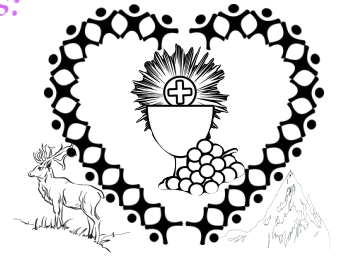


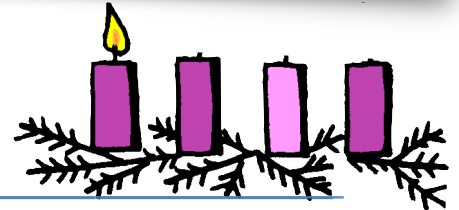
Our Current Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:

*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).

Welcome to Advent!



27th/28th November

Dear All,

Happy Advent!

Now the question is, is Advent a happy and joyous time, that is, a celebration, or should we see it purely as a time of preparation for a celebration?

Now to be a bit provocative, there is one line of thought that says there is little to celebrate in Advent for those who are content and comfortable, for those who are already prosperous, who feel very at home in the world that they live in. By contrast, Advent is a real joy for those who know themselves to be poor, those who feel troubled, those who do not feel that they fit too well into our modern world so look forward to something greater and better than what we have at the moment.

Our first reading today says,

“The days are surely coming, says the Lord,
when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel
and the house of Judah.”

And we remember Mary’s proclamation to Elizabeth before the birth of Jesus,

“He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly;
he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.
He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy,
according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.”

The promise God made to Israel and Judah was that God would come to them and establish the Kingdom of God. So for Advent to be a joyous season we too have to yearn for what is to come, the establishment of a new order, and that is much easier if we are not too wedded to the existing way of things. So perhaps I should say, if you are at home in this world then I wish you a challenging Advent, but if you are yearning for something beyond this world, then please pray for me this Advent.

Synodal Journeying for Advent!

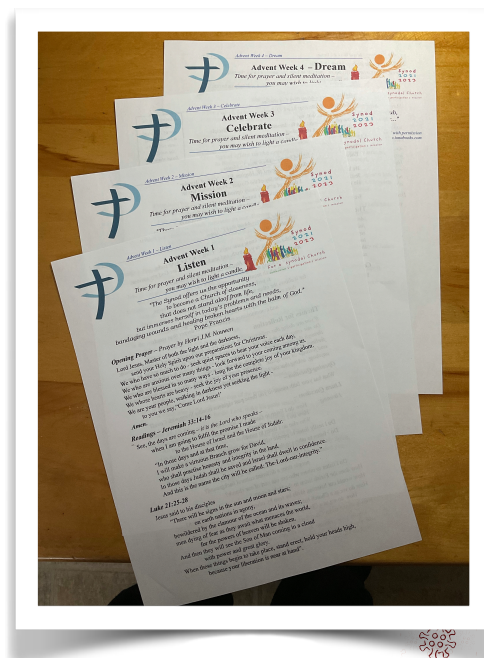
As I have said a number of times now, Pope Francis is asking us to listen to the Holy Spirit and embark on a ‘Synodal Journey’. And as I write these words I am conscious that they can mean absolutely nothing unless the concepts behind them are understood. To fully explain them would take pages, but this week I got a link to a very good YouTube video that really explains these ideas so well. It is a video of a webinar that I was part of ten days ago. It is a talk given to my home diocese of Plymouth, England, by the author and journalist Austen Ivereigh. It is forty-five minutes long, but he is a compelling speaker full of enthusiasm, and explains so clearly what Synodality is all about and why it is so important.

The link is: <https://youtu.be/EFFyNjdn8rc>

Four Synodal Reflections for Advent

For the four Sundays of Advent I have produced four reflections which are based on the themes, Listen, Mission, Celebrate and Dream. Each will start with a prayer and then some scripture passages. Next there will be a short reflection followed by questions. Normally there will be about eight questions, but for the first and last weeks there is one extra question.

You are invited to take these reflections and to spend some quality time with each. They can be read alone, but they are also suitable to be read with others, perhaps one other family member or friend, or a number of other people (or even read to your cat).



Praying the Reflections

Now there are some very important things to remember: Firstly, don't read these reflections like you read the rest of this e-mail; rather take it as a liturgy and pray it! Give time, particularly time in silence between each part. Don't rush. The purpose is not to get to the end, the purpose is to listen to the Holy Spirit.

It is so important that when you are answering the questions that you listen to the other person as carefully as you can; not to refute, not to judge, but to hear what the Spirit might be saying through them. Their logic might be faulty, their facts might be wrong, but the Spirit can still use them, so listen for that Spirit. And if you are alone, in the same way give time to listen to yourself. Each set of questions goes from the personal, through the parish or diocese, to the universal Church.

Time Scale

If you want some expectation of how long the reflection should take, the answer is the longer the better! But perhaps with some reasonable pauses, the first section of prayer, readings and reflection might take ten minutes, and then consider taking at least a minute or two over each of the eight to ten questions. If you read a question and think, 'I don't know!', then stay with that question and see what comes to you.



So, for example, on the third reflection there is the question, “How does our Parish celebration bring us together to be companions with one another on our journey of faith?” A minute or two’s reflection might not give you the answer, but it might open up new thoughts or ideas about the collective nature of our liturgical celebrations, about being one body together, about being a community of faith all walking the same path. Don’t listen for an answer, listen for a prompting.

Feedback

Then, if you feel comfortable, it would be wonderful if you could feed back your thoughts. Write down your answers. These don’t have to be ‘essay answers’, they can be just bullet points or the answer to just one or two questions that particularly connected with you.

Then you can send these either via e-mail to the St. Michael’s parish office: ElkValleyRC@gmail.com or you can write them down and give them to me at the church. Mark your return “Synod” so that they come to me and get included.

All answers will be put together and sent on up the line until they get to the Pope! Or, at least, that is the hope and intention.

Sacrament of Reconciliation – Confessions

During the last year many people have come to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and each time we have either simply sat in the church in Sparwood in front of the Blessed Sacrament, or sat in the sacristy in Fernie, and celebrated the sacrament six foot apart. As I am not sure if we will be able to get any other priests out here again this year, I will continue what we have been doing during the year for anyone who wishes to go to confession. The times are included in the separate sheet at the end of this e-mail.

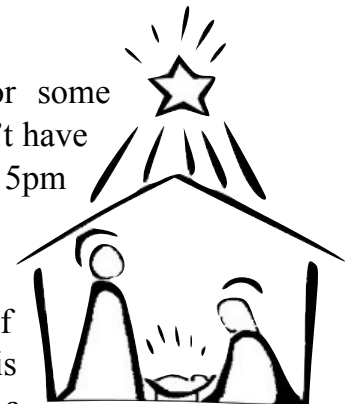
If you can’t make any of these times let me know and we will arrange another time.



Christmas Service — see the times at end of this e-mail

This year Christmas Day falls on a Saturday, which makes for some interesting planning, as it means Boxing Day is a Sunday and we can’t have an ‘anticipated’ Mass on the evening before - that is, we can’t have a 5pm Mass in Fernie on the Saturday evening as that is Christmas Day!

To produce the Mass times we took a few criteria, like the 5pm Mass on Christmas Eve in Fernie has traditionally been attended by lots of people we don’t see that often, so we really don’t want to disturb this and possibly lose our link with so many people; Elkford needs a Christmas Mass; and those who aren’t yet comfortable coming to church must be given enough time to be able to receive Communion in their vehicles after Mass. Once these principles were set then the times of services really dictate themselves!





There will be an on-line Midnight Mass; it won't be from a freezing barn but hopefully from somewhere warmer. It will be a very simple Mass for anyone who wants a little spiritual break at the end of Christmas Eve to thank God for Christ's birth before Christmas Day starts! Even if you attend one of the other Masses, do think if this late night Mass might be a help to your *spiritual* celebration of Christmas. It will be on-line only.

Please remember that if the time of Mass on any day does not suit you, the next community to you is less than half an hours drive away, so there is nothing stopping a couple of people getting in a car and driving to a Mass in one of the other parishes. I do this all the time!

Hopefully 'hard copies' of these Christmas weekend Mass times will be available in the churches, but they are also at the end of this e-mail.

Fernie Mass - Sing along with the Choir

For our Mass from Fernie we are trying to get the words of the hymns visible to those joining us from their homes so you too can sing along! I have been playing with the camera positions; hopefully with a split screen, you will be able to see both the words and some of the things that are happening during the singing. If you are watching on-line, do let me know if this works for you.

And Finally...

We had a lovely moon during the week, which with the cold clear air seemed very bright (*top left*). And Thumper got a year older this week (*bottom left*). But please don't tell him, for although he got a good long run that day, we are saving his party for a couple of weeks.

With prayers, *Fr. David @ Thumper*



Our churches are open to those *without* any Covid symptoms.
But Covid is still a real threat – thus 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@holyfamilyfernie.ca

ElkValleyRC@gmail.com

Audio Only

Don't forget, even if you are on your way to the North Pole to pick up some extra presents for Christmas, if you have cell service then 'church' is there and available. So if you don't have access to the internet you can still listen to Mass wherever you are 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 "1A - 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.**



Mass Times for Christmas Weekend

All these times presume that there will not be any change in the directives from the Provincial Health authorities.

Christmas Eve (Friday)

5pm - Fernie *(This Mass will be broadcast on Zoom)*
Communion distributed from 6:15pm to 7pm
(or longer if needed)

9pm - Elkford
Communion distributed immediately after Mass (10pm)

12midnight - Mass broadcast via Zoom only

Christmas Day (Saturday)

9am - Sparwood *(This Mass will be broadcast on Zoom)*
Communion Distributed from 10:15am to 11:30am
(or longer if needed)

Sunday (Boxing Day)

9am - Sparwood *(This Mass will be broadcast on Zoom)*
Communion distributed from 10am to 11am
(but no longer than that).

12noon - Fernie *(This Mass will not be broadcast on Zoom)*
Communion distributed from 1pm to 1:30pm.

Confession Times before Christmas

Fernie	- Saturday 4th December	11am to 12noon
Sparwood	- Sunday 5th December	11am to 12noon
Elkford	- Sunday 5th December	5pm to 6pm
Sparwood	- Saturday 11th December	11am to 12noon
Fernie	- Saturday 11th December	6:15pm to 7pm



Advent – 27th/28th November

Advent Week 1

Listen

*A time for prayer and silent meditation –
you may wish to light a candle.*



*“The Synod offers us the opportunity
to become a Church of closeness,
that does not stand aloof from life,
but immerses herself in today’s problems and needs,
bandaging wounds and healing broken hearts with the balm of God.”*
Pope Francis

Opening Prayer – Prayer by Henri J.M. Nouwen

Lord Jesus, Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit upon our preparations for Christmas.
We who have so much to do – seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day,
We who are anxious over many things – look forward to your coming among us.
We who are blessed in so many ways – long for the complete joy of your kingdom.
We whose hearts are heavy – seek the joy of your presence.
We are your people, walking in darkness yet seeking the light –
to you we say, “Come Lord Jesus!”

Amen.

Readings – Jeremiah 33:14-16

See, the days are coming – *it is the Lord who speaks* –
when I am going to fulfil the promise I made
to the House of Israel and the House of Judah:
“In those days and at that time,
I will make a virtuous Branch grow for David,
who shall practise honesty and integrity in the land.
In those days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell in confidence.
And this is the name the city will be called: The-Lord-our-integrity.”

Luke 21:25-28

Jesus said to his disciples
“There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars;
on earth nations in agony,
bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves;
men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world,
for the powers of heaven will be shaken.
And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud
with power and great glory.
When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high,
because your liberation is near at hand”.

Psalm 24:4-5

Lord, make me know your ways. Lord, teach me your paths.
Make me walk in your truth, and teach me: for you are God my saviour.

Reflection – Gerard W. Hughes SJ in “Cry of Wonder”

The gift of being a compassionate listener,
a gift which requires constant practice,
is perhaps the most healing gift anyone can possess,
for it allows the other to be, enfolds them in a safe space,
does not judge or advise them,
accepts them as they are without desiring to change them,
and communicates support at a level deeper than words.

Themes for Reflection

If you are doing this reflection with others, try to listen actively and without judgment. Do not enter into debate but rather search for what the Holy Spirit might be saying through the other person; pay attention not only to the words but also to the tone and feelings of the speaker; and listen actively to yourself, mindful of your own thoughts and feelings as you speak. Whether alone or with others, always pause before saying anything, asking that the Holy Spirit might guide you.

Opening Question –

What has your faith meant to you these past eighteen months living with Covid?

Listen Questions –

- Listening:*
1. How do I listen to God?
How do I listen to others?
Who do I listen to most?
 - 2.. Do I listen to people with different views to myself?
 3. Do I listen to others in the parish –
perhaps groups I am not associated with like:
people from a different age group?
people from a different cultural background?
 4. Do I listen to others who are not part of our Church?
 5. How does the Parish listen to the Holy Spirit?
 6. How would our listening skills be seen by others not involved in our Parish?
 7. How do we as a Church listen to others?
How do we as a Church listen to those outside the church?
 8. How does the wider Church relate to the society of which we are a part?

You are very welcome, indeed encouraged to share your answers with the parish. All responses will be anonymised and they will not be judged, but taken and shared with the diocese. E-mail to ElkValleyRC@gmail.com with the heading “Synod”