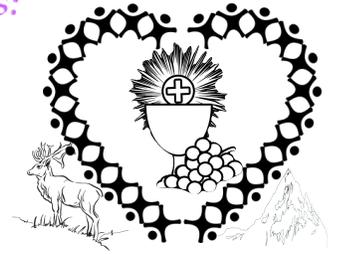


*Our Current Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:  
Fernie on Saturday evening at 5pm,  
Sparwood at 9am Sunday morning,  
and Elkford at 4pm Sunday afternoon.*



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

## A Joyous Welcome!



*11th/12th December*

**Dear All,**

This Sunday is called ‘Gaudete Sunday’ or ‘Rejoice Sunday’. The reason for this is that the ‘Entrance Antiphon’ (the chant that used to be said or sung just at the start of Mass) was:

*Gaudete in Domino semper: iterum dico, gaudete.*

*Modestia vestra nota sit omnibus hominibus: Dominus enim prope est.*

That is,

*Rejoice in the Lord always: again I say, Rejoice.*

*Let your gentleness be known to all men: for the Lord is near.*

In turn, this chant was taken from the second reading for this weekend which is from St. Paul’s letter to the Philippians, chapter 4 verses 4-5.

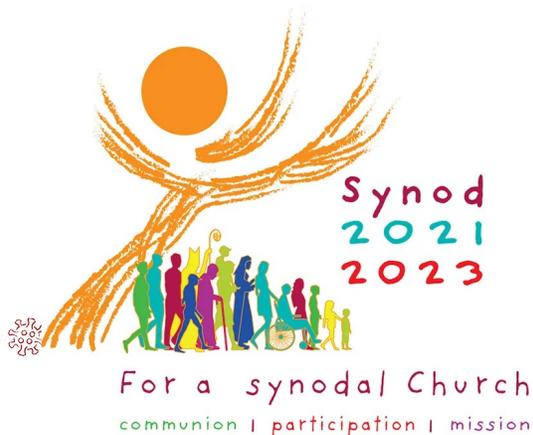
When the season of Advent was more like Lent, that is, a time of fasting and a more rigorous time of preparation for Christmas, this Sunday people allowed themselves to ease off a little, just as they do on Laetare Sunday, the fourth Sunday of Lent. But equally importantly, with the joyous festival so close, it was a chance to do a little celebrating in anticipation of Christmas. Of course today Advent is one long ‘anticipation’ of Christmas more than a time of preparation, but all the same, we can use Gaudete Sunday to make sure we are rejoicing about the correct thing, and that is God choosing to come to us.

### **First Attachment – National Day of Prayer in Solidarity with Indigenous People**

This day of prayer is celebrated each year on 12th December, the feast day of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, who appeared to a humble native peasant, Juan Diego, in Mexico in 1531. This year with the approval of the Bishops of Canada, the Canadian Catholic Indigenous Council (formerly the Canadian Catholic Aboriginal Council) have written a letter for this special day of prayer. I have attached this letter at the end of this e-mail along with a prayer for this event.



CANADIAN CONFERENCE  
OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS



## Second Attachment –

### Our Third Step in Our Synodal Journey

Also attached at the end of this e-mail is the third reflection for Advent and eight more questions to answer. Some answers from the previous weeks have come in, which is good, so feel free to either send your answers in each week or all together at the end of the four weeks, but if you can please do send some comments in.

The Church doesn't just want to hear the voices of the good and the great, the holy and pious, or the ordained and religious; the Church wants to hear from everyone including you!

Also I have included a sheet about talking to your family, particularly kids and grandkids. As part of this world-wide listening the Church wants to hear from your family, so they have provided a 'Guide to Conversations With Family and Friends'. You are invited not only to feedback your own thoughts but also the thoughts of your family and friends, whether they attend church or not, whether they see the Church in a positive light or not, whatever they think - *the Church still wants to listen to them*. After the explanatory notes there are four questions.

## Third Attachment – Covid & Christmas Update

As I write on Thursday afternoon, we haven't heard of any changes to the restrictions on religious gatherings. I include a letter from Bishop Gregory that goes over these rules once more just to remind us of our current situation.

We are limited to fifty percent of our maximum seating capacity in each church. But quite honestly, with the very understandable hesitancy of so many to be in crowded places I don't think we will have a real issue with this. I will be amazed if we get anywhere near half of our full capacity.

Remember that we have a very big church in Fernie; we have the combined seating capacity of the church and the hall in Sparwood; and even in Elkford we have the combined seating capacity of the church along with the two rooms that are separated off by glass. So I am sure that we will be okay with this.

So to be clear, we will **not** be checking the vaccination status of people attending church over Christmas, but never the less Bishop Gregory does want to stress the importance of everyone being fully vaccinated.

## Sacrament of Reconciliation – Confessions

Just a quick reminder that this coming weekend is the final time for scheduled confessions. So I will be in Sparwood church from 11am to 12noon tomorrow (Saturday 11th). Also tomorrow I will be available immediately after our 5pm Mass in Fernie – *once I have given Communion to those who turn up in their vehicles*.



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

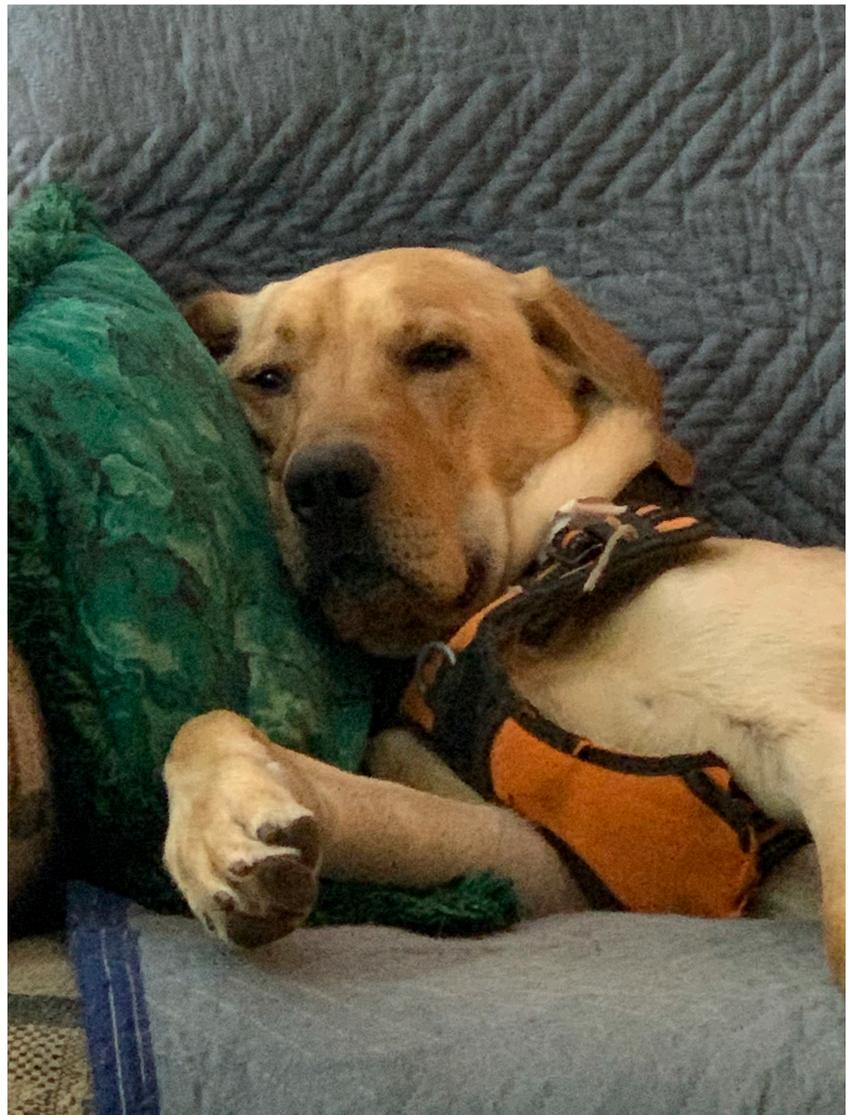
**Christmas Services in Brief** — *full details are on both parish websites*

<b>Christmas Eve:</b>	5pm	Fernie
	9pm	Elkford
	12midnight	On-Line Only
<b>Christmas Day:</b>	9am	Sparwood
<b>Sunday 26th:</b>	9am	Sparwood
	12noon	Fernie.

**And Finally...**

This week I tried to get Thumper to smile, but it wasn't easy; if he was human I wonder if he might be a stropky teenager who thought that it wasn't cool to smile! So below left is the best we got. But Thumper was very tired after trying so hard to smile that he decided that really he had to have another sleep.

With prayers, *Fr. David @ Thumper*





Forgiving does not mean forgetting... Free and heartfelt forgiveness is something noble, a reflection of God's own infinite ability to forgive... Those who truly forgive do not forget. Instead, they... choose not to yield to the same destructive force that caused them so much suffering. They break the vicious circle; they halt the advance of the forces of destruction. They choose not to spread... the spirit of revenge that will sooner or later return to take its toll.<sup>2</sup>

We often have such a hard time finding and seeing God. In response to the question, why do you ask where God is, a Tlicho Dene woman once commented that we should look around, despite all the violence on the earth, it continues to provide for us. Our mother continues to provide for us, and gives us everything.

The insight of one Dene Elder is that the Creator shows us the way to healing. The Land is always giving back. Our parents and grandparents are people who have given their lives for us. We have made many mistakes. But there has been someone who has given His life for us. We have been forgiven many times by the blood of Jesus Christ. The privilege of our humanity carries with it the great responsibility of the respect and care of our brothers and sisters – especially those who deal with obstacles, injustices, or other barriers to their human freedom and blessedness.

One of these barriers is discrimination and prejudice because of the differences among peoples. The COVID-19 pandemic has made this worse, and unless we find a better and more respectful path, people's minds and hearts will be further corrupted. This better way always begins in our own lives; in our own minds and hearts. The prophet Ezekiel reminds us: "Make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit!" (Ezekiel 18:31) We can work towards reconciliation, growth, and healing, when we are open to this in our own lives.

In this year of St. Joseph, perhaps this elder of our faith – the father of Jesus and husband of Mary – can teach us an important feature of this path. As Pope Francis states:

Joseph set aside his own ideas in order to accept the course of events and, mysterious as they seemed, to embrace them, take responsibility for them and make them part of his own history. Unless we are reconciled with our own history, we will be unable to take a single step forward, for we will always remain hostage to our expectations and the disappointments that follow.<sup>3</sup>

There is a proverbial Inuit saying: " 'A long time ago, in the future.' Let the children see our history, and maybe it will help to shape the future." Let us pray and work in such a way that our children will know that the people who preceded them took seriously the problem of intolerance and prejudice – especially during times of uncertainty and fear – and responded by working for a culture of caring and respect. What a gift we can give our young people – an example and memory that they can take forward to an unknown, but, hopeful future.

<sup>2</sup> [Fratelli Tutti \(3 October 2020\) | Francis \(vatican.va\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Apostolic Letter Patris Corde of the Holy Father Francis on the 150th Anniversary of the proclamation of Saint Joseph as Patron of the Universal Church \(8 December 2020\) | Francis \(vatican.va\)](#)

**Let us pray:**

*O God, Creator and Father of all,  
with humility we your children acknowledge  
the relationship of all living things.  
For this we thank you, we praise you and we worship you.*

*We call on you, Great Mystery, the Word made Flesh  
– our teacher, prophet and brother –  
to open our hearts to all our brothers and sisters,  
and with them to grow in the wisdom, honesty, courage and respectfulness  
shown in The Sacred Teachings.*

*Give us the vision and honesty to recognize  
that we are all brothers and sisters of one human family,  
created and sustained by the One Creator.  
As we deal with many challenges, may we never give way to fear and anger,  
which can be the source of division and threat amongst peoples.*

*We look to how God always gives to us,  
as a remedy for sins of prejudice and intolerance.  
We see in God the Creator of all things,  
One who always provides and is generous  
– even given the abuses we have heaped on one another and on the earth.*

*We see in the Son, Jesus Christ  
- the innocent Victim who pours His life blood out from the Cross  
for all peoples.*

*We see how the Holy Spirit is God's gift, alive in our world today  
– inspiring vision and hope that we can have the same mind and heart of God!*

*May Your Spirit also bless and guide  
the delegation of indigenous leaders and young people  
as they prepare to visit the Holy Father, Pope Francis, in the near future.  
May this be an occasion of grace and healing,  
and make possible a renewed journey and future.*

*O Creator, show us the way to healing, forgiveness and reconciliation,  
and a renewed fellowship.*

**+Amen**



*Advent – 11th/12th December*

## Advent Week 3 Celebrate

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



For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

*“The Synod offers us the opportunity  
to become a listening Church,  
to break out of our routine  
and pause from our pastoral concerns  
in order to stop and listen.”*

Pope Francis

### **Opening Prayer –**

Lord we pray:

May our synodal preparations inspire people  
to dream about the church we are called to be,  
to make hopes flourish,  
stimulate trust,  
to bind up wounds,  
to weave new and deeper relationships,  
to learn from one another,  
to build bridges,  
to enlighten minds  
and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.

We trust in your Spirit who journeys with us.

*Amen.*

### **Readings – Philippians 4:4-7**

I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord;

I repeat, what I want is your happiness.

Let your tolerance be evident to everyone; the Lord is very near.

There is no need to worry;

but if there is anything you need, pray for it,

asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving,

and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand,

will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

### **Psalm 42(41):5-6**

These things will I remember as I pour out my soul:

how I would lead the rejoicing crowd into the house of God,

amid cries of gladness and thanksgiving, the throng wild with joy.

Why are you cast down, my soul, why groan within me?

Hope in God; I will praise him still, my saviour and my God.

**Reflection** – By Bishop Mark O’Toole

The Lord walks with us!  
How often we forget this fundamental truth of being a disciple.  
The Lord does not stand aloof;  
    He is completely present to us.  
    He is open to encounter.  
Nothing leaves Jesus indifferent;  
    everything is of concern to him.  
Encountering faces, meeting eyes, sharing each person’s history;  
    that is the closeness that Jesus embodies.  
He knows that someone’s life can be changed by a single encounter.  
Jesus did not hurry along or keep looking at his watch to get things over.  
He was always at the service of the person he was with,  
    listening to what he or she had to say.  
We too are called to take time to encounter the Lord and one another.

*Leaving Jericho,  
Bartimaeus  
son of Timaeus,  
a blind beggar,  
was sitting by  
the roadside.  
Jesus stood still  
and said,  
“Call him here.”  
Mark 10:46, 49*

**Themes for Reflection**

*As before, 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.*

**Celebrate Questions** –

1. How do I celebrate the presence of God in His Word?  
    How do I celebrate the presence of God in His Sacraments?  
    How do I celebrate the presence of God in my neighbour?
2. How does our liturgical celebrations influence my most important decisions?
3. Is our parish ‘celebration’ of Mass experienced as a celebration?
4. How do prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire our growth as a Parish?
5. How does our Parish celebrations bring us together  
    to be companions with one another on our journey of faith?
6. Do you see our Church as a celebrating Church that rejoices at God’s presence?  
    Do others outside of the Church see the Church as a celebrating Church?
7. How could the Church promote everyone’s  
    active participation in our celebrations?
8. How could the universal Church celebrate all its members?

*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](mailto:ElkValleyRC@gmail.com) with the heading “Synod”*



## GUIDE FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

Matthew 13:31–32

During preparations for our Synodal journey, people have asked for questions they could use with family and friends and in particular children and grandchildren, to explore their views. We have prepared a few broad questions that we would encourage you to share and discuss, but which can also be filled in online if people prefer to respond individually.

The following are some reflections that we hope you might find helpful in approaching these conversations:

- ❖ Before you open a conversation take some time and really pray for the person you are speaking to. We have suggested a prayer below. If possible, invite people to join in with your prayer and to share a moment of silent reflection.
- ❖ Plan your conversation – it is always better to invite someone to join at a time that suits them.
- ❖ Unconditional love is crucial in any relationship inspired by Gospel values and the Holy Spirit. It is important that the conversation does not suggest that we strongly disapprove of anyone's decisions. Our goal is to listen and understand and not to judge.
- ❖ People will not open up about their opinions and fears if they worry that they are going to be judged, laughed at or told off. It is important to create a supportive environment where people are not worried about getting things wrong or causing offence.
- ❖ We must genuinely listen and not jump in with responses. It might be worth considering in advance how you will feel and react if the answers to your questions contain criticisms of God or the Church and its beliefs. One approach would be to acknowledge the other persons feelings, welcome their doubts and criticisms and let people them know they are not judged, but listened to. (There will be plenty of time for discussion and responding in future conversations)
- ❖ Listen more than you talk. Allow the other person freedom to express their feelings, even if it's anger at God. The moment you begin to tell someone how they should feel the conversation is likely to dry up.
- ❖ At the end of the conversation, you might reflect back in a respectful and non-judgemental way what you have learned about that person's views on the faith or the Church. Try to end on a positive note.



This Synodal Walking Together is not a one-off exercise but part of a new way of listening to the Holy Spirit and to each other. You might wish to reflect on what you will do differently in your faith life and family relationships after going through this conversation.

## Synodal Prayer

**Holy Spirit, make Yourself at home in our hearts**

**Holy Spirit, we are gathered in the name of Jesus.**

**As his gift to us, guide us; make Yourself at home in our hearts, our homes, and churches.**

**You who fill the world, Holy Spirit, fill our minds and hearts.**

**Show us the way you desire to renew the Church and give us courage to walk it.**

**Let us find our way to harmony and unity, truth, and self-knowledge**

**May we run the way together to a renewed and relevant church in the world and to eternal life.**

**Amen.**

*Sisters of St. Benedict in Winnipeg, Manitoba - Canada<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.prayforthesynod.va/en/>



## Share your thoughts

**1. Please share with us any experience you have of faith, both within the Catholic Church and/or within other Christian communities.**

**2. How can the Catholic Church show that it welcomes and accepts everyone?**



## Share your thoughts

3. Is there anything else you would like to tell Pope Francis about your experience of church?

4. Are you a baptised Catholic?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

If you would like to be kept in touch with the outcome of our Synodal Journey please put your name and email details below:



## Office of the Bishop

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### Further Clarifications to New Health Orders

8 December 2021

Dear Pastors, Assoc. Pastors, and Parishioners,

Greetings and Peace in the Lord!

Further to my last Memo, please find the following clarifications to the recent Public Health Orders that were issued 30 November 2021. Please note:

1. Masks have been made mandatory for worship services for everyone 5 years and older. Public Health is asking that signage to this effect be posted at all entrances to the church and parish facilities.

A person can remove their mask for Holy Communion and once outside the Church. A reader, single soloist or a musician playing a wind instrument can temporarily remove their mask while engaging in a worship activity. Choirs must wear a mask during worship services.

Again, it is important for masks to be worn properly to be effective. They must fully cover one's nose and mouth. If a person cannot wear a mask for the entirety of Mass, it might be better to attend Mass virtually or in their vehicle through FM broadcast.

2. The capacity limit for worship services has been reduced to 50% of seated capacity. Although Public Health says that if all persons are vaccinated, capacity could increase to 100%, I am not going to promote further divisions among our parishioners by checking their vaccination status in order to attend Mass.

Once more, thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we do all that we can to keep each other safe. God bless you.

Sincerely in Christ our Lord,

✠ Gregory J Bittman  
Bishop of Nelson

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](mailto:info@holyfamilyfernie.ca)

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

### Audio Only

*Don't forget, even if you are snowed in somewhere, 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.**

