

Dear friends,

The noise of the wind and rain kept a lot of people up on Saturday night. That continued into the morning which I expected to have a dramatic effect on numbers but in the end, it was only marginal. Yes, we were down a bit but nothing major. Well done to everyone who battled the elements and made it to church.

We had the serving vicar (that's me by the way!) and two former vicars of St. Peter's in the congregation, Ken Parry and Robert Charles so I was afraid I'd be given marks out of ten at the end of the service. Both really enjoyed it and re-acquainting themselves with each other. Both will be helping to cover services during my sabbatical along with all our other faithful retired priests for which I am very grateful.

Solo's lunch was brilliant as usual and there is a special Christmas Solo's lunch on the 22nd December so get your booking in quick.

Our Advent carol service is at 6pm next Sunday evening with favourite Advent carols and readings and Choir pieces. This has a more reflective tone than Christmas and has proved very popular in past years.

Sunday 1st December – Advent Sunday – Year C begins

Archdeacon Trevor Jones will be presiding at both services at St. Peter's, and I will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30 and 11.00 respectively. I will then also preside at the Advent Carol service at 6pm.

Jeremiah 33: 14-16. Advent is a season of expectation, both of a Messiah {as in this case) and also the end times (the end of all history- the eschaton). So the scene is set by Jeremiah. The advent hope in this piece looks forward not only to a messianic leader but also a restored and renewed community (Jerusalem)

1 Thessalonians 3: 9-13. The end goal is "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints". Two things will mark this community looking forward to that day – love and holiness. Love is "for all" so this writing is inclusive rather than exclusive. Holiness though denotes a setting apart from the world and usually denotes a strong moral code. But true holiness, blamelessness, can only be given as a gift of God in Christ Jesus, not through moral striving.

Luke 21: 25-26. The Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven (Referring to the reading from Daniel last week) is as certain as the fig tree sprouting leaves. “This generation” not passing away before all these things have taken place could refer to the destruction of the Temple in AD70, but Luke’s focus is on the need for all disciples (in whatever era) is to live in a state of constant readiness for what will certainly occur one day. Don’t be weighed down by the worries and troubles of your life and this world.

The Advent Candle: Different priests have differing schemas taken from differing traditions to denote which candle represents what on a certain Sunday (so you may in practice encounter a little variation) but the one that I will use sits best with the Sunday readings and is sanctioned by the liturgical commission of the Church of England.

Advent 1- The Patriarchs

Advent 2 – The Prophets

Advent 3 – John the Baptist

Advent 4 – the Virgin Mary

Advent 5 – The Christ

Thought for the Day

One of the peculiarities of the Christian church is that our year starts not on January 1st but on Advent Sunday. Let me try and explain the lectionary for you that dictates what readings we use not only on Sundays but on every day of the week. Our readings are on a three-year cycle – years A, B, and C. We are just about to enter year C on December 1st (Advent Sunday). Years A is characterised by having the majority of the gospel readings that year from Matthew’s gospel, Year B from Mark’s gospel and year C – the year we are about to plunge into from Luke’s gospel. John’s gospel doesn’t have its own year but readings from John’s gospel pop up all the time in all three years to fit the theme of the day where the predominant gospel doesn’t have anything appropriate. With minor changes it is essentially the same lectionary used by the Catholic church. There sometimes a choice between Track 1 and Track 2. We always use track 2 in the RMC. In Track1 the Old Testament reading is followed continuously but in Track 2 the Old Testament reading is chosen to fit the “theme” of the other two readings. Following the lectionary is a good discipline because it forces you to preach on themes or subjects you might naturally avoid and provides the underlying pattern for the liturgical year. While I’m on the subject I might as well add that the word liturgy is taken from a Greek word that means “a public work provided at our own expense for the good of all”, which is why giving public thanksgiving for the sacrifice of Jesus every Sunday -the Eucharist – (Eucharist is also a Greek word that simply means Thanksgiving) is so important to those of us on the catholic side of the spectrum.

Again, while I am on the subject, it is a thanksgiving but also a remembrance – “Do this in remembrance of me”. Remembrance translates the Greek word “anamnesis” which is much stronger than simply remembering but is actually a “making present” of Jesus, his suffering, his death and his resurrection.

The Prayer for Today is by Henri Nouwen

Advent Prayer

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,

We who are anxious over many things look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

Amen.

- Henri J.M. Nouwen

Love and peace,

Martin