

~ The Epistle ~

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NEWSLETTER OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST
ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF CANADA • TRADITIONAL ANGLICAN COMMUNION
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THE MOST REVEREND SHANE B. JANZEN, ARCHBISHOP & RECTOR



"O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

ADVENT heralds the coming of Christ in time and eternity. The Church year begins anew. The turning of the Season from green to purple vestments, from autumn leaves to winter cold, with the lighting of the Advent candles upon a wreath of green, call us to the approach of Christmas, and to the glorious celebration of the coming of Christ in the Babe of Bethlehem. Advent is a joyous season of preparation, a time to prepare our hearts and our homes for the coming of the Redeemer King.

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 reminded 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 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."

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.

At the request of some in our Cathedral Parish, I have included three of my recent sermons in this Advent edition of *The Epistle*. May the Holy Spirit continue to inspire and enlighten us as we seek to live out our Christian faith amidst a world of challenge, questioning, and even despair.

The Season of Advent is the time to begin anew the progress of the Kingdom within us. A time to reach out to others with the message of hope, love and faith in Jesus Christ. Then the heralding of Advent and the Coming of Christ will be 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!

May I pray each of you, your family and friends, a blessed Advent and very joyous, holy Christmas!

Archbishop Shane B. Janzen

"DOES GOD EXIST?"

ALMOST since the time of creation, humans have wondered and asked the question: "Is there a God?" and, if so, "Who or what is God?" It is, perhaps, the hardest question in the world. Christian tradition says that Thomas Aquinas at the age of four asked his mother that question, "Who is God?" Because his mother was unable to answer his question satisfactorily, Aquinas spent his life searching for the answer and seeking to understand the nature of God. The results of his exploration and writings have served the Church ever since -- and Saint Thomas Aquinas is recognized as one of the great theologians of the Christian Church.

"I believe in God..." The Creed of the Church begins where all reality begins -- with God. Beginning with God means that we think not just theistically but also theocentrically. This is an incredibly important distinction. Many people in our world are theistic but not theocentric, because their God, their *theos*, is something less than the absolute centre and point of all reality and of all life. For them, God -- 'he, she or it' -- is a god out there (deism) or a god down here (naturalism); or a god who is an ingredient in reality (paganism); or a god in which we are the ingredients (pantheism); or a god of the gaps, who comes in only to explain whatever we can't understand, or to fix whatever has gone wrong. In short, a god but not The God.

But the Faith of the Church does answer the question: "Who and what is God?" God is Creator; God is Being; God is the Absolute; Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end; the point and pinnacle of all reality; God is the Supreme Being -- "that which none greater may be thought". The First Cause, the Prime Mover, the Intelligent Designer, the Author of the laws of the universe, Life and Being.

But God is also personal. God has personhood. God is not an 'it' or an object; God's has a Name: "I AM" -- the absolute subject. God is not our object, nor our creation, nor an image of ourselves -- we are His. He is the I and we are His thou.

The practical difference all of this makes is a total one: Because God is God, we live relative to Him, immersed in the God relationship, surrounded and confronted by God through all things. Everything in the universe is between God and us. We are characters in His unfolding story of salvation, not He in ours. As the ancients knew and Saint Paul quotes: "In Him we live and move and have our being." (*Acts 17:28*)

Early man, however, did not know this. They were not theocentric but cosmocentric -- their gods, their belief system, found its place in the cosmos, the ordered and fated whole that was

their understanding of the universe. Some today share in this same understanding of God. In much the same way, many today do not know the theocentric God. For the modern mind, the modern understanding of God, of religion, of faith, is anthropocentric. God and the cosmos, and faith are thought of solely in relation to human life, human reasoning, human understanding, and finite existence.

But if God is but an anthropomorphic creation, an 'opiate' of the people (as Karl Marx taught), and not the God revealed in creation, Scripture, and reason, then our lives, with all the darkness and sham and tragedy of our world, are surrounded by emptiness. There is no divine plan, no eternal life, no end goal, no meaning or purpose -- just this life, this earth, the here and now, followed by death and nothingness. The nihilism of Neichze.

But God is not anthropomorphic nor a mere reflection of the cosmos. He is the God of light and goodness; the God of truth, beauty and holiness; the God who is Life and Love. He is the God of creation, of all time and space, yet outside of time and space. Lady Julian of Norwich, one of the great English Christian mystics, in a divine vision, saw the whole universe as a tiny hazelnut held in the palm of God's hand. We read in Isaiah 9:12, "and His hand is stretched out still." Though mysterious and beyond the comprehension of mortal man, God is. We know Him because He has willed to reveal Himself to us, not only through His creation but directly, personally, incarnationally.

The Creed mentions three of the most important things we know about God through His revelation: That God is One in Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That God in this Trinity is Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. And that God became Incarnate.

Creation is the distinctive act of God. All the gods in mythology form or shape an already-existing world. All the scientific theories of the origins of the universe stop at the point of *ex nihilo* -- creation from nothing. Only the God of revelation creates the very existence of the universe out of nothing. For God is the Source of Being. Creation forms the essential dividing line between God and everything else. God exists eternally, without beginning or end. The material existence of the universe has both a beginning and an end. God alone is a non-dependent being. The universe, creation, humanity are all dependent beings for they are not and cannot be self-realized. The best science can offer is a 'spontaneous combustion' -- which pre-supposes elements capable of combustion.

What difference does the Judeo-Christian doctrine of creation make? First, it makes a difference to our knowledge of God. We know God is generous with the gift of life, omnipotent

in being able to create being out of nothing, and that He is creative as only the Divine Artist could be -- one has but to look upon the beauty of creation, peer into the cosmos, to know the artistic grandeur of God.

Albert Einstein wrote: "I want to know how God created this world. I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this or that element. I want to know His thoughts. The rest are detail."

Secondly, the doctrine of creation makes a difference to our knowledge of the universe. We know the world, and the universe in which it is a part, are real not an illusion, as some eastern religions teach. And we know too that the universe is ordered, designed, rational, logical. There is not, and cannot be, a contradiction between God and science -- only a misinterpretation limited by our own finite understanding.

Thirdly, it makes a difference to our knowledge of ourselves. We know we are precious because we are the handiwork of God, created in His image and likeness. We know too that God is the Author of life, and that, therefore, all life is sacred.

Having said all of this, there remains the fundamental truth that God is mystery. And while God may be seen in His creation, known through His Word, loved through His abiding presence, there is still the mystery of faith. Faith which is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." (*Hebrews 11:1*)

Earlier last week, I had a conversation with a man who, with his obvious knowledge of science and the cosmos, said to me: "How could a God who created the universe with its billions and billions of solar systems, stars, galaxies and planets, all perfectly alienated with physical laws and logic, possibly care about human beings or be concerned about our tiny unimportant lives?" The Psalmist asked this very same question some three thousand years ago: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (*Ps. 8:4*)

And the answer is: Because God does. So much so that His Son came to redeem a lost people, to restore a fallen world, to bring hope and love where doubt and hatred had taken hold. To give meaning and purpose in the place of nihilism. To offer life in the place of death.

The evidence for which is the faith, and lives of faith, of billions of human beings through the millennia, who believed and continue to believe in the one true God; and who seek to know Him better.

Not a human construct but a Divine revelation.

*Sermon on Trinity XXI – 2018
by Archbishop Shane B. Janzen*

"THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED"

WHAT is more important for us today is the 'faith once delivered to the saints'. As the Prayer Book Collect reminds us, God has built His Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ being the head corner-stone. Which means that the doctrine, moral teachings, order and discipline of the Church, are built upon the revelation of Jesus Christ and the teaching of His Apostle. Jesus Christ, who is 'the same yesterday, today, and forever'.

The 'faith once delivered to the saints' is revealed and preserved in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments; and that faith has been handed down to each generation through the living witness of the Church. It is the responsibility of the bishops, as successors to the Apostles, to maintain and teach this Faith 'once delivered to the saints' without addition or substitution or diminishment. A responsibility I take very seriously in my ministry and life.

There is an ancient adage which states: 'The Church to teach, the Bible to prove'. This adage sums up the role and place of Sacred Scripture and the teaching authority of the Church in the transmission of the Christian Faith.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the revealed Word of God. By which we mean that the books of the Bible are inspired by God and not simply the product of ordinary human creativity and effort. Because the Scriptures are inspired of God, the Bible has an authority equaled by no other source, religious or secular. It is, in the theological sense, "the norm which is the standard for all other norms". It flows from this that as the Scriptures are of God, this divine revelation cannot be in error, for God is the author of truth, 'with Whom there is neither variableness nor shadow of turning'. Thus we believe that the Bible teaches firmly, faithfully, and unerringly, the truth which God has revealed for the sake of our life here and for our eternal salvation.

Even as the Church and her scholars continue to understand the meaning of God's holy word in the light of critical studies, we still recognize the fact that the Bible is of divine inspiration. One cannot be a Christian nor be true to the Christian faith without affirming the inspired, normative and authoritative character of Holy Scripture.

I should stress, however, that while the Scriptures are the revealed word of God, these same sacred writings do not constitute a divine textbook of science nor a sort of divine answer book for all questions of human knowledge. As one Scripture scholar put it: "The Bible tells us how to go to Heaven; not how the heavens go." This is a critical understanding in the face of Christian fundamentalism and of on-going

scientific study. There can be no contradiction between God and Science, Faith and Reason.

With our understanding of the nature and divine inspiration of Holy Scripture, we must add the importance of Tradition. Tradition, in the sense in which the Church speaks, is understood as the living and lived faith of the universal Church. In other words, the whole process by which the Church "hands on" (the literal meaning of the word 'tradition') the Faith to each generation. Tradition, in the formal sense, refers to the content of the Church's post-apostolic teaching, through which we are able to understand the teachings of Christ and apply those teachings in our lives.

This understanding of Tradition should not be confused, however, with the more common notion of tradition, which is simply customary ways of doing or expressing matters related to the faith – things such as rituals, customs, devotions, and other ceremonial observations which assist in the expression of our faith and worship. Rather, Sacred Tradition, as part of the teaching authority and responsibility of the Church, is the means by which the Church in her teaching, life and worship, perpetuates and hands on to all generations the teachings of her Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Finally, a brief word about the place of 'Reason' in the understanding of the Christian Faith. Both Scripture and Tradition are subject to the criticism of Reason. Neither Sacred Scripture nor the Tradition of the Church are to be interpreted as teaching what Reason shows to be untrue. God cannot utter contradictions, God is 'reasonable' in the true sense of that word; and if Scripture and Reason, or Tradition and Reason, contradict each other, then the divine Truth is yet to be grasped and our human conclusions must be rejected.

It is important to understand that reason is given by God to be used; and the noblest use of reason is to apply it reverently and humbly to the things of God. We must remember that we are commanded to love God with our minds, as well as our souls and bodies. The assent of faith is not blind nor arbitrary; it must be consistent with reason.

However, in the same vein we must also understand that reason alone does not lead us to God. We come to a rational understanding of a reasonable God through His divine revelation. Reason is then applied through the active presence of God in our human experience and human consciousness. In other words, the revealed Word of God coupled with the active presence of the Holy Spirit leads us to God and reveals His truth, both in our minds and in our souls.

In understanding the place of reason within faith, we must not fall into the trap of the

Enlightenment, declaring that Reason (and its great offspring, Science) is the arbiter of all truth. Human knowledge, human exploration, scientific discovery, are still subject to error and misinterpretation. We have only to consider the various scientific theories or to remember various discoveries which proved to be false. God is the author of Truth; Truth in turn is reasonable. However, humanity, even in its contemporary state of knowledge, remains fallible. A fact some today have difficulty admitting.

Thus we have the three-fold cord of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason -- by which the Church is able to transmit the Faith to each generation. Without the safeguard of Tradition and Reason in the authoritative interpretation of Scripture, the Bible, the word of God, becomes nothing more than a matter of private interpretation; which, in the words of the great Church Father, Tertullian, "leads only to a situation in which every man is for himself and the devil takes the foremost."

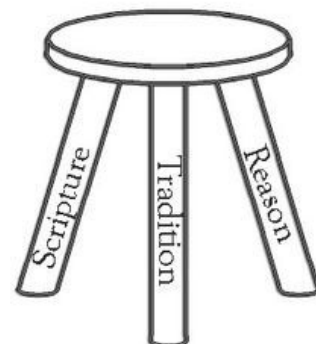
In the end, it is the responsibility of the Church to safeguard the Faith, by ensuring that that which was revealed by Christ and 'delivered to the saints' is enshrined in its completeness in Holy Scripture, and correctly interpreted in light of the Church's Apostolic Tradition.

As faith, hope, and love form the basis of our theological virtues; so Scripture, Tradition, and Reason form the unbreakable three-fold cord spoken of in *Ecclesiastes 4:12*.

This then is the Deposit of Faith: "The authentic record of God's revelation of Himself, His saving activity, and moral demands -- a revelation valid for all people and all time." (*Affirmation of Saint Louis, 1977*)

Let us pray that we will ever be faithful to God's revelation in Christ, and to the doctrine of His holy Church transmitted through the Apostles and 'delivered once, for all, to the saints'.

*Sermon on the Feast of St. Simon & St. Jude
October 28, 2018
by Archbishop Shane B. Janzen*



THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

THERE will come a day, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps next month, perhaps next year, when all our present troubles and all our present triumphs will come together; when all our cares and worries, anxieties and problems will no longer be of any importance. When the arguments of individuals, and families, and nations will cease; when sin and war and death will be no more. The Day when God will command the sound of the last trumpet, when people will look up and from the eastern sky behold Christ coming again with power and great glory. On that great and terrible Day time will cease, human history will end, a new Heaven and a new earth will emerge, and we shall behold Jesus face to face in His eternal and glorious Kingdom.

Although difficult to imagine, and even more difficult to comprehend, that Final Day will come. This earth will pass away. But that Day, that hour, will not be one of terror or despair or sorrow for those who have waited patiently for the coming of the Lord. We who have knelt in prayer, repeating the words of Jesus: "Thy kingdom come...."

The final words of the final chapter of the final verse of the Bible, are and will be the final words of all the faithful: "*Marana tha*" – "Come, O Lord." It is the prayer of every Christian; it is the prayer of every person of faith: "Come, Lord Jesus."

In the face of the challenges and struggles of life we need to be reminded of two fundamental truths: One, that God loves us so much that He has called us to be His own sons and daughters – not just 'children of God' in the generic creation sense; but His own adopted children, members of His Holy Family.

The second fundamental truth is that because we are the adopted sons and daughters of God, the world does not hold a permanent place for us, either in its designs or future. The world did not know Jesus nor accept His Way and Truth. The world does not know us nor accept the Gospel message of salvation we proclaim. We should not be surprised then if our ultimate hopes and dreams, future and life, lie elsewhere.

As sons and daughters of God through our adoption in Christ, we need to hold on to these two fundamental truths. The message from Holy Scripture is that the future belongs not to economists nor politicians nor scientists nor the marketplace but to Christ. Our years are not measured by things temporal but by things spiritual – by our faith in God, and in the future He holds out to those who believe on His Name.

Christ will come again; and His coming will be evident to all. As we read in the Gospel: "For as the lightening comes from the east and shines as

far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of man." (*Matt. 24:27*) The question remains though, the ominous question posed by Jesus to His disciples: "When the Son of Man comes again will He find faith on earth?" (*Luke 18:8*)

Whether it be at dawn or midday or 'as a thief in the night' Christ shall come. On that Day we shall behold our God in all His glory – and you and I, together with all the faithful in time and eternity, will greet Him with joy and holy fear. Not as strangers nor as passing acquaintances but as His beloved brothers and sisters.

On that final Day we will hear His voice call out to us; and unlike the myriad of voices calling out for our time and attention in this world, we will recognize His voice, the voice of our Saviour, the voice of the Good Shepherd. Then the faithful will hear and answer the call of Jesus Christ.

That Day – the Second Coming of Christ in glory – will be like no other. The joy of it will never be surpassed. But for the world, and for those who belong to it, with all its false hopes, illusions and fears, violence and deceit, that Day will not be one of joy but of one of distress and judgment.

As the Bible foretells, "then shall all the tribes of the earth see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory to judge the nations." On that Day, as on no other, parliaments and courts and presidents and kings will know the truth of God and behold His sovereignty.

Money and power, fame and fortune, will not guarantee a place in the Kingdom of God. Scripture records: "The race will not be to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill..." but all shall stand before the judgement seat of God, and each shall make answer for their life.

But for those who believed on His Name that day will be one of liberation. For Scripture also records: "He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, and from one end of heaven to the other." (*Matthew 24:31*)

We are not a people of fear but a people of faith. We live our lives not in the shadow of death but in the light of the Resurrection. Our growth in holiness and our place in the Kingdom of God is assured so long as we look to Jesus as Lord and Saviour; and stand firm in our faith that He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

May we also know the sure confidence and hope which is ours in Christ Jesus, never letting the present situation cloud our understanding of the future, nor cause us to doubt the promise of His salvation. For we are 'the children of God, members of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven'.

Even so, Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

~ ~ ~ CATHEDRAL CALENDAR ~ ~ ~

DECEMBER 2	FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT MATTINS 9:15 AM SUNG MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 6	FEAST OF SAINT NICHOLAS ~ MASS 10:00 AM STUDY GROUP 10:45 AM
DECEMBER 8	CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 9	SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT MATTINS 9:15 AM SUNG MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 13	FEAST OF SAINT LUCY ~ 10:00 AM STUDY GROUP 10:45 AM
DECEMBER 16	THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT (GAUDETE SUNDAY) MATTINS 9:15 AM SUNG MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 19	PARISH COUNCIL MEETING ~ 7:00 PM
DECEMBER 20	ADVENT EMBER DAY ~ MASS 10:00 AM STUDY GROUP 10:45 AM
DECEMBER 21	FEAST OF SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 23	FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT MATTINS 9:15 AM SUNG MASS 10:00 AM
DECEMBER 24	CHRISTMAS EVE FIRST MASS OF CHRISTMAS ~ 8:00 PM
DECEMBER 25	CHRISTMAS DAY THE CHRIST MASS ~ 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 30	SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY MATTINS 9:15 AM HIGH MASS 10:00 AM
JANUARY 6	THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD MATTINS 9:15 AM HIGH MASS 10:00 AM <u>EPIPHANY DINNER 11:45 AM (FIRESIDE GRILL)</u>

[ARCHBISHOP JANZEN IS IN ATLANTA FROM JANUARY 12 TO JANUARY 18]