



In some ways Christmas is about an ordinary child like us. The Child welcomed both shepherds and Kings/Queens; but we welcome both oil-drenched mechanics and well-dressed managers. When the Child encountered the closed door at the inn, he looked for the open door of the manger; but we also are resilient, rising when we are knocked down. The Child received gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh; but we also receive and give the gifts of time, talents, and treasures in response to world disasters.

So why do we remember this Child's birth in our midst? Maybe it's because we also experience that the color of a person's skin does affect how they are treated, and that refugees are still experiencing doors being closed, and that the fighting in Syria or Crimea or the homeless in Canada still remind us of our unwillingness to share unselfishly.

The God-Child Jesus is an extra-ordinary child, teaching us that *difficult* is not the same as impossible – in God all things are possible. I pray that daily we will experience God's grace helping us to make the difficult *possible*. Merry Christmas and blessings throughout 2017.

Gift from St. Joseph Parish: Faith Calendar for 2017. Please accept this gift from our parish as a sign of our appreciation that you have joined us for the Christmas celebration in thanking God for the gift of His Son Jesus. This gift of the Faith Calendar will serve to help us celebrate the fullness of the mystery of Immanuel, God with us. We hope you use the calendar in two ways.

The calendar highlights the Sundays and the other special days of celebration. It marks the Saints who continue to intercede for us before the face of God, and the Seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Ordinary Time as times with special significance. The calendar will remind us that God is with us the whole year through.

The calendar also contains a teaching reflection for each month and a back page with the basic Catholic Christian teachings. For example, January reflects on prayer and the sign of the cross, and February looks at the existence of evil. The back page has lists for the Commandments, the Spiritual and Corporeal Works of Mercy, the Virtues, and it has explanations for the sacrament of Reconciliation (Confession) and for the days of fasting and abstinence.

We know that God's mercy and goodness is not limited to what our Catholic faith has to offer – God works in anyway and in anyplace to help us be the best we can be. But the teachings and practices of our Catholic faith are good ways for us to proceed on our journey towards ultimate union with God in heaven. It is good to spend some time knowing and understanding what our faith has to offer.

HOMEWORK: hang the Faith Calendar in a prominent place in the home.

Meaning of the 12 Days of Christmas

One Partridge – Jesus Christ, Our Savior
Two turtle doves - Old and New Testaments
Three French hens - faith, hope, and love.
Four calling birds - the four gospels
Five golden rings – 5 books of Torah
Six geese a-laying - the six days of creation.
7 swans a-swimming- seven gifts of the Holy Spirit
Eight maids a-milking -the eight beatitudes.
Nine ladies dancing - 9 fruits of the Holy Spirit
Ten Lords a-leaping -the Ten Commandments.
Eleven pipers piping - eleven faithful Apostles.
Twelve drummers - 12 pts.in Apostle's Creed.



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE:

The God-Child welcomes everyone. We have chosen this year to reflect on the manger scene as the shelter for everyone and anyone. It was amazing that Shepherds and Kings would be in the same room – just as it would be wonderful for rich and poor, men and women, Gentile or Jew, (I Cor 10:16,17) to be united together. The hospitality of the manger scene creates a safe place for the different people to experience the one God without fear –just as good hospitality allows us to experience diversity and unity without fear.



Pope Francis spoke on being immersed in HOPE. The Holy Father turned to the Christmas crib, saying it transmits hope and that each of the people represented there are "immersed in this atmosphere of hope."



— **Bethlehem.** A small borough of Judea where a thousand years earlier David was born, the shepherd chosen by God as King of Israel. Bethlehem is not a capital, therefore it is preferred by Divine Providence, which loves to act through the little ones and humble ones.

— **Mary, Mother of Hope.** With her "Yes" she opened the door of our world to God ... She contemplated the Child and saw in Him the love of God, who comes to save His people and the whole of humanity. —**Joseph,** descendant of Jesse and David ... looking at Jesus in the manger, he meditated that that Child came from the Holy Spirit, and that God Himself ordered him to call him thus, "Jesus."

— **The shepherds,** who represent the humble and the poor ... In that Child they saw the fulfilment of the promises and they hope that God's salvation will finally reach each one of them. (Regarding the shepherds, and the tendency to put one's trust in material things, the Pope emphasized: "Let's get this in our head: our securities will not save us; the only security that saves us is that of hope in God." — **The choir of Angels** proclaims from on high the great design that the Child carries out: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased" (Luke 2:14). Christian hope is expressed in praise and thanksgiving to God, who has inaugurated His Kingdom of love, justice and peace.

The Pope concluded by saying that the celebration of Christmas will "be truly a celebration if we receive Jesus, seed of hope that God deposits in the furrows of our personal and communal history." ' A Happy Christmas of hope to all!"

The Lonely Ember

A member of a certain church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, the pastor decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening. The pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his pastor's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a big chair near the fireplace and waited. The pastor made himself comfortable but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the play of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone. Then he sat back in his chair, still silent. The host watched all this in quiet fascination. As the one lone ember's flame diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and "dead as a doornail." Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. Just before the pastor was ready to leave, he picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it. As the pastor reached the door to leave, his host said, "Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I shall be back in church next Sunday."

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Women, Catholic Women's League: Jan 10/17 - 7pm
Men, Knights of Columbus: Jan 17/17 - 7pm
Youth: Next meeting Jan 9/17 at 7pm (School Gymnasium)
Bible Study: Every Tuesday at 10:15am (Parish Centre)

December 30th - Feast of the Holy Family The *Feast of the Holy Family* is a liturgical celebration in the Catholic Church in honor of Jesus, his mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Saint Joseph, as a family. The primary purpose of this feast is to present the Holy Family as a model for Christian families.

January 1st - Feast of Mary the Mother of God This wonderful title, Mary, the Mother of God, "*Theotokos*", reveals a profound truth not only about Mary, but about each one of us. We are now invited into the very relationship that she had with her Son. We can become "God-bearers" and bring Him to all those whom we encounter in our few short days under the sun.

March 1st - Ash Wednesday, beginning of Lent The seventh Wednesday before Easter and the first day of Lent, on which many Christians receive a mark of ashes on the forehead as a token of penitence and mortality.

April 16th - Easter is the celebration of Jesus Christ's rising from the dead (His Resurrection) after His crucifixion which took place on what we now term Good Friday.

June 4th - Pentecost is a holiday on which we remember the coming of the Holy Spirit on the early followers of Jesus. It is the birthday of the Church, the community of the followers of Christ enlivened by the Spirit.

Bishop Stephen Jensen, of the Prince George Diocese,

Reaching Out In Mercy (Diocesan Appeal 2016-17): "The Year of Mercy tells us that faith should be expressed in corporal and spiritual works of mercy. Please join me in this year's Diocesan Appeal to better serve the material and spiritual needs of our faith community near and far." (**Action:** consider supporting the Appeal—more information on bulletin board)

Youth: Diocesan Youth Conference, (April 21-23 in Prince George)

Formation: Diocesan Lay Formation Program, HEARTS TRANSFORMED

Camps: Camp Morice, Stewart Lake, camps for children, youth, and families (July-Aug. 2016)

Missions and Outreach: Shepherd's Corner, First Nation's Retreat, Pro-Life

Rose Prince Pilgrimage: First Nations people sponsoring this event (First week of July)

Northern Catholic News Diocesan Newspaper Fall 2016

Online at <http://www.pgdiocese.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/2016-12-Winter-2017-Edition-com-pic-2.pdf>





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Office Hours: Wednesday to Friday 10AM-2PM

MASS TIMES

Saturdays 5PM
Sundays 9AM

For week day Masses and Sacraments and other concerns, please call the Parish Office.

CHURCH GROUPS

Knights of Columbus (Fr. Callaly Council 7973)
Catholic Women's League

SCHOOL

St. Joseph's Catholic School

School Principal: Rosemary McKenzie
Our school website: www.stjosephschool.ca
Phone: 250-847-9414

Children, Youth and Family Programs

Camp Morice; Children and Family Camps
Diocesan Youth Office; DYU, University Chaplaincy
(Contact the Parish Office)



St. Anthony's Parish

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Website: in progress

e-mail: houston.parish@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant: Dennis Gonia

Cell: (778) - 816-0512

Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Saturday 9AM-5PM

MASS TIMES

Sundays 11:30 AM
No week day Masses

For Sacraments and other concerns, please call the Parish Office.

EXISTING CHURCH GROUP(S)

Catholic Women's League

Pastoral Visitations (home visits with the Priest)
twice a month

Celebrating Christmas: consider joining us in the Christmas Season as we celebrate the many aspects of the mystery of the birth of Christ. The season is composed of the following feasts: Feast of the Nativity (Dec25), Feast of the Holy Family (Dec30), Feast of Mary the Mother of God (Jan01), Feast of the Epiphany (Jan09), and the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (Jan09). All these help uncover the depth of what it means for God to take on human flesh and dwell among us.

The cycle of the Saints adds further reverence to this time as we celebrate Saint Stephen, first martyr (Dec26), Saint John, the evangelist also known as the Divine (Dec27), Holy Innocents, infants martyred by King Herod as Jesus escaped to Egypt (Dec 28).