



Saanich Peninsula Parish

A ROMAN CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN COVENANT WITH ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

ST. ELIZABETH'S 10030 Third Street, Sidney

OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION
7742 West Saanich Road, Saanichton

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Office hours: Tuesday to Friday, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Pastor: Fr. Rolf Hasenack, O.P.

Parish Office Coordinator: Melanie Ehrlich

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Parish Council Chair: Mary McGovern

SPECIAL NOTICE

Given the concern for curbing the spread of COVID-19, please note the following changes that Bishop Gary Gordon has issued for the Diocese of Victoria and those effective here:

1. All weekend and weekday Masses, including Sunday Celebrations of the Word are cancelled until further notice.
2. All Parish Penitential celebrations are cancelled.
3. Priests will continue to respond, upon request, to people in the hospital or at home who are gravely ill.
4. All celebrations of Baptisms and other Sacraments are postponed.
5. Funerals may continue to be celebrated in our churches. No receptions.
6. Marriages may continue to be celebrated in our churches.
7. Since it has been difficult to maintain physical distancing in the church St Elizabeth's in Sidney as well as Our Lady of the Assumption will NOT be open for visits. Please, pray at home.
8. The Chrism Mass is cancelled as well as all Holy Week & Easter Liturgies.

*For further information please go to:
<https://rcdvictoria.org/diocesan-blot/responsetocovid19>*

Or contact the parish office.

The complete content of Bishop Gary's letter is available on the Diocese of Victoria's website: <https://www.rcdvictoria.org/>

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2020

4th SUNDAY OF LENT

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13

Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

Ps 23: The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want

Dear Parishioners;

Everyone is freed from the obligation of Sunday Mass attendance. This does not mean that we should not pray or grow spiritually. In fact, it is a beautiful occasion for us all to set a specific time to be in silence at home, to read the Sacred Scriptures and to share your reflection on them with others in the home. If you have a family with children, determine a time when you can all pray together. Father or mother could lead the prayer; begin with a short examination of conscience and asking each other forgiveness and then asking God: "Lord have mercy on us"; have the children read out loud the reading and share your reflections on it with each other; then share prayer intentions for loved ones, family, friends, and also for those who are in the front lines making our lives safe and better. Please, let us pray for those who are worse off in our world; those who are in unsafe places, those who are fleeing persecution, war or are trying to reach a better home, especially those who are in refugee camps. Ask each person in the family what he/she can do that day to make your day more joyful, peaceful. Ask the children to make a picture with an encouraging message to be sent to a person who is alone in the family, in school or in the neighbourhood or in a home for the elderly etc. (Melanie in the office and Fatima Warner will facilitate this) Finish the celebration by asking God's blessing; each one takes a turn to say it with your own words. If you know of a song, sing it together or have it played.

God bless you and peace be upon you; stay calm, connected, confident and joyful.

Fr Rolf, OP

COLLECTION

Mar.8.....	\$ 2,546
Mar. 15.....	\$ 1,158
Pre-Authorized Debits (monthly)	\$ 5,335
Monthly Target:	\$ 25,000

ART SHOW, SALE & AUCTION:

Thank you to Maryanne Tomashewski and her team for putting on a successful Art Show/Sale and Auction!

\$3,715 has been raised towards helping Syrians.

SPECIAL REQUEST

During this time of physical isolation it is particularly difficult for those within our community especially seniors who are alone to cope with being so isolated. The children within our faith community can fill in this need in a BIG WAY! Melanie and Fatima are asking parishioners with children to participate by filling out a "Note to My Special Senior" form to which includes a picture or drawing from the child. Fr. Rolf sent this form out via email to all Parishioners so if you didn't receive it please email the office at spparish@shaw.ca. Parents and caregivers are asked to take a photo of the picture along with completed form and email it to the office. From there, Melanie and Fatima will make sure the seniors in our nursing homes receive it! **Please do this sooner than later** as we know how much the seniors will appreciate it and feel better. Ask your friends and neighbours with kids near or far to join in!

"Dear Parishioners;

As directed by Bishop Gary & in compliance with government mandates, all parish masses and ministries are cancelled until further notice. Federal/Provincial health experts ask us to stay home and not to come in physical contact with one another.

We are all dispensed from attending mass on Sunday. **Since it has been difficult to maintain physical distancing in**

St. Elizabeth Church, the church is now closed at all times.

During this time it is even more important to find different ways to be in contact with one another and especially to reach out to those who are lonely at home or elsewhere.

We are blessed in these modern times with electronic communication and social media through which we can give each other support. You are urged to think of others in these times and especially those who are the most vulnerable. Since we all have more time to be at home I would urge you to read spiritually nourishing books, to pray together and to follow formative and educational as well as recreational emissions.

You can follow the Mass/other spiritual exercises by clicking on the following: www.dailytvmass.com www.youtube.com/dailytvmass. On www.livingwithchrist.ca, you will find many prayer intentions, including prayers from Pope Francis.

Let us pray in thanksgiving for all the religious, social, medical, political and economic leaders who are trying to help people through this crisis. May we all see this as an opportunity to broaden our horizons, our compassion and our willingness to make a more just and peaceful world. Let us also remember that God is with us in these challenging times, encouraging and strengthening us: "Do not be afraid; I am with you always"

As I celebrate the Eucharist/Mass alone but with all of you in my heart, be assured that I do so in your name and for you. Bishop Gary too wishes to remain close to us all. The special celebrations of the Triduum will be livestreamed to everyone in the Diocese; details will follow. Shalom **fr Rolf, OP**

"Is the Lord among us or not?" That complaint was expressed by the people of Israel in the desert as recorded in **Exodus 17:3-7**. It is a complaint which is probably cried out by many people who are now affected by the Covid19 pandemic. The Israelites had just been liberated from slavery in Egypt and had jubilantly danced and sung their thanksgiving to God. However, as soon as things got tough they forgot how blessed they were by a God who was their strength and their companion on the journey.

How are we reacting today? Are we experiencing God's absence and blaming the presence of Satan?

Or are we once more reminding ourselves how blessed we are and that our God is present in many varied ways always calling us to look beyond the horizons of our vision. Both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures always show us that our God is a God of surprises calling us forward. Yes, our God is a God present in our prayers, in our churches, on pilgrimages, among believers. But our God is also present in the hell-holes of our world whether it is in the bombed out villages and cities in Syria and in Yemen or in the all too numerous refugee camps of our world. And just think about how with women, men and children in small overcrowded tents and huts these places may become even more hellish if the Covid19 pandemic breaks out there. We might think that God could not possibly be present in opioid addicted alleys, in prisons, among religious fanatics, on the death bed of a child, of a loved one. But no, God appears in the most unusual places and circumstances. Yes, in the tender care and love of parents, family, neighbours, volunteers, care workers, strangers, etc, but also in the sheer silence, in the cross of Golgotha. There is no place or circumstance which is inappropriate, no circumstance or place where God is not present because God has far more imagination than we, is far more creative than we. God's presence is not prevented by our limitations and sins, by boundaries of history, culture and tradition. Love conquers them all.

Isn't that what happened to the Samaritan woman in the Gospel of **John 4:5-42**? Here is this woman married five times, probably shunned by the people of her village; she goes to the well for water at the hottest time of the day, when everyone else is staying home. And who does she find? This enemy of her people, this Jewish stranger who is not supposed to even touch, let alone drink, from Samaritan cups considered unclean. Barriers which tradition, culture, prejudices and laws had erected stood between her and this Jesus, a man who was not supposed to be alone, even less speak, to a woman in public.

But this Jesus reaches beyond the barriers and invites her to drink of a water which will satisfy her deepest desires and hopes, and not only hers but also her people's. The God in Jesus invites her and the Samaritan people to a relationship of love which breaks down all barriers.

This same invitation comes to us this Sunday in **John 9:1-41** in the story of a man healed from darkness, blindness loneliness; notice how, faced with criticism, he is strengthened little by little in his humanity and in his faith.

When we read the Scriptures we see that it takes time for humans to realize who God is and who we are called to be. It is always in hindsight that the Hebrew people come to recognize that God is present in sometimes strange and desolate places like the desert, like being a refugee in a land of exile or being trampled upon by oppressors. It took the disciples of Jesus time to recognize that God was present in this Jesus reaching out to and sharing a meal with tax collectors, prostitutes, the unclean and the marginalized, sinners such as them.

Our Lenten journey is offered to us so that we too might discover or rediscover how truly thirsty we are, how we are searching for something beyond ourselves. We need to discover that we are blind and living in darkness, that we do not really "see" and that we need to be healed and that we need to choose between darkness and light.

Let us be glad and thankful because this year's Lenten journey is truly an occasion to grow in our humanity and faith.

Shalom, fr Rolf, OP