

ADVENT

Advent is the time when we prepare ourselves for the birth of Christ. It is a time of reflecting on our readiness for this great event – for letting go of anything that prevents us from welcoming the One who is coming. The time of repentance and anticipation; of warning and welcoming; of giving and receiving.

Excerpt from 'A Word with the Children' - Advent 4 Year A

God's love for us became visible in a person - when Jesus was born. Before that, people could only talk about God's love in an abstract way - but in Jesus that love could be seen and experienced. That's why the hymn says "Love was born at Christmas, star and angels gave the sign."

Christmas is that special time when we show our love for others in visible ways to people we know (ask how) and to people we don't even know

CHRISTMAS

Christmas is the celebration of the historical event of Jesus' birth - the joyous coming of God in the midst of humanity. The waiting is over; expectations are confirmed; prophetic promises fulfilled in the birth of the Christ-child.

Excerpt from Call to Worship - Christmas Eve Family Service Year A

Invite people on left side of church to read words under heading L

Invite people on right side of church to read words under heading R

Do you think that this is an ordinary night?

L: No - the waiting is almost over,

R: our excitement grows.

L: The time is coming near,

R: the time of Jesus' birth,

L: God's gift to the world.

R: That is why we're here.

EPIPHANY

Epiphany is from the Greek word epiphaneia which means 'to make clear, show forth or to manifest.' The season of Epiphany gives us the opportunity not only to join those journeyers from the East who followed the star to find the Christ-child, but also to discover new insights as we follow the Light of the world on our journeys through life.

Excerpt from Sermon – Baptism of Jesus – Epiphany 1 Year A

In the early pages of his famous book on the Holy Spirit by John V. Taylor – The Go Between God – he writes

“What is the force which causes me to see in a way in which I have not seen? What makes a landscape or a person or an idea come to life for me and become a presence towards which I surrender myself? Christians find it quite natural to give a personal

name to this current of communication, this invisible go-between. They call him the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God.”¹

It is this Spirit, this go-between God who links our three readings together today. It is the Spirit who communicates promise in the Isaiah reading; presence in the gospel, and power in Acts – the power to change.

LENT

Lent is the “in between time “ the season between Epiphany and Holy Week – a journey from ashes to palms and beyond.

The Lenten season is one between Jesus’ transfiguration and our shouts of “Hosanna!” The time when Jesus meets us, and helps us to face our temptations on our journeys through the wilderness.

Excerpt from Sermon for Palm Sunday – Palm/Passion Year A

That image of Jesus riding into Jerusalem on an insignificant animal - a donkey - to confront all that was evil not only in Jerusalem, but the world...to give life a new direction, reminded me of another image. Do you remember seeing on your television screen a number of years ago that Chinese man who placed himself in the path of the tanks that were rolling into Tianamin Square in Beijing? The tanks - symbols of evil, and violence and oppression - overshadowed that brave soul who made them change direction - even if only temporarily.

HOLY WEEK

Holy Week continues the journey - specifically, Jesus’ journey towards the cross and death. What happens during this most sacred sequence of days indicates how central this period is to Christian faith.

Holy Week is also our journey – one that ends in darkness wondering how the journey goes from here.

Excerpt of Prayer for Good Friday Year A

Gracious God, on this day we gather to remember the suffering death of Jesus.

We come overwhelmed by the depth of Jesus' love for us,
and his commitment to defeat evil,
even when that meant his own suffering and his own death.

Even death on a cross,

and so, in response to such love and sacrifice,
we commit ourselves as his disciples to overcome evil with good,
suffering with wholeness,
and oppression with justice in Jesus' name. Amen

EASTER SEASON

The great fifty days of Easter begin on Easter Day and conclude on the Day of Pentecost. This season therefore celebrates both the resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

This is the season to go forward as resurrection people – inspired on the journey by the risen Christ and empowered by the Spirit.

Excerpt of Sermon – Easter Day Year A

That first Easter Day began very strangely. Mary comes to the tomb and finds it empty. She has no idea at all what has happened. She thinks someone has stolen Jesus' body, so she runs to tell Peter and the other disciple. They both ran to the tomb to find out what had happened and the tomb is empty just as Mary had said.

Then, a very strange thing happened. Peter and the other disciple just went back to their homes. And left Mary there, weeping.

What a strange and bizarre way to begin the story of Easter.

DAY OF PENTECOST

This is the great climax of the Easter Season with flame red as the appropriate colour for the day. This is the day when we celebrate the sending of the Holy Spirit with all God's gifts and commissioning power for our ministries. The day when we witness to that outpouring of Spirit into our hearts with drama, dance, Pentecost symbols, art, glorious music – however the Spirit leads us.

Excerpt of Sermon - Pentecost 2A

When Matthew wrote these words down, there was real danger for those who proclaimed Christ in word and action - they were hated and persecuted. They were sent out as sheep among wolves, therefore the messengers were under the very real and very constant threat of fear - fear which would seize them again and again. And so, Jesus reassures them by saying don't be afraid, you are of great worth in God's eyes. Keep on proclaiming the good news of my love - you are surrounded by God's care.

What about us in this day and age – what are we afraid of?

PENTECOST SEASON

This season begins with Trinity Sunday and concludes with the Reign of Christ. This is the long season of growth where we go forward as people inspired on the journey by the risen Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Excerpt of Sermon – Trinity Sunday Year A

The first half of the Christian year has been about God's intervention in our human history in the person of Jesus Christ, whose life continues on in us through the power of the Holy Spirit. Today is an opportunity to reflect on how these events give meaning to the present and the future - how they give us direction and guidance through the ordinary as well as the extraordinary experiences of our lives.