

St. Francis of Assisi Church

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December 19th, 2021

Christ is born for us, come let us adore Him.

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Christmas is fast approaching. It gives us a wonderful occasion to renew our family life, to reach out to those who are lonely and to celebrate the core of our faith: **Emmanuel, God with us.**

No doubt, we have all experienced the negative impact that the pandemic has had on our common liturgical celebrations and our access to the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist. Happily, I have recently seen more people attending church. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage all the Catholic faithful to renew their covenant with the Church and her worship. Christmas seems the right time to do this. At Christmas, we call to mind how the shepherds said to each other: “*Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing which has happened, which the Lord has made known to us*” (Lk 2:15). And so, the Child in the manger calls to us to go with them.

This year, Christmas Day falls on a Saturday and is immediately followed by the feast of the Holy Family on the Sunday. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the celebrations of the Christmas weekend by attending Mass both on Friday evening and Sunday afternoon. We do not have a Saturday, Christmas Day Mass here at St. Francis due to a schedule conflict between our two parishes (Revelstoke and Nakusp). Please refer to the Christmas Mass schedule in the bulletin.

Nothing can adequately replace our actual presence at the Liturgy. At the heart of our Christian life is the miraculous event of the Word becoming flesh and, thereby, our own incorporation through the Sacraments into the Mystical Body of Christ. It is to experience this solemnity, that we come to church. Our current reflection on synodality points us all in the same direction: **we are a people who meet together, because we journey together.**

Therefore, let us use the coming Christmas season to return, with purified hearts and fresh fervour to our usual sacramental and liturgical life. During Advent and beyond, there will be opportunities to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. And

Christmas itself is more than a Day. It is a Season. Beyond Christmas Day, the Church includes in our Liturgy the beautiful feasts of the Holy Family, of Mary, Mother of God, of the Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord. In our southeastern area, this season falls at a time of year of shortened day-light hours and long hours of darkness. This is not by chance. It's precisely at this time, made darker still by so many current uncertainties, that we are offered divine energy and the joy of the human birth of a Divine Child. Christ's birth means the forgiveness of our sins and our rebirth as children of God. We sense how Mary's motherhood embraces us as well and, at the Epiphany, the star of faith lights up our hearts. As the Lord is immersed in the River Jordan, the waters of our own baptism can flow in our lives with new force. We are given light and strength to live a new year in the power of the Holy Spirit.

I understand that the Covid 19 virus is still spreading and with the presence of the new strain, **Omicron**, the anxiety of the modern world can be overwhelming. However, we must never lose hope. May the rise in Covid infections around the world not lead us to despair but keep us focused on those positive practises which respect the health of each person, and which help us to focus on the value of a vaccine for everyone across the globe. We must take care of one another as well as our own mental health. In this way, may we grow together in strength and grace to know and celebrate God's presence in our lives and His dominion over all things of this world. The Lord God cherishes you.

May our Lord Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem, bless you, your families and loved ones at this joyful and blessed time of hope and grace. May Mary and Joseph, the parents of the Child Jesus, always watch over you and our parish.

May Christ abide in your hearts!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Luan Vu". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail.

Fr. Luan Vu

Pastor