

Pastor's Corner - December 11, 2011 - God speaks to us in our wilderness

Since the beginning of Advent we have been asked to continue to actively search for God in our lives or in the words of Jesus to **"stay awake"**, to watch and actively wait in prayer for the rebirth of Christ in our hearts and in our world. Isaiah (40:1-11) called on us "in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."

That wilderness if first of all ourselves! After all, we all live at times in human situations of loneliness, of barrenness and emptiness, of emotional and spiritual chaos. We all go through desert experiences: the death or absence of a loved one; a sudden unexplained or maybe a long-lasting illness; an accident; the loss of a job; separation or divorce; an uncertain future; or maybe simply the maturing as a teenager or as some one entering that supposedly "golden" age. Well, God spoke to the Hebrew people in the wilderness, in their exile far away from home when everything seemed to be lost. He did so through messengers such as Isaiah, John the Baptist. **In the same way God speak to us in our own wilderness, in our own deserts, in our own moments of desolation. And again God uses messengers to reach out to us wherever we are.** These can be parents, children, friends, strangers, events in our lives as well as the Word of God spoken, broken open for us each Sunday or at other life-giving moments. **It is amazing how God finds some surprising ways to reach out to us. I suspect that God uses Twitter and Facebook! I am sure God is into all those fancy ways of communicating! After all, isn't he the ultimate source of all these wonderful creations which we as humans are capable of?**

I know for sure that God comes to us especially in the wilderness of our lives. The eminent Protestant theologian Howard Rice was once asked: "How is it that you have become so wise?" He fell silent and his eyes filled with tears. Then, grabbing the sides of the wheelchair in which he was sitting, Rice choked out these words: "MS mm ss, multiple sclerosis! I was pastor in Chicago, doing great. Things were going well. But you know what I was doing? I was living on talents. I was preaching on talent. I was ministering on talent. I was administrating, doing pastoral care and all the things that I had learned ... all on my talent, with God's blessing of course! But when I got multiple sclerosis, I could not handle it because I couldn't walk anymore. I had to give up a lot; suddenly I stopped living on my talent and started to live in trust and it changed my life. I thank God (as he grabbed his wheelchair), **I thank God for my multiple sclerosis. God didn't bring it to me, but he sure used it to help me mature in my faith, to find him and to trust him.**"

We all have our own stories, our own moments of truth or we will have sooner or later, you can be sure! **In this Advent season God invites us to recognize him, not somewhere outside, but rather within the wilderness of our lives.** It is there that we are challenged to respond and to act or re-act concretely. Christmas time brings us to reflect on many things. Isn't it amazing how God finds surprising ways to come back into our lives again and again? If only we could recognize them, learn from them, discover in them the presence of God who calls forth, who challenges us to find a deeper meaning in whatever happens to us. Yes, God is like the shepherd in Isaiah who cares and comforts us (Isaiah 40:1-11), who is faithful to his promises, all the while entering into our pains to transform them into new life. A new road is being cut through the desert and it is Jesus who will help us deal with hills and valleys too difficult for us to overcome alone.

On this Gaudete ("Rejoice!") Sunday, we can truly rejoice because God is near, because we are willing to come before God as we are in order to be liberated from sadness and to be freed of all that encumbers our lives. That is why we are invited to **come to St. Elizabeth this coming Thurs. Dec. 15 at 7:00 pm when we will all approach our God with humility and ask for forgiveness during our community celebration of reconciliation (confession).** Micah 6:8: "What God wants of you. Only this, to do what is right, to love tenderly, and to walk humbly with your God."

Shalom!

Fr. Rolf, OP

Saanich Peninsula Parish

A ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN COVENANT WITH ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
Box 2116, Sidney, BC, V8L 3S6

Parish Office: 250-656-7433, email: ssparish@shaw.ca, fax 250-483-1597

Web site: www.sparish.com, Rectory: 250-652-1990

Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

Reconciliation: Saturdays 4:00 - 4:30 pm, or by appointment.

PASTOR: Father Rolf Hasenack, O.P. **PARISH COORDINATOR:** Gary Koett

PASTORAL COUNCIL: Paul Ledet, Jr. (Chair)



EUCCHARIST AT ST. ELIZABETH'S

10030 Third Street, Sidney
Saturdays at 5 pm, Sundays at 10:30 am.
Daily on Tuesdays (8:30 am), Wednesdays and
Thursdays (9 am), and First Fridays (9 am).

RECONCILIATION AT ST. ELIZABETH'S
Saturdays 4 - 4:30pm

EUCCHARIST AT

OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION
7742 West Saanich Road, Saanichton
Sundays at 8:30 am

Last Friday at Saanich Peninsula Hospital at 11 am
Remaining Fridays at 9 am in a private home
(see "This Week in Our Parish" inside bulletin)



THE 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

DECEMBER 11, 2011

Isa 61.1-2, 10-11 / 1 Thess 5.16-24 / Jn 1.6-8, 19-28

VISITING EUCCHARISTIC MINISTRY

If you know of someone who is house-bound or in a nursing home/hospital and would like a visit from the Pastor or the Visitation Team, please call the office at 250-656-7433.

MISSION STATEMENT

*Let us be open
accepting individuals
sensitive to change
and willing to take
Courses untraditional,
unknown to us.
Let us live as
examples of God's love.*

NEW TO THE PARISH? WELCOME!

Please fill out the information below so we can get to know you. Pick up one of the blue information pamphlets next to the bulletins in the foyer so you can get to know us.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Postal Code: _____

Email: _____

Need Pre-Authorized Debit package? Yes ___ No ___

Need donation envelopes? Yes ___ No ___

IN OUR PARISH

COLLECTIONS:

December 4 \$ 3,273
Monthly Target: Approx. \$ 23,000

SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT IN ADVENT

OPENNESS TO GOD: You are invited to experience moments of God's presence, scripture reflection, personal quiet in preparation for the celebration of Emmanuel - God with us. **Thur. Dec. 15, 22, 29** to 3:30 pm at St. Elizabeth's. For info call Cathy Kelsey at 652-2365 or Sr. Donna MacIntyre at 656-0281.

OASIS MINI RETREAT

Saturday, Dec. 17, 10 am to 2 pm at St. Elizabeth's. Margaret O'Donnell and people living with addictions will lead us in prayer, reflection & sharing through the use of Jean Vanier and Taize prayer and singing. Please bring muffins, sandwiches or dessert.

RECONCILIATION SERVICE: DEC. 15, 7 PM

Everyone is invited to attend our annual Reconciliation Service on Thu. Dec. 15, 7 pm at St. Elizabeth's.

CHRISTMAS POINSETTIAS

Poinsettias are gratefully accepted for our Christmas decorations **after Dec. 20**. Drop off at the church or you may wish to make a money donation for their purchase in honour of someone special. This can be placed in the collection basket at any time (mark envelope "Christmas Flowers").

CONSIDER PRE-APPROVED DONATIONS !

You are encouraged to donate to our parish through the use of a pre-approved donation (PAD) rather than the weekly envelopes. Information packages are available from the parish office. If you have any questions or if you would like to increase your PAD donation, please call the parish office at 250-656-7433.

THIS WEEK IN THE PARISH

MONDAY, DEC. 12

1:00pm Memory Plus
1:00pm Faith Reflection Group

TUESDAY, DEC. 13

8:30am Mass
9:00am Eucharistic Adoration

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 14

9:00am Mass
10:00am Taiji Qigong

THURSDAY, DEC. 15

9:00am Mass
2:00pm Openness To God (see bulletin)
7:00pm Reconciliation Service

FRIDAY, DEC. 16

9:00am Mass at the Legion Manor

SATURDAY, DEC. 17

10 - 2pm Oasis Retreat at St. Elizabeth's
4-4:30pm Reconciliation
5:00pm Mass at St. Elizabeth's
7:00pm Via Choralis Concert (see bulletin)

SUNDAY, DEC. 18

8:30am Mass at Our Lady of the Assumption
9:45am Children's Religious Education
10:30am Mass at St. Elizabeth's followed by Coffee Fellowship
2:00pm Via Choralis Concert (see bulletin)

See online calendar at www.spparish.com for latest changes (click "View Parish Calendar").

MESSAGE FROM APPEAL TEAM

We are almost there - thank you to 20 parishioners who sent in their donations last week. Their donations brought us to a total of \$40,280 - **81% of our goal**. In total, the Diocese is just short of \$1,000,000 of which \$285,600 is going back to Parishes! Yes the appeal is still open. Please call the parish office at 250-656-7433 if you have any questions or need assistance to make your donation. Once again many thanks from Fr. Rolf, Derek, Freddie, Jim, Linda, Mark and Norm.

GIFTS FOR NEEDY PENINSULA CHILDREN

The youth of our parish are organizing a gift drive for needy children. Please place your gifts **UNWRAPPED** with the tag attached. Gender neutral gifts are preferred. **Gifts MUST be in by Sun. Dec. 11.** For more info contact Roy Battilana at 250-652-0340.

Many thanks & blessings!

CHRISTMAS CARDS ON SALE IN FOYER

\$1 per card, available for purchase after mass. Proceeds to St. Clare's Monastery, Duncan.

FRIENDLY HOURS

Will be closed **Dec. 13**, reopening on **Thu. Jan. 5**.

TAIJI QIGONG

Will be closed **Dec. 15**, reopening on **Wed. Jan. 11**.

2012 DONATION ENVELOPES

Donation envelopes can be picked up in the foyer.

TOILETRY KITS

There is an ongoing need for these supplies Joe Rigby has taken some to St John the Divine who runs an "In From the Rain" program, and they were thrilled. He has also given some to prisoners on their release. Deodorant is the item we are usually short of, so if you have any Shoppers Drug Mart points that would be a good way to spend them !!!

VIA CHORALIS SINGS MESSIAH

Sat. Dec. 17 at 7 pm & Sun. Dec. 18 at 2 pm at St. Elizabeth's. Handel's Messiah will be performed by Via Choralis and orchestra, with soloists Rachel Mitten, Arlene Overman, Sunny Shams and Paul Windlemans. Tickets: \$25 / \$10. Groups of ten or more can buy tickets for \$22 each. Tickets at the door or contact Daphne Hughes at 250-655-3093, or email daphnekildara@gmail.com.

IN OUR DIOCESE

ST. ANDREW'S HIGH SCHOOL EVENTS

Please join us for our celebrations:

- Advent Carol Service on **Thu. Dec. 14**, 7 pm at St. Andrew's High School. There will be a tea and raffle after. Everyone is welcome.
- St. Andrew's High School is collecting socks for St. Vincent de Paul.

2011 CHRISTMAS MASS SCHEDULE

THURSDAY, Dec. 15

7:00 pm - Reconciliation Service

SATURDAY, Dec. 24

6:30 pm Mass at St. Elizabeth's
8:30 pm Mass at Our Lady of Assumption
10:30 pm Mass at St. Elizabeth's
Carol singing: 30 minutes before each mass

SUNDAY, Dec. 25

No 8:30 am Mass
10:30 am Mass at St. Elizabeth's
2:00 pm El Shaddai Fellowship at St. Elizabeth's, followed by Mass at 3:30 pm

TUESDAY, Dec. 27

8:30 am Mass at St. Elizabeth's (followed by Eucharistic Adoration)

WEDNESDAY, Dec. 28

9:00 am Mass at St. Elizabeth's

THURSDAY, Dec. 29

9:00 am Mass at St. Elizabeth's

FRIDAY, Dec. 30

11:00 am Mass at Saanich Peninsula Hospital

SATURDAY, Dec. 31

5:00 pm Mass at St. Elizabeth's

SUNDAY, Jan. 1, 2012

8:30 am Mass at Our Lady of Assumption
10:30 am Mass at St. Elizabeth's