



# Northern Son



**A pastoral newsletter for the Anglican Church of St George - Fairbanks, Alaska**

*Patronal Festival: April 23*

*Vol 1 No 6*

Sunday Service: 11 am  
currently meeting at the Masonic Lodge  
10th Ave & Noble St, Fairbanks

Bible Study: tba

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### **Tentative Schedule:**

|                 |                                 |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| 4 Advent        | December 20                     |
| Christmas Eve   | December 24                     |
| Christmas I     | December 27                     |
| Epiphany 3      | January 24<br>(Annual Meeting)  |
| Quinquagesima   | February 14<br>(St Valentine's) |
| Ash Wednesday   | February 17                     |
| I Lent          | February 21                     |
| Palm Sunday     | March 28                        |
| Maundy Thursday | April 1                         |
| Good Friday     | April 2                         |
| Easter          | April 4                         |

## **Advent — a time of preparation...**

Preparation for the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And we must prepare, if we are to see this glory. Otherwise we may miss it. It is possible to get so busy with shopping and cooking and celebrating that by the time Christmas arrives, we are worn out. We have been so busy that we miss the glory.

If we want to see the glory of Christmas, let us begin by concentrating on the mystery of Christmas. The mystery of Christmas has to do with the Person of Christ. Article 2 of the 39 Articles refers to the two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood which were joined together in one Person, never to be divided. One of Christ's natures is completely human... as human as any baby you know born today. The other nature is divine. As St Paul's Letter to the Colossians says, Christ is "the image of the invisible God." <sup>1:15</sup> And in Christ dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. <sup>2:9</sup>

The two natures of Christ in one Person, this is what the New Testament calls a mystery. And it is what philosophy calls a paradox—two statements that are diametrically opposite and mutually exclusive, and both of them are true! The paradox is the point where the Christian Faith goes beyond our understanding to revelation. Note, revelation does not go against our understanding. It is not irrational. It simply goes beyond our human understanding. And it is in this mystery of the two natures — divine and human — that the glory of Christmas is to be found: God has entered human history as a little Child!

Over the centuries Christians have tended to emphasize one of the natures of Christ more than the other. In the Middle Ages, the divinity of Christ was emphasized, almost to the exclusion of His humanity. Christ was seen as so exalted that He could only be approached through prayers to His disciples or to His mother. It was in opposition to this view of the exalted Christ that St Francis of Assisi created the first living manger scene with cows and a donkey and sheep and human figures representing the Holy Family.

Today we have gone to the opposite extreme and emphasized the humanity of Jesus to the exclusion of the divinity. We are presented with a child just like every other child. (After all, aren't we all

equal?) We are presented with a child, a precious child, but a child without the power to save us from our sins. We have emphasized the humanity of Jesus to the neglect of the divinity.

Let us try to follow the guidance of Scripture and the Prayer book, with the Articles of Religion. Let us try to go beyond our understanding and behold the glory of our Lord as He is revealed to us, in His humanity and His divinity. And this contemplation can best be done on our knees, let us pray:

*Oh holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.*

This was an article in the newsletter sent to the parish of All Saints, Pensacola FL by the Rev Hugh Hall that I thought worth sharing.

Here we are, at the threshold of Advent Season. Not long and the Christmas Trees will be brought in the door, set up in the corner and all those pretty decorations and bright lights added to it. But what is Advent? Gifts of every kind and description will be piled under the tree as we anticipate Christmas Morning. But what is Advent? For four Sundays we'll celebrate with the lighting of the Advent Candles on the Advent Wreath. But what is Advent? We'll sing special songs and enjoy the festive season. But what is Advent? Then Christmas will arrive and there will be a bit of let down as we pass from Advent through Epiphany and then into Lent and Holy Week and from Holy Week to Trinity Season. But what is Advent? It is very easy to lose contact with the true sense of Advent Season and in fact a good many people have exactly zero idea of what Advent really is all about. It gets lost in the hustle and bustle of that hectic time from Thanksgiving to New Year's and we let ourselves lose touch with Advent.

What is Advent? Advent is a tradition, not scriptural Holiday Season. I recall having a discussion with a person at the door one day. They were reminding everybody they refused to celebrate Christmas and wanted me to know that the Bible did not command the observation of the Birth of Christ. I acknowledged that fact willingly. We quite honestly do not know when Jesus was born but we do know that He was born. They said it was sinful to have a celebration of the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. I asked them where they found that in the Bible? They said it was so because the Bible did not command us to keep the celebration, only Easter, which they insisted had to be called

Passover because Easter was a pagan holiday. Well, enough of that.

When I was studying for the priesthood, Bishop Reg Hammond asked me what I thought the focus of my ministry would be and I answered teaching. That in mind, I want to comment about Advent. Advent, as we know it today, is in fact, a construct of the Western Church. If we look we find two main-streams flowing through the Advent Season as we observe it.

First is the French influence that arrived during the fourth century AD. Authorities far greater than I believe that it probably sprang from Celtic monks (the Anglican root is deep in the Celtic Tradition). The Celtic influence was a period of about six weeks before Christ's Mass or what we know as Christmas and was a penitential and devotional period similar to but less than Lent.

The second influence stems from Rome, where there was a practice of having a three-to-six week fast during which the faithful came regularly to Church, this is the source of the tradition of fasting before the feast of Christmas time.

Advent is a time in our Liturgical Calendar in which we prepare ourselves for the Advent (Advent simply means coming) of the baby Jesus in that manger in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago. But is something more as well; it is a time each year when we prepare ourselves, body and soul, for the Second Advent or Coming of Jesus. Advent is a Solemn Time of reflection and preparation, but it is also a time to express great joy for the Greatest Christmas Gift ever given.

Advent is not commanded by God of men to be observed as is Harvest Festival and Passover, for example, but is right and good that we should at least annually take a bit of time and prepare ourselves for the Coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, both to commemorate His wondrous birth by the Blessed Virgin and to acknowledge that we are prepared for Him to come again.

May God Bless each and every one of you with the richness of this Advent Season and keep you ever mind-ful of the Wondrous Gift He has given in the Advent of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

This was an article in the newsletter sent to the parish of All Saints, Pensacola FL by the Rev Tom Brooks that I thought worth sharing. Fr Brooks and I took Holy Orders together and is a very special friend... he is also the Godfather to my Grandson.