**2021 to 2022**

**The Year of Luke**

Each of the four Gospels has its own value, but Luke’s is probably the nearest to our modern thought as we find in the New Testament. Luke is literate, meticulous and restrained. He leaves some marks of the eye-witness but does not obtrude. He was a Gentile and a medical doctor and puts great store in prayer and regards women as equal in value to men.

He published his Gospel about 65 A.D. using multiple sources including Mark and a collection of Jesus’ sayings. Tradition suggests that he obtained some details from Our Lady.

**The Season of Advent**

The weeks preceding Easter and Christmas were used to clean and prepare the Church and equipment in anticipation of the important festivals. This led to the less grand vestments being used during the lead-in, which is how we eventually came to associate particular colours with the seasons.

The Christmas festival has been observed from the 4th century A.D. and Advent from the 6th. This meant that from the beginning Advent was thought of in the same way as Lent which leads the unwary into a trap. Advent looks forward to Christmas, celebrating the historical Nativity, but also the eschatological judgement. Lent however does not look forward to Easter but to Good Friday. The Resurrection was a surprise, the birth of a child was not. Yet, without losing sight of that, both celebrate the beginning of life.

It will be granted that a birth is always anticipated and preparations have always to be made. But no birth is celebrated before it is successful and we should not anticipate Christmas before night falls on the 24th December. The Advent themes themselves have their own value and we should give them the weight they deserve. But our Advents do not just look back to Bethlehem but also forward to Armageddon. So the Readings and Propers reflect both past and future comings but the most important reason for the Nativity stories is to give clues as what to expect in the Passion.

Unlike Ordinary Time, both of the first two readings are chosen with links to the Gospels. They look forward to the coming of the Lord at the end of time, they contain expressions of hope and urge people to live Christian lives, they speak of Christian joy, and, on the fourth Sunday, they present Christ, the revelation of the mystery of God's saving plan.

**Advent 1 Year C**

**First Reading Jeremiah 33:14-16**

This passage is the writing of a disciple of Jeremiah, who used one of his genuine oracles (23;5-6) but in a later situation. Jerusalem had fallen with many Jews enslaved and many tempted to align themselves with their owners’ gods. The author promises a new order to those who are faithful.

The term 'branch,' in the Jewish tradition deriving from Isaiah 11: 1, designates the Messiah (see Zechariah 3:8; 6:12) and it suited Christians to continue this tradition.

The new reign will be marked, to an eminent degree, by wisdom, justice and righteousness and, in the days of the new king the reunited land will again know peace: 'In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will live in safety' (v. 16).

The name of the Messiah is *'The Lord-our-integrity’* making a deliberate contrast to the last pathetic king of Judah - Zedekiah, was a living contradiction of the meaning of his own name. Our author has reversed the two Hebrew words which make up Zedekiah’s name to indicate the greatest possible change with the past.

In the adapted oracle the New Jerusalem has taken the place of Israel and is now called by the new name of the messianic king (33:16).

The oracle fittingly introduces the season of Advent, of preparation. For Jesus is the 'root of David' (Revelation 5:5), who will inaugurate the new Jerusalem, the veritable kingdom of God (21:9-27).

**Responsorial Psalm: 24:4-5, 8-9, 10 & 14**

The idea of Yahweh's righteousness is contained in the key words "truth" (that is, God's fidelity to his promise) "Saviour" “upright” "faithfulness and love," and “covenant" The whole psalm speaks of patient waiting for the advent of the Lord.

**Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2**

Paul visited Thessalonica for the first time in the course of his second missionary journey, probably in the autumn of 46 or 47 A.D. He preached with such success that after a stay of no more than two or three months he was forced, because of Jewish threats, to leave the town. From Corinth, in concern for an infant Church that had so soon been left to itself, he sent Timothy to visit it. The latter returned to Corinth with a comforting report (3:6-10); the first part of our reading is Paul's heartfelt prayer for the future progress of his converts.

One reason that we read this letter in Advent, is because the Thessalonian Church was preoccupied with the ‘Parousia’ or the imminent arrival of the Lord. Some were worried about those who had died, fearing that they had missed out. Paul reassures them and then exhorts the members to live lives that will be ready to receive him.

He prays that the Lord Jesus, the immediate source of growth in love, may bring these Christians to a deepening of love within their community, a love that will then reach out to those outside as well.

**Gospel Luke 21:25-28 & 34-36**

From 66 A.D. Jewish rebels occupied Jerusalem, defying the Roman Army. In 68 A.D. Gallus led a punitive force against them but suffered an ignominious defeat, being annihilated in the pass of Beth-Horon. Roman honour would not allow this to pass and sent an overwhelming force to lay siege to Jerusalem in the autumn 70 A.D.

With its fall, Jews (which included Christians) were slaughtered or fled and the Roman army destroyed both the city and its Temple. 60 years later Hadrian built a temple dedicated to Jupiter on the site of the Crucifixion thus preserving it in the foundations.

This is the world backdrop for the events in the Gospel reading for to-day. It is the beginning of the end and the Parousia of the Son of Man. Luke’s Gospel is 18 years after Paul’s letter and he is conscious of the delay of the Parousia no longer sharing the view of the Thessalonians that it was around the corner. He is now convinced that Christians must readjust to a long period of waiting and persecution.

The two passages that are combined in our reading concern the coming of the Son of Man and a call to watchfulness.

Luke's apocalyptic description in the first paragraph uses typically Old Testament language; it has been influenced especially by Isaiah 13:10 and Psalm 65:7-8. Cosmic signs and distress on earth are the stock accompaniment of a divine intervention and especially of the divine judgement of humankind.

The cloud which accompanies Old Testament theophanies not only veils the glory of God (Habakkuk 3:4; Psalm 18:11) but also reveals it (Exodus 34:5). The cloud of the Parousia will also reveal Jesus' hitherto hidden glory. He comes in the cloud, the vehicle of God, to effect the divine work of judgment and redemption.

We must not forget that all this is apocalyptic imagery. The Parousia really means that there is a goal to the divine plan working itself out in history, a plan that is accomplished in and through the incarnate Son, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13).

Christians need not fear: the cosmic events will terrify the nations but reassure the followers of Christ that the time of persecution is ending - their 'redemption' is drawing near.

They have been liberated, set free from sin, by Christ. But they must not be presumptuous (21:34-36). Christians must be constantly on their guard against dissipation and distraction by worldly affairs (see 8:14; 12:22; 17:26-30): the end will come suddenly, and upon all without distinction.

Vigilance and prayer (see 18: 1) will win for them strength to support the dangers and temptations of the last trials and will enable them to stand (among the redeemed) in the presence of the Son of Man in his glory.

The Parousia may be delayed, but it will eventually involve us all. How one lives here and now determines how one will 'stand before the Son of Man.' These words of Luke, apparently so remote, are not at all without reference to our day-to-day lives. For trials can strike us suddenly, at any time; and the need of prayer is always with us.

Although Luke follows Mark in placing his apocalyptic passage just before the account of the passion narrative, he also draws much of its content from his special source. And unlike Mark, he has a long-term view of the Church as here to stay. In such a situation Luke calls his readers to watch and pray.