



St Luke's in the City

150 years - 2009

Celebrating at the Crossroads

Advent 1

30 November 2008

CELEBRATING 4 SUNDAYS OF ADVENT

It's that time of year again. Most of us feel the pressure. So many demands. If our faith community's work, our liturgical practices and our personal prayer times are nothing other than a 'demand' upon us at this time of the year we might well be better off dropping them altogether. A more creative way than the two unhelpful extremes - moral obligation versus neglect - is needed. It can help to simply let Advent be Advent. The Advent-Christmas-Epiphany seasonal guide booklet contains information and suggestions. Watching. Waiting. Expectation. This is Advent's gift. What will assist us to increase our sense of longing rather than amplify our exhaustion, to deepen our awareness rather than accentuate our superficiality? Try substituting noise with silence, clutter with space, complexity with simplicity, more with less. When the external pressures and demands mount, more space and time for prayer is needed rather than less. What is the meaning of Incarnation for us personally, communally? We should expect that meditation upon this question involves a careful balance of reading, study, liturgy, service to others, action and contemplation. We should also expect we will not be the same persons at the Midnight Mass this year as we are today on this Advent Sunday (let alone last Christ'sMass!) For Advent is a symbol for a process of transformation in the present tense.

Watch! Something is about to happen. Something is to be revealed. Something is coming to birth. We do not yet know what it really is, only that we feel its effect. In the first instance we simply feel a disturbance, a tension, an uneasiness, an unknowing. In this state we know that something must change, but we do not know what.

Then, if we remain attentive, watching and waiting upon this unease, suddenly we become aware that there is a terrible tension building within us, within our world. Our eyes open to the reality of this and that, up and down, here and there, dark and light, good and evil. This is a painful state of affairs, and it takes effort to remain conscious and aware.

If we can remain watching and expectant, next we become aware that, just by holding the terrible tension something entirely new, which is neither this nor that, neither dark nor light, neither good nor evil begins to emerge. It is the beginning of the new creation in us.

But the new creation must be nurtured, it must be carried, held. That which is gestating requires, as it did for Mary, our pondering. Perhaps this is the most difficult stage, since we are so tempted to assume that we have found 'it', and announce it. Yet to do so is to risk premature birth or miscarriage. The watching and waiting is not yet complete.

Watching and waiting, emergence from unconsciousness into consciousness has its reward. Light. Life. Revelation. Creation. Unity of humanity and Divinity. Complete embodiment. Incarnation. Christ's Mass! That is the goal and the meaning of the Advent symbol. Why would we exchange that priceless gift for busy-ness, for mere sentimentality and nostalgia!

May you be blessed this Advent!

David