

Reflection for Saturday November 28th

I want to share with you some thoughts about the Church's liturgical year. I must point out that they are my own. The whole year for me is a wonderful spiritual experience.

I look upon the Church's year in two parts: (1) training in faith (2) living the Christian faith. First training; this is the longer of the two. It begins tomorrow with first Sunday in Advent and ends with Pentecost. This training is centred on the main events in our Lord's life. Our trainer is the Holy Spirit who guides us through them

Advent. There are two parts to this preparation: looking forward to the Second Coming when our Lord will come again in glory and secondly, a looking back to the birth of our Saviour as foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament, the preaching of a baptism of repentance by John the Baptist, baptism in the River Jordan and the angel's message to Mary and Joseph.

What a joy Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ followed 12 days later with the Epiphany, the showing forth of Christ to the Gentiles. when the wise men visited infant Jesus. We then have a short break from training although the Sundays in ordinary time, which follow the Christmas cycle, do have an epiphany theme in the readings.

Then we go into some vigorous training in the six weeks of Lent, culminating in Holy Week when we enter deeply into the events of our Lord's Passion and death on the Cross both in in the words and the liturgical action of the liturgy.

The Easter Vigil takes us into the great joy of Easter itself. It is the centre of our faith. We must remember St Paul's words, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." Easter lasts 40 days and the appearances of the risen Lord finish with the Ascension.

We then come to the last period of our training when, before his Ascension into heaven, Jesus tells his disciples to go to Jerusalem and wait to be clothed from on high with the coming of the Holy Spirit. They then become apostles sent out into the world in the power of the Holy Spirit to witness to him. That is exactly what happened at Pentecost. Pentecost is the final part of our training.

We now come to the second part of the Church's liturgical year. We go out in the power of the Holy Spirit to witness to our Lord Jesus Christ and spread his love, his peace, his joy, proclaiming the kingdom over which Jesus reigns. The period in ordinary time running from the Monday after Pentecost Sunday and finishing today gives us God's help in our Christian living.

May God bless us as we enter a new Christian year tomorrow.

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