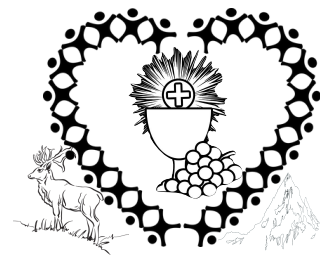


*Our Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:  
Fernie on Saturday evening at 5pm,  
Sparwood at 9am Sunday morning,  
and Elkford at 4pm Sunday afternoon.*



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

22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023



**Dear All,**

In this week's e-mail I want to touch on the readings that will be coming up over the next couple of months as they are a bit different from our normal pattern of readings; I will share with you one of my memories of Bp. Christopher; and I also will include a short reflection on the symbolism of bread as one of the elements of the Eucharist. I will include all three of these as appendixes at the end rather than as part of the main text as I know that many who are outside the parish will skip straight to these items (*after looking at the pictures of Thumper!*)

### **Thank You**

As yet I haven't thanked everyone who helped to make our Holy Week and Easter services so good. A lot of people put a lot of work into making our services happen, so many thanks to them all.

Also thank you for the messages of condolence over the death of my retired bishop in Britain, Bp. Christopher.

### **And Finally...**

That is the last time I buy a toy for Thumper. A simple stick is something to carry, something with which to play fetch, and something to spend a sunny afternoon chewing. And it was free, it cost me nothing!

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 Link – To Eastertide Sunday Masses

### Link to Our weekend Masses

**Topic:** **Third Sunday of Eastertide**

**Date & Time:** Saturday – 22<sup>nd</sup> April – at 5pm Mountain time from Fernie

Sunday – 23<sup>rd</sup> April – 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@holyfamilyfernle.ca](mailto:info@holyfamilyfernle.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 greetings 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 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.***





## Bread of Life

I was reading this week and came across the following passage from the writings of Saint Gaudentius. He was Bishop of Brescia for 23 years until his death in 410AD. Brescia is in Northern Italy about 100km east of Milan. The late fourth century and the beginning of the fifth century was a turbulent time in the life of the Church when it was trying to define what it believed. In the midst of all these deep theological debates we occasionally find some very down to earth reflections on our faith and the basics of what we do in church, like the following:



### *From a Sermon by Saint Gaudentius of Brescia*

*It is appropriate that we should receive the Body of Christ in the form of bread, because, as there are many grains of wheat in the flour from which bread is made by mixing it with water and baking it with fire, so also we know that many members make up the one body of Christ which is brought to maturity by the fire of the Holy Spirit.*

So collectively we are like bread: we are the many members who, through the water of Baptism and the fire of the Holy Spirit, make up the Body of Christ. Thus it is fitting that in the Eucharist we become what we receive via the medium of bread.

I am sure that there are many in our society who hunger for more than worldly bread, and they need it exactly because they experience water and fire in a negative way. How many people feel that they are drowning under the pressures of our world? How many people feel burnt by the events around them? Yet the water of Baptism does not cause us to drown, nor does the fire of the Holy Spirit burn us. Just as the people of God passed 'dry shod' through the waters of the Red Sea, and the bush through which God appeared to Abraham never got consumed by the flames, so we pass through these elements, not drowned or burnt, but drenched in the love of God and with the flame of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. As the hymn based upon Isaiah 43:1-2 says,

*When you walk through the waters I'll be with you,  
You will never sink beneath the waves...  
When the fire is burning all around you,  
You will never be consumed by the flames.  
Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you,  
I have called you by your Name; you are mine.*

## Bishop Christopher RIP

When I go to funerals and they announce that they are going to have an “open mic” I tend to be a bit apprehensive. Not always but on a number of occasions I have heard people stand up, and with every good intention, tell a story that included the person who had died, but it is so easy for the focus of the story to wander away from the deceased and onto the person who is speaking.

With this in mind I am reluctant to tell you any of the very many stories I have about how Bp. Christopher helped me and guided me. Instead I will tell you a story about how he helped someone else, and I was fortunate enough to witness how Bp. Christopher loved his priests.

I was newly ordained and as part of my training I had spent some time working in a parish with a particular priest, let's call him Fr. A. One day Bp. Christopher came to me and said,

*“I am only going to ask you this once, and if you don't feel comfortable answering me, then that is fine, but should I be worried about Fr. A?”*

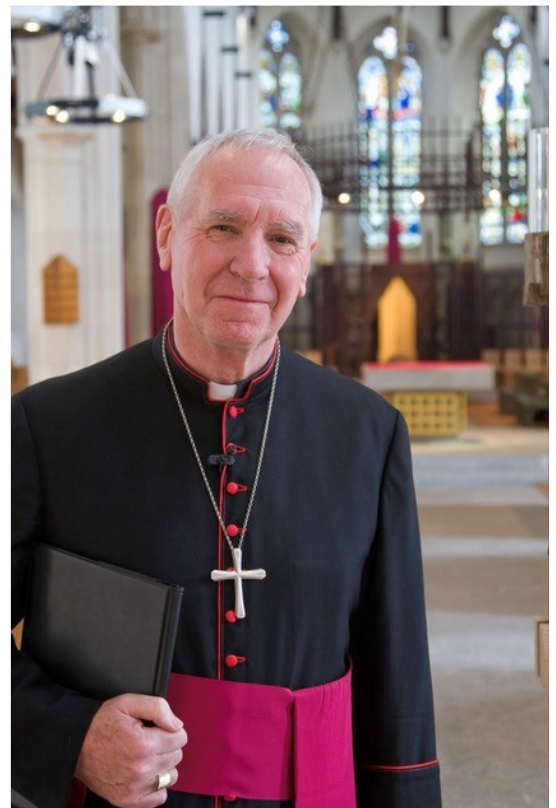
The situation was that while I was with Fr. A I had noticed that he was drinking a lot... or to put it more bluntly, he had a real problem with alcohol. It was so sad because Fr. A was a very funny man, and he would walk into a room and say something and the whole place would laugh, but as he had been drinking more and more his humour would fall flat and rather than being funny he would just look like a sad figure.

So I replied to the Bishop, “Yes, you should be very worried about Fr. A.” The Bishop thanked me and said that he had heard various things from a couple of other sources, but he wanted to be sure before he approached Fr. A.

What happened next was that Bp. Christopher went and saw Fr. A and had a talk with him which resulted in Fr. A agreeing to go off to a monastery that specialises in addiction problems. Six months later Fr. A was back in his parish and back to his old self, telling jokes that got us all laughing. And what is more, we all knew that Bp. Christopher would see this little episode in Fr. A's life as a learning experience that left him with greater wisdom rather than seeing it as a black mark against him.

As a newly ordained priest I was privileged to witness these events. I saw the Shepherd of the diocese recognise that one of his sheep had got lost, so he went out and with great care brought him back on his shoulders and reunited him with the rest of the flock. And when I saw that non-judgemental compassion and kindness, I couldn't help but see a reflection of Christ.

***May Bp. Christopher receive the rewards of his labours and rest in peace.***





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## Gospel Readings through Eastertide

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This year through ‘ordinary time’ we are reading sequentially through Matthew’s gospel. Next year it will be Mark’s gospel and then Luke the year after; that is how our lectionary works on a three year cycle. This means that John’s gospel does not get its own year. Instead, because John contains some of the greatest theological teaching of the New Testament, we read from John each year during the ‘seasons’ (that is, Advent and Christmastide, and Lent and Eastertide) and also sequentially through the ‘Bread of life discourse’ for five weeks in the summer during our reading of Mark’s gospel.

As we are in one of the ‘seasons’ – Eastertide – from next Sunday (30<sup>th</sup> April) our gospel will be taken from John all the way up to Pentecost. In fact, we will also stay with John’s gospel for the feasts of the Most Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi.

Next Sunday is called “Good Shepherd Sunday” and will be a weekend where we pray particularly for vocations to the priesthood and religious life. And we will hear the gospel writer John telling us how Jesus explained his role as one like a shepherd who leads his sheep by being in a caring relationship with his flock. This is the role that Christ took and still takes, this is the role that Bishop’s are called to, it is the task entrusted to priests, indeed, all of us – Deacons included – if we have leadership roles with others, we are called to conduct ourselves in the same way. This includes particularly the role of parents and grandparents.

Then we have two weeks about Christ’s relationship to God the Father and to the Holy Spirit. Both of these passages are passages of reassurance, first, “*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God still, and trust in me.*” And then, “*I will not leave you orphans; I will come back to you.*” Eastertide is when we hear in the first reading about the birth of the new Christian Church, the community of believers joined together in love and joy, living with a clear understanding of Christ’s continued presence in their midst. These two gospels underline the theological reasons for this.

*(In Britain and many other places the Feast of the Ascension is celebrated on the Thursday of the sixth week of Easter, but here in Canada it is transferred to the following Sunday, and as Matthew in his gospel gives us a full account of the ascension of Christ, on the Feast of the Ascension we will hear from Matthew’s gospel. In areas where this feast is not transferred, again John’s gospel is read on the Sunday. Deacon Stephen will be preaching that weekend.)*

Finally, this year the feast of Pentecost, Most Holy Trinity and Corpus Christi (the Feast of the Body and Blood of Christ) all take their gospel readings from John.

As a preacher I rejoice at the chance to dive into John’s gospel, but I also fear whether or not I will have the time to do enough reading to even start to scratch the surface of these incredibly deep gospel stories. I certainly don’t feel confident that I will do justice to any of these passages. So if you do get a chance, do try to take a look at the Sunday gospel ahead of time each week of Eastertide; it will be so hard to see the full beauty of John’s words by just listening to it once in church, looking at it before hand might really help you see the unique and beautiful nature of John’s writing.