

So, Christmas Day on a Monday, this year!

Easter Before Christmas?

This year we have the curiosity of Christmas day coming after a Sunday (it must happen every seven years, I guess), and the Christian Church has long considered that each Sunday is an Easter, and recalls, and celebrates, the Lord's rising; and a curious thing, the Church's year is, because, of course, in each year Easter occurs before Christmas.

Somehow, the festival of the Incarnation seems to feel like the crowning, and end, of the year, while Easter just feels like a stop-off point not long after Christmas, with the majority of the year stringing on after it, with all those Sundays After Trinity, which can, at times, appear a little meaningless.

Of course, it will be quickly pointed out how the Church's year follows the Christianisation of ancient pagan festivals, related – not to Christian theology or chronology – but to the reality of the cycle of nature: darkness and seeming-death, followed by rebirth and revitalisation (Christian festivals, the Christian Year, seems to reflect northern Europe more than where the Church was born - what we now call the Middle East).

We think of the season of Advent as a progressive moving to the light, the Light of Christ coming into the world (and we have services where we all light candles in a darkened church) – yet, in reality, the days are still getting shorter and darker as Advent progresses (presumably, in the southern hemisphere this is not so). Perhaps the seeming-paradoxes in the Christian year can serve as reminders that we live in a paradoxical time – between the life and saving act of Jesus Christ, and the end of the present age and of all things temporal. Jesus, in his earthly life, inaugurated the Kingdom, yet it is not fully, finally, here.

We are in the time of waiting, but waiting having the *promise* of the final consummation, but not yet in the midst of it, or beyond it. What we are in is technically called *proleptic eschatology*; and it can be a bit daunting, at times, making the present – this life/world – very disconcerting; but we do *know* that all that is good and final *is* coming, and that then, “there”, we will see him “face to face”.

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