

WEEKLY E-BULLETIN

Saint Dunstan's Parish, Scarborough



From the Administrator's Desk

My dear friends in Christ,

It is a special week, brethren. It is the week of Christmas! The next time you receive the newsletter we will already be in the Christmas Season. So I'd like to take this opportunity to wish all of you, wonderful parishioners of Saint Dunstan, a merry and joyful Christmas. May the glory of God shine in your lives just as it shone on that beautiful night in which the angels sang the first Noël.

Although we are not able to celebrate Christmas together in the traditional sense, please continue to visit our website for updates about the special Christmas Communion Services that will be available.

Last Wednesday December 16th, we had a virtual retreat for our children at Saint Dunstan's Catholic School. May God bless them and the staff as they proceed on their Christmas break.

May God keep you, and yours, safe.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fv. Victor Amole

OVERVIEW:

- From the Administrator's Desk
- A Special Message from Father Jeff
- Ongoing Parish Projects
- Wednesday Audience with Pope Francis
- Feature: St. John of the Cross

CHRISTMAS **LIVE** **STREAM** MASS SCHEDULE

Christmas Eve	10:00PM
Christmas Day	10:00AM
December 26th	5:00 PM
December 27th	12:30PM
January 1st	10:00AM
January 2nd	5:00PM
January 3rd	12:30AM



Christmas Wishes from Fr. Jeff

On the occasion of the upcoming celebration of our Saviours' birth, I want to send my best wishes with the promise of prayers to all parishioners and friends of St. Dunstan's for a happy and holy Christmas season.

While this Christmas may not have quite the familiar solemn liturgies and family gatherings as in other years because of the pandemic, the true meaning of Christmas is essentially internal when Christ is born in our hearts. **Despite all the sadness and loss which the corona virus has brought, no pandemic can stop the coming of Jesus into our world and into our hearts. This is the faith we must cling to this Christmas.**

I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their prayers and concern during my illness and my recovery which is still ongoing. Although my health is improving, progress is slower than anticipated. Please be assured that although I am absent, you are always in my thoughts and prayers. I appreciated the prayers and Masses offered for me, as well as the messages, cards, and gifts I have received which brought me much comfort and joy.

I want to thank Fr. Victor for all his efforts on behalf of St. Dunstan's during this difficult time, and all those parishioners who have assisted him and our parish to meet the many challenges the pandemic has presented. We all hope and pray that the New Year will be better for everyone. May we keep our hearts open to receive the blessings of peace and joy, light, love and life which the Child of Bethlehem brings.

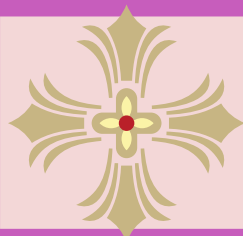
Christmas Wishes from Fr. Victor

The season of joy and hope is here again brothers and sisters in Christ. On behalf of Fr. Jeff, Jean and myself I wish you a truly Joyous and Merry Christmas.

One would be right to ask, *"how could one really celebrate in the midst of all these restrictions and lockdowns -- even our churches are closed!"* And that would be a natural thought. But then, one has to progress a little bit above that thought and add, *"there are several persons, some of whom we know very well, who have been through so many difficulties and have survived this pandemic thus far, and they are looking forward to light and hope in the future".*

And that indeed is our cause for celebration: light and hope in Christ. Because He is born for us, we can sing; because he lives, all fear is gone. There is no doubt that we are living through some dark hours, but the light will shine once again. And we know this very well from the One whom we celebrate at Christmas. Many believed that He died an ignominious death; but on the contrary, he rose to glory and conquered death itself! Appearance therefore should not frighten us; the Lord has the power to conquer all things.

I pray that Jesus, our new-born King, will set our hearts afire with hope. May he bless us and all our families and bring our world to perfect healing. Merry Christmas to you and yours! Keep safe and well. May the grace of the new-born King abide with you now and forever. Amen. God bless and keep you!



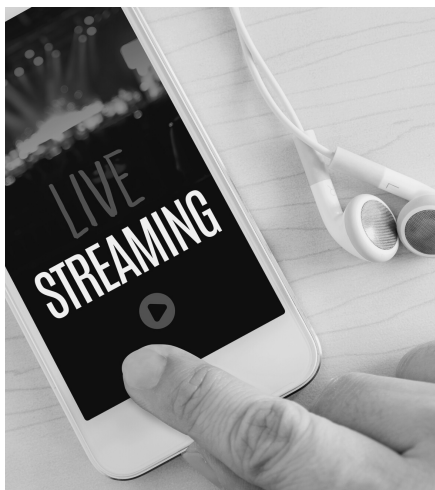
Universal Intention of Pope Francis for Dec. 2020: for a Life of Prayer. We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.

Ongoing Parish Projects

Parish Website

Take a few seconds to poke around the parish's new website. Do you have any suggestions? How about jotting down your ideas and sharing them so that they may be published in the new e-bulletin? Email stdunstan@rogers.com or simply give us a call.

A word of special appreciation to Dora and the online content staff at the Archdiocese of Toronto who worked tirelessly to bring the website to life. Parishioners now have access to daily readings, online mass schedules, and information about how to support the parish.



Livestreamed Masses

St. Dunstan's Parish launched its first livestreamed mass on **Saturday, November 28 at 5:00pm**. Although we continue to experience a few initial audio and video glitches, the team is working hard to improve your viewing experience. Thanks to **Jose and Greg** for their expertise, dedication, and good will.

Digitizing Telephone Communication

We are delighted to report that we've now completed the upgrades to our telephone system. Please feel free to call and keep in touch with us. Let us know how we may serve you better.



Weekly E-Bulletin

Don't forget! If you wish to receive the newsletter directly, please email us so that we may add your name to the mailing list: stdunstan@rogers.com

An Evening of Songs & Praise: Virtual Christmas Carols



Thanks to all those who worked persistently and tirelessly to make St. Dunstan's Virtual Christmas Carols a reality. Our hope is that the evening of festive music, readings and prayers warmed your homes with the mirth of Christ's coming. We thank God for the energy and the strength to praise Him and express our gratitude for everything that He gives each and every one of us every day.

Special thanks to our guest artistes: Antonella and Sammy Cavallaro, Carissa Douglas and the little douglins, Fr. Emmanuel Supreem Olusola, Fr. Francesco Marrone, Jay Franco, Luigi Rizzo, Mylene Otou, Nick and Elaine Maiorano, Rev. Phil Allard, and the Rodrigues family.

May our Lord and Saviour Jesus be born in all hearts. May our world know peace, joy and healing.

Weekly Wednesday Audience with Pope Francis



by Christopher Wells

Continuing his catechesis on prayer, Pope Francis on Wednesday focused on “intercessory prayer”; that is, prayer which asks on behalf of another.” Those who are accustomed to pray, said Pope Francis, “never turn their backs on the world.” If prayer is not engaged with every aspect of human existence – its joys and sorrows, its hopes and anxieties – it becomes a “decorative” activity.

Bread, Broken & Shared

The Pope noted a resemblance between those who pray for others, and Christ in the Eucharist. “In prayer,” he said, “God ‘takes us, blesses us, breaks us, and gives us,’ to satisfy everyone’s hunger.” Every Christian, he added “is called to become bread, broken and shared, in God’s hands.” Men and women of prayer, the Pope said, always “keep the doors of their hearts wide open,” even when they seek solitude and silence. They pray for those who do not pray, or do not know how to pray, as well as for those “who have erred and have lost the way.” In their solitude, those who pray “separate themselves from everything and everyone” precisely in order to “rediscover everything and everyone in God.”

*“Those who pray,
pray for all.”*

- Pope Francis

The Pope said these people “pray for each and every person,” they see “the face of Christ in every poor person who knocks at their door, in every person who has lost the meaning of things.” Prayer is “simply human,” Pope Francis said. “The human heart tends toward prayer.” But prayer necessarily involves love for our brothers and sisters. Human experience, said the Pope, “is present in every prayer, because no matter what errors people may have committed, they should never be rejected or discarded.”

No Judgment or condemnation

Pope Francis insisted that when those who pray offer prayers for sinners, there should be no judgment or condemnation: those who pray, pray for all, and first of all for themselves. The Holy Father suggested, for this very reason, a prayer that all can pray: “Lord, no one is just in your sight; we are all debtors, each with an outstanding balance to pay; no one is sinless in your eyes. Lord, have mercy on us!” The Pope continued, noting that, even despite the sins of His people, God remains faithful, persevering “in His service as a Shepherd even with those force him to get His hands dirty; He does not close His heart to those who have even made Him suffer.”



A BETTER WAY IN

WRITTEN BY MICHAEL SCHAUB

It was Christmas Eve, and he would not be going to church. He hadn't reached this decision at the last moment; he hadn't been inside a church for 25 years. He had no objection to church; it was fine for some people, but not for him. He had left this behind him, like his other childhood occupations, during his university years. He thought the Christmas season was a brilliant invention. It made people friendlier, kinder, and more willing to give, and he could hardly object to that. He particularly thought the Christmas story had made the world a good deal better than it would otherwise have been. He enjoyed the carols, and believed that if there were more peace on earth, goodwill to men, the evening news would be far less depressing than it was. His wife and daughter celebrated the season, and they were excellent examples of how faith could nourish and refine character.

But it didn't sit well with him. This fable about angels and shepherds and God in a cattle stall - it didn't make sense. And 22 years as a structural engineer had taught him that no proposal or project plan or solution was to be trusted if it did not make sense.

They were in the next room getting ready, and he called out, "It's bad out there; let me drive you." "It's OK!" his wife replied; "I'll be fine; thanks anyway." A few minutes later, with their coats on, she called out, "Back later; enjoy yourself!"

It was a diplomatic thing to say, but diplomacy had always been one of her most attractive qualities. He had enough sensitivity not to reply, "You, too."



The study was warm, and he settled into a book he had long wanted to read. He hadn't read more than a page, however, before he heard a sharp, firm tap on the window. He turned, but saw nothing. A few seconds later he heard it again, but again there was nothing. When it happened a third time, he turned quickly and saw, from the corner of his eye, the head of a bird falling below the window sill. Springing up, he reached for his coat and hat, and went outside. There, fluttering on the fresh snow, was a sparrow. It was moving its wings in a frantic attempt to fly, and even managed, with a heroic effort, to reach the window again, and, before falling once more, giving it a sharp tap. "He's trying to get in," he said; "he's cold and weak, and knows it's warm inside." He reached down with open cupped hands, but the sparrow scuttled away. He tried it again, but the bird would not let him come near. "He's afraid of me," he said; "how can I get his confidence?" He tried making whistling bird-like sounds, and for a moment the sparrow listened, then moved farther away. He once again reached down, but this time the bird scampered behind a large bush, nearly out of reach.

Reflections from Our Parishioners

The bird was weaker now, and he knew if he could not capture him in a few minutes, he would die. Desperately he reached for a fallen branch and swept it under the bush, forcing him out, but this provoked a greater alarm, for he scurried away again, chirping in frigid fright with all his tiny failing voice, like the final notes of a song ending too soon. Taking off his coat, he swept it behind him, trying to push him toward the door, but with an unbelievable effort he rose into the air a few inches, flew four feet away, and landed behind a snow bank. "The poor thing doesn't know that if he would only let me pick him up, I would take him inside myself," he thought. "He's going to die out here, and there's nothing I can do to help him."

"The poor thing doesn't know that if he would only let me pick him up, I would take him inside myself."



Then a bizarre, irrational thought came to him from years of brainstorming sessions. "If I could become a sparrow, he would trust me, and I could fly into the house, and he would follow me." He paused, but just for a moment; then, with nothing else to try, snatched his coat from the snow, opened it wide, and quickly threw it over the sparrow. Trapped, the bird could no longer fly away, and he reached carefully under the coat and grasped him in his hands. Then, holding him close to his chest, he climbed the steps into the house. But he was no longer concentrating on the bird. Now it was beginning to make sense.

Preparing Our Hearts For Christmas

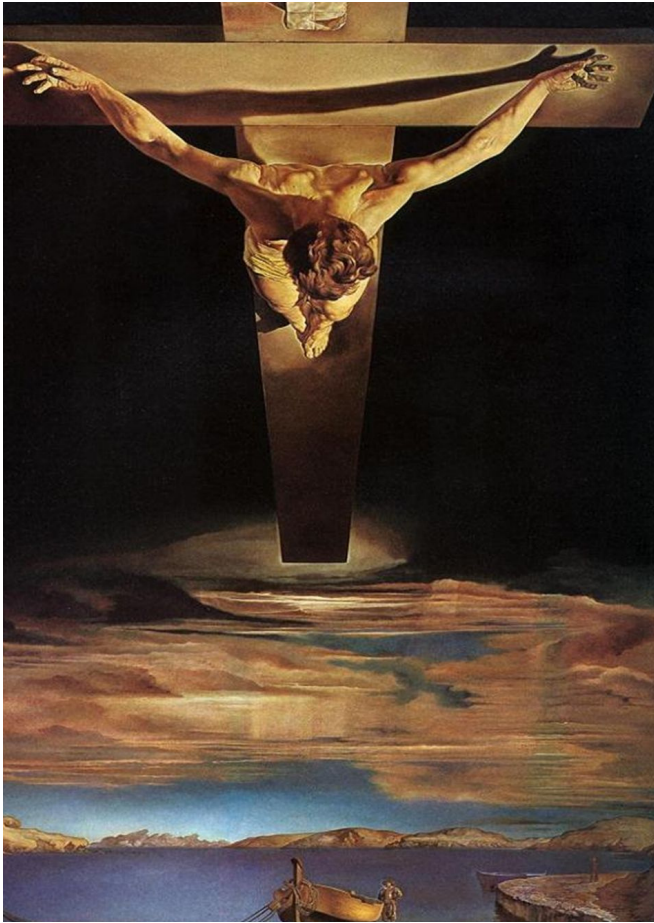
During Advent, the Church calls all her children to return to their Father's house with repentant and contrite hearts by inviting them to receive the Sacrament of Penance & Reconciliation. The Liturgy repeats the cry of John the Baptist, "*Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near*".

Amidst all our Christmas preparations, the most important preparation takes place in our own heart to welcome Christ the Saviour. Let us heed the Church's invitation to seek and find God's forgiveness by making a good confession. If you missed our days of confession last week, please call the parish

office at 416-694-2811 to schedule a time to speak to Father Victor.



Saint John of the Cross - Feast Day, December 14



Christ of St. John of the Cross - by Salvador Dali

St. John of the Cross, a Holy Doctor of the Church, was born in 1542 in Fontiveros, Spain. He was the third son of Gonzalo de Yepes and Catherine Alvarez. As a child, he attended a poor school at Medina del Campo and then was apprenticed to a weaver, but because he was unable to do the job, he was sent to work at a local hospital. He worked at the hospital for seven years and continued his studies in the college of the Jesuits.

At the age of 21, he became a Carmelite friar; at 25, he met Saint Teresa of Avila who was undertaking the reform of the Carmelite Order. St. Teresa persuaded John to work with her to establish monasteries of discalced (barefoot) Carmelite friars. This was a difficult and dangerous task. The older friars looked on this reformation as a rebellion against their order. When St. John refused to obey the older friars, they persecuted him.

He spent nine months in a dungeon, suffering the heat of summer and the cold of winter. The cell had one window so small and high up that he had to stand on a stool in order to read. He was also bloodily beaten. It was during this time of great suffering that St. John of the Cross wrote some of his most sublime and mystical poems. He achieved deep insight not when he was in a comfortable location, but when he was carrying the cross within the Church - when the members of his own Order were persecuting him.

And yet, in the midst of it all, St. John of the Cross maintained his love of the Lord and his service to the Lord. The Lord gave him the strength in the battles of life as he passed through insults, slander, physical pain and agony of the soul. He followed Christ in the way of the Cross.

His writings include two major mystical poems. He is considered one of the great poets and geniuses of the Spanish language who wrote many detailed commentaries on the poems and the spiritual truths they convey. He was canonized in 1726 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1926.

- St. John of the Cross walked more than 18,000 miles all over Spain, by foot.

- His father was from a wealthy family in Spain, but he was disinherited because he married "beneath him".

- St. John of the Cross only slept 2 or 3 hours in a night, employing the rest in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament

**DID
YOU
KNOW?**

Source: Butler's Lives of the Saints and Cardinal Collins' Homily of December 14, 2020 at St. Michael's Cathedral



Some good news! The Archdiocese of Toronto has arranged for special permission for Communion Services.

Thank God we can receive Jesus sacramentally on Christmas Eve or on Christmas Day! This is going to be just a 5-minute liturgy to allow a maximum of **8 people** (plus myself and an usher) in the church to receive the Eucharist along with a few minutes of prayer then to safely exit to allow the next group to come in. This means that there should be strict compliance to keep all of us safe.

There will be a maximum of 10 minutes in total for each group and the communion service will start and end at an exact time. Please see the Communion Service Schedule below and **reserve a time to receive the Blessed Sacrament**. All visitors must call the office to book a time slot in advance. **Please call the office and speak to Jean to reserve your time slot. Only those scheduled can come into the church at their designated time. See the time slots available below.**

Christmas Eve: Communion Service Schedule

- 3:00pm
- 3:20pm
- 3:40pm
- 4:00pm
- 4:20pm
- 4:40pm
- 5:00pm
- 6:00pm
- 6:20pm
- 6:40pm
- 7:00pm
- 7:20pm
- 7:40pm
- 8:00pm

Christmas Day: Communion Service Schedule

- Noon
- 12:20pm
- 12:40pm
- 1:00pm
- 1:20pm
- 1:40pm
- 2:00pm



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SPREAD
HAPPEANESS



Joke of the week

Three men were pacing nervously outside the delivery room at a hospital when the head nurse came out beaming. To the first she said, "Congratulations, sir, you are the father of twins." "Terrific!" said the man, "I just signed a contract with the Minnesota Twins and this'll be great press." To the second man the nurse said, "Congratulations to you, too. You are the father of healthy triplets!" "Fantastic!" he said. "I'm the vice-president of 3-M Company. This'll be great P.R.!" At that point the third man turned ashen and ran for the door. "What's wrong, sir? Where are you going?" called the nurse. As he jumped into his car, the man shouted, "I'm dashing to my office to resign. **I'm the president of 7-UP!**"

That's exactly what Mary was feeling as she listened to the angel spell out what God wanted of her: "Virgin birth?! I'll be stoned to death as soon as the neighbors see I'm pregnant! Dear God, what are you asking of me?" Yet she gave her fiat in obedience and faith. Indeed to God, nothing is impossible.

(Credit: Msgr. Dennis Clarke)



BUILDING THE CHURCH TOGETHER

BY FATHER VICTOR

In the name of Jesus Christ, dear parishioners, I am reaching out to you today because our church - like many churches in Toronto and the GTA - is struggling financially. Money is needed for many expenses at Saint Dunstan's including: heat, hydro, phones, insurance, snow plow services and staff salaries.

Standing behind the ambo giving a homily that I prepared is easy compared to asking for donations during a pandemic. Many parishioners have experienced unemployment and great hardship at this time, so to ask parishioners to open

their purse strings to sustain the church is a deeply humbling experience for me.

The Church is not a business. It has never been a business and it will never be a business. We do our best to rely on the generosity of volunteers and the kindness of local businesses to sustain us, but the limitations caused by the pandemic have created a large shortfall. If you are able to donate, please consider one of the options listed at the end of this short article. *Any amount is greatly appreciated at this time of need.*

The situation we are living through brings to mind St. Francis of Assisi. He trusted completely in the providence of the Creator. His entire existence was Christ-centred, and he lived with complete confidence in Him. God has always provided, dear friends in Christ. He will always provide! I have confidence that God's miraculous love will get us through this difficult moment in time.

“ Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

– FATHER VICTOR

- **ENVELOPES:** Envelopes can be dropped off at the church office. Please call ahead: 416-694-2811
- **MONTHLY WITHDRAWALS:** Consider pre-authorized giving For more information: <https://stdunstanssc.archtoronto.org/About-Us/donate>
- **CREDIT / DEBIT:** Donate online using your credit card or your chequing account. Visit: <https://stdunstanssc.archtoronto.org/About-Us/donate>
- **ON-LINE BANKING:** Contribute to the offertory via on-line banking. Visit: <https://stdunstanssc.archtoronto.org/About-Us/donate>

100% of all monies collected will be put towards St. Dunstan Parish.