

24th September 2020

Love

**“Yblessded be god, that I have wedded fyve;
Welcome the sixte, whan that evere he sal.
For sothe, I wol nat kepe me chaast in al.
Whan myn housbonde is fro the world ygon,
Some Cristen man shall wedde me anon.”**

Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, ‘The Wife of Bath’s Prologue’

Put any group of clergy together and the conversation is bound to turn to “a funny thing happened at a wedding I conducted.” I’m no different ...

At one of my weddings, the rings were to be delivered *by an owl*. Bella, the owl, was to swoop down from the gallery, with the rings in a velvet pouch tied to a claw, to perch on the gauntleted arm of the best-man. The rings would then be retrieved, with the owl exiting to gasps of amazement. But Bella had other ideas. She flew *in* OK, but, ignoring the best-man, she proceeded to circle round behind me and the wedding party and fly straight back out again! Enter a suitably embarrassed owl-handler with the recalcitrant Bella on his arm and the rings in his other hand – to much hooting (pardon the pun) and hollering from the assembled company. Any vestige of amazement or romanticism had gone! And I had to continue calmly as if this kind of thing happened every day of the week.

Every wedding is unique, just as every loving relationship is unique. *Wild Goose Publications* (www.ionabooks.com) has produced a new download by Simon Taylor, *As We Celebrate the Love*. Full of worship ideas for weddings, this helpful addition to their resources on relationships, marriage and partnerships invites us to celebrate love where we find it. Life is enriched for all of us when people honour their relationships, regardless of age, gender or circumstances – or even an uncooperative Bella.

I’m not sure Chaucer’s Wife of Bath is the best one to turn to for a critique on romantic liaisons. But if she *had* chosen to have a badly-behaved owl at her “sixte” ceremony, whenever it came along, maybe Chaucer would have had yet another “Canterbury Tale” to relate, along the lines of *A Funny Thing Happened At The Wife Of Bath’s Sixth Wedding*.

A prayer for today

Lord, help me to celebrate love where I find it – even in unexpected places. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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