

# Martha's ♥ prayer time

*This program helps connect moms with other moms of the parish. An opportunity to find encouragement, support, fellowship and joy which includes a time for prayer and reflection. Children are welcome and encouraged to attend with mom.*

“My family is new to Grande Prairie. We moved here in August after having our roots in the Red Deer Region for 15 years. Our faith is very important to us. Our children have always attended Catholic School and I ran for a Catholic School Trustee in the last election.

Naturally, as soon as we got settled, I started looking for activity options in our church community. Luckily, I came across the newly rebranded Martha's Prayer Time. I was able to join the group and let my little one have play time with other children while we are getting to know people in GP. I have like-minded people to talk to, and I have the ability to take refuge in my faith outside of Mass. Most importantly, I was able to find a sense of community while feeling very lonely. The group of ladies is warm and welcoming and does their best to ensure everyone feels welcome. We are so blessed to have this organized group available in our faith community!”

## Ministry to the Homebound

*Each week a group of parishioners takes Communion to people who are unable to get to the church for Mass.*

“The people we visit are so appreciative to be able to receive the Body of Christ, often after not having been able to receive for a while. We pray with them, read scripture and they receive the Eucharist. On one occasion, when a family member requested that we bring communion, the shut-in who received it was brought to tears of joy and each week when we bring her the Eucharist she is again brought to tears.

The people to whom we bring communion are always so very grateful. In their joys and in their struggles we listen to their stories. Over the years, repeatedly, our volunteers have said that they feel that they receive the greater blessing.”



“Discovery helped me so much with rediscovering and restoring my relationship with God. It helped me understand that God doesn't make the storms, but He helps us when we are dealing with them, and ultimately makes us stronger in the end. Discovery helped me make new friends who believed in the same things as I did and ultimately helped restore my confidence. After the Discovery weekend, a weekend full of fun and lots of tears, I found Jesus and found myself. Discovery is a great way in discovering your faith; it showed me how special my relationship with Jesus really is and how He is constantly with us, holding our hand through all the storms and every step of the way.”

# RCIA

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

“My experience with being baptized as an adult was one of the most memorable. At first I was worried about how I would be able to attend the RCIA meetings and church on a regular basis, because our family had such a busy schedule already. However, as the time got closer the doors opened where I needed them to and I was so grateful for that. I soon enjoyed the meetings with the RCIA group and looked forward to them each week. I even had wished for another day to be added as I thoroughly enjoyed the conversations as well as the learning that was happening.

As time got closer to the baptism, my wish came true. There were many church events and meetings such as the Pilgrimage walk, and Faith Daze just to name a few. After being baptized I not only gained a better understanding as well as closeness with God, but I also found a community that was very welcoming and treated me like family. What I've found with being in RCIA was more than I could have imagined; I felt I had finally found my place, and now I am not alone.”

## Annual Mom's Retreat

*Our annual Mom's Retreat connects mothers of all ages (with children of all ages) in a morning retreat. This retreat is not just for mothers; the invitation is open to all women - you do not have to be a mother to attend. Take a break to pray, reflect, relax and enjoy the company of other women.*

“The Mom's Retreat has been like a little oasis in the middle of the craziness of motherhood. The first thing that convinced me to participate was the lunch and childcare provided: a real treat! My mind was then in peace to be able to enjoy the talks, the sharing and the times of prayer. During the retreats, I have been reminded that God created me as a beautiful woman, that He takes care of me and calls me to take care of myself so I can better take care of my family. I have been encouraged to pray constantly and not forget to take time to be in God's presence. As a bonus, I had a chance to visit with old friends and make new ones. Thank you so much for this wonderful gift!”

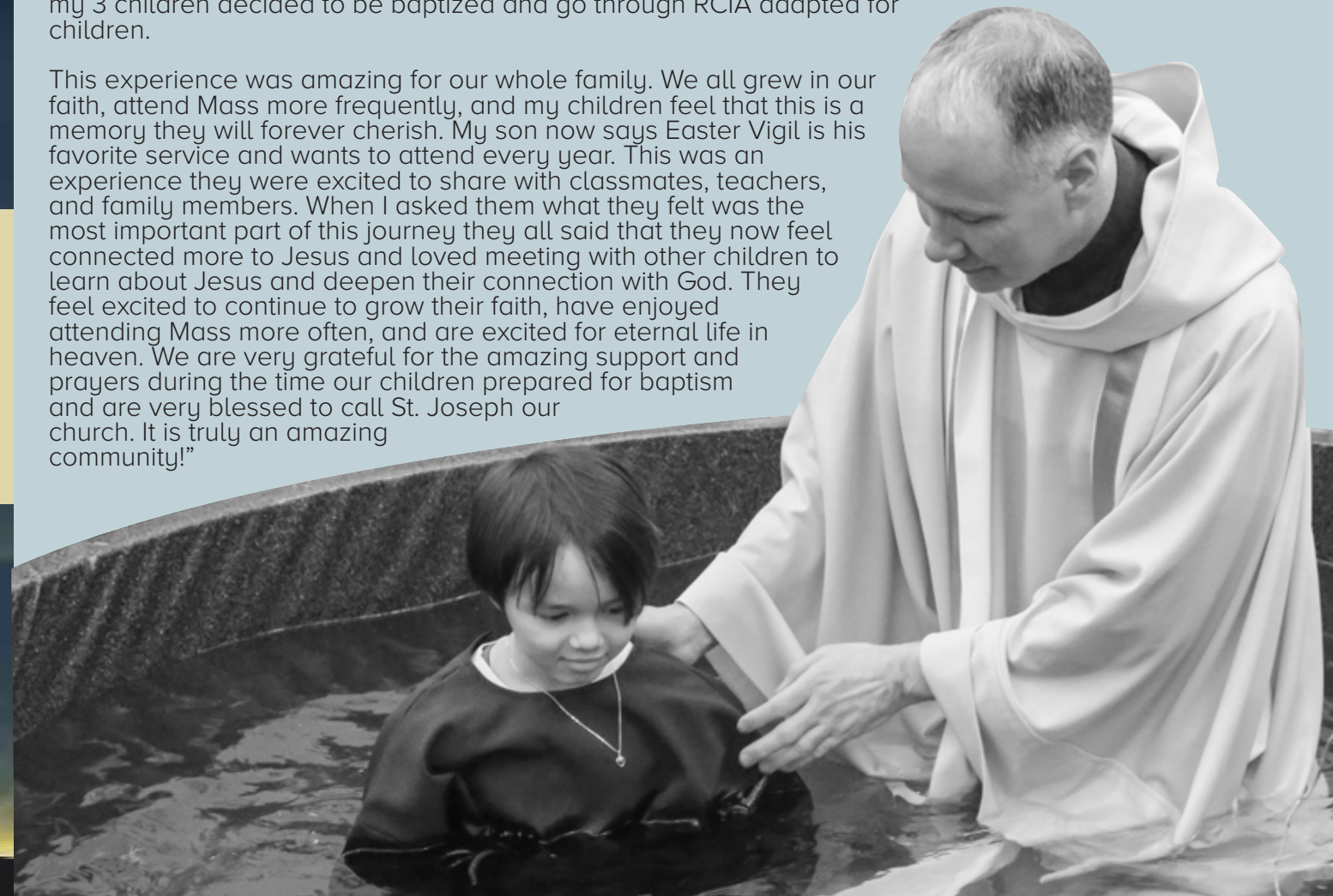


## RCIA ADAPTED FOR CHILDREN

*This program is for children between the ages of seven and eighteen that have not been baptized. We focus on the whole family growing in relationship with Christ. At the Easter Vigil Mass the children/youth receive the three initiation sacraments: Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist.*

“Faith has been an important part of our family as we have raised our 3 children, but my husband is not Catholic and wanted them to make the choice to be baptized. I attended St. Joseph as a child and we began attending St. Joseph parish regularly about 3 years ago. Our family feels at home and welcomed. My children say they feel peaceful and filled with the Spirit when we attend Mass. In September of 2017, my 3 children decided to be baptized and go through RCIA adapted for children.

This experience was amazing for our whole family. We all grew in our faith, attend Mass more frequently, and my children feel that this is a memory they will forever cherish. My son now says Easter Vigil is his favorite service and wants to attend every year. This was an experience they were excited to share with classmates, teachers, and family members. When I asked them what they felt was the most important part of this journey they all said that they now feel connected more to Jesus and loved meeting with other children to learn about Jesus and deepen their connection with God. They feel excited to continue to grow their faith, have enjoyed attending Mass more often, and are excited for eternal life in heaven. We are very grateful for the amazing support and prayers during the time our children prepared for baptism and are very blessed to call St. Joseph our church. It is truly an amazing community!”





## EVENTS COMING SOON:

- Jan. 19th- Parish Retreat  
"Mary in a Martha World"  
(For men and women!)
- Jan. 27th- Parish Pilgrimage  
"Blessed are..."
- Feb, 27th- Faith Daze  
"Restored Order of  
Sacraments of Initiation"
- Mar. 1st- Mardi Gras  
(All are welcome!)
- Mar. 19th- Feast of St. Joseph  
Mass, Supper & Talent

### St Joseph's Pilgrimage of the Heart

Each winter, our parish hosts a pilgrimage within the walls of our very own church. This Pilgrimage is about taking a bit of time out of our busy lives, quieting our thoughts, and opening ourselves to allow Jesus to speak to our innermost self. The reflections are given by our very own parishioners.

"I was a bit skeptical while coming to the pilgrimage for the first time. I had some questions and was wondering what we would possibly be doing? With the passport book I was given, I selected a few of the presenters and I listened to their talks with an open mind. God truly spoke to me through the simple words of the presenters. I connected with the messages and reflected on life in such a pleasant environment. The presenters had such a way of pointing out what really matters in our lives, and how much we are loved and treasured by God. The time of the evening went so fast and I left uplifted and refreshed in God's love. The sense of connection with brothers and sisters through respectful silence was wonderful."

Pilgrimage 2019 *Blessed are...* will take place on Sunday, January 27, beginning at 7 pm. Drawing on their own personal experiences, speakers' reflections will focus on the Beatitudes from Matthew 5:1-12.

### Our Catholic Schools

"Morning Prayer, with my students, is one of my favourite parts of the day. It's a time where we join together as a class, and share our intentions for the day. I learn so much about my students during this time, their hopes, their fears, and who is important to them. I know that Jesus is up their smiling and truly does hear us when the choir of children's voice say, Lord Hear Our Prayer."

### Vacation Bible School

One week in July of each year we hold a summer Bible camp at the church. Children age 4 to grade 5 sing, make crafts, hear Bible stories, play games and make new friends. (The youth and adult volunteers have been known to have more fun than the kids).

"I registered my grandson for Vacation Bible School and to start with he did not want to go but after the first day he could not get enough of it. He was always sad when the day ended and on the last day when he knew it was done he kept asking why they couldn't have it all summer. He keeps asking when you will have it again and is still listening to the CD. He loves every song on it and knows them all with the moves. It was so good for him and he is looking forward to the next one. Thanks Joanne for making it so much fun for him. He really needed that."

Mark your calendars for VBS 2019, "In the Wild", July 8 - 12! We look forward to seeing you.



# hear it through the Grapevine Christmas 2018

### Christmas Greetings from our Pastor

One evening, a number of years ago, I was sitting in the church by myself. I heard the front doors of the church open and was aware that someone had entered. As it turned out a person I had never met wandered into the church. I called him over to me and we sat in the pew talking. My heart was heavy for him as his spirit was not at all at peace. He knew God, loved the bible but was distracted in life in so many ways.

As we both enjoyed the silence and he looked around the church, he bowed his head and said in a very soft tone "I think it will be OK." I am thankful that he had a few moments of peace in our church. I do not know how his life continues to unfold but I do believe that I witnessed God healing the wounds of this young man. I like to think that perhaps he was able to share with others the power of God in his life and so serve others.

Christmas tells us that God enters our lives in very simple and humble ways. There is no

greater example of humility than God becoming a newborn child. In the same way, Jesus heals our wounds in subtle yet powerful ways.

Over this coming year we will all be learning more about our new parish pastoral theme. The theme, **Healing Our Wounds in Joyful Service**, is a result of a day of reflection by the Parish Pastoral Council as we reflected on the pastoral needs of our parish and city in combination with the gospel we will be listening to all year at Sunday Mass (this year it is the gospel of Luke).

Enjoy this special Christmas edition of the Grapevine. In these few pages are many stories of God's Grace touching the lives of people. These stories are precious because they are living examples of God being real in our lives. On behalf of our entire parish staff I wish you and your loved ones all the fullness of God's peace that we can touch through our story with Jesus.

Blessings,  
Fr. Remi Hebert CSSR



St. Joseph Parish Staff 2018  
(Absent from photo: Denise Robert)