

~ The Epistle ~

Vol. 15

ADVENT/CHRISTMAS 2012

No. 7

NEWSLETTER OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST
DIOCESE OF CANADA • ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF CANADA
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AS the People's Warden said at our recent Budget meeting, it has been a year since some of our former brethren left us for the Roman Catholic Church, and we were faced with new challenges and new beginnings. But we have come through stronger; we have come through with a greater sense of who we are as traditional Anglicans, ever holding fast to the ancient Catholic Faith once received by the saints and transmitted to our forefathers. Through it all we have healed the wounds and now seek to foster the historic Anglican tradition of the Christian faith. Our faith, our parish life, our spiritual well-being, our growth as Christians, and as a Christian community, lies in the future not the past. We have met the challenges, forged on in our journey with generosity of spirit and integrity of faith. Now we look to a new chapter, both in the life of the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada, and in the life of our Cathedral Parish; indeed in the future ministry and outreach of the continuing Anglican church in North America. We should never forget that we are part of a much larger Church universal, and a national Province of the world-wide Traditional Anglican Communion.

My election as the next Metropolitan and Bishop Ordinary of the Anglican Catholic Church of Canada will entail new opportunities for unity and growth, as well as new challenges for our Parish. I pray God that He will provide me with the grace, the faith, the strength, and the stamina to undertake the office and ministry to which He has called me in and through His Church. Needless to say, I am humbled by the confidence and vote of the clergy and laity of our Province and Diocese. There is much to be done, and I will need not only your prayers but also your support and active participation if we are to be effective in our witness and accomplish the work Christ would have us to in His Name. Over and above all else, we need to focus our energies on healing the wounds of the recent past, and to draw together in unity the various

jurisdictions within the continuing Anglican church in North America.

With the challenges of the future, we also look to the present, and to our spiritual renewal in this Season of Advent leading up to the joyous celebrations of Christmas. On December 8th, the Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, we will have our annual parish 'Advent Quiet Day' – a day set aside for quiet reflection and prayer in preparation for the Christmas Season. So much of our time and energy is spent this time of year in getting presents purchased and wrapped, in writing and posting Christmas cards, attending parties, and getting everything ready for the 'big day'. It is thus all the more important that we set aside time for God, and time for ourselves before God, so that this Season becomes more than the world offers, and more than just tinsel, pretty lights, and hectic schedules. So I invite you to come out on Saturday, December 8th to experience the true meaning and sense of this holy Season.

As part of our on-going outreach, we will be holding a Service of Christmas Lessons and Carols on Sunday, December 23rd (the Sunday before Christmas), in which family, friends and neighbours are invited to join with us in the celebration of the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The Service will begin at 5:00 pm. So mark your calendars, invite your friends and family. And, as usual, we will celebrate Christmas with the traditional Services at 9:00 pm on Christmas Eve, and 10:00 am on Christmas Day. In addition, we will mark the various feast days in Christmastide with daily Mass at 9:30 am. On Sunday, December 30th, following the 10:00 am Mass, we will hold our Parish Christmas Dinner in the Church Hall.

May I take this opportunity to wish you all a very blessed Advent and joyous Christmas. May the birth of our Saviour Christ bring us new life, new hope, and renewed strength.

Dean Shane B. Janzen



Advent: A Season of Hope and Anticipation

ADVENT is the season of waiting. The Chosen people of Israel waited, hoping for the great day of their liberation. Though at times there seemed to be no future, the prophets bid them be patient, for God would be faithful to His promises. Announced by the prophets of old, especially by the prophet Isaiah, the shepherd-king, Jesus Christ the Messiah, was ushered into a distracted world by John the Baptist: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make His paths straight!" (Mt. 3:3) John the Baptist fearlessly called the world to repent, to put away sin and to live in the fullness of God. He proclaimed Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ -- the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world -- the long-awaited Saviour!

Our Lord Jesus Christ came long ago *in history*, Son of God and Son of Mary. He comes to us today *in faith and in mystery*, in the word of holy Scripture, and in the grace-filled presence of the holy Sacraments. He will return again in glory at the end of time, in the first day of the new and eternal week, the day which will have no ending. As Christians, we live in the present, but we look forward in joyful hope to the great return of our Lord Jesus Christ. We live as servants and subjects of the Lord Jesus, ready to meet the Master when He comes. We watch and pray, not attached to possessions or the things of this world, but ready and eager to praise His holy Name and to witness to His holy calling in word and deed, by sacrifice and self-giving. Advent is such a time of waiting, watching, and preparing -- a time for us to search our souls, to straighten out the Lord's avenue into our lives, and to prepare our hearts and our homes for His coming again.

Advent is a time of prayer, for eagerly awaiting the greatest gift of all, Jesus the Lord. He is the light who shines in the darkness of our world. Advent wreaths are lighted. We join the angels and the saints in

proclaiming the great wonders God has worked among us. We hear anew the prophecies of old; and we are renewed in our joy and hope at the promise of our Lord's return, when He shall wipe every tear from our eyes, and make all things new.

The liturgical season of Advent is divided into four Sundays. The First Sunday in Advent announces Advent's principal theme -- the coming of the Lord again in glory. We await the coming of the Lord who is our salvation. Penitence and prayer are the elements of our preparation. The Second Sunday in Advent (also known as 'Scripture Sunday') emphasizes both the hope of our salvation and the revelation of God in Holy Scripture. The Third Sunday in Advent ('Gaudete' or 'Rose' Sunday) calls to mind the proclamation of John the Baptist to repent of our sins and to prepare the way of the Lord in our lives. In the face of His coming in judgement, both final and ever-present, 'the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God' prepare His way by preparing His people. With the Third Sunday, we conclude our preparation for Christ's coming *in judgement* and turn once again to the joyful remembrance of our Lord's first coming *in humility* -- as the holy Child of Bethlehem. The preparation for Christ's coming in humility is also the preparation for His coming in judgement. On the Fourth Sunday in Advent all the themes of Advent converge and climax: 'Raise up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy power and come among us'. All is in readiness. We wait in silence and in joyous anticipation for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who is our Lord and our Redeemer.



INTO THE DARK WITH GOD
A Christmas Meditation on the Incarnation
By Hans Urs von Balthasar

ON Christmas night the shepherds are addressed by an angel who shines upon them with the blinding glory of God, and they are very much afraid. The tremendous, unearthly radiance shows that the angel is a messenger of heaven and clothes him with an incontrovertible authority. With this authority he commands them not to be afraid but to embrace the great joy he is announcing to them. And while the angel is speaking thus to these poor frightened people, he is joined by a vast number of others, who unite in a "Gloria" praising God in heaven's heights and announcing the peace of God's goodwill to men on earth. Then, we read, "the angels went away from them into heaven." In all probability the singing was very beautiful and the shepherds were glad to listen; doubtless they were sorry when the concert was over and the performers disappeared behind heaven's curtain. Probably, however, they were secretly a little relieved when the unwonted light of divine glory and the unwonted sound of heavenly music came to an end, and they found themselves once more in their familiar earthly darkness. They probably felt like shabby beggars who had suddenly been set in a king's audience chamber among courtiers dressed in magnificent robes and were glad to slip away unnoticed and take to their heels.

But the strange thing is that the intimidating glory of the heavenly realm, which has now vanished, has left behind a human glow of joy in their souls, a light of joyous expectation, reinforcing the heavenward-pointing angel's word and causing them to set out for Bethlehem. Now they can turn their backs on the whole epiphany of the heavenly glory for it was only a starting point, an initial spark, a stimulus leading to what was really intended; all that remains of it is the tiny seed of the word that has been implanted in their hearts and that now starts to grow in the form of expectation, curiosity and hope: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us." They want to see the word that has taken place. Not the angel's word with its heavenly radiance: that has already become unimportant. They want to see the content of the angel's word, that is, the Child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. They want to see the word that has "happened", the word that has taken place, the word that is not only something uttered but something done, something that can not only be heard but also seen.

Thus the word that the shepherds want to see is not the angel's word. This was only the proclamation (the kerygma, as people say nowadays); it was only a pointer. The angels,

with their heavenly authority, disappear: they belong to the heavenly realm; all that remains is a pointer to a word that has been done. By God, of course. Just as it is God who made it known to them through the angels.

So they set off, heaven behind them, and the earthly sign before them. But, Lord, what a sign! Not even the Child, but a child. Some child or other. No special child. Not a child radiating a light of glory, as the religious painters depicted, but on the contrary: a child that looks as 'inglorious as possible. Wrapped in swaddling clothes. So that it cannot move. It lies there, imprisoned, as it were, in the clothes in which it has been wrapped through the solicitude of others. There is nothing elevating about the manger in which it lies, either, nothing even remotely corresponding to the heavenly glory of the singing angels. There is practically nothing even half worth seeing; the destination of the shepherds' nightly journey is the most ordinary scene. Indeed, in its poverty it is decidedly disappointing. It is something entirely human and ordinary, something quite profane, in no way distinguished except for the fact that this is the promised sign, and it fits.

The shepherds believe the word. The word sends them from heaven and to earth, and as they proceed along this path, from light to darkness, from the extraordinary to the ordinary, from the solitary experience of God to the realm of ordinary human intercourse, from the splendor above to the poverty below, they are given the confirmation they need: the sign fits. Only now does their fearful joy under heaven's radiance turn into a completely uninhibited, human and Christian joy. Because it fits. And why does it fit? Because the Lord, the High God, has taken the same path as they have: he has left his glory behind him and gone into the dark world, into the child's apparent insignificance, into the unfreedom of human restrictions and bonds, into the poverty of the crib. This is the Word in action, and as yet the shepherds do not know, no one knows, how far down into the darkness this Word-in-action will lead. At all events it will descend much deeper than anyone else into what is worldly, apparently insignificant and profane; into what is bound, poor and powerless; so much so that we shall not be able to follow the last stage of his path. A heavy stone will block the way, preventing the others from approaching, while, in night, in ultimate loneliness and forsakenness, he descends to his dead human brothers.

It is true, therefore: in order that he shall find God, the Christian is placed on the streets of the world, sent to his manacled and poor brethren, to all who suffer, hunger and thirst; to all who are naked, sick and in prison. From henceforth this is his place; he must identify with them all. This is the great joy that is proclaimed to him today, for it is the same way that God sent a Savior to us. We ourselves may be poor and in

bondage too, in need of liberation; yet at the same time all of us who have been given a share in the joy of deliverance are sent to be companions of those who are poor and in bondage.

But who will step out along this road that leads from God's glory to the figure of the poor Child lying in the manger? Not the person who is taking a walk for his own pleasure. He will walk along other paths that are more likely to run in the opposite direction, paths that lead from the misery of his own existence toward some imaginary or dreamed-up attempt at a heaven, whether of a brief pleasure or of a long oblivion. The only one to journey from heaven, through the world, to the hell of the lost, is he who is aware, deep in his heart, of a mission to do so; such a one obeys a call that is stronger than his own comfort and his resistance. This is a call that has complete power and authority over my life; I submit to it because it comes from a higher plane than my entire existence. It is an appeal to my heart, demanding the investment of my total self; its hidden, magisterial radiance obliges me, willy-nilly, to submit. I may not know who it is that so takes me into his service. But one thing I do know: if I stay locked within myself, if I seek myself, I shall not find the peace that is promised to the man on whom God's favor rests. I must go. I must enter the service of the poor and imprisoned. I must lose my soul if I am to regain it, for so long as I hold onto it, I shall lose it. This implacable, silent word (which yet is so unmistakable) burns in my heart and will not leave me in peace.

In other lands there are millions who are starving, who work themselves to death for a derisory day's wage, heartlessly exploited like cattle. There too are the slaughtered peoples whose wars cannot end because certain interests (which are not theirs) are tied up with the continuance of their misery. And I know that all my talk about progress and mankind's liberation will be dismissed with laughter and mockery by all the realistic forecasters of mankind's next few decades. Indeed, I only need to open my eyes and ears, and I shall hear the cry of those unjustly oppressed growing louder every day, along with the clamor of those who are resolved to gain power at any price, through hatred and annihilation. These are the superpowers of darkness; in the face of them all our courage drains away, and we lose all belief in the mission that resides in our hearts, that mission that was once so bright, joyous and peace bringing; we lose all hope of really finding the poor Child wrapped in swaddling clothes. What can my pitiful mission achieve, this drop of water in the white-hot furnace? What is the point of my efforts, my dedication, my sacrifice, my pleading to God for a world that is resolved to perish?

"Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you Good News of a great joy... This day is born the Savior", that is, he who, as Son of God and Son of the Father, has traveled (in obedience to the Father) the path that leads away from the Father and into the darkness of the world. Behind him, omnipotence and freedom; before, powerlessness, bonds and obedience. Behind him the comprehensive divine vision; before him the prospect of the meaninglessness of death on the Cross between two criminals, Behind him the bliss of life with the Father; before him, grievous solidarity with all who do not know the Father, do not want to know him and deny his existence. Rejoice then, for God himself has passed this way! The Son took with him the awareness of doing the Father's will. He took with him the unceasing prayer that the Father's will would be done on the dark earth as in the brightness of heaven. He took with him his rejoicing that the Father had hidden these things from the wise and revealed them to babes, to the simple and the poor. "I am the way", and this way is "the truth" for you; along this way you will find "the life". Along "the way" that I am you will learn to lose your life in order to find it; you will learn to grow beyond yourselves and your insincerity into a truth that is greater than you are. From a worldly point of view everything may seem very dark; your dedication may seem unproductive and a failure. But do not be afraid: you are on God's path. "Let not your hearts be troubled: believe in God; believe also in me." I am walking on ahead of you and blazing the trail of Christian love for you. It leads to your most inaccessible brother, the person most forsaken by God. But it is the path of divine love itself. You are on the right path. All who deny themselves in order to carry out love's commission are on the right path.

Miracles happen along this path. Apparently insignificant miracles, noticed by hardly anyone. The very finding of a Child wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger is this not a miracle in itself? Then there is the miracle when a particular mission, hidden in a person's heart, really reaches its goal, bringing God's peace and joy where there were nothing but despair and resignation; when someone succeeds in striking a tiny light in the midst of an overpowering darkness. When joy irradiates a heart that no longer dared to believe in it. Now and again we ourselves are assured that the angel's word we are trying to obey will bring us to the place where God's Word and Son is already made man. We are assured that, in spite of all the noise and nonsense, today, December 25, is Christmas just as truly as two millennia ago. Once and for all God has started out on his journey toward us, and nothing, till the world's end, will stop him from coming to us and abiding in us.



A CHRISTMAS QUIZ

- Joseph was originally from... (Luke 2:3)
 - Bethlehem
 - Nazareth
 - Hebron
 - Jerusalem
 - None of the above
- A manger is a...
 - Stable for domestic animals
 - Wooden hay storage bin
 - Feeding trough
 - Barn
- Which animals does the Bible say were present at Jesus' birth?
 - Cows, sheep, goats
 - Cows, donkeys, goats
 - Sheep and goats only
 - Miscellaneous barnyard animals
 - None of the above
- Who saw the star in the east?
 - Shepherds
 - Mary and Joseph
 - Three kings
 - Both A and C
 - None of the above
- How many angels spoke to the shepherds? (Luke 2:10)
 - One
 - Three
 - Multitude
 - None of the above
- What did the angels say / sing? (Luke 2:14)
 - "Glory to God in the highest, etc."
 - "Alleluia"
 - "Unto us a child is born"
 - "Joy the world, the Lord is come"
 - "Glory to the newborn King"
- What is a heavenly host?
 - The angel at the gate of heaven
 - The angel who serves refreshments
 - An angel choir
 - An angel army
 - None of the above
- What is frankincense?
 - A precious metal
 - A precious fabric
 - A precious perfume
 - None of the above
- In Matthew, what does "wise men" or "Magi" refer to?
 - Men of the educated class
 - Eastern kings
 - Men who studied the stars
 - Sages
- What is myrrh?
 - Middle Eastern money
 - A drink
 - An easily shaped metal
 - A spice used for burying people
 - None of the above
- How many wise men came to see Jesus?
 - 3
 - 6
 - 9
 - 12
 - We don't know.
- Where did the wise men find Jesus? (Matthew 2:11)
 - In a manger
 - In a stable
 - In Nazareth
 - In Saudi Arabia
 - In a house
 - None of the above
- When the wise men found Jesus he was... (Matthew 2:11)
 - A babe wrapped in swaddling clothes
 - A young child
 - A boy in the temple
 - A grown man
- The "star in the east" that the wise men followed... (Matthew 2:9)
 - Stayed in the same place their entire journey
 - Disappeared and reappeared
 - Moved ahead of them and stopped over the place where Jesus was
 - Was just a mirage
 - None of the above
- The wise men stopped in Jerusalem... (Matthew 2:2)
 - To inform Herod about Jesus
 - To find out where Jesus was
 - To ask about the star
 - To buy presents
 - None of the above
- Where do we find the Christmas story?
 - Matthew
 - Mark
 - Luke
 - John
 - All of the above
 - Only A and B
 - Only A and C
 - Only A, B and C
- Who told Mary and Joseph go to Bethlehem? (Luke 2:1-5)
 - The angel chorus
 - Mary's mother
 - Herod
 - The shepherds
 - Caesar Augustus

~ ~ ~ PARISH CALENDAR ~ ~ ~

DECEMBER 2 **FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT**
MATTINS 9:15 AM
SUNG EUCHARIST 10:00 AM

DECEMBER 6 **FEAST OF SAINT NICHOLAS ~ MASS 9:30 AM**

DECEMBER 8 **CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**
'ADVENT QUIET DAY'
MATTINS 9:15 AM; MASS 9:30 AM; EVENSONG 3:00 PM

DECEMBER 9 **SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT**
'SCRIPTURE SUNDAY'
MATTINS 9:15 AM
SUNG EUCHARIST 10:00 AM

DECEMBER 16 **THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT**
'GAUDETE (ROSE) SUNDAY'
MATTINS 9:15 AM
SUNG EUCHARIST 10:00 AM

DECEMBER 20 **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 7:00 PM**

DECEMBER 21 **SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE**
MASS 9:30 AM

DECEMBER 23 **FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT**
MATTINS 9:15 AM
SUNG EUCHARIST 10:00 AM
LESSONS & CAROLS OF CHRISTMAS 5:00 PM

DECEMBER 24 **CHRISTMAS EVE MASS ~ 9:00 PM**

DECEMBER 25 **CHRISTMAS DAY MASS 10:00 AM**

DECEMBER 26 **FEAST OF SAINT STEPHEN ~ 9:30 AM**

DECEMBER 27 **FEAST OF SAINT JOHN ~ 9:30 AM**

DECEMBER 28 **THE HOLY INNOCENTS ~ 9:30 AM**

DECEMBER 30 **SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY**
MATTINS 9:15 AM
SUNG EUCHARIST 10:00 AM
PARISH CHRISTMAS DINNER 11:30 AM

JANUARY 1 **OCTAVE DAY OF CHRISTMAS ~ MASS 10:00 AM**