

Chaplain's Assembly – Father Philip Murphy SSC
18th December 2014
“Advent - Preparation”

A narrated version of the PowerPoint presentation of this talk can be seen here:
http://youtu.be/4HW80R_bFTc

Reading: Philemon 4:4-7

One of the most popular YouTube videos at the moment involves: a man, his dog and a spider outfit which the dog wears. You may have seen it recently, as the man dresses his dog up as a giant spider, and lets him loose on the unsuspecting public.

<http://youtu.be/YoB8t0B4jx4>

I think that one of the most impressive things about the video clip is just how much preparation the man has gone to. He hasn't just dressed his dog up in the spider outfit. He has also made props of body parts hanging around, he has created enormous spider webs, and he has taken time to decide where he would do each practical joke, and perhaps also had to wait long periods for people to come along.

Preparation, we are told, is the key to success. It certainly will be fundamental to the success of any examinations coming up, preparation through study and revision, and before that, preparation by taking an active part in lessons and learning. If we fail to prepare, we prepare to fail. What is true of us, is also true of God. As we prepare, in this Advent season, to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ nearly two thousand years ago, let us not forget the preparation which God made for that event.

A preparation which goes back much more than two thousand years. In Abraham, some five thousand years ago, God began to prepare his people for the coming of Christ. He asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son, but before Abraham did so, God stopped him. And in place, there was a ram, a male sheep, which was provided. So in place of a human sacrifice, God provided a lamb for the sacrifice.

Then we have the Passover. For anyone who has seen Ridley Scott's new film – Exodus: Gods and Kings, there is a very clear presentation of the Passover. God tells Moses that all the first-born of every family will be killed. However, God also tells Moses that all of the Israelites are to sacrifice a lamb and to put the blood of the lamb on the doors of their houses, and he would pass over them and their children would not be killed. Once again, God provided a lamb for the sacrifice and to save his people.

We fast forward to the time of Jesus when he was baptised. His cousin, John the Baptist, looked at him and told the people that Jesus was the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world. Once again, in the form of Jesus, God provided a lamb for the sacrifice on the cross, to save his people. To save us.

So much so that at every Eucharist we say or sing an ancient hymn of the Church which reminds us that, as the priest breaks the bread for all to share, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Over thousands of years God prepared for the gift of his Son, who would save us and make us free: through the prophets who foretold him; through the Virgin Mary, who longed for him with love beyond all telling and through John the Baptist who sang of his coming and proclaimed his presence when he came.

These thousands of years of preparation are what we celebrate in just four weeks during Advent. I pray that as we approach Christmas, you may know just how much preparing of the way God has done in order to show you the love he has for all of you, in Christ Jesus.