

Last week I reflected on how in this Christmas season we are called to rediscover and celebrate various manifestations and revelations of God in the life of Jesus and in the proclamation of the “Good News” to the early Christian communities as described in the Gospels. I invited us to “come and see” in the ordinary events of our own life and times “revelations” of the divine, especially in the unexpected, in the unplanned, including the pandemic or other natural or man-made disasters.

Well, in the last few days we have experienced close to home the sad spectacle of poor and even evil leadership and extremism. In many ways it was to be expected because of greed and the pursuit of power by self-centered individuals. We are assured that only a small minority is afflicted with this but we also know by experience in history that this can lead to ever greater disasters. We need to remember that, unfortunately, many people in other parts of the world have to live this daily. As Christians we are called to pray that sanity and goodness prevail and that people may come to a true conversion. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought to light beautiful examples of goodness and of service, of people working together, of sacrifice for the common good on behalf of millions of people. We pray that what is happening south of the border may also bring to light the basic goodness and desire for justice of humanity and inspire people to overcome deep divisions so all may live in peace. We can only achieve this if we begin with ourselves.

You may wonder what has that to do with the baptism of Jesus. Well, this year we have the Gospel of Mark. Mark does not say anything about Jesus before this. We have no description of what happened before and at his birth, nothing about his parents and family, nothing about his upbringing and hometown. We can only find that in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

For Mark the baptism of Jesus is an occasion for him to speak of who Jesus was called to be by God, of his vocation as a human being. Mark simply says: “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan...and the Spirit descended like a dove on him (Mark 1:10-11).” For Mark Jesus continues the renewal movement, which John the Baptist had begun by “appearing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 1:7).” In other words **the vocation of Jesus was to “evangelize”, to bring people to realize how God loved them and wished them to overcome evil and injustice and to spread love, justice, hope and peace around them beginning with themselves. The baptism of Jesus was another manifestation, revelation of God in the life of the people just as God’s birth in Jesus was. Jesus as an adult accepts to do the will of his Father and to become an itinerant preacher, to suffer and to die, and thereby redeem humanity to restore humanity’s relationship with God.**

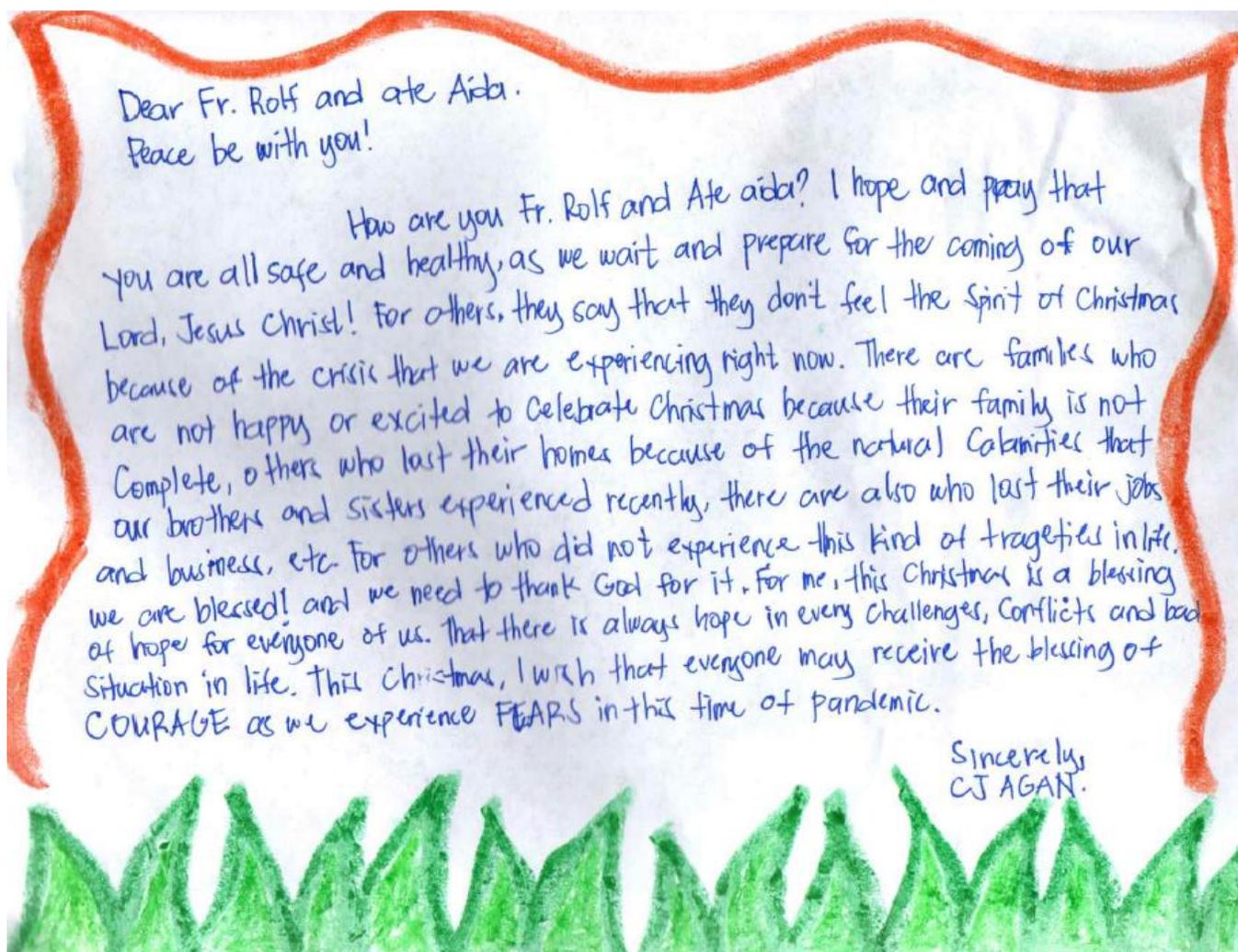
Jesus was commissioned to fulfill a mission. He was tempted to avoid it or to take short cuts (Mark states that after his baptism “the Spirit immediately drove Jesus into the wilderness where he was for forty days, tempted by Satan (Mark 1:12).” **We are being tempted, living a “baptism of fire” in our own modern world, in the greed and violence, in the midst of abuse of power which we have and are still seeing in many parts of the world. It is in the midst of that wilderness and the temptations that we are called to discern or rediscover what our vocation is, to discern the mission which God is commissioning each one of us to. Yes, our baptism was and still is God commissioning us to fulfill a never-ending and important mission because the journey is ongoing and never finished.**

Through our baptism God is calling us to continue to do the work of Jesus according to our ability and always with the help of God's grace: to teach and preach by our action, by our life; to continue to challenge and to overcome evil, to forgive and heal and reconcile, to continue to encourage and build, to create and enjoy God's world gifted to us. And we are called to do so, not alone but together with others, with who we are in solidarity. Every day we are given revelations and opportunities to fulfill that mission of comforting, of healing. Every day we are faced with moments of grace, when others need and we can give, a kind word, a random act of kindness, a masked smile or appropriately distanced touch of sympathy, a sign of hope and peace.

Shalom, Fr. Rolf, OP

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS & THANKS FROM PASOBOLONG

We received many Christmas letters from Pasobolong in Mindanao, Philippines, wishing us health, blessings and thanks for our contributions towards their formation this past year. Here are a couple that I would like to share with you.



We are fortunate to have such amazing sponsors like you and we thank you for your kind and generous support in helping us work for such an important cause.

On this festive occasion, we are sending our warm wishes to you and to your family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year.

- ADONG, WILLY
12-23-20



CHURCH DISPLAY AT ST. ELIZABETH'S

Check out the display in front of St. Elizabeth's Church. It's a bit of a change from past years' beautifully illustrated images of Jesus and mother Mary and as our usual crèche scene inside the church. We felt these pictures can bring us to see beyond the image to reflect and pray. We are challenged in so many ways throughout this pandemic, both spiritually and emotionally, yet at the same time, with God's grace, we see the surrounding **Joy** within the simple interactions of people, the display of **Love** between us in

our actions and are reminded that we are **People of Hope**, knowing that God's light burns within us all, as we celebrate the light of the world in Jesus Christ born in our midst and in our world of today.

All are welcome to come inside St. Elizabeth's when the doors are unlocked for quiet reflection and prayer. Please maintain protocols. Thank you.

Join **Bishop Gary Gordon** for mass, Monday to Friday at 7 PM as well as on Sundays at 10 AM through live stream from the Cathedral. Simply click on: www.rcdvictoria.org/diocese-of-victoria-live-stream.

To keep connected to the various communities in our Diocese, check out the weekly blog's at: <https://www.rcdvictoria.org/diocesanblog/holy-family-notre-dame-port-alberni>

NEWLY UPDATED BC PUBLIC HEALTH RESTRICTIONS - [Click Here](#)

- **[As of January 7th, Masses in all BC churches continue to be suspended until at least Feb. 5, 2021.](#) This is true for religious services of all faith groups.**
- You are **required to wear a mask** when entering the church. St. Elizabeth Church in Sidney is open for individual prayer visits during office hours provided you observe protocols.
- The celebration of **baptisms, weddings and funerals** continue to be possible but with limitations (**10 persons only**) and observance of strict protocols. If you wish to receive the **Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession)**, please, contact Fr. Rolf to arrange for a day and time.
- The **hospital and home Visiting Ministries** will continue to be by phone or electronically.

THANK YOU FROM ANAWIM HOUSE

This year has been a challenge for all of us! Thanks to your continued support in these times of uncertainty, Anawim House has been able to continue to look after those seeking love, support and acceptance during these uncertain times. Your generosity has allowed us to adjust how we provide this care in a "Covid-safe" environment. We look forward to being able to open the doors to everyone again in 2021. Our heartfelt gratitude is extended to each of you and we wish you hope, happiness and health in 2021.

2020 TAX RECEIPTS

We will let you know when the 2020 Tax Receipts will be ready for you to pick up. Please refrain from contacting the office to find out when they will be ready (most likely at the beginning of February); rest assured we will inform you.

DONATIONS

If you plan on dropping off or sending your regular weekly offertory envelopes, please try and consolidate your white envelope givings into one cheque and into one envelope, rather than putting your contributions into 3 or 4 separate white envelopes. Our counters appreciate your help!

2021 ENVELOPES & MISSALS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE CHURCH LOBBY.

Please pick them up during office hours Tues-Fri 9:00 am – noon or whenever the church doors are unlocked.

OUR FINANCIAL SITUATION

Thanks to all who are continuing your weekly donations including the Pre-Authorized Debits (PAD's) and E-Transfers. You have been very generous in helping the Parish to stay afloat. If you wish to send via E-Transfer, you can do so directly to the Diocesan Development Office at developmentoffice@rcdvictoria.org. Include your Full name and Parish Name "Saanich Peninsula Parish" in the e-transfer message. Let us know at sparish@shaw.ca so we can track it. The Diocese and the Parish continue to receive payments under the "Canadian Federal Emergency Wage-subsidy" program (CEWS). **The last one of Nov. 30 was \$ 976.36 which represents about 13.4% of our monthly payroll.** Please, express our gratitude to our Canadian Government.

SURPRISING RESULTS IN OUR ANNUAL DIOCESAN APPEAL

Our Parish has pledged \$ 44,113 or 95.90% towards our goal of \$46,000 in the Horizon of Hope Diocesan Appeal. These results are better than any previous year! The Parish portion (20%) will be used to help the West Coast Missions of Ucluelet and Tofino. **Thank you for your participation and your generosity!**



The K of C is holding their Charity Appeal in support of local and provincial charities! However it has some new twists! All prizes are cash, with 1st Prize being \$100,000! Tickets are \$3 each, but with no paper tickets, they must be bought online by credit card. Go to: www.KofCDraw.net/C9703 By purchasing through our Council 9703, a portion of the sales returns to us for local distribution. Last year's sales allowed us to share over \$1600 with local charities. We thank you for your support in past years, and hope we can count on you again this time! Share this URL with friends and family in BC, or buy tickets for them! There are only 200,000 tickets available, and **the draw is on January 30**, so get yours now! If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Jim Williams (250-656-9658). BC LLC# 126541

PRAYING THE ROSARY

CWL invites all parishioners to join their weekly Rosary on Wednesdays at 9:30am. It is hosted via Zoom. On Wednesday morning, please click on the following:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84574603894?pwd=SXFIVUtScm82Vm93L09FaTdTZFQ3dz09>

Meeting ID: 845 7460 3894

Passcode: CWL

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