



ISSUE 01 // MAY 2021

LIFE IN OUR PARISH

DISCIPLESHIP IN ACTION AT CHRIST THE REDEEMER PARISH



An invitation to
COMMUNITY
EXPLORE
RELATIONSHIP
GROWTH
MISSION
MULTIPLY



CONTENTS

3 WELCOME TO OUR PARISH MAGAZINE

An introduction from the pastor, Msgr. Gregory N. Smith

4 IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO PREPARE FOR MASS

Three Sunday Mass volunteers share how being part of the Welcome Team last October enriched their connection with the parish community

5 SAS PARENTS “SEARCH” TOGETHER

Nicole Bitelli has been organizing discussion-based video series with parents at St. Anthony’s School to foster community and create a safe space to explore questions of faith

6 FINDING JOY IN AN OLD FRIEND

After the loss of her husband, Maureen Giefing has found comfort in simplifying her faith

7 THE FRIDAY MEN’S PRAYER GROUP

These early risers take growing in faith to the next level

9 BAPTIZED IN FAITH

Soney Shahi began her journey to the Catholic church as a young Hindu girl in Nepal

10 PARISH LEADERS: DOM & CHRISTINE

Youth Ministry played a central role in the faith of these two Youth Leaders during high school - now they’re paying it forward

12 THE POWER OF ONE ‘YES’

Adriana Sarvas’s powerful experience leading Faith Studies has led her to invest in others

14 RETROSPECT & PROSPECT

Parting thoughts from Fr. Jeff Thompson, CSB

15 2020 PARISH FINANCIALS



From the Pastor: WELCOME TO OUR PARISH MAGAZINE

Msgr. Gregory Smith

Life in our parish! It's more than the name of our new-magazine.

Just before the pandemic hit, we created a graphic to show the life of Christ the Redeemer parish in a simple but comprehensive way. The result is the diagram you can see on this page, which presents the various stages through which we move as we grow in faith.

But the diagram is not just a path for individual parishioners—it charts a course for our parish.

After years of study, work and prayer we're convinced that the mission given to the Church and to each of us must be front and center of everything we do at Christ the Redeemer. We have focused our time, talent, and treasure on finding the lost sheep, on sharing the Gospel not only among ourselves but boldly and intentionally with our brothers and sisters who do not know Jesus.

This is a big task, but a joyful one! The pages of this magazine show numerous parishioners living as fulfilled missionary disciples. Their joy is visible as they live their faith fully and share it with others.

I've been inspired and encouraged by these dedicated

members of our parish, and I thank them for their example and service. I hope you feel the same as you read their stories and look at their photos.

Where did these committed parishioners start their adventure? Right where they were. Would you like to join them? Start where you are! The "discipleship path" represented by the six circles of this graphic offers guidance and direction.



We're all somewhere on the discipleship path, but each of us needs to prayerfully discover where we are—and then, with God's help, figure out the next forward step.

It doesn't matter where you are—our discipleship roadmap is a continuous circle. And at the center is Jesus in the Eucharist, the heart of everything we do, sustaining us. May we soon be able to celebrate that supreme Sacrament together!

This parish magazine, so beautifully edited by Elizabeth Krump, shows what walking together in faith looks like. It demonstrates our parish commitment to mission over maintenance. And, most importantly, Life in our Parish invites you to join us on the path to a deeper life with Christ, wherever you may be.



Invitation to Community: IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO PREPARE FOR MASS

Last fall, we created a system to give every parishioner the option to safely attend Mass, every Sunday. For two months, the parish relied on nearly 80 volunteers to assist with welcoming and proper sanitizing for sixteen Mass groups each weekend. Our army of volunteers was the face of the parish community. A few share their experience here.



Name: Glen Goh

When did you start volunteering at the parish? 7 years ago

Volunteer role last fall: On-site tech support, training the Welcome Back volunteers and safety planning for in-person Mass.

What did you do as a volunteer? I had to stay on top of provincial health orders and apply them to our church environment to create a safe and welcoming space for those coming to Mass. For tech support, I (still) help with the livestream on-site by coordinating with our parish team and the livestreaming company to ensure the video and sound are working well. I'm always ready to activate a back-up plan if needed.

Best part about volunteering: Seeing the grateful faces of parishioners coming for Mass, and watching many new volunteers step up in hospitality. In some ways, I think they created an even more welcoming community during Covid than pre-Covid.

Name: Ken Thai

When did you start volunteering at the parish? I have volunteered on and off since 2000.



Volunteer role last fall: I was the team leader for the volunteers in my Mass group.

What did you do as a volunteer? I ensured that my team knew and adhered to the safety protocols to keep parishioners and themselves safe.

Best part about volunteering: I really enjoyed seeing and getting to know parishioners in our grouping; where they prefer to sit, learning their names and celebrating Mass together. Being able to bring our parish community together for Mass was the most fulfilling aspect of being in the Welcome Back Team.

Name: Gaby Chavez

When did you start volunteering at the parish? I actually started after the pandemic hit. I had just moved to North Van and was still trying to adjust to the new neighborhood when we experienced the closing of churches. When Msgr. Smith asked for volunteers, I immediately saw myself helping.

Volunteer role last fall: I started as a member of the Welcome Back Team, then became a team leader.

What did you do as a volunteer? At first, I helped with the hand sanitizer station and checking names at the registration table. When I became a team leader, I had to check everything was ready before starting the Mass. I welcomed the volunteers and ensured Covid-19 signs were placed properly, laid out the registration sheets, and distributed duties among the other volunteers. We welcomed and directed people where to sit when they arrived at the church. After Mass, I sanitized the church or gym if our designated volunteer didn't arrive.

Best part about volunteering: I am most grateful for the opportunity to help people and to be useful to my Parish. It's like paying a little back from all that I have received since I joined CTR. I have never felt so welcomed in a community.

We're always looking for helping hands. If you'd like to volunteer, please contact office@ctrwestvan.ca.



Invitation to Explore: SAS PARENTS “SEARCH” TOGETHER

An interview with Nicole Bitelli

Nicole has been part of the St. Anthony's School (SAS) family for three generations: she attended SAS as a student many years ago, then her daughters studied there, and currently, her grandson is enrolled (photo left). Now, she's creating opportunities for SAS parents to explore their faith in a small group environment.

CTR: Whenever CTR hosts a new program, we try to offer one especially for SAS parents – why?

Nicole: It's challenging to bring up kids in the faith these days, and even harder if the parents don't have faith. The parish is here to support parents in their faith growth so that they can pass it on to their kids.

In January this year, you hosted a small group screening of “The Search” for SAS parents – what is “The Search”?

The Search is a video series that gets you thinking about where we come from and the purpose of our existence... the bigger, deeper questions of life!

What do you like about “The Search”?

I call it food for my soul. For me, it's an affirmation of all of those things that I know, but need to be reminded of – not because I forget them – but by being reminded, it keeps it alive inside.

How did the group work and what did people think of it?

First, everyone logged into the Zoom call. We'd chat a little bit to get start-

ed, then watch a video together and we'd discuss it afterward. Sometimes we'd follow discussion questions, but sometimes other things would come up in conversation and we'd just talk about those things. We looked forward to the next sessions and created a bond in the group, because you end up talking about more personal things.

Everyone liked it so much that we decided to do something following “The Search.” Now we're watching a series called, “The Chosen” about the lives of the disciples of Jesus.... And everyone who did “The Search” signed up for it!

What is your hope for parents who join a small group like this?

My hope is that, as a parent body, we can be more unified in faith, because we are a faith community as members of a Catholic school.

Why take the risk to explore your faith this way?

You've got nothing to lose! There really is no risk, there are only things to be gained by participating. You can gain a whole new perspective to life, and to living and walking in faith. We don't often spend time exploring faith on our own, so doing it in the compa-

“[We] created a bond in the group, because you end up talking about more personal things.”

ny of others is very enjoyable. Other people might add ideas you've never thought about and you might get a different perspective even of yourself through them.

How has exploring your faith with SAS parents helped your own relationship with Jesus?

It feeds me and is a constant reminder of how important faith is to living peacefully. I have gotten to know the parents who have participated on a deeper level, and it makes me a better person. I've learned that everyone has their story, everyone is on a journey and each is different; there's something to be learned in every journey.

If you're an SAS parent wanting to explore your faith, look for Nicole's next invite in the school newsletter.



Invitation to Relationship: FINDING JOY IN AN OLD FRIEND

By Elizabeth Krump

The invitation to relationship is a Divine invitation: Jesus himself wants to know us, and he wants us to know him. We are all presented with an adult decision to follow Jesus. Whether we've been raised in the faith or are new to it, Jesus invites us freely to choose life with him.

It's been an unusual and challenging year for most of us thanks to Covid, but for long-time parishioner Maureen Giefing, it's been the saddest year of her life for another reason. Just before the pandemic, Maureen lost her husband of 57 years, Hank. He was her great love and constant source of support. "He was elegant and from Vienna, and I'm from Ireland... so the banter never stopped!"

She misses his affection most of all. "He allowed me to be me," she says. The loneliness and grief has taken her to what she describes as "the bottom of sadness."

One Sunday near the beginning of the pandemic, Maureen recalls watching livestreamed Mass in tears. She decided to connect to the Prayer Team after Mass, and the person on the other

end heard her grief and cried with her. "I came away from that and it made a difference," she recalls.

Since then, she has continued to spend a great deal of time in the church, arranging the flowers and keeping the place looking beautiful. She calls it her "happy place." Maureen has been decorating the church for nearly a decade. "I'm a creative person, but I'm not good at math," she jokes.

Maureen credits her raw creativity with a spiritual source. "I don't really plan on what I'm going to do. I let the Holy Spirit work through me, and I believe it's Divine Intervention. It has moved me to tears before." Sometimes selecting the right plants involves a trip to the wholesale or local markets for inspiration, but Maureen has also been known to take clippings

and flowers from parishioners' yards (with permission!).

Decorating in the silence of the church is a place of an encounter with Jesus for Maureen. There have been many times when she is the only person in the church. During moments like this, she sometimes approaches the tabernacle and simply says to Jesus, "Hello, it's me again."

This approach to prayer - meeting Jesus as a friend - has provided great comfort for Maureen, and is in contrast with the Irish faith of her youth. "If you love someone, you need to get to know them. I grew up in Ireland - hellfire and brimstone - and someone asked me, when did you know Jesus? I grew up in Ireland, I didn't know Jesus! I knew God and the ten commandments and fear of God."

But now, with her husband gone, and Covid limiting her ability to play tennis or have friends over for a glass of wine or a meal, Maureen admits she feels freed to spend time with Jesus in a new way. "I'm not finished with Jesus yet," she teases. "I want him as my best friend. I really, really do."

Though she still tears up when she talks about Hank, Maureen experiences love in her relationship with Jesus. "God made me a happy person; I'm not good with grief. I need a deeper faith, and to get rid of the rules and regulations I grew up with. I think the biggest thing [about faith] is love and getting to know Jesus," she explains.

The little things are what bring her the most joy now. "Sometimes, I look at a flower and think, 'How can people say there is no God?'" She laughs, "I used to be very materialistic... I like nice things!"

These days, you can find her arranging flowers in the church, cheerily and without a plan; in her happy place, with Jesus. When I spoke with her, Maureen emphasized that her faith is a journey. "I'm no saint," she says. "Please end with that."



Invitation to Growth: THE FRIDAY MEN'S PRAYER GROUP

Most Fridays, the Men's Prayer Group continues to gather more than 20 men to grow in faith. Going online has not stopped interest or evangelization. In fact, we are now joined by a few outside the parish who were invited by other men.

As before the pandemic, we start with prayer (Liturgy of the Hours) followed by presentations on topics of interest or testimonies from men who attend. The online format has provided the impetus to find new material: we now also use short videos from different sources (e.g. Matthew Kelly, Fr. Mike Schmitz), often followed by open discussion with the whole group or smaller break-out sessions.

We have also continued the tradition of the Rosary and "virtual Adoration" on the First Friday of the month and have run the Faith Study series during Nov 2020 - Jan 2021 (Growth, Source, Trust, Commission).

Overall, we miss the opportunity to meet in person as a community of faith... though I do not think too many men are "missing the simple breakfast"!

The day will come when in-person meetings will again be allowed, and returning to gathering in church and then around the table in the Mallon room will no doubt be welcomed.

- Alessandro Bitelli (Men's Group Co-leader)

Members share how the Men's Prayer Group has helped them grow in faith:

I was invited to join the Men's Prayer Group near the end of Alpha and prior to starting RCIA. When I am hopefully ordained a Permanent Deacon in October, they will have walked with me the entire journey. An amazing group of men to have supporting me as I grew in my faith.

- Steve

It has given me an opportunity to appreciate the fact that we all have struggles, and that in coping with them we find strength in our faith. That is enriched by the dynamics of our prayer group and by the camaraderie.

- Anonymous

It continues to be ever supportive and encouraging for me as we share, pray, learn and grow as men of the faith, in a zero pressure gathering.

- Tom

The group has made me realize that there are many others who are also seeking God in their lives, in truth and honesty. It has taught me that we can rely on each other to grow in our search for God. It is a group where I feel open to share my inner thoughts on my beliefs without hesitation, and has shown me the importance of openly sharing that faith with others in a world that wants you to keep it only to yourself. It is true community of believers united in prayer and openness to the Spirit.

- Salvador

Find out more about the Men's Prayer Group at ctrwestvan.ca/mensprayergroup.





*When you approach the tabernacle,
remember that he has been waiting for you
for twenty centuries.*

- ST. JOSEMARIA ESCRIVA

Jesus at the Centre: BAPTIZED IN FAITH

By Glen Goh (RCIA Coordinator) & Elizabeth Krump

From around the age of eight, Soney Shahi, who grew up Hindu in Nepal, found herself fascinated by Christianity. As a young girl, she would often sneak away to attend Mass with her Catholic neighbours against her family's approval. The church was a place she always felt very comfortable.

Years later, as an adult living in Canada, Soney was going through a particularly difficult time when someone (not knowing her predicament) sent her an image of the Virgin Mary. When she looked at the image, she heard an inner prompting, "I am here, you are not alone." Immediately, she felt peace. The same person sent her instructions on how to pray the Rosary and she began to recite the prayers regularly.

This experience with Mary and the Rosary led Soney to desire to know more about the Catholic faith. She searched online for a parish and called the first one she found: Christ the Redeemer. After contacting the parish,

she was advised to join a faith study to learn more about the faith. Her small group was encouraging, and Soney was touched by what she learned in the study. She soon expressed a desire to become Catholic and was enrolled in RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults).

Up to that point, Soney had not met any other CTR parishioners in

"She heard an inner prompting, 'I am here, you are not alone.'"

person because of the pandemic, but incredibly she discovered that a client at work attended the parish. The client shared that CTR was within walking distance and showed her the grotto of Mary; soon Soney began to walk to the grotto to pray several times a week. Later, when Soney shared with her client that she was going

to become Catholic, the parishioner enthusiastically offered to be her sponsor.

While Soney has been amazed at how quickly the doors opened for her to become Catholic, the seeds of faith were planted many years ago in Nepal. Soney's joy at 'coming home' to the Catholic Church has been beautiful to witness. Even the fact that her reception of the sacraments was delayed due to Covid did not dampen her spirits. In fact, when she was finally baptized on May 2, 2021, her mask was wet with tears of joy. She is immensely grateful to the CTR community for their support, and looks forward to getting to know everyone in time.

Please join me in congratulating and praying for Soney and our other newly baptized parishioner, Lukas, as they step into a new life of grace in the Catholic Church!

At the heart of everything we do as Catholics is the Sacramental life. Our RCIA candidates remind us of this truth, especially at Easter.

Find out more about RCIA at ctrwestvan.ca/rcia.





Greater Than Retreat, 2019



Invitation to Mission: PARISH LEADERS: DOM & CHRISTINE

A conversation with Krista Greig

Dom and Christine have been involved with Youth Ministry since they began high school. Now, as university students, they are part of the Core Team and lead small groups. Krista Greig, Coordinator of Evangelization and Outreach, had a Zoom call with them to ask why, in their own words, they love Youth Min.

Krista: Let's start with a bit about you. How would you describe your personality?

Dom: A mix of introverted/extroverted. I like to get outdoors for long walks in the forest but I'm also down for a video game or round of Dungeons & Dragons.

Christine: Introverted, fairly type-A, outdoorsy/athletic.

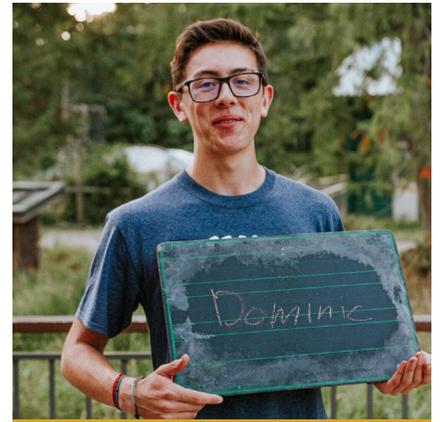
How did you keep your faith during high school?

D: A lot of that came from Youth Min. I experienced faith-based community there that I didn't really have elsewhere, like the opportunity to do retreats, Theology of the Body series, Youth Alpha, and to explore and grow in faith. I didn't have that in public school.

C: The biggest thing for me was being able to get involved in "Catholic things" in school – campus min, Life and Justice Club, being able to go to Mass every week. Initially, I was invited to a weekly prayer group and enjoyed being with the people who were involved in that. I genuinely enjoyed those kinds of environments and it gave me more exposure to living a Catholic lifestyle.

What was it like to be part of Youth Min? Did any of the leaders have an impact on you?

D: Brandon was the one person I knew outside of Youth Min (from having him as a swim instructor). So, having someone that I knew in an unfamiliar space helped. Once in a while he would ask me where I could grow in my faith. Eventually, he helped me find the right spot in leadership



Dominic (Dom) Po White

High school: Carson Graham
University Studies: First-year Forestry (Natural Resources Conservation)
Serving in Youth Min: Small Group Leader and Inner Room Leader



Christine Weiss

High school: St. Thomas Aquinas
University Studies: First-year Sciences
Serving in Youth Min: Youth Min Core Team

where I could do the most. It started off as, “Hey, we think you’d be good at this...” A lot of [my faith journey in YM] as a whole came from the community in general and getting to know the Youth Min leaders as people.

C: Krista and I got connected, and it was really nice having an older figure in the faith to learn from. I think the biggest thing was seeing the potential of my faith. How you’ve (Krista) been living your life made me confident in my faith and my ability to share that faith with others. Being part of the retreat team was also huge. It brought me closer to everyone and working with everyone as a group...I realized, “Maybe I could do this a bit more.”

Now you’re both serving as leaders in Youth Min! How do you feel called to serve the parish in this way?

D: The transition from being involved in Youth Min to being involved in leadership has been very natural to me. I enjoyed the community, so it made sense to help there, and I felt I could grow it to be even better.

C: I really enjoy sharing my faith with people who are excited to learn about it, so I think Youth Min was a really good place for me. Most of the time, people who are coming to YM actually want to be there so they’re open to hearing what you have to say and vice versa. The girls [in my small group] are so excited to learn how to pray, to learn about trust...and that’s really exciting to me. It’s nice to be able to provide a comfortable environment for other people to talk about their faith. I needed that in high school.

How have you been able to use your gifts in ministry?

C: I’ve been able to use my organization and planning skills... I really enjoy the admin stuff. In my small group, I also love being able to



Greater Than Retreat, 2019

“The transition from being involved in Youth Min to being involved in leadership has been very natural to me.”

share some of the wisdom that I’ve been given that really helped me. I really enjoy accompanying [the high school girls] through what they’re experiencing as young Catholics.

D: I have some experience as a camp leader so I found the retreat planning process very exciting and my role as a camp “servant” was very exciting. Honestly, I’m still discovering where to best use my gifts.

What are your hopes for the future of Youth Ministry at our parish?

C: I would love to see people doing normal things as a group of Catholics. We get to thinking that Youth Min has to be something religious...as much as that’s important, a big thing is also creating an environment where people can have good conversations, like on a hike. I want people to be more comfortable with inviting their



friends in, so if they’re curious or have no idea about the faith or if they want to continue their faith, they’re still welcomed and able to explore that.

D: I’ve always enjoyed opportunities for prayer and faith exploration-type stuff – opportunities like Inner Room, praise and worship stuff, Adoration... Hanging out in a Catholic community is awesome. As someone who went to school completely without that, it’s something I always appreciated when I was here [at Youth Min].

We’re excited to see the legacy that Dom and Christine leave in Youth Min!

To learn more about Youth Ministry at our parish, or to join Anchor (our monthly event) please visit ctrwestvan.ca/youthministry.



Adriana's group, 2019



Invitation to Multiply: THE POWER OF ONE 'YES'

By Krista Greig

Adriana Sarvas has gone through all five studies in the CCO Faith Studies series, but leading them with a group opened up a whole new dynamic. She shares her heart for the New Evangelization here.

The Catholic Christian Outreach (CCO) Faith Study series has been a staple program at Christ the Redeemer Parish for more than four years, but these studies are far more than just a program; they provide an opportunity for fellowship and growth among believers.

Adriana Sarvas is no stranger to the faith studies. Since their introduction at CTR, Adriana has taken or led a faith study at least once per week. Having gone through all the studies herself, she has seen first-hand the value they bring to peoples' lives.

Adriana has led the same group of women through all five CCO Faith Studies and beyond. However, leadership didn't always come naturally to her.

"Everyone told me I was a natural leader," Adriana shared, "but I never felt that. People tell me this is the gift

I've received from God – to lead, to teach."

Although she admits she was apprehensive about leading at first, she felt compelled to say yes to take on her first faith study. "The Holy Spirit led me to do it. I felt I needed to say yes, and if I did, God would equip and provide me with whatever I needed."

Armed with Spirit-led boldness, Adriana set out to lead a Discovery study with a group of six women of various ages and stages of life and faith. Over the course of the five studies – Discovery, Source, Growth, Trust, and Commission – Adriana has "noticed a huge difference in every single member of the group." Since they began meeting, each is now embracing the mission of the Church in their own way.

Accompanying her participants has been a highlight for Adriana: "To see

the Holy Spirit working through me – guiding, navigating, and using me - I see their peace, I see their happiness. I love to watch ongoing conversion in peoples' lives."

What has really surprised her has been watching the group beginning to reach out to others. "They're not doing it for leadership or to be recognized; they're doing it because it's coming straight from the heart. They have so much love for God and others that this love is overflowing."

Having led her group through all the Faith Studies, Adriana is now helping others start their own Faith Study groups. Aside from supporting two of her own participants as they lead Discovery, Adriana has stepped up to coach new Faith Study leaders in the parish.

This process contributes to multiplication: the idea that to reach the

world with the good news of the Gospel, we must invest deeply in a few people who can then reach out to others. Adriana describes multiplication as “the work of the Holy Spirit in an exponential way. It’s reaching many people not only on the surface, but in their hearts so they can share with other people.”

She notes that the motivating factor in multiplication must always be a love for Jesus: “When someone is on fire for Jesus they spread that love and passion more vividly and more passionately.”

Fuelled by this passion, Adriana recognizes the need to walk with people as they grow as missionary disciples. “Multiplication means you reach one person and really accompany that person...every person will reach others and go out, spreading the Good News with fire. If we can get everyone on fire for God, the whole parish will blossom and we would have to build another church!”

Adriana has some words of encouragement for other parishioners who might have even a small desire to be part of evangelizing mission of the

Church: “There is no need to fear leading. Pray about it and see what the Holy Spirit is calling you to. You’ll be called to things based on your gifts.”

Adriana’s faith-study-group-turned-women’s-group is a testament to the power of one person’s “yes.” Through Adriana, the lives of many people are being touched by Jesus. People are coming to know the Lord or to know Him more deeply, and all it took was Adriana trusting God to equip her to lead six women through a faith study.

Below (L-R): Mary Elise, Julia, Zuzana, Adriana, Theresa, Maureen, and Mariana



Are you interested in taking or leading a faith study? Visit ctrwestvan.ca/faithstudies.

What the group has to say about their experience:

I felt the the Holy Spirit bring us into closer relationship with God and with one another! Knowledge is important but it has to be accompanied by a personal love for Jesus which only comes about through prayer, scripture and the Sacraments, particularly Penance and the Eucharist. - *Maureen*

My Discovery group has been a journey of friendship and spiritual fellowship growing into very close friendships leading to building of a feeling of community within our parish. Along with the spiritual growth and friendship that we experienced, we were able to share from the depths of our souls and discuss our growth and openly share our [faith] journey. - *Theresa*

The journey began as an exploration into the religion my parents introduced me to through baptism. It was based more on rituals than belief. Throughout the series, [Adriana’s] leadership and our group discussion, I found myself growing in love with Jesus and learning to trust in the Holy Spirit. As a result, I begin and end each day in prayer and give my day to God. - *Mary Elise*

After repeated Faith Studies, I developed a deep personal relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. What I found amazing is that I had a spiritual experience before having any knowledge of Scripture and faith. The Faith Studies have helped me understand and see what is happening in my life. - *Mariana*

As a participant of the CCO program, I have experienced a deepening of my personal relationship with our Heavenly Father. The small group setting was comfortable for sharing my experience of God’s love in my life. I realized that I need to read Scripture daily, and live it and share it with others. - *Zuzana*



RETROSPECT & PROSPECT

By Fr. Jeff Thompson, CSB

It was such an exciting prospect: through the good graces of Archbishop Miller and Monsignor Smith, I was going to live and minister as a priest in my sister's parish where I had worshipped through the years as a Christmas and Easter visitor from the East. It began with such bright promise: faces at daily Mass began to acquire familiar names, families at Sunday Mass were feeling blocked at the front doors until I shook their hands, regular visits to Amica Lions Gate and to Capilano and Inglewood Care Centres opened my eyes and heart to the human condition, gracious CWL Ladies listened patiently to my vocation monologue without nodding off, Men of the Pre-Dawn kindly included me in their Friday prayers when, despite our whispered tones, we never failed to wake up the angels. But only eight short months later, this ghastly and beastly pandemic forced itself into our lives with its impudent attempt to turn everything upside down, mocking us by constricting the celebration of our faith, and even dismissing it as an on-again off-again affair. Getting to know all of you by shaking hands and chatting after Mass was quickly reduced to a nodding acquaintance through the plexiglass shield at outdoor Sunday Communion. Was the prospect still exciting? Was the promise still bright?

Without intending to bestow a single blessing on anyone, this greedy pandemic has inadvertently blessed me

with the gift of time, so much precious reflective time to myself. Well outfitted in the smart walking shoes that my sister lavished upon me for my 60th birthday (surely there was a hidden meaning in that loving gesture), I began to explore the surrounding neighbourhoods on foot, braving the fierce challenges of slopes and summits, and constantly searching for fresh reasons to pick up the pace. I learned so much during these picturesque perambulations: what Moses thought was a burning bush on Mount Horeb was really a scarlet azalea in full bloom transplanted from the British Properties; God is the owner of some choice real estate in the parish and has thus ordered the elements so that, when the heavy westerly clouds (whose raindrops nourish the flaming hues of the azaleas) decide to clear, the sweet sunshine peeks out and kisses first the cheeks of West Vancouver; apart perhaps from dimming the glow of our hearts and minds, this wretched pandemic has dulled nothing of God's grandeur that greets us at every turn.

A most vivid highlight for me in the parish was the first Midnight Mass of 2019, which began at 5:00 pm. Excited and bright-eyed children sat down with me on the steps in front of the altar and explained to me how their evergreen Christmas trees at home were just like the wood of the Cross above the altar on which hangs the promise of everlasting life. Clever children! I was so hoping that at Midnight Mass in 2020 I would learn something equally profound from their parents (whether seated on the altar steps or not), but – alas! – this infernal pandemic. A most distressing regret for me has been that I, and Monsignor, have been robbed of celebrating the Sacred Easter Triduum in the church with our parishioners – twice. Again, this relentless pandemic.

During my first eight months at

Christ the Redeemer, I was immersed among parishioners who were teeming with life, brimming with faith, and joyfully sharing with each other their discipleship of the Lord. Several peripatetic months later, atop the peaceful panoramic heights of Sentinel Hill, far above the sea level-hugging amblers of Ambleside, and gazing out over the shimmering waters of Burrard Inlet below, I began to understand and accept that this pandemic, which I have mistakenly empowered with strong emotional adjectives, is a spell of very bad weather in the life of our parish. We have gone indoors to take shelter from the storm, yes, but the living of our life and faith continues unabated indoors as well, albeit with adjusted contours and rhythms. Our nimble and acrobatic English language has not failed to furnish us with new synonyms for indoors, such as Zoom and livestream. Our parishioners still continue to teem with life, brim with faith, and joyfully share our discipleship of Jesus Christ, and now we know how to do it virtually too. But how we long to gather in the flesh again! Will the Word be made flesh again?

Storms pass, clouds clear, and sweet sunshine kisses us again. We have seen this before, and we shall see it again. Stripped of all its adjectives, this virus that rages and surges to engulf us cannot and will not overwhelm the love of God, the love that raised Jesus from the dead, the love that is, even now, drawing us back to feel the warmth of his embrace and to behold the gentle greeting of his face. This virus does not belong with us, but we do belong to God. We cannot rely on this virus for anything, but we can rely on God for everything.

May God bless you all, every day!
Oremus pro invicem.

Fr. Jeff has been a wonderful gift to our parish for the past two years. We wish him well as pastor of St. Pius X!

Finance Council Report: FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

2021-2024
Council Members

Thank you! Your generosity during these difficult times has been inspiring and allows the parish to continue its many ministries and programs without interruption. We hope for your continued support of both the Sunday collection and Project Advance. A major bequest (received over two years) has bolstered our finances. Please consider remembering the parish in your Will. We've also received some generous gifts of stocks, a way of giving that can reduce your tax bill.

The significant increase under 'salaries' in 2020 was partly due to hiring Krista Grieg for one year, funded by last year's Project Advance campaign. She has done a wonderful job of building and strengthening our evangelization and discipleship programs. We wish her well as she moves to the Communications Office at the Archdiocese of Vancouver. We also hired another preschool teacher due to increased enrollment.

Funds for the new church doors were raised in 2019 and spent in 2020, thus resulting in a deficit at the end of last year.

Numbers tell only part of the story. Our annual Spiritual Report from this past year showed the expected drop in Mass attendance due to church closures. However, infant baptisms and confirmations held steady, marriages were up and adult baptisms were the highest they've been in many years.

So the work goes on—with your help!

– *Clem Pelletier (Chair), Claudia Fraga, Kieran Magee, Meg Maledy, Sharon Morrisroe, Rachid Nayel*



Revenue	December 31, 2020	December 31, 2019	
Collections - Holy Days of Obligation	\$ 593,358	\$ 622,734	
Project Advance	142,402	140,475	
Bequests	82,784	255,000	
Other Income	278,836	220,824	Note 1
Collections - Charitable Works	7,067	41,799	
Collections - Archdiocesan/National	23,570	36,206	
Special Donations	15,345	18,511	
Religious Education	1,165	15,845	Note 2
SAS School Fundraising	13,033	42,587	
Fundraising - Parish	-	14,859	
Total Revenue	\$ 1,157,560	\$ 1,408,841	
Expense			
Salaries & Benefits	\$ 375,812	\$ 271,326	Note 3
Operating	255,570	366,860	Note 4
Non-Recurring	116,204	9,436	Note 5
Administration	178,148	146,009	Note 6
Remittance - Archdiocesan/National Collections	23,528	35,734	
School Subsidies	54,160	59,735	
Repairs & Maintenance	70,646	80,742	
Religious Education	8,336	23,388	
SAS School Fundraising	8,283	13,536	Note 7
Charitable Works	90,416	57,639	Note 8
Total Expense:	1,181,103	1,064,406	
Net Income (Loss)	\$ (23,543)	\$ 344,435	Note 9

Notes to Financial Highlights

Note 1 - Includes Canada Employment Wage Subsidy (\$83,194) income, preschool income and interest.

Note 2 - PREP fees were suspended in 2020. Families were encouraged to contribute to the parish.

Note 3 - Project Advance supported one additional staff position for a year. Also included salary for an additional preschool teacher.

Note 4 - Operating Expense includes Diocesan Assessment, Insurance, Parish Organization Activities, Publications, Rectory Expenses, and Utilities.

Note 5 - 2020 includes Extraordinary Expenditures from 2019 Project Advance Funds.

Note 6 - Administration includes BC Catholic, Bank Charges, Office Supplies, GST expense, Professional Fees (associated with parish renewal) and COVID-19 expenses.

Note 7 - 2019 \$29,050; 2020 \$44,750 held in reserve for future school project.

Note 8 - Charitable Works includes donations to St. Vincent de Paul, Refugee Sponsorship expenditures, and donations to other charities.

Note 9 - The 2019 surplus resulted from a bequest and \$115,150 held in reserve for approved Project Advance projects.

- In 2020 the \$115,150 reserve was spent to complete these projects.



CHRIST THE REDEEMER PARISH
599 KEITH ROAD
WEST VANCOUVER, BC V7T 1L8

CONTACT US:
604-922-1371
OFFICE@CTRWESTVAN.CA



*Join us for Mass on Sundays
by scanning the QR code or
visiting rebrand.ly/ctrmass*

WWW.CTRWESTVAN.CA