

Dear friends,

I had the second of three Baptisms on consecutive Sundays at St. Peter's. The first one had been at All Saints. Eleven-year-old Clara had asked to be Baptised but couldn't be persuaded to have it within the service so at 2pm in the afternoon we conducted a small family service which was extraordinarily sweet and attentive. Clara was as tall as me (not hard!!) so could easily just bend over the font.

Louise's mum and dad were staying with us so it was good that they could experience our candlelight supper in the Peter Hall. 52 people enjoyed a superb meal courtesy of Mandy Butcher and her team and we were entertained by Stephen Tanner playing popular tunes on the keyboard and also playing an instrument I'd never seen before, a breath operated synthesizer which was amazing.

Our annual Advent Carol service takes place at 6pm next Sunday evening in St. Peter's church reflecting the particular Advent season atmosphere which some prefer to the Christmas carol services that grace all three churches later in December. All Welcome.

Sunday 30th November – Advent Sunday

I will be presiding at both services in the morning at St. Peter's, the baptism in the afternoon and the Carol service in the evening. Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30 and 11am respectively.

Isaiah 2: 1-5. Isaiah was of course looking forward to the Messiah. Christians looking at these prophecies know that the prophecy has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. But the peace on earth that Isaiah was also looking forward to has definitely not occurred. While Jesus heralds the end, the complete fulfilment of God's plan for the world still lies in the future. Technically, this is known as "Inaugurated eschatology". In Jesus we have a picture of the end and the Jewish "Day of the Lord" has been conflated with the Parousia (often called second coming) of Christ.

Romans 13: 11-14. The final end is yet to come, and St. Paul defines this as "waiting for salvation", but what do we do in the meantime? We work towards what is called Theosis in the Eastern church and in the West is known as Sanctification. We put on Jesus and act and say and think as he would have done.

Matthew 24: 36-44. Jesus famously admits that even He doesn't know when the end will come – only the Father knows. Acting and being as Christ (Sanctification) Jesus calls "keeping awake" because we don't know when he will return. We will be as surprised as the world's population was at the time of Noah when the flood came.

Thought for the Day

Advent is the start of the year for the church. We simultaneously are looking at the beginning (Christmas) and towards the end (The Parousia) and this reflective and state of preparing ourselves for the end provides Advent with its distinctive flavour. The colour of the season is purple which reflects this pensive, penitent flavour providing a counterpoint to the unbridled rejoicing of the celebration of his birth. For

this reason the “Gloria” that we normally sing at the Eucharist is deemed (as it is during Lent) too unnecessarily jolly so we don’t sing it during either of those two seasons.

That the church year starts a month before the calendar year is a bit disconcerting but at this time the cycle of daily and Sunday readings (the lectionary) also changes. We use a three year rolling cycle where in year A we when appropriate use mainly gospel readings from Matthew. In year B we predominantly concentrate on Mark and in year C we concentrate mostly on Luke. We are just leaving year C and we just about to start year A again. John’s gospel doesn’t get its own year but fills in when appropriate at different times of the year.

There is a set of readings for the Eucharist, Morning prayer and Evening prayer for every day of the year. It is, barring a few exceptions, the same lectionary used by the Catholic church, so using it brings us closer to Christians around the world. Being told what to read on any given day also has the advantage of forcing you to confront readings that are difficult and would probably overlook given the choice – so you are not given it! I enjoy the discipline that you have to show in reading a wide range of scripture, a discipline that comes with being a liturgical church.

The prayer for Today is by Bishop Thomas Wilson (1663 – 1755)

**Grant O God,
That amidst all the discouragements, difficulties,
Dangers, distress and darkness of this mortal life,
I may depend upon your mercy
And on this build my hopes,
As on a sure foundation.
Let your infinite mercy in Christ Jesus deliver me
From despair,
Both now and at the hour of death.
Amen.**

Love and peace,
Martin