

**Masks are
Mandatory in the
Church**

**Sacred Heart Parish
Eucharist Schedule: Saturday 4:00**

**Fr. John Yake, I. V. Dei
(902) 535-2053 – Fax: 535-3127**

**December 18, 2021
Fourth Sunday of Advent**

**Due to a furnace
breakdown at the church,
Mass will be held in the
hall this week.**



The **First Reading** is taken from the Prophecy of Micah 5:1-4. In today's reading we hear words of hope that focus on one who is to be born in Bethlehem and who will bring in the day of peace when all nations will look to Jerusalem.

The **Second Reading** is taken from Hebrews 10:5-10. The perfect offering of Christ restores us to oneness with God. Jesus came to do the will of God perfectly. He overcame the power of evil that separates us from God and became our bridge back to God when we fall into evil. David prefigures Christ's sacrifice. The Psalm is now seen from the perspective of Christ.

The Gospel of this Sunday, Luke 1:38-45 recounts the visit of Mary to St. Elizabeth. An ancient title of Mary is Ark of the Covenant. The Church Fathers saw the parallels between the Old Testament wooden chest containing the divine presence and the Virgin about to give birth to Jesus. This theme is developed in a tape series by Tim Staples. Tim brings out the similarities between today's Gospel and the ascent of the Ark to Jerusalem (2 Sam 6:1-15).

1. As the ark is brought to Jerusalem, King David is overcome with awe saying, "How can the ark of the Lord come to me?" (v. 9)

2. The ark remains three months in the hill country near Jerusalem, bringing great blessings to the house of Obadiah. (v.11)

3. King David leaps for joy -- dancing before the ark. (v. 13) (Tim Staples, All Generations Shall Call Me Blessed)

In today's Gospel, Elizabeth says to Mary, "Who am I that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" She tells how the babe (John the Baptist) leaped in her womb as she became filled with the Holy Spirit. Finally Mary remains three months with her kinswoman before returning to her home. This Sunday, so close to Christmas, the Church invites us to focus our attention on Mary, round-wombed because of the God-child. As we say in the Litany of the Blessed Virgin: "Ark of the Covenant, pray for us."

--Excerpted from Fr. Phil Bloom

This is the last Sunday of our preparation for Christmas, the anniversary of Christ's birth. Like Joseph, we can all feel unworthy of the honor of welcoming him into our hearts and our homes. We are indeed unworthy, not because we have little of this world's goods, but because we have so little humility, so little charity, so little faith and trust in God's goodness. Let us try to imitate Joseph and Mary, the humblest of the humble, the kindest of the kindly, and the greatest-ever believers in God's goodness and mercy. We can never hope to equal them, but we can follow them humbly, from afar.

The feast of Christmas should draw the hearts of every child of God towards the furnace of divine love. In the manger, the infinite love of God for us miserable sinners is dramatically and forcefully portrayed before our eyes. In that helpless Baby, represented by a statue, we know that the person, and the power, of the omnipotent Creator and sustainer of the universe lie hidden "He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave" for us. He became a creature, like ourselves, so that he would make us sharers in his divine nature. He came on earth to bring us to heaven. He hid his divine nature so that he could

**Christmas/New Year's Schedule
Christmas Eve, The Nativity of the Lord**

Friday, Dec 24, 2021

Sacred Heart, Johnstown – 3:30 pm
Holy Guardian Angels, L'Ardoise – 5:30pm

Christmas Day, The Nativity of the Lord

Saturday, Dec 25, 2021

St. John the Baptist, River Bourgeois – 9:00am
St. Peter the Apostle, St. Peter's - 10:30am

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Sunday Dec. 26, 2021

Sacred Heart, Johnstown – 9:00am
All three parishes at St. Peter the Apostle at 11:00am:

- St. John the Baptist
- St. Peter the Apostle
- Holy Guardian Angels

The Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God

Holy Day of Obligation

Friday, Dec. 31, 2021

Sacred Heart, Johnstown – 3:30 pm
Holy Guardian Angels, L'Ardoise – 5:30pm

The Solemnity of Mary, The Holy Mother of God

Holy Day of Obligation

Saturday, January 1, 2022

St. John the Baptist, River Bourgeois – 9:00am
St. Peter the Apostle, St. Peter's - 10:30am

The Epiphany of the Lord

Sunday, January 2, 2022

Sacred Heart, Johnstown – 9:00am
All three parishes at St. Peter the Apostle at 11:00am:

- St. John the Baptist
- St. Peter the Apostle
- Holy Guardian Angels

Parishioners at these three parishes may choose to celebrate any of the feasts:

The Nativity of the Lord, the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and the Epiphany of the Lord at Sacred Heart Church in Johnstown or a parish of their choice.

cover us with it.

"Unsearchable indeed are the judgements of God, and inscrutable his ways." But though we are unworthy of his infinite love, it nevertheless stands out as clear as the noonday sun in the Incarnation. We realize that we can never make ourselves worthy of this infinite love, but let us imitate Joseph and accept the honor which God is giving us, as we trust that he will continue to make us daily less unworthy.

--Excerpted from *The Sunday Readings* by Fr. Kevin O'Sullivan, O.F.M.

Collection:
December 11/21

Envelopes	\$350.00
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Notices:

1: The blower motor for the furnace has arrived Friday afternoon, but not in time to install it into the furnace, so therefore we will be holding mass in the hall again this week December 18th. We will be back in the church for Christmas Eve (say a prayer)

2: Envelopes for 2022 – The church envelopes for 2022 will be at mass today. I did not order as many boxes of envelopes as past years, so anyone who had an envelope number greater than 50 will have a new number for 2022.

3: Change - Decorating for Christmas: We will be decorating the church on Tuesday December 21st, at 10am. Please come and help decorate, everyone is welcome. – Changed from Monday to make sure the furnace is working again.

4: Celebration of Life: A celebration of life for Kenzie MacNeil – Due to new Covid19 restrictions this event has been cancelled.

5: Mass For Shut-Ins Christmas Day - We will be airing Christmas Day Mass, Saturday at 1130am AT. Bishop Wayne Kirkpatrick will be the presider for that Mass this year.

6: Update on COVID restrictions from Dr. Strang via Bishop Kirkpatrick

I want to share with you the latest update that we received from Dr. Strang yesterday. As you know we are going to have to bring back SOME of the restrictions that were in place with Phase Four. We are doing this to slow the spread of COVID and keep people safe. **Masking** will be required, along with gathering limits and **physical distancing**. We will need to provide safe distancing for our faith services. At this point we are not required to do contact tracing. We will be limited to 50% capacity up to 150 people indoors and 250 people outdoors even though we do not have outdoor faith services. Please read the details in the email directed to Faith Leaders that come into effect Friday, December 17 at 9 a.m. As Bishop, I support these restrictions.

Fraternally,
+ Wayne

Dear Faith Leaders,

As you've likely heard, we announced earlier today (Dec. 13th) that due to the arrival of the omicron variant and the current epidemiology in Nova Scotia, we are returning to province wide restrictions. While we don't have an end date, it's intended to be a short-term measure to protect Nova Scotians and our health system while we learn how this new variant behaves and continue to increase our vaccination coverage.

The key restrictions that come into effect at 9:00 am Friday Dec. 17th and which will affect faith organizations are:

- 📌 Return to physical distance requirement, as in phase 4, of 6 feet between individuals or between groups of no more than 20 people from the same household or pre-established close social group.
- 📌 **Return to gathering limit** for gatherings hosted by a recognized business or organization – 50% of an indoor venue's capacity to a maximum of 150, or 250 outdoors.
- 📌 Return to people must be seated to remove their masks for eating and drinking.

Our website will be updated with these restrictions this Friday. In the meantime, you can the news release here: <https://novascotia.ca/news/release/?id=20211213007>

The following is an updated overview of rules and guidance for faith organizations with the new restrictions included:

- 📌 **Starting December 17, faith services, events and other activities need to abide by the physical distance requirement and formal gathering limits – 50% of an indoor room or venue's capacity to a maximum of 150, or 250 outdoors. This means if your facility normally holds 100 people, then your limit is 50 (because that's 50% of capacity).** If your facility normally holds 600, your limit is 150 because that is the maximum. During this

time, we strongly recommend that singing only be done by the choir or leader(s) of song, and not by the congregation. Faith organizations with large venues that have a previously approved plan to accommodate multiple, but fully separated groups of up to 150 people, can re-implement this plan.

- ② **Proof of full vaccination is required for any other events and activities hosted by a faith organization, including social time after a service, bible study, youth group, retreats, community meals, fundraisers or meetings, holiday concerts and special events, and activities and events held in rental spaces.** It is also required when people rent/use the church's facilities (like a hall or other rooms) for events like a wedding reception or leisure activities/clubs like quilting or book club. Masking is required at such events except when people are actively eating or drinking (starting December 17, they must be seated to eat/drink), when officiants are speaking, or when performers are speaking/singing/playing a wind instrument. In addition, from December 17 to at least the New Year, physical distance is required and formal gathering limits are in place for these events and activities – 50% of an indoor venue's capacity to a maximum of 150, or 250 outdoors.
- ② **Proof of full vaccination is not required for a regular faith service, such as daily or weekly services. Services that are part of your faith's annual calendar (such as Christmas and Easter services in Christian faiths) are considered the same as regular daily/weekly services – no proof of full vaccination is required.** If a singer, organist or choir needs to practice for a regular service and if people need to clean or prepare the place of worship for regular services, proof of full vaccination is not required.
- ② If a faith organization holds multiple regular or special services in a single day, they are encouraged to **consider making one or more of the services for vaccinated people only to accommodate people who require or are seeking a greater level of safety** and to decrease overall exposure risks.
- ② **Masking is required throughout these services, whether people are seated or not, except for officiants or singers when they are speaking or singing.** Both you as an organization and the people who attend your services and activities have a responsibility to ensure mask rules are followed. While people with a valid medical reason for not wearing a mask need to be accommodated, these valid medical reasons are infrequent and this should not be a reason for significant numbers of people in a single congregation to be unmasked. Supporting the use of this medical exception is inappropriate.
- ② **Proof of full vaccination is not required for officiants or employees of a business or organization (including faith organizations) but it is required for volunteers.** It isn't required for business meetings in the workplace when they involve people who regularly work together and where the general public is not present (unless they're held in a rental space). However, from December 17 to at least the new year, physical distance is required and formal gathering limits are in place for meetings hosted by a recognized business or organization – 50% of an indoor venue's capacity to a maximum of 150, or 250 outdoors.
- ② **Proof of full vaccination is required for participants (not officiants) at weddings, funerals and other ceremonies – even if they take place in a church or other faith facility.** In addition, from December 17 to at least the New Year, physical distance is required and formal gathering limits are in place for weddings and funerals hosted by a recognized business or organization – 50% of an indoor venue's capacity to a maximum of 150, or 250 outdoors.
- ② **Proof of full vaccination is not required for indoor and outdoor funeral services with a maximum of 25 participants (not including officiants or funeral home staff).** Everyone must wear masks and physical distance is required. For any visitation and receptions, proof of full vaccination is still required, masks are required in indoor public places, and physical distance is required and formal gathering limits are in place – 50% of an indoor venue's capacity to a maximum of 150, or 250 outdoors.
- ② **If a faith organization is offering mental health and addictions support groups, programs, services for vulnerable populations, food bank services, shelters or meal programs for vulnerable populations (including dine-in), or space for any of these activities, proof of full vaccination is not required for people accessing those services or for employees providing them, but it is required for volunteers.** From December 17 to at least the New Year, physical distance is required and formal gathering limits are in place – 50% of an indoor venue's capacity to a maximum of 150, or 250 outdoors. Masks continue to be required except when people are eating/drinking and they must be seated for this.
- ② **Due to the highly infectious nature of the Omicron variant it is strongly recommended that there not be congregational singing at this time.** If members of the congregation do sing they are required to remain masked. I understand it's a difficult time of year to reintroduce these restrictions. However, our cautious approach has served us very well through the pandemic to date. I ask for your continued support to help keep your faith community and everyone in our province safe.

Sincerely,

Dr. Robert Strang

Chief Medical Officer of Health

Department of Health and Wellness

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