In the Orthodox Church the 2nd Sunday before Lent is the Sunday of the Last Judgment or Meatfare Sunday, since it is traditionally the last day before Easter for eating meat. Orthodox Christians observe a fast from meat all week, but still eat dairy products and eggs until the start of Great Lent, and then go vegetarian for lent. This gives *‘food’* for thought.

**WE COULD CALL OUR 2nd before Lent - CREATION SUNDAY**

The Sunday lectionary readings do, on the whole, allow us to focus on the central Christian belief that God does all things out of love towards his creation. I think creation is like a dance, a dance of love, wisdom, life, death, growth and beauty, all these intertwine and dance with each other, and can we imagine that God through Jesus as the Word and the Holy Spirit dances through this.

Do you believe in a God who dances?

John of Damascus (writing in the 7th century) uses the Greek word “perichoresis” to describe what is going on with Wisdom in our reading from Proverbs. “Perichoresis” has the same root as “choreography.”

I believe our readings today present us with a God who wants us to dance within creation.

Our first reading comes from a time when the traditional idea of God was shattered. Israel conquered by Babylon had lost all the symbols that identified them as a people. Jerusalem was captured; shattering the notion that the City of God was protected, untouchable. The king of Judah was imprisoned in Babylon, taking away the mediator of God’s blessings, the temple was destroyed, removing the means by which people related to God. The Israelites were taken from their land into far off exile, removed from their inheritance, - the land God had promised to their ancestors.

Through wisdom God’s people can begin to dance again with God.

In our reading from Proverbs it is as though wisdom (portrayed in a feminine form) danced at the beginning of creation, we read “The Lord conceived me at the beginning . . . . Ages ago I was established, from the start, before the earth began”

Woman Wisdom is of divine origin! God, like a mother, gives birth to Wisdom prior to creating the world. Then Woman Wisdom co-operates with God in the creative process.

Some commentators advocate that Wisdom is the Holy Spirit, others say Wisdom was created by God in her own form and image of God.

In my mind I can imagine the dance of wisdom in creation, the wisdom in how all things were formed, wisdom in the beauty of creation.

Our second reading, from Colossians, identifies this wisdom with Christ – and then with us, Christ is the first born of this Wisdom and we are to be like him. This reading is sometimes known as the Christ hymn, as a poem which can be set to music – music and words to enable the glory of Christ to dance through us.

John’s Gospel –‘ In the beginning’ takes us right back to Genesis and in this John wants us to see his book is about the creator God acting in a new way with his creation. It is about the way in which the long story which began in Genesis reached the climax the creator had always intended. In Genesis 1 the climax is the creation of humans, in this the climax is the arrival of a human being, the Word become ‘flesh’.

When we speak a word, it is, in a sense, part of us. It is a breath that comes from inside us, making a noise that we give it with our throats, mouth and tongue. When people hear it, they assume we had intended it. But you said……….. people comment if our deeds do not match up to our words. We remain responsible for the words we say. And yet our words have a life which seems independent of us. When people hear them, words can change the way they think and live. When we consider the words – I love you. or it’s time to go, or you’re fired – these words create new situations.

In the old testament God regularly acts by means of his ‘word’. What he says happens. Psalm 33 v6 – By the word of the Lord, the heavens were made. In Isaiah 55v10-11 we read ‘God’s word will go out of his mouth and bring life, healing and hope to Israel and the whole creation. William Barclay says that is part of what lies behind John’s choice of ‘Word’ here, as a way of telling us who Jesus is.

The word of God danced through creation and now that word becomes flesh – that is became human, became one of us.

The Holy Trinity, icon by Andrei Rublev (The dance of the Trinity: perichoresis). The ancient Greek Fathers depict the Trinity as a Round Dance: an event that has continued for seven thousand years, and seven times seven thousand, and beyond the time when humans first knew time. “An infinite current of love streams without ceasing, to and fro: gliding from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This circular current of Trin­itarian love continues night and day”.

LET US observe this divine dance, let this dance surround us and let this dance weave through us. In this we experience the love and beauty of God.