

Mass Times: Saturday: 7:00pm, Sunday: 9:00 am and 11:00 am— Tuesday to Friday at 9:00am

Reconciliation: Saturdays 6:15pm, Sundays 8:15 am or by Appointment.

Pastor: Father Aruldas Lucas, SAC.

Mailing address: 1088 Gillett Street, V2M 2V3—Office hours: Monday to Friday 9:00am to 4:00pm

Website: stmaryspg.ca—E-mail: stmarys.parish@shawcable.com

We acknowledge that St. Mary's Parish rests on the unceded traditional territory of the Lheidli T'enneh

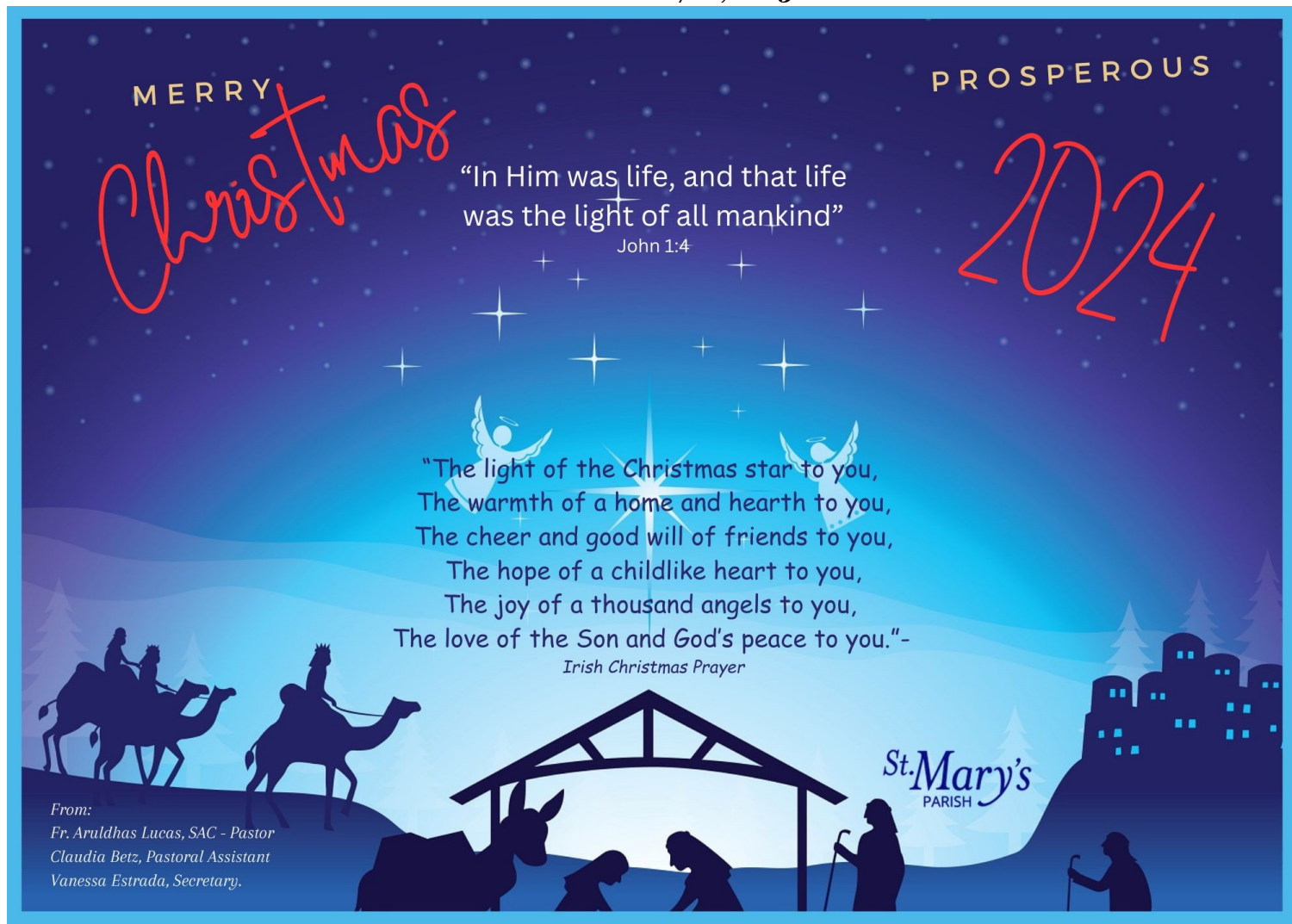


THE ROMAN
CATHOLIC DIOCESE
OF PRINCE GEORGE

Bishop: Most Rev.
Stephen Jensen



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT GAUDETE SUNDAY DECEMBER 17TH, 2023



READINGS AND LITURGY

Isaiah 61.1-2, 10-11; Luke 1.47-50, 53-54;

1 Thessalonians 5.16-24; Gospel: John 1.6-8, 19-28.

In the first reading, Isaiah is anointed by the Lord and sent to announce a day of vindication by our God. In the second reading, Paul encourages the Thessalonians to always rejoice, pray, and give thanks. In the Gospel, John the Baptist testifies to the light and says he is the voice of one crying out in the desert, "make straight the way of the Lord."

Faith Catholic

ONLY WHEN I AM ALONE

It may be that one of our own challenges is to know who we aren't. There's a story about a woman finding herself alone in an elevator with the famous and very handsome Robert Redford. As the elevator moved up the floors, the woman, like many of us might, found herself uncontrollably staring at the movie star. Finally, in her excitement and nervousness, she blurted out: "Are you the real Robert Redford?" To which Redford responded, "Only when I'm alone." That story reveals that Robert Redford is not simply another pretty face, but he has grown into a wisdom that must serve him well. For like John the Baptist, he obviously knows who he is not—Mary Lynn Tobin, Finding Our Voice.



MASS INTENTIONS

Sat	Dec 16	7:00 pm	RIP Maria Isabel Dos Santos
Sun	Dec 17	9:00 am	Int for all our Parishioners
		11:00 am	RIP Jose Resendes
Tue	Dec 19	9:00 am	RIP Nick Kurpita
Wed	Dec 20	9:00 am	RIP Ida Vezina
Thu	Dec 21	9:00 am	RIP Albert Pittet
Fri	Dec 22	9:00 am	Int for a Parishioner
Sat	Dec 23	7:00 pm	Int for all our Parishioners
Sun	Dec 24	10:00 am	4th Sunday of Advent RIP Branco Brbot
		4:00 pm	Christmas Eve Mass Int for all our Parishioners
		9:00 pm	Christmas Vigil Mass RIP Hugh Norman
Mon	Dec 25	10:00 am	Christmas Day Mass

PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for the intentions of: Brigitta Betz, Elmer Braun, Eldon Gauthier, Maria Levar, Beverly Stuart, Rizal Advincula, Grace Noblette, Minnie, Blair, and Korena Peters and family, Garry Kaulbach's daughter, Birdie Froment, Mia Savic and family, Pam Meyer, Joanne Rebogaliata, Manae Peters, and Wark family.

SAVE THE DATES!

DEC 2023	SATURDAY 23 7:00PM 4th week of Advent Mass 	SUNDAY 24 10:00 AM 4th Sunday of Advent 4:00 PM Children's Mass - Christmas Vigil 9:00 PM Christmas Vigil Mass 	MONDAY 25 10:00 AM Christmas Day Mass 
	SATURDAY 30 7:00 PM Holy Family Mass 	SUNDAY 31 10:00 AM Holy Family Mass 6:30 PM Adoration of the Holy Eucharist 7:00 PM Mary, Mother of God New Year's Vigil Mass 	MONDAY 1 10:00 AM Mary, Mother of God New Year's Mass 



ST. MARY'S PARISH OFFICE CLOSED

The St. Mary's Parish Office will be closed from Friday, December 22nd to Thursday, December 28th.



PREPARE THE WAY FOR HIM!

A religious sociologist, Dr. Dean Hoge, has written a book entitled Converts, Dropouts and Returnees. Very briefly, he narrates his experiences with individuals who either left the Catholic Church or had been reconverted, and what led them to make that important decision. And he found that "the happiest Catholics were the dropout Catholics" – persons who had left the Catholic Church for a time but returned. Even more, he found that the best recruiters of dropout Catholics are the dropouts themselves. More specifically, Dr. Dean Hoge found that two-thirds of the thousands of Catholics who return to the Faith each year do so because a neighbor, a friend or a relative invited them to return. This is where each and every one of us can play a vital role in the return of many. And we could begin just by inviting them to attend a service this Christmas. We have been anointed for this very specific outreach; so, let the Holy Spirit speak through you in preparing the way for the Lord. (James Valladares in Your words, O Lord, Are Spirit, and They are Life, p. 13).

DIOCESAN APPEAL UPDATE

I am pleased to announce we're getting close to 80% of our diocesan goal with more than 78% pledged and over 75% already received. We also had a small increase to the Healing and Reconciliation total, reaching almost \$26,000. Thank you to everyone who has participated so far and I ask those who have not yet joined in to consider doing so. This will be the last update until the new year. I want to thank everyone again for their support both financially and in prayer, and I ask that you consider adding your support or additional support to the many needs throughout the diocese.

It is our prayer that everyone has a blessed Advent and a very happy and holy Christmas season.

-James Fowlie, Business Manager

CHILDREN'S LITURGY OF THE WORD

This Sunday, December 17th will be our last Children's Liturgy of 2023! We will be taking a break over the Christmas Holidays. We hope all our families have a Blessed Christmas! We will resume the Children's Liturgy of the Word again on Sunday, January 14th at the 11am Mass. Thank you so much for your support.

ST. MARY'S FREE FORMED SUBSCRIPTION

Sign up for your free FORMED subscription courtesy of St. Mary's Parish & School: <https://formed.org/signup>
Enter St. Mary's Parish Postal Code: V2M 2V3.

Formed recommendation this week: Agape/Love | Advent: Word Studies | The Bible Project. The word "love" is one of the sloppiest words in our language, as it primarily refers to a feeling that happens to a person. In the New Testament, "love" refers to a way of treating people that was defined by Jesus himself: seeking the well-being of others regardless of their response.

<https://watch.formed.org/videos/agape-love-advent-word-studies-the-bible-project>

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Thank you to all who joined the Knights of Columbus and CWL Christmas Party. It was a special time together!



2024 CALL FOR CANDIDATES FOR THE CATHOLIC WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

We are pleased to announce that we are accepting applications for the 2024 cohort of our Leadership Program, scheduled to begin in June 2024 at the Providence School of Transformative Leadership and Spirituality, Saint Paul University, Ottawa.

The program is open to all Canadian Catholic women, from all walks of life who have a genuine interest in making a difference in their communities and places of work.

A candidate must be a Catholic woman, at least 21 years of age, demonstrate oral and written English language competencies, have a genuine desire to cultivate her gifts of leadership, and have made a previous contribution to her community in some capacity.

The Program is a 11-month Certificate program with an ongoing mentorship once the course work is completed. Throughout the Program, participants will be guided by professional facilitators from Saint Paul University. The Program is specifically designed to integrate faith and life, personal and professional leadership development. Spirituality and a Catholic faith perspective are the foundation of all activities; prayer and reflective practice are core elements integrated throughout the program.

At present the plan for 2024 of the Program will have an introductory get-to-know-you online module in June 2024; and a five-day intensive component in June 2024. This is scheduled to be through ZOOM, and you will be expected to be present. All other modules are online and consist of videos, readings, personal reflections, and discussion forums. The final face-to-face residency component is scheduled for June 2025 in Ottawa.

Details of the content of the different components and timelines can be found on the website at www.cwlfcanada.ca.

If you are, or know of, a Catholic woman who wishes to be a transformational and influential leader, we invite you to complete the application process by **January 15th, 2024** which can be found at www.cwlfcanada.ca/participate.

ADVENT COFFEEHOUSE WITHIN THY SANCTUARY

Everyone is welcome to attend the 8th Annual Advent Coffeehouse: 'Within Thy Sanctuary.' This evening is organized by young adults and families, and serves as an evening of fellowship, live music, and a silent auction fundraiser for a local charity in Prince George - all infused with spirit of Advent.

This year's Advent Coffeehouse's theme is Within Thy Sanctuary, an ode to and focus on the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. And in line with our theme, the silent auction fundraiser's proceeds will go to St. Vincent de Paul and Hope for Women here in Prince George! We're excited to raise money for them this Christmas.

Advent Coffeehouse: Within Thy Sanctuary:

Date: Sunday, December 17 ~ Doors Open at 6pm, and the Evening Begins at 6:30pm

Location: The Diocesan Pastoral Centre ~ 6500 Southridge Ave

Cost to Attend: \$5 per person, \$10 per family

Who can come: This evening is for people of all ages! Young and old alike will enjoy this evening

What to expect: MC'd by Prince George Catholic young adults, this night is full of local musical talent, baked goods and hot beverages, fellowship, a silent auction, and the spirit of Advent: the waiting and anticipation for Christmas.

Contact: Lisa Findlay for more information at lfindlay@pgdiocese.bc.ca

NON PERMISSIBILITY OF MAID IN HEATH ORGANIZATIONS WITH A CATHOLIC IDENTITY

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCCB) has released a statement regarding the non-permissibility of MAiD in Catholic Health organizations. "Euthanasia and assisted suicide (MAiD) have always been, and will always be, morally unacceptable because they are affronts to human dignity and violations of natural and divine law. Catholic healthcare affirms that every person, made in the image of God (cf. Gen 1:26), has intrinsic value, regardless of ability or health."

In their statement, they lay out the Catholic position of compassionate and high-quality palliative care, the timely access of which can reduce suffering and attend to patients' spiritual and psychological needs. The CCCB offers "Horizons of Hope" as a tool to assist Catholic communities with this compassionate work: <https://www.cccb.ca/faith-moral-issues/suffering-and-end-of-life/horizons-of-hope-a-toolkit-for-catholic-parishes-on-palliative-care/>

The CCCB "oppose any efforts by governments or others to compel such facilities to perform MAiD in violation of Catholic teachings."

To read the full statement, please visit the CCCB website here: <https://www.cccb.ca/media-release/statement-by-the-canadian-conference-of-catholic-bishops-on-the-non-permissibility-of-euthanasia-and-assisted-suicide-within-canadian-health-organizations-with-a-catholic-identity/>

O ANTIPHONS AT IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

To help us prayerfully prepare for Christmas, Fr. Matthew will be conducting a series of evening prayer services in the final week of Advent. It is in these days that the official Evening Prayer of the Church uses the "O Antiphons" which we know well from the hymn "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel." Starting at 5:30PM, and finishing by 6:00PM, a brief reflection will be given on the O Antiphon of the day, an explanation of Evening Prayer, then praying Evening Prayer with those in attendance.

So, come all ye faithful, to Immaculate Conception Church, Monday, December 18, through Friday, December 22 - each weeknight of the 3rd week of Advent - for 30 minutes of reflection and prayer as we journey through the last week of preparation for Christmas!

Church and the Liturgy

Mass and the Children

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” - Mt. 19: 14. When we bring our children to Holy Mass, we are bringing our children (as well as ourselves) to Jesus, to His perfect Sacrifice offered to God the Father for the salvation of the human race, we are bringing them to Jesus – Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity, we are bringing them to the fountain of grace flowing from His Paschal Mystery! Don’t miss the grace!

At the baptism of a child, parents and sponsors promise to teach their children the Catholic faith and “to bring them up according to the law of Christ and His Church.” The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us, “The Sunday celebration of the Lord’s Day and his Eucharist is at the heart of the Church’s life” (No. 2177). This importance is shown in attendance at Mass and rest from labor, the first of the precepts of the Church.

The obligation to attend Mass is captured in canon law, which states, “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass” (Canon 1247). The same canon goes on to note the duty to abstain from work on the Lord’s Day. As a law of the Church, the Sunday Mass obligation binds Catholics who are at least 7 years old and have the use of reason. However, since first reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist are at or about age 7, it seems that children should be well accustomed to attending and participating in the Mass prior to that age



In truth, children can at times be loud and disruptive during Mass, and not everyone is accepting of the fact that children will be children. It can be exasperating to those around them when parents do not attempt to quiet their children who are overly loud or rambunctious during Mass, preventing others from participating in Mass. However, children need to be taught correct behaviors, and they should learn to feel welcome in the pews at Mass. By keeping your children away from Mass unless they behave perfectly, you might be sending a subtle message that Mass and Church are only for the perfect and not for sinners. That’s a lesson that might keep them away from Mass in the future, too.

Some churches have a children’s room, or “cry room.” Signs in the children’s room of one church state clearly that it is a place to help parents teach their children to participate in the Mass. In other churches, there are a few pews or seats in the narthex, where parents can take a crying or overactive child for a time, while still able to see and participate in the Mass.

For parents with children, the rush to prepare for Mass and to leave the house on time can set up a state of panic that lasts through the Mass. It is easily written and not always easily accomplished, but finding more time on a Sunday morning in order to make the preparations for Mass more calm and relaxed — even praying at home or in the car as a family in preparation for attending Mass together — can establish a more serene atmosphere even before arriving at the church, along with establishing a clear expectation for children that they should focus on prayer and the Mass as much as their age allows them to.

Children under the age of 7 are not obligated to attend Mass, but if they can there are benefits for them and for the community. There are certainly times when it is best to remove unruly children from Mass temporarily, if only to be charitable to those in surrounding seats, but it seems better to teach children to be comfortable in the house of God surrounded by their fellow Catholics. It takes plenty of patience and lots of attention from parents, but that is a better practice than keeping them away from the Lord.

BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN IN BRINGING THEM TO MASS

- The grace being poured out.
- Helps to develop a love and fascination for sacred things
- When brought to Mass frequently, children more quickly learn the language of the Faith.
- Behavior at Mass gets better at an earlier age if they are taken from an early age and become used to going.
- The Faith becomes interwoven into the “fabric” of their lives.
- A love for and hungering after the Real Presence of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist