

Sunday between 30th October & 5th November

PENTECOST 22, Year B

Responsibility: Canon Barlow

"One of the scribes came near ... and he asked Him: "Which commandment is the first of all?" (Mark 12:28)

Advent Sunday is 4 weeks away, which means that Christmas is only 8 weeks off! Traditionally Advent was always a season of sober reflection in the Church, with repentance and the need for readiness for Christ's Second Coming as its theme. Then suddenly it was Christmas Day, and because in Australia so many people go away or after Christmas, the celebration of the Birth of the Saviour tended to be a one-day affair only. The balance was all wrong.

When the Lectionary was altered with the appearance of the revised Prayer Book in 1978, and the revision of that Book in 1995, there came a change in the Sunday themes, correcting that imbalance. Advent is still a Season of preparation - but now of joyful preparation, when it is easier for us to join in pre-Christmas festivities without that feeling of strange contrast: gloominess in church, joyfulness outside. The serious aspect of preparation has been appointed for these next-few Sundays prior to Advent, with the theme "God's saving love" for today; next Sunday the theme is "Life eternal"; then "Living between the Cross and Christ's return"; and the final Sunday of the Ecclesiastical Year is "Christ the King" - the climax.

This is a long introduction and you might think it is all very theoretical and academic. But our worship in church ought to be a reflection of our life outside church. We should be aware of the serious themes of the next few weeks, and then the weeks of Advent will build up to a really joyful celebration of the Birth of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, as we realize the implications of that whole holy event. As we follow through those themes, our Christmas worship will be heartfelt and sincere, rather than the rushed unprepared affair that outside pressures tend to make it become.

So then, in this pre-Advent period we are called to look into our own lives and lifestyle, and where necessary amend them so that we may celebrate the Incarnation of the Saviour with a pure heart:

One of the guidelines given to God's people to assist them lead a godly life is the set of rules we know as the Ten Commandments. In the exhortation to Godparents in the Baptism Service of the Book of Common Prayer of 1662, the priest would say among other things: "Ye shall call upon him to hear sermons; and chiefly ye shall provide, that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar tongue, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health." Vulgar, in this instance means "common" or "ordinary". This was merely recommended in the 1978 revision and dropped altogether in the latest revision where the duties of a godparent are much more generally described. It was probably dropped because, regrettably, godparents and parents who actually carried out this injunction were very rare indeed. It is now generally left for the pre-Confirmation classes to endeavour to teach these things, and while only the Lord's Prayer is likely to be learnt by heart, the classes certainly cover the contents of the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Church Catechism.

The **Lord's Prayer** guides us in all our prayers - it is the Christian family prayer; it is the model prayer which saves us from regarding prayer as merely selfish petition.

The **Creed** is the framework which summarises Christian belief; it sets before us the basic essentials.

The **Ten Commandments** are meant to teach us how we should behave towards God and towards other people.

The first two of these three basics are well known: almost too well known because they slip over the tongue Sunday by Sunday as part of the services and attain familiarity. A few years ago, when those Prayer Book revisions altered them slightly in accordance with changes in our language, we stumbled at first and indeed those of us accustomed to the older expression still tend to slip back now and then. It is good that we were made to stop and look again at what we are actually saying. The Creed and the Lord's Prayer have been said and sung in Christian worship from earliest times.

Not so the Ten Commandments. Before the Reformation they were not used in the services, although they were well known to instructed people. When the 1662 Book of Common Prayer was drawn up, the Commandments were inserted near the beginning of the Communion Service, where they have remained until the most recent revision, where they are printed only in an abbreviated form in **the conservative form of that Service**. Since 1928 provision has been made for what is known as "The Summary of the Law" to be read. And this Summary which was stated by Jesus, as we heard in today's Gospel just now, is used today much more frequently than a recitation of the Big Ten. There are a number of reasons for this, none of which are intended to lessen or water down the importance of proper Christian behaviour towards God and our fellow human beings. The first reason is probably because the Ten bear the marks of the Old Testament approach – severe, unforgiving, and legalistic. However the Two, although quotations from the Old Testament, have the stamp of our Lord's personal approval.

Then, because certain sinful behaviour is specified by the Ten, other not specified might seem allowable. Modern technology has provided the possibility of sinning far beyond the wildest imaginings of Moses! However the Two leave absolutely no loop-holes, for any age or technology. Love God with your whole being; treat every person in the same way that you would wish to be treated.

Thirdly, our Lord's positive words about love for God and love for fellows are so much more in harmony with His teaching, than are the "Thou shalt nots" of most of the Ten.

And finally, the archaic phraseology makes explanation of a number the Ten necessary to bring them into modern application. We might not covet our neighbour's ass, but we quite possibly might covet his Porche.

When that lawyer asked Jesus: "Which commandment is first of all?" he was not asking Him to pick out one of the Ten. The Law or Torah had developed into a great and complex variety since Moses had set out the original Ten for the Children of Israel - that rabble of runaway slaves striving to develop into a community. And the faithful Israelite had to keep not merely the Ten, but hundreds of laws which had grown up around them as they were interpreted and applied. When Jesus said how hard it is for the rich to enter heaven - referring to the temptations which come with wealth - His listeners said: "If the rich can't enter heaven without difficulty, who can?" In those times only the rich could afford a scrupulous keeping of the Torah. For the Jew, loving God meant keeping was commandments, so it was impossible for him to distinguish between loving God and keeping the Law.. But Jesus made loving God the first and greatest commandment, distinguishing between loving God, and keeping a whole host of rules and regulations. It is no longer necessary to see the love of God realized in the Commandments, or to see the Commandments as

the means of loving God. To love God is a commandment, and we keep the other Commandments because we love God, and therefore want to obey His will.

Jesus was not content to let the matter rest at simply specifying which is the first and greatest Commandment. He went on to specify which is the second: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." Although love for God is the first and greatest, the love for neighbour is "like it", having similar priority. Furthermore Jesus did not merely single out these two as the greatest from all the rest. As the record in St. Matthew's Gospel shows, He maintained that "on these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets". (Matt.22:40)

All the life and actions of a Christian are to be measured by the Two Great Commandments. If they are, then the Christian cannot fail to lead life to the glory of God. If all our actions are truly inspired by love for God, they will necessarily be right. If we truly love God, we will not set up other things in our hearts to value more than Him. Nor will we show disrespect to His name, nor neglect to worship Him, on the Sabbath or any other day. If we really love our neighbour, we will not harm him or her by violence, by theft, by immoral behaviour, by falsehood and gossip.

As we obey these Two Great Commandments, Jesus is able to say to us, as He said to that scribe: "You are not far from the kingdom of God." God grant that it might be so for us.

AMEN

Sunday between 6th and 12th November

PENTECOST 23, Year B

Responsibility: Canon Barlow

"He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury." (Mark 12:41)

It is just not done to look and see how much people put into the collection plate when it is passed along the pew. And most sidesmen make a point of being very disinterested about it. Rightly so, it is no-one else's business. But Jesus, on this occasion at least, deliberately took a seat near the Temple treasury and watched to see how generously or otherwise people gave to the service of God. In congregations where the income barely meets the budget, treasurers sometimes itch to get out into the vestry to check on the contents of the collection plate or bag to see whether or not the accounts can be paid this month. And it positively hurts when the church is chock-a-block full at a funeral or a wedding and it is just not on to pass the plate on that occasion! But it is rare to find one acting in the way Jesus did: watching as the people made their contribution.

Few people really understand their financial obligation to God. Most of us have never been taught, even in our pre-Confirmation or other formal instruction in Church teaching, that money given to God, which is a short way of saying "to the Church to carry on God's work - is sacramental. A Sacrament is by definition "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace." The two Sacraments ordained by Christ as necessary to salvation are Baptism and Holy Communion. He made specific pronouncements about the necessity of these. There are five other rites or ceremonies usually called the Lesser Sacraments, which the Church observes as arising from the teaching of the early leaders of the Church: Confirmation, Holy Matrimony, Holy Unction or Anointing, Ordination, and Absolution. These are not required as necessary for salvation and are not required of everyone. A former Bishop of this Diocese, Tom Jones, said that he would add another - Bible reading and study. We could add also the proper giving of money. Why? Because it is an outward and visible sign of how much a person cares. If we have a deep concern for some cause or other, we back it financially. If we are devoted to a hobby we spend money on it almost without stint. For that matter if we have a vice, money doesn't matter much so long as our addiction doesn't suffer.

I said earlier that the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion were ordained by Christ as necessary for salvation. But how can those Sacraments be made available, not just to the faithful, but drawn to the attention of the uncommitted, without the Sacrament of Money? Christ died, not just for the salvation of the faithful ones, but for all! A daunting task given to the Church, but one the Church is endeavouring to carry out, limited only by skimpy resources.

Now some may say: "But salvation is the free gift of God." And so it is - but the cost was great. Not in material expense: just two pieces of timber, one short and one longer; a handful of nails and a hammer; and a naked body. We say: "God so loved the world that He gave" We cannot say "salvation is free" without adding that the cost was great. In church it is bad form to watch whether people give much or little or nothing. That is good because we cannot know the demands on another person's income. A certain parishioner, and this is a true story, was ashamed

of how little he felt able to put on the plate. But he was sending money, as much as he possibly could, to his parents who were in dire poverty in one of the then Russian occupied countries. We do not know the financial circumstances of other people, so we dare not criticize their giving. Nevertheless people should be aware of the sacramental nature of money and make a commitment accordingly.

Our Lord knows the circumstances of each one of us though, and He sits near the treasury, watching. Not judgmentally - more anxiously. Anxious that we will do the sacrificial thing, and anxious for the well-being and extension of His Church - that the opportunities for salvation which cost so much will be freely available to all for whom He died. He is the supreme realist and knows that without money the coming of His Kingdom will be severely delayed.

An Anglican priest who lived during the first half of this century, Studdart-Kennedy, told the story in one of his books, how he went to minister to a poverty-stricken young woman seriously ill with tuberculosis. Studdart-Kennedy was a great priest and had everything he needed to spiritually minister to this girl. Downstairs afterwards he asked the doctor anxiously: "What chance has she?" The doctor replied: "None whatsoever, as long as she stays here." The priest asked the obvious question: "How much?" The answer was much more than he had. He went away and somehow raised the money, and with it brought about a miracle. Out of it he produced a taxi, a train ticket, a room at the seaside, a nurse, and a knowledgeable doctor. And all out of a bit of money. This is the point of the story: "Then I knew", wrote Studdart-Kennedy, "what money is, what money can be. It is power. It is the means to obtain resources and in this case to bring about healing." That is the sacramental reality of what we call money.

While Jesus was sitting there watching, a poor widow came and dropped into the donation box a couple of small coins - the smallest there were - all she had. Her act was generous and worthy and Jesus said so. He also noted that the rich and the well-to-do put in large sums. It was natural that Jesus should say that relatively speaking the woman had given more than all of them. But that is not the only message for us in that extract. Jesus watched all of them, because their rate of giving was an indication of the depth of their piety. It is right that the Gospels should mention and give praise to the poor widow. It is also right that in another Gospel, St. Luke's, record is made of the Roman officer whose servant was ill. The Jewish elders commended this Gentile, this non-Jew, to Jesus because, they said: "This man loves our people and he himself built a synagogue for us." (Luke 7:5). Jesus praised that man too. A poor widow and a rich officer, praised equally by our Lord for their generosity.

Every congregation, every Parish, every Ministry District, finds it difficult to remain financially viable to continue the battle for the souls of man and women. Every missionary agency of God's Church of whatever denomination needs every cent that comes its way - and indeed much more. The Church is expanding so fast in some parts of the world that keeping up supplies of even petty items like pencils and paper is almost beyond them. And in this country where the Church is not expanding to any great degree, the ministry is stretched thinly. In the country particularly, where the population of the towns is steadily diminishing, the spiritual needs of the

people remain as great as ever - probably greater in these stressful times of poor returns for produce and the anxiety of job security and availability.

This sermon is not meant to be an appeal for you to dig ever deeper into your pockets - unless God so moves you. It is however an appeal to you to view your giving to the work of Christ through His Church in a realistic way - not as a handout but as a deliberate act of worship; as sacrifice, a deliberate offering to God; seeing it as a sacramental activity.

Jesus sits by the treasury watching the rich and the poor, seeing how they respond to the needs of the Gospel and its dissemination. Our true piety is measured in terms of our generosity..

AMEN

Responsibility: Canon Barlow

"When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs." Mark.13:7 & 8

Right now our world is suffering from the very things which this passage speaks of: wars, earthquakes, famine. It would be easy for us to read into these signs that the end of the world is near. The world has always been plagued by war, earthquakes, and famine - sadly this is nothing new. Mankind reaps what it sows and the earth on which we live is always in a state of flux, changing and developing. Jesus **reassures** us: "When you hear of these things, do not be alarmed."

This style of very dramatic descriptive speaking and writing is called "apocalyptic", from the Greek word meaning revelation or uncovering. There is quite an amount of it in Holy Scripture, both in the Old Testament and the New, and it is important that we understand it for what it is. Otherwise we will either dismiss it as merely figurative, or else apply it too literally to our particular situation and perhaps become alarmed and obsessed by it. There are sects which make a big deal of this writing, using it for scare tactics to induce people to join them - for they of course are the only ones who have the solution!

We find apocalyptic writing in the Old Testament books such as Daniel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah. There is quite a bit of it in the Apocrypha - those writings not accepted as Holy Scripture but coming between the Old and New Testaments. In the New Testament, the Revelation of St. John the Divine is a prime example, and there are brief sections like today's Gospel Reading in several of the Gospels.

The style of this writing generally takes the same form: God and Satan, light and darkness, are totally opposed and on a collision course. The present world order is under the control of the forces of evil, but the final battle is about to be fought, and then the tables will be turned. God will crush all opposition, destroy all evil for ever, and create a new heaven and a new earth in which His faithful people will be released from their oppression and reign with Him in glory

The message is conveyed in often extraordinary visions, with symbolic numbers and cataclysmic happenings. Often, a selected series of historical events are recounted under the guise of future prediction, up to the time of writing, and then future historical events are rather vaguely outlined, and finally a foretelling of the cosmic disasters at the end of creation as we know it: the Final Judgment after a mighty showdown in which the forces of Satan are finally defeated for ever. Usually these writings were to reassure a people crushed and near despair - a triumphant appeal to the sovereignty of the One True God, the God of Israel.

In the New Testament, the writers and Jesus Himself proclaim the same message of the ultimate supremacy of God. Jesus picks up the term "Son of Man" from the Book of Daniel, saying that the Son of Man is the one who will come with the angels to gather in the faithful. And He applies the title to Himself, which is why in the Creed we declare our belief that "He will come

again in glory to judge the living and the dead." St. Paul certainly held this belief, for in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians he wrote: "The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thess.4:15) The Son of Man comes from heaven to earth on the clouds with power and great glory and sends His angels who accompany Him to gather the elect and escort them to heaven. This is rather beyond the imagination of us prosaic, literal-minded people of this Age. And so the sense of urgency which accompanies this style of writing has also been set aside to some extent. The Church has tended to ignore the Biblical sense of the imminence of the end of all things, and understood this material as simply a prediction of a remote consummation of history. The justification being that, as St. Mark records Jesus as saying: "of that day or that hour no-one knows, nor the Son, but only the Father." However, what the Church has always emphasized is the need for constant preparedness – the traditional theme of the Advent Season. Watch, for you know not the hour when the Son of Man comes."

And surely this attitude is far more important and vital. wondering and worrying when the whole works will go up in a spectacular fireworks display, but the expectation of knowing that when our mortal, earth-bound bodies die - and that could be at any The message is conveyed in often extraordinary visions, with symbolic numbers and cataclysmic happenings. Often, a selected series of historical events are recounted under the guise of future prediction, up to the time of writing, and then future historical events are rather vaguely outlined, and finally a foretelling of the cosmic disasters at the end of creation as we know it: the Final Judgment after a mighty showdown in which the forces of Satan are finally defeated for ever. Usually these writings were to reassure a people crushed and near despair - a triumphant appeal to the sovereignty of the One True God, the God of Israel.

In the New Testament, the writers and Jesus Himself proclaim the same message of the ultimate supremacy of God. Jesus picks up the term "Son of Man" from the Book of Daniel, saying that the Son of Man is the one who will come with the angels to gather in the faithful. And He applies the title to Himself, which is why in the Creed we declare our belief that "He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead." St. Paul certainly held this belief, for in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians he wrote: "The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. (1 Thess.4:15) The Son of Man comes from heaven to earth on the clouds with power and great glory and sends His angels who accompany Him to gather the elect and escort them to heaven. This is rather beyond the imagination of us prosaic, literal-minded people of this Age. And so the sense of urgency which accompanies this style of writing has also been set aside to some extent. The Church has tended to ignore the Biblical sense of the imminence of the end of all things, and understood this material as simply a prediction of a remote consummation of history. The justification being that, as St. Mark records Jesus as saying: "of that day or that hour no-one knows, nor the Son, but only the Father." However, what the Church has always emphasized is the need for constant preparedness – the traditional theme of the Advent Season. Watch, for you know not the hour when the Son of Man comes."

And surely this attitude is far more important and vital. wondering and worrying when the whole works will go up in a spectacular fireworks display, but the expectation of knowing that when our mortal, earth-bound bodies die - and that could be at any time - at that time all that the term Day of Judgment implies will apply to us, individually. For that occasion we are warned to prepare and to be ready.

There is an important sense in which we may think of the Second Coming of Christ as a here and now, present reality. Our reception on our Day of Judgment will depend upon our life lived here and now, in the present. At any moment, often when least expected, Christ comes into people's lives - like a burglar in the dead of night, or the boss turning up when he was thought to be at the other side of the world. When people who have just quietly jogged along, living a respectable moral life, worshipping in church fairly frequently but not too often, when people like that suddenly see that it really is all fair dinkum and Christ comes to them and floods them with awareness and light and love - that surely is a Coming which is far more important than the apocalyptic expectation. For the Day of Judgment is too late for repentance and turning to a new life - but the Coming of Christ into one's heart is the time for a new beginning, a spiritual revival, a new birth in Christ.

The trouble with the term "Second Coming" is that it suggests that Christ is only coming again once in the far-off future, and until then He's well away from us and we need not think too much about it as long as we live a good, that is, well-behaved and moral life. We are compelled to use the term "judgment" when Christ is present, because the Light of Christ illuminates the darkness of man-without-God. The world is ill-at-ease when looked at in the light of Christ.

Watching for the Coming of Christ is much more than merely wondering whether the current famines and earthquakes and warfare and civil unrest in so many places around the world are the signs of the apocalyptic Second Coming. Watching for the Coming of Christ is the expectation that Christ comes into every aspect of life, and being open and ready to receive Him into our own hearts and minds.

AMEN

The last Sunday after Pentecost - Year B

CHRIST THE KING

Responsibility: Canon Barlow

Today we come to the last Sunday in the Church's Year, the end of the great round of Seasons which the Church has for generations followed as a programme to ensure a balanced syllabus of worship and teaching. This programme is designed to ensure that preachers are deterred from emphasizing one part of the Scriptures and overlooking another. The predominant colours used for vestments and apparel, and the use of appropriate hymns are all part of the teaching theme. To further widen our knowledge and understanding of the Church's teaching and worship, we have a 3-year Cycle of Scripture Readings, appropriate for the Season or Holy Day. *We finish Year B today, and next Sunday we begin the Cycle again with the First Sunday of Advent, Year C.*

A visitor or new-comer to the Church might find this somewhat confusing, but once they see the plan, it all comes together very satisfactorily and covers the whole gamut of our Lord's teaching. It also enables us to worship Almighty God in every aspect of our knowledge of His Being. You probably know all this, but today, as we come to the end of one Ecclesiastical Year and are about to begin another, I want to look at the whole picture, even at the risk of telling you what you are already familiar with.

From Advent through to Whitsunday we have presented before us the whole sweep of the story of our salvation in Christ; the whole drama of the Christian Faith. Advent, the first Season, consists of the four Sundays prior to Christmas. It says: Prepare to welcome Christ into His own creation. And as we prepare to celebrate the anniversary of His FIRST coming, we are reminded to prepare for His promised SECOND coming, Advent says; "Christ is coming! Prepare for that coming! Make straight in the desert of your soul a highway for our God. There is One who comes with the secret of life for those who will receive Him. Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!" Will the celebration of Christmas be for us a time of superficial merry-making - overspending, over-drinking, over-eating - in an effort to catch the spirit of what the world understand as a "Merry Christmas"? Or will it be merry in a deep, profound joyfulness because Christ WAS born into this world and IS born again in us?

True Christmas joy is more than tinsel and glitter and present-giving: although we use them to express the joy of this great occasion. Christmas is about a great act of God, commemorating an event in history and summed up by St. John in his Gospel that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, full of grace and truth has visited His people. He took our humanness and became a man. From His own experience, He knows what it is like to be a human. This is the great and mighty wonder which the Church proclaims - that Jesus is the supreme revelation of God, in human flesh. It is nothing less than this that we celebrate each Christmas

Following the Season of Christmas, comes Epiphany. Epiphany is a Greek word which means a light shining out in the darkness, and the subtitle of this Season is "The Manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles" His being made known to the non-Jews. Although Jesus was born into the Jewish race, and fulfilled so many of the ancient Jewish prophecies that they might know that He was indeed the anticipated Messiah, yet nevertheless it was made plain from the earliest days of His earthly life that He was not the exclusive property of one particular race of people. And this is typified by the visit to the infant Jesus by the Wise Men from the East. – the Maji. Other lessons which the Epiphany Season has for us tell of the Child in the Temple, beginning to find His destiny; of the first miracle at the wedding in Cana; of various displays of His

power over life and death and the elements; all so that we might be encouraged to see and believe that the Child of Bethlehem is indeed and in fact God-become-Man, God Incarnate.

When Lent comes along, beginning on Ash Wednesday, 40 days away from Easter, we should be ready to subject ourselves to some self-discipline above our ordinary standard, to ensure that the appetites of the flesh have not taken control over the will of the spirit. As Jesus used abstinence from ordinary food and drink and luxuries to train and strengthen His will, and as He went aside from the ordinary routine of life for the purpose of preparing for His ministry, so we are encouraged to use these six weeks as a period of training wills, and for spending more time on spiritual study, reading of religious books. At the end of Lent culminating with Good Friday: the Crucifixion, and all for - the love of God for mankind. "Greater love hath God SO loved the world that He gave His only-begotten amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."

Furthermore we are reminded that suffering can be used for a blessing. Christ used His to redeem the world, and ours can, with God's help, be a means of spiritual growth for ourselves and for others around us. Again, here we see real sacrifice, and we know that there can be no maturity, no growing-up, no successful family relationships, no fine achievement of any kind without sacrifice, without self-denial.

Incredibly, even this tremendous display of love outpoured is not the end. The forces of evil which had brought Jesus to His cross were beaten, and on Easter Day, and throughout the Easter Season of six weeks, Christians rejoice in the fact of the Resurrection. We believe that life is NOT swallowed up in death and dust. We believe that all the evil in the world cannot finally defeat God's purpose. Christ is risen! And we know that His victory will be ours.

Over the six weeks of Easter, Jesus made Himself known to His followers to ensure that they really knew that He had overcome death. The final post-Resurrection appearance of Jesus is commemorated on Ascension Day, when He made it quite plain to His disciples that they would see His human form no longer; that He was returning to the heavenly realm from whence He had come some 33 years previously. Ten days later the Ascended Christ made good His promise not to leave His followers without spiritual direction. On the Jewish Festival of Pentecost, known to us also as Whitsunday, the Holy Spirit made His Presence known to the Apostles with the sound of a rushing mighty wind and the appearance of tongues of fire on their heads. God did not simply call us and inspire us to follow the teachings of Jesus, and then leave us to go it alone! God did not act once in Christ and then leave all future generations with nothing but a memory. God is with us still today as we open our hearts and our minds to the Holy Spirit - just as surely as on that first Day of Pentecost.

For the first half of the year we are led to think about Almighty God as Father, as Son, and as Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity - one God in three Persons, co-equal, co-eternal, is our attempt to sum up all the experience of God which the Church has learnt, and which I have so briefly outlined. We believe it was God who created all things - we have no other more satisfactory solution to the problem of creation than that belief. We see this God in Christ redeeming and reclaiming His recalcitrant children. We experience His Holy Spirit working in us and through us to achieve His will. In the remaining half of the

year we are led to grow in the Faith, as we endeavour to learn and profit by our Lord's teaching and example. And so we come back to today, hailing Christ as "King of Kings and Lord of Lords".

Our Anglican Church provides us with a year-round system of prayer and worship, based on a balanced programme of consideration of every aspect of the teaching of Holy Scripture. May we so use this programme that we may become knowledgeable and balanced in our Christian understanding and service.

AMEN