From time to time, we have hosted students from other parts of the world as guests in our home. We head to the airport to pick them up, not knowing who will appear. In our hands, we hold a sign with their name on it, so they’ll know where to go when they come out into the airport arrivals lounge. They’re tired, hungry, thirsty, and in need of a friendly face. Their faces always relax with relief when they see something familiar: their name, in the hands of a stranger.

We are heading overseas for a vacation shortly, and have arranged transfers from airports and train stations to the places we are staying. We will be tired, hungry, thirsty, and in need of a friendly face when we arrive, after hours of travelling. I have always felt vaguely self-conscious holding a sign for someone, for reasons that escape me, but I know that when we come through the gate into the arrivals lounge, we will be so grateful to see something familiar: our names in the hands of a stranger.

This September, we have some new faces with some familiar information, and some familiar faces with some new information. In July, we were blessed to ordain to the Diaconate four men who, with their wives, have had quite a journey. There were times in their journey when they were tired, hungry, thirsty, and in need of something familiar: God called their names, and they responded with grace, compassion, and willing spirits, recognizing Someone familiar. The Diaconate may not be familiar to you; this edition of the Diocesan Messenger provides information about what a deacon does, and how he works within a diocese.

The gift of these men and their wives to the Diocese is beyond repayment. We are grateful for the friendly faces, the work, and the presence they will be for strangers, neighbours, friends, and family. We are also pleased to introduce our new Diocesan website. The website address remains the same: www.rcdvictoria.org, but we have a new format.

We chose some time ago to roll this out in a phased approach: this is phase one. You’ll see in the menus some items that are in italics. These are not yet available, but will be worked on over the next several months, as phase two, and will be live when we have content prepared.

One major change is that the website is now easily used on mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. Another change is in how we present parishes and missions: when you click on ‘Parishes’, you’ll see a listing of all our parishes and missions, with basic contact information. Clicking on the image will direct you in one of two ways: either you will be taken directly to the websites for parishes and missions that have existing sites; or, for parishes or missions which do not have existing websites, you will be taken to a page with more information.

Finally, you are able to subscribe to our blog updates by entering your email address at the bottom of our home page (which can be accessed by clicking the Diocesan Crest in the upper left-hand corner). Once we have this feature fully functional, you will then be notified when blogs are uploaded, and you will receive a monthly email newsletter. We invite you to take advantage of this method of communication, to stay in touch with news around the Diocese, and we also invite you to submit items for consideration for the blog. Blog entries should be no more than 500 words in length, and when possible, include one or two high-resolution photographs. Please email blogs directly to me: editor@rcdvictoria.org.

May God continue to bless us this Fall with familiar faces, and abundant grace. ☀️

Connie Dunwoody serves as Communications Coordinator for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria, and as Editor of the Diocesan Messenger magazine.
Most Reverend Gary M. Gordon is Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria.

My great hope for this Order of Deacons in our Diocese is that your ministry will open the hearts of all the faithful in our parishes, and that you will knock on the hearts of our Church to be a place of refuge, and that the whole people of God in this Diocese will be so committed to the impoverished, to the vulnerable, to the poorest, to the weakest, to the addicted, and to those who are simply excluded from society that our Church, every parish in this Diocese, will truly look like a field hospital.”

~ Bishop Gary Gordon, Homily at the Ordination to the Diaconate (see page 10)
Deacons are clearly mentioned in the New Testament. The Acts of the Apostles describes their origin: “Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task (i.e., distributing food and other material resources) … They presented these men to the apostles who prayed and laid hands on them” (Acts 6:1-3, 6).

Again, the Rite of Ordination of Deacons, in the consecratory prayer, recalls this New Testament scene: ‘And so, in the first days of your Church, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, your Son’s Apostles appointed seven men of good repute to assist them in the daily ministry … By prayer and the laying on of hands they entrusted to these chosen men the ministry of serving at table.” St. Paul also refers to deacons and the qualities they should possess in his First Letter to Timothy (1 Tim 3:8-13). Later, St. Hippolytus would describe the ceremony of the ordination of deacons; involving the laying on of hands and a prayer (Apostolic Tradition 9:1-5, 9-12). St. Ignatius of Antioch regarded deacons as “ministers of the mysteries of Jesus Christ … and not simply distributors of food and drink, but servants of the Church of God” (Letter to the Trallians 2).

Because of the service (diakonia in Greek) that deacons performed, the Church continues to regard the Order of Deacons as a true ordained ministry in the Church. Deacons share in the sacramental grace and character of Holy Orders, even though they are ordained not to the priesthood but to the ministry (see the Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1569; Vatican II, Lumen gentium, No. 29). The presence of the deacon at the altar, and his involvement in works of charity in a parish or a diocese, reminds the faithful of the service of Jesus Christ who tells us, “I am among you as the one who serves” (Lk 22:27). The living-out of these characteristics is exemplified in the lives of some well known saints who were deacons: St. Stephen, one of the original seven deacons and the first martyr of the church; St. Lawrence, martyred in Rome around A.D. 258, and St. Francis of Assisi, who remained a deacon so that he could give witness to the servanthood of Christ.

Over the centuries, the presence and ministry of deacons, for a variety of reasons, became limited to assisting the priest at Mass, and the diaconate itself was conferred almost exclusively on seminarians who were preparing for ordination as priests. The Second Vatican Council, however, wanted “to restore the diaconate as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy” (Lumen gentium, No. 29), opening up also the possibility of conferring “this diaconal order even upon married men, provided they be of more mature age” (Lumen gentium, No. 29). The Council declared that it was up to the bishops’ conference of a nation or region to decide whether it was opportune for such men to be ordained deacons. Since the time of the Second Vatican Council, many episcopal conferences have exercised this permission, and many bishops have ordained (and continue to ordain) deacons for ministry in their dioceses.

The Rite of Ordination of Deacons, through its words and actions, addresses a three-fold service of diaconal ministry: service of the Word of God, service at the altar, and service of charity. Thus today it is the task of deacons, at the direction of the bishop or pastor, to assist in the celebration of Mass, to distribute Holy Communion, to preside over public prayer, to administer baptism, to assist at and bless marriages, to bring Viaticum to the dying, and to conduct funeral rites outside of Mass. Deacons also can proclaim the Gospel during Mass and preach the homily; they can instruct others by teaching the Faith in different settings (for example, in a parish religious education program, the RCIA or youth ministry); and they can dedicate themselves to any number of charitable works (Lumen gentium, No. 29; Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1571).

As ordained ministers who make present in a unique manner Christ the servant, deacons offer themselves in service to the Lord and to His people in a variety of ways and enrich the life of the Church by their faithful diaconal ministry.

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1 The Eucharist as given to a person near or in danger of death
John Dawson and his wife Heather are members of St. Patrick’s parish in Campbell River. John is active in many ministries in the parish including: sacristan, extra-ordinary minister of the Eucharist, leader, server, and was catechist for the RCIA for many years.

John and Heather have been married for 27 years and are actively involved in St. Patrick’s parish. They are caregivers for Bryan, who lives with them and accompanies them to Mass. John is active in the Knights of Columbus, the Special Olympics, and likes to fish and work in the garden. John is active in the community, counsels people with addictions, and is a past member of the Board of Directors for 2nd Chance Recovery House in Campbell River. John is a ‘cradle Catholic’ who was raised in the faith and inspired by his mother, Mary.

John is assigned to serve in the ministry of accompaniment at Holmalco First Nation, and will serve at St. Patrick’s Parish in Campbell River under the pastoral leadership of Fr. Jan Grotkowski SDS.

Dion Pomponio is first and foremost a disciple of Jesus Christ, husband, father, son, friend, and son of the Church. He and Kerry have been married 29 years, and have three children.

Dion was born in Prince Rupert, BC. His brother and parents still play central roles in his life. Dion is actively involved in his parish and the Diocese, serving on a number of parish and Diocesan committees, including finance, Men’s Faith and Fellowship Forum, outreach to the homebound and others.

Diaconate formation inspired Dion to think and feel deeply. Through regular prayer, meditation, and spiritual direction, he has developed a stronger trust in God and a zeal for his faith.

Dion is assigned, with the assistance of a team, to serve in a special ministry and respond to social justice needs by journeying with others as we beautifully reflect God’s grace, mercy and love. He will also serve at Our Lady of the Rosary Parish in Langford under the pastoral leadership of Fr. Paul Szczur SDS.

Michael Watkins and Cynthia have been married for 37 years, have three sons, and they have also been blessed with four grandchildren. Michael and Cynthia have been members of St. Joseph the Worker since 1991, when they moved to Victoria.

Over the years, Michael has led liturgical music at St. Joseph the Worker and Holy Cross Parishes. Michael has been actively involved with Cynthia in facilitating Adult Formation programs including The Great Bible Adventure, Catholicism Series, Beloved, and Pivotal Players.

Michael has always felt that God calls each of us to a unique mission and purpose, and he believes that his formation in the Diocesan program was helpful in responding to that call. Michael looks forward to fulfilling his role as a Deacon by answering the call to better serve the people of God.

Michael is assigned to serve in hospital ministry and care of the sick, assisting Fr. Ian Stuart, Hospital Chaplain, and will serve at St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Victoria under the pastoral leadership of Fr. Alfredo Monacelli.

Philip Yuson and his family have been parishioners at St. Andrew’s Cathedral since 1995, when they moved to Victoria. He has been married to Marie for 28 years, and they are blessed with two children: Pauline and Joseph. The family migrated from the Philippines to Canada in 1994.

Although Philip has a Bachelor’s Degree in Electrical Engineering, he made his career in the IT industry. Philip was the Chief Counsellor for the Columbian Squires Circle 1169; a member of the Parish Council; a teacher of RCIA (Discovering the Catholic Faith) and for the El Shaddai Prayer Group. In the past, he has developed three courses and conducted them at the Cathedral: Come and See Jesus, Why Lord: God in the Midst of Suffering and Come to Jesus: How to Pray Scripture. He continues to write bi-monthly articles for the Genesis Catholic Community in Jakarta, Indonesia. Philip speaks English, Filipino, Hokkien, and Bahasa Indonesia.

Philip is assigned to serve in the ministry of the Apostleship of Sea in collaboration with Bishop Gary Gordon. This is a new ministry serving seafarers who visit the ports on the island. He will serve at St. Andrew’s Cathedral under the pastoral leadership of Fr. John Laszczyk.
The Word of God today in the beautiful Second Reading of the Acts of the Apostles, speaks of the ministry of Jesus Christ as the bringer of healing, and of peace, and to liberate all who are oppressed by sin and the devil. And that is a ministry of the whole Church, and in particular, the ministry of service to the Church and to all people. To bring peace. And so one of the great hallmarks of this particular ministry of deacon is to be a wonderful instrument of peace, a witness of peace. The service of Jesus Christ to the world will continue in our hearts, and in our lives, through our hands, and our feet. Now, this is the peace of Christ. This is not the peace of a détente, or some kind of negotiated deal. This is the peace of Jesus Christ. It’s a peace that brings healing, because it is a peace that is meant most particularly for the poor and the vulnerable—the ones in our society who cannot protect themselves, whose lives are on the very edge and fringe of existence. St. John Paul II said that the Diaconate, the deacon, is the sacrament of Christ’s service to the poor and to the needy. You have received from God many talents, and many gifts, which you have used in the service of your families, and have used in the service of the community, and of the Church. Many, many gifts. Most preciously, you have the gift of your wives and your families. This is the gift that you bring to ministry. Your closest collaborator in this ministry of service of Christ to the poor is going to be your wife. She is your collaborator. This is the one who is going to say, How are you doing? How are those poor people doing? Have you been able to advocate for them? Have you been able to create opportunities of justice and peace and mercy? So, wives, you have a very important job to do. Your job is with a fairly gentle toe and foot: Get going! I’m so grateful for that support.

What is our Church in need of, more than anything else, at this particular time, in this particular age, in this particular country, Canada, and this particular Diocese? Well, let me use an example from the year 258. Way back.

In 258, in the city of Rome, Valerian the Emperor had just started a new persecution of Christians. The reason was they had been declared as enemies of the human race. This is what Valerian and the Senate of Rome said, that Christians are enemies of the human race. And, well, the best thing to do, is let’s round up all the clergy, especially the Bishop of Rome, and the deacons, and we’ll execute them. So in 258, Pope Sixtus II lost his head, along with the other seven deacons of Rome, except for one: Lawrence.

And so Emperor Valerian called Deacon Lawrence in, who hadn’t quite met his end yet, and said, “Lawrence, we’re going to do a deal! You bring me all the wealth of the Church, and I will spare your life, and I’ll let you go on being a deacon.” So Lawrence—he’s a smart guy—says, “We’ve got a deal, Valerian. Give me three days.” 0k Lawrence goes, and in three days, he gathers up the total wealth of the Church. They set a meeting place in Rome. Lawrence sends a message and says, “Valerian, come on over. I’ve got all the wealth of the Church, and it’s piled up in the Square. Come on over and get it.”

“My hope is that you will open the doors of our churches … that you will open the hearts of the faithful to the poorest and the most marginal so that our hearts become homes for those who are suffering greatest.”

When Valerian got there, Lawrence presented to the Emperor of the Roman Empire the lame, the destitute, the prisoners, the slaves, and the poorest of the poor in the City of Rome, and said, “This is the wealth of the Christian Church.” Well, that didn’t go over too well, and Lawrence was also martyred. I hope that doesn’t happen to you! This is not my plan, it is not my hope, and it is not my expectation.

But my expectation is this: my hope is that with this Order of Deacon, which is to serve the poor, that you will open the doors of our churches to the poorest and the most marginal in this city and in this Diocese. My hope is that you will open the hearts of the faithful to the poorest and the most marginal so that our hearts become homes for those who are suffering greatest. My hope, and this might be where it might be a wild idea, is that you set up your tent in a tent city, in this city. My hope is that your ministry is going to enliven our Church to become what Pope Francis has invited us to: I want the Church to be a field hospital.
I write to you today awkwardly. My right hand is in a ‘thumb spike cast’. It means that the thumb is held out from the rest of the hand at approximately a 45-degree angle. I had surgery on my right hand last Friday, because the previous Friday I fell on my right hand coming offstage during a performance of The Tempest. Falling in a poor position on my hand, I tore the ligament clean off the bone in my thumb.

It wasn’t a very good idea. I am kind of clumsy and most injuries I’ve sustained over the years have been, by and large, self-induced. This one was no exception. It’s all sewed up and I am wearing a cast for the next six weeks at least. Silver lining: I’m left-handed. People keep telling me how lucky I am.

But here’s the thing. Perspective is everything. If my ridiculous injury doesn’t define me, I don’t care what others think. I’ve lived my whole life for real. “It makes mortality real. It makes my need for God more real. It makes God more real. Really, it makes what I’ve lived my whole life for real.”

I don’t know why it takes crisis to take stock of where we are with God. Every Mass we attend, every prayer we say, every biography or quote from every saint we read says the same things, over, and over, and over. Love God. Love others. Be a person who can rise above their problems and stumbling blocks and difficulties as the very thing that can draw us closer to the Lord who gave us life.


In any event, I could barely remember that I had a hand, let alone an injury. Life was spinning out of control. An example of perspective, for sure. But here is an even better example.

In the middle of all the angst, and fear and unknown of a heart condition, my husband said this. “It makes mortality real. It makes my need for God more real. It makes God more real. Really, it makes what I’ve lived my whole life for real.”
Imagine the surprise and glee in the Diocesan Archives when it was learned that the great-nephew of Fr. Adrianus Johannes Vullinghs was planning a ‘once in a lifetime’ trip to Canada, to see where his ‘Great Uncle John’ ministered and travelled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Dr. Arnold Wennekers, unofficial chronicler of family history for the Vullinghs’ dynasty, and his travelling companion Dr. Pieter Druif (chief cheerleader for writing a book about ‘Uncle John’) arrived in Victoria on June 2, 2018, just in time to join the Sisters of St. Ann in their public celebration of 160 years in the Pacific Northwest.

What a joyful reunion of pioneers and their descendants! The following days were filled with visits to the many Vullinghs’ sites—five days were not enough—as well as learning, learning, learning, about the life and times of Fr. Vullinghs on southern Vancouver Island.

As noted in the last article about Fr. Vullinghs, (Diocesan Messenger, Winter, 2017) he was a prolific and creative photographer and the Archives received scans of nearly 300 picture postcards depicting life on Vancouver Island in simpler times. In passing, I ask you … has the Malahat Drive ever seemed so peaceful? Do you remember when the ‘Princess’ ships regularly visited the harbour?

In return, Dr. Wennekers revealed that Fr. Vullinghs was a regular writer home to Holland, and the Archives received scans of nearly 300 picture postcards depicting life on Vancouver Island in simpler times.

As noted in the last article about Fr. Vullinghs, he made a ‘once in a lifetime’ trip to Canada to see where his ‘Great Uncle John’ ministered and travelled in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Dr. Arnold Wennekers, unofficial chronicler of family history for the Vullinghs’ dynasty, and his travelling companion Dr. Pieter Druif (chief cheerleader for writing a book about ‘Uncle John’) arrived in Victoria on June 2, 2018, just in time to join the Sisters of St. Ann in their public celebration of 160 years in the Pacific Northwest. What a joyful reunion of pioneers and their descendants!

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As noted in the last article about Fr. Vullinghs, (Diocesan Messenger, Winter, 2017) he was a prolific and creative photographer and the Archives was able to share more than 800 photographs with his family.

Dr. Arnold Wennekers (L) and Dr. Pieter Druif (R)
Building in love

ICS highlights
By Beverly Pulyk

Building Excitement at St. Andrew’s Regional High School
If you have driven by St. Andrew’s Regional High School this summer, you may have noticed a lot of construction taking place. Throughout 2018, approvals and permits were acquired for the third project of the Catholic Schools Plan (CSP)—the renewal of the high school. This project has been divided into multiple phases. Phase One of the project involves a seismic upgrade in a section of the existing building that will remain; this work began in the summer of 2017 and will be finished as the project reaches completion. Phase Two, the building of a new wing, was started in the spring of 2018. This wing will be completed by the summer of 2019; at that time, the demolition of the old wing will begin. The last phase will be the completion of the Arts wing and field.

Independent Schools in BC receive 50% funding for operations, but no funding for capital projects. All funding for capital upgrades in Independent Schools must be secured through donations, fundraising, and loans. Even though a significant amount of money has been reserved for this project, additional monies will have to be raised to complete the project. I’ll have more news on the fundraising front once the school year gets underway.

Closure of St. Joseph’s School in Chemainus
As many of you may be aware, St. Joseph’s Elementary School in Chemainus has faced immense financial challenges with declining enrollment, and very limited options for future sustainability. With much regret and heavy hearts, the difficult decision was made to close the St. Joseph’s School building in Chemainus, and to facilitate the transition of students, families, and staff from St. Joseph’s Elementary School to Queen of Angels School in Duncan, effective the 2018/2019 school year.

This decision was not easy, as we acknowledge, with gratitude, the efforts of the community. However, in the best interests of our Island Catholic Schools families, we had to move forward with transition plans. We have been able to accommodate students and families at Queen of Angels School in Duncan, and transfer most staff to Queen of Angels School.

We recognize that the summer months have been a time to grieve, so we continue to pray for all those affected by the closure and we ask that you do the same. Thank you to all the staff, families, alumni, and supporters of St. Joseph’s School in Chemainus, for your loving support of the school for more than 50 years.

Employment with Island Catholic Schools
There is an ongoing need for substitute/on call Teachers, Educational Assistants, Early Learning, and Before and After School workers.

Interested persons are invited to visit our website for application forms and requirements.

www.cisdv.bc.ca/employment-opportunities.php

Catholic Schools Ask: What Do You Want of Me Lord?
We are very excited about the theme for Catholic school this year. As school begins, students and staff will ask the question, What Do You Want of Me Lord?

As priest, bishop, and now the Holy Father, Pope Francis has always sought ‘to live the Gospel’, as Jesus asked. From the first day of his pontificate he has emphasized action over theological discussion; he has insisted that Jesus calls us ‘to live’ the Gospel, by putting into practice in daily life the beatitudes and the words of Jesus in chapter 25 of Matthew, that refers to feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger. (Gaudete et Exsultate)

In our Catholic schools, we are striving to learn and act as Jesus would want us to, and as Pope Francis is challenging us to.

Beverly Pulyk serves as the Superintendent of Island Catholic Schools, and she is Chairperson of the Catholic Independent Schools Committee of British Columbia.

Photos courtesy Connie Dunwoody.
Faith Matters

Our Faith

Joy complete

By Jean Allen

Jesus said that if we love one another our joy would be complete. In the past few months I have chatted with two of our newly ordained deacons who both talked about the ministries they have become engaged in, one doing hospital visits, the other setting up an Alcanolics Anonymous® program for the First Nations community in his town. What struck me with both of them was how full of complete joy each was to be doing what he is doing.

The complete joy Jesus spoke of doesn’t mean that a person is full of over the top bubbling happiness. The Greek word for Jesus’ brand of joy is chara, which means ‘a great calm delight that comes from deep within’. This is not joy that is dependent on happy circumstances and having no personal troubles; it is a joy that reflects the heart of Christ on happy circumstances and having no personal troubles.

When Christ within us ministers to Christ within the sick, dying, imprisoned or the otherwise impoverished, the circuit of joy is completed. Jesus shares himself unstintingly to all within that presence of Christ, who seems to shine out through their eyes.

Whenever I encounter someone expressing the joy they experience in their ministry, I not only recognize the joy from my own experiences in ministry but I also feel as though I am in the presence of Christ, who seems to shine out through their eyes.

Please note that it is always Christ’s love and joy that is being circulated in and through those who answer the call, not our own. If you feel poor in love or poor in capability, don’t be afraid. Jesus actually prefers those who feel poor because those are the ones he can fill with compassion and joy. St. Paul said, “When I am weak then I am strong.” Within your poverty is an ability to be transparent and really present to those who are in need, without patronizing them. When you know that you are receiving as much from those to whom you minister as they may be receiving from you, then you know that you are truly within the circuit of Christ’s love.

May you hear the call. May you find the joy.
Our Faith
Faith Formation and Evangelization

But what does it all mean?
By Gwen Jahelka, Assistant Director, Faith Formation and Evangelization

What comes to mind when you hear the words ‘Faith Formation and Evangelization’? Do you see a preacher on the corner, someone going door to door, or perhaps a glossy pamphlet announcing the Good News? Although these can be useful tools, as Catholics, we often cannot picture ourselves participating in the evangelization mission of the Church in these ways, but we are, by the very essence of our baptism, called to evangelize! So take a deep breath, because we are here to help.

Faith Formation is the action of equipping people to live as disciples of Jesus.

Faith Formation is the action of equipping people to live as disciples of Jesus. The process of faith formation is informed by many people, ideas, and mediums, and is a lifelong process of learning. Faith formation brings people into community, and works best when it is continually renewed by the people of God. Our team will offer opportunities for faith formation in the mid-island, north island and greater Victoria locations. Our faith formation program will take a variety of shapes. It may be a general workshop, or a retreat, or working with an existing parish team to meet their pastoral goals. We are counting on the Holy Spirit to guide our retreat, or working with an existing parish team to meet their goals. We are a very diverse and dynamic Diocese; these conversations will help us to form a faith formation and evangelization plan to serve our parish communities in meaningful and practical ways.

Evangelization is about integrating our Catholic Faith with our daily living.

Evangelization is about integrating our Catholic Faith with our daily living. It is being caught up in an amazing cosmic and historic love story between God and creation. It’s a worldview that is shaped by the revelation of a God who creates and sustains everything; declaring it good and giving humanity a special relationship to reflect the divine image and likeness. This love story goes further, showing a God who desires to heal, forgive and redeem all who are broken by dysfunction and sin. This is proclaimed most clearly through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the followers of Jesus Christ and the Church witness to the Good News of this love story in word and deed.

Glen Palahicky is the Director of Faith Formation and Evangelization for our Diocese and has been serving in the ministry of Religious Education for more than four years. Gwen Jahelka has recently joined the team as Assistant Director, returning to our Diocese after working as a High School Teacher/Chaplain for Calgary Catholic Schools. If Gwen’s name seems familiar, you might remember her serving our Diocese previously as teacher, Religious Education Coordinator, and Principal of St. Joseph’s School in Chemainus. Gwen lives in Ladysmith with her husband, and is delighted to have returned to the newly formed, but just as welcoming, All Saints Parish.

Over the past few months, Glen and Gwen have been engaging pastors and lay leaders in conversations about the specific hopes and needs of the nearly 40 parishes and missions. We are a very diverse and dynamic Diocese; these conversations will help us to form a faith formation and evangelization plan to serve our parish communities in meaningful and practical ways.

We are here to support your baptismal mission to participate in faith formation and evangelization, as part of a welcoming community of faith. In our baptism, we are anointed as priest, prophet and king and called to live as a member of Christ’s body. We challenge you to draw on the graces of your baptism to recognize the specific ways you share Christ with others, beginning with your parish family. You are an essential part of the Body of Christ and we hope we can journey alongside you as together we learn and grow as missionary disciples.

If you have a retreat or workshop idea or concept, please contact Glen or Gwen at gpalahicky@rcdvictoria.org or gjahelka@rcdvictoria.org.

“We challenge you to draw on the graces of your baptism to recognize the specific ways you share Christ with others…”

Contact Information

We are delighted to announce that the Diocesan Faith Formation and Evangelization Team has opened an office in St. Peter’s Parish, Nanaimo, to help serve the diverse needs of our communities north of the Malahat.

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Calendar of Events

• Diocesan Catechist Retreat and Workshop
  Saturday, September 15
  8:30 am – 3 pm, Ascension Parish, Parksville
  Register on Eventbrite

• Foundations of the Faith
  September 19 – November 14 (Wednesdays)
  7 – 9 pm
  Part I: Pastoral Centre
  4044 Nelthorpe Street, Victoria
  Part II: Queen of Angels School, Duncan
  Note there will be no class on October 31

• Credible Catholic
  September 23 – November 6 (Tuesdays)
  7 – 8:30 pm, St. Andrew’s High School

• Diocesan Conference: Proclaim Life
  Saturday, November 24
  St. Edward’s Parish/Queen of Angels School, Duncan
  More details to follow

Explore or learn more about these and other Faith Formation opportunities at www.rcdvictoria.org/religious-education
A few months ago one of my young parishioners, maybe six or seven years old, asked me a question, “Where do priests come from?” My answer to this young fellow was that first, a man has to feel a vocational call to the priesthood, and after that he has to attend seminary for at least five years. When I gave that answer, the boy had a puzzled look on his face. He told me that he didn’t understand why everybody who would like to be a priest had to live for at least five years in the cemetery. Hmm … maybe my explanation wasn’t clear enough, or perhaps he didn’t understand me correctly, or maybe he somehow connected a seminary and a cemetery in his own mysterious way. Anyway, as we all know, every candidate for the priesthood is not headed directly for the cemetery, but he will attend the seminary—and just to be clear, these are two really different places.

The seminary plays an extremely important role in the life of every candidate for the priesthood, and also in the life of our Church. At the seminary, each candidate and the Church has the chance to evaluate the candidate’s vocation through prayer, personal reflection, and through meetings and discussions with faculty members and spiritual directors.

Every seminary is also a place of formation. This formation is meant to lay a wonderful foundation for fruitful ministry in the future. There are four closely connected components of priestly formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral.

As the Program for Priestly Formation states: “Human development (formation) aims at developing in the candidate for Holy Orders, a growing inner freedom, an appropriate level of maturity and a capacity for healthy relationships fitting for priestly life and ministry” (64).

Spiritual formation helps every candidate to develop an intimate union with our Risen Lord, and to learn to remain open for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (Program for Priestly Formation, 75).

Intellectual formation is a very important part of seminary life. A seminarian’s years of studies include topics such as Sacred Scripture, Dogmatic Theology, Moral Theology, and the History of the Church, to name a few. These studies are vital to equip each future priest with skills to explain the truthfulness and beauty of our Faith.

The last, but not the least, element of priestly formation is pastoral formation. Every priest is sent out to the people for a period of time before ordination to help them understand and see that our Almighty God sent His Son to invite us on the wonderful journey to His Everlasting Home. Pastoral Formation helps seminarians to bear great witness to this amazing truth.

Time in the seminary is a wonderful opportunity for each candidate to reflect on his vocation and grow closer to God, as well as to get to know himself better. On the other hand, this is a very demanding time which requires a lot of work, clarity of thought, and dedication. At the beginning of this new school year, let us pray for all seminary faculty and formators as well as seminarians, especially those from our Diocese. May our Almighty God bless their efforts and help others discover the amazing love of our Heavenly Father.

Learn more about the Program for Priestly Formation

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