

Saint Thomas and Saint Thomas of the Air Church
 Sunday Next Before Advent
 November 23, 2025
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This is of a truth, that prophet that should come into the world.

Today, the Sunday Next Before Advent
 is both the end of the long green Trinity Season
 And the beginning of the penitential Advent Season.
 It is both the end and the beginning of the Church year.

In times past, when most people lived their Christianity
 every day.
 Our Prayer Book was part of their lives.
 It went home with them and they lived it.
 The culture of the time allowed them meaningful
 Customs and practices
 That expressed their beliefs and love of God.

You see, in times past, social customs reflected the Church
 Whereas,
 Today, the hollow church has it backwards
 And the church reflects social customs.

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 today's Collect home
 And into the homes of his subjects
 With an idea inspired by the “Stir Up” Collect.

And on the Sunday Next before Advent
 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 5 weeks to be ready for the Christmas Dinner.
 And Stir up Sunday fell
 about 5 weeks before Christmas.

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.

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

With great anticipation, Children waited all year
 for the “Stir Up” collect
 because when they heard it in church, that meant that
 families across England would all gather in the kitchen,
 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.
There is a lesson in that.
The work gets harder the older we become.

And as you received the stirring spoon
you 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 and the Christmas pudding is
presented to the table in a great flaming procession.
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.

So 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,

We take all that we have realized, learned and done
 In that long green Church season
 of the Trinity Season Survey of Essential 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
 than Jeremiah's vision and Prophecy
 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 in Trinity;
 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 pales
 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
And 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 Advent; the coming of Our Lord.

Advent is a change to a somber season that some call a mini Lent.
We will signify the change with the penitential 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 but
Coming again at the end times.

And 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.

Advent is a Time to take stock of our lives in preparation for His coming:

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?