

~ The Epistle ~

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ADVENT ~ CHRISTMAS 2017

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST
THE ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF CANADA • TRADITIONAL ANGLICAN COMMUNION
990 FALMOUTH ROAD, VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA V8X 3A3

THE MOST REVEREND SHANE B. JANZEN, ARCHBISHOP AND RECTOR



"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

AS the Church enters the liturgical season of Advent it won't have passed your notice that many of the stores and commercial advertisers seem to have been weeks ahead of us. Before the task of raking our autumn leaves was even finished shopping centres began playing Christmas music. The decorations are up and the mood has been set to have us focus on this most sentimental of holidays, not for any religious purpose, but to empty our bank accounts as we shop our way towards December 25th.

Christmas can be for many a nostalgic time of year, filled with warmth and peace, family and friends. But it can also be for some a time of struggle, sadness, even isolation. On a positive note, many in the secular world do turn their thoughts at this time of the year toward those less fortunate. Around the world we see the challenges of homelessness, refugees, economic want, violence and terrorism. It is into this very world that our Lord Jesus Christ entered; and it is His Church that has been given the mission of offering hope and salvation in His Name. A mission which has both a spiritual and a material component.

On the material level, we offer our time and treasure to assist others in need, locally and internationally. Through the missionary arm of the International Anglican Fellowship we provide support for churches, parishes and missions across the Traditional Anglican Communion. Similarly, locally we here at the Cathedral Church of Saint John the Evangelist offer a place of worship and fellowship, as well as

assistance to those struggling with emotional and financial difficulties – a mission which goes beyond the Seasons of Advent and Christmas.

As Christians we know too that the holy Season of Advent has a spiritual dimension, a spiritual importance. We begin the season not with "Joy to the World", but rather "O Come, O Come Emmanuel". Advent means "the coming", or "the arrival". In Advent we anticipate and prepare for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in time and eternity. Advent involves the anticipation of both a past and a future event. The Latin word *adventus* from which we get the name of the Season means "the coming", but itself is a translation of the Greek word *Parousia*, which refers to the Second Coming of Christ. Thus Advent includes a time of preparation for the coming of the Christ Child in time, and penitential preparation for the return of our Lord at the end of time, when He will come to judge the living and the dead.

All of the Scripture lessons chosen for the Season of Advent shout with urgency: prepare yourselves! Focus on what is important. By examination of conscience, by prayer, and meditation, by taking our part in the corporate worship of the Church, and in acts of Christian charity and good will, we are able focus on what truly matters. We blend our preparations of home and hearth with those of spirit and soul. We show forth the faith that underlies our good works. In a world searching for meaning and truth, the Season of Advent properly celebrated can offer a powerful witness of the saving love of the Redeemer Jesus Christ.

I pray each of you will use this holy Season as a time of witness and preparation for the coming in time and eternity of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. A blessed, prayerful and joyous Advent to you all!

Archbishop Shane B. Janzen

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT

Archbishop Shane B. Janzen

TIMES of transition provide us opportunities for growth and occasions for renewal. And the transition from the Season of Trinitytide to that of Advent recalls us to the very nature of our spiritual beginnings and reminds us of our final end. But most significantly the Collect and Lessons for the Sunday Next Before Advent recall us to the Revelation of God, in Holy Scripture and in the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ. It is for each of us a turning point – God’s turning towards us, and our turning to Him. Because of this turning – He to us and we to Him – we are able to make the transition from the old to the new, from what was to what will be; and so we begin again, even as the Church ends one year of grace to begin another.

The Lesson from the Prophet Jeremiah speaks to us of more than just historical events, there is a profoundly spiritual principle at work here, namely that of God’s righteousness being the only true basis for our security and well-being in the here and now, and in the yet to be. The Lesson speaks of God raising unto David “a righteous Branch,” a King who will reign and prosper. It is a prophecy, of course, about the Messiah, and the coming of the Anointed One, the Christ – a prophecy fulfilled in the advent of Jesus and in the inauguration of a new and everlasting kingdom that is first and foremost spiritual not political, universal not geographical, eternal not temporal, one where God dwells with His people, and we with Him.

Times of transition can be stressful but also positive. Transitions can help us to prioritize things in our life, and cause us to take stock of who we are and where we are going. For all the progress we may have made in the past year, in whatever way we may measure progress, there is also the recognition that perhaps not everything is quite right. There may be a realization that somehow, in some way, in some parts of our life, we turned away from God. Yet, even in this, Jeremiah proclaims to us God’s saving love. We are awakened to a desire for something more, something better. He is calling us out of our own little world, our own personal lives, to a better world, a better life, a better kingdom, where Christ is King, and God is “all in all.” It is a turning from the sovereignty of self to the sovereignty of God.

The ideas of turning and dwelling, of being with God in Christ, are focused and highlighted in our Gospel reading from Saint John. In true prophetic fashion, another John – John the Baptist – points to Jesus and proclaims: “Behold the Lamb of God.” This proclamation results in two of John the Baptist’s disciples moving, transitioning, toward Jesus. Then comes the powerful words which frame this Sunday’s message: “Then Jesus turned.”

Jesus turns to address John the Baptist’s two disciples face to face, to engage them in dialogue. And in this Gospel narrative, Jesus also turns to us, bringing us into the moment – a powerful moment, a turning moment. Jesus turns to speak to each of us personally, intimately, at the very heart and core of our being. He speaks to us of who we are and where we are going; of His will and purpose in our lives; and of our place in His eternal Kingdom.

Jesus asks: “What do you seek?” What do you desire? Where do you want to go in your life? It is the first direct question of Jesus in John’s Gospel. Then John the Baptist’s disciples respond with what might at first seem to be a rather odd question, “Where do you dwell?” This leads to Jesus’ first direct reply, His invitation to them and to each of one of us: “Come and see.” It sets in motion the beginnings of Christian discipleship, those who are brought to Christ and who follow Him in faith. All because Jesus turned, and asked the question: “What are you seeking?”

This radical profound message reminds us that we cannot of ourselves turn to God, as if God were simply something of our own devising, made in our own image. No, God turns to us. God first reveals Himself to us and redeems us from ourselves. He turns to us so that we can turn to Him, in Whom we find life and salvation, hope and glory, grace and mercy, love and forgiveness. The sovereignty of God over self.

Jesus continues to turn towards us, in all the moments of our life. He turns to us in His Word, in His Sacraments, in His abiding Presence. And through His life and passion, His death and Resurrection, He has overcome all that stands between us and God in our turning away from self and our turning toward Him. This turning marks a radical new start. Jesus’ turning to us signals the hope of our turning, and returning, to Him. Jesus invitation to each of us is renewed today in our own inquiry of Him: “Where do you dwell?” To which we hear: “Come and see.”

The transition of the old year to the new on this Sunday Next Before Advent marks the renewing of our spiritual lives with God in Christ; and of our dwelling with Christ in His eternal kingship. Endings and beginnings, death and resurrection, are now become the dynamic pattern of our lives as followers of Christ, dying unto self in order to live for God and for one another. Our lives are not empty, not without meaning or purpose, for we find ourselves in God’s finding us.

We have been found in Christ and in His righteousness because He first turned and found us. Let us then call out to others the joyful proclamation, “We have found the Saviour”, and invite them to “Come and see Jesus.”

ADVENT: THY KINGDOM COME

Advent is not only the Season when we celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in time but also the season when we anticipate and pray for His Coming again in glory. Our Lord Jesus Christ said that He would come again at the end of time to judge both the living and the dead. However, Jesus also told His followers that the Kingdom of God was not something external, something imposed by God through arbitrary might; but was within. Christ said that the rule of God, the observance of His spiritual laws, the moral life, dwells in those who seek for His kingdom and righteousness. As Christians we will only help to bring about the Kingdom of God in our midst if we first look to our own selves, and our own lives. "For the time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God?" *1 Peter 4: 17*

The establishment of God's reign on earth begins with the establishment of His reign and rule in our own hearts and minds and bodies. The Kingdom of God and of His Christ begins here, now, with us -- not in some distant tomorrow, nor in some place or person beyond ourselves. Our lives, our choices, our decisions, our thoughts and actions, can either help to bring about the Kingdom of God or set it back beyond our grasp.

The great Church Father, Origen, in his treatise *On Prayer* wrote: "Note this about the kingdom of God. There is no partnership between justice and iniquity, no compromise between light and darkness, no commerce between Christ and Satan. The kingdom of God cannot co-exist with the reign of sin. Therefore, if we wish God to reign in us, in no way should sin reign in our mortal body. Rather we should put to death what is base in us and bear fruit in the Spirit. There should be in us a kind of spiritual paradise where God may walk and be our sole rule with His Christ. In us the Lord will sit at the right hand of that spiritual power which we wish to receive. And He will sit there until all the enemies which rage within us become His footstool, and every principality, power and authority in us is cast out."

All of this can come about in each one of us only if we desire to live as children of God, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, ambassadors for Christ.

Christ came at His first Advent to save a sinful, anxious world. He called the people of God to repent and to turn again that their lives might be focused upon God and His righteousness. This is the Season for each of us to turn again from old habits and old sins, to draw closer to God and to examine where God rules in our life and where our own self-will still holds sway.

As we prepare our homes and our hearths for the coming season of joy; let us also take the time to prepare our hearts and souls that they may be found meet for the coming of the King in glory. Advent is the perfect time to begin anew the progress of the Kingdom within us. Each of us in the days leading up to Christmas, should try to spend time in quiet prayer with God, to spend time reading His holy Word, to make our confession of sin before God, to take advantage of the Sacraments of healing and penance offered through the Church, and to make new our life in Christ. Then the heralding of Advent and the Coming of the Christ will not only be a Season but a living abiding witness of faith in the One who came to us as the Babe of Bethlehem and will come again as the King of glory!

Almighty God,
Give us grace to cast away
the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ
came to us in great humility;
That on the last day,
when he shall come again
in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who lives and reigns with
you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

O HOLY NIGHT!
A Reflection on Christmas Night

EACH year at this time, Christians, as well as men and women of good will throughout the world, pause to reflect upon that Holy Night, when so many centuries ago lonely shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks by night, looked up and beheld the Christmas Star - 'arise, shine, for thy light has come'. The angel appeared unto them -- they were frightened by all they saw and heard -- yet in the dark and cold of that night the Word had leaped down from heaven and the Saviour was born into the world -- His name: JESUS -- Emmanuel -- God-with-us.

The centuries which have come and gone may have dulled the world's sense of its wonder, but not for us -- not for all those who still look with the eyes of a child at the wonder of that Holy night; who ponder anew the mystery of the Incarnation -- God coming among us as one of us. A mortal body, a human soul, became the habitation of God -- the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Perfect God, perfect Man; One however, not by conversion of Godhead into flesh, but by taking of Manhood into God -- begotten not made -- God-with-us.

From the far reaches of time back to the Eternal Word, the divine plan of God was set in motion -- that in the fullness of time He would come to be our Saviour. He would make Himself known to those who He created in His own image and likeness. He who is Love took the one way in which to reveal His love most perfectly: He became one of us. Through the child of Bethlehem and in the life and ministry of the Man who would walk the way of Calvary, God spoke to us with human lips, and looked on us with human eyes. He touched the life of man and woman as only the Son of God could do. He came among us in the frail and lowly child of Bethlehem, born in a manger in an obscure village in the outer edges of a once mighty empire. A son of Adam, but Son of God too, with a capacity for faith and eternal things, bearing within Himself an unquenchable spark of the divine -- the very revelation of God.

Huxley wrote, "The highest altar man can raise is to the unknown and unknowable God." But if you have seen Jesus Christ, you cannot say that, for His birth, His life and passion, and victory over sin and death, these reveal God to man. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." No longer can we, who know the story of that holy night -- we who know the child cradled in the arms of Mary and watched over by Joseph and the shepherds -- no longer can we raise an altar 'to an unknown god'. God is with us, and therefore known to us. With the angelic host we join in the joyful proclamation of that night: *'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men'*.

The mystery of the Incarnation unfolds for us as the majesty of that night unfolded for those who followed the Star to Bethlehem. God is with us to seek and to save. Salvation in its fullness -- forgiveness, healing, comfort, moral strength -- cannot be given from afar or in some impersonal fashion. Sin is not forgiven by the stroke of a pen, and pain is not removed from the heart by a mere word of sympathy from one who knows nothing of its anguish. Therefore God to be our Saviour humbled Himself and entered into our life, faced our temptations, carried our sorrows, and bore our sins on the Cross, that we might know the length and breadth His love would go for our redemption. He came to show us the Way -- He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life -- and to reveal the eternal plan of God for our salvation.

All of this in the little child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger that long, dark night so many centuries ago. A night in which a young mother and her husband had come because the decree of Caesar Augustus had compelled them to make the journey. They were poor, and when they came to the town, no one took any notice of their coming and no one helped them to find a place in which to stay. Joseph and Mary came wearily to the end of their long road yet found no room in the village inn, and nothing to do but to find a corner in a stable where Mary could come to rest. There amidst the simple creatures of God, she gave birth to the Creator of all, the Son of God.

These travellers from Nazareth had come late, the inn was crowded; through no hostile act or deliberate turning away, the holy family found no room in which to lay their heads, it was as simple as that. Just so casually, through the drift of time and circumstances, and through no any particular hostile will or deliberate act, many men and women too exclude Jesus from the inn of their hearts. We, like them, may have filled all the space we have with other guests. We do not mean to shut God out, but our thoughts and feelings are so occupied with other matters that God, and prayer, and worship cannot find a place. In this world with its noisy and demanding clamour the crowd of common thoughts and common interests may have poured in upon us and taken possession of our time and our attention, and when Christ comes with His infinite gift of love for the enrichment of our souls, for the fulfilling of our lives, there is no room for Him.

Jesus comes to find room in your heart this holy Season. As in ages past, He comes not to mighty Caesar upon his throne; not to chief priests and scribes and the great ones of the world -- no, but to shepherds abiding in the field, to the humble, to the lowly, to expectant hearts,...to you!

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 to go to Bethlehem? (Luke 2:1-5)
 - The angel chorus
 - Mary's mother
 - Herod
 - The shepherds

~ ~ ~ CATHEDRAL CALENDAR ~ ~ ~

DECEMBER 3	FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT MATTINS 9:15 AM SUNG MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 7	ADVENT FERIA: MASS 10:00 AM STUDY GROUP 10:45 AM
DECEMBER 8	CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 9	<u>ADVENT QUIET DAY: 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM</u>
DECEMBER 10	SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT MATTINS 9:15 AM SUNG MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 14	ADVENT FERIA: MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 17	THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT MATTINS 9:15 AM SUNG MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 20	PARISH COUNCIL MEETING 7:00 PM
DECEMBER 21	SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 24	FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT MATTINS 9:15 AM SUNG MASS 10:00 AM
CHRISTMAS EVE	FIRST MASS OF CHRISTMAS ~ 8:00 PM
DECEMBER 25	CHRISTMAS DAY MATTINS 9:15 AM THE CHRISTMASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 26	SAINT STEPHEN THE PROTO-MARTYR MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 27	SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 28	THE HOLY INNOCENTS MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 31	SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY MATTINS 9:15 AM SUNG MASS 10:00 AM <u>PARISH CHRISTMAS DINNER 11:30 AM</u>
JANUARY 7	THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD MATTINS 9:15 AM HIGH MASS 10:00 AM