We welcome you all to St. Vital Parish, parishioners and visitors alike. May you be spiritually fulfilled as you pray with us this Christmas Season. For our many visitors, know that you are among friends and that you are welcome to join us in prayer at any time. Every year we rejoice as look forward to this great feast of Christmas a feast of our salvation. May we welcome Christ, not only as a new-born child in a lowly manger, but as our Redeemer. With gratitude let us recall his humanity and the life he shared with us so we to might have eternal life. *Wishing you a Joyful Christmas Season May you and your loved ones be blessed with joy, love, peace and happiness*

**MASS TIMES**

**Feast of the Holy Family**

Saturday, December 29 - 5:00pm Mass

Sunday, December 30 - 9:00am, 11:00am,

**New Year’s Eve (Feast of the Holy Mother of God)**

Monday, December 31 - 5:00pm

**Mass New Year’s Day (Feast of the Holy Mother of God)**

Tuesday, January 1, 2019 - 10:00am Mass

**HOLY DAYS OF OBLIGATION**

***The Holy Days of Obligation in the Catholic Church in Canada include: All Sundays of the Year, the Feast of Christmas (December 25) and the Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God (January 1). On these days, all Catholics are asked to participate in the Celebration of the Eucharist as a part of our community prayer and worship of the Lord.***

**MARRIAGES**

To be married at St. Vital’s Church, you must notify Fr. Arlan at least 6 months prior to the wedding date. A marriage preparation course is required.

**Baptism Preparation Course**

Are you expecting a child in the near future? Consider taking Baptism Preparation now while you are waiting for the birth of your son or daughter. **The classes are for parents and sponsors (godparents).**

Attending now eliminates the need to find baby-sitters, rearrange feeding schedules etc. plus it adds to the joyful anticipation of your new arrival.

Parents wishing to register for the **next course** which will be held on **Mon,** **February 25th at 7:00 pm** please call the parish office**.**

The Bible Study will resume on January 14, 28, 2019. We are still doing the study called **Mary, Virgin, Mother, And Queen**.

**24 Hour Adoration – Friday, January 4th, 2019**

Sign up Schedule in Adoration binder at the back of the church. All time slots must be filled.

**Parish Office will be closed on December 25, 26, and 27th.**

**No bulletin will be printed for December 29/30th. Regular bulletin will resume January 5th.**

**No weekday masses (Wednesday, Thursday, Friday) December 26th, 27th, 28th.**

**Christmas Meal Prayer**

God of all gifts, we thank you for the many ways you have blessed us this day. We are grateful to all who are gathered around this table. We ask you to bless us and our food and to bless those we love who are not with us today. In our gratitude and love, we remember your humble birth into our lives and pray for those who are without enough to eat. We remember the stable in which you were born and pray for those who have no place to live. We remember your challenging message of caring and giving and we pray for peace in families and nations throughout the world. We bless you and give you thanks in your Spirit who brings our hearts to life this Christmas Day and forever. Amen

**Octave of Christmas**

We have all heard the saying “Christmas comes but once a year” but that is not quite true. The church celebrates some major feasts, including Christmas, for eight days. We celebrate December 25 to January 1 as the Octave of Christmas. The octave’s primary focus is celebrating daily Mass in thanksgiving for Christ, with the gospel readings centered on the Incarnation and the early years of Jesus’ life. During this time, there are several major feasts: St Stephen the first martyr, St John the Apostle that Jesus loved, the Holy Innocents whom Herod murder in his jealous search for Jesus, the Holy Family and Mary Mother of God. We invite you to consider extending the feast throughout the octave by rejoicing in the Incarnation, the coming of Jesus fully human and fully divine - and the role of the lowly handmaid in his divine plan.

**Sign of Peace** According to the General Instructions for the Roman Missal, the sign of peace asks for peace and unity for the human family. The faithful express to each other their ecclesial communion before approaching the altar. This expression can take many forms according to cultural tradition. In Canada the usual form is a handshake or a bow. Either form is acceptable; you should not feel offended if you reach out your hand and the person bows to you; especially in this flu season but also at any time, the bow or nod is an acceptable expression of peace. Please also note that the sign of peace is only given to those who are nearest and should be done in a solemn manner. There should be no movement throughout the body of the church at this time.

**2019 Donation Envelopes**

Sunday Offering Envelopes 2019 Offering envelopes for the new year are now available for pick up by parishioners.

**Year-end Donations:** Donations made at the 5:00pm Mass on December 31 will be considered 2018 donations however, any cheques dated for 2019 will be recorded in 2019.

**DO WE HAVE YOUR CURRENT ADDRESS?** If you have recently moved, please contact the parish office with your new address. Any tax receipts not picked up the parish will be mailed to the address on the data base.

**Christmas Message from Archbishop Richard Smith**

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

At this time of year, many of our young people are enjoying the story of the Grinch, the furry green Dr. Seuss character who tries to ‘steal Christmas,’ only to be thwarted by the love of a child. In many ways, the story captures the reality of the suffering of many people today. The Grinch felt alone, abandoned and unwanted in an orphanage, and that led him to close in on himself and away from all association with others.

But it is also a story of transformation, thanks to an encounter with a little child who did not give up on him, who led him to realize that he was actually appreciated and wanted for who he was, unconditionally. A deep desire for such unconditional acceptance is what animates the hearts of all of us.

The link with the Christmas story of the Gospel is obvious. It announces the coming of God as a child in order to redeem us from ourselves, to save us from the self-imposed isolation from both God and others occasioned by the harm of sin. The child is none other than the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, who has made himself one of us in order to encounter us, so that in that encounter we might discover the joyful truth of both God and ourselves. In the encounter with Christ, we discover ourselves, and in that discovery, learn that, in the eyes of God, we are loved, wanted and considered necessary - and all of that without condition.

Little Cindy Lou’s persistence allowed the Grinch to encounter the meaning of love. That encounter led him from self-isolation to self-gift, to be a gift for others. His transformation was gradual, yes, but because of the child's persistence, it did happen.

God does not give up on us. He never gives up on us. In the encounter with the child born at Bethlehem, we discover Love itself. God is love, is what the Scriptures teach us. God's grace reaches us in the sacraments and works upon our self-isolation, gently but with persistence, summoning us and enabling us to live no longer for ourselves but for Jesus and for his people by making ourselves a gift for others. In a life of self-gift in Christ, we live as we are intended to live and we discover real joy.

As we recall and celebrate the timeless story of Christmas this year, may it be for all of us a genuine encounter with God who made himself human in order to transform and save us by a love that will never give up on us.

God bless, and Merry Christmas to all.

*Archbishop Richard Smith*