

Sunday Morning Resources

Tuesday 24 December - Christmas Eve

Lectionary Readings (depending on the kind of service you are leading, you may use one or more of the following readings – however, you **must** use the gospel reading, as this is what the homily is based on)

Isaiah 52.7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1. 1-4 (5-12); John 1.1-14

TODAY THERE IS A SHORT HOMILY REFLECTION ON JOHN 1 1-14 AND THERE IS AN INTERACTIVE HOMILY WHICH USES THE VISUAL AID OF A TANGERINE ORANGE. PLEASE SELECT THE MOST APPROPRIATE VERSION.

SHORT HOMILY

Today's homily has been written by **Amanda Tuck, LLM** in the **Orwell Group Benefice**

John 1:1-14

Christmas Eve - and the BIG day is almost here.

Gifts, secretly wrapped, will soon be revealed.

The gift of Christmas, the start of a new life, is offered to us all. God made human, born as a babe and dwelling on earth. That lies at the heart of this season.

Today we have a chance to ponder deep elements lying quietly at the core of Christmas.

In John's Gospel reading, 1:1 his ***hymn of creation*** we hear, in his first words, just a hint of just how incredible God's creation and our role in it is. God is offering us everything.

John, in his first poetic images, explains that Jesus truly is the Son of God.

This one statement is enough to encourage theological heavyweights to debate deep meaning all their lives. But that needn't deter us from thinking about this too.

Jesus, we learn – is a close and mystical participant in Divine life.

He lies at the heart of John's vision of eternity too. Part of his story of creation stretches back to before our world, while looking forward to its end.

Jesus is the **Logos**. The Word. He is revealed as God, the creator of the universe. God's power, reach and omnipotence, is to be glimpsed by us at this Christmas Season. The creator is seen, through the person of Jesus.

This mystery lies at the centre of our faith. John puts it simply. God the creator, a powerful, loving and compassionate being, is always there for us. An unknowable God, wanting to be known, and openly offering us each a vision of eternity.

Pause

Eternity. The Universe. ...And then there is us.

You and me- right here and now.

We are here today to mark the birth of a vulnerable baby. The human Jesus soon to be born to an unmarried mother in an occupied land. Jesus, our light to live by; he who banishes our darkness.

John makes us think this way from his first few poetic words.

There is no question.

He outlines our central Christian truth; that Jesus **is** the person through whom God has spoken via Prophets.

It makes sense of John's Gospel. It flows through his Good News.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God" we hear.

John tells us this confidently. He states it as a fact. This is never up for debate.

A profound theological truth.

Human beings are God's own people.

God, the Word, created us.

The **Word, Logos suggests** an **agent** of creation. A **something from nothing** creator. Logos, the Godly being, who created us and everything else on our amazing, beautiful, if scarred, and lonely planet.

None of us, given all the tools in the world could create anything as beautiful.

Nothing as fruitful.

God is present in creation. He sent his son, Jesus to us.

We find ourselves today, staring at John's central creed, facing the **idea that the Word is God, and the word was God.**

Words.

John's words are unique and special.

So fruitful.

Words of God's son Jesus, they grew unseen, quietly, steadily, gaining meaning as the Christian Church developed.

John wants us to grasp the profound significance of Jesus's life and death. At Jesus's birth John is shouting to us that something new, and profound is happening. World shattering.

Giving universal perspective to Jesus's story, which he unfolds.

We are invited to recall who Jesus was and what he did. From a transcendent and eternal vantage point.

We start at the beginning. Contemplating the hugeness, the unimaginable idea of all creation, and work outwards, or inwards from there.

That is quite a notion to wrestle with.

In the prologue to John's Gospel, Jesus is made known to us.

He is quite simply **one with, by and through** the Divine Word of God.

Light, and darkness, life and death.

Here we first meet a child, who becomes a man.

Who is also God.

Here we have light and life created by God before and after creation.

Revealed this Christmas Eve for us.
It is that simple.
It is that profound.
Amen

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THE LONGER INTERACTIVE HOMILY USING A TANGERINE.

Today's homily has been written by Amanda Tuck, LLM in the Orwell Group Benefice

John 1:1-14

(A visual aid of a tangerine may help here)

Christmas Eve - and the BIG day is almost here.

Gifts, secretly wrapped, will soon be revealed.

The gift of Christmas, the start of a new life, is offered to us all. God made man, born as a babe and dwelling on earth. That lies at the heart of this season.

Just like this health-giving fruit has a centre, a heart. *(show tangerine)* You may even have eaten one today. A simple tangerine to consider today - A fruit offering us seasonal sweetness and joy.

It filters out pure water, the stuff of life.

This tangerine offers us an analogy, a chance to ponder deep elements lying quietly at the core of Christmas.

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This mystery lies at the centre of our faith.

John puts it simply. God the creator, a powerful, loving and compassionate being, is always there for us. An unknowable God, openly offering us each a vision of eternity.

Pause

Eternity. The Universe. ...And then there is us.

You and me- right here and now.

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A profound theological truth.

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The **Word, Logos suggests** an **agent** of creation. A **something from nothing** creator.

Logos, the Godly being, who created us and everything else on our amazing, beautiful, if scarred, and lonely planet.

Everything, including this small tangerine- (Show)

Have you ever peeled a tangerine and come across the central white bit which runs from top to bottom? It is called the **endocarp**.

It might enable us to visualise God's created **Word**. **Maybe it could help us to think of Logos** as that pure and untouched, undefiled centre of a juice filled tangerine.

Why not dig a little deeper and explore this image?

Deeper into that delicious God-given citrus fruit.

None of us, given all the tools in the world could create anything as beautiful.

Nothing as fruitful.

Consider the pure and unblemished centre of this simple tangerine.

That unconsidered, unknown, transformative white structural centre at the core of this fruit's structure. The endocarp. Reaching out, from top to bottom. Placed central in the structure, like the centre of the earth's axis.

This is a tiny wonder of creation and evolution, its core supplying all it needs to those delicious tangerine segments.

Unappreciated, the **endocarp** has been silently changing matter to create an explosion of flavour, of watery deliciousness. Each cell crammed with even more than the pure water of life.

That unconsidered central part: the fruit's umbilical cord, is something we happily disregard.

Just as some disregard God.

It is thrown away as we consume our succulent fruit. When we take it into ourselves.

This endocarp forms a minute element in the unimaginably huge jigsaw of life. A complex creation which has been present from the mysterious start of everything.

This endocarp has been playing its role within the botanical miracle which is a growing plant. Genetically, it might be traced back to the start of things.

To the beginning. To God's creation.

This endocarp does its job unseen in the heart of our delicious fruit. Just like God, who is central to all who believe.

God is present in creation. He sent his son, Jesus to us.

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Giving universal perspective to Jesus's story, which he unfolds.

We are invited to recall who Jesus was and what he did. From a transcendent and eternal vantage point.

We start at the beginning. Contemplating the hugeness, the unimaginable idea of all creation, and work outwards, or inwards from there.

That is quite a notion to wrestle with.

Much bigger and less manageable than a simple tangerine, isn't it?

But small things can contain hidden truths and vast secrets.

In the prologue to John's Gospel, Jesus is made known to us.

He is quite simply **one with, by and through** the Divine Word of God.

Light, and darkness, life and death.

Here we first meet a child, who becomes a man.

Who is also God.

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Amen

Suggested intercessions

We think today about our Lord Emmanuel being born into a poor and vulnerable human family. Emmanuel means simply, "**God is with us**".

So, after each intercession we say...

Emmanuel, God is with us...

The response today.

We welcome you

Today we celebrate God coming to us,

Being born among us as a human child.

We bring to you today the needs of our damaged world.

We pray for all those who have taken a leap of faith

They have resolved to know God more deeply.

(silence)

Emmanuel, God is with us...

We welcome you

We pray for those who are spending this season

Apart from those they love.

We pray for those who find these Christmas celebrations difficult.

Those who are feeling deep sorrow or fear for the future.

(silence)

Emmanuel, God is with us...

We welcome you

We pray for peace in your Holy Land, and in Ukraine,

We pray for peace throughout our world,

Especially where there is open hostility and anger.

Where families are torn apart by conflict

Thinking of the children and the vulnerable caught up in war.

(silence)

Emmanuel, God is with us...

We welcome you

We pray for those working hard over Christmas

For those in hospitals and the caring professions.

We thank you for their dedication.

We think at this time of nativity of those giving birth today.

And pray for their homes and all their families.

(silence)

Emmanuel, God is with us...

We welcome you

We thank you again, Heavenly Father, for all the wonderful gifts you give us.

From the unimaginably large gift of creation to the tiny gift of succulent fruit.

We thank you for sending us your son, Jesus Christ,

To be our guide, our mentor and our loving friend.

Merciful Father

Accept these prayers for the sake of your son, our saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Suggested hymns/songs

Christmas Favourites will no doubt dominate here!

Silent Night

Unto us a Child is Born

Go, Tell it on the Mountain

Behold the Great creator

Lord, Jesus Christ.

Activities to accompany the service:

Small things can contain hidden truths and vast secrets....

My suggestion would be to ask younger people to thoughtfully each handle a Tangerine fruit.

- To get them to place it in their hands and think of it as a symbol of God's created world. *What makes you think of it as a world?*
- To use each of their senses while handling it. *What can you see, hear, touch, taste, smell?*
- To wonder and discuss whether any human has or could ever create something so beautiful. *What might you need to do this as a craft? Would it work?*
- To imagine whether anyone has ever seen the centre (endocarp) of that specific fruit before. *Has something special been revealed to you? What is it for? What does it do?*
- To consider the gift of life revealed through seasonal fruit. To think about the unwrapping of the fruit (mention presents!) as a part of the glorious gift God gives us. *What gifts does God give us that we take for granted?*

Then to think of the Nativity. The gift of a much-loved newborn baby, and to think about how carefully any baby must be handled. To thank God for the gift of a new life, a new opportunity to think about God's amazing creation as it is right here, and existing right now in each of their homes.

To think about how precious baby Jesus was and is for us. A wonderful gift we ought not to take for granted.

If you are looking for resources to accompany the service for engaging younger children, then there are lots of online resources. The following free to access/download resources may be useful starting points:

- <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/MessyChurchBRF/>
- <https://www.faithinkids.org/>
- reflectionary.org – lectionary-based resources
- engageworship – in particular 'Area 52' for lectionary-based material
- <https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/product-category/primary-age-5-11/> (weekly@lectionary resource)