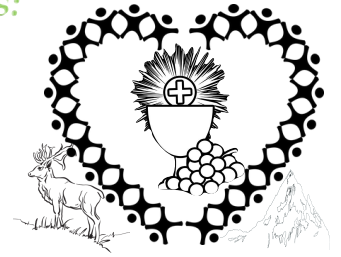


*Our Current Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:*

*Fernie on Saturday evening at 5pm,  
Sparwood at 9am Sunday morning,  
and Elkford at 4pm Sunday afternoon.*



*The Sunday Mass is broadcast via Zoom from Fernie & Sparwood (see below).*

*23rd/24th October*

## **Dear All,**

Thumper and myself are back in the valley, and I must say, it is looking as beautiful as ever. The picture below was taken half way between Sparwood and Fernie looking west on Wednesday evening. When I saw the sun's rays breaking through the cloud, all I could think of was God's grace pouring down upon us, *(but of course, I am sure that God's grace also falls on other parts of B.C..)*



## **A New Word: Synodal**

Last week I introduced you to this new word (or at least, new to me), Synodal which means "Walking together on a particular path". I think this word is going to be coming up again and again, so it might be worth having a little look at its Greek roots.

*Synodal has two parts to it, first in Greek 'syn' means 'together', as in synchronised or in a car's gearbox, synchromesh, but in 'Synodal' it particularly means 'walking together'. The second half 'odal' [or technically in Greek the word 'hodos'] means 'on a particular way', the word 'exodus' comes from the same roots, and staying with the car theme, so does 'odometer' which is an instrument to measure [meter] your path of travel. Thus one gets, "Walking together on a particular path"*



Pope Francis has now opened a synodal journey inviting the whole Church – *in its widest sense* – to join in. The journey will have three phases of consultations and discernment, firstly in the diocese, then on a continental level and finally on a universal level, It will culminate with an assembly in Rome in October 2023.

***So what is it, and equally importantly, what isn't it!***

*“Pope Francis invites the entire Church to reflect on a theme that is decisive for its life and mission: “It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.” This journey, which follows in the wake of the Church’s “renewal” proposed by the Second Vatican Council, is both a gift and a task: by journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made, the Church will be able to learn through Her experience which processes can help Her to live **communion**, to achieve **participation**, to open Herself to **mission**. Our “journeying together” is, in fact, what most effectively enacts and manifests the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.”*

(Part of the opening paragraph of the Vatican’s ‘Preparatory Document’.)

What this process **isn't** is a new programme or teaching; rather it is a way we live out the teachings that we already have in the scriptures and in the Church’s traditions. This process isn't something new that has to be added on to the Church, rather it is the Church manifesting what she is. First and foremost what we are asked to do is listen to the Holy Spirit; the importance of this cannot be over emphasised as this journey is a journey of prayer.

This week our bishop, Bp. Gregory, has said that he will write to us and explain how he sees this journey being made in this diocese, so we look forward to that.

The themes of Communion, Participation and Mission are at the heart of how the Church sees herself. A number of times we are told that “‘*Journeying together*’ is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.” ¶30. This listening invites us to full and active participation both in the liturgy and in the life of the parish, and then it sends us out. Remember that the word ‘Mass’ comes from the old Latin word ‘missa’ which means ‘to be sent out’; of course ‘missa’ itself comes from the Latin ‘missio’ or in English ‘mission’.

*“In creating the opportunity for listening and dialogue on the local level through this Synod, Pope Francis is calling the Church to rediscover its deeply synodal nature. This rediscovery of the synodal roots of the Church will involve a process of humbly learning together how God is calling us to be as the Church in the third millennium.”* ¶1.1 Vademecum

And God’s Spirit speaks to us in many ways and through many people, and as we see in both the Old and New Testaments it is often the weak and lowly who are the clearest instruments of the Holy Spirit. Not least is the fact that God chose a simple young girl, Mary, to be the mother of Christ. She had no status or honours, but rather God “looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant.” (Luke 1:48)

### ***My Hope and Dream for this Journey***

My personal hope is that this listening to the Spirit will go far beyond our church walls; that we will seek to hear the Spirit talk to us through others, for example, those who have previously ‘walked together’ with us but have now chosen not to. So this might be a journey where we will reach out and ask to listen in a new way to family members or others who now don’t choose to be part of the Church.

Can I share with you a small incident that happened some time ago when I was out camping: I was in the middle of nowhere when I met a man exploring the area. As normal when I meet people, once the conversation progressed passed the niceties, I introduced myself as a Catholic Priest. From the look on his face I at once knew that I had touched something in his life. He went on to tell me the following story.



Pope Francis  
in his book  
*‘Let us Dream’*  
talks of  
“a respectful,  
mutual listening,  
free of ideology  
and predetermined  
agendas”.

*The man had a son who was really into ice hockey. The son was also going through the parish Confirmation programme. The parish priest said that if the kids didn't attend all the Confirmation classes then they couldn't be Confirmed. His son, along with three of his friends who were on the same hockey team, all missed a number of the lessons. So come Confirmation and the visit of the Bishop, the other three parents gave the parish priest \$20 and their kids were Confirmed. This man was not prepared to make this payment as he thought it was wrong, so his son wasn't Confirmed. That was the last time he went to church.*

This incident was probably many decades ago, but I did wonder if this man had ever had the opportunity to tell a priest about what had happened? I judged that first and foremost he simply seemed to want to tell me and for me to listen, which I did. The Synodal Journey will involve this same type of unconditional listening.

My 'dream' would be for the Synodal Journey to be able to hear from people like this man, people who have not rejected our faith and beliefs, but have been hurt by our actions. Being **listened to** is healing, and **hearing** can be humbling and might start to move our hearts. In Mark's gospel, the cry of the father with the sick child "I believe; help my unbelief!" (9:26) might be the basis of our cry to the Holy Spirit "We believe; help that frailty that has meant that we, as a Church, haven't always lived our belief." That would be quite a journey.

## **Stay Safe – Think of Others**

This week Bp. Gregory reminded all of us for the need for extra caution in our interactions, and very particularly, to have an abundance of caution when we are in church. He reminds us that "*Masks are mandatory for all people 12 years and older regardless of vaccination status*".

He also reiterated the Pope's call for everyone who can to be vaccinated saying, "*Everyone eligible is encouraged to be vaccinated as vaccinations are the surest way of protecting oneself **and especially others** from COVID-19.*"

He again said that when we are in church our prime concern should be the wellbeing of others, including the priest, and we should not do anything that increases the risk to others being exposed to Covid.

Here is a sobering story that was told to me this week: A family of four was heading off for the weekend. During their time away they knew they would be interacting with a number of other people, so when two of the family members went down with cold symptoms they thought, to be safe, they should all go and have a Covid test. When the results came back they were amazed: the two family members who had been unwell came back with a negative test meaning that they didn't have Covid, the two family members who **weren't** ill came back with positive tests meaning that, while asymptomatic, they were carrying Covid.

This should remind us all that being well is no guarantee that we are Covid free, so at any point we might have the virus – symptoms or no symptoms – so should do all we can to protect others, particularly from our breath or saliva.

## Cleaning

Obviously with this in mind, and as we have less fresh air coming in because we have to shut our outside doors to stop the churches freezing, cleaning of our churches becomes of greater importance.

I have heard a number of people say that church cleaning is one of the best jobs in the parish. The reason is that you get time alone in the church when you are doing something but have all the time in the world just to be with God. Some church cleaners say the Rosary while they are cleaning, or then might sit down when they have finished and pray then.

In Fernie I hear that cleaning is going ahead apace with a number of volunteers, but with such a big church they could always do with more. Sparwood currently is cleaned by the very noble effort of one person, and she does do an exceptional job, but again more would be better. And I am sure that Elkford and every other parish would also appreciate volunteers. And this is not just the preserve of one gender, it is open to all, including families. As winter approaches, if you are fearing being shut up in a confined space with your family, again perhaps a bit of church cleaning would get you out, get you all doing something together, and give you a chance to build your family's attachment to our church! So many possibilities.

## And Finally...

The CWL's Provincial meeting I attended a couple of weeks ago was a 'hybrid' meeting, that is, half the participants were present in the room and half joined us via Zoom. We had a really big television where we could see all the remote participants and we had a central microphone that picked up all of our voices, but from where I was I couldn't read the 'chat'. So I logged in with my phone, but obviously kept my camera and microphone turned off and just read the chat. This meant my 'ID' picture appeared on the big screen. And, of course, I couldn't resist having a little play. So I swapped my 'ID' picture to the one below on the left. But shortly after doing this the remote chairperson said, "Father David, do you have your hand up?" So this picture was no good. Then I quickly put together another picture, shown on the right below. Zoom meetings can be fun!

With prayers, *Fr. David @ Thumper*



Our churches are open *without* a limit on numbers.  
**But Covid is in the population – so caution is needed!**



## Zoom Links

### Link to Weekend Masses

To get the link to our two weekend Masses please send an e-mail to one of our parish offices with your name and you will then receive the link each week.

[info@holymfamilyfernie.ca](mailto:info@holymfamilyfernie.ca)

[ElkValleyRC@gmail.com](mailto:ElkValleyRC@gmail.com)

### **Audio Only**

*Don't forget, you might be heading off to Costco in Lethbridge on a pre-Christmas shop, but if you have cell service, 'church' is still there and available. So even if you don't have access to the internet you can still listen to Mass while you are on your travels via a phone call to our Zoom link.*

Again, e-mail the office for the link for this.

### **Chat:**

*Feel free to greet people via the chat when you join our broadcast, and if you are praying for anything particular, do share this with others on the Chat.*

*Normally there is "IA - Chat (Co-Host)" who watches the chat for any problems or prayer intentions. If you don't want everyone to see your message you can send your message directly and it will remain private.*

### **Waiting Room:**

*Please note when you log on you will be put in a "waiting room". Hopefully as soon as we see you waiting we will let you in. If there is a bit of a delay, please just wait; we will be with you as quickly as we can.*

### **And for those who are attending church in person, be careful:**

Please continue to be careful when you are in church. Please sanitise your hands, wear a mask at all times, always think of the good of others. As you move about in church you might come within a 'breath distance' of others, and be conscious that others might have health vulnerabilities that you don't know about.

***Everyone still needs to be careful.***

