

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
Sunday Next Before Advent
November 20, 2022
rmcneely+

This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.

The Sunday Next Before Advent is a Sunday unique to Anglicans.

It is both the end of the long green Trinity Season

And the beginning of the Advent Season.

It is the end and the beginning of the Church year

And the calendars,

the table of lessons and psalms for the Daily Offices,

Reach their end and we turn back

to the beginning of the table.

The Propers for our Communion Services

Turn back to the beginning next week,

the First Sunday in Advent.

There is a clear sense of ending and of beginning.

But today begins the time of year

When our Church most contributes to our culture.

Perhaps less so now but in a time

when most people went to church

every Sunday

and all the major feast days.

People lived their Christianity

every day

and their lives reflected their faith and belief.

And because a goodly number of readers were church goers

And the 1928 liturgy was a part of the culture

Novelists, of not that long ago,

Could insert the liturgy into their books with meaning and effect.

Novelists such as Agatha Christie and P.G. Wodehouse
 Frequently quoted passages from the Communion Service
 To deepen the characters of their novels and to advance the
 plot.

You see social customs and culture in times past
 reflected the Church
 Whereas today the modern Church
 is attempting to gain something
 By mimicking social customs and culture.

A perfect example of how the Church influenced culture is today's
 Collect

In which we pray that God
 "Stir up the wills of thy faithful people."

It was Prince Albert, the beloved husband of Queen Victoria
 Who took the Collect home
 And into the homes of his subjects
 When he had an idea inspired by the Stir Up Collect
 And people throughout the Kingdom
 Began making their Christmas Pudding
 On what would become known as "Stir Up Sunday".

The timing was perfect,
 It took the Christmas Pudding
 about 6 weeks to be ready for the Christmas Dinner.
 And Stir up Sunday usually fell
 about 6 weeks before Christmas.

And Albert observed that making the Christmas dessert
 Involved 'stirring up' the ingredients in a large bowl.

To appreciate its cultural significance: A word about Christmas
 Pudding:

First it is not pudding in the American sense of the word.
 "Pudding" in the British Commonwealth is more akin to our word
 "dessert".

And Christmas pudding does not have the consistency of pudding
 As we know it in America.
 It is more like fruitcake.

For the purposes of this discussion
 The important thing about Christmas Pudding
 are the traditions that encompass it.

With great anticipation, Children waited
 for the “Stir Up” collect all year
 because when they heard it in church 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.

Now, 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 tiny 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,

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, 23 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
 As you know, Epistles are generally from the New Testament
 And usually written by 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.

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 the incarnation
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?