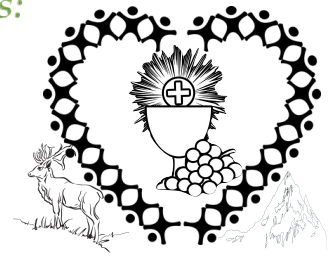


Our Current Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:

*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).

18th /19th February 2023

Dear All,

This coming Wednesday, 22nd February, is Ash Wednesday and we start our ‘Season of Lent’. The details of our broadcast Masses for Ash Wednesday are included at the end of this letter.

Looking Forward to Lent

Towards the end of his letter to the Galatians, Saint Paul writes about the direction we can easily end up taking if we let ourselves follow our own desires, and he contrasts this with the direction the Holy Spirit is inviting us to take. As Lent is a time when we try to be more faithful to the ways of God, and particularly we try to give up on our own desires, it is worth looking at this passage from St. Paul.

In this letter to the Galatians, St. Paul is writing to some of the newly formed Christian communities in the area called Galatia, that is, a large area in the centre of modern day Turkey. The situation is that the Galatians received the message of Christ with joy, but then some people within the church told them that what they were now practising was wrong. Instead of being part of the current Church, they were encouraged to go backwards, back to what they used to do as part of the Jewish tradition.

Now I have to admit that I don’t always find St. Paul’s writing easy to read and embrace. Part of the problem here is the Greek style of writing which Paul uses, and our translation of the bible tries to be true not only to the meaning but also to the style of the original text. But there are a number of other translations of the bible that try to stay true to the meaning but express it in more contemporary style. I should add that there are many problems with these translations and the Catholic Church would not want to recommend them as our main text to understand the bible, but all the same, they can help us to see St. Paul’s writings in a slightly more digestible form. So what I have used below is taken from something called the “Easy English” translation of the bible.

*The
Season
of
Lent*



We join the text after St. Paul has told his readers that “*the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’*” (v.14) And he goes on to say that we should “*live by the Spirit*” (v.16).

Now taking up the ‘Easy English’ translation, St. Paul says that “*everyone knows the kinds of bad things that weak people want to do.*” (v.19) and he lists a number of behaviours. It is worth noting that the Jerusalem Bible translates this, not as ‘weak people’, but as ‘self indulgent’ people, so I suppose we could say that St. Paul is talking about those whose weakness lets them give way to self indulgence, and for them the following occurs:

They become enemies and they fight one another.

They are jealous of other people.

They become very angry.

They want to please themselves and to be important.

They cause trouble.

They make people belong to different groups.

They want things that belong to other people.

They are drunks.

They have wild parties.

And they like to do many other bad things like those.

So I warn you again, as I have already warned you before.

People who continue to do any of those bad things

will not receive good things from God.

God has prepared good things for the people who belong to his kingdom.

But God’s Spirit causes us to live in a different way:

We love other people.

We are happy and we have peace in our minds.

We are patient, kind and good.

People can trust us to do what is right.

We respect other people and we rule ourselves properly.

God’s Spirit helps us to live in that way.

There is no law that says these things are wrong.

(Galatians 5:20-23 Easy English Bible)

I think that this puts clearly what Lent is about.

Firstly, it is about **not letting** our weaknesses persuade us that it is okay to be self indulgent, and that might be in an obvious sense of ‘indulging’ in worldly things that leave less room for God, but it might also be banishing self indulgence that leads to the negative behaviour that causes division and puts us above others.

Then, it is about **letting** the Spirit guide us, the Spirit that has been given to the Church, to the Church community, and the Spirit that expresses itself in our unity and love for every person. The Holy Spirit is the Love that binds the Father and the Son together in perfect Communion, so we might find the Spirit in silence and peace, but we will also find the Spirit in our unity that we express in our Church.

So now what are you going to be doing for Lent? And does this reflect the first item above **and also** the second?

Give up sugar in your coffee or give up chocolate if that is right for you; these will be daily reminders that it is Lent and good ways to push out self indulgence. But also think about how you can enable the Spirit to be with you more fully, how you can let the Spirit empower you to live a life in greater harmony with others.

Ultimately, self indulgence is inward looking – “How can I put myself first?” But the ways of the Spirit are always about looking outward, about building, about loving. And, of course, the irony is that the exact fullness that we seek by self indulgence – but never find – is in fact offered to us through the Spirit, that is why Lent is given to us as a gift, both to fulfil us and to build up the Church in love.

Footnote: the ‘Easy English’ translation above is quite different from what we are used to, so here I will also include the more traditional Catholic translation from the Jerusalem Bible. Taking it up in the same place as above, St. Paul has said that “*When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious*” and after listing a number of things he describes the behaviours that results from ‘self-indulgence’:

“feuds and wrangling, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels; disagreements, factions, envy; drunkenness, orgies and similar things. I warn you now, as I warned you before: those who behave like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. What the Spirit brings is very different: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control. There can be no law against things like that, of course.” (Galatians 5:20-23 Jerusalem Bible)

Lent Talks from Britain

I am delighted to say that you are once again invited to join people from across ‘the pond’ in my home diocese for a series of five Lent talks. Fr. Mark writes,

“I look forward to seeing some of your parishioners again in Lent. It would not seem to be a proper Lenten Course without our virtual Canadian parish family joining us

This year the talks, using the Sorrowful Mysteries as their inspiration, are attempts to look at the Passion and Death of the Lord through a variety of lenses. Giving us a different perspective perhaps on to this wonderful gift.

Each talk, beginning with one of the mysteries as its ‘leaping off point’, will explore the person of Jesus, our faith journey, our Christian hope.

All talks will take place on Thursdays at 12noon Mountain Time (so 11am if you are in the other part of BC and at 7pm in the UK). They will be online but this year there is also the opportunity, if people have the time and money to fly over to England, to attend in person at Our Lady and St Patrick’s Church, Teignmouth, Devon. Okay, probably not many people will fly over for these talks, but it will be interesting seeing the talks given in front of an in-person audience.

So the schedule for the talks is:

Thursday 2nd March — The Agony in the Garden:-
Rev. Anthony Carey – A reflection beyond nature.

Thursday 9th March — The Scourging at the Pillar:-
Rev. Mark Skelton – A reflection in Poetry.

Thursday 16th March — The Crowning with Thorns:-
Mr. Francis Harrington – A reflection with Music.

Thursday 23rd March — Jesus carries His Cross:-
Mgr. Robert Draper – A reflection using Scripture.

Thursday 30th March — Jesus dies on the Cross:-
Rev. Jonathan Stewart – A reflection through Art.

To get the link to watch these talks 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

ElkValleyRC@gmail.com

Ash Tuesday and Ash Wednesday!

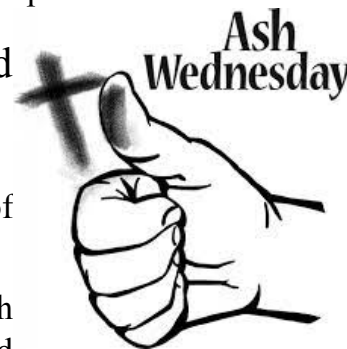
As normal we will have a Mass for Ash Wednesday in both Fernie and Sparwood:

7pm Tuesday 21st February — St. Michael's, Sparwood

7pm Wednesday 22nd February — Holy Family, Fernie

Both of these will be broadcast on Zoom and the link is at the end of this e-mail.

The residence in Rocky Mountain Village will also be celebrating Ash Wednesday at their weekly Mass, but sadly due to current covid restrictions this will not be open to any one other than residence and staff at the Village. People in Elkford are welcome to come to Sparwood on Tuesdays evening, or I will be distributing Ashes after Mass on the First Sunday of Lent.



Other Lent Devotions

This Friday, 24th February, we will have a Mass at 11am in Sparwood. I am hoping to do something slightly different with this Mass, that it will be a time when we prepare for our Sunday celebration of Mass, and that this Mass will help us journey through Lent by enabling us to get more in touch with the scriptures that the Church gives us over the Lenten season.

Other Lent Ideas

I was talking to Fr. John Kellogg this week about prayer and fasting, and I mentioned how hard I find it to fast on Ash Wednesday. On many other days I will go from morning to late evening without eating anything and never notice it, but on Ash Wednesday I always seem to be hungry all day! Fr. John suggested that I got a series of small bottles and filled them with water, and every time I feel hungry try drinking water instead of eating. He said that often our sense mistake hunger and thirst. I don't think this can do any harm, so I might try it.



From Last Week's Much Reduced Sermon

Last week while preparing a very long sermon (that in the end I didn't deliver), I found a couple of great quotes that I very much want to share with you. The first one is actually much better seen written than read, because the spelling of the words go so well together.

It is a quote from a French Jesuit priest, Fr. Xavier Leon-Dufour (1912-2007) who is considered to be one of the leading scripture scholars of the twentieth century. He is talking about 'The Decalogue', that is, about the Ten Commandments, and he is saying that for the Jewish people and for Christians, we are called into a living and active relationship with God, not one that is prescribed and fixed, but one that God has specifically made because he has uniquely made each one of us. And obviously while we have a tremendous amount in common with one another – thus very many of the ways we relate to God will be common to all of us – yet for God each relationship is unique. So with this in mind he wrote:

*“When the decalogue stops being a dialogue
it becomes hardened into a catalogue.”*

In my last parish in Britain we had a wonderful family with twelve kids. Now you would never question whether the relationship of the parents with each child was unique, and while obviously there would be lots of similarities, yet the parents loved each child individually for who they were. The same is obviously true for God. So the point I think that Fr. Xavier is making is that if we let our relationship with God become prescribed, or if we think it has to be the same for everyone, then the relationship becomes hardened; we must strive to keep our relationship with God alive and recognise God's unique call to each one of us.



*Fr. Xavier Leon-Dufour
(1912-2007)*



The second quote is from Canon Law, that is, the Law of the Catholic Church. If anyone has ever read Canon Law it can seem to be only slightly more engaging than reading the ingredients list on the side of a cereal packet, yet Canon Law is a very highly thought out and carefully put together statement about who we are as a Church. Not only what it says but also the way it is arranged tells us about how the Church understands herself. Thus the last words of Canon Law are not there by accident, the Church wants these words to be the words that are left with us as we put down the ‘Code’ and move out into the world. They are,

*“the salvation of souls,
which must always be the supreme law in the Church,
is to be kept before one’s eyes.” (Canon 1752)*

And Finally...

As always we look forward to Deacon Stephen preaching this weekend and I am sure that he will give us a good launch point for the start of Lent.



And so to Thumper, he has a new ‘Kong-on-a-String’, and more than that, in the same package arrived a new harness, and a very special one as it lights up at night.

I just love the idea of something that is made with camouflage material – *presumably so that it becomes less visible in the bush* – then not only does it have a bright orange beading on it, but a beading that lights up – *so it is more visible?* I suppose the patterns look pretty.

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 ‘*Very Deacony*’ Sunday Masses

Topic: **Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Date & Time: Saturday – 18th February – at 5pm Mountain time from Fernie

Sunday – 19th February – 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

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.

Zoom Links – To Our *Ash Wednesday* Masses

Topic: **Ash Wednesday**

Date & Time: Tuesday – 21st February – at 7pm Mountain time from Sparwood

Wednesday – 22nd February – at 7pm Mountain Time from Fernie

To get the link to watch our two Ash Wednesday 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

ElkValleyRC@gmail.com

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. 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.



Ash Wednesday – the Art of Ashing!

I saw this on the internet and couldn't resist including it. I certainly do know "Father's Revenge" and "The One Stroke", but I might see if I can work on doing "iPriest"!

