

EXPLORING OUR FAITH ~ A SHEPHERD IS IT?

I know very little about shepherds. In fact I would argue, that very few of us do. Frankly, I was shocked to discover that shepherds are still a real thing. That, although modern methods of farming have made protecting and herding sheep a lot easier, there are still many places in the world, including places in North America, where shepherds continue doing the job which has been done for thousands of years – one source indicated it may well be the oldest occupation of all. I also learned that while sheep may look docile, peaceful and easy to manipulate, they can be very difficult to herd and guard.

This fourth Sunday of Easter is sometimes called Good Shepherd Sunday, primarily because in each year of the lectionary cycle, the readings for it ask us to think about Jesus as a Good Shepherd. It is an image I am challenged by, one I had considered out-dated, more reflective of the culture during the time of Jesus. In point of view, given the nature of sheep ... and of people ... it is spot on. Who knew???

Shepherds look out for their sheep. They work long hours for little pay, spend many days alone in cold, wet weather, ensuring that the herds under their charge are protected from predators, led to new pastures when their food supply is exhausted, seek out errant sheep who have wandered from the fold. What a powerful image for our God – a God who is always desiring what is best for us; a God who never tires of trying to guide, feed and protect us; a God who comforts and strengthens us when we are challenged by life's circumstances.

On this particular Good Shepherd Sunday, we here the beloved Psalm 23. It is one that is very familiar even to those who are not regular participants in the Sunday liturgy, sung as it often is at funerals. Indeed, I have heard it so often that I no longer listen to the words – it has become a rote prayer akin to the Lord's Prayer almost, another prayer that I have to work on praying versus racing through. Recently however, I received some disconcerting news, and in my preparations for this reflection, the words of that psalm have resonated with me in a new way. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want ... he restores my soul ... even walking through the darkest valley, I fear no evil ... my cup overflows ... I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long." An aha moment for me. No wonder these words bring comfort to so many as they sit in the midst of grief and mourning.

To have our souls restored when we are weighed down by life; to be open to the guidance of one who loves us unconditionally; to know that regardless what we must face our God is accompanying us; to accept that we dwell always in the Lord's house - these are concepts that come to us through faith. My father was diagnosed with terminal cancer at the age of 56, and died 20 months later.

In our home, our mother was the one we saw as the faithful Catholic, albeit that Dad joined us every Sunday at church. Yet, from the point of his diagnosis to the date of his death, my father never expressed anger at his sickness or fear at what was to come. He was a reticent man my dad, and I will concede that part of that may have been his natural inclination. But what I witnessed during those 20 months was a man of profound faith, who knew that this journey he was making was not being done by him alone. The Good Shepherd who is preparing a table for us all was with Dad during that time in his life, as He is with us all, always. Like any good shepherd He never strays from the task of protecting and guiding us. Comforting? Yes, for sure.

~Ellen Bennett, St. Elizabeth of the Trinity Parish Grouping

Our Lady of Hope Pastoral Unit

Fourth Sunday of Easter (Good Shepherd Sunday) 30th April 2023

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 – 11:00 am

Tuesday – 4:00 pm (Sacristy)

St. Peter's Mass Time

Saturday – 4:00 pm

Scripture Readings for Upcoming Week

Mon	Genesis 1:26-2:3	Psalm 90	Matthew 13:54-58
Tue	Acts 11:19-26	Psalm 87	John 10:22-30
Wed	1 Corinthians 15:1-8	Psalm 19	John 14:6-14
Thu	Acts 13:13-25	Psalm 89	John 13:16-20
Fri	Acts 13:26-33	Psalm 2	John 14:1-6
Sat	Acts 13:44-52	Psalm 98	John 14:7-14
Sun	Acts 6:1-7 1 Peter 2:4-9	Psalm 33	John 14:1-12



PARISH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM LAST WEEK

Immaculate Conception

Loose: **\$32.50**; Envelopes: **\$615.00**;
Hall Rental: **\$95.00**; Good Friday: **\$5.00**;
Easter Offering: **\$25.00**; **TOTAL: \$772.50**

St. Peter's

Loose: **\$30.00**; Envelopes: **\$105.00**;
TOTAL: \$135.00

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED GENEROSITY!

MASS INTENTIONS FOR UPCOMING WEEK

Sat	29	SP	4:00 pm	Donnie Wood †	Dale & Debbie
Sun	30	IC	11:00 am	Katherine Ann Hatt †	Bill & Stuart
Tue	2	IC	4:00 pm	Eric Johnson Sr. †	Elva & Family
Sat	6	SP	4:00 pm	Lillian Vautour †	Norma McNairn
Sun	7	IC	11:00 am	James Roach †	Alverie & Huguette

LITURGY SCHEDULE FOR UPCOMING WEEK

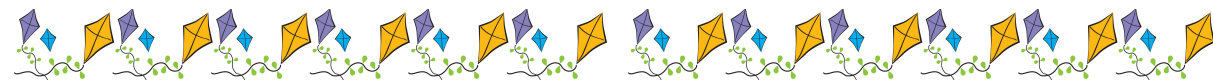
				Lectors		Eucharistic Ministers
Sat	6	SP	4:00 pm	1 st Reading & Psalm: 2 nd Reading / Intentions:	Lois	Stella
Sun	7	IC	11:00 am	1 st Reading & Psalm: 2 nd Reading & Intentions:	Pat Donna / Vina	Dennis

ROSARY SCHEDULE FOR IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

				Leader	Intentions
Sun	7	IC	10:30 am	Gail	1 st Decade: <i>For our clergy</i>
Sun	14	IC	10:30 am	Vina	2 nd Decade: <i>For our parishioners</i>
Sun	21	IC	10:30 am	Gail	3 rd Decade: <i>For our youth</i>
					4 th Decade: <i>For peace in our world</i>
					5 th Decade: <i>For the intentions of parishioner</i>

WE PRAY FOR STRENGTH FOR THOSE WHO ARE SICK:

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

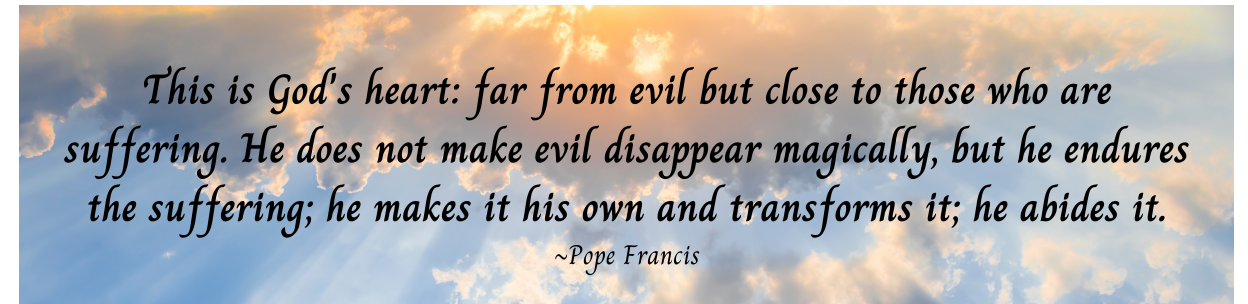


WE EXTEND OUR CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY OF CARLA MAY REYES AND SON LORENZO SUSON. Carla May died at the Moncton Hospital on April 18th and her infant son died on April 24th at the IWK Hospital in Halifax. Carla's funeral was held at Immaculate Conception in Rexton on Saturday, April 22nd. A funeral mass for Lorenzo will be held next week at Immaculate Conception. Both Carla May and her surviving husband Leonardo Suson have been actively involved in various parish ministries.

WE ALSO EXTEND OUR CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILY OF ALBERT ARSENAULT, who died on April 23rd at the Stella Maris Hospital in Ste. Anne. Funeral and burial for Albert will take place at Immaculate Conception on May 18th at 10:30 am.

SAVE THE DATES! COMMUNITY BREAKFASTS will take place on **Saturday, May 13th** and **Saturday, June 17th** at the Immaculate Conception Parish Hall from 8:30 am – 10:00 am. The cost will be \$10.00 /person and \$5.00/child, with all proceeds going to the ongoing maintenance of the church and hall.

BEING PRESENT: CAREGIVERS AND THE PEOPLE THEY CARE FOR Save the Dates! The Diocesan End of Life Pastoral Care Committee will offer a session designed for those who provide care to the sick / infirm, facilitated by Louise Ongo of St. Bernard's Parish. The first session will take place on Thursday, May 11th at Immaculate Conception Church (8 School Street) in Rexton and go from 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm. Louise will offer the same session a second time on May 18th at St. Bernard's Church (43 Botsford Street) in Moncton, from 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm.



FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MONCTON

ANNUAL COLLECTION FOR THE INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION FUND I am pleased to inform you that the funds collected locally in our parishes last year (\$34,820.00) will be used in funding local projects in collaboration with our four local Mi'gmaq communities: Elsipogtog First Nation, Bouctouche MicMac, Fort Folly First Nation, and Indian Island First Nation. We will work in the coming months to identify projects based on the priorities of these communities. In addition, we hope to encourage initiatives in the following areas: 1) healing and reconciliation, 2) revitalization of culture and language, 3) education and early childhood development, and 4) promoting Indigenous spirituality and culture. I know that no process can erase the pain of survivors and those who experience intergenerational trauma. However, by staying attentive, cultivating trusting relationships, and working collaboratively on joint projects, we hope to learn to journey together on the path of truth and healing. Special envelopes will be distributed to parishes for this year's collection, which will take place on May 6th and 7th, 2023. May the Lord help us in our efforts of reconciliation and rapprochement with our Indigenous sisters and brothers. ~Archbishop Valéry Vienneau