

EXPLORING OUR FAITH - *The Consoling Joy of the Gospel*

In a world that has not enough of any, the themes of Advent are significant – hope, peace, joy and love. This Sunday, the focus is on joy. The prophet Isaiah, a key character of the season, reminds us of the ‘good news’ which he has been sent to proclaim, for which he is ‘greatly rejoicing.’ Mary, on arriving at her cousin Elizabeth’s home, responds to Elizabeth’s greeting with her beautiful Magnificate – a prayer of joy and praise. And the words of John’s Gospel, from which we also draw the Gospel for Christmas morning, speaks of one who has come to ‘testify to the light.’

From these possibilities, the words which resonate with me are those of this young mother-to-be. We know there are many unwanted children conceived. Given what we know about that time period, Jewish women were considered marriageable by the age of 13/14, so while we don’t know this definitely, it is expected that Mary would have been about that age when Jesus was born. She was young. Clearly she would have reservations about this pregnancy.

Initially she resists the news from the angel Gabriel. She is poor, uneducated, has no attachment with a man, is a powerless member of society – a nobody. During this time, many women who had no husband, father or brother to look after them had to resort to prostitution simply to survive. Women did not have it easy. Mary **must** have had doubts. Even when a child is long desired, and couples well prepared, pregnancy creates anxiety. On my much longed for first pregnancy, I remember lying awake one night mere weeks before my due date, saying to Wayne, “I can’t do this. I want out.” “Well, girl,” he replied, “too late for that now.” Even living in 20th/21st century North America, with good medical care, mother’s to be worry about what can go wrong; we worry about the financial strain of having a child; we worry about the parenting which will continue for the rest of our lives. (My mother used to say, “Until you die, or they die, you worry about your children.” She was right!) Despite this, Mary finally agrees to the angel’s request.

Scant weeks after hearing the news from the angel, Mary speaks these words of gratitude and awe: “My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. ... For the Mighty One has done great things for me.” With all she has in front of her, at this point not even yet having shared the news with her husband to be, this is a woman who is filled with joy.

It is joy within the tumultousness of unknowing – unknowing how Joseph will respond; unknowing what exactly it means to bear the “Son of the Most High;” (Lk 1:32) unknowing, as no parent does, what the future will hold for this Jesus. In her book, *Lessons in Chemistry*, author Bonni Garmus compares raising children to rowing: “Both require patience, endurance, strength, and commitment. And neither allow us to see where we’re going – only where we’ve been.” Where Mary has been does not give much confidence for where she is going.

Within this struggle, Mary still feels joy and proclaims that joy to the first person who recognizes that she is with child. Every child born has the potential to be someone great, do something amazing. Children are such a wonderful gift, even those born in the most trying of circumstances. How much more for one who is the Son of God. In the midst of these last hectic weeks before Christmas, we are asked to look at our world with eyes of joy; to live, despite all that may be troubling us, with joy. We think of joy and happiness as interchangeable words and yet they are not always so. We all have prayers that seem to go unanswered, or are answered contrary to what we had hoped. Life does not always work out the way we plan, especially the plans we make for our children – Wayne frequently reminds me, me wanting it for them does not make them want it. However, within all the disappointments, pain, stress we may experience, we can also find joy – in morning sunrises, Christmas lights, inspiring music, errands completed, good books, quiet reflection. And always, always there is joy for the many possibilities that exist because of the imminent birth of a child.

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

Our Lady of Hope Pastoral Unit

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT 17 December 2023

Immaculate Conception Church, Rexton



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

St-Peter's Church, South Branch



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	Jeremiah 23:5-8	Ps 72	Matthew 1:18-25
Tue	Judges 13:2-25A	Ps 71	Luke 1:5-25
Wed	Isaiah 7:10-14	Ps 24	Luke 1:26-38
Thu	Song 2:8-14 or Zephaniah 3:14-18A	Ps 33	Luke 1:39-45
Fri	1 Samuel 1:24-28	1 Sm 1	Luke 1:46-56
Sat	Malachi 3:1-24	Ps 25	Luke 1:57-66
Sun	2 Samuel 7:1-16	Ps 89	Romans 16:25-27 / Luke 1:26-38



— THIRD SUNDAY OF —
ADVENT

PARISH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM LAST WEEK

Immaculate Conception

Loose: **\$136.00**; Envelopes: **\$615.00**;
Hall Rental: **\$200.00**;
Mass Stipends November: **\$40.00**; **TOTAL: \$991.00**

St. Peter's

Loose: **\$25.00**; Envelopes: **\$100.00**;
Donation: **\$20.00**; Mass Stipends November: **\$20.00**;
TOTAL: \$165.00

Immaculate Conception Cemetery

Memorial Tree: **\$100.00**

St. Peter's Cemetery

Memorial Tree: **\$3260.00**

Thank you for your generosity!

MASS INTENTIONS FOR UPCOMING WEEK

Sat	16	SP	4:00 pm	Kadie Francis †	Audrey Francis
Sun	17	IC	11:00 am	Edward & Mary Hannay †	Blaine & Donna
Tue	19	IC	4:00 pm	Mina Richard †	Nancy Richard
Sat	23	SP	4:00 pm	David Harnett †	Debbie & Dale Harnett
Sun	24	IC	9:30 pm	~	~

LITURGY SCHEDULE FOR NEXT WEEKEND

				Lectors		Eucharistic Ministers
Sat	23	SP	4:00 pm	1 st Reading & Psalm: 2 nd Reading / Intentions:	Lois	Stella
Sun	24	IC	11:00 am	1 st Reading & Psalm: 2 nd Reading & Intentions:	Gloria / Pat Jocelyn	Louise

ROSARY SCHEDULE FOR IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

				Leader	Intentions
Sun	24	IC	10:30 am	Gail	1 st Decade: For our Clergy; 2 nd Decade: For our parishioners;
Sun	31	IC	10:30 am	Vina	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.

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, etransfer 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.

OUR COMMUNITY MOURNS OVER THE LOSS OF CLIFFORD CARTER who died on Wednesday, December 13th. Please hold the Carter family in prayer.

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.

COP28 - Even though Pope Francis' health did not permit him to attend the opening of COP28, he continues to strongly push for efforts to preserve our "Common Home". On Thursday, Decmber 7th, the Pope addressing new ambassadors at the Vatican, expressed hope that world leaders meeting in Dubai "will join in adopting concrete measures to hand on to future generations a world which more fully resembles the fruitful garden that its Creator entrusted to our care and stewardship." Canada has made commitments along with other countries which, if followed, will bring the goals expressed at previous COP's closer to realization. The Conference is still ongoing, and many issues are yet to be resolved. In a speech delivered on behalf of Pope Francis to delegates at the conference, he begged, "Please, let us move forward and not turn back." He urged leaders not to postpone action any longer and pointed to the responsibility of policymakers to craft concrete and cohesive responses for the well-being of current and future generations.

