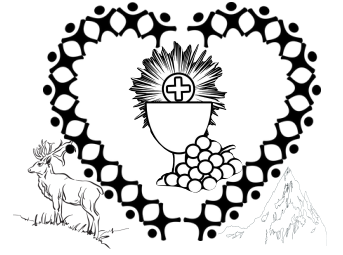


*Our Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:  
Fernie on Saturday evening at 5pm,  
Sparwood at 11am Sunday morning,  
and Elkford at 4pm Sunday afternoon.*



*For this week and next, no broadcast via Zoom (see below).*

17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> June 2023

**Dear All,**

I am sure many of you have already guessed, but here are the answers to last week's competition..



## The Competition Answers

The cryptic clue is in two parts,

- *What four letter word (starting with 'b') describes a rounded knotty or a tumour like growth on a tree?*

The word was 'burl' – which the Webster dictionary defines as “a hard woody often flattened hemispherical outgrowth on a tree”

- *How big do these grow, how large can they get and how in the world can we know that they grow this big?*



How big to they grow? There is a town that claims to have the *world's largest* burl, so that is how we can know how large they get. And on the picture you might just be able to see that this burl is in Port McNeill in the far north of Vancouver Island.



Hopefully the crossword clue was a bit easier:

- *After the fortified wine the Scotsman fell on his knees!*

‘Fortified wine’ is port, and after that a Scotsman is ‘Mac’ - or in this case, ‘Mc’, and when you fall to your knees you kneel, or in this case, Neill as the town is named after the nineteenth century explorer Captain William Henry McNeill.

So hopefully somehow you got to Port McNeill, which being in the north of Vancouver Island is part of the Victoria Diocese, and their website will tell you that St. Mary’s in Port McNeill is grouped with St. Bonaventure’s Church in Port Hardy, St. Theresa’s Church in Port Alice and Our Lady of the Assumption in Alert Bay.

Taking these in order:

1. *Three of the Catholic Churches are dedicated to female patrons and one is dedicated to a male patron – to within a day, what is this male saints feast day?*

St. Bonaventure was the only male who was a patron saint of any of these churches, and his feast day is 15<sup>th</sup> July. It used to be 14<sup>th</sup> July before the reforms to the calendar of saints in 1969, so either date was counted as correct. I could have chosen another question about St. Bonaventure, but I chose this as it is the date that Fr. Neil will celebrate his first Mass in the Elk Valley.

2. *The church which is in the wonderland to the south is called by one name by the Catholics, but many others refer to this building by another name it was given when it was built in the late 1960s. What do Anglicans call this building?*

The ‘wonderland’ is, of course, around Port Alice! In 1968 the town of Port Alice moved from where it was crowded around the logging facility to a new more open site some 5km further down the inlet. The Victoria Diocesan website tells us:

*“The Catholic community, instead of constructing a new church, joined the United-Anglican Church in building a new ecumenical church under the title St. John’s Ecumenical Church. Since the completion of this one-of-a-kind Ecumenical Church in the North Island, the Catholic community has been using St. John’s Ecumenical Church building, but they keep the name of St. Theresa’s Church, not only to continue to ask the guidance and protection of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, but also to maintain the Catholic character of the community.*

So the name that the Anglicans use for the building is “St. John’s Ecumenical Church”, but “St. John’s” was an acceptable answer.

3. *When visiting the most easterly church of these four the priest will have to have his wits about him, but how will he get there?*

Of course, when crossing over to Alert Bay the priest must have his wits about him, that is, be alert, because it requires a forty-five minute ferry ride from Port McNeill. So ferry or boat or anything like that was accepted.

4. *The church in the centre of the group is situated in a small community that claims to have “The World’s Largest...” what? (Clue: a tree is not the answer!)*

As mentioned in the cryptic clue, Port McNeill claims to have the world’s largest burl.

## My New Assignment

This was a long way of saying that as of 1<sup>st</sup> September this year I will be serving in the North Island Mission area right up at the top of Vancouver Island. There is no priest there at the moment, but there are four church communities that regularly gather for Sunday liturgies:

- **Port Hardy** – a port known for fishing, logging and mining and the last significant town at the northern end of Vancouver Island; it is the biggest town in the area I will be covering with a population around the 4,000 mark;
- **Port McNeill** – about half the size of Port Hardy, another logging port – *about 43km south-east of Port Hardy* – the priest's house is located in Port McNeill;
- **Port Alice** – a small community of about 700 people which is inland from Port Hardy and Port McNeill – *about 52km south of Port McNeill* – and is built around its pulp and paper mill which is situated on one of this area's *very* long sea inlets.
- **Alert Bay** – this is the name of a village on Cormorant Island, just off the north coast of Vancouver Island east of Port McNeill and accessible by a 45 minute ferry from Port McNeill. About a thousand people live on this island.

The next parish to the south and east is Campbell River which I believe also looks after the communities in Gold River, Tahsis and Sayward. Anything above the Campbell River parish then falls under the North Island Mission Area.

The North Island Mission Area is on the territories and traditional lands of the Kwakwaka'wakw Peoples, and I hope I will be working with the local First Nations communities and that many of the indigenous peoples will be part of the parishes.



When I get back to the office I will have to see how many responses we have got – I know there have been a few people who have done a fair amount of 'googling' and have come up with answers. And there is a little pile of prizes accumulating in the house!

## Climate

If one thinks of Vancouver Island one might think mild winters and spring coming early, which may be true, but this region of Vancouver Island has its own micro-climate. The weather of the whole area is influenced by the Pacific which means summers are very cool for the latitude and winters are mild. But the dominant feature is the rain!

Port Alice receives 3.4m (130in) of rain each year; which compares with Fernie that gets about 0.9m (35in). This figure is one third *more* than even Prince Rupert which is often referred to as the wet spot of B.C., and three times what Vancouver gets, which is thought to be a rainy place to live. Thank goodness Thumper is happy to get wet.



*St. Mary's Catholic Church, Port McNeill*



## Conclusion

Now I should say that although I have visited these areas on my travels, I don't pretend to know them at all. But I am excited about taking on this new ministry.

While I have been in the Elk Valley I have been blessed because I have been in a most beautiful part of the world, and certainly where I am going will also have mountains, plus deep valleys and long sea inlets as well as lakes. But ultimately, as a priest, it is the people in the parish that are the really important factor, so I have had a double blessing while I have been here in this corner of B.C. I am looking forward to meeting the people who will now be my new family for – *hopefully* – a good number of years.

## We Again Welcome Fr. Marian

This weekend the parishes will again welcome Fr. Marian who will be with us this weekend and next. This weekend I am with the CWL in Prince George, and from there I will go straight on to Victoria on Vancouver Island to have a few meetings with the Victoria Diocese in preparation for my new ministry.

## No Zoom Broadcasts until 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> July

As I am away there will be no zoom broadcasts during that time. So the next Zoom broadcast will be on the weekend of 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> July.

## Father's Day

I know that I am going to lose this battle, but I would have written "Fathers' Day" as the day belongs to many "Fathers", but I will go with the flow on this one.


Sparwood Sunday Mass is now at 11am.



*Left: Thumper on our walk after the rain through beautiful scenery near Clearwater.*

*Right: Thumper doesn't care about inverted commas, he just wanted to give me this bunch of flowers.*



**"DON'T TELL MOM"**  
  
THE BEST ADVICE YOU  
EVER GAVE ME!  
**HAPPY FATHER'S DAY**



## And Finally...

As I knew this week would be rather busy, I wrote the above before I left Sparwood – *at the same time I wrote the competition questions!* By the time you get this I should be at the CWL convention in Prince George. The journey to Prince George can be summed up as ‘very wet’, but I suppose this is something I must get used to!

With prayers, and please pray for all of us at the CWL Convention,

*Fr. David @ Thumper*

**Left:** *is Thumper carefully retrieving a stick that went into a river.*

**Below:** *is a stand-off we had when Thumper so much wanted to go and play with this guy, but I persuaded him not to.*

*It wasn't a very big bear and I feared that it's mother might be the next to appear out of the bush!*

