



Vox Clamantis

Bulletin of the Society of Saint Pius X in Scotland

December 2019

"The will to do, the soul to dare"

Dear Faithful,

The *Advent* of Our Lord is at once simple and threefold. It is simple, for it is the one same Son of God that is coming; it is threefold, because He comes at three different times and in three different ways.

'In the first coming,' says St. Bernard, 'He comes in the flesh and in weakness; in the second, He comes in spirit and in power; in the third, He comes in glory and in majesty; and the second coming is the means whereby we pass from the first to the third.'

Peter of Blois, says something similar: 'There are three comings of Our Lord; the first in the flesh, the second in the soul, the third at the judgement. The first was at midnight, according to those words of the Gospel: At midnight there was a cry made, Lo the Bridegroom cometh! But this first coming is long since past, for Christ has been seen on the earth and has conversed among men. We are now in the second coming, provided only we are such as that He may thus come to us; for He has said that if we love Him, He will come unto us and will take up His abode with us. So that this second coming is full of uncertainty to us; for who, save the Spirit of God, knows them that are of God? They that are raised out of themselves by the desire of heavenly things, know indeed when He comes; but whence He cometh, or whither He goeth, they know not. As for the third coming, it is most certain that it *will* be, most uncertain *when* it will be; for nothing is more sure than death, and nothing less sure than the hour of death. When they shall say, peace and security, says the apostle, then shall sudden destruction come upon them, as the pains upon her that is with child, and they shall not escape. So that the first coming was humble and hidden, the second is mysterious and full of love, the third will be majestic and terrible. In His first coming, Christ was judged by men unjustly; in His second, He ren-

ders us just by His grace; in His third, He will judge all things with justice. In His first, a lamb; in His last, a lion; in the one between the two, the tenderest of friends.'

This year I would like to continue the holy tradition of celebrating a votive Mass of Our Lady by candlelight at the unconscionably early hour of 7am in our church in Edinburgh. These Rorate Masses have a long tradition throughout Christendom and proved very popular last year with sometimes up to 25 people attending despite the bitter weather and dark streets.

Looking at ancient Advent traditions I found the following: In medieval and pre-medieval times, in the North, there was an early form of Nativity scenes called 'advent images' or a 'vessel cup'. They were a box, often with a glass lid that was covered with a white napkin, that contained two figures representing Our Lady and the baby Jesus. The box was decorated with ribbons and flowers (and sometimes apples). They were carried around from door to door. It was thought to be very unlucky if you hadn't seen a box before Christmas Eve! People paid the box carriers a halfpenny to see the box. John Knox would probably have taken a dim view but one wonders if he would prefer our contemporary Advent customs of 'Xmas parties' and shopping sprees. Rorate Masses seem a much better option.

With every good wish and blessing,

Rev. Sebastian Wall (Prior)

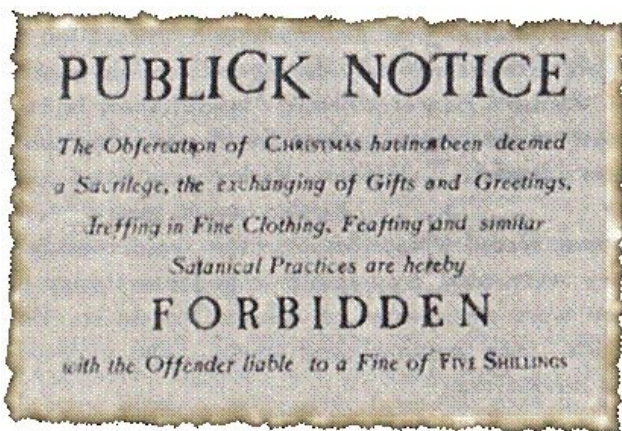




CHRISTMAS LOST



Last year we looked at a Scottish Christmas as it was celebrated in the thousand years of Christianity before the violent rupture with Christ's Church in the 16th century. As we are also examining the historical process of this rupture in our series of articles on the so-called Protestant Reformation in Scotland, I thought it might be an idea to have a look at the history of Christmas in Scotland after 1560 to see how the essentially pagan winter celebrations of the time before the Christian millennium passed, ironically by what were considered religious ordinances, to the basic pagan celebrations we see today in Scotland.



Last year we saw the act of Parliament abolishing the keeping of Christmas and this time I would like to start by quoting the First Book of Discipline written by John Knox (and five other “John”s including Spottiswood). This document predates the act of Parliament and, indeed, was not placed before Parliament at all, merely a thinly attended convention of nobles and lairds in January 1561. Since Mary Queen of Scots had declined to ratify the acts of Parliament and the state of the law was uncertain it had little authority, therefore, a Second Book of Discipline was necessary after the deposition of the Queen in 1578.

The intentions of the usurpers, however, was clear:

“By the contrary doctrine [i.e. the Catholic Faith] we understand whatsoever men by lawes, counsellis, or constitutions, have imposed upon the consciences of men, without the expresse commandement of God’s word, such as be the vowes to chastitie, forswearing of marriage, binding of men and women to severall and disguised apparrells, to the superstitious observation of fasting dayes, difference of meat for conscience sake, prayer for the dead, and keeping of holy dayes of certaine Saints commanded

by man, such as be all those that the Papists have invented, as the feasts (as they terme them) of the Apostles, Martyrs, Virgines, **of Christmasse**, Circumcision, Epiphanie, Purification, and other fond feastes of our Ladie: which things because in God’s Scriptures they neither have commandement nor assurance, we judge them utterly to be abolished from this Realme: affirming farther that the obstinate maintainers and teachers of such abominations ought not to escape the punishment of the civill Magistrate”.

In 1573 the newly created ‘Church of Scotland’ in its General Assembly confirmed the abolishing of “all days that hereto have been kept holy except the Sabbath day, such as **Yule day**, saints days and such others”.

The Episcopalians temporarily restored some feasts and Christmas itself was brought back in 1617 by James VI, but already the association of Church celebrations with a Winter holiday was weakening and, though grateful for the holiday, hardly anyone went to church.

And it was a scant 20 years before the Act of Parliament of 1640, following the General Assembly’s ban of 1638, which stated that “keeping the Yule vacance has interrupted the cause of justice in this kingdom” and went on “the Kirk within this kingdom is now purged of all superstitious observation of days... therefore the said estates have discharged and simply discharge the foresaid Yule vacance and all observation thereof in time coming”.

As the 17th century wore on, protest came from curious quarters. Pupils in schools and colleges wanted a Yuletide holiday and went to extraordinary lengths to get it, even barring the doors to the buildings so the masters could not get in. These had been prohibited from granting pupils a holiday by the General Assembly in 1645.

Later, in 1650, the Dunfermline session summoned Bessie Coupar in Grange, Bessie



Sands in Lymekills and William Malcolm in Mylnburn “for superstitious absenting from work on Yule day”.

England suffered a similar puritanical drive under Cromwell, who similarly banned Christmas celebrations. Charles II allowed them again in 1660 in England but with the arrival of William and Mary, they took advice from the Scottish Parliament and in 1690 an ‘Act discharging the Yule Vacance’, re-iterating that of 1640, stated that ‘The king and queen’s majesties by the advice of the estates of parliament have discharged and simply discharge the forsaid Yule vacance with all custom and observation thereof’. This in itself was officially repealed in 1712 and legislation regarding Bank holidays were now made in Westminster though the State’s decrees and permissions made little difference to the Kirk’s antipathy to what they considered a religious festival rather than a financial or social one.



Indeed, what was to change (and very slowly at that) the attitude of Scots to Christmas was not the restoration of the hierarchy in 1878 but the secular influences of the English monarch, Queen Victoria, who had married a German and was heavily influenced by European celebrations. These then passed to ‘polite’ society both north and south of the Tweed. Similarly, the popularity of the writer, Charles Dickens, with his idealised presentation of Christmas (think Tiny Tim and the Christmas goose), had an enormous influence on society, leading some Scottish churches even to hold Christmas services, including carols! The Wee



Frees objected of course but what was now starting to happen was a curious attachment to a date, together with its association with gift giving and freedom from work whereas the Mass of Christ, ‘Christmas’ had gone, or was confined to the small number of Catholics. They, of course, had not had a regular Sunday Mass for centuries, let alone been able to keep the 36 holy days of obligation then in force (until 1910 when they were reduced by St. Pius X) so their celebration of this particular holy day was perforce influenced by their surroundings.

There are all sorts of anecdotes from people who can remember the celebration of Christmas within living memory before 1958 when a public holiday was finally granted in Scotland. Rural life went on. Work on the farms and in the village, the shops were open, even the mills were working. Children, of course, went to school. There was no Christmas dinner, no Christmas pudding, it was like every other day of the week. There was still in the mind of the dour Presbyterian that Christmas was a heathen celebration or something that only Catholics or the English did.

Even when the public holiday came in 1958 (and 1974 for Boxing Day) the Scots in some places were reluctant to take it up since employers often deducted the days from their Hogmanay holidays to give the extra one on the 25th. And so, 400 years of separation of the religious significance from its public celebration have made Scotland indistinguishable from its Southern neighbour and in some ways even more secular in its celebration of the Winter break. Tinsel, ‘Santa’ and reindeer have replaced the Infant Jesus and His Blessed Mother in the decorations, Nativity plays have become an opportunity to teach the children about ‘unmarried mothers’ and a staple of mirth and social jockeying. It thus remains for the small number of practising Catholics to take joy, after four weeks of austerity in Advent, in the birth of our Saviour as best as they are able. A Blessed Christmas to you all!

Mass Schedule

	CARLUKE	GLASGOW	EDINBURGH
Sunday 1 st December — 1 st Sunday of Advent		10.30am	11am
Monday 2 nd December	11am		
Tuesday 3 rd December			6.30pm
Wednesday 4 th December			7am
Thursday 5 th December	11am		
Friday 6 th December (<i>First Friday</i>)		6.30pm	
Saturday 7 th December (<i>First Saturday</i>)		11am	11am
Sunday 8 th December — Immaculate Conception		10.30am	11am
Monday 9 th December	11am		
Tuesday 10 th December			6.30pm
Wednesday 11 th December			7am
Thursday 12 th December	11am		
Friday 13 th December		6.30pm	
Saturday 14 th December		11am	11am
Sunday 15 th December — 3 rd of Advent <i>Gaudete</i>		10.30am	11am
Monday 16 th December	11am		
Tuesday 17 th December			6.30pm
Wednesday 18 th December			7am
Thursday 19 th December	11am		
Friday 20 th December		6.30pm	
Saturday 21 st December		11am	11am
Sunday 22 nd December — 4 th Sunday of Advent		10.30am	11am
Monday 23 rd December	11am		
Tuesday 24 th December	11am		
Wednesday 25 th December Nativity of Our Lord		11am	Midnight
Thursday 26 th December	11am		
Friday 27 th December			
Saturday 28 th December			
Sunday 29 th December — In Christmas Octave		10.30am	11am
Monday 30 th December	11am		
Tuesday 31 st December	11am		

Contact details:

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Resident priests:

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Rev. Fr. Anthony Wingerden

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EDINBURGH

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If you require any further information concerning one of these places, or need to talk to a priest e.g. in case of emergency for the Sacraments, please ring the phone number mentioned in contact details.