

13th December 2020 – Third Sunday in Advent

Anticipation

“There is no terror in a bang, only in the anticipation of it.”

Attributed to Alfred Hitchcock, Halliwell’s Filmgoer’s Companion

This is the third Sunday of Advent in the Church’s Christian Year, as we continue to anticipate the Incarnation. Alfred Hitchcock was right about anticipation. But his comment about terror could be equally applied to wonders and delights. The event that brings good things can be wonderful enough of itself. But the anticipation of it surely heightens our pleasure.

When I was small, there was an annual Agricultural Show in the Town Park in Fort William close to where I lived. I’m not the “farming type” and we had no pets at home, so animals didn’t figure in my upbringing. Maybe it was this which served to heighten my awareness of the pleasures the Agricultural Show would bring – horses and sheep; pigs and Highland cattle; dancers and races; piping competitions and parades; craft-stalls and home-baking. This was a veritable cornucopia of delight for a small boy.

So, when I saw tents being erected, bunting strung round the fencing, loudspeakers raised on poles, staging built for the dancers, pens aplenty organised for the livestock, my anticipation was unbounded. By the time the Saturday of the Show came along, I was as excited as a small boy could be. Anticipation mattered. I was never disappointed.

The Season of Advent is no different. We can see preparations being made. We can feel the build-up, sense changes, newness and arrangements, make decisions and organise what we can – especially now that we have a “five-day-window” to work with. It’s an anticipation time *par excellence*. And on this Sunday, the Church pauses again on its journey, to listen to the wisdom of the ages and to further heighten our anticipation of the meaning of Christ’s coming.

Because of Covid-19, this Christmas will be different from previous years. In church and community, with family and friends, it will take new and, perhaps, unexpected forms. But should the anticipation be different? Should our heightened expectations be diminished? I hope not, for, if we anticipate as we should, then we will be getting ready as we must.

A prayer for today

God of my Advent, the preparations continue. May my anticipation be worthy of the wonder and delight of what is yet to come. Amen.

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