

Dear friends,

A new, expensive sound and projection system for the church and the Peter Hall is bedding in nicely. After a few hairy moments at the early service, it worked flawlessly over the three main services which included our annual Advent Carol service which was well attended on Sunday Evening. The four services on Sunday included my third baptism in as many weeks as we welcomed 6-month-old Daisy into the church community.

Sometimes a break is as good as a rest so after training on how to use the new sound system on Friday Louise and I escaped for an overnight stay at the Harbour hotel in Salcombe. It's a lovely place and the last time we went we actually got sunburned – alas not this time..ahem..but the food was as good as ever.

Just a reminder that we hold our last joint PCC meeting of the year in the Peter Hall at 7pm on Wednesday evening – so PCC members, be there or be square!

Sunday 7th December – Advent 2

Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at both services at St. Peter's and I will preside at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30 and 11am respectively. The second candle on the Advent wreath represents the prophets.

Isaiah 11: 1-10. A famous piece in which Isaiah prophesies that a future perfect king of the house of David will usher in a perfect time of peace with justice and even nature will live in idyllic unity where adversaries like the wolf and the lamb will live peaceably together. This future king will stand as a beacon to the nations of the world.

Romans 15: 4-13. Paul, in this piece explains that the God revealed through scripture and the patriarchs of the Jewish people is actually a sign for the whole world who will be drawn in to form one people under one God. This was the true message and true hope of the scriptures.

Matthew 3: 1-12. John the Baptist is deliberately portrayed here as an “Old Testament” style prophet. The fierce and wild simple man with a clear message speaking from the margins (the wilderness). In such a role he bridges the gap between the two testaments – old and new – and clears the path for the Messiah.

Thought for the Day

Having introduced Advent last week, it is time to explain the Advent wreath. Different schemas are available of course (Some priests light the pink candle on a different day for example) but the schema that accords most with the readings for each week, and therefore the one I use is as follows. In the symbolic romp through salvation history we start with the Patriarchs of the Jewish religion. Abraham (and his wife Sarah) and Jacob (who had his name changed to Israel) figure hugely here. Then comes the whole load of prophets whose writings fill a good proportion of the Hebrew scriptures featuring books/people like Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah for example and as we see in today's gospel reading can include John the Baptist. Then John the Baptist gets his own special candle as the herald, the man who points the way towards Jesus. Then, we come to the virgin Mary, without whom and without her “yes” to God, Jesus would

not have been born. Her pivotal and central role was essential for a true incarnation of God to become man. And finally, on Christmas day (or Midnight Mass) we light the final white candle for Jesus himself. So in simple form we have

1. Patriarchs
2. Prophets
3. John the Baptist
4. The Blessed virgin Mary
5. Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As I say, other schemas are available, but these accord best with the scriptures we are presented with on the appointed Sundays.

The Prayer for Today is from the Book of Common Prayer. Reading the Bible can be hard work, with some pieces seemingly irrelevant or hard to fathom. Let's pray then for help in using the Bible better.

**Blessed Lord,
Who has caused all holy scriptures to be written
for our learning,
Grant that we may in such wise hear them,
Read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them,
That by patience, and comfort of thy holy word,
We may embrace, and ever hold fast the blesses
Hope of eternal life,
Which thou hast given us in our saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.**

Love and peace,
Martin