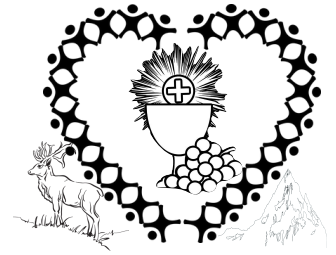


*Our Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:
Fernie on Saturday evening at 5pm,
Sparwood at 11am Sunday morning,
and Elkford at 4pm Sunday afternoon.*



This weekend and next Mass will be broadcast via Zoom (see below).

Looking
Forward

*** Timetable ***

Fr. David's last weekend: 22nd/23rd July
Fr. Thomas' first weekend: 29th/30th July

15th/16th July 2023

Dear All,

Greetings from the Elk Valley, and what is more, probably greetings from the Elk Valley for the last time.

Next week I am on retreat in Montana and I must really try to resist the temptation to be doing things on my computer when I should be trying to find stillness and peace. And perhaps more significantly, there is no wifi or cell service at the retreat centre, so even if I did write something I wouldn't have any way of getting it to you.

Then after my retreat it will be my last weekend in the Elk Valley!

Looking Back

The reason I started to do a weekly e-mail was because at the beginning of Covid my Bishop in Britain, Bp. Mark, started writing to all his priests each week. He recognised that Covid was a time of uncertainty for us, and as many of the priests thrive on personal contact, he knew that for some it might be a time of stress because of the isolation. So he started to write each week, and not 'news' and 'things you need to know' but he wrote more in the style of a little chat. I so appreciated these letters, thus I decided that I would do the same.

I suppose the fact that these weekly e-mails are drawing to a close is quite natural. Covid has passed, my wonderful time in the Elk Valley is ending, and my very blessed time as CWL Provincial Spiritual Advisor is also over, so it is a time of change.



Cycle of Life

But like the cycle of the seasons, one *end* simply leads to a *new beginning*. Personally in my life there will be an abundance of new beginnings, with the new parishes, living in a new area and in a new residence, being part of a new diocese, and of course, learning to live in a new climate.

Having said that, I have so enjoyed writing the weekly e-mails, and they have helped me in many ways, I will really miss putting them together each week. (*Okay, I won't miss sitting at my computer very, very late on Thursday night saying, 'I have to get this out first thing in the morning!' But generally I will miss writing them.*) And I will miss being out and about and thinking, 'Have I got a good picture of Thumper for this week's e-mail?'



Often late at night when I am sitting and writing someone will come along and look at me and say, "You know I am waiting for my supper".

Future

Before Covid and before this weekly e-mail, three times each year I did try to write a 'Life in Canada' letter to my diocese back in Britain, so my challenge now is to find out what sort of writing I should do next. What, if any, reflections will my new parish want? Also in my home diocese they, are about to launch a new monthly diocesan newsletter, so will that be something for which I write regularly? More immediately, I am trying to get four weeks holiday when I will be away from everything, so that means I won't be writing anything for a bit. But I am sure that in time I will discover a new 'niche' for my scribblings!

Thank You

I do want to say a very big 'thank you' for all the positive feedback that I have got from so many people about this weekly e-mail. I have just shared some almost random thoughts each week and readers have seemed to connect with them in some way, which is wonderful. I am so pleased if they have helped.

More generally, I want to say thank you for all the other kind and loving messages I have received as I prepare to move on. Obviously as a priest one shares deeply in the lives of people, and this is an incredible gift that parishioners give to their priest, and thus many of the comments I have received have referred back to times that I have been able to be part of people's lives and particularly with families and loved ones.

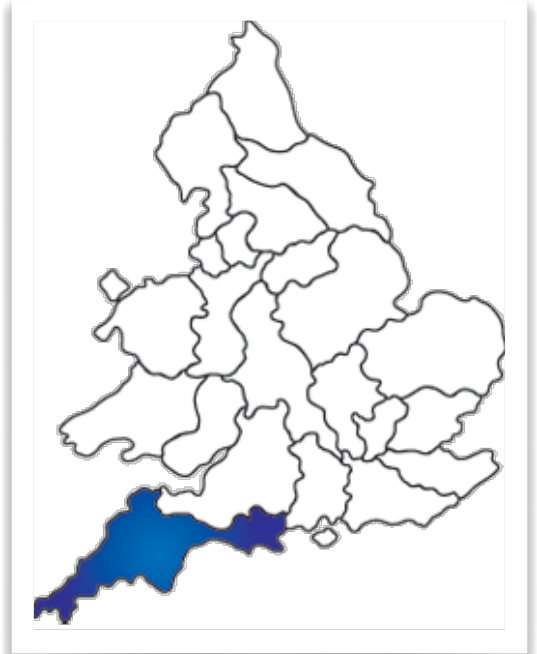
Many have also reminded me of how, during Covid, we had to start broadcasting the Masses via Zoom, and some of the fun we had doing this. Again, I greatly enjoyed making the videos that were part of the broadcasts during lockdown, from being up the bell tower in Fernie, to being in the middle of nowhere seeing the world from different angles. So again, thank you for all the kind comments.

My Move & New Appointment

I have written so much over the last couple of weeks that I have got slightly confused about what I have told to whom, but I did want to mention (or mention again) something about how this ‘Brit’ ended up in Canada and why I am moving from one diocese to another, something not usually done by ‘diocesan’ priests.

Fidei Donum

Up to the mid-1990’s the Plymouth Diocese – *my home diocese* – had three of its priest working in Kenya. But at that point it was judged that the diocese we were assisting no longer needed our priests as they had produced so many of their own, which was wonderful. After these priests had come home, the bishop, Bp. Christopher, was keen to keep a ‘missionary’ outreach as part of the diocese. At that time one of the areas that was very much in need of priests was Canada.



The Plymouth Diocese is in the far south-western corner of Britain (marked in blue).

So in 1999 I was sent to Canada as a ‘Fidei Donum’ (Gift of Faith) priest with the proviso that I would be ministering in a place that otherwise wouldn’t have a priest and so wouldn’t have access to the sacraments. My first group of parishes was in north-eastern B.C. – Chetwynd, Tumbler Ridge, Hudson’s Hope and Moberly Lake. The people there had been without a priest for four years and were more than 100km from Dawson Creek or Fort St. John, the nearest parishes with a priest. After ten years ministering there I was moved to southern B.C. and the small and scattered communities of the Slokan Valley. For decades this area had not had a priest who stayed for any length of time; church services were provided sporadically by priests from neighbouring parishes, none of which were especially close.

Then in 2016 I was asked to go to the Elk Valley, which at that time had some particular problems, and my bishop in Britain agreed to this.

By the time I left each of these parishes the local bishop had managed to recruit enough priests from Africa, the Philippines or India so that I have always been replaced and the people could continue to be served by a priest, as is the case with this latest move; the Nelson diocese does not now have any parishes that don’t have access to the sacraments. Thus in order to be able to stay in Canada as a Fidei Donum priest, I needed to move to a new diocese.

The Diocese of Victoria covers the whole of Vancouver Island and many of the smaller islands around Vancouver Island. It has twenty-six parishes and thirteen missions, which are served by eighteen priests. The Victoria Diocesan website says that “five of our parishes currently have no priest: two of these are served by religious sisters; two are served by lay Executive Committees; and one is vacant.” This compares with the Nelson diocese which has twenty-eight parishes and twenty-nine active priests supported by twelve retired priests.

The churches in Port Hardy, Port McNeill, Port Alice and Alert Bay form a mission area and collectively are called a single parish under the title “The North Island Catholic Parishes”. From 2018 to 2020 pastoral responsibility for this area was fulfilled by a priest who was based in Campbell River, some 200km away, and he would celebrate Mass in the Mission Area just once a month. The last resident priest was some years before that. More recently the Bishop himself has been travelling up to this area as often as he can to provide Mass for the people. This means that when I arrive at the ‘North Island Mission Area’ I will once again be providing the sacraments for those who otherwise wouldn’t have access to them.

This ‘Fidei Donum’ role is one that I have been fulfilling for the majority of my time in Canada, and indeed for the majority of my priesthood, so in that sense, I am going back to what I know and love doing. I am not an administrator, I am a country pastor.

It is so difficult because I have seen this move coming for a bit, and for a couple of months I have known that the Victoria diocese was interested in me ministering with them after I had finished in the Nelson diocese, so I have had time to come to terms with my move, and as a result, I am really looking forward to the new challenges and what lies ahead. But I should quickly add that in no way does that diminish the sense of loss that I – and every priest – feels when I leave a parish.

Retreat

From this Monday, 17th July, to Friday, 21st July, I will be away on retreat in Montana. The retreat centre has no cell service and no wifi, so I will be off line for the week. I will be back for the weekend Masses on 22nd & 23rd.

And Finally...

On Wednesday we had some visitors at the church in Sparwood (*right*) – a young Mum who was feeding her two babies.



(Left) Thumper having a drink of water from a Fernie Brewing cup.

With prayers, *Fr. David & Thumper*

If you are *without* any symptoms of a virus, please join us.
But Covid is still about – thus caution is needed!



**Our broadcast of Sunday Mass will end
next weekend on Sunday 23rd July.**

Zoom Link – To our Sunday Masses

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

Topic: **15th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

Date & Time: Saturday – 15th July – at 5pm Mountain time from Fernie

Sunday – 16th July – at **11am** 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 Or 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 about
– also other viruses are about –
so please still be respectful of other
people's space.***

Some people might have vulnerabilities that we don't know about, and with a number of viruses 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.