

The Parish Light

The Parish of the Northern Lights Newsletter – February 2020



February is unique. Because it usually has 28 days, once every 6 years, it's the only month to have 4 full 7 day weeks. In the years that aren't leap years (otherwise known as common years), February and March start on the same day of the week.

The month has some fun events. Everyone loves to talk about Ground Hog Day, Valentine's Day, and the Super Bowl in February. However, the big news in February is that pitchers and catchers report kicking off spring training for a new baseball season. What's a truer sign of spring?

One of the earliest flowers to bloom in spring is the primrose. It is also the flower of February. If you are born in February, you are either an Aquarius or a Pisces. February's birth flowers are the violet (*viola*) and the common primrose (*primula vulgaris*). The February birthstone is the amethyst, which symbolizes piety, humility, spiritual wisdom, and sincerity.

[Snow Moon](#) is the given name or nickname for the Full Moon in [February](#). It was named after the snowy conditions in the Northern Hemisphere. [Traditional Full Moon Names](#) come from different cultures. Some North American tribes called the Full Moon in February the Hunger Moon due to the scarce food sources during mid-winter..

February is considered the seasonal equivalent of August in the [opposite hemisphere](#). And it's the only month that can pass without a single [Full Moon](#), also known as a [Black Moon](#).

[February](#) starts on the same day of the week as [March](#) and [November](#) in [common years](#). During [leap years](#), it starts on the same day of the week as [August](#). Once every six years and twice every 11 years, the month of February will have only four full [seven-day weeks](#), where the first day of the month begins on a [Sunday](#) and ends on a [Saturday](#).



What to do when you find empty pews



Terrance Klein

Who is not here? Who is absent from this assembly? If you come to church in a small-town parish, it is easy enough to notice who is missing. But even mega-parishes are like large universities. People move in circles of known stories and recognized faces. So ponder, for a moment, who is not here with us.

There are, of course, the temporary absences. Someone is traveling this weekend. There was a reunion or a wedding. Someone else is down with the flu but, if all goes well, will soon be back. When chemotherapy is kind, she is here, but some weeks she just cannot make it. Happy and worrisome reasons mingle among the temporary absences.

But, let's ask ourselves: Who is not here because they almost never are? Bring to mind some of those faces and ponder why they are not among us. Who is alienated from us? And why is that so? **Let's ask ourselves: Who is alienated from us? And why is that so?**

Perhaps the problem began in their own lives. Money and pleasure seemed better masters. Arrogance and pride may have had their role. Of course, it could be that some of those who are absent just slipped on the rodent wheel of modern life, and they have never been able to catch up. Are there some who are absent from us because of shame? Guilt is a work of God; it helps us to grow. But shame is never an action of the Good Spirit. It sets us apart. If someone feels ashamed, is there something that we can do about that?

Are some absent because they have never felt this place to be their spiritual home? They have never found themselves challenged or comforted here. They were never asked to lend a hand. If you feel invisible, sooner or later you just disappear.

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In the world of the Gospel, leprosy banished its casualties from community. The only way to slow the spread of the disease was to expel its victims from all human contact. Alienated, they became strangers in their own communities. For Jesus to heal lepers was to restore them to the circle of their own humanity.

If to be church is to be baptized into Christ and into his mission, to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, isn't it our duty to look for our lepers? To seek out those who are alienated from us? How will we answer, when the Father of all asks each of us: "Where is your brother? Where is your sister? Did you not see when they fell? Were you not moved with compassion?"

How will we answer, when the Father of all asks each of us: "Where is your brother? Where is your sister?"

Contemporary parishes breathe with only one lung because on any given Sunday half of the faithful are not in their pews. How much vitality is lost to a parish that breathes so shallowly? The church is not confined to her pews. If she is, she is truly paralytic. If you share some fellowship with these absent faces, here is what you can do.

1. *Find them and listen.* What alienates all of us is having no one who will listen. Don't enter with your questions. Come to listen. Being befriended and being faithful grow in tandem. Don't make those who are absent your project. Just be their good friend.
2. *Be yourself.* You don't need talking points. If faith makes a difference in your life, it will show. It will bespeak itself without any calculation on your part. "For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that moment what you should say" (Lk 12:12).
3. *Immerse yourself in Christ so that you become the Christ, finding his own in the world.* Be more faithful to your own faith. Volunteer. Learn again to fast. Give yourself to prayer. Choose one of those faces and carry it to the Lord each time that you pray. Having learned something of his or her story, you can share it with the Lord.

Faith is a living thing. It either grows or it dies. If your faith contains no concern for those who are not here, it is not healthy. Imitate the apostle:

Brothers and sisters, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,
do everything for the glory of God.

Avoid giving offense, whether to the Jews or Greeks or the church of God,
just as I try to please everyone in every way, not seeking my own benefit but that of the many,
that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ (1 Cor 10:31-11:1).

Who is not here? We know their faces. And in our baptisms we became the Lord's face, his voice and his hands. Either we become more like Christ each day or we begin to lose him ourselves.



"If telemarketers call, invite them to church."

I Believe In The Church

I believe in the church in spite of its imperfections. The church will never be perfect in this world. It is made up of people struggling to do God's will – but people who are still human with their weaknesses and sin.

I believe in the church in spite of its limitations and handicaps. Sometimes the church is hindered by lack of vision and commitment. But in spite of all of this, the church is the only agency in the world that provides a place where people can gather to worship God.

I believe in the church because it is an agency of God's Spirit – an instrument of the Eternal. It has changed through the years, and it will continue to change. It will make mistakes. But the church is still God's chosen vessel for carrying on His work of redemption in the world.

..... Author unknown



THE PARISH OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

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Parish Council

Chair: Jan Overacker 780-206-5544

Secretary: Deana Lemke – 780-713-8903

Friday, February 21st –

Bishop-Elect Rev. Canon David Greenwood's Consecration
as the twelfth Bishop of Athabasca. The service takes place
On February 21, 2020 at 7:00 pm at the Cathedral Church of
Saint James, Peace River.

February 23rd - Parish of the Northern Lights

Annual General Meeting, St Paul's, Boyle

11:00 am – Potluck lunch

Monday, February 24th – *Shrove Tuesday on Monday*

Pancake Supper

5:00 – 7:00 – Colinton Church Hall

Tuesday February 25th – *Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper*

St Paul's Church Basement, Boyle

5:00 – 7:00 pm

\$8.00 person/6 and under free

Save the Date:

Diocese of Athabasca Diocesan Women's Conference **May 1-3 2020**

Relationships "Come near to God and he will come near to you.Humble yourselves before the
Lord, and he will lift you up." James 4:8-10

Guest Speakers: Rev. Rose Howell and Melody Shologan

Hosted By Parish of the Northern Lights at St. Andrew's Zion, Colinton

Watch for More Information and Registration Forms Soon!

