

Connecting faith and daily life

Julia McGuinness *reflects on* Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9

The pomp of a royal wedding inspires many a song, including this psalm. The occasion is more than mere pageantry. Kings in the psalmist's day ruled with sovereign power and military prowess, embodying their nation's hopes for peace and prosperity. As a monarch in King David's line, this king is one of God's chosen rulers. The psalmist's praise is effusive. The king is described as god-like in standing – handsome, gracious in his speech. His bride is a foreign princess and his "ladies of honour" include princesses, emphasising his international status.

But this is no self-glorifying tyrant or power-hungry dictator. The psalmist sets this event in the context of God's ultimate kingship. It is always telling to observe whom or what our human leaders worship. This king bows the knee to God, allowing his own rule to be shaped by divine justice and righteousness.

As the psalmist fulsomely sings of God's blessings, we discern another melody. Myrrh, a perfume fit to scent royal robes, reminds us of the magi's gift to the infant King Jesus. The bridegroom king is revealed as a foreshadowing of the Messiah, and the permanence of God's blessing on his reign takes on a whole new resonance. The psalm anticipates the glorious day when King Jesus is united with the Church as his bride – and that really is something to celebrate. 🍷

# Wedding celebrations



Lord, we pray for leaders of nations, that they might acknowledge you as King over all. May they humbly exercise the power with which you have invested them, to establish justice and exercise compassion, that your kingdom may come. Amen.

## People of the New Testament *Introduction, part 4*

by Caroline Fletcher

*Caroline continues her series in which she shares the inspiration behind writing her book.*

Stories are powerful, aren't they? Jesus knew that – he taught in parables to grab people's attention. There are other less obvious stories hidden in the New Testament, though, if we dig a little deeper. These are the stories of characters whose lives, though mentioned only briefly, illuminate the world of Jesus and the first Christians. I

chose to focus on some of these in my book.

I took a deeper look at people such as Onesimus, a runaway slave; Joanna a well-to-do woman who travelled around with Jesus and his followers, providing for them financially, and John Mark, who abandoned Paul on his first missionary journey but went on to become one of his most trusted companions.

These are real people who lived in a very different world to us, but whose pains, joys and struggles we can relate to and learn from. 🍷

“Open your hearts to the love God instils... God loves you tenderly. What He gives you is not to be kept under lock and key but to be shared.”

St Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997), Roman Catholic nun and missionary

## Finding God on the smallholding

by Jeni Parsons

This is the month for weaning and selling the spring-born lambs, who will be raised to carry on the breeding programme on another farm. My primitive breed birth their lambs in April, so at five months they're fully capable of living on grass, but still suckle if they get the chance. So the decision is made to remove the lambs so the ewes can regain

condition ready to meet the ram in November when the cycle of breeding begins again. Moving lambs on so the breed increases in numbers is important, but at the same time separating ewes from their lambs is tough though often the process has already begun naturally.

It is one of the main rhythms of sheep-keeping that links me with all the shepherds who have sung the glory of God, from King David through to the shepherds on a starry night outside Bethlehem. 🍷