

EXPLORING OUR FAITH – WHEN WE BELIEVE

What do we believe? If we allow the words we effortlessly recite at every Sunday Eucharist during the Creed to resonate within us, we should know. In this Sunday's Gospel for the 4th Sunday of Advent, Elizabeth says of Mary: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." *Blessed is she who believed.* That resonates with me this week.

It has been a tough week for our province – tougher than most of the weeks of this ongoing global pandemic, with a virus that continues to mutate as it persists working its insidious way into our bodies. It has also been a tough few weeks for my family, as we encounter many of the same issues as other folks during Advent season preparations for Christmas within COVID-19, made more chaotic because of renovations and a challenge surfacing from an intellectually disabled adult son. A line from the movie *The Sound of Music* comes to mind when Mother Superior comforting Maria says: "God never closes a door without opening a window." About time for God to get to that window, I think!

Within all this, I hear Elizabeth's greetings to Mary, and I ask myself – do I believe, do I *really* believe?

Mary was young – historians say that Jewish women from 1st century Israel were having children as young as 14 years of age. Scripture doesn't tell us how old Mary was; only that the angel Gabriel was sent to a virgin named Mary. (Luke 1:26) However, if we accept the tradition of the time, we expect that Mary was between 14 and 20 years old when she was pregnant with Jesus.

When I was 14, I was busy worrying about what to wear to the next dance. Having a child was not anywhere on my agenda. And yet Mary, who could arguably have been the same age, trusts what the angel says, and accepts this huge responsibility, which will now also mean she has to trust that Joseph will not abandon her. Still, she believes.

We all face challenges in our lives that shake our belief in God – I doubt it is possible to mature in faith if we do not. Elizabeth is led to her exclamation about Mary because of the knowledge which comes to her of who it is that Mary carries in her womb. Mary responds, first with her Fiat, "Let it be [done] with me," to the angel, and then through her Magnificat, a response to Elizabeth's greeting which follows the verses we hear from Luke today.

Belief and trust can be difficult. I am no more immune from that than anyone else. Yet, last week, the window opened in the Bennett household, not fully, only a little, but it is enough. My mother had a marvelous saying: "better to live in hope, than die in despair" stolen from an 18th century German poet (although I suspect she did not know that.) Belief gives us hope.

As we can have no clear idea of what the future holds for us, Mary had little inkling of what the future held for her or her son. Yet she believed, she trusted, and she hoped. She is my inspiration in my attempt to do the same. For, as Elizabeth told us: if we believe, we will be blessed.

~Ellen Bennett

Archdiocese of Moncton Office for Evangelization and Catechesis



Our Lady of Hope Pastoral Unit

4th Sunday of Advent 19 December 2021

Immaculate Conception Church, Rexton

St-Peter's Church, South Branch



Parish Office:

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Office Hours:

Tuesday 4:00 pm - 8:00 pm,
Wednesday & Thursday – 8:30 am - 12:30 pm



Priest-Moderator: Fr. Bernard Gauthier, C.Ss.R. 523-9788 Cell Phone: 889-0344

Immaculate Conception Mass Times

Sunday – 9:00 am & 4:00 pm (until further notice)

Tuesday – 4:00 pm (Sacristy)

St. Peter's Mass Time

Saturday – 4:00 pm

Scripture Readings for Upcoming Week			
Mon	Isaiah 7:10-14	Psalms 24	Luke 1:26-38
Tue	Song of Solomon 2:8-14	Psalms 33	Luke 1:39-45
Wed	1 Samuel 1:24-38	2:1-7	Luke 1:46-56
Thur	Malachi 3:1-4,23-24	Psalms 25	Luke 1:57-66
Fri	2 Samuel 7:1-5,8-16	Psalms 89	Luke 1:67-79
Sat	Isaiah 52:7-10 Hebrews 1:1-6	Psalms 98	John 1:1-18
Sun	Sirach 3:2-6,12-14 Colossians 3:12-21	Psalms 128	Luke 2:41-52



PARISH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM LAST WEEK

Immaculate Conception

Loose: **\$95.00**; Regular Envelopes: **\$890.00**;
 Christmas Env.: **\$400.00**; Mass Stipends Nov.:
\$39.00; Donation: **\$150.00**; Votives: **\$90.25**;
TOTAL: \$1,664.25

St. Peter's

Loose: **\$35.00**; Envelopes: **\$310.00**;
 Mass Stipends Nov.: **\$12.00**; **Total: \$357.00**

Immaculate Conception Cemetery Fund

Memorial Tree: **\$280.00**

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

Please note your envelope donations can also be left in the locked box outside the parish hall.

MASS INTENTIONS FOR UPCOMING WEEK

Sat	18	SP	4:00 pm	Leon Vautour†	Phyllis Shortall
Sun	19	IC	9:00 am	Raymond Perry†	Mina Richard
Sun	19	IC	4:00 pm	John & Melina Mourant†	Dwight & Jeannette Little
Tue	21	IC	4:00 pm	Noella Cormier†	Stella & Yvon
Fri	24	IC	9:30 pm	--	--
Sat	25	SP	11:00 am	--	--
Sun	26	IC	4:00 pm	Dave Hebert†	Mina Richard

LITURGY SCHEDULE FOR NEXT WEEKEND

				Lectors		Eucharistic Ministers
Fri	24	IC	9:30 pm	1 st & 2 nd Reading Intentions	Donna Pat	Gloria
Sat	25	SP	11:00 am	1 st Reading & Psalm 2 nd Reading & Intentions	Lois	Stella
Sun	26	IC	4:00 pm	1 st & 2 nd Reading Intentions	Vina Stephen	Gloria

WE PRAY FOR STRENGTH FOR THOSE WHO ARE SICK:

Alverie Robichaud, Roger Mazerolle and all residents in special care homes.



Christmas Mass Schedule

December 24th

Elsipogtog.....6:30 p.m.
 Rexton.....9:30 p.m.
 Indian Island....12:00 Midnight

December 25th

South Branch...11:00 a.m.

December 26th

Elsipogtog.....11:00 a.m.
 Rexton.....4:00 p.m.

December 31st (No Mass)

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
 Rexton.....7:30 p.m.

January 1st

South Branch.....4:00 p.m.

January 2nd

Rexton.....4:00 p.m.
 Elsipogtog.....11:00 a.m.



CONFESSION/RECONCILIATION

Fr. Bernard will be available to hear confessions 30 minutes prior to any mass, or you may also contact him to arrange a another time.

2021 CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

Please note that with the current COVID-19 restrictions in place, pre-registration for Christmas Masses will be necessary by contacting the Parish Office where you plan to attend mass. The number for Elsipogtog & Indian Island is 523-7578. Because there will be only one mass in Rexton on December 26th and on January 2nd, we ask that you call the parish office to pre-register for these masses as well. Thank you!



DIOCESAN ANNOUNCEMENTS

FOR A SYNODAL CHURCH: COMMUNION, PARTICIPATION, AND MISSION You have heard some talk, I hope, about the Synod, which was announced by Pope Francis in October, and will be taking place over the next two years. You may have some questions about what this all actually means. Over the next couple of months, we will be speaking about that, attempting to answer questions you may have. Let's begin by answering what a synod is. A Synod is a formal process, used by the Church, in which many people are consulted on a specific topic for discussion. Though it usually leads to a formal gathering from which a formal document is produced, Synods can involve countless discussion groups that precede the formal gathering, assuring the greatest amount of participation possible. Two of the most recent Church Synod includes the Synod on the Family and the Synod on Youth.



Christmas symbols, especially the creche and trimmed tree, bring us back to the certainty that fills the heart with peace, with joy for the Incarnation, to God who becomes familiar: He dwells with us, He fills our days with the rhythm of hope.

~Pope Francis (via Twitter)