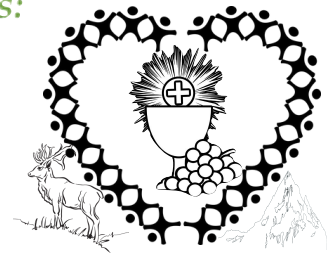


*Our Current Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:*

*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).*

28<sup>th</sup> /29<sup>th</sup> January 2023

## **Dear All,**

This week I noticed that there were many special days when we were asked to celebrate, remember or pray for particular needs. Here are just a few.

### ***Saints Days or Feasts***

Tuesday — ***St Francis de Sales*** (1567 - 1622) was born in Annecy, France, which is in the south-eastern part of France that is tucked into the mountains and almost surrounded by Switzerland. At the age of just 35 Francis de Sales became Bishop of Geneva in Switzerland, where he was highly regarded for his moderated approach to many issues at a time when, due to the Protestant Reformation, there was not a lot of moderation in the world. He wrote a lot of spiritual works, and once said, “whoever wants to preach effectively must preach with love.” In this he was not just talking about priests in a pulpit, but all of us as we share our faith.

Saturday — ***St Thomas Aquinas*** (1225 - 1274) was born into a noble family in southern Italy, and was educated by the Benedictines, but when older rather than joining the Benedictines he joined the Dominican order. He was ordained a priest but he was first and foremost an academic. Like now, in the thirteenth century there was much philosophical debate about truth. The writings of Aristotle, a great philosopher of the ancient world, had been newly rediscovered, and were becoming available to people in the West for the first time in a thousand years.

Many feared that Aristotle’s writings (known as Aristotelianism) were flatly contradictory to Christianity; accordingly his writings were banned in many universities. The fact that many of Aristotle’s works were coming to the Christian world from mostly Muslim sources did nothing to help matters.

Into this chaos Thomas Aquinas brought simple, straightforward common sense. He said that truth cannot contradict truth: thus if Aristotle’s writings contradicts Christianity - *which we know by faith to be true* - they are wrong; but Thomas said that there was also another possibility, that what looks like a contradiction isn’t in fact a contradiction. So Thomas took Aristotle’s work and studied it, taught it, argued it, and eventually his simple, common-sense philosophy showed that it didn’t contradict Christianity, and his work brought an end to the controversy.

Thomas wrote many papers on philosophy and theology, including the *Summa Theologiae*, a standard textbook on religion and thought for many centuries.

Yet in the end Thomas gave up writing. One day when he was celebrating Mass he had a vision that, he said, made all his writings seem like so much straw.

So Saint Thomas Aquinas, if no more, is a reminder that if someone presents us with a fact or a teaching that seems to contradict our faith, we should not reject it outright, but we should investigate it. If we discover that what we thought was wrong *isn't* wrong, then we are wiser, but if what we thought was wrong *is* wrong, then our investigations will mean that we will know more about our faith.



All Week, 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January — ***Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*** when Christians around the world are invited to pray for the unity of all Christians. This year the theme taken is ‘Racial Equality’, which at first might seem like a bit of an odd focus for prayer for Christian Unity! But having read some of their

literature I think the idea is that, as Christians, how can we hope for and pray for racial equality, an end to discrimination and the breaking down of so many other barriers in society if we are divided among ourselves? Or to put it another way, if we see all people as equally children of God – *regardless of race or anything else* – then why don't Christians see themselves more clearly as brothers and sisters?

## ***Other Celebrations this Week***

26<sup>th</sup> January — ***Republic Day in India*** — Although India became independent from British rule in 1947, it was on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950 that it adopted its constitution and thus declared itself a sovereign, democratic and republic state. On this day throughout India there are many parades and other events which are celebrated as a tribute to India, to its ‘unity in diversity’, as well as to its rich culture and heritage. This theme of unity in diversity was a theme that the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, often talked about and was part of how he saw such a large and diverse country coming together in unity. In 1946 he wrote in his work ‘The Discovery of India’,

*Though outwardly there was diversity and infinite variety among our people, everywhere there was that tremendous impress of oneness, which had held all of us together for ages past, whatever political fate or misfortune had befallen us.*

I couldn't help noticing the way that this idea of ‘unity in diversity’ fits in so well with the week of prayer for Christian Unity theme.



Apologies to my Australians, as Thursday was also Australia Day!

## Holocaust Memorial Day

Learning from genocide  
– for a better future.



27<sup>th</sup> January — **Holocaust Memorial Day** — A day that is designed to encourage remembrance of the dreadful reality of genocide. On this day we remember the six million Jews who were murdered during the Holocaust of the Second World War, alongside millions of others killed under Nazi persecution of religious and ethnic groups, plus the murder of those with physical or mental illnesses. But it also asks people to remember the more recent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur.

This day is chosen as it was on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January 1945 that the concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau, the largest Nazi death camp, was liberated.

Recently I was listening to a fascinating six part series of radio programmes from the BBC called, “Bad Blood, the Story of Eugenics” which looked at the philosophy behind eugenics, how this lead directly to the holocaust, and what was most frightening, how these ideas are still in our society today. Having heard all six of those programmes I think there is no doubt that we have to pray on Holocaust Memorial Day, not just for those who have suffered in the past from the dreadful inhumanity of others through genocide, but very particularly that we will move away from philosophies like eugenics.

Of course, the philosophy of eugenics makes abortion totally acceptable, as well as euthanasia. So while the Church is thought to be out of step with the world on these issues, Holocaust Remembrance Day reminds us of the most dreadful places that these oh-so-logical and up-to-date sounding philosophies can lead our world.

I thought that all of these ‘feasts’ ran together surprisingly well. So we do pray for a better world without killing, where we respect each human being, whatever their background or their present circumstances, where there is unity in diversity, where we are open to others and their ideas, even if on the surface their ways don’t look like our ways of doing things, and where we all preach Christ effectively because we all preach with love.

### And Finally...

Today (Thursday) was lovely and sunny, but the forecast says that some really cold weather is on its way. So I thought I would take Thumper out for his first cycle ride of the year – 10km. And looking at the forecast, it might also be his last for a number of weeks. With prayers,

*Fr. David @  
Thumper*



Our churches are open to those *without* any viral symptoms.

**But Covid is still a real threat – thus caution is needed!**



## Zoom Links – To Our Beatitudinal Sunday Masses

**Link to Our Weekend Masses** (*it is the same link for both of our broadcast Masses*)

**Topic:** **Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

**Date & Time:** Saturday – 28<sup>th</sup> January – at 5pm Mountain time from Fernie

Sunday – 29<sup>th</sup> January – at 9am Mountain Time from Sparwood

To get the link to watch our two weekend Masses via Zoom 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, if you don't have the internet but have a phone you can still listen to Mass via a phone call to our Zoom link; again, e-mail the office for the link.*

### **Chat:**

*Feel free to send greeting via the chat when you join our broadcast, and if you are praying for anything particular, do also share this with others.*

### **Those who are attending church in person, be careful:**

**Covid and other viruses are about  
and many people have vulnerabilities.**

Some people might have vulnerabilities that we don't know about, and at the moment as well as Covid there are other viruses going around – *the normal winter colds* – but this year they might be slightly more problematic because many people haven't been exposed to colds and flu for a few years. So please continue to be careful and continue to sanitise your hands; wear a mask if you wish and always think of the good of others. This is particularly important as we move about the church before Mass, at Communion and at the end of Mass. If someone wants a bit of space, we have a lot of it in our churches, so please be respectful.

**Everyone still needs to be careful.**

