

TRINITY NEWS

Advent III Advent and the Meeting of Heaven and Earth at Bethlehem

We draw closer to Christmas in the Advent season. The first Christmas was a huge shock to those who awaited the Messiah.

Jesus saw early in his ministry that he would overcome death and return in glory. But in his first coming at Bethlehem he came as a helpless child.

Despite the appearance of the angels and the star, his mode of entry in such humble circumstances and his humiliating execution at the Cross were entirely unexpected for a Messiah. This was no majestic Messiah taking all before him and utterly changing the world by his dominant appearance and acts.

One of the entry doors to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem is so low that even a short person has to stoop to enter. A wise Jew said that one reason why we fail to see God now is because we cannot bend our eyes low enough in humility to see the Divine Presence.

The low door at the Nativity Church was probably to stop horsemen riding in to despoil the sacred place in times of attack.

We see Christ from the earth up, not from the sky down. We fashion our distinctive understanding first from the face of a child of the earth.

We treasure the few glimpses of his early life like we treasure videos now of a child's first walk. Mary and Joseph would always remember their son's first steps in the 'video' of a memory shaped by love. When Hiraya and Frederick are baptised today the event will be etched into their life-memory and the annals of their family.

The Gospels are the treasured memoirs of Jesus' disciples about his life, ministry and teaching. We hear them read every Sunday in the Church. Jesus wrote no memoirs and his disciples wrote them for him in the Gospels. There is no Jesus Book signed by Jesus of Nazareth. He may have carried some notes in Aramaic in a leather bag, but we do not know for sure.

Read the Gospels, and especially the first chapters of Matthew and Luke at Christmas. They don't tell us everything, but they tell us more than enough. They built their narratives from the ground up, and as T.W. Manson was fond of saying, they "remembered very well." Christian Faith starts to grow in our own being when we ground our hope in the personal link between heaven and earth called Jesus of Nazareth.

See him in a manger. See him walking in Galilee and sitting with his disciples on a hill overlooking Lake Galilee. Listen to his teaching. Walk with him to the Cross and see him emerge from the tomb clad in the light of God. Feel his Spirit penetrating the Words of Scripture and the Sacraments and settling in your heart, mind and soul.

Listen to the still small voice of God calling you down the road of life and through the receding mists of time. It calls us into the mystery of God's presence that never leaves someone who trusts in Christ.

Start from the ground of your heart's needs and gifts and the ground of reason. When it is linked to faith it is a strong voice for love on the earth, echoing the clearest voice of love yet heard in our world "according to the scriptures". It all starts from the ground up, where we are, as it does today for Hiraya and Frederick.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Monday, December 15.

- Finance Committee Mtg., 5:30pm, Parish Office
- Vestry Meeting, 6:30pm, Rectory

Wednesday, December 17.

- Group discussion, 7:30pm, Parish Office.

Thursday, December 18.

- Midweek Eucharist, 10:00am, Chapel

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

2 Samuel 7:4,8-16; Psalm 132; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

FAMILY SERVICE/CHRISTMAS PAGEANT. Performance on the 24th, 4pm. Open to all ages (adults/kids). A sign-up paper is posted on the board for those who wish to participate.

Second Rehearsal: Dec. 21 after the service.