

EXPLORING OUR FAITH ~ Love and Worthiness

Today's gospel is one of the best-known stories in the New Testament, and at the same time it is one that most of us don't really "know." That is to say, we don't really take one of its key messages to heart – love and belonging have nothing to do with deserving.

When the younger son asked for his inheritance while his father was still living, he did something that wasn't considered good, but was allowed. A son who truly honored the commandments and respected his parents would have stayed and worked with them, but a son who chose to sever the relationship with the family and go his own way, still "deserved" to move into the world with the same socioeconomic status that he had always had. Conversely, a child who severed the relationship with their family and squandered the money that they had, "deserves" isolation and poverty. This is because the very idea of deserving is anchored in past choices rather than in present choices. Deserving is the partner to owing. It implies that there is a debt to be paid.

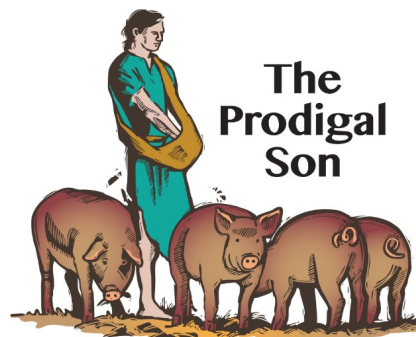
The son heads home knowing that his father owes him nothing. He does not deserve to be seen as a son because in asking for his inheritance he declared his father dead to him. The father, on the other hand, is unconcerned by the son's worthiness and pays no attention to the son's statement about what he does or does not deserve, because it is irrelevant. The father did not love the son and care for the son out of a sense of duty or obligation. He did not love his son because he owed love to his son. He loved his son because he is a father who loves. The choices that he makes are not based on what has been done in the past, but rather on who he wants to be in the present.

This is what the older son cannot understand. He is angry because he has been with his father all the time without ever receiving a reward for his presence and his faithfulness. He believes that he deserves more than his brother but has received less. Again, the father makes it clear that belonging, celebrating and loving have nothing to do with deserving. "You are always with me, and all that I have is yours." From the Father's perspective all of life with the older son is a celebration of love. He hasn't "rewarded" the older son because any reward that could be given already belonged to the son. The older son was so concerned with trying to earn a place of love and belonging that he missed the fact that he was loved unconditionally and belonged absolutely.

Love is something that must be lived in the present moment. It is not a reward for past behavior nor a means of locking in future behavior. It is a choice to be fully alive and fully connected in the present moment. It is a choice to see the image of God in the person in front of us as they are right now. It is the recognition that God sees each of us as a beloved child just as we are right now.

Last Sunday we heard the Scripture passage in which God tells Moses to tell the people that "I am" sent him. We were reminded that God meets us in the present moment, in what is right here and right now. This Sunday we are reminded that God meets us with love in that present moment, love that is right here and right now, regardless of what has come before or what may come after. Love has nothing to do with worthiness.

~Pam Driedger, St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish Unit



Our Lady of Hope Pastoral Unit

Fourth Sunday of Lent 27 March 2022

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

Tuesday – 4:00 pm (Sacristy)

St. Peter's Mass Time

Saturday – 4:00 pm

Scripture Readings for Upcoming Week

Mon	Isaiah 65:17-21	Psalms 30	John 4:43-54
Tue	Ezekiel 47:1-9	Psalms 46	John 5:1-16
Wed	Isaiah 49:8-15	Psalms 145	John 5:17-30
Thur	Exodus 32:7-14	Psalms 106	John 5:31-47
Fri	Wisdom 2:1-22	Psalms 34	John 7:1-30
Sat	Jeremiah 11:18-20	Psalms 7	John 7:40-53
Sun	Isaiah 43:16-21 Philippians 3:8-14	Psalms 126	John 8:1-11



PARISH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM LAST WEEK

Immaculate Conception

Loose: **\$61.00**; Envelopes: **\$460.00**;

TOTAL: \$521.00

St. Peter's

Loose: **\$17.00**; Envelopes: **\$280.00**;

Ash Wednesday: **\$20.00**

TOTAL: \$317.00

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	26	SP	4:00 pm	Dick Murphy†	Gertrude Connolly
Sun	27	IC	9:00 am	Agatha Godwin†	Bill LeGoff & Stuart Ward
Tue	29	IC	4:00 pm	Edward & Mary Hannay†	Donna & Blaine
Sat	2	SP	4:00 pm	Cathy Roach†	JoAnn Murphy & Family
Sun	3	IC	9:00 am	Rose Jean Cormier†	Norma McNairn & Family

LITURGY SCHEDULE FOR UPCOMING WEEK

				Lectors	Eucharistic Ministers
Sat	2	SP	4:00 pm	1 st Reading & Psalm 2 nd Reading & Intentions	Lois Stella
Sun	3	IC	9:00 am	1 st Reading & Psalm 2 nd Reading & Intentions	Corinne Donna

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION ROSARY SCHEDULE

				Leader	Intentions
Sun	27	IC	8:30 am	Gail Barlow	1 st Decade: For our clergy
Sun	3	IC	8:30 am	Maia Scoretz	2 nd Decade: For our parishioners
Sun	10	IC	8:30 am	Gail Barlow	3 rd Decade: For our youth
Sun	17	IC	8:30 am	Maia Scoretz	4 th Decade: For peace in our world 5 th Decade: For the intentions of parishioners

WE PRAY FOR STRENGTH FOR THOSE WHO ARE SICK:

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

WE MOURN the death of Josie McGlynn, who died on March 19th at the Moncton Hospital. Please hold in prayer her family and those whose lives she touched.

ROSARY For those who wish to participate, we will be praying the Rosary prior to Sunday mass each Sunday, beginning at about 8:30 am. If you wish to assist with leading the Rosary, please contact the parish office so you can be included on the schedule.

PARISH POTLUCK There will be a parish potluck on Sunday, April 3rd from 5:00 – 7:00 pm at the Parish Hall in Rexton. Everyone is invited, but you will need to sign up and indicate which dish you plan to bring with you. There will be a sign-up sheet at the back of the church, as well as on the bulletin board in the parish hall. You may also contact Trevor at the parish office to indicate what you plan to bring.



SACRAMENT OF THE SICK Fr. Bernard will be offering the Sacrament of the Sick in Rexton on Wednesday, April 3rd at 2:30 PM, and in Elsipogtog at 7:00 PM on the same day.

MOVIE & DISCUSSION On Good Friday, April 15th from 6:30 – 8:30, we will be showing the film *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977) at the parish hall, following which Fr. Bernard will lead a discussion on the film. For more information contact Maia at 506-688-6061 or family@forourlady.com

LITURGICAL MINISTRY SCHEDULE for April-May are now available at the back of the church.

DIOCESAN ANNOUNCEMENTS

INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION FUND On September 24, 2021, the Bishops of Canada issued a formal apology to the Indigenous peoples of our country. A few days later, they collectively made a nationwide financial commitment to support healing and reconciliation initiatives for residential school survivors, their families, and their communities. The national goal is to raise \$30 million over five years. In solidarity with all Indigenous peoples and, particularly with our local Mi'gmaq communities, the Archdiocese of Moncton is making a financial appeal to the faithful in our parishes to contribute to this fundraising effort. The first annual collection will take place on May 7 and 8, 2022. Starting on April 9, I will be sending out weekly announcements in the parish bulletins to inform you about the reasons for this national collection and the use of the funds. The Holy Father is scheduled to meet with individual Indigenous delegations the week of March 28th, 2022. A final audience with all participants will take place on Friday, April 1st. I invite you to pray for the success of these meetings that they may be fruitful and further engage us in recognizing the truth and achieving reconciliation.

+Archbishop Valéry Vienneau

ONLINE COLLECTION FOR UKRAINE Development and Peace is taking online donations to help the thousands of people affected by the ongoing war in Ukraine. You can make a donation on our website (www.devp.org), by calling 1 888 664-3387 or by sending us a cheque by mail (1425 René-Lévesque Blvd. West, 3rd floor, Montreal, QC, H3G 1T7) made out to Development and Peace and marked "Ukraine Emergency".

VBS XPRESS 2022 Mark your calendars for this year's Vacation Bible School (for children having finished kindergarten up to the end of 6th grade), which will again be held virtually on Zoom from June 6th-9th from 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM. This year's theme is *MONUMENTAL: Celebrating God's Greatness*. There are a limited number of spaces available, so register early by contacting Karen at 387-4198 or Trevor at 857-4879. A \$20 registration fee will be required, but will be refunded at the end of the program.