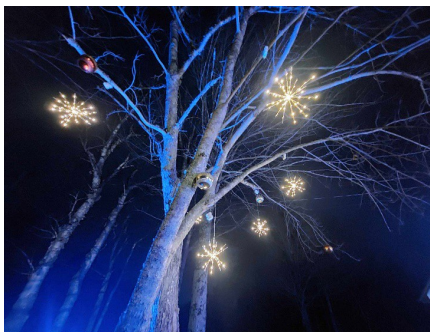


EXPLORING OUR FAITH - *The Wilderness of 2023*

As we observe the Season of Advent amid the wilderness of 2023, we are reminded to not get ahead of ourselves and celebrate Christmas before spending time reflecting and preparing. This is good advice. I do not think we are meant to move from Halloween directly into celebrating Christmas without preparation. But depending on how you look at it, I feel like there is a lot of stuff going on.

How many of you have already put up your Christmas trees and not even patiently decorated them progressively each week in order to build upon the sense of Advent hope, expectation and waiting? Do you feel guilty? I know several people have told me (some whispered) they put their Christmas tree up on November 12th. Still others I know put their Christmas tree up annually by the end of October and listen to Christmas music year-round. In my years working in public libraries, I learned there is a whole group of people out there who read Christmas romance novels all year long. Others watch Hallmark Christmas movies regardless of the time of year. And did you know in Philippines it is common for Christmas trees to go up as early as September or October? Four months!

Driving the 134 between Shediac and Rexton, I have never seen so many houses lit up so early and so brightly as this year. Full confession here...our Christmas tree went up shortly after Remembrance Day. My plan was to decorate it slowly and light it the Fourth Week of Advent but this plan failed almost immediately and that tree is fully decorated and lit brightly enough to be seen from Truro. This year we needed the light. I do not think my Christmas tree means I am celebrating Christmas already, but it does remind me that I am waiting for something greater. It gives me hope for better days to come. It softens the darkness.



There is no need to describe the harsh darkness in the world we navigate in December 2023 as we struggle to hear the voice in the wilderness. Globally there are escalating wars, a worsening climate crisis. Locally, we are experiencing a homelessness epidemic, economic insecurity, and an ever-deepening despair among many. If you feel unaffected by these I would like to know your secret.

Advertising messages are almost inescapable. We need products to make us more skinny, less old, more successful, less ugly. There will always be peer pressure messages to fit in: "You have to do it this way," "you don't fit in," "you need to be more Catholic," "you obviously have that wrong," "if you think this you're wrong," or "if you did that you're clearly imprisoned by sin."

Even in our Church, how often is the message we receive about our need to be more virtuous, more Catholic, less secular, more loving, more evangelized, more liberal, less conservative. Always more something and less something, but how often do we hear we are enough? When was the last time you felt that you were enough? I wonder if there is a place that would allow us to step back, rest, and disconnect ourselves from the multitude of messages telling us what we need to be? A place where we can be enough? A place where we dare to feel joy or hopeful anticipation.

Interestingly, those early Christmas trees I mentioned earlier, the bright outdoor lights I see everywhere I go, the movies on television, the music on the radio, the Christmas baking in August? Something about all of these helps to silence the other competing, often toxic messages I encounter in the wilderness, and takes me to a place and time when I can hear more clearly the voice I listen for, "Get ready for something awesome, folks." In case you have not heard this lately, you are enough. I think God wants us all to know this. Now get ready, I heard someone say a miracle was supposed to happen.

Trevor Droesbeck

~Office for Evangelization and Catechesis

Our Lady of Hope Pastoral Unit

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT 10 December 2023

Immaculate Conception Church, Rexton

St-Peter's Church, South Branch



Parish Office:

12 School Street Rexton, NB E4W 2E5

Phone: 506-523-6817

Email: icprexton@rogers.com

Web: <https://ourladyofhope.weebly.com/>

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	Isaiah 35:1-10	Ps 85	Luke 5:17-26
Tue	Zechariah 2:14-17 or Revelation 11:19A	Jdt 13	Luke 1:26-38 or Luke 1:39-47
Wed	Isaiah 40:25-31	Ps 103	Matthew 11:28-30
Thu	Isaiah 41:13-20	Ps 145	Matthew 11:11-15
Fri	Isaiah 48:17-19	Ps 1	Matthew 11:16-19
Sat	Sirach 48:1-11	Ps 80	Matthew 17:9A-13
Sun	Isaiah 61:1-11	Lk 1	1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 / John 1:6-28



PARISH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM LAST WEEK

Immaculate Conception

Loose: **\$167.00**; Envelopes: **\$655.00**;
Missals: **\$15.00**; Votives: **\$129.05**; Donations: **\$300.00**
Initial Offering: **\$25.00** **TOTAL: \$1291.05**

Immaculate Conception Cemetery

Memorial Tree Donations: **\$230.00** **TOTAL: \$230.00**

St. Peter's

Loose: **\$40.00**; Envelopes: **\$185.00**;
TOTAL: \$225.00

St. Peter's Cemetery

Donation to St. Bartholomew: **\$250.00**
TOTAL: \$250.00

Thank you for your generosity!

MASS INTENTIONS FOR UPCOMING WEEK

Sat	9	SP	4:00 pm	Leon & Lilian Vautour †	Evelyn & John
Sun	10	IC	11:00 am	Antonio & Magdalena Mendoza †	Adona
Tue	12	IC	4:00 pm	Faye Hudson †	Dick & Family
Sat	16	SP	4:00 pm	Kadie Francis †	Audrey Francis
Sun	17	IC	11:00 am	Edward & Mary Hannay †	Blaine & Donna

LITURGY SCHEDULE FOR NEXT WEEKEND

				Lectors	Eucharistic Ministers
Sat	16	SP	4:00 pm	1 st Reading & Psalm: 2 nd Reading / Intentions:	Lois Stella
Sun	17	IC	11:00 am	1 st Reading & Psalm: 2 nd Reading & Intentions:	Gloria / Pat Vina Adona

ROSARY SCHEDULE FOR IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

				Leader	Intentions
Sun	17	IC	10:30 am	Vina	1 st Decade: For our Clergy; 2 nd Decade: For our parishioners;
Sun	24	IC	10:30 am	Gail	3 rd Decade: For our youth; 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, CHRISTIAN ROBICHAUD
ROGER MAZEROLLE
ALL RESIDENTS LIVING IN SPECIAL CARE HOMES**

CATECHISM BEGINS!

Catechism will begin on Friday, December 15th at 7:00 pm in the Parish Hall.

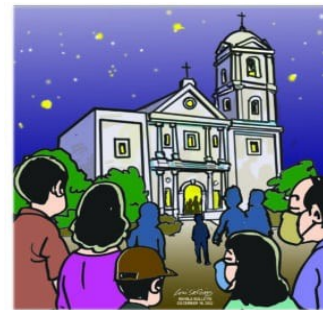
MEMORIAL TREE 2023 (Rexton & South Branch) To purchase a bulb, those in South Branch should contact **Phyllis Shortall** (506-523-6178), **Carol Beers** (523-6389 / 427-0027), or **Stella Marinelli** (506-523-3612). In Rexton you can purchase a bulb through the Parish Office, or by dropping a bulb request in the collection basket. Requests can be found at the back of the church.

A special "thank-you" to Marilyn Hannay who generously donated this year's Memorial Tree for Immaculate Conception.

SAINT BARTHOLOMEW CEMETERY in Molus River (Bass River) will illuminate a Christmas tree at the graveyard in remembrance of loved ones or as a sign of gratitude or to extend prayers for someone. With a donation of \$10.00 per Bulb you can have a Solar bulb added to the tree. We accept cash, cheque, e-transfer to mghannay1@gmail.com password -bulb. Donations along with the person's name can be given to Carmel Whalen, Rita Whalen, Daneen Warman, Christa Ward-Gillis & Marilyn Hannay by December 15, 2023.

DONATIONS FOR 2023 Please note that donations for 2023 must be received by the Parish Office by December 31st in order for it to appear on this year's tax receipt.

FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE



THE FILIPINO COMMUNITY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF MONCTON invites everyone to join in our first ever **SIMBANG GABI IN MONCTON**. *Simbang Gabi*, a tagalog phrase that literally means "Evening Mass," is the Filipino traditional novena Masses offered for nine consecutive evenings before Christmas Eve. It is a spiritual journey for Filipinos, a time of reflection, devotion, and anticipation as we prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Centred on the Eucharist, the nine Masses honour the Blessed Mother Mary, who carried Our Lord Jesus in her womb for nine months. How is it different from a daily Advent Mass? On Simbang Gabi Masses, the priest wears white festive vestments, and the Gloria is sung. In Moncton, Fr. Carlos Jacinto will preside at **SIMBANG GABI**

MASSES AT ST. BERNARD'S CHURCH (43 BOTSFORD STREET) FROM DECEMBER 15TH TO THE 23RD AT 7:00 PM. All Masses are in English. We will be honoured if you join us in these celebrations.

BENEFIT CONCERT - "Music of the World" on Sunday, December 10, 2023, from 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm at OUR LADY OF MERCY CHURCH (11 rue St Andrews), Pointe Du Chêne. The Christmas concert will be followed by a potluck supper in the basement. All are welcome. Donations will be accepted at the door to support the church's mission projects. This musical afternoon will see artists from Canada, Nicaragua, Mexico, Poland, and the Philippines present pieces from their native countries. For information, contact 506-531-0252. Thank you for your support!

