



St Marylebone Parish Church

Advent 4, 2018 8.30am BCP Holy Communion

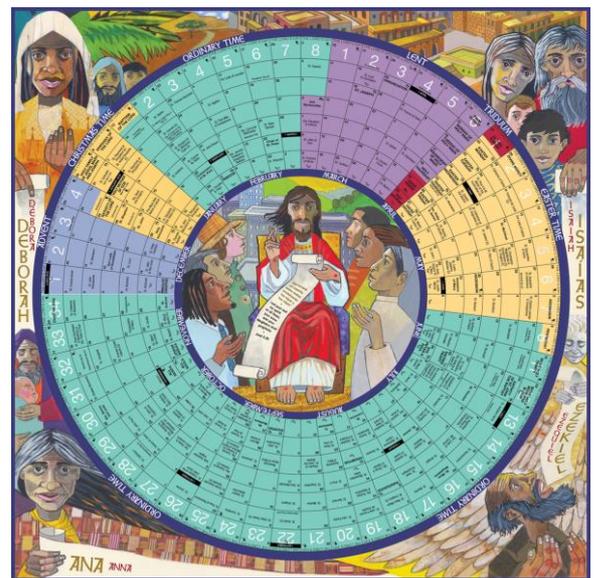
Liturgical time is a strange thing. The cycle of feasts and fasts, the story of our faith that we live in year by year.

It is easy to ignore it, or to only get the bits that affect the contents of our shopping trolley. This is a human tragedy, a diminishment of the *full* colour of a *full* life.

Instead, as Christians we are invited to see the greater context of the seasons. With the passing of life to death and to life again. As we live the year, each and every year, we are invited to dwell deeper and explore further the mystery of being alive. The mystery of life, with others and with God.

The Calendar of the Church's year – the Liturgical cycle - looks something like this:

A great cycle of life and colour. One could say something like 'we only really become Christian by doing it – by doing Christianity, we are Christians'. And it takes a lifetime, because the Christian year is not a record stuck on repeat going round and round.



Instead, more accurately it is a screw-thread that with each turn takes up deeper and deeper into the mystery of who we are and who God is.

It takes effort to acknowledge liturgical time, and to live a Christian year amongst the busy life of people today. To turn up every Sunday, to say our prayers each day, to take note and genuinely celebrate the seasons of the Church year, the Saints days. To properly prepare in Advent and Lent, and especially to celebrate the mysteries of the Lord's death and Resurrection by fully participating in Holy Week – not just turning up on Easter Sunday.

Living life as a properly liturgical person can feel like a laborious add-on to normal, 'real' time. Except in a funny way, the more one really inhabits life as a Christian, the more one comes to realise that liturgical time is not an artificial addition to normal time, but is actually more compelling, more *real*, more capable of communicating the truth of our experience than any other pattern of life or conception of our lives.

This is God's way, and therefore more truly *human* way of stepping through life.

Today, just hours short of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prayer Book readings transport us – strangely – to Christ's adult life. Liturgical time, in this instance seems to have got in a muddle. But not so, today the Prayer Book reminds us from the mouth of St John just who it is that we are to celebrate. This baby is not a cuddly toy to be 'oohed' and 'ahhed' at and put away. It is God himself coming to change everything – something we will only truly begin to understand if we go with Him – from the manger to the Temple at Candlemas, through His childhood to His Baptism, then His public ministry, His teaching and healing, to Jerusalem, to the Great and Holy Week: seven days leading up to the great liturgies of Easter, Pentecost and then on to Advent. So let's be encouraged and renewed in our vocation to live as Christians – not just up here (in our heads) but day by day – really living that turning of the year - discovering our humanity in Christ as we do life with Him.