

CATHOLIC MOUNTAIN STAR

SPRING 2026

ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF NELSON, B.C.

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BISHOP'S REFLECTION



FEATURING
THE WEST KOOTENAY DEANERY

GREENWOOD PARISH CELEBRATES
125 YEARS

LOAVES AND FISHES BOOKSTORE
CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

BISHOP GREGORY'S REFLECTION

A tribute to love and prayer.

Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? He said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22.36-40)



April 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Greetings and peace in the Lord!

I write this as a tribute to God and prayer because it's due to God's grace and mercy, and your love and prayers, perseverance and persistence, that I am still here. I really shouldn't be alive because of the many complications that happened after the last surgery. In fact, when I finally returned to Kelowna and visited my family doctor, he was shocked and said that he had never expected to see me again.

Let me take you back to the first surgery. It started in the fall of 2024 when an MRI showed an AV fistula (short form for arterial – venous fistula) on the dura, or the covering of my brain. Further investigation in Vancouver with a cerebral angiogram uncovered that I had two AV fistulas that required immediate attention.

That led to an initial surgery in December of 2024, which ended up being three surgeries and an interventional radiological procedure. At that point, the doctors felt that they had removed all of the fistulas, and I made a rapid, uneventful recovery.

BISHOP GREGORY'S SPRING REFLECTION CONTINUED...

However, the fistulas returned, and so did the symptoms, which led to a fourth surgery in September of 2025. Unfortunately, I developed multiple complications, which led to a four-month-plus stay in hospital and me being near death. Some of the complications included renal failure, liver failure, blood clots in the lungs and both legs, a urinary tract infection, fungus in the blood, bacterial meningitis, and I also lost a part of my tongue. A portion of my tongue had died during the 12-hour surgery. In addition, when I awoke, they discovered my throat had swollen, and it would not be possible to continue with any further treatment at that time. The next four months that I spent in bed being tube-fed meant I had to relearn how to eat and walk again.

At the end of September, the last words that I spoke before hallucinating and being semi-conscious were, "I need a miracle. Have everyone pray for a miracle." I did not know what was going on, who visited me, or anything that was said by me or anyone else until sometime in December.

When I was transferred back to Kelowna, I realized the full magnitude of what had happened to me. I send many thanks to the friends and family who visited me and retold stories of what I experienced between September and December of 2025.

I spent approximately one-plus months in Kelowna General Hospital further recovering and doing rehab. I have been home for almost two months now. The recovery seems slow; however, everyone says I am doing very well.

During this whole time, I had lots of time to think, and I especially felt very connected to all of you through the continuous prayers, masses, novenas and devotions that you offered for me. In

fact, I felt closer to you than if I had been in the diocese physically, one of the miracles of prayer. At other times, I literally felt lifted up by your prayer. I can't really describe it, but it was real, and any of you who have ever felt it will know what I mean.

I recently flew to Vancouver for my follow-up cerebral angiogram and received an all-clear. I cannot thank you enough, nor are any words adequate to express my deep appreciation for all of the prayers you said on my behalf. Even though recovery is going slow, I can hardly wait to see you and to be with you again. You have truly lived out the two greatest commandments during my time away, and you continue to do so. The love you showed to me was the answer to my request for a miracle. I have truly received the miracle I asked for, and it is because of all of you.

***"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* (John 13.34–35)**

God bless you and thank you.



✠ Gregory J Bittman
Bishop of Nelson





THANK YOU FOR PRAYING FOR OUR PRIESTS

Canadian Martyrs Parish, Invermere
St. Joseph Church, Radium Hot Springs
Mission Akisq'Nuk Native Reserve/Band,
Windermere (Formerly Columbia Lake
Shuswap Band/Reserve (Shuswap Nation
(Secwe'pemc) (Kinbasket/Kenpesq't people)
Rev. Fr. Francis dela Cruz

St. Rita Parish, Castlegar
St. Anthony Mission, New Denver
St. Mary Mission, Slokan City
Rev. Fr. Aaron de Dios

Holy Cross Parish, Creston
Most Holy Redeemer Mission, Riondel
Lower Kootenay Band/Reserve (Yaqa Nu'kiy),
Creston
Rev. Fr. Lawrence Kanickaisamy, CMI

Sacred Heart Parish, Rossland
St. Rita Parish, Fruitvale
Sacred Heart Mission, Salmo
Rev. Fr. Paul Joseph Thymootil, CMI

St. Francis of Assisi Parish Revelstoke
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Nakusp
St. John the Baptist Mission, Fauquier
Rev. Fr. James McHugh

St. Anne Parish, Osoyoos
Christ The King Parish, Oliver
Our Lady of Lourdes Church/Mission,
Chopaka Native Reserve
(Lower Similkameen Band) (semelk'mexw)
St. Gregory Mission, Inkameep/Nk'Mip
Native Band
Rev. Fr. Peter Tompkins

St. Edward's Parish, Winfield/Lake Country
Winfield Okanagan Band/Reserve
(S-Ooknanhkchinx)
Rev. Fr. Shaiju Payyappilly Kunjuvareed

Sacred Heart Parish, Grand Forks
Sacred Heart Parish, Greenwood
Our Lady of the Lake Mission,
Christina Lake served from Grand Forks
Rev. Fr. Ruben Buela

Holy Family Parish, Fernie
St. Bernard Mission, Elkford
St. Michael Parish, Sparwood
Rev. Fr. Thomas Kakkaniyil, MST

Cathedral of Mary Immaculate, Nelson
**Most Rev. Gregory Bittman, Bishop of
Nelson**
Rev. Fr. Jojo Augustine, MST Rector

Sacred Heart Mission, Kaslo
Sacred Heart Mission, Procter

St. Charles Garnier Parish, Kelowna
Very Rev. Fr. Gerald Sekanga
Rev. Fr. Ferdinand Bayarong
Associate Pastor

Sacred Heart Parish, Golden
Rev. Fr. Paul Iumba

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, West Kelowna
St. Patrick Mission, Westbank First Nation
(Tsinstikeptum) Westbank Native Reserve
Very Rev. Fr. Cerlouie Jimenez

St. Pius X Parish, Kelowna
Rev. Fr. Biju Antony, CMI

Roman Catholic Diocese of Nelson
Evangelization and Missionary Discipleship
Rev. Fr. Sylvester Ibekwe

Roman Catholic Diocese of Nelson
Seton House of Prayer and Retreat House
Rev. Fr. Marcel Coté

Sacred Heart Parish, Kimberley
St. Anthony Mission, Canal Flats
St. Joseph Mission, Jaffray
Rev. Fr. Manoj Pathiyil George

Christ the Servant Parish,
Cranbrook
St. Mary's Parish, Cranbrook
St. Mary's Native Reserve/Band
(?Aq'am) St. Eugene's Mission,
Cranbrook
Rev. Fr. Rex Velmonte

St. Peter Parish, Princeton
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Keremos
St. Ann Church/Mission, Hedley Native
Reserve (Upper Siimilkameen Band)
(semelk'mexw)
Rev. Fr. Dominique Trinh Do

Corpus Christi Parish, Kelowna
Rev. Fr. Pat Monette

Holy Trinity Parish, Trail
**Rev. Fr. Xaviour Mulakkampilli Chakku,
CMI**

Immaculate Conception Parish, Kelowna
Rev. Fr. Maurice Okolie

Our Lady of Lourdes Mission, Okanagan Falls
Holy Child Parish, Summerland
Rev. Fr. Gabriel Chinnaperiannan

St. Ann Parish, Penticton
St. John Vianney Parish, Penticton
Penticton Okanagan Band/Reserve
(Sn Pin'Ktn) Sacred Heart Mission,
Penticton Native Reserve
Rev. Fr. Neil Lustado

Latin Mass Society of Kelowna
Latin Mass, Immaculate Conception Parish
Rev. Fr. Edwin Neufeld

RETIRED PRIESTS

Bishop Emeritus Eugene Cooney
Bishop Emeritus John Corriveau, OFM Cap

Very Rev. Vicar General
Rev. Fr. Sebastian Puthenpura
Rev. Fr. John Kellogg
Rev. Fr. Wayne Pfliger

Rev. Fr. Harry Clarke
Rev. Fr. Dave DeSouza
Rev. Fr. Jack de Verteuil





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"But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. How much more then, since we are now justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath." (Romans 5:8-9)



FR. JIM RATCLIFFE

JANUARY 28, 1940-FEBRUARY 2, 2026

<https://www.springfieldfuneralhome.com/obituaries/ratcliffe-rev-james/>



FR. JAMES JOSEPH RATCLIFFE

[Homily adapted for print.]

By Fr. Peter Tompkins, February 10, 2026

Friends, today is really about our faith, our Church, our priesthood, and our families. This has been a bittersweet week: we've had a Super Bowl and the first week of the Winter Olympics in Torino—good stuff. But we are also shocked by the tragic Killings in Tumbler Ridge and the kidnapping of the Tucson woman from a well-known media family. And, on the day Fr. Jim died, three junior hockey players were tragically killed in a vehicle accident in Stavely, Alberta.

And it is bittersweet here as well. Ten days ago, we lost a valuable, esteemed labourer in the Lord's vineyard. At the same time, we are enthused to have our bishop, Gregory, after his extended hospitalization, here to preside and celebrate this Holy Mass to commend Fr. Jim to God, who loves us with mercy.

To Fr. Jim's family (Mary, Elizabeth, the Marty side, the in-laws, the younger generations): our gratitude to you, and through you to your parents.

To Fr. Jim's parishioners: thank you for being kind to him and engaging with him. In every parish, there are wonderful people who love the gift of the Catholic priesthood and their own pastor. You are appreciated.

To Bishop Gregory and Fr. Jim's brother priests: we lost a true icon of the Diocese of Nelson. He cared for us and truly thrived on our priestly fraternity. We have much to carry with us as we remember his six decades of ministry and faith. Like me, he served five bishops in the Diocese of Nelson. How is that possible? Well, Bishop Doyle's time spanned more than three decades.

Bishop Gregory...Bishop Doyle was from Edmonton too! Three decades here?!

This reflection is part homily and part eulogy—a 'hom-ogy', you know.

Jim Ratcliffe was born in 1940 as the world was at war, the first of eight children. He was ordained in 1965 in a famously large class of impressive priests at St. Peter's Seminary in London, Ontario. Six months after Fr. Jim's June 6th ordination, the Second Vatican Council would conclude on the Feast day of our Blessed Mother's Immaculate Conception. Those mid-60s were paradoxical days of anticipation, uncertainty, and turmoil.

As the Council came to a close, Catholics the world over were living with the tension and excitement of letting go of the familiar and putting out into the deep. The seismic shift of the Church would unsettle many and even cause ripples and tides through the ranks of the priesthood and religious life. Fr. Jim held steady and, with a servant's heart, only saw a lifetime of ministry ahead of him. From my earliest years with him, I knew him to say, 'I intend to die in my work boots.'

If, as it is said, half of success is just showing up, Fr. Jim was successful because he responded to the call of duty in so many areas of church life: pastor of numerous parishes and communities in our diocese, educator at Immaculata High School, collaborator with bishops on diocesan committees, ever-sensitive to the gifts of talented religious women, participant in many renewal movements (Cursillo, COR, the Encounter weekends), Knights of Columbus chaplain, CWL spiritual director, and many more areas of church life including the trusted position of Vicar General.

When planning funerals in the parish, I am occasionally asked to find readings that suit the deceased—mother, husband, brother or sister. The family will tell me about their loved one and, with electronic concordance, well, it sometimes works and I can find some connecting Bible passages.

I hope today's Scripture readings give us a biblical way to see, and measure, and appreciate the life and Appreciate the life and key qualities of Fr. Jim. The Book of Nehemiah (he is identified as a prophet in the liturgical proclamation, but



he is a governor and trailblazer in the period of reconstruction after the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century BC). A man of many evident talents, Nehemiah cooperated with Ezra the priest to stir up hope and fidelity among the returning pilgrims. It wasn't just opening-day ribbon-cutting for the new walls of Jerusalem; the event described in the first reading was a catechism—a call to renewal of the covenant, awareness of, and love of, the Law—a great long liturgy! (Which would have been just fine with Fr. Jim!)

One day, around 2015 at Christ the Servant Church in Cranbrook, I mentioned to Fr. Jim that the clock over the church entrance had a dying battery and the time was incorrect. He said, 'Why is the clock there anyway? The liturgy is timeless!' Yes, Jim, but some people have to get to work or the golf course.

Like Ezra, and Nehemiah, Fr. Jim could preach and preach, maybe from early morning until midday! Like Ezra and Nehemiah, a great event needs a great liturgy. It is beautiful, emotional, and instructive. Like Ezra and Nehemiah, Fr. Jim gave the sense and the interpretation of God's holy word. His devotion to the Breviary prayers and the daily Mass readings always helped in his preaching.

TIME: In a way, his priestly life was like that. He gave so much time—an extraordinary amount of time—to the people in his care. He interviewed individually all of the children preparing for sacraments (in the 1980s, that could be 25 to 40 children for each Sacrament). He was attentive to the aged and infirm in long-term care, he was committed to hospital chaplaincy, and he wouldn't intentionally miss a meeting of any committee he served on. He was devoted to the interfaith ministerial associations of non-Catholic clergy. Yes, Fr. Jim's selfless gift of his time left his people knowing that he cared for them. Timeless, well-planned liturgy and ritual were his way of saying to Jesus, "I do care. I am grateful. I will give my best."

So, what's with all the gemstones in the Book of Revelation? Was that really necessary? Well, YES! It is another expression of liturgy, this time apocalyptic, as St. John is led by the angel to see the

holy city of Jerusalem—the new Jerusalem—in the heavenly glory. The perfection of symmetry, the image of the apostles and the tribes of Israel, the four directions, the measuring rods of squared numbers (12 x 12 again), the captivating beauty of the precious stones, the streets of gold, and the perpetual light of the lamb.

But this is beauty hard won. Ten days from now (on the First Sunday of Lent), we will hear the proclamation of St. Matthew's Gospel, detailing the three-fold temptation of Jesus by the devil. Simply, the devil tempts with the clever use of short-cuts. Hungry? Turn Stones into loaves. Danger? Test God. Need these kingdoms? Bow to me. The Book of Revelation shows the beautiful city of Jerusalem to John the evangelist because it is the result of hard work, not the devil's short cuts. Its beauty is washed in the redeeming blood of the Lamb and the steadfast witness of martyrs' blood. And yet, the scene is liturgy—with rubrics, style, perfection, glory, and light.

In the Gospel of St. Luke, Jesus instructs the Pharisees (and therefore his disciples too) about two needed qualities—keys to living like Jesus.

1. **First**, there is no place for self-conceit. Never mark your own exam. Take the lowest place. The shame of being downgraded can be avoided by the possibility of an upgrade. Fr. Jim was genuine; he lived with austerity (suspenders and a Lumby dinner-jacket revealed a lot about him). His vehicles were modest. He did not put on airs.
2. **Second**, you know the line: "Generous to a fault." Yes, that was Fr. Jim. I am absolutely confident that his arrival at the heavenly gates did not have him fumbling for an alibi or needing to explain why he did **not** help someone in need. He gave generously, profligately, knowing he would never be repaid.

In 1979, St. John Paul II began a tradition of writing a Holy Thursday letter to the Priests of the world.



‘I say to you therefore,’ quoting these words of his: ‘strive to be “artists” of pastoral work. There have been many such in the history of the Church. They speak to each of us.’

In Pope John Paul’s list of pastors and parish priests, can’t you see something of each of them in Fr. Jim?

For example,

1. **Saint Vincent de Paul**... the icon of charity and sensitivity to the poor. Fr. Jim never neglected the poor. He knew Jesus was each one of them.

2. **Saint John of Avila**... dedicated to the renewal and reform of the priesthood (Trent and the Counter-Reformation). Fr. Jim was always ready to participate outside his comfort zone with new challenges, changing with the times, and ever so dedicated to our Nelson diocesan fraternity of priests.

3. **St. Jean Vianney**, the holy Curé d’Ars, who rose above his more intelligent peers by being available—tireless it seems—in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Fr. Jim had long, long days, never retiring until the work was done; then ready for hospital calls any time of the night.

4. **Saint John Bosco**, who was dedicated to the formation of youth: instruction in the faith, readiness for careers, and the required skills for the trades. Fr. Jim taught high school, participated in COR weekends, and was present to the children in our schools and religious education programs.

5. **St. Maximilian Kolbe**... At Auschwitz: “Select me! Not my will but yours.” Fr. Jim, though not called to Maximilian martyrdom, always said, “If there is a parish in need of a priest, I am always movable.”

St. John Paul II went on to say: “Each of these priests was different from the others, was himself, was the son of his own time, and was “up to date” with respect to his own time. But this “bringing up to date” of each of them was an original response to the Gospel, a response needed precisely for those times; it was the response of holiness and zeal, priestly life and pastoral activity, within our time and with the world as it is today.”

Fr. Jim and I used to make time for each other

on our annual priests’ retreats (Spokane, Mission, Cache Creek, and not so much—Revelstoke).

Even to travel with Jim was like having Google or GPS in the car before there was an internet or location devices. The Kootenays and Okanagan geography was etched in his mind. He knew the history of communities and roads. He knew when the calves came early, when the lakes thawed late, when the snow level was too high, when the riverbanks were showing early, when the tamaracks turned gold right on schedule. About winter driving on our roads and mountain passes, Fr. Jim would say of blizzard conditions: “It just makes an interesting drive more interesting!”

In 2003, the June soaker (‘June-uary’). On our retreat at the Benedictine Abbey in Mission, Fr. Jim and I would plan an afternoon or two hiking through the rainforest surrounding Stave Lake. We were drenched. People were wondering if we would ever warm up, dry out, and have a summer. He said it can change quickly. Prophetic: By August, many of you will recall 2003, Kelowna was on fire in a summer than began so wet.

Fr. Jim had the talent and corresponding interest in liturgy. He got the liturgical gene; it seems like I did not.

Even in the mid-20-teen years, a decade ago, while I was pastor of Christ the Servant and St. Mary in Cranbrook, Fr. Jim resided there in his first retirement years. As we concelebrated Masses, I could still feel his liturgical breath on the back of my neck. I just knew I was still doing most things wrong.

But there was something great about being with Fr. Jim. Around that time, his feet began to need care and attention. He was not mobile or flexible enough to give his feet proper care. I was only one of many people in Cranbrook and Kelowna (and a few other places) who gave his feet the therapy they needed. Certain lotions and remedies were a must, and the foot care became a liturgy in itself, even exceeding the ritual of making tea. Making his feet more comfortable became a time of greater fraternity, longer stories, recollections of diocesan history, and peculiar priests who served our parishes.



The occasion of disability and immobility was also an opportunity for genuine encounter.

Just yesterday, our Holy Father Pope Leo wrote on The World Day of the Sick (11 February) about the importance not just of service but of encounter. Care-giving is not just about medical or physical care, but about the lingering encounter effected by an illness or disability, which then results in relationship.

Pope Leo the 14th calls it the gift of encounter: the joy of offering closeness and presence.

“We live immersed in a culture of speed, immediacy and haste – a culture of “discard” and indifference that prevents us from pausing along the way and drawing near to acknowledge the needs and suffering that surround us. In the parable, when the Samaritan saw the wounded man, he did not “pass by.” Instead, he looked upon him with an open and attentive gaze – the very gaze of Jesus – which led him to act with human and compassionate closeness. The Samaritan stopped, approached the man and cared for him personally, even spending his own money to provide for his needs... [Above all] he gave him his time. Jesus does not merely teach us who our neighbor is, but rather how to become a neighbor; in other words, how we can draw close to others.

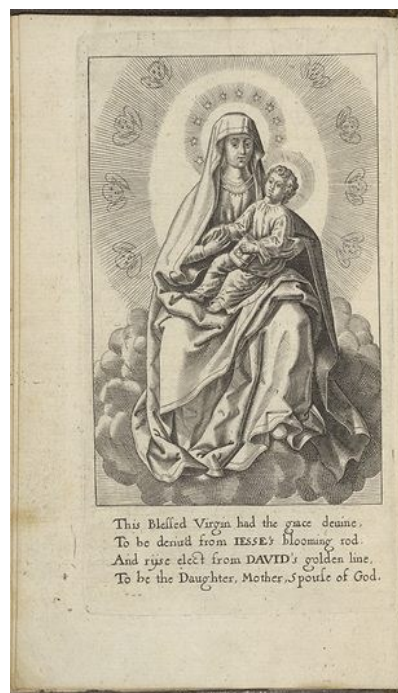
Love is not passive; it goes out to meet the other. Being a neighbor is not determined by physical or social proximity, but by the decision to love. This is why Christians become neighbors to those who suffer, following the example of Christ, the true divine Samaritan who drew near to a wounded humanity. These are not mere gestures of philanthropy, but signs through which we perceive that personal participation in another’s suffering involves the gift of oneself.” [Pope Leo, 2026.02.11]

What externally was just my poor imitation of a physical therapist brought Fr. Jim and me closer together with the stories and the memories. And he really loved the foot-massages. Let me tell you, it’s kind of hard work; he wondered why I ended the session so soon each time.

With Fr. Jim, there were no short-cuts. He was a dedicated priest, with a work-ethic beyond the call, with an availability that knew no clock, and with a servant’s heart that made our Church and world a better place. He didn’t die as an assigned pastor in a parish, but we know that in his heart and prayer, his work boots were on. His booming voice has gone silent, but in many ways we will certainly hear his voice echoing in our Church.

“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God for the promise of life in Christ Jesus, to Timothy, my dear child: grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I am grateful to God, whom I worship with a clear conscience as my ancestors did, as I remember you constantly in my prayers, night and day.”

2 Timothy 1.3



WEST KOOTENAY DEANERY

By Elizabeth Stephens, February, 2026

The West Kootenay Deanery (WKD), one of the four deaneries within the Diocese of Nelson, serves a diverse collection of parish communities spread across the southeastern and central Kootenay region. The Deanery is led by Fr Jojo Augustine, elected from among the priests, and includes each parish priest along with a secretary, a treasurer and a lay representative from every parish. The Dean's office is located at the Cathedral of Mary Immaculate in Nelson, which also serves as the seat of the Bishop.

The Deanery meets four times a year, rotating among its parishes. Each meeting begins with lunch before moving into discussions on diocesan policies, parish reports, emerging pastoral concerns and the coordination of major liturgical events. Among the annual tasks are preparing Advent and Lenten reconciliation schedules. The Deanery also plays a role in organizing major diocesan celebrations, including the Chrism Mass, the Rite of Election, Confirmation retreats, the Bishop's Dinner and activities connected to the World Jubilee Year.

Six active parishes form the heart of the West Kootenay Deanery: The Cathedral of Mary Immaculate in Nelson, St. Rita in Castlegar, Holy Trinity in Trail, Sacred Heart in Rossland, St. Rita's in Fruitvale and Sacred Heart in Grand Forks. The Deanery also supports mission communities in Slocan, New Denver, Kaslo, Procter, Salmo, Greenwood, Christina Lake, Fauquier and Nakusp, some of which operate only during the summer months.

Geographically, the WKD encompasses some of British Columbia's most striking natural landscapes. Its parishes and mission churches are nestled among the Selkirk, Purcell, Monashee and Valhalla mountain ranges—communities shaped by deep mining roots, resilient settlement histories and

a strong sense of identity. The region is also defined by major river systems, including the Columbia, Salmo, Granby and Kettle rivers, as well as well-known lakes such as Kootenay, Arrow, Slocan, Nancy Greene and Christina Lake. From mountain towns to city parishes, the West Kootenay Deanery works to unify communities, accompany clergy, and strengthen the Church's life of faith across the region.

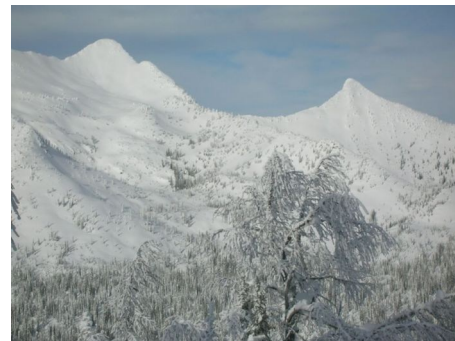
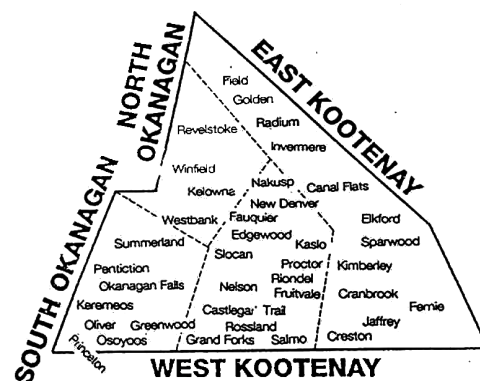


Photo taken from Wildhorse Catskiing terrain towards the backcountry skiing at Ymir Yurts. [Kootenays - Wikitravel](https://www.kootenays-wikitravel.com/)

Nelson Diocese

DEANERY BOUNDARIES



Diocese of Nelson. *[Nelson Diocese Deanery Boundaries]*
Nelson, BC, BC: Nelson Diocese Archive, 1999.



THE MISSIONARY PRIESTS: HEART OF THE WEST KOOTENAY

By Christine Reeves, March, 2026

The house is quiet, except for the low hum of the furnace and the occasional creak of the pipes, as I reflect on the mission priests who transformed our Diocese. Their devotion carried the Gospel through bitter winters, scorching summers, and long stretches of scarcity. In their perseverance, they embodied the mysteries of the Liturgical Year—from Advent’s longing, Christmas joy, from Lenten sacrifice to Easter hope, and the steady fidelity of Ordinary Time. Their stories and unwavering love for the Church open a window into a past that continues to illuminate our lives and faith today.

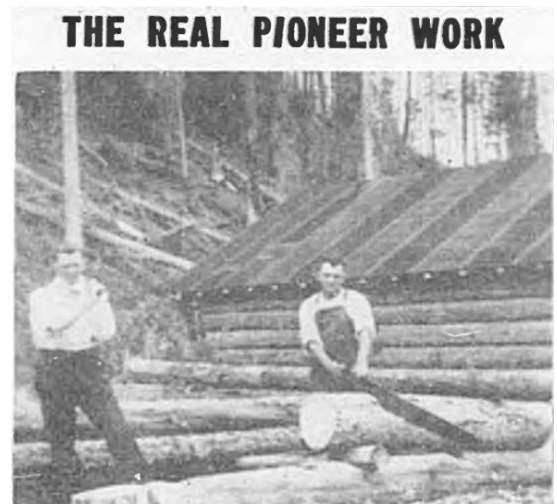
It is no surprise that the Lord has pressed on my heart a desire to look back at the history of our Diocese and recognize what God has done. He stirs in me a call to proclaim the Good News on lands shaped by generations of praise—lands where the Acts of the Apostles were lived out by those who came before us. As I walk through the archives of time, I try to place my feet in the footprints of our early shepherds, though I know I lack the historical depth they carried so naturally. Yet through the magnifying lens of their lived holiness, I am beginning to see the Church with greater clarity.

Bishop Emeritus Johnson said, “The missionary’s trail is most interesting. It leads over high mountains, across deep valleys and along thrilling mountain roads. It leads one to vast stretches of virgin soil—to city, hamlet and “Ghost” towns. The end of the trail is immortal souls.

Missionaries are lone warriors of Christ because they are generally unknown. This hidden life is not advantageous because it deprives them of the spiritual and material assistance with which generous, faithful hearts would overwhelm them were they informed of their problems and what is needed for a most fruitful and efficacious ministry.”

Johnson (1937) *The Prospector*

As a diocese, our goal is to highlight each of these missions. However, the historical richness and unique beauty of every mission parish cannot be fully captured in a single issue. In the editions to come, we hope to explore their stories in greater depth. As we turn from the past to the present, we recognize that the same missionary spirit continues to build in us and our priests shape our communities today to build in us the body of Christ.



The Real Pioneer Work [Photograph]. (1937, Nov. 12) *The Prospector*, Official Newspaper of the Diocese of Nelson, B. C.

Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2.46-47)

With that in mind, we now introduce the parishes and missions of the West Kootenay—communities built on prayer, sacrifice and the quiet fidelity of those who carried the Word before us and continue to build the future of our diocese.



THE WEST KOOTENAY PARISHES AND MISSIONS



St. Rita Parish, Castlegar

St. Mary Mission, Slocan

St. Anthony Mission, New Denver

Cathedral of Mary Immaculate, Nelson

Sacred Heart Mission, Kaslo

Sacred Heart Mission, Procter

Sacred Heart Parish, Grand Forks

Sacred Heart Mission, Greenwood

Our Lady of the Lake Mission, Christina Lake

Our Lady of Lourdes, Nakusp

St. John the Baptist Mission, Fauquier

Holy Trinity Parish, Trail

Sacred Heart Parish, Rossland

St. Rita's Parish, Fruitvale

Sacred Heart Mission, Salmo



ST. RITA PARISH CASTLEGAR

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

St. Rita's Parish Priest is Fr. Aaron de Dios. The city of Castlegar sits at the confluence of the Kootenay and Columbia rivers, nestled in the Selkirk Mountains halfway between Nelson and Trail. It has a rich and diverse history, shaped by Doukhobor (Russian) heritage and a strong Portuguese community.

St. Rita Church, established in 1930 and named after St. Rita of Cascia, the 15th-century Italian "Saint of the Impossible," was rebuilt in 2013 after an arson fire.

This circular church, featuring a hanging crucifix behind the altar, has a strong devotion to Our Lady, with processions for Our Lady of Fatima and Our Lady of Guadalupe. With Selkirk College nearby, the parish has a vibrant multicultural community that includes Russian, Portuguese, East Indian and Canadian families.

St. Rita has an active Catholic Women's League, hosts annual teas, Knights of Columbus steak-and-lobster dinners, and supports Development and Peace, catechism and sacramental preparation, RCIA, and music ministry. Mass is celebrated on Saturdays at 5 p.m. and Sundays at 9 a.m. St. Rita Parish oversees missions in Slocan City and New Denver.



St. Rita's Parish, established in 1930. Photo: St. Rita, Castlegar, BC. 2025



Photo: St. Rita, Castlegar, BC. 2025

ST. MARY'S MISSION

SLOCAN

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

St. Mary Mission, named in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary, was established in 1923 near the cenotaph by Fr. A.L. McIntyre, who moved and renovated a community hall from nearby Brandon. Services are arranged through St. Rita Parish and vary throughout the year.



St. Mary Chapel, Slocan City, B.C. Courtesy of
The Diocese of Nelson Archives



Mary, Mother of Priests



Mary the Mother of Jesus, was with her Son during all His passion. She heard the cruel scourging, she had seen Him wearing the Crown of Thorns, and being mocked as a King; she too had met Him carrying His cross as a criminal. She accompanied Him and mounted Calvary with Him. She heard the cruel nails being driven through those loved hands and feet. (Unlike Hagar in the desert, Mary stays near her thirsting Son as He dies not at the foot of a tree, but nailed onto that tree). If Mary was near Christ during all His passion will she not remain near her missionary priests, her “other Christs” during their passion? If Christ summoned His mother to suffer in His hour, can not the priest, “another Christ,” summon his mother Mary, to suffer with him in his hour of trial?

Yes and Mary will remain near her missionary priests, protecting and consoling them. These priests are martyrs for Christ and Mary is Queen of Martyrs. She did not undergo the pains of childbirth on Calvary for nothing. She will not, she cannot forget her sons in the mission fields.

Source: The Prospector, Diocese of Nelson, November 26, 1937, Rev. Thomas P. Freney, Editor.



ST. ANTHONY MISSION

NEW DENVER

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

St. Anthony Mission in New Denver lies on the eastern shore of Slocan and Arrow lakes at the mouth of Carpenter Creek, surrounded by the Selkirk Mountains. The town has a rich mining history, having served as a center for the region's mines and as a boat and stagecoach connection to Nakusp. It is home to one of nine Japanese Canadian Internment camps from the second World War—Nikkei Internment Memorial Centre, a National Historic Site featuring the Kohan Reflection Garden, a Japanese—style garden honoring Canadians. The community also once housed a Doukhobor Residential School. St. Anthony Parish was founded in 1897, and in 1902 Fr Stephen Côté constructed a place of worship by fastening two houses together; the current building was completed in 1929. Mass is celebrated every Sunday at 11:30 a.m.



St. Anthony Mission, New Denver, BC, founded in 1897.
Fr. Steven Côté constructed a place of worship, the current building was completed in 1929.

Did you Know? (1938)

1938 Memories: The Heart of St. Anthony's in the Little Things

Looking back to 1938, this simple yet joy-filled evening revealed the true spirit of St. Anthony's mission community. Neighbors once gathered to share their time, talents, and homemade treasures—reminding us that it was the small acts of generosity that held the parish together and helped its mission thrive.

That November, the Altar Society of St. Anthony's Catholic Church held its annual bazaar in the New Denver Legion Hall. The event was both lively and successful, owing much to the quiet dedication of parish volunteers whose steady service brought the evening to life.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Landervill headed the kitchen committee, while the always-popular sewing and fancy work table was carefully managed by Mrs. A. T. Jeffery, Mrs. A. Schnoaeble, and Miss Florence Moss. Assisting throughout the hall were Mrs. C. Kennett, Mrs. S. Christopherson, and Miss R. Zadra. Mrs. DuMont created a colorful display of candy and home baking, and Miss R. DuMont organized the raffle featuring a bedspread, pillow slips, and a tablecloth.

At the close of the bean supper, Miss Patty Greer drew the winning tickets. The bedspread was awarded to Mr. George McKean of Perry's Siding; the pillow slips went to Mrs. A. L. Harris of New Denver; and the tablecloth to E. Peterson of Sandon.

Source: The Prospector, Diocese of Nelson, December 2, 1938, Rev. Thomas P. Freney, Editor.

CATHEDRAL OF MARY IMMACULATE NELSON

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

The Rector of the Cathedral in Nelson is Fr. Jojo Augustine. The Cathedral of Mary Immaculate is a heritage site and the second-oldest original church structure in Nelson. Built almost entirely of wood, it features distinctive classical marble columns inside and out. The parish began as an oblate mission in 1898, where the first altar was a cook's table from the Silver King Mine.

The Cathedral hosts a wide range of ministries, including Development and Peace with Stations of the Cross, hospitality gatherings with monthly coffee after Mass, and social-justice initiatives such as a Lenten hunger meal. Other ministries include Knights of Columbus pancake breakfasts, scholarships, a men's retreat, a widows' support group, Habitat for Humanity involvement, Meals on Wheels, and a Citizen of the Year participation.

The CWL provides funeral lunches, runs an annual bazaar, and supports St. Joseph School. Additional outreach includes the Dutch Harbour Summer Youth Camp, refugee support programs, catechism for children and adults, a renewal group, and music ministry. The Cathedral also oversees mission communities in Procter and Kaslo.



Photographs: Cathedral of Mary Immaculate, 1898, Nelson, BC, Diocese of Nelson Archives, 2024-2025, Diocese of Nelson



Did you Know? (1937)

Did you know that in 1937 the newly built Cathedral of Mary Immaculate was already the vibrant heart of the Nelson Catholic community?

That year, the Cathedral hosted a **remarkably solemn and beautifully attended Forty Hours Devotion**, drawing people of all ages from across the diocese.

According to *The Prospector*—the official diocesan newspaper at the time—**Bishop Martin M. Johnson** opened the devotion with a *Missa Cantata*, celebrated by Rev. Fr. O'Brien. After the Mass, the **Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession around the Cathedral** and placed on the throne of Exposition, where a **Guard of Honour** kept watch throughout the days that followed.

Each morning, the **Girls' Choir of St. Joseph's Academy** filled the Cathedral with the "Mass of the Angels," while the **adult mixed choir** led the music at Benediction each evening. Crowds gathered nightly to hear sermons focusing on the central place of the Eucharist in Christian life—messages described at the time as deeply moving and beautifully delivered.

Even in its earliest years, the Cathedral wasn't just a building—it was **alive with prayer, community, music, and devotion**, just as it continues to be today.

Source: The Prospector, Diocese of Nelson, December 10, 1937, Rev. Thomas P. Freney, Editor.

SACRED HEART MISSION

KASLO

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

Sacred Heart Mission in Kaslo is the gateway to the majestic north end of Kootenay Lake. With about 1,050 residents, Kaslo is a vibrant artisan community surrounded by holiday destinations like Crawford Bay, Riondel and Wynndel. It is also home to the SS Moyie, the world's oldest intact heritage passenger sternwheeler.

Sacred Heart Church was built in 1893, serving the growing mining town and rebuilt in 1902—a period that included a pastoral visit from Fr. Jean-Baptiste Côté of Montreal, the famed “wrestler-priest” whose brief ministry left a lasting impression in the community. The white wooden landmark with Gothic-style windows served the community for more than a century and holds Mass on Sundays at 3 p.m.



Sacred Heart Mission, Kaslo B.C. (originally built in 1893, this Church replaced it in 1902, Photo 1990s, Diocese of Nelson, B.C. Archives



Did you Know? (1937)

Kaslo

Father Sullivan, C.S.S.R., had a **miraculous** escape on a dangerous mountain road near Kaslo when his car skidded and nearly plunged 300 feet, saved only by two trees. Uninjured, the delay of three hours he continued his missionary travels throughout the Nelson Diocese with dedication.

Missionaries Get Through Blizzards

Despite heavy snowfall, storms, and snowslides, the Slocan missionaries kept every Mass appointment. After celebrating Pontifical High Mass at the Cathedral, Bishop Johnson drove through deep drifts to reach Kaslo for a 9 a.m. Mass, where a beautifully prepared Church awaited him—a striking example of perseverance in harsh winter conditions.

Source: The Prospector, Diocese of Nelson, December 31, 1937, Rev. Thomas P. Freney, Editor.



SACRED HEART MISSION PROCTER

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

Sacred Heart Mission in Procter holds services twice a month, on the first and third Sundays at 1 p.m. The quaint stone church has a steeple, and visitors cross a small bridge over the creek to reach it. A sanctuary lamp hangs inside, and the church once housed a pump organ.



*Sacred Heart Mission, Procter, B.C.
Permission granted: Cathedral of Mary Immaculate, date unknown*

Did you Know? (1937)

In 1937, every mission in the Slokan district received Christmas Mass—the first Midnight Mass in over 40 years for some communities. Despite snowstorms, slides, and rugged mountain trails, priests travelled long distances after the Pontifical Mass in Nelson.

- ✚ The Bishop trekked alone with only basic tools to reach Kaslo for a 9 a.m. Mass.
- ✚ Father Sullivan, C.S.S.R. celebrated Midnight Mass in Nakusp, then continued to nearby missions and the mountain camps near Fruitvale.
- ✚ Father O'Brien travelled the long route to Ymir and then Salmo.
- ✚ Father Freney celebrated Midnight Mass south of Slokan before heading to Castlegar for another Mass.

A remarkable example of dedication that brought Christmas Mass to remote communities across the region.

Source: The Prospector, Diocese of Nelson, December 24, 1937, Rev. Thomas P. Freney, Editor.



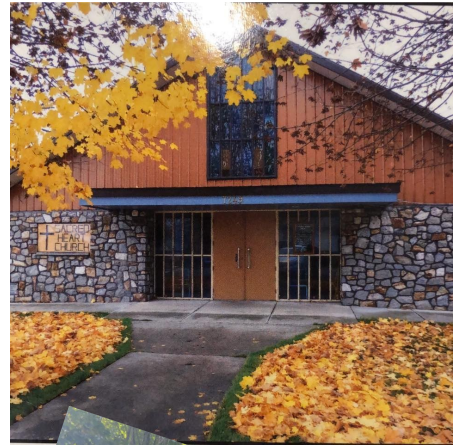
SACRED HEART PARISH

GRAND FORKS

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

Sacred Heart's Parish Priest is Fr. Ruben Buela. Grand Forks lies at the confluence of the Kettle and Granby rivers in the heart of Boundary Country. The community has had a strong Doukhobor (Russian) influence since the 1900s. This vibrant, active community—known for its low cost of living and strong sense of community spirit—is steeped in history, reflected in the extensive murals visible on walking tours throughout the town.

In the summer, markets and live music concerts offer many opportunities to experience the blend of culture and nature. The oldest CPR station, built in 1899, is located in west Grand Forks. Sacred Heart Church, established in 1901, has active ministries including the Knights of Columbus, catechism, music ministry, faith healing groups and a hospitality ministry that offers coffee and refreshments after Mass. Mass is celebrated on Saturdays at 5:30 p.m., Sundays at 9:30 a.m. and Fridays at 9 a.m. Sacred Heart's missions are Christina Lake, and Greenwood.



*Photos: Sacred Heart Parish, Grand Forks, BC
Fr. Ruben Buela.*

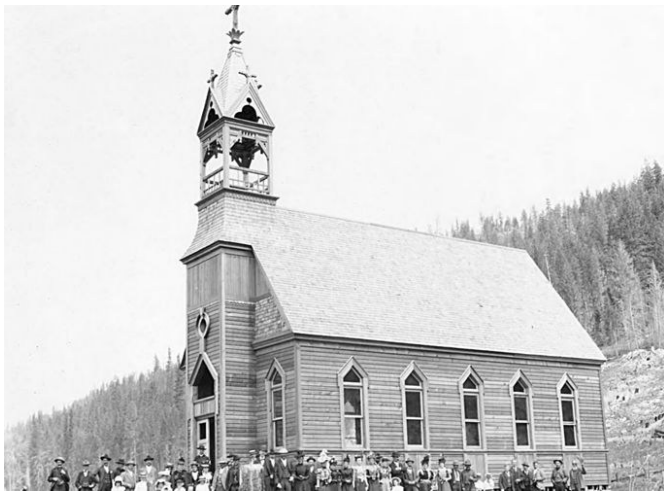


SACRED HEART MISSION GREENWOOD

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

Sacred Heart Mission in Greenwood is situated on Highway 3 and is Canada's smallest city, rich in mining history. As you drive through the community, you'll see the colorful quirky buildings that resemble a movie set, the Fort Greenwood RV Park with its fort-style façade and—of course—a must-stop at the Copper Eagle Café for refreshments and something delicious to eat. Sacred Heart mission celebrates Mass on Sundays at 2 p.m.

Sacred Heart Mission is celebrating their 125th anniversary this year. To read more about this historic and beloved mission, refer to [page 30](#).



Sacred Heart Mission, 1898, courtesy of Greenwood Museum Historical Photograph Collection: P00504



Sacred Heart Parish, Greenwood, BC, Fr. Ruben Buela



OUR LADY OF THE LAKE MISSION

CHRISTINA LAKE

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

Our Lady of the Lake Mission does not have full-time residents year-round; many families own summer cabins and return seasonally. The community sits on the southern edge of the province, bordered by the Kettle River valley and the Monashee Mountains. Known as the warmest tree-lined lake in Canada, it is warmed by geothermal activity and fed by clear mountain streams, making it a popular destination for water recreation. The lake was named after a Métis woman, Christina McDonald.

Our Lady of the Lake Mission celebrates Mass during the summer months in the community hall.



Top Photo: Permission to use courtesy of: <https://christinalakehall.ca/>

Bottom Photo : Christina Lake, B.C. Photograph https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Christina_lake_bc.jpg?uselang=de



OUR LADY OF LOURDES MISSION

NAKUSP

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

Our Lady of Lourdes' Parish Priest is Fr. Jim McHugh, who resides in Revelstoke. The Village of Nakusp is located south of the mouth of Kuskanax Creek on Upper Arrow Lake, nestled between the Selkirk and Monashee ranges. It is known for its nearby hot springs—first used by Indigenous peoples and later developed for public use in the early 20th century—and its picturesque lakeside mountain setting. The name Nakusp comes from a Sinixt word, possibly meaning “the bay behind the long point” or “closed-in/safe.”

When glaciers of the last ice age receded from Arrow Lakes, the Sinixt people were the first inhabitants. Their 10,000-year history is verified by archaeological and historical records. Finian McDonald was the non-indigenous man on Arrow lakes region. The first steamers arrived in 1865, followed by settlers in 1890, with the community beginning its documented history in 1892.

Our Lady of Lourdes church was built in 1904 and dedicated in 1905. This century-old, one-storey wooden frame structure features a steep-pitched roof, front gables, a central bell tower and Gothic Revival windows, and is still in use today. Over the years, it has undergone several renovations, including a new rectory, entranceway and altar, while maintaining the original priest's residence. Mass is celebrated on Sundays at 4 p.m. and Mondays at 7 p.m.

Nakusp's Mission is St. John the Baptist in Fauquier.



Photos: Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Mission, Nakusp, B.C.
Fr. James McHugh.



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST MISSION FAUQUIER

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

St. John the Baptist Mission in Fauquier was built in Burton in 1926 and moved to its present location in the 1960's. It is a point of pride for the community—a landmark and the only non-residential heritage building in town—making it something of a showpiece. The Mass schedule is determined by the priest who resides in Revelstoke and depends on his ability to travel by ferry to Fauquier, which can be especially challenging during the winter months.

Church of
St. John the Baptist
Fauquier, B.C.



Photo, St. John the Baptist, Mission, Fauquier Archives,
(1922).



HOLY TRINITY PARISH

TRAIL

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

Holy Trinity’s Parish Priest is Fr. Xaviour Chakku. Trail is nestled along the Columbia River—which flows all the way to Oregon in the United States—and is flanked by the Monashee Mountains to the west and the Selkirk Mountains to the east. The community was named after the historic Dewdney Trail, originally known as Trail Creek Landing, before being shortened to Trail in 1897.

Trail is home to a diverse cultural population, including a vibrant Filipino community and a strong, long-established Italian presence. The Italian heritage is reflected in longstanding institutions such as the Cristoforo Colombo Lodge (est 1905), the Italo-Canadese Hall, Piazza Colombo, the bocce facility, and the neighbourhood known as “Little Italy” in the Gulch. The Charles Baily Theatre also contributes to the city’s cultural life, hosting international performing artists and touring productions. Trail additionally operates a regional airport with direct flights to Vancouver.

Holy Trinity Church, established in 2013 through the amalgamation of St. Anthony in the Gulch, St. Francis in Trail, and St. Joseph in Warfield, honours the Holy Trinity—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The altar with its three pillars, the entrance columns, the ambo, and the baptismal font are all crafted from marble sourced from Kelowna. Outside stands the iconic bell originally from St. Anthony Church in the Gulch.



Holy Trinity Church, Trail, B.C.. The top photo is the original bell from St. Anthony Church.



HOLY TRINITY PARISH TRAIL CONTINUED....



Photo: Peace Garden, Holy Trinity Church, Trail, B.C.

Holy Trinity is a vibrant parish with ministries spanning faith formation, pastoral care, outreach, cultural events, and community service. These include catechism and RCIA, hospital and home visits, CWL and Knights of Columbus activities, food-bank support, music ministry, the Ecumenical Advent Festival, and a peace garden.

Driving 15 minutes up Rossland Hill, you pass the small municipality of Warfield—known for its unique “Mickey Mouse houses” built in the 1930s—along with the Mountain View Cemetery and its mausoleum. Continuing beyond the Redstone Golf Course, Les Furber design that once featured a hole accessed by a T-bar pulley system, you arrive at the mountain town of Rossland.



SACRED HEART PARISH

ROSSLAND

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

Sacred Heart's Parish Priest is Fr. Paul Thymootil. The city, built in the crater of an extinct volcano, sits in the Kootenay Boundary high in the Monashee Mountains at an elevation of 1,023 meters, halfway between Vancouver and Calgary. It is home to Red Mountain Ski Resort, which features four ski hills and is associated with Olympic champion Nancy Green. The region is a premier destination for downhill and cross-country skiing and mountain biking, with access to the Seven Summits trail network and the U.S. border only 10 minutes away. The film *Miracle on Ice*, based on the Lake Placid Olympics, was partly shot there.

Sacred Heart Church, a heritage building, was established in 1895 and rebuilt in 1915, is one of the oldest Catholic churches still in use in the region. The Spanish Mission—style structure features five exterior buttresses and a bell imported from England and installed in the tall bell tower in 1900. Inside are four large stained-glass windows, a tabernacle behind the altar, and a hanging sanctuary lamp. The original choir loft and confessionals remain in use. A recent renovation created an open-concept gathering space alongside the church, supported without beams or posts.

Fr. MacIntyre served the parish for 60 years. The community maintains an active music ministry that hosts an annual Advent music festival. The Catholic Women's League (CWL) offers teas and services. Mass is celebrated on Saturdays at 5 p.m. and Sundays at 9 a.m. The parish priest also serves St. Rita's in Fruitvale.



Sacred Heart Church, Rossland, B.C. The top photo shows Tony Campana shoveling snow from the roof of the church hall in 1969. The other photos feature the Steeple, the former altar and the sanctuary at Christmastime.



The above photo was taken at a Sunday School picnic in the pioneer days of the Golden City. The scene of the picnic was the south side of Columbia avenue near Spokane street.

Photo, *Pioneer Days*, June, 3, 1938. The Prospector



ST. RITA'S PARISH

FRUITVALE

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

St. Rita's Parish Priest is Fr. Paul Thymootil, who also looks after the mission in Salmo. Fruitvale lies amid the Selkirk Mountains and was one of eight original stations on the Fort Sheppard Railway. Formerly known as Beavery Siding, the community received its new name in 1907 and was incorporated in 1952. Today, this close-knit community—known as **the Heart of the Beaver Valley**—is popular with young families and is appreciated for its small-town charm, natural beauty for its small-town charm, natural beauty and strong community spirit.

St. Rita's church was established in 1930, with the first Mass celebrated in a private home in 1934. Under the supervision of Fr. Murphy from Nelson, the original church was constructed, followed by an extension in 1946 and the foundation for a rectory. In 1953, Fr. Frank was appointed parish priest. A new church was built in 1970, and the original structure was converted into the parish hall—a configuration still in use today, with the priest's residence upstairs and a corridor connecting the hall to the church. Mass is celebrated on Sunday at 11 a.m., typically drawing 20–25 parishioners.

Driving 40 minutes to Salmo brings you past Champion Lakes Provincial Park, home to a golf course and a lake popular for cross-country skiing in winter. The area also contains the region's first residential school.



The Prospector, Nelson, B.C.—Friday, July 1, 1938, Father G.M. Murphy, C.S.S.R., pastor and builder, is seen in the centre.



Photos: St. Rita's, Fruitvale, B.C.



SACRED HEART MISSION

SALMO

By Elizabeth Stephens, February 2026

Sacred Heart Mission was Nelson's first commuter community and is home to the world-famous Shambhala Music Festival. Located at the confluence of the Salmo River and Erie Creek, the community was originally known as Salmon Siding because of its historic salmon run. The church community in Salmo celebrates Mass once a month with a small group of five to seven parishioners.

Salmo is a historic mining and logging community that travellers pass through on the way to Nelson or bypass when driving over the Salmo-Creston Skyway the highest-elevation point on a major highway in Canada en route to the East Kootenays.



Photo: Sacred Heart Mission, Salmo, B.C.



Did you Know? (1938)

Where a Community Built more than Walls

In 1938, the small but faith-filled community of the Sacred Heart Mission in Salmo, BC, came together with a shared purpose: to build a new parish hall for the Sacred Heart Mission. Guided by the steady leadership of Father J. Murphy, C.S.S.R., the project became an expression of Catholic hope, unity, and trust in God's providence.

The hall rose through the generosity of parishioners who gave not only from their means but from their hearts. Donations such as \$25 from a friend, \$28 from Mr. Domenic Murray, and \$5 from Edward McHale—simple gifts by today's standards—were profound sacrifices during that era.

The most powerful witness came through the countless hours of voluntary labor, freely offered as acts of service to God and neighbor. The following men—among many others—lent their hands, their skills, and their endurance to raise the parish hall:

H. Warr, A. Yonker, Theo. Schulbauser, H. Kemes, Frank Swift

Their work was prayer in motion, each nail and beam a testament to their devotion. Through early mornings, weary muscles, and humble cooperation, they built more than a structure—they built a spiritual home.

The 1938 article in *The Prospector*, edited by Rev. Thomas P. Freney, reveals a community united not only by need but by faith. It tells the story of a people who believed that with God's help, and with each other, all things were possible. The hall they raised became a lasting symbol of Catholic hope, perseverance, and the deep love that bound the Sacred Heart Mission together.

Source: The Prospector, Diocese of Nelson, June 10, 1938, Rev. Thomas P. Freney, Editor.

SACRED HEART PARISH

IN GREENWOOD CELEBRATES 125 YEARS

BY JEFF HOLITZKI

1900-2025

This past Fall, Sacred Heart Parish, in Greenwood celebrated its 125th anniversary with a Mass and potluck dinner. In preparation for the event, the church received a fresh coat of white exterior paint and green trim.



During the dinner, the parish recognized the approximately 72 priests who served Greenwood and the surrounding area since 1897. The Sisters of Atonement were also acknowledged for their contributions to education and health care in the Boundary region.

Mass is held every Sunday at 2 p.m. All visitors are welcome to join us in celebration at our heritage church on the hill.

A Simple Glimpse

(Patty Jarvis)

In the historic little town of Greenwood, B. C. is a little church that is perched upon a hill calling out for all to see. The steps that lead you there have been shaped by the footsteps that have walked upon them for 125 years.

A bell tower sits atop this historic building and is still used to call all who can hear its toll, for the bell pull is just inside the inviting doors.

Into the foyer and through the swinging doors,

you are enticed to sit in a wooden pew and gaze upon the altar ...which is simple, yet can take your breath away while honoring the Lord on the Cross.

Many different priests have graced their presence upon this Altar for Masses, Weddings, Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, Funerals and Blessings.

Moments of somber sadness, happiness and joyful occasions have shaped this sacred church into what it is today.

The structure is unique and envelopes the vibrant acoustic sounds of the Lord's music.

We invite all to see and feel the love which comes forth from this "Little Church Perched Upon the Hill" at Mass on Sundays at 2 p.m.

Sincerely, the Parishioners of the Sacred Heart Parish, celebrating 125 years of service

Mom and dad plus eight, two pews, three rows down

by Patty Jarvis, January 13, 2026

Mom and dad plus eight, two pews, three rows down.

Don't scratch, don't fight in the pew.

A silent prayer, a song we all knew, sitting in the pew.

I can't help but whisper to my sister next to me in the pew ... oh no the old ear pull from behind the pew.

Mom and dad plus eight, two pews, three rows down.



SISTER NORMA AND WEST KOOTENAY ASSOCIATES

Celebrate the Feast Day of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys at Holy Trinity Church

Submitted by Maureen Wiley, CND Associate, February 2026

Sister Norma Gallant and the West Kootenay Associates, together with parishioners and friends, gathered at Holy Trinity Church in Trail on January 12, 2026, to celebrate the Feast of St. Marguerite Bourgeoys, foundress of the Congregation of Notre Dame.

Fr. Wayne Pfliger, who was filling in at the parish during Fr. Xaviour's vacation, celebrated Mass on the Feast Day. Many parishioners attended and expressed their happiness to participate. During the Mass, Father Pfliger highlighted St. Marguerite Bourgeoys' contributions to early Canadian settlers and First Nations people. He also spoke about the ongoing impact of CND Sisters in the Nelson Diocese, including their work in religious education, parish ministry, and the Seton House of Prayer.

After the service everyone enjoyed coffee and homemade treats. Many thanked Sister Norma, the last remaining member of a women's vowed community in the Nelson Diocese, for her ongoing presence and service in the Catholic community.



CHILDREN REFLECT ON LENT ST. MICHAEL SPARWOOD CATECHISM



By Linda DeLuca—Religious Ed. Coordinator, and Robin Huryn, Emily Peebles and Barb Anderson—Catechists, March, 2026

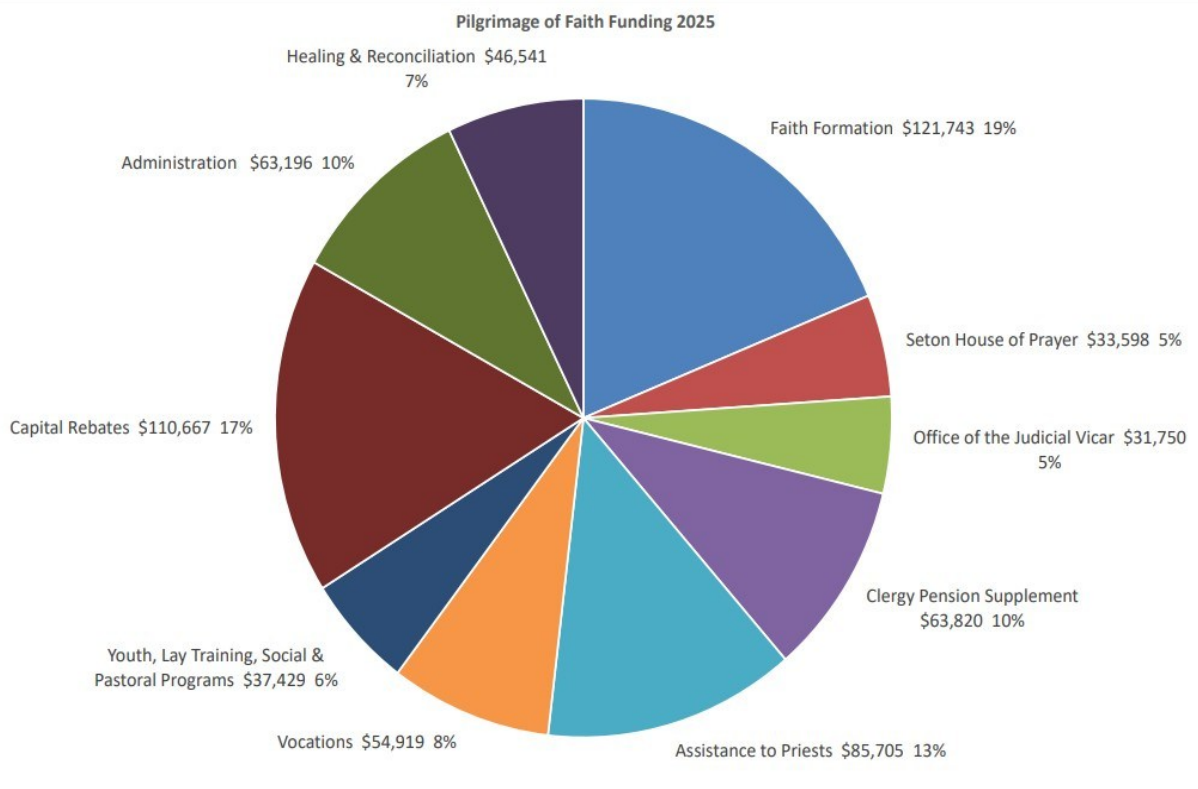
The Catechism children of St. Michael Parish in Sparwood recently completed a special Lenten project focused on the Passion of Christ and His walk to Calvary.

As part of their learning, the children explored the instruments associated with Jesus’ suffering—including the cross, the crown of thorns and nails--gaining a deeper understanding of His sacrifice.

Their project centered on the powerful message: “Love led him to the cross.” Through reflection and hands-on activities, the students were reminded that Jesus’ suffering was an act of great love for all. Photos of their work are being shared to highlight their meaningful participation during this sacred season.



PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH APPEAL FUNDING TOTALS \$649,368 IN 2025



By Alexa Dolor, Pilgrimage of Faith Coordinator, March 2026

The above chart illustrates the distribution of \$649,368 that was funded by the Pilgrimage of Faith (POF) appeal in 2025. Total required parish contributions to the POF fund in 2025 were \$605,000. The additional funding of \$44,368 came from the POF reserve that was set aside during the COVID pandemic, when government policies restricted outside programs. The balance of the reserve fund for future program costs is currently \$88,051.



ARCHIVES

A VOLUNTEER'S PERSPECTIVE

By Annette Mihic, Archives Volunteer,
March 2026

When one thinks of archives of the Catholic Church, it is easy to imagine the Secret Archives in Rome and something out of a Dan Brown novel. From the perspective of a volunteer, however, diocesan archives are better understood as vital collections of cultural and spiritual heritage. They preserve the past, inform the present and guide the future life of the Church. They also allow people from a range of professional backgrounds to offer their skills as a form of service and prayer, rather than as a bureaucratic exercise.

The work combines historical research with spiritual ministry, linking past generations of laity and clergy to the present. Volunteers may find themselves handling a wide array of documents and responsibilities—some tedious and repetitive, others deeply moving; some clinical, others highly personal; some indecipherable, and some, typewritten (oh joy!).

Volunteers are often of a dignified age with inquisitive minds, many of whom feel they are participating in a deeply rewarding hidden ministry—the stewardship of the Church's living memory. Bishops' and Parish records are the oldest type of materials making up the diocesan collection, with the oldest missionary records being in French in this Diocese. These records require careful storage and preservation, including consistent temperature and humidity control, as well as appropriate fire protection. New contributions are constantly evaluated for their historical significance and for the suitability of their inclusion in the diocesan archive.

An institution that forgets its own past will have great difficulty in discerning its function and position among mankind in any social, cultural, or religious context. Catholic archives contribute in every way to the sense of belonging—spiritually and socially—for each generation, and the same is true of the volunteers who care for them.



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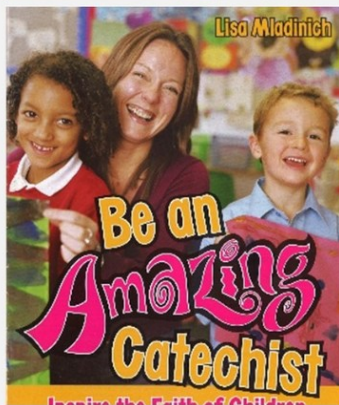
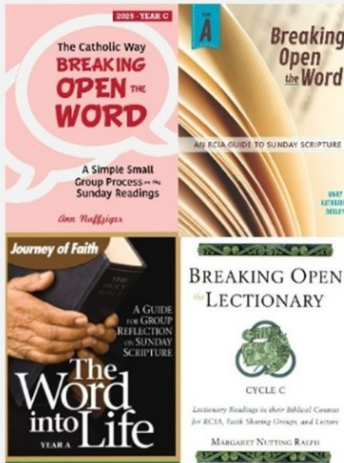
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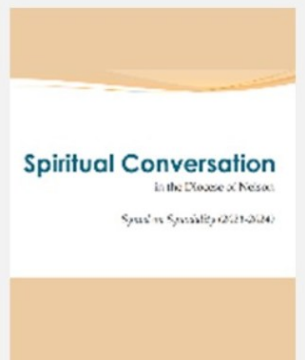
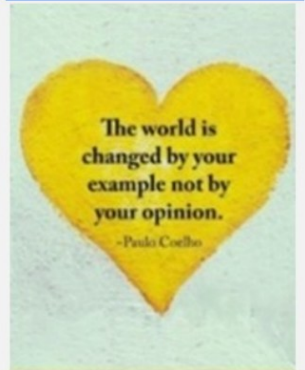


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for more information see poster in the church foyer



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By Fr. Marcel Cote

Seton House is entering its 52nd year of operation, continuing to serve the spiritual needs of the Diocese. Some faces are new, as are some user groups and guests who have never been here before.

I have offered thanks in recent articles to Donna Goss and Christine Marin, and now also to Trinh Son. All have served faithfully, and Trinh is now in the role of Guest Clerk. She is the person to contact to book your event. Email setonhouse@nelsondiocese.org or call 250-764-4333.

A big thank you as well to the behind-the-scenes work of the diocesan Financial Department for their assistance in developing policy and supporting us through some difficult decisions around guest services.

We are now winding down our upgrades and renovations. This year we are considering new window coverings for Emmett Hall and perhaps a larger screen TV for the conference room. We have worked with Telus to obtain 1-GB light fibre internet improving the Wi-Fi experience for guests. The dining room

has also been made less echo-prone with new sound-absorbing panels on the ceiling and walls—much improved, with no need to shout across the table during large gatherings.

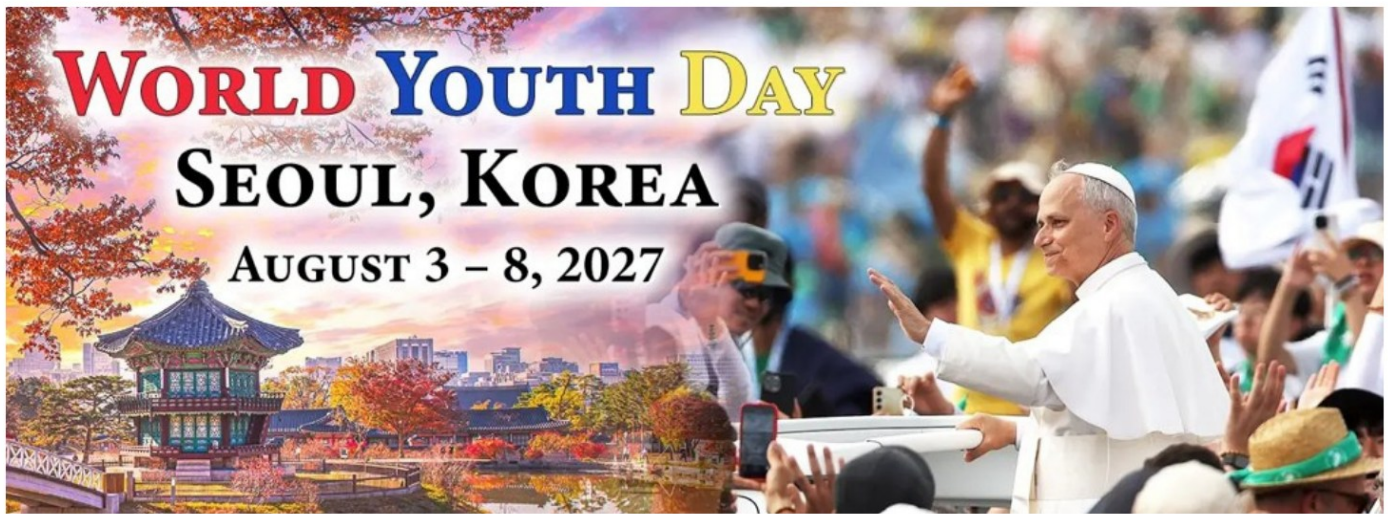
Bookings continue to increase year over year, keeping our maintenance staff well occupied. With volunteer help, the grounds remain beautiful. Thank you to the many volunteers who make a difference each year.

Lastly, the deer, marmots, coyotes, squirrels, chipmunks, quail, flickers and chickadees all love to see you when you visit or stay for a time. Our gratitude extends to all guests over the years—you are the reason we serve here.

“ BE ATTENTIVE TO
THE VOICE OF
GRACE. ”

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton





Young Adults of the Diocese of Nelson

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Priest Chaplain: Fr. Ferdinand Bayarong

For more information, please contact:

Deacon Rod Attwell
rod.attwell@nelsondiocese.org

“Take courage!
I have overcome
I have overcome
the world.”
(John 16:33)



PILGRIMAGE REFLECTIONS

AFTER COMING HOME

YOUTH JUBILEE PILGRIMAGE 2025

By Dshamilja Egli, January 10, 2026

I was very fortunate to be one of the youth from the Diocese of Nelson who travelled on the Youth Jubilee pilgrimage to Rome, Naples, Sorrento, and Assisi this past summer.

I was especially excited because of my connection to Saints Clare and Francis of Assisi. I have always lived close to nature and found comfort outdoors—whether spending time with animals or walking in the forest—and, like many others, I have often felt closest to God in creation. As the patron saint of animals and nature, St. Francis has always held a special place in my family. Both the late Pope Francis and our current Pope Leo XIV have called for greater awareness and action in response to “the Cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” in their encyclicals *Laudato Si’* and *Dilexi Te*—the same causes St. Francis championed in the 13th century. Though the entire two weeks of the pilgrimage were special, the two days we spent in Assisi were the greatest highlight for me. Praying at the tombs of Saints Clare and Francis and of Blessed (now Saint) Carlo Acutis, walking to the San Damiano Convent—where the Crucifix spoke to St.

Francis and where St. Clare later died—and seeing relics such as the clothes they wore were profoundly



moving. It was an honour to walk through the narrow streets of the hillside village where one of the saints most influential in my life once lived.

As I reflected on the pilgrimage after returning home, I realized that St. Francis’ message had followed us throughout the journey like a golden thread. In Rome, the Eternal City, our pilgrimage group joined a million youth at the Youth Jubilee Mass at *Tor Vergata* with Pope Leo XIV. In his homily, the Pope said we must “realize that everything in the world has meaning only insofar as it serves to unite us to God and to our brothers and sisters in charity, helping us to grow in ‘compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience’ (Col 3:12), forgiveness (cf. *ibid.*, v. 13) and peace (cf. Jn 14:27), all in imitation of Christ (cf. Phil 2:5).” (Pope Leo XIV, 2025, Jubilee of Youth Holy Mass) I believe his message reflects the teaching of St. Francis of Assisi and reminds us of our call to love our neighbors and care for Creation.

As we return from the many God moments of the pilgrimage, we can reflect on how to unite ourselves with God through our actions toward others, as Pope Leo suggested in his homily. I think back to two moments that continue to shape this reflection.

The first was the walk back from *Tor Vergata*. It was incredible to be among a million people—flags waving, singing, chanting and processioning through the streets together—knowing we are all connected by our faith.

Continued...

PILGRIMAGE REFLECTIONS continued...

Yet alongside that joy and sense of communities, I also thought about what we left behind. We offered smiles and waves to locals watching from their balconies and greeted other groups of Canadians and pilgrims from around the world. But we also left behind something less uplifting: millions of plastic water bottles scattered across the roads and fields. It struck me as an area where we, as children of God, have tremendous room to grow in making our world more livable and loving.

For some, a pilgrimage marks a call or a life transition; for others, it is a time for prayer over a particular need. But is a pilgrimage not always, in some way, about carrying a burden to the end? “Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me...For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?’” (*Luke 9:23, 25*) Carrying our empty water bottles back would have been a small and inconvenient “cross,” yet our choice not to do so made me wonder: what heavier crosses do others carry because of our carelessness, pollution or indifference?

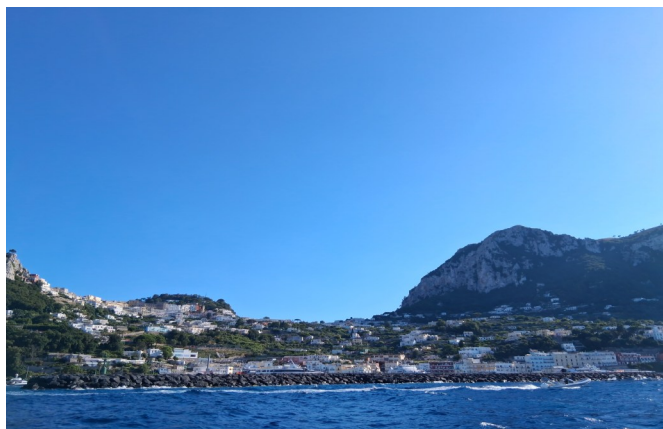
Even though many pilgrims—myself included—did not fully understand the Pope’s homily in the moment, as it was mostly in Italian, I feel its meaning is clear. The joy we experienced at such events must be translated into action so that others may share in that joy, both now and in the future. It is thoughtless to let our joys place burdens on others, intentionally or not. We must be mindful of how our “conveniences” affect those around us.

As we are called to care for one another, and as the pilgrimage has left a lasting impression on each of us, perhaps we, both individually and as a group, can also leave a lasting, positive impression wherever we go—by respecting one another and the earth God has so generously entrusted to us.

The other moment on the pilgrimage that stayed with me, and once again drew me to the views of St. Francis, came at the very end during our day

trip to the Isle of Capri, a beautiful island in the Mediterranean Sea. The group I spent the day with took the funicular up to the village of Capri, wandered through the shops and enjoyed a gelato before returning to the boat. We then toured around the island as the guides pointed out many stunning places along the shoreline.

Though the day was spectacular and the boat ride exhilarating, I couldn’t shake the thought that I was on the same sea where countless refugees—fleeing injustice and hoping to begin again in



Europe—have drowned on their way to a better life. It kept coming back to me, and I wondered why I couldn’t simply delight in the ride. Perhaps it was because a pilgrimage is, at its heart, a journey of preparation to become a better person. For me, that includes reflecting on how to help make the world a better place for all of God’s creation, which led me again to the “Cry of the Earth and the Cry of the Poor.”

Many of these issues are complex and require change at every level, but each of us can still make a difference. I believe I once read from a Swiss politician that, “many peanuts also make a Snickers” (Badran, 2022). And as St. Thérèse of Lisieux reminds us, “Remember that nothing is small in the eyes of God. Do all that you do with love.”

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)



A Pilgrimage Discussion Between a Mom and a Son

By Fr. Obi Ibekwe, *Evangelization and Missionary Discipleship, Nelson Diocese*, February 2, 2026

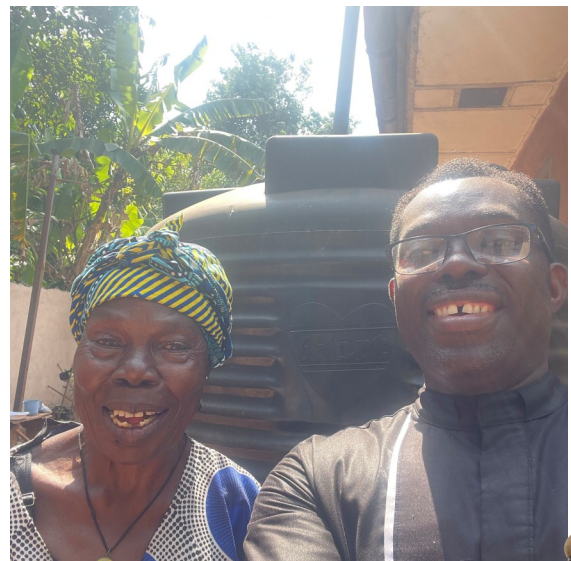
In the summer of 2025, I had the profound joy of going on a pilgrimage to Rome, Assisi and Medjugorje with many youths from our diocese. It was a life-changing experience. Later in the year, after Christmas 2025, I went to Nigeria for a vacation where I shared with my family my pilgrimage experience. I could see my mom's face light up with a beaming smile. She took a special interest. After a few days passed, she asked me to tell her the story again. I asked, "Which one?" "Everything," she replied. This happened several times. My mom is not suffering from dementia; but she wanted to hear the story repeatedly. The story of our Catholic faith and the people who came to encounter Jesus at the pilgrimage sites captivated my mother. She told me: "Faith in Jesus is sweet; it is alive. I have always dreamed of visiting the Holy Land and Rome and the places where our Blessed Mother appeared. But since you have been there my son, I too, I have been there because you are part of me."

In my quiet moment, as I reflected on my interaction with mom, something dawned on me. This is the woman who passed on the faith to me, who carried me in her arms to the house of God on the day of my baptism, who held the baptism candle for me, who shared the stories of faith with me. Now I am the one sharing my faith experience with her.

One of the stories she shared with me years ago was about the missionaries and their experience of Holy Mass. At the time, there were very few priests, and Mass was not celebrated every Sunday. The missionary priest would visit only once a month because he had many mission stations to serve. My mom and many people from the village would walk miles to attend Mass. Though the roads were dusty, their hearts were filled with joy as they made their way to the house of God. "Today, the priest will come; we will receive Jesus in the Eucharist."

It was as if they were echoing Psalm 122:1, *'Let us go rejoicing to the house of the Lord.'*

After the Homily, they longed to hear more, knowing it would be another month before they heard the Word of God again. Mom admitted that she wanted to shout, "Encore!" but chickened out.



Communion was always the highlight. After receiving Holy Communion, a deep silence fell—a profound awareness that God had entered their very souls. “We did not want to speak to one another. We just wanted to speak with Jesus who is in our hearts,” mom said. “We held the Sacred Host on our tongues as long as possible. We did not want the Sacred Host to melt.” The Latin phrase, *Ite Missa Est* – Go in peace the Mass is ended. They would then wait longingly for four weeks to receive our Lord again. As they walked home, they eagerly shared their experiences and the grace of each Mass spread throughout the village. People were converted. Souls were won for Jesus.

I became a recipient of this gift of faith that the missionaries brought to us. The missionaries have all died, but the faith they brought is still alive and will never die. A Mom and a son reminisce about this faith.

The thoughts that came to my mind as I recall this experience are:

1. Wouldn't it be a wonderful thing to keep sharing the wonders of the gift of our faith at the dinner table whenever the grace of God prompts us? What a beautiful gift this would be for the next generation of Catholics.
2. How lovely to go into the house of God on Sunday rejoicing, with a smile on my face.
3. Seizing the opportunity of receiving Jesus in the Eucharist to share with Him about the things that brought me joy the past week; the things that hurt me and break my heart, the desires and the longings of my heart, my need for the Holy Spirit so that I can put God's love in the world every day.
4. To value each day the great gift of faith and never to take it for granted.

“The work of evangelization presupposes in the evangelizer an ever-increasing love for those whom he is evangelizing. That model evangelizer, Apostle Paul, wrote to the Thessalonians, and are a program for us all: “With such yearning love we chose to impart to you not only the gospel of God but our very selves, so dear had you become to us.” What is this love? It is much more than that of a teacher; it is the love of a father; and again, it is the love of a mother. It is this love that the Lord expects from every preacher of the Gospel, from every builder of the Church.”

Schu, 2003; *The Splendor of Love, John Paul II's Vision for Marriage and Family*, (Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntaiandi*, 1975, p.79)



Rediscovering the Deep Thirst for God in my Soul this Lent



By Fr. Obi Ibekwe, Evangelization and Missionary Discipleship, Nelson Diocese, February 2, 2026

The weather is so hot in Nigeria. Many times, coming back from school, I realized that my throat was parched with thirst. Sometimes, when I had been a good boy, Mom would buy a bottle of Coke or Fanta for me. I loved it, though it didn't happen very often. Drinking a bottle of Coke or Fanta on a hot day was refreshing, but after a minute or two, I realized I was still thirsty. More than Fanta or Coke, I needed water. (*John 4: 14*)

The Samaritan woman in the Gospel comes to the well to fetch water. Beyond her physical thirst, she is a woman thirsting for love. In her search for true love, she has married five times, yet none of those relationships worked out. All her relationships have failed, and as a result, she has been alienated by her community. This is why she comes to the well at noon—the hottest part of the day, when no one else would be there.

Jesus meets her there and sees her secret thirst and her deepest desires. He does not condemn her; instead, with gentleness, He asks her for water. In the end, it is Jesus who gives her the living water. For the first time, she is treated not as an object but with honour, love and respect.

Her shame is gone and she returns to her community with joy, having met someone who has quenched her thirst for love—someone who has

restored her soul and healed her heart.

An encounter with Jesus truly changes us and sets us on a path toward happiness and the fulfillment of our heart's desires. However, it all depends on how much of ourselves we are willing to offer Him.

There was once a poor man who sat by the side of the road begging. He had only a handful of wheat—just enough for one last cake. Suddenly, he saw the king coming toward him, and hope flared up inside him: The King is a kind man, he thought. He will give me something. As the king approached, he said to the poor man, "Friend, could you spare a little corn wheat for your King?"

The poor man was astonished. Completely taken aback, he opened his sack, glanced inside, picked out the smallest grain he could find and handed it to the king. "I'm sorry it's so small, your Majesty, but it's all I can afford" he said.

The King thanked him and moved on, leaving the beggar feeling terribly disappointed and empty. All day, the man sat by the roadside begging, but received nothing.



Rediscovering the Beauty and Joy of Confession

By Fr. Obi Ibekwe, Evangelization and Missionary Discipleship, Nelson Diocese, February 2, 2026

For some Catholics today, the Sacrament of Confession is a non-event--something considered part of the past. "I don't find any meaning in it," one said. Another added, "I can just talk to God directly about my sins." A third said, "When I go to the Confessional, it feels like kneeling in a dark room where I'm already condemned even before I open my mouth."

Such an image is far from what confession is truly about. Didn't Jesus say, "There is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." (Luke 15:7)?

We give joy to God when we return to His loving embrace in confession. His loving embrace not only forgives but also heals us. God is concerned not only about how destructive sin can be but equally concerned about the wounds sin leaves in us. He wants to touch and heal us.

During my pilgrimage to Rome in the Holy Year 2025, we heard Confessions at Circus Maximus, a historic site where many early Christians were martyred. Thousands of young people had gathered, each wanting to start a new relationship with Jesus by making a good Confession of a lifetime. I asked one young woman why she had travelled to the Jubilee Year of Hope. "To go to Confession," she replied. It struck me that she had journeyed thousands of kilometers simply to encounter Jesus in this sacrament. I was edified. Her

Confession began with sincere tears of repentance, yet ended with a bright twinkle in her eyes reflecting the joy in her soul—a soul that has rediscovered the beauty of friendship with Jesus. No judgment. No condemnation. Simply: "Go in peace; you are absolved of your sins." As Scripture reminds us, "*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through Him*" (John 3:17).

In Medjugorje, thousands of people stood in line for Confession in many different languages. I've heard that one of the great miracles of Medjugorje is that the people travel all the way for confession and return home with a new soul.

A Franciscan priest gave a homily there and recounted an experience. One day, as he was preparing for Mass, a young adult approached him in the sacristy and asked if he could use the room to phone his mom. The priest granted his permission, and the young man pulled out a flip phone. The priest was amazed. After the call, he asked how someone his age was still using a flip phone.

The young man smiled and explained that he used to have an iPhone, but it had begun to destroy his life and distract him from God's purpose. One day he told himself: "I can't go on like this. Otherwise, I'll die." He smashed the phone on the ground and bought a flip phone instead. Since then, he has found a new life. He no longer visits pornographic sites. He uses a computer in the living room for his assignments, and he now dresses neatly and well. It is a new life and a new beginning.



He travels to Medjugorje, goes to confession, renews his relationship with Jesus.

A good Confession begins with a stirring in the soul that makes one say, 'I can't go on like this. I can't keep living my life this way. If I do, I'll destroy my life and my marriage.' It is a moment of realizing that one is betraying not only God but also the people who love them. Sometimes, this requires a huge sacrifice—to cut something off in order to save the soul. To cut off occasions, objects, things and people who lead us to sin. As Jesus said: "And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away, it is better for you to enter into life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell." (Matthew 18:9)

Recently, during a Faith discussion with a parishioner, she told me that, for her, confession is like finding a glass of water in a desert. I liked the image. It made me think about Jesus and the Samaritan woman, to whom he promised living water.

I have enjoyed watching the movie *The Chosen* and in the episode where Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman, I found the discussion very moving and apt for bringing out the true meaning of how God relates with us when we have failed.

The Samaritan woman said to Jesus: "The good thing about coming here alone is that I can escape being condemned." Jesus reminded her, "I'm not here to condemn you." She replied, "I've made mistakes, too many...until the Messiah comes and explains everything and sorts this mess out including me."

Jesus responded, "I came to Samaria just to meet you. Do you think it's an accident that I'm here in the middle of the day?"

"I'm rejected by others", she said. Jesus reassured her, "I know—but not by the Messiah."

At the end, she was so overjoyed, forgetting her bucket, ran back to the village and began telling everyone about Jesus. She had become a disciple. She had been captured by true love and mercy. For the first time, she was treated like a human being with dignity. Jesus gave back to her the thrill of

what it means to be a human being.

Preparing for Easter Confessions

1. Are there things taking away my joy?
2. The Samaritan woman carried deep regret, shame, pain, past wounds, failures and mistakes. Jesus reassured her that she was not defined by those failures, but by the love of God. Are there regrets, shameful events, past hurts or trauma that you've carried for years? Carrying such burdens can be exhausting. Jesus invites you to bring all of it to him. You can leave everything at the Cross and receive the refreshing water He promises healing, peace and new life. This is the wonder of Confession.
3. Have others judged you without understanding your life situation?
4. Jesus told her the truth: the man you are living with is not your husband. Are there truths about your life that Jesus is revealing to you this season?
5. Are you still in love with your own life—that you are the beloved child of God—or has that image become fuzzy? Confession is a time to reclaim your belovedness.
6. Are there things you need to repent of?
7. Are you overwhelmed with life?

May we remember that nobody is defined by his or her sins but by the love of God.



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LOAVES & FISHES BOOKSTORE

MARKS 50 YEARS OF MINISTRY

By Kevin Kishor, March, 2026

On behalf of Paulet Isaacs and the Loaves & Fishes team over the past 20 years

A SMALL STORE WITH A BIG MINISTRY

Loaves & Fishes marks 50 years of faith and service in Kelowna. For nearly half a century, a modest storefront in Kelowna has carried a mission far larger than commerce. As Loaves & Fishes marks its 50th anniversary, memories from founders, former owners, staff, and community members reveal a place that has become not only a Catholic bookstore, but a refuge, a ministry, and a spiritual crossroads for the Interior of British Columbia.

Loaves & Fishes was founded in 1976 in Rutland—now part of Kelowna—by Colin and Joan Scott. The couple had previously worked for a Western Canadian chain of Catholic Christian bookstores and noticed a significant gap: There was no Catholic-oriented store between Vancouver and Calgary.

“We chose the name Loaves & Fishes because we were beginning the store with limited resources and hoped it would grow to serve the Church in the B.C. Interior,” Joan Scott recalled.

The early years were financially challenging. Colin worked part time outside the store, to supplement their income, while support from churches across the Interior proved essential. The Dioceses of Nelson, Kamloops, and Prince George, along with Eastern Rite and Anglican communities helped sustain the store through its formative years. That network of faith communities, made the store’s survival—and eventual growth—possible.

A renewed chapter

In 1995, Loaves & Fishes entered a new

chapter when Annette Leib and her family became involved, supporting their daughter Kathy Hughes in acquiring the business. At the time, sales were low and the future uncertain. The family relocated the store to downtown Kelowna and invested heavily both financially and personally—to rebuild its inventory and customer base.

Much of that effort involved extensive travel throughout the Diocese of Nelson and Kamloops, setting up displays at churches, conferences, and retreats, and delivering supplies directly to parishes. Attendance at U.S. Catholic trade shows significantly expanded the store’s access to books and religious gifts, drawing new customers, especially during major Church seasons such as Christmas, Easter, RCIA and the sacraments of initiation.

As the years passed, the family became increasingly attentive to maintaining fidelity to Catholic teaching, choosing to rely on trusted Catholic publishers and carefully reviewing new titles before ordering. The store became a familiar gathering place for priests, many of whom stopped in not only to shop, but to talk and connect.

An extension of Loaves & Fishes later operated in Kamloops to reduce travel demands, but as family responsibilities grew and retirement approached, the time came to pass the torch once again.

Ministry before business

In 2002, Paulet Isaacs & family assumed ownership of Loaves & Fishes, inheriting what her son, Kevin Kishor, describes as “a solid foundation built by Colin Scott, with roots already established throughout the B.C. Interior.

Under their stewardship, the store narrowed its focus toward Catholic and Orthodox communities and became a key distributor for religious materials,

sometimes the only distributor in Canada for certain publishers, including Ascension Press.

Yet Kishor emphasizes that distribution and sales have never been the heart of the store.

“For us, it has always been a ministry rather than a business,” he said. “One day we may be helping someone prepare for a baptism or wedding. Another day, we’re walking with someone through grief.”

Over time, Loaves & Fishes has become a first point of contact for many people seeking faith—sometimes for the first time. Some who enter the store eventually find themselves drawn toward RCIA or deeper involvement in the Church. Others arrive simply broken, looking for guidance, prayer, or a quiet place to breathe.

“We believe God works through this small store with a big ministry. We are grateful to have been instruments in His work.” Kishor said.

A place of encounter

Few stories illustrate that ministry more vividly than those shared by Christine Pineault, who worked at Loaves & Fishes for 12 years in the early 2000s—a position she describes as a fulfilled dream.

The store, she recalls, was a peaceful space filled with sacred art and Christian music, frequented by bishops, priests, religious, seminarians, and everyday people seeking truth and comfort. But two encounters early in her employment revealed to her the deeper purpose of the place.

Just one week into the job a young man confided that he intended to take his own life.

“I stood still, asking the Lord to guide me,” Pineault recalled. Through conversation, prayer, and timely phone calls, she ensured he did not leave the store alone.

A week later, a distraught woman—homeless and weeping—embraced Pineault in the store. The woman shared that she was a sex worker who had lost contact with her child and desperately wanted to change her life. With encouragement and practical help, she contacted an aunt who agreed to pick her

up that same day. She left the store with a small pocket Bible, renewed hope, and a visible sense of joy.

“After those incidents,” Pineault said, “I told Paulet, ‘I have to take a course to work in this place.’” That decision led her to formal training in prayer ministry—one of the most meaningful steps of her life.

“These are just two of many stories,” she said. “It isn’t just a store; it’s a Christian gathering place, a mini-retreat, and a beacon of light in the heart of downtown Kelowna.

Looking ahead

Like many independent retailers, Loaves & Fishes has faced challenges in recent years as online shopping has reduced in-store traffic. Yet those closest to the store note that what cannot be replicated online is the personal encounter—the prayer, conversation, guidance, and human presence that have defined Loaves & Fishes for five decades.

As the store marks its 50th anniversary, its story is ultimately one of continuity: a steady thread of faith, hospitality, and service woven through changing ownership and generations. In a culture of constant motion and consumerism, Loaves & Fishes remains what it has always been—a place where the sacred meets everyday life, and where hope is offered one encounter at a time.

[Loaves and Fishes – Loaves & Fishes Book and Church Supply](#)





THE SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT de PAUL

Who are we?

Founded in 1833, the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP) is an international lay organization, united in its mission to serve persons in need. In Canada, the SSVP supports more than 350,000 people each year, providing non-perishable food, clothing, household items and furniture to individuals and families across the country. Whether in homes, on the street, in shelters, hospitals or prisons, our work knows no boundaries. The Society also aids refugees, immigrants and northern communities.

Our founding activity, still central today, is the home visit. Through these visits, our members—known as Vincentians—build personal relationships with those in need, by

offering material support, friendship and understanding. The first Canada conference was established in 1846, and we now have conferences across the country.

In the Diocese of Nelson, six conferences are active: St Charles Garnier Parish, (Kelowna), St Pius X Parish, (Kelowna), Corpus Christi Parish, (Kelowna), Immaculate Conception Parish, (Kelowna), Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, (West Kelowna) and St. Ann Parish, (Penticton).

All are welcome to ask for and receive services.

Our Mission

To live the Gospel message by serving Christ in all who experience need, with love, respect, justice and joy.

Values

The Mission of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul calls us, as Vincentians, to:

- * See Christ in every person who suffers
- * Come together as a supportive and compassionate family
- * Build personal relationships with those we serve.
- * Offer help in every way we are able

Our Impact in the Okanagan

At the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, we are driven by love and justice. Our volunteers work within their own communities, responding to local needs with compassion and making a meaningful difference. All our conferences deliver food hampers and meet our neighbors wherever they are. Through home visits, we often identify additional needs, such as support for children, help with utility arrears, rent assistance and more.

To better meet these needs, we connect people with local resources, including free tax filing services, eyeglasses, low-cost internet options and referrals to community agencies.



Our Vincentians also visit homeless encampments, offering food, support and information about available resources—always approaching each person with dignity, compassion and respect. bringing love, food and again resources.

Invincible Housing

One of our special projects, Invincible Housing, is dedicated to preventing homelessness. The program offers small rent subsidies and helps people access supports such as SAFER for Seniors, or RAP for low-income working families. We collaborate with other organizations to find sustainable solutions—supports that help maintain housing stability rather than provide a one-time fix. Our volunteers, known as the “Invincibles” bring extensive knowledge and compassion to this work. Community partners often turn to them when they are struggling to find solutions.

Ozanam House

Ozanam House is another of our special projects. This 19-bed men’s addiction recovery program offers in-house supports, a safe and stable place to stay for up to two years, and connections to community resources such as counselling services. Ozanam House will celebrate its 20th anniversary in the spring of 2026.

Chez Vincent Thrift Store

We are preparing to open Chez Vincent, our own thrift store. The funds generated will help us continue delivering our programs. We are currently seeking a suitable location and anticipate opening in late spring 2026.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul Funding

The SSVP is funded entirely through the generosity of parishioners. When you drop a coin

into the poor box, you are helping to purchase the food that fills a hamper.

In the past year, our volunteers contributed 50,000 hours of service to communities from Penticton to Kelowna

National Impact

The National Council supports many special projects, including Social Justice, North of 60, North of 50 in B.C., the National Housing Committee, the International Twinning Committee, Prison Ministry, Advocacy Committee, Indigenous Reconciliation and other initiatives as needs arise.

Information on these programs is available on our national website at www.ssvp.ca.

- * **Distributed approximately \$250,000 in food to the Valley’s poorest and vulnerable residents.**
- * **Personally delivered 2,500 food hampers.**
- * **Conducted home visits to about 3,600 adults and 2,000 children.**
- * **Made 600 additional contacts with individuals in need outside of home visits.**
- * **Made 600 additional contacts with individuals in need outside of home visits.**
- * **Assisted 1,500 people experiencing homelessness with essential items and support.**
- * **Donated about \$20,000 to help with utility bills, bus tickets and other living expenses.**
- * **Provided \$60,000 rental assistance through the Invincible Housing Initiative, preventing eviction or supporting housing for 69 families, including 130 children and 99 adults.**
- * **Supplied \$6,000 in aid to refugees.**



AN INVITATION

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL

If your parish would like to open a conference, we are here to help. Please contact ssvppcouncil@gmail.com or call 250-899-8992. The national website provides the information needed to get started, and we will guide you through each step. Our B.C./Yukon Regional Council also has limited funds available to support initial start-up costs.

If several parishes in a geographic area begin, they can then then form a particular council. Councils provide leadership and support.

Membership is open to anyone who feels called to this vocation. **We invite you to answer that call today.**



TO ALL CHRISTIANS ON LOVE FOR THE POOR

[HTTPS://WWW.VATICAN.VA/CONTENT/LEO-XIV/EN/APOST_EXHORTATIONS/DOCUMENTS/20251004-DILEXI-TE.HTML](https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/apost_exhortations/documents/20251004-dilexi-te.html)

“Christian love breaks down every barrier, brings close those who were distant, unites strangers, and reconciles enemies. It spans chasms that are humanly impossible to bridge, and it penetrates to the most hidden crevices of society. By its very nature, Christian love is prophetic: it works miracles and knows no limits. It makes what was apparently impossible happen. Love is above all a way of looking at life and a way of living it. A Church that sets no limits to love, that knows no enemies to fight but only men and women to love, is the church that the world needs today.” Leo XIV, Pope. (2025). **Dilexi Te: Apostolic exhortation on love for the poor**. Vatican city: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, §120.



SPRING CATHOLIC MEN'S CONFERENCE INVITES MEN TO RENEW FAITH AND MISSION

Submitted by David Ziebart

The Fr. Pandosy Knights of Columbus council is seeing strong fruit from That Man Is You (TMIY), a faith-formation program for men currently running at Immaculate Conception Parish and is encouraging men in other parishes to consider launching the program themselves.

That Man Is You is an interactive Catholic men's initiative focused on forming authentic male leadership in today's world. The program combines contemporary scientific research with the teachings of the Catholic Church and the wisdom of the saints. Through engaging video presentations and small-group discussion, participants are challenged to deepen their relationship with God and live out their vocations as husbands, fathers and leaders with purpose, integrity and courage.

At Immaculate Conception Parish, TMIY meets weekly from 6:30 to 7:30 a.m. in the parish center and draws men from multiple parishes across the Central

Okanagan. The early-morning format has proven effective, allowing men to grow in faith while still tending to work and family responsibilities. A simple continental breakfast helps foster fellowship and keeps participation accessible and welcoming.

One of the strengths of That Man Is You is its ease of implementation. The program is turnkey, requiring minimal preparation from group leaders while offering high-quality content and structure. For parishes looking to strengthen men's ministry or re-engage men in parish life, TMIY provides a practical and proven model.

The Father Pandosy Knights of Columbus council encourages interested men, pastors, and parish leaders to consider bringing That Man Is You to their own parish communities. More information about the program, including resources for starting a group, is available at paradisusdei.org.



Upcoming Event



CATHOLIC MEN'S CONFERENCE

APRIL 24-25, 2026

KELOWNA, BC

Immaculate Conception Church
839 Sutherland Avenue



SPRING CATHOLIC MEN'S CONFERENCE INVITES MEN TO RENEW FAITH AND MISSION



Submitted by David Ziebart

Men from across the diocese are invited to gather this spring for the Catholic Men's Conference, a two-day event focused on faith, brotherhood and mission. The conference, themed **One in Christ, United in Mission**, will take place **April 24–25, 2026**, at **Immaculate Conception Church in Kelowna**

At a time when many men feel stretched between work, family and faith commitments, the conference offers space to pause, reconnect with Christ and rediscover the call to lead with conviction and humility. Rooted in Catholic teaching and lived experience, the event aims to strengthen men spiritually and encourage them to live their faith more intentionally at home, in their parishes and in the wider community.

This year's **keynote speaker is Fr. Larry Richards**, best-selling author of *Be a Man!* and internationally known presenter whose direct and engaging style has challenged and inspired thousands of men to take their faith seriously and live it boldly.

Hosted at Immaculate Conception Church, the conference will bring together men from across the region for prayer, inspiration and fellowship. In addition to keynote sessions, participants will have opportunities to connect with other Catholic men who share a desire to grow in faith and support one another in living out their vocations.

The conference is open to men of all ages and stages of faith, whether they are deeply involved in parish life or exploring what it means to be Catholic today.

More information and registration details are available at <https://events.insogan.org/KMC26> or by scanning the QR code on the poster.

Contact Information: David Ziebart, Youth & Religious Education
Immaculate Conception Church, Office: 250-762-3910 ext. 3



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CATHOLIC MEN'S CONFERENCE

APRIL 24-25, 2026

KELOWNA, BC

Immaculate Conception Church
839 Sutherland Avenue

ONE IN CHRIST, UNITED IN

MISSION

SPEAKER &
BEST SELLING
AUTHOR:
FR. LARRY
RICHARDS



Meet Fr. Larry

A gifted and captivating speaker, preacher, retreat master, and author, Fr. Larry Richards holds the answer to some of life's most profound questions.

 The Reason For Our Hope





CWL Nelson Diocese

Highlights from the President

By: Rosa Maria Rocca, CWL Nelson Diocesan President

The first photo was taken at the Nelson Diocesan fall Executive meeting, held Sept. 12-13, 2025, at Holy Cross Church in Creston, where the Holy Cross CWL council served as host. The parish council welcomed us warmly and provided delicious meals throughout the weekend. Their efforts were instrumental in making the meeting a success.

The meeting was very well attended, and presenters and members contributed to meaningful discussions, craft sessions, social time and spiritual activities over the day and a half of meetings. Despite covering many items of interest, we were able to complete our business and even wrapped up 15 minutes ahead of schedule. I look forward to more opportunities for connection with our dedicated CWL Nelson Diocesan members.

I would like to note that most parishes have embraced the new membership program introduced by a dedicated team of CWL members, and we hope it will encourage more Catholic women to join. As Pope Leo said during his visit to Turkey, where he urged the small Catholic community to grow, work together and persevere by “working faithfully, joyfully and courageously.” We too can witness to all women that unity enables us to accomplish great

things in our parishes, our communities and our lives.

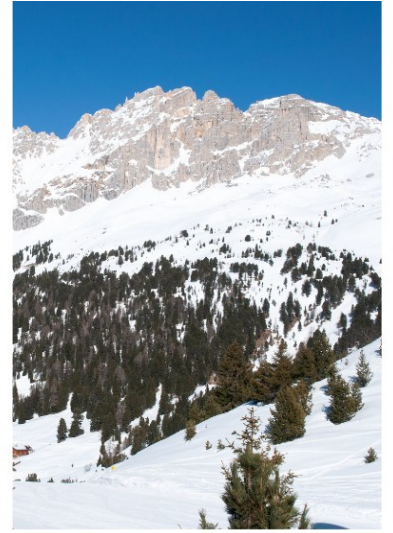
The second photo features the Nelson Diocesan CWL Executive council. From left to right the top row includes: Alida Nesmith, service chairperson; Donna Trenaman, vice-president; Debbie Cloutier, past president; Margaret Roosdahl, treasurer as of Jan. 1, 2026; and Sandra Stajduhar, interim treasurer.

In the front row are: Georgina (Gina) Hoffarth, faith chairperson; Christine Doraty, Social Justice Chairperson, Catherine (Cathy) Nilsson, secretary; Rosa Maria (Rosa) Rocca, president; and Caroline Ann-Alter, life member liaison.

I am very proud to share that, following a successful diocesan convention held in Nelson this year and hosted by the CWL parish council of the Cathedral of Mary Immaculate, more CWL members from our diocese stepped forward. As a result, we were able to fill all diocesan executive positions for the upcoming term.

Our new council—including myself—consists of many first-time executive members, alongside those who have served for many years and continue to be exceptional mentors. Together, we hope to help our Diocese grow in numbers, spirit, sisterhood, faith and pride, strengthening the CWL as a welcoming place for all women of faith.





CWL WELCOMES YOU

.....
Contact your Local Parish

.....
[CWL BC/YUKON WEBSITE](#)



ALPHA AT IMMACULATA HIGH SCHOOL



**is a Breakfast Club
February 23 - May 11, 2026**

Alpha Youth Series

**Evangelize
Build Community
Deepening of Faith**

This program is free for all students and
relies on generous donations from the
community.

More Information: iuhrich@cisnd.ca

<https://wearemadeforthis.com>



ALPHA AT IMMACULATA HIGH SCHOOL IS A BREAKFAST CLUB

By Ingrid Uhrich, January, 2026

The third session of the Alpha Youth Series at Immaculata Regional High School is about to begin. The program starts at 7 a.m. on Mondays where students enjoy breakfast watch a video and take part in group discussions. With pancakes, waffles, or eggs and sausage on the menu, breakfast might seem like the main attraction. But when former participants were asked about their favourite parts, many pointed to the relationships they formed and the discussions they shared.

The mission of an Alpha course is to evangelize and build community, and the previous two offerings at Immaculata High clearly reflect that goal. Feedback from both students and staff highlights a renewed sense of connection and a deepening of faith. For some staff, serving in roles different from their usual classroom duties has strengthened their relationships with students. After all, it's not every day you see your physics teacher washing dishes. That is faith in action.

The Alpha Youth program runs for eight weeks with 10 videos and presents the gospel of Christ in an approachable way. At Immaculata, groups are student-led, with a senior student serving as the table "host." Hosts guide the conversations and help keep the group on task, while other students take on the "helper" role. Teacher mentors circulate to support students as needed, and the rest of the staff team oversees cooking, clean-up and planning. Midway through the course, the program includes an overnight weekend. Last year's retreat was a highlight, with more than 35 students participating in team-building activities, roasting s'mores over a fire and completing two additional course sessions.

The growth of the program speaks for itself. In the first year, 30 students registered—well above the original target of eight. The following year's goal of 20 was more than doubled, with 45 students signing up. The enthusiasm students show when they gather, their interest in what's for breakfast and their consistent attendance every Monday at 7 a.m. all point to the impact the program is having. Most teenagers don't get up that early without a good reason.

Prayer is the most important element of Alpha, and the community plays a vital role in that. We ask that you pray for the participants, the leaders, and the course itself. Alpha Canada also invites us to pray for all high school students across the country through an initiative at <https://wearemadeforthis.com/>. We especially encourage you to pray for the students of Immaculata Regional High School. There is power in prayer, and our new generation needs it.

The third installment of this program is set to begin at Immaculata on Feb. 23 and will run until May 11. The program is free for all students and relies on generous donations from the community. If you are interested in supporting it or would like more information, please contact Ingrid at iuhrich@cisnd.ca.



Canada B.C. Mariapolis

Annual Retreat



May 29 to May 31
2026

Mariapolis Retreat: Columbia Bible College
Abbotsford, B.C.

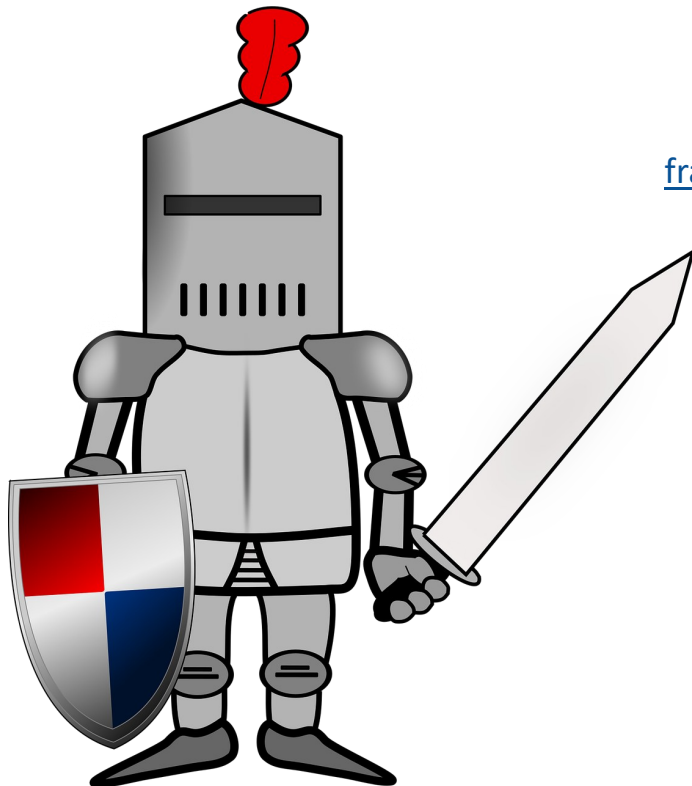
Please contact: Fr. Harry Clarke: 250-870-8364 or
focolare.vancouver@gmail.com





Knights of Columbus®

**Thinking about Joining the
Knights of Columbus?
Contact your local Parish.**



<https://www.kofc.org/who-we-are/our-fraternity/#tabset=tabset-tabset&tab=tab-block-38519>

<https://www.youtube.com/@KnightsOfColumbus>



Rachel's Vineyard

Our Next Retreat - Kelowna

April 10 to 12, 2026



**Post Abortion
Trauma is real.**

**Getting the help
you need is hard.**

But we believe everyone deserves support and healing when suffering from the trauma of an abortion experience.

Join us for a confidential, therapeutic weekend retreat where anyone impacted by abortion can find healing and peace.

**Things only get better when
healing becomes a priority.**

Abortion doesn't have to keep a painful grip on your life. Make time for your wholeness by devoting a weekend to focus on yourself.

Start here:

1. Visit our Website

Learn more about how the Retreat has helped countless people suffering from post abortion trauma.

2. Attend the Retreat

The entire weekend is created to give you the opportunity to focus on yourself. You'll walk through expertly developed, leading-edge methods and scriptural promises to move your body, soul and mind toward healing and hope.

3. Live a Bigger Story

You are more than the experiences of the past. This weekend is just the beginning of life beyond your pain.

scan below or visit
rachelsvineyardkelowna.com
or call/text 250.762.2273



 **Rachel's Vineyard Retreats**
KELOWNA, BC

