

**A CUP OF WATER**

**Matthew 10: 40 - 42**

**Sunday 26 June 2011  
(Sunday after Trinity)**

**Church of the Ascension, the Anglican Church in KZN  
Nic Denny-Dimitriou**

*[Sermon notes for the parish website; for the purpose of these notes,  
Introductory comments on the other bible readings for the day have been omitted.]*

**A cup of water.**

Yes, a cup of water.

Jesus said that was significant. And amongst all the highly significant material of today's readings, that's what I'm focusing on in this short sermon.

**To begin, here's the first paragraph from last week's Cordwalles Preparatory School Newsletter, written by Simon Weaver, Headmaster – and member of our parish:**

*We have now come to the end of a very busy and condensed 2nd term. It has been a fun-filled time with a great deal of learning taking place. This learning for our boys has come in all forms – learning in the classroom, on environmental trips, at the (T's) chicken farm, on the walk to World's View (for the annual school picnic), playing rugby, singing in Combined Choirs, being dropped from a team, having a fight with another boy, preparing for Grandparents' Day, helping those in need by buying blankets, and the list goes on.*

Education: clearly much, much more than only class-room and book-learning; a very widespread and life-long endeavour in which the whole of life is engaged – in which the world is the classroom, effectively.

So too, our faith: To be serious about following Jesus, the whole of life is engaged in the process, not simply a short time spent in a church building or religious gathering, no matter how sincere or well-intentioned...

Just as we wouldn't diminish the place of the classroom for learning, we wouldn't diminish the role of the church service in regards to our faith either, but we acknowledge that everything else outside the church service is also important and relevant.

In this morning's short Gospel passage, at the end of a section in which Jesus says strong things about following him, suddenly there are these words from him:

**“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple - truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward”.**

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### **Story of being at the Never Never Land Crèche yesterday:**

Rosemarie Bullock – a passion from some years ago  
 (Also the late Frank Bullock – a passion for feeding poor and hungry people)  
 Social Responsibility Portfolio  
 Various projects, some successful, but ...  
 Prayed for the “right one”

Then at CHUMA meeting in Howick [– explain re churches and NGO's networking]  
 Met Zandile Khoza  
 Went to visit her little crèche, which began in her parents' old railway house at Cedara and later housed in a tiny concrete-block RDP house; minimal resources  
 This was clearly a woman with vision  
 Linked with Andy Kruger  
 Slowly...  
 First major project: Fencing (keep children in, cows and goats out) – done WITH the community, not for them, not imposing on them

Shared meals on 2 occasions  
 Sponsorship developed

Aware of far greater needs  
 Overwhelmed / where to begin / where to find sufficient funds?

Invited Zandile to speak to our Parish Council one evening  
 Then Zandile stood before our church community

Major need: A new classroom, more space, storage  
 Initial plans – an old container (would need over R50, 000 – where from?; horribly hot in summer and bitterly cold in winter)

**Yesterday: Celebration of the community to bless their new classroom**

Prior to that:

RDP house tidied and painted; minor improvements to facilities

Sandpit donated by parishioners, small veg gardens organised

Large jungle gym (via a parishioner, from her brother-in-law when he visited, and went back to his church in The Netherlands – they raised 000 Euros!)

And now:

Thanks to Bronwyn Mackenzie's input: A huge big wooden classroom plus small toilet block was being blessed. Large, clean, warm, spacious, light!

Colourful, with many additional things donated by well-wishers

Also on display: some of the many jerseys and blankets bought, sewn and hand-knitted by the generous people of this parish!

Bookkeeper also from our parish

Hands-on training and experience arranged for Zandile at Hilton Pre-Primary School thanks to Jean Binnendyk

Two church communities – us and St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Cedara (I knew several young families there, through connections with Alpha and a faith-sharing group); Leaders from both churches have helped drive this project, encouraging and supporting it. Great to have parishioners from both places there, showing interest and support and engaged in practical tasks

ENGEN donation - significant, matching what the community had raised (2 churches and the crèche community together)

A total of R90, 000 - R100, 000 (not sure of exact numbers). Wow!

Zandile: Prayers answered!

Chairman of the committee, Sbu (Sibusiso) – thrilled and giving thanks to God

Not all at the crèche are Anglicans

Not all are Catholics

Irrelevant!

Many faithful Christian people

Working together

We, who can take so much for granted, pleased at what has taken place

And Zandile (33) – their leader, a faithful Christian woman with vision, determination (also vis-à-vis her own struggle with cancer)

Deeply moved by what has taken place

Me too, as well as others from our parish who were present

Deeply sensed the presence of God

Children delighted!

Often, we start significant things in small ways, giving a bit of our time or money, and being prepared to open our minds and hearts a little bit. The experiences we have encourage us to open our hearts and minds a little further.

What has happened at Emandleni hasn't changed the world, but it has opened doors. The good experiences, of one small contribution compounding another small one until we have several big developments to celebrate, creating opportunity for further response and creativity, guided not by fear and defensiveness but by genuine compassion and sharing of resources.

For some, no hassle to go "over the road" to Emandleni. For others, a big issue!  
[Experiences in Sweetwaters and Edendale – visiting – taking our children (e.g. to employees' homes to offer condolences after death) – some in the suburbs shocked, but they've never been and never experienced the warmth, hospitality, appreciation]

Deeply moved, years ago, to meet a physically disabled man, working with Sarah Dottridge and Carol Cassidy in their Sweetwaters' programme which has been operational for over 2 decades; "Phungaloo" to replace outdoor 'longdrop' toilets; for the first time in his life, this man was able to go to the toilet in dignity. Think about it – we all visit the toilet several times a day. Imagine being wheelchair bound and having only a 'longdrop' and what it must be like in the middle of the night or in the pouring rain... this man's dignity was restored! This is a story I often remember.

A glass of cold water will not change the world. But if you open the door to your heart and you are willing to see someone's need for that glass of water, it will change the way you see the other. And that in turn will change the way you approach the issues that may come with welcoming the other.

The Apostle Paul says in the passage we read from Romans 6, that in baptism we die with Christ and rise to new life. As followers of Christ our life is put on a different track: The Jesus Track. Where seeing someone's need for a cup of water is important.

It may be hard to surrender to this, to live this life of faith, but there is a great freedom in it. It's like jumping into the arms of a parent from a scary height to discover you are held and are safe. It's learning to live the reality of the message Jesus Christ lived: that generous love and compassion will make your life a rich place, bearing a wealth of fruit. And not a place where fear and anxiety close doors and narrow us in, until there isn't even room to hand a cup of water over.

Sometimes even Christians' lives are inspired more by fear and anxiety or by unwillingness to share from the great resources God has given us. But followers of Jesus ideally are inspired by love and compassion. We follow the leading of that man who, two thousand years ago, said that what it takes to build a world in line with the

values of God is to love back the God who loves us, and to love the other as much as we love ourselves.

And that starts, believe it or not, with a glass of water. It begins with noticing the need of another and responding to it by giving even the simplest little bit of yourself.

Once you've shared that cup of water your world changes. Because, soon there will be more you'll want to give than just that cup of water you started with. Your boundaries become more porous, and other things, other gifts will start to slip out. And while you, in this way, will be letting Christ in through the front door, any fears you have, or residual selfishness, will begin to leave quietly through the backdoor, deflated and defeated by love. By the love of Jesus. And the love expressed, believe it or not, by giving a cup of water!

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