



**Sacred Heart Parish
Bulletin**

**Mass: 4:00 pm – Saturdays
Fr. John Yake, I. V. Dei
(902) 535-2053 – Fax: 535-3127**

December 17, 2022

Fourth Sunday of Advent

**REMINDERS:
Decorating for Christmas
will take place on
Monday Dec 19th, at 10
am. All are welcome.

Christmas Eve Mass will
be at 5:30pm Saturday
December 24th.**

Sunday Readings, Year A:

The **First Reading** is taken from the *Book of the Prophet Isaiah 7:10-14*. In today's prophecy, Isaiah gives us the most important detail concerning the Messiah, Christ. He was to be God as well as man. This is what Christ was, as he claimed and as he proved by his miracles and by his resurrection. What a stunning, and at the same time, what an inspiring fact this knowledge is for us! We call the Incarnation, the coming of the Son of God among us in human nature, a mystery. It is one of the basic mysteries of our Christian religion, but the mystery lies not so much in how it was done ("with God all things are possible"), but rather in the infinite, mysterious love of God for us, who are so much below him and so unworthy of his love.

The **Second Reading** is taken from the *Letter of St. Paul to the Romans 1:1-7*. In today's reading, we have the opening verses of that Epistles. In it, he calls himself a servant of Christ, an Apostle, set apart (chosen) to preach the gospel of God. This gospel is the news of the Incarnation, through which and by which, all men are called to follow Christ, and become his brothers, and thus sons of God destined to be saints in heaven.

The **Gospel** of this Sunday, from the *Gospel of Matthew 1:18-24* begins in a typical Hebrew fashion, by giving the genealogical table of Jesus, who was born of Mary. He does not mention the Annunciation, nor Mary's problem of preserving virginity while becoming a mother. But the revelation given to Joseph, Mary's betrothed, which Matthew here describes, brings out the fact of the virginal conception of Jesus, and his messianic mission of salvation. Matthew then adds that Christ was the Messiah, to be born of a virgin, of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke, seven centuries later.

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 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 10, 2022**

Envelopes	\$205.00
Donation	\$50.00
Cemetery	\$200.00
	\$455.00

NOTICES:

1: 2023: Envelopes: The envelopes for 2023 are at the front of the church

2: Christmas Concert: You are invited to a Christmas concert at St Theresa's church (381 Whitney Ave, Sydney) Dec 18 from 2:30 to 4:00pm. Local choirs and groups. Good will offering. Come in, sit down and enjoy the music!

3: Decorating for Christmas: Decorating the church for Christmas will be on Monday December 19th, at 10am. All are encouraged to come and help us get ready for Christmas Eve

4: Christmas Eve: Mass will be at 5:30 pm

5: Thank You: Thank you to Raymond MacDonald for replacing the shingles, on the Vestry, they came off during Hurricane Fiona. Thank you to Butch MacAdam for fixing the big doors at the front of the church. The wind will not get in now.

6: CHRISTMAS, 2022

From Bishop Kirkpatrick

Given our Atlantic coastline, we all know about lighthouses. A lighthouse is designed to emit light to serve as a beacon for navigational aid, for maritime pilots at sea or on inland waterways. Lighthouses mark dangerous coastlines, hazardous shoals, reefs, rocks, and safe entries to harbours. I was inspired to write this reflection after learning of the memorial lobster trap Christmas tree tradition, made up of lobster traps with buoys and lights with a lighthouse on top. The buoys bear the names of people lost at sea. It is a memorial tree for all who did not return home. The lighthouse placed on top is to guide them home.

A lighthouse provides direction through the rough seas to the harbour of safe waters and home. We have lived through so many rough days together with Covid and most recently with the wind and rain of tropical storm Fiona and all the havoc that has followed. When we think of this image of the lighthouse, we might think of the bright star of Bethlehem guiding the pilgrims to the Christ-child. They too lived amid a sea of economic and political turmoil. "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shone." These words from the prophet Isaiah reverberate during our celebration of the Christmas Season.

There are so many concerns today: the illness or death of loved ones; rising costs of gas, food and everything essential; homelessness and food insecurity; access to medical care and viruses that continue to affect us; war and conflicts around the globe and millions of refugees with no place to call home; intergenerational trauma through residential schools; the future of our church as discernment continues for the upcoming Synod; and in general trying to carry on in faith amid so many issues. What are we to do?

We have every reason to hope that brighter and better days are ahead. The Christmas Season celebrates the birth of the Lord Jesus and the ways he manifested the presence of God among us. The Christmas Season reminds us of the goodness of our God and the people around us who are guided by God's love and concern for all people. This Christmas Season brings out the best in people who try to brighten the lives of others. Yes, it is a season filled with partying and buying but it is also a season filled with sharing. This Christmas Season is highlighted by our neighbourly concern, generosity, and unselfish love. Such love is a light that pierces the darkness of our world. Such love is prompted and celebrated. God sent us the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ to be the Light of the World to guide and direct us. As we celebrate the coming of that Light, we become a light for others. When we live our faith we become a light to our world. Our faith does not free us from problems and hardships, but enables us to find peace, to persevere, and to hope because we know we are not alone. Faith assures us that God is with us in our struggles, and that the love of God and the peace that Jesus promised are ours for the asking. The lighthouse calls us to look to him for direction, especially amid turbulent waters. He will guide and direct us to a safe harbour and peaceful waters. He will guide us home.

May you have a peaceful Christmas, filled with love and joy.

Fraternally,

+ Wayne Kirkpatrick

Bishop of Antigonish