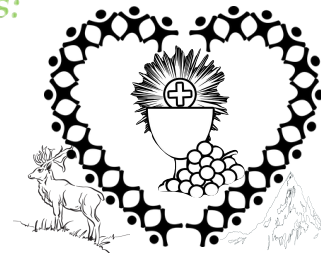


Our Current Weekend Mass Schedule for the Elk Valley is:

*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).

30th/31st October

Dear All,

As I write, there is a torrential rain storm passing over us and we are under a heavy rainfall warning, plus the Weather Network is predicting that after the mild band of rain has passed, colder air will follow and it will get down to minus 17°C on Sunday night! I think winter is on our doorstep and knocking. And, of course, Sunday night is Halloween, so any kids who do go door-to-door this year had better wrap up good and warm.

More on Our “Synodal Journeying”

(If this makes no sense to you, please see last week’s e-mail!)

This week I have been doing more research into how we might move forward in our venture of listening to the Holy Spirit and reflecting on how we are being called to build up the Church. I have found a number of lovely quotes that I think are worth sharing. Firstly, from the Preparatory Document of the Synodal Journey, which ends with this reflection from Pope Francis:

“We recall that the purpose of the Synod, and therefore of this consultation, is not to produce documents, but to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands.” ¶32

Secondly, from the ‘Vademecum’ (or ‘Go With Me’) document,

“How can we implement God’s dream for the Church on the local level?” ¶2.4

There is also a list of nine “pitfalls” or “temptations” that the Vatican invites us to *resist* which are worth a read. As these are a bit long I will include them as an appendix at the end of this e-mail.

*to plant dreams,
draw forth prophecies
and visions,
allow hope to flourish,
inspire trust,
bind up wounds,
weave together relationships,
awaken a dawn of hope,
learn from one another;
and create a bright
resourcefulness that will:
enlighten minds,
warm hearts,
give strength to our hands.*

*How can we implement
God’s dream for the Church*

I just thought that all these quotes were beautiful and should inspire us to listen to the Holy Spirit and let ourselves be challenged.

Obviously this process of “planting dreams” might seem a bit abstract, but I do believe that it can be a very useful tool in many different areas of the life of our parishes. This last week in both Fernie and Sparwood the parish councils have been reflecting upon our parishes’ needs, community involvement in the life of the church, and particularly how we so often need more ‘help’ in various areas. This has sparked some discussion that was for me thought provoking and stimulating. Understandably our first reaction is to say, “What is the problem and how can we solve it?” As you will read in the appendix, one of the pitfalls we are asked to *avoid* in the ‘Synodal Journey’ is,

(3), *“The temptation to only see “problems””. [...] Instead of focusing only on what is not going well, let us appreciate where the Holy Spirit is generating life and see how we can let God work more fully.”*

As we get more stressed and more stretched, there is such a temptation to just work out what the problem is and then try to find a solution. But trying to embrace this idea of approaching things in a different way, I thought I might take a little look at exactly what we are doing when we ask our fellow parishioners for ‘help’.

Hopefully a Helpful Reflection on ‘Help’!

The dictionary defines ‘help’ as:

- *make it easier for (someone) to do something by offering one’s services or resources.*

Obviously offering to help is a good and generous act and we want to encourage good and generous acts within the Church community.

But the word ‘help’ implies more than this. A child wouldn’t say to a parent, “Mum, I am willing to help you do my homework.” Or, at least, if they did, the parent might respond, “No, it is **your** homework, so **I will help you** to do it.”

Similarly, if a visitor came into my home and I cooked them a meal, it would be so kind and thoughtful if after the meal they said, “Shall I help you with the washing up?” But when a number of people share a house, the household chores are the responsibility of all, so it is not that one person ‘helps’ with the cooking or washing up, it is that they take on their rightful role and responsibilities as a member of that household community. Saying, “I will help” implies that the task belongs to the other person and not to me .

When it comes to ministries in our celebration of Mass, the Church clearly says that the tasks that need to be done are the common responsibility of all the faithful. As I have quoted a number of times before:

“Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.” Sacrosanctum Concilium ¶14

And if we follow through on this idea that the Church is a community, one body, a pilgrim people journeying together, then a number of issues flow from that.

Having more than my fair share of Mums and Dads, not to mention aunts, uncles and other relatives, I do give a significant amount of my time supporting them. And I can particularly remember when Mum-in-England was in her nineties, it was difficult for her and so I put extra effort into ‘helping’ her. But was this a chore I had to do? Or was it an obligation? No, it was something I wanted to do out of love.

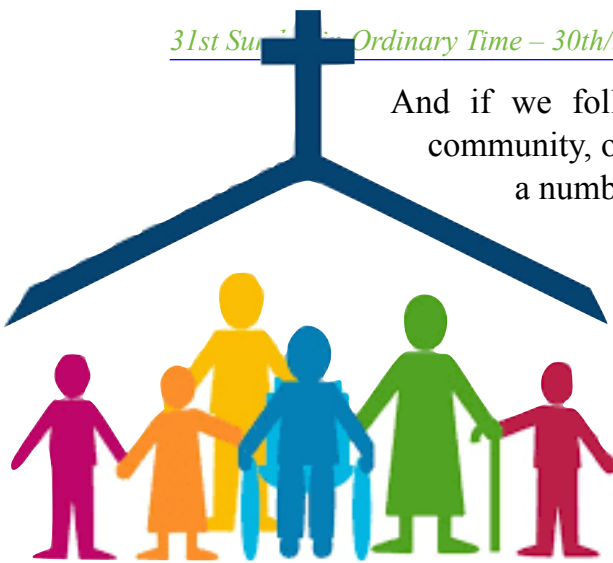
So when it comes to ‘helping’ in church, is this a chore that we are expected to do because we are part of the parish? Is this, as the church document says, a duty or obligation given to us in baptism? Certainly if I had said to my Mum-in-England that I was calling to chat with her because it was a chore that was expected of me or a duty or obligation of being her child, then I know Mum would have quickly said, “Thank you very much, dear, but please don’t bother.”

And I believe that this is why the Church talks about being zealously “*imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy*”, because the Church sees ministry as a gift we are invited to embrace. Being able to love my Mum-in-England was an incredible gift; and my memory of that love is still very dear to me. And people who know me will know that I have very particular reasons for feeling that the love I have now for my family-in-Canada is an incredible gift and I would be so much the poorer if I wasn’t in contact with them. Serving in the Church should be seen in the same way; by being imbued in the spirit and power of the liturgy we discover that it is not that someone is saying ‘thank you’ to us for what we have done, but we are endlessly saying thank you to God for being able to fulfil these ministries.

Further on in the Vatican II document, Sacrosanctum Concilium it states that first the pastors and then the whole people of God should,
“become thoroughly imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy”

My hope is that when a Eucharistic minister gives Communion either in church or in someone’s home, they will be filled with joy as they share in a sacred moment with another. If a Eucharistic minister told me that it was a chore, duty or obligation then I would question if they understood what they were being asked to do.

This doesn’t mean that all Church ministry is ‘happy-clappy’ and like the assistants in Walmart, ministers are expected to smile at all times. Sometimes it is tough. I remember seeing one parishioner when she was asked to read at a funeral of one of her friends (a 40 year old who died in a car accident). She wanted to ‘help’ the family so she agreed. I can so clearly recall her getting to the lines,



*“There is a season for everything,
a time for every occupation under heaven:
A time for giving birth, a time for dying;”*

These lines were so very painful to read and they broke her heart, but with great effort she managed to read them. If you were to ask her now if she enjoyed reading at the funeral, clearly the answer would be ‘no’; but if you asked her if she regretted being asked to read at that funeral, then the answer would also be ‘no’; she would say it was an incredible privilege to be able to read at her friends funeral and she will remember it for the rest of her life as a gift.

But the gift becomes visible in the light of love, and the gift of service in the Church and particularly of the Mass comes out of love of the Church and the liturgy. So if we are to get more people to come forward to ‘help’, then perhaps we need to awaken them to the love that they have for the Mass. I am sure that love is there, but like all love, it is fed and nourished by interaction. Perhaps we need to shake people up slightly to awaken them to that inner love that they have and invite them to nourish it by becoming more involved, being more “imbued with the spirit and power of the liturgy”.

So perhaps before asking people to help, first we need to talk to them about their love of God and their love of the Mass. Then we might invite them to think about what helps love grow, what gives expression to love, what makes love manifest. Then we might want to explain that the ministries in Church are gifts that enable us to live that love that we have and draw more deeply upon it.

Just my thoughts.

Stay Safe – Think of Others

Again this week Bp. Gregory has written to us asking us to be as careful as we can when we are in church. On Tuesday he wrote,

“It is important that we don’t lose focus in order to protect one another from the virus. It can be very easy to become casual, or let our vigilance wane, and to forget we are still living with a very contagious and virulent virus.”

He then goes on to remind us about mask wearing, hand sanitising and social distancing.

Permanent Deacons

While I think we can claim to be the first group of parishes in the diocese to have a Permanent Deacon officially as part of the team – that is, Deacon Stephen – after our lead deacons are now popping up everywhere! Last week three Permanent Deacons were ordained for this diocese: Deacons Peter d’Aoust, Dale Webster and Rod Attwell. The first two of these will minister in Penticton and Deacon Rod will be in Kelowna.

Where the Elk Valley has gone, many will follow!

And Finally...

This weekend Deacon Stephen will be preaching at our Masses. And because of this, I had the following series of thoughts on Monday morning.

This morning I came to consciousness very slowly.

*First, I heard a car in the distance,
and from the sound of its tyres I knew the roads were wet,
and my heart sank a little.*

*I then let in a little light to my eyes,
and a little more and a little more,
but there was not a lot of light coming in through the window,
my first sight was heavy grey clouds,
and my heart sank a little.*

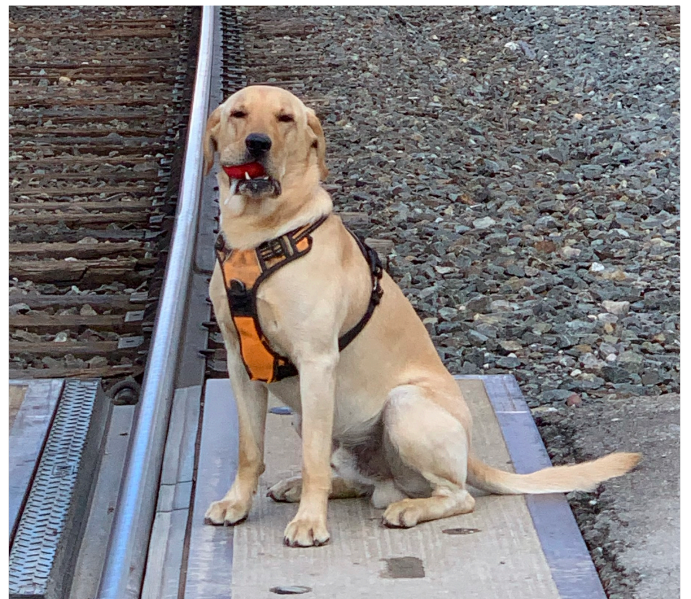
*I looked at the clock and it had already turned eight!
I had overslept but yet I still felt very tired,
and my heart sank a little.*

*I turned over and tried to collect my thoughts,
and this bright light came to me:
“You don’t have to preach this coming weekend!”
and my heart was lifted
so throwing off my covers, I sprang up...
and followed the way that lead to the coffee machine.*

I was awake.



With
prayers,
Fr. David
©
Thumper



Our churches are open *without* a limit on numbers.
But Covid is in the population – so caution is needed!



Zoom Links

Link to Weekend Masses

To get the link to our two weekend Masses please send an e-mail to one of our parish offices with your name and you will then receive the link each week.

info@holyfamillyfernie.ca

ElkValleyRC@gmail.com

Audio Only

Don't forget, you might be heading off to somewhere that is warmer and dryer than hear, but if you have cell service, 'church' is still there and available. So even if you don't have access to the internet you can still listen to Mass while you are on your travels via a phone call to our Zoom link.

Again, e-mail the office for the link for this.

Chat:

Feel free to greet people via the chat when you join our broadcast, and if you are praying for anything particular, do share this with others on the Chat.

Normally there is "IA - Chat (Co-Host)" who watches the chat for any problems or prayer intentions. If you don't want everyone to see your message you can send your message directly and it will remain private.

Waiting Room:

Please note when you log on you will be put in a "waiting room". Hopefully as soon as we see you waiting we will let you in. If there is a bit of a delay, please just wait; we will be with you as quickly as we can.

And for those who are attending church in person, be careful:

Please continue to be careful when you are in church. Please sanitise your hands, wear a mask at all times, always think of the good of others. As you move about in church you might come within a 'breath distance' of others, and be conscious that others might have health vulnerabilities that you don't know about. **Everyone still needs to be careful.**



Potential Pit Falls on our Synodal Journey!

When I was reading one of the Vatican's documents about preparing for the Synod in 2023, one section jumped out at me as perhaps the most helpful; it is entitled "Pitfalls" and it lays out nine "temptations" that we are invited to resist! While obviously very broad and designed to cover lots of situations, I think all the points include at least one idea that might be helpful to keep in mind.

2.4 Avoiding Pitfalls

As on any journey, we need to be aware of possible pitfalls that could hamper our progress during this time of synodality. The following are several pitfalls that must be avoided in order to promote the vitality and fruitfulness of the Synodal Process.

1) *The temptation of wanting to lead ourselves instead of being led by God. Synodality is not a corporate strategic exercise. Rather it is a spiritual process that is led by the Holy Spirit. We can be tempted to forget that we are pilgrims and servants on the path marked out for us by God. Our humble efforts of organisation and coordination are at the service of God who guides us on our way. We are clay in the hands of the divine Potter (Isaiah 64:8).*

2) *The temptation to focus on ourselves and our immediate concerns. The Synodal Process is an opportunity to open up, to look around us, to see things from other points of view, and to move out in missionary outreach to the peripheries. This requires us to think long-term. This also means broadening our perspectives to the dimensions of the entire Church and asking questions, such as: What is God's plan for the Church here and now? How can we implement God's dream for the Church on the local level?*

3) *The temptation to only see "problems". The challenges, difficulties, and hardships facing our world and our Church are many. Nevertheless, fixating on the problems will only lead us to be overwhelmed, discouraged, and cynical. We can miss the light if we focus only on the darkness. Instead of focusing only on what is not going well, let us appreciate where the Holy Spirit is generating life and see how we can let God work more fully.*

4) *The temptation of focusing only on structures. The Synodal Process will naturally call for a renewal of structures at various levels of the Church, in order to foster deeper communion, fuller participation, and more fruitful mission. At the same time, the experience of synodality should not focus first and foremost on structures, but on the experience of journeying together to discerning the path forward, inspired by the Holy Spirit. The conversion and renewal of structures will come about only through the on-going conversion and renewal of all the members of the Body of Christ.*

5) *The temptation not to look beyond the visible confines of the Church. In expressing the Gospel in our lives, lay women and men act as a leaven in the world in which we live and work. (...)*

6) *The temptation to lose focus of the objectives of the Synodal Process. As we proceed along the journey of the Synod, we need to be careful that, while our discussions might be wide-ranging, the Synodal Process maintains the goal of discerning how God calls us to walk forward together. No one Synodal Process is going to resolve all our concerns and problems. Synodality is an attitude and an approach of moving forward in a co-responsible way that is open to welcoming God's fruits together over time.*

7) *The temptation of conflict and division. "That they may all be one" (John 17:21). This is the ardent prayer of Jesus to the Father, asking for unity among his disciples. The Holy Spirit leads us deeper into communion with God and one another. The seeds of division bear no fruit. It is vain to try to impose one's ideas on the whole Body through pressure or to discredit those who feel differently.*

8) *The temptation to treat the Synod as a kind of a parliament. This confuses synodality with a 'political battle' in which in order to govern one side must defeat the other. It is contrary to the spirit of synodality to antagonise others or to encourage divisive conflicts that threaten the unity and communion of the Church,*

9) *The temptation to listen only to those who are already involved in Church activities. This approach may be easier to manage, but it ultimately ignores a significant proportion of the People of God.*

Not just with this new 'Synodal Journey', but more generally, quite often our approach to managing our parishes is to see problems and work out how to solve them. Thus I was fascinated to read in part (3), that we are asked to resist "*The temptation to only see "problems"*". And it goes on to say, "*Instead of focusing only on what is not going well, let us appreciate where the Holy Spirit is generating life and see how we can let God work more fully.*"

I was also taken by the idea in point (5) that said, "*In expressing the Gospel in our lives, lay women and men act as a leaven in the world in which we live and work.*" 'Leaven' meaning, 'a pervasive influence that modifies something or transforms it for the better'. So many of the things that have changed in our society have come about because one person, or one small group, have been convinced that this is a way forward for everyone, and they have persevered relentlessly in that belief. For example, it was campaigners like Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce who had such a big effect on stopping the 'slave trade'. And whatever one might think of her, there is no doubt that Greta Thunberg has been 'a pervasive influence' that is attempting to modify or transform the way we look at the environment. And Saint Mother Teresa had little church, political or financial power, but her power as a saint influenced so many things for the better and moved people's hearts.

So our first concern should be to strive to become 'leaven' in our parish, bringing others to a greater understanding of what it means to 'be church'. First and foremost we are not called to be problem solvers, we are called to be people of faith.