

OF CHRIST THE KING AND CHRISTMAS PUDDINGS

When we were kids Dad would stomp around the house some mornings, or other times when he wanted to get us all organised as a family (and there were rather a lot of us) calling out “Stir your stumps!”. This rallying call was supposed to get us out of bed, for a pre breakfast dip in the sea, a yomp on Dartmoor or some such adventure. I don’t know where this phrase came from but I suspect it was one of the more repeatable ones from his days in the Army.

I found myself thinking about this long distant time when I was reflecting on next Sunday’s concluding Collect. Next Sunday of course is now usually referred to as Christ the King, the last of the Church’s year, before the next one starts on Advent Sunday. But many of you will remember it as “Stir Up Sunday” for two reasons. Traditionally this was the day people made their Christmas puddings, which, of course if you use the proper recipes requires a fair bit of stirring, a task that could be shared by several family members. But why THIS particular Sunday? It’s down to the Collect I’ve just mentioned. In the BCP it was used as the main one for the “Sunday Next Before Advent” and in CW it is placed at the end of the service, it goes like this:-

*Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people;
that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works,
may by you be plenteously rewarded;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen*

At one level the Collect reminds us to literally “stir our stumps” in readiness for a new Church year and the rapidly approaching season of Advent, with its focus on preparation and being ready to welcome the Christ child into our hearts at Christmas, but also on being ready to meet Christ whenever he returns. And on a domestic level people could take it as exhorting them to make their Christmas puddings among all the other things they feel they have to do....

So how does this tie in with our current naming for this Sunday, Christ the King? If I somehow got wind of the fact that Jesus, the ruler of my life, was going to drop in tomorrow afternoon (for instance) I would do everything in my power to prepare for this momentous event, wouldn’t you?

By way of a slight change of tack, there’s a lot of talk about how Christmas might get “cancelled”...what a load of hubristic nonsense! As if it was in anyone’s power to do this, it certainly is not for politicians and so on to tell us this is/ maybe the case. I take encouragement from the fact that the Creator of the Universe chose to be born as a human being, and it is not for us or governments to change this. It is completely possible though, that a lot of the festivities and events around Christmas WILL be different and it will look and feel very different. But we can and must celebrate the coming of the Light of the World and a new dawn of hope for us all. And for this we need to prepare ourselves by keeping a good Advent.

With my love and prayers

Alice