

St Thomas' of the Air Church
 Sunday Last Before Advent
 Stir Up Sunday
 November 22, 2020
 rmcneely+

*Stir Up, we beseech thee O Lord
 the souls of thy faithful people*

Today is known among Anglicans as “Stir Up Sunday”,
 from the first words of the Collect for this week.

In England, ever since Prince Albert first established the tradition
 in the 1850s;

With great anticipation, Children waited
 for the “Stir Up” collect all year
 because that meant that
 families across England would later gather in their kitchens,
 with a large stout spoon
 and each family member took a turn to “stir up”
 the Christmas pudding in the big iron pot.

A symbolic tradition to bring home the message from today’s
 Collect.

Christmas Pudding is a mixture of flour, dried fruit, dark sugar,
 butter, eggs, raisins, orange peel, currants, grated apples and spices
 like cinnamon, nutmeg and all spice.

All that is mixed in a large bowl on Stir Up Sunday
 Poured into a mold and steamed
 But it needs 5 weeks to cure before it is ready.
 The 5 weeks from Stir Up Sunday until Christmas

It turns out stirring up the Christmas Pudding is hard work
 The mixture is stiff and is increasingly so before it is done.
 So the youngest children went first
 And the spoon passed in order of age.

The work gets harder, the older one becomes
There is a lesson in that.
The work gets harder the older we become.

As one received the stirring spoon
He/she got to make a wish
When the Pudding was turned out of the mold
The cook placed little items in it
And when it was served, the diners might find
A coin, prophesying wealth
A button, indicating another year of bachelorhood
A ring, meaning an upcoming wedding
A horse shoe for good luck

The Christmas Pudding was the crowing glory of the Christmas Meal.

But like much in their lives
Even the dessert at the family Christmas Table
Had religious significance

In great anticipation, at the end of the Christmas Meal,
A sprig of holly is put on the top and
warmed brandy is poured over it
the lights are dimmed
And the brandy is set alight
The flames warm it and burn off the alcohol
Leaving a delicious warm cake like dessert.

The holly is reminiscent of Christ's crown of thorns at the crucifixion

The flames remind us of His agony and suffering.

In the culture of the time

People went to church each Sunday and
They lived the Book of Common Prayer
In their traditions and customs in their homes.

You see, that is what life is like
 When it is lived in Christ
 With the Book of Common Prayer
 As a daily guide.

Would that we could live our religion the way they did.
 That we had traditions grounded in Christianity
 Tokens that serve as reminders of our beliefs
 Family traditions that are lived out
 At the dinner table
 At home
 In Church
 Places we go, things we do,
 say, watch, read and sing
 To teach the little ones and remind us all about Jesus
 Why we celebrate His birth,
 What Advent means
 and why the next 5 weeks are so very special.
 Is this the year that you revive or establish
 Your own family traditions
 with your children or grand children?

Now, the Sunday Next Before Advent; Stir Up Sunday
 Evokes all of that,
 But it is also the end of the Christian year;
 It brings to a close the long green season of Trinity.
 In the agricultural metaphor of our ancestors
 We planted the seed, the word of God
 In the warm moist earth
 At the beginning of the growing season
 At the beginning of Trinity, Trinity Sunday, 24 weeks ago.
 And we have tended it, watered it,
 taken away the weeds and the tares to protect it.
 It has grown, sprouted and born fruit.
 We take all the growth of the long green Trinity Season

We take all that we have realized, learned and done
 In that long green Church season
 of the Trinity Season Survey of Christian Doctrine
 And we end the year in contemplation of its beginning:
 in contemplation and anticipation of the incarnation of
 our Lord,
 when God became man on Earth.

Today's Epistle is one of very few Old Testament Readings
 Epistles are generally from the New Testament
 And usually from St Paul.

This one is ancient
 From Jeremiah the prophet.
 Foretelling the coming of Christ the Messiah
 There could be no better Advent Epistle
 And nothing better to stir up
 the wills of the faithful people

Some see today's Gospel as misplaced.
 Others find the Advent note hinted in the final verse:
 "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world."
 And a suitable conclusion for the Christian year:
 Namely- we have been filled to abundance
 Let us gather up what remains that nothing be lost.

This is a time when the harvest is in and we give thanks to God
 It is a time when the autumn leaves
 fall from the trees and clutter the streets
 It is a time when the golden daylight pails
 and the daylight gives way to the night.
 It is a time when the weather turns colder
 The rain comes to the Bay Area (we hope)
 The mist lingers in the early morning hours

It is a time when the metabolism
 and the pace of life
 seems to slow a bit
 and we spend more time
 in our cozy warm homes with our feet up
 with the fire lit in the fireplace.
 and a winter's nap sounds like an appealing idea.

It is a time after the long green season of Trinity,
 when we can become complacent
 and even lethargic
 about our Christian Life and duty.

So today marks our time to WAKE UP
 from the quiet, long, leisurely, green
 of the Trinity Season Survey
 To turn the corner on the Christian year

So clergy across the globe
 are encouraged to Stir Up our will,
 to sound the trumpet call and the drum roll
 to excite us,
 to wake us from the lethargy
 and to prepare for the coming of Our Lord.

- His coming by His Incarnation that we celebrate with the feast of Christmas, the Nativity, His birth
- His coming into our hearts and souls
- And His coming at the end of time to judge the quick and the dead.

Advent is a change to a somber season that some call a mini Lent.
 We signify the change with the penitent color of violet
 The liturgy changes to reflect the somber tone of the season

The Advent music from the Hymnal points us
toward the incarnation, His coming,
His life on Earth. God with us
We count down the time with the Advent wreath, lighting
another candle each week

Some families give an Advent calendar to the children
with a little door for each day of Advent
and behind the door
a piece of chocolate.

Another reminder of the time left before He comes.

At Advent, we think not only of Jesus coming
At Christmas and
Coming again at the end times

But also His coming again
spiritually
into our lives,
our hearts
and our souls

That is what we celebrate on Christmas Day.
Without the preparation of Advent, Christmas has little meaning
beyond the secular, commercial one.

And All the customs,
the trees, the lights, the carols, the man in the Red suit, the
glitter, the presents are only nice traditions,
if they are not preceded by the prayerful time
of preparation throughout Advent.

For Christians,
we need
and take
the time to

Consider what it means to have a savior

What it means to know that the only begotten Son of God
became man to save us from ourselves, our sins.

WAKE UP, He is coming.

It is a new year.
 It is a new beginning.
 God should be a part of our daily lives.
 It is a Time to take stock of our lives:

What is our prayer life like?
 Are we doing all we should to be ready for him?
 Are our lives lived in accordance with God's will?
 Are we the people God has intended us to be?

Am I living the life for which He has created me to live?
 How do I approach receiving His sacrament and communion?
 Is Jesus in me and am I in him?
 Have I examined myself and my life?

Am I truly penitent and have I confronted all my sins, confessed
 them,
 sought His absolution
 and have I changed my ways to avoid that sin?
 Or is there that ghostly foe,
 that spot of sin
 we may not know?

Are we ready?
 Are we ready So that when Jesus comes,
 When we celebrate his incarnation at Christmas
 Or when He comes again, to judge the world,
 next decade,
 next year
 or next week,
 or in the next minute;
 now
 Are we ready?

Will He greet us with:

“Well done my true and faithful servant”

On our judgment day will Jesus be our only advocate and mediator?
At our judgment trial, when Satan reads the charges upon which he
claims our souls and when we plead guilty

Guilty of our sins

Guilty of the charges wrought by our lives on Earth

And just before sentence is past

Will Jesus intercede?:

Satan, you are overruled

I have already paid for her sins

Will he put his protective and loving arm around our shoulders and
say: “This one is one of mine”

We have 4 Sundays in Advent.

Only 25 days to prepare ourselves for His coming.

Are we ready?

Wake Up.