

Stirring Stuff



The Sunday before the beginning of Advent has traditionally been called 'Stir up Sunday'.

It was often taken as the cue to start making the Christmas Pudding with a good stir of the ingredients. These days we would probably use something more sophisticated than a wooden spoon.

The origin of the name is not really to do with making food but the tradition of the prayer said in Church on that Sunday.

There is an ancient Latin Collect that was used at Mass in the centuries before the Reformation. It was then translated as a Collect in the Book of Common Prayer by the Church of England.

The first words in English are:

Stir up the will of your faithful

and so the Sunday on which Christians heard these words acquired the name.

These days Catholics (and Anglicans) celebrate Christ the King on the Sunday before Advent to mark the end of the Year by remembering that all time and all creation belongs to him. We rejoice in the fact that Jesus is our humble and gentle ruler.

This meant that the Collect traditionally said on the last Sunday before Advent was replaced by one describing Christ as King. But the Church wanted to hang on to the old prayer so now we pray it on weekdays during the week that follows.

In the Collect we ask God to stir up our wills so that we may be,

striving more eagerly to bring your divine work to fruitful completion

At this time of year, as the nights draw in and we pull closer the comfort blanket of nights in front of the Television, this prayer reminds us to stir ourselves for there is much to strive for and a lot to be done.

This is not simply the headlong rush into the crowds thronging the aisles of supermarkets and the bending low to reach the last pack of party food in the store freezer. There are other aisles to walk, other places to bend back and knee.

The prayer speaks of bringing 'divine work to fruitful completion'. We recognise that the work we can do is divine – God's work. Here at the end of the year we think of how we may bring the work of God to completion in small every day ways.



The end of the year is a time to think of those who are fearful of the future or who feel they are at the end of their tether. The end of the year is a time to support those who feel their world has ended in the loss of a loved one, a job, a way of life.



We admit we cannot solve every problem and at times all we can do is be with somebody in their difficulty. On other occasions fruitful completion is about how we deal with a situation.

Sometimes what feels like a disaster or desolation can also be a moment for new growth, new friendship, even new vision.

Completing divine work needs eagerness and inspiration – and for these I need God to give the mixed-up pudding that I am a good stir.