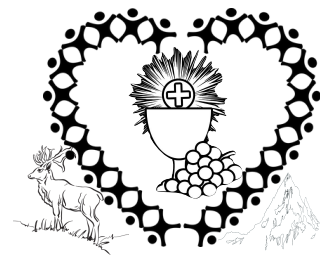


*Our Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:  
Fernie on Saturday evening at 5pm,  
Sparwood at 9am Sunday morning,  
and Elkford at 4pm Sunday afternoon.*



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

20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> May 2023

*God goes up with shouts of joy;  
the Lord ascends with trumpet blasts.*



**Dear All,**

This week's e-mail was so easy to put together as it all-but wrote it self. You see, I was reading a book by a British comedian and there was a passage that just jumped out at me, and I thought, 'There you go! That is what I want to share with others in this week's e-mail.'

### ***Comedian's Prayer Book by Frank Skinner***

Over the page I will quote at some length from Frank Skinner's book, but before I do I want to highlight why this passage caught my eye, and by looking at prayer, hopefully it will mean that some of the very many ideas contained in the passage quoted below will stand out more clearly, and then in turn, help us with our celebration of Pentecost next week.

The fact that what follows comes from a comedian is not that relevant, other than it signals that there is a slightly less formal approach to what is being described. But what connected with me were a few things.

Firstly, the idea of using 'good English' when we are praying! Now this whole discussion is in the context of 'extempore prayer', that is, prayers where a person might use their own words to speak to God. This is not opposed to other forms of praying – like reciting traditional prayers – because it quite often happens at the same time as we might be praying the Rosary or whatever. So here let's imagine sitting still and trying to pray in our own words to God. This can be a challenge because what do we say and how do we say it?

Frank Skinner talks about praying in sentences that are 'elegantly' constructed. When I first read this I thought he was saying 'eloquently', that is, forceful or moving prayers, and I certainly do try to do that. But rather he refers to 'elegant', which is giving the prayers we make a certain dignity or quality. And instead of laughing at this slightly absurd idea that we might try to use our very best English when we are talking to God, he affirms it by saying that we have been given language as a gift from God, so of course we (*or at least, us Brits*) want to use it well – like all gifts from God, we want to show God that we appreciate these and want to use them with care and joy.

Then there is the idea of what we include in our prayers; do we include jokes? Indeed, why would a professional comedian **not** include a joke in his sharing with God! So how do we personalise our prayers?

This is important because God obviously receives a lot of prayers. It is hard to resist the analogy of a charity that receives many requests for money; how does someone make their request stand out? Of course, God is in a personal relationship with each of us so this would be a very poor analogy, but there is still this thought in the back of my brain about whether God is bored by my prayers! There is little point in trying to be ‘clever’ (or at least, too clever) before God, but I think we do come back to this idea of making our prayers something other than mundane, or dare I say it, trying to avoid our prayers being so boring that God inserts earplugs! So we have our stream of elegant (and perhaps even eloquent) words, and yet we know that ultimately these words are not so much for God but for ourselves, to help us, for our welfare, because God knows everything for which we are going to pray before we say it.

Obviously in prayer ‘words’ are ‘front and centre’, but Frank talks of our need to go beyond them, not all the time but sometimes – sometimes we need the words, but sometimes we don’t. Therefore after the words we might want to go into silence.

So here is the passage from Frank Skinner’s “Comedians’ Prayer Book”:

*When I pray, words do sometimes seem a bit cumbersome, even inappropriate.*

*There’s a silent, nearly non-breathing place I occasionally stumble across  
that feels like it might be close to where you are.*

*Not the same postcode, but, I think, adjacent.*

*And all the hard work of prayer –*

*coming up with neat phrases,*

*innovative requests,*

*jokes*

*even, generally trying not to bore you: yes, I do worry about boring you  
– seems to melt away.*

*As I said, I’m aware that you know what I’m going to say next,*

*but I still feel I owe it to you to say it as elegantly as possible.*

*I don’t want to be like that slothful servant who buried his talent in the ground,  
thus offering his returning master no increase.*

*You gave me the words; I’m trying to make the most of them.*

*I imagine you flicking through Heaven’s super-multiple prayer-channels,  
listening to all our pleading and praise:*

*‘my poor wife’;*

*‘if I could just pass this exam’;*

*‘hallowed be thy name’;*

*‘I’m so afraid’.*

*Flicking, flicking, trying to find something that earns more than  
just a tick for effort or a cross in the ‘be careful what you pray for’ box.*

*I know we're told to keep knocking at the door,  
but I'm worried that if the knocking continues in the same dull rhythm,  
you'll eventually opt for earplugs.*

*Anyway, all that hard work of prayer is sometimes – not every day –  
replaced by a yearning to just be. To silently be.  
It isn't not-praying. It feels more like being prayed.*

*I never hear your voice – no mighty wind –  
or, if I do, I don't recognise it,  
but I have sensed you in the silence.  
And I rest there for just a short time.  
I sort of know it's where the glory is,  
but it's a place I feel too naked to stay long.*

This brought to mind the passage from St. Paul:

*Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness;  
for we do not know how to pray as we ought,  
but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words.  
And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit,  
because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.*

Romans 8:26-27



Over the passed few weeks I have been trying to highlight some of the ways we might request at the Holy Spirit comes to us and enriches our lives, so this week is asking the Holy Spirit to take our frail and always inadequate words and deliver them to God, not so much as elegant or even eloquent, but perhaps more as a perfect 'sigh'.



## Bishop Gregory's Visit

Congratulations to Wyatt and Ryan, our youngsters who were Confirmed in Sparwood, and the three kids who received their first Holy Communion last Sunday. Thank you to the Bishop for flying in to the East Kootenay region to be with us. And a special thank you to the catechists, the parents and all those involved with the kids preparations.

After the Confirmation Mass in Sparwood the Bishop drove to Fernie where he had a meeting concerning finances of the parish.

When all the finance business was done, the Bishop asked if he could ascend the bell tower. He wasn't specific about whether he wanted to do this to get a bit closer to God, or just to see the magnificent view, but with the help of John Pallone, the Bishop, Mike Delich and myself made the long climb up the tower.



*Part of the discussions with the Bishop touched upon the issue of income to the parishes.*

*After Covid we were hoping for a 'lift' in the finances, but this has not yet happened.*

*Covid made things difficult for many, including our parishes,  
so please remember that each of the three Elk Valley parishes are slightly struggling financially.*

*And with that in mind, all of us who oversee these things want to say a*

***big thank***

*you to everyone who has contributed either with one-off payments,  
or through the regular collection or the Pilgrimage of Faith appeal.*

*A particular thanks to those who have set up some form of regular 'direct' deposit payment method*

*– this really helps the parish in its planning*

*as it can know more accurately what money might be coming in.*

## **Stop Press – Deacon Stephen!**

We were hoping that Deacon Stephen would be with us this weekend and that Deacon Stephen would be preaching, but he and his wife Marjorie have both gone down with a nasty cough and cold, so they are not able to join us. This also means that I will be preaching on slightly short notice, so don't expect much!

But this is a reminder that there does seem to be some nasty bugs going around. A number of parishioners have also appeared to have this same cough and cold. So if you are under the weather, please stay at home and join us via Zoom. This bug has hit otherwise very fit and healthy people like Deacon Stephen quite hard, so we don't want to potentially expose people to it.

## **And Finally...**

Thumper when fishing this week. He didn't catch anything so instead he went for a swim. 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** (*it is the same link for both of our broadcast Masses*)

**Topic:** **Feast of the Ascension**

**Date & Time:** Saturday – 20<sup>th</sup> May – at 5pm Mountain time from Fernie

Sunday – 21<sup>st</sup> May – 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 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 is still very much about –**  
*recently we have had parishioners*  
*who have been quite ill due to Covid.*

**Also other viruses are about,**  
*this week we have also had parishioners*  
*who have been quite ill with some other virus.*

**So please still be respectful of other's space.**

Some people might have vulnerabilities that we don't know about, and with a number of viruses going around, please continue to be careful, and please don't breathe over people.

If someone at Mass wants a bit of space, we have a lot of it in our churches, so please be respectful.

***Everyone still needs to be careful.***

