



THE GRRRAPEVINE

"I am the Vine, you are the branches" (Jn 15:5)

Number 28

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 19, 2006

REMEMBER IN NOVEMBER



Traditionally, November is the month the church dedicates to the Holy Souls, when we remember our deceased relatives and friends.

During November the BOOK OF LIFE will be displayed at the back of the Church near the baptismal font & the Tree of Life. We pray that all the baptized will be raised to new life in Christ Jesus.

You are invited to take some time and add the names of your relatives or friends to the pages in the book.

THEO TIDBITS



Our third series has finished! Many thanks to Mary-Anne Jamin for sharing her knowledge about The End... of Time with us.

Our next series is another short one and will look at Mary in the Life of the Church. How is Mary a model of Christian discipleship for us? Bishop Gerry will be our guest presenter, so come out and show him what a vibrant parish we have!

We will meet on Tuesday, November 28 and on Thursday, November 30. Both sessions begin at 7 pm in the Conference Room

PARISH PHOTO DIRECTORY DECEMBER 4 TO 9

Have you made your appointment yet?? The photographer is going to be here from Monday, December 4 to Saturday December 9, and we need to book appointments well in advance. We have sign-up sheets at the entrances of the church and you're encouraged to look them over and pick a date and a time that work for you. If you don't book now, then you'll get a phone call later, inviting you to book!



If you're one of our phone volunteers, then you should have received a phone call advising you of when you can come and pick up your package of material and your phone list.

We've had a few questions regarding people who are house-bound or shut-in. If you'd like to have your picture taken, but you or your spouse can't get out of the house, give us a call at the parish office and we'll arrange for someone to come to your home and take your picture.

Remember, if you sign up to get your picture taken for the photo directory, you receive a complimentary copy of the directory. You also have the option of buying a portrait package after the photo shoot, but are under no obligation to do so. If you do not sign up to get your picture taken for the directory, then you have to pay if you want a copy of the directory.

The parish photo directory is a great way for parishioners to become more familiar with each other. It's a wonderful way to build community and a lasting historical record of our parish. Check out our bulletin boards to see an example of our previous parish photo directory. And then make plans to say "yes" when you're invited to book an appointment!

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE

Are you interested in joining a group who will be studying *A Purpose Driven Life* by Rick Warren?? Give Nives Pastro a call at 562-1735.

STEWARDSHIP

We have not had a reflection on Stewardship for a while, not because we have moved on to something else in our community, but because it just kept falling behind other things we wanted to include in the GRRRAPEVINE.

Time for a little refresher! We recall that stewardship is about living as a disciple of Jesus Christ, responding to the Lord's call to follow him. Stewardship is more about attitude than action. Stewardship is a basic stance that we take before God, recognizing that all that we have and are is a gift from God, given to us out of love, entrusted to us for our good and the good of others. Recognizing everything as gift from God, we respond in gratitude, giving thanks for our gifts, cherishing the gifts, expressing our gratitude by sharing our gifts, returning them to God with increase. A steward is entrusted with someone else's property to manage it and to return it when required to do so. We are entrusted with so many things: creation, life, talents, gifts, family, friends, intelligence, wisdom, etc. Do we see all of these as gifts? Do we recognize that the author of all these gifts is God? What is our response when we are aware of these gifts? How do we treat the gifts we are given?

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: I'm back, and in some ways it seems like the holiday never was! The past week has been a blur with a couple of funerals, diocesan meetings (2 full days) and Parish Pastoral Council and catching up on everything that needs to be done.

The week after the trip to the Philippines was spent in Lumsden, SK at a gathering of the National Federation of Presbyterian Councils (representatives of the Priests' Councils from the dioceses of Canada). It was an enjoyable gathering, a time to renew friendships from across the country and catch up on the news, as well as to do some work. At the end of the meeting, I was elected Regional Vice-President for the Federation, which will mean a couple more trips and meetings each year for the next two years. I look forward to this new venture.

During the next two weeks there will be time in the parish, at the Diocesan Office and a couple of days in Fort Ware. It is good to be home!

Giselle: I'm just scampering around the office working on the usual round of RCIA, Religious Education, Sacramental Preparation, Children's Liturgy of the Word, etc. At the end of the November we're going to take a look at some of the more "neglected" books of the bible (see column at right): Jonah, Tobit & Judith. There aren't a lot of resources out there on Tobit or Judith, so I'm going down to Vancouver next week to do some research at UBC. Yep, that's my reason for going...

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Our Parish Pastoral Council gathers each month to reflect on the life of the community, to pray together, build community, study and plan for the life of the community. At our meeting this week, we spent time once again focusing on the topic of building community in our parish. Many ideas came forth, and we reflected on the things that are happening now that help foster a sense of community.

We recognized that the Theo Tidbits sessions have helped foster the building of community. As people gather for each session, they gradually begin to interact more, and on a more personal level. In beginning this program in the parish, we have responded to the need for adult faith formation as well as the need to build community. The plan is to continue the sessions throughout the year, and possibly even to repeat a couple of sessions when there is a request.

We will begin a simple initiative - the Family of the Week - to help us get to know each other. Someone from Pastoral Council will approach a family each week and ask permission to post a photo, with names and a bit of biographical information on the bulletin boards. That way, each week we can take time to stop and learn a bit about someone else in the parish community.

We have often been reminded or invited to introduce ourselves to others in the community when we gather for our Sunday Eucharist. At a previous meeting, this was mentioned as one way to build a sense of community. One of the council members, who had commented that she did not know many people in the parish, took that suggestion to heart and started introducing herself to others at Sunday Eucharist. Her comment at this meeting was "It was kind of my own fault that I didn't know anyone - now I know a lot more people, because I took the time to introduce myself." We are all responsible for taking initiatives to build community in the parish.

We recognize that the most effective way to build a sense of community is by building small communities within the larger community and then helping those smaller communities connect with each other. Often the smaller communities come about as people respond to some initiative in which they have an interest - study of a certain topic, some particular activity (hiking, sewing, building, growing, etc.) or involvement in a certain ministry. Our role as Council is to make available as many opportunities as possible for people to gather and begin to form bonds among themselves. Any ideas?

UNLIKELY HEROES & HEROINES OF THE BIBLE

Jonah, Jonah, Jonah... you have to wonder at the intelligence of this guy... Did he even read the Jewish scriptures??? He receives a call from God... a pretty serious undertaking... and what does he do... he tries to run away... and then sail away... and then escape by sinking to the bottom of the ocean... what a guy...

Where can I go from your spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?

If I ascend to heaven, you are there;

If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.

If I take the wings of the morning

And settle at the farthest limits of the sea,

Even there your hand shall lead me,

And your right hand shall hold me fast. (Ps 139:7-10)

A group of us are going to take a closer look at Jonah and what his story means for us. We don't ignore the call of God, do we? Or run away? Nooooo!!!! Of course not!

When: Starting Wednesday, November 29 at 7:30 p.m.

Where: Parish Office Meeting Room



ADVENT...

begins December 2/3, 2006



What are you doing for Advent this year?

Advent is not Lent. The season does not call for prayer, fasting, almsgiving. It is not a penitential season, nor is a season of preparation for baptism. Advent is a time of waiting and longing, a time of reflection and preparation – the focus is different than that of Lent. Because the focus is different, and we are so accustomed to the focus of Lent, we often miss the season of Advent. It comes and goes and we arrive at the celebration of Christmas with no sense that we have been engaged in any kind of preparation for this great feast.

Even though Advent is not Lent, the Church still invites and calls us to make some special effort to celebrate this season and to allow it to enrich our faith lives. So, what can we do during Advent? What are you planning to do for Advent?

These are some of the opportunities for Advent here at St. Mary's:

Before Advent starts:



Theo Tidbits, November 28 and 30, 7 p.m. in the Conference Room

Bishop Gerry will reflect on "Mary in the Life of the Church"

Mary, the model of Christian discipleship, Mary, Mother of the Church, Mary, bearer of Christ to the world – what does she teach us as continue our faith journey. Where does the example of Mary's response call us today?

Bible Study, beginning Wednesday, November 29, 7:30 p.m. in Parish Office,

Unlikely Heroes and Heroines of the Bible (*see description in GRRAPEVINE*)

During Advent:



Family Reflection and Prayer, each week in the Sunday bulletin, you will find an insert (Welcome, Yule!) to help you reflect and pray during the season of Advent. Take some time together or alone to read, pray, reflect, using this resource

Vespers will be celebrated on Wednesdays, December 6, 13 and 20 at 7:00 p.m. and on Sunday, December 17 at 4:30 p.m. in the Church. Take a half hour to gather with the community to pray this ancient prayer of the Church. This can be wonderful opportunity to step back from the hectic pace of life for a half hour, to relax in God's presence, to build community, to nourish our souls. If you haven't tried Vespers as a way of prayer, take the time to come and explore this Advent.

Reconciliation Service will be held at St. Mary's on Thursday, December 14 at 7:00 p.m. Celebrating Reconciliation is always a wonderful way to prepare to celebrate any major feast or season. Again, we take the time to step back from the busyness of life and spend some time reflecting on life, eternity, faith, our response to God's love.

Watch the bulletin and GRRAPEVINE for other opportunities to do something out of the ordinary this year – it might be attending the Pasta Supper to support St. Vincent de Paul, or delivering hampers with St. Vincent's, attending a session at the Domano Renewal Centre, checking out a new ministry, helping to build community -----the opportunities are many. Will you choose some?



ADVENT WREATH BASICS

HISTORY



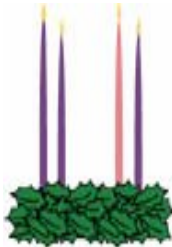
Like many customs of the season of Advent, preparing and lighting the Advent wreath probably has its roots in an ancient pagan custom. The very survival of these ancient people depended on the success of their crops.

So it may be that during the shortest days of the year, these people lighted candles on a wheel in the hope that the one who controlled the sun would turn the wheel of the earth's orbit to the sun once more. It seems natural that the Christian Church should adapt the lighting of candles as a Christian custom, since humanity was brought into the light of life by the Son of God.

The very first Advent wreaths were probably used in the home, where a spray of evergreen was placed near the hearth to remind everyone of the everlasting life found in Christ. In the heart of winter, while most of nature slept, the greenery symbolized the continuation of life. Soon the boughs of the spray were bent and bound together in a circle, which symbolized life without end.

ADVENT WREATHS TODAY

The wreath of today, used in Church and home, combines the circle of evergreens with four candles that are lighted progressively on each Sunday of Advent. When used in the Church, the candles are the liturgical colors of the season - purple or deep blue, with the exception of the third candle, which may be rose.



In home, however, the candles may be these colors, or white, or even red. The significance of the four candles lies in their progressive illumination - light out of darkness. Lighting the candles helps us remember the one who said, "I am the light of the world."

Still, new customs have grown up around the lighting of the candles, with each candle being given an attribute (light, hope, joy, peace), or symbolizing a character from the Christmas story (prophets, angels, shepherds, Magi). (If you have small children, it might be best to use this symbolism). One way to think of the candles is to relate them to the scriptures used during the week. At the same time, bring meaning to the lighting of the candles by using the ancient hymn "O Come, Emmanuel" with one person singing or reciting the verses and everyone joining in the refrain. (See column at right)

CANDLE SYMBOLISM

The First Candle: The Candle of "Hope"

This candle symbolizes the hope of Israel for the Messiah and the Christian hope for the coming again of Christ in final victory.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

The Second Candle: The Candle of "Preparation"

This candle symbolizes the preparation for the comings (past, present, future) of Christ.

O come, thou Key of David, come,
and open wide our heavenly home.

The captives from their prison free,
and conquer death's deep misery.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

The Third Candle: The Candle of "Joy"

This candle symbolizes our joy at the coming of Christ. Sometimes it is rose colored, in contrast to the purple of the other candles.

O come, thou Dayspring, come and cheer
our spirits by thy justice here;
Dispense the gloomy clouds of night,
and death's dark shadows put to flight.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

The Fourth Candle: The Candle of "Love"

This candle symbolizes God's love for the world in giving his only Son to be our Savior.

O come, Desire of nations bind
all peoples in one heart and mind.

From dust thou brought us forth to life;
deliver us from earthly strife.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

USING THE ADVENT WREATH

Gather around the Advent Wreath weekly, or better yet, daily. Choose appropriate scripture passages to read and decide who will read the passage aloud and who will light or snuff out the candles. After reading the passage, take time to discuss the passage and reflect on the meaning of the passage in your daily life. Sing an Advent song such as the one above.

HOW TO MAKE AN ADVENT WREATH

Making an advent wreath is as easy or as complex as your artistic talents make it! The primary symbols are the four candles and the circular shape. The colours of the candles are secondary. Real evergreens (a symbol of life) would be ideal, but are slightly tricky when they dry out and are placed in proximity to lit candles. Fake evergreens are not the greatest symbol of life, but do reduce the fire hazard to some extent. Remember, simple is sometimes better!

METHOD 1

Tools and supplies you will need are:

- Styrofoam base form. These are usually available in craft shops and come in various sizes. The most popular size is 10" in diameter and 1" thick.
- Several evergreen branches.
- Sharp thin blade (knife).
- Scissors.
- Three (3) Purple and One (1) Rose Long Stem Candles

Assembly - the fun part:

- Using the styrofoam base, mark off four (4) equally spaced points approximately 1" from the edge where the candles will be inserted.
- Trace the circumference of a candle's base at each of these points.
- Using a sharp thin blade, cut vertically through the styrofoam on the line you previously traced out representing the base of the candle. Be careful not to cut the holes oversize. Otherwise, your candle will not stand vertically, nor will it be very secure.
- Insert a candle into each of the holes you created.
- Using evergreen sections, decorate your Advent Wreath.
 - Cut perhaps 15-20 short (approximately 4" each) sections of evergreen using scissors. Each stem base will be substantially easier to insert into the styrofoam, if the cut is on a bias to produce a relatively sharp point.
 - Insert the evergreen sections at approximately a 45 degree angle and at equally spaced intervals (approximately 2-1/2 inches apart) around the periphery of the styrofoam surface and also around the sides.
- Add purple & rose colored ribbon as well if you desire

METHOD 2

A simpler version may be made by using a ready made evergreen wreath. Arrange the boughs so that you can place four small candle holders among them and then decorate with ribbon or holly berries.

METHOD 3

- Take a large flat shallow bowl (at least 9 inches in diameter) and fill it with sand or coarse salt.
- Place the four Purple candles around the outside with the large candle in the center. Stick them down into the sand or salt so that they are placed securely.
- Place a circle of evergreens and around the bowl.
- Place the wreath and candles in a prominent place (at the center of the table, on a mantle, etc.) where they can stay through Christmas.

METHOD 4

- Cut a disc of wood from a log (birch works well)
- Drill 4 equidistant holes along the edge of the disc
- Insert a candle taper into each hole
- Decorate with greenery

METHOD 5

- Visit the Dollar Store
- Buy some tea lights
- Buy 4 glass votive candle holders: 4 purple, 3 purple & 1 pink, 4 red, or 4 white
- Place tea lights in candle holders
- Arrange candle holders in a circle

METHOD 6

- Same steps as Method 5
- Place votive holders within an artificial evergreen wreath, or within a pottery bowl filled with sand, or place a small potted plant in the middle of the circle

The important thing is to actually use your Advent Wreath! The first week of Advent, you light one candle. The second week of Advent two candles. The third week of Advent three candles (the pink one gets lit this week). The fourth week of Advent all four candles are lit. Simple!!!

VESPERS

Vespers is a Latin word and refers to Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours. Although it used to be considered the sole reserve of monks and religious, Vatican II, offered the rich prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours to the entire Church as a way of consecrating the entire day.

The beauty of it is that it is the prayer of the whole Church and at any given day or time, somewhere in the world, others are praying the same prayer. If you're interested in learning a bit more, take a look in the Sunday Missal book on page 587 and following. There, you will see abbreviated versions of Morning and Evening prayer.

Vespers is actually a sung version of evening prayer, and if you find that a bit daunting, relax! We have music ministers who sing most of the really serious stuff. Vespers is a wonderful way to close out your day, to come and sit in the silence, to pray with the community, and to offer praise and thanks to God.

Our next celebration of Sunday Evening Vespers will be this Sunday, November 19 at 4:30 p.m. Come and join us for this beautiful prayer.

During the season of Advent, we will also celebrate Vespers on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m.



LOCUSTS & WILD HONEY

John the Baptist bridges the era of the prophets and the coming age of the Messiah. He is both the last of the great prophets before Christ and the first herald of the gospel. The Eastern churches have deep reverence for John, and they call him the Great Forerunner of Christ. The early church, too, had high respect for him, and his story is intertwined with the story of Jesus in the beginning of the gospel of Luke.

John's message is fire and his manner chills like the winter wind. He is a man of vast contrasts, eating locusts and wild honey, living in the desert and baptizing in water. He speaks truth to power, defying King Herod to his face. He stands up for what is right and he pays with his life. We recalled the beheading of John the Baptist on August 29. And we celebrated his birth on June 24 — an important holiday in Quebec! Soon, we will celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25. There's a connection between John and Jesus even in our calendar.

In the fourth gospel, John the Baptist says of Jesus, "I must decrease and he must increase." In times past, June 24 was thought to be the first day of summer, the longest day of the year. (We now know that to be June 21.) After this date, the days start to become shorter, second by second, until December 21, the first day of winter and the shortest day of the year. In times past, people thought that December 24 was the shortest day of the year, and that on December 25, the days began to grow longer, second by second. So what John says happens every year: On his birthday, the sun is at its most glorious. But then it diminishes until the birth of the Son of God, when it gathers strength and glory again. Jesus himself said it: "There is no man born of woman greater than John the Baptist."

Copyright © 2002 Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1800 North Hermitage Avenue, Chicago IL 60622-1101; 1-800-933-1800; www.ltp.org. Text by David Philippart. Art by Steve Erspamer, sm. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

ON MEALTIME AS PRAYER

Eating together as family, with friends or in community is as old a human expression as history can recall. The very word "companion" means "the one you share your bread with." Sharing food is just as nourishing to the soul as eating is nourishing for the body. How is it that in recent years the family meal has suffered such disintegration? All day we graze and nibble and by dinner time, we are no longer hungry. We are so busy, that we cannot cook, or cannot sit together over food and drink to share the events of the day and the issues that burn in our hearts. The average American family eats dinner in about five minutes!

In these Easter days, beyond the meal shared which we call the "last supper," we hear that the risen Jesus shared his bread at the end of a long walk with his grieving disciples on the road to Emmaus. He broke bread with them and "they knew him in the breaking of the bread." Every meal that we share is an occasion to "know him"—to recognize Christ in the heart of the persons with whom we share our meal. We also hear the story of a fish fry that the risen Jesus prepared for his friends after a night of fishing. How concrete. How physical. How human. How loving. Ghosts don't cook for us. But the bodily presence of a risen Lord knows our bodily hungers and provides for us in material ways. To share what we have with another is to "know him." To break bread with a blessing is to help us remember that every meal looks concretely to the meal. And it isn't possible to comprehend the eucharistic meal if we don't understand the sacramentality of the daily meal.

Collect blessings for your table. Offer a variety of words and songs so that your prayers do not become routine or unimaginative. Take time to enjoy your meal and to enjoy one another. If you live alone, invite others in to share your bread.

Copyright © 2001 Archdiocese of Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1800 North Hermitage Avenue, Chicago IL 60622-1101; 1-800-933-1800; www.ltp.org. Text and art by Gertrud Mueller Nelson. All rights reserved. Used with permission.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

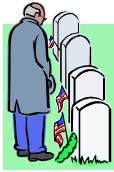
Please remember the sick and suffering in our community and families, especially:



- Kay McEwen
- Joseph Glasser
(Kathy Labonte's father)
- Beverly Teegee
- Judy Nelson
- Nick Palfy
- Sheila Livingstone
- Don Binnie
- Anne Whyte
- Josephine Nykoluk
- Kai Peterson
- Peter Alexander
- Suzanne LeFebvre
- Sr. Margaret Quinn

REJOICING & REMEMBERING

In the hope of the resurrection, we bid farewell to:



- Marvin Lane
- Maurice LaBrosse

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

There are several different options for marriage preparation:



For those sessions offered at St.

Mary's, please contact the parish office to register. For the Engaged Encounter weekends, please call 964-2805 to register.

- Nov 24 & 25
Friday evening & Saturday
until about 8:30 p.m. (with meals) at St. Mary's
- Jan 24 to Mar 7
Six Wednesday evening sessions at St. Mary's
- Mar 23-26
Engaged Encounter Weekend
- May 11-13
Engaged Encounter Weekend

MINISTRIES IN OUR COMMUNITY: MUSIC

Music is integral to celebration. Think about any celebrations you may have attended in the last while; music is usually part of any kind of gathering or celebration. There is something in us that needs to be nourished by music, and music certainly helps to set a tone, a mood, to help us enter into whatever is being done; it bridges and carries us along. In many ways, music draws us in, and we cannot help ourselves – we start to sing, to hum, to move, to dance, to laugh, smile or even cry. Music moves us and calls us.

Music is a vital part of our celebrations whenever we gather as a community of faith to celebrate, whatever the celebration. Imagine a wedding, a funeral, a graduation celebration without music. We would all comment that there was something essential missing. So, whenever we gather, we need music to help us truly enter in and celebrate. The documents of the Second Vatican Council and the liturgy documents of the last forty years all give music a high priority in the liturgy of the Church.

Whenever we think of Music Ministry, we usually think of the people who play the instruments and lead us in song. They are ministering, for sure, and their ministry is essential to the beauty and effectiveness of our liturgies. There are certain skills, talents and gifts necessary for this ministry, obviously. Not everyone can lead the singing or play an instrument. Not everyone can sit and plan the music for a particular liturgy. For those in our community who minister to us in this way, we are grateful.

However, music ministry is not restricted to those who play the instruments and lead the singing. Each member of the congregation at any particular liturgy is also part of the music ministry of the parish. We are all called to a full and active participation in the liturgy, and part of that participation includes involvement in the music – joining in the singing! Through our participation in the music, we minister to each other in our celebrations. My joyful, enthusiastic involvement in singing the hymns or parts of the liturgy may be what the person next to me needs in order to help him or her enter into the celebration and become actively involved. We need to be reminded often that when we come to celebrate liturgy, we do not come to celebrate as individuals, we come to celebrate as a community, and our response has an effect on the response of the rest of the community. We are all music ministers in our parish. We thank those who take leadership in this ministry, but we need to remember that we all minister to each other.

MONTHLY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Below is the synopsis of the October financial statement.

Bank Balance:	98.34
DDF Balance:	170075.64
<u>Accts Receivable:</u>	<u>847.04</u>
Total Assets	171021.02

INCOME		EXPENSES	
Donations	18331.10	Admin.	13495.92
Fees	450.00	Programs	1465.42
Programs	0	Oper./Maint.	6901.95
Other		755.00	
<u>Rentals</u>	<u>3845.00</u>	<u>Rental Op.</u>	<u>3311.72</u>
Total Income	23381.10	Total Expense	25175.01
	Net Income		-1793.91

The bottom line (net income) looks bad, but what is important is the bank balance – and we still had some money in the bank at the end of the month. We took \$3000 from our DDF account to pay for

the new furnace for the conference room, as that was a capital expense, and that is what our savings is for. We have come pretty much to the end of the major repairs and maintenance for this year, so our budgeting should be on track again for the remainder of the year. As always, we need to remember that the income to pay the bills for the parish comes from each one of us. Without the contributions of each individual or family in the parish, we could not operate.

SEMINARIAN TIDBITS

Vener and Rector have begun their last semester as the Loyola School of Theology in Manila. In fact, they will only be there for part of this semester. They hope to do their comprehensive exams before the middle of December, when the school begins its Christmas break. They have completed all their courses except for one, which has been extended into the second semester because the professor was away from the Philippines for a time. These weeks will be a hectic time of preparing for the comprehensive exams, which they will be doing several months ahead of schedule.

Both Rector and Vener have enjoyed these months back home in the Philippines, spending time with family and friends and studying in familiar surroundings. This year they will be spending Christmas with their families, after having been here in Canada last Christmas. They are both looking forward to their return to Canada and to our ciocese on December 28.

Vener will be ordained deacon in Dawson Creek on January 8. The next day, Vener and Rector will go to St. Joseph's Seminary/Newman Theological College in St. Albert, AB for a final semester of study before ordination. We look forward with anticipation to their ordination to the priesthood on May 18, 2007 at Sacred Heart Cathedral. Both Rector and Vener are looking forward to their ordination and to the visit of family and friends for the celebration!

DAILY PROPHET: NAHUM

Over the last few weeks, we've heard a bit about the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah and how they were called to repentance by God. The call fell mostly on deaf ears and, as we know, Israel was hauled off into Exile in 722 by the Assyrians. Judah was still hanging on by a thread, primarily because the Assyrians were experiencing internal and external difficulties. The Assyrians were not very nice rulers. When they went into a country and conquered it, they hauled the entire population off into exile, scattered them throughout the realm and gave the land to others. A very effective way of conquering a nation. At the same time, they used terror and cruelty as a means of keeping their wide-flung empire under wraps. Naturally, many people chafed under such a regime. The Assyrians were also attacked from outside by the Scythians, the Medes and the Egyptians. During the middle to latter part of the 7th century BCE (650 to 612 BC), things started to go seriously downhill for the Assyrians. And finally, in 612 BC, the Babylonians united with the Scythians and the Medes to capture and destroy Nineveh, the capital city of the Assyrian Empire.



It is in this era that we find the oracle of Nahum, a prophet from a town called Elkosh. Nahum is only 3 chapters long and one of the shorter books in the bible, but what it lacks in length, it more than makes up in enthusiasm and glee! Nahum is writing from the kingdom of Judah and can see the writing on the wall regarding the Assyrians. He hears of the troubles Nineveh is experiencing, as surrounding nations launch repeated attacks against it, and Nahum rejoices. For the hated Assyrians, the ones who carried Israel into captivity, and who have been leaning heavily on Judah, are finally going to get their comeuppance... and with a vengeance too.

Nahum's oracle lets us know, in no uncertain terms, that Yahweh detests evil and evil will be removed by Yahweh. The oracle is full of Yahweh's wrath and anger and vengeance. This is one of the few prophetic books in which the message of doom and gloom (in this case directed against Judah's enemy) is not balanced by Yahweh's love and mercy. This is not a call to repentance but a gleeful denunciation of the evil Ninevites and what will befall them as a result of their evil actions. The message of Nahum, read on its own, could lead one to the conclusion that anyone who commits evil is lost, for they will be destroyed by Yahweh. And yet, the message of Nahum needs to be held up against the entire scriptures, and we always need to remember that the message of doom and gloom is tempered by God's mercy and compassion. The message of repentance, love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness brought by Jesus Christ, helps us to put Nahum into its proper context. The book of Jonah, which we'll look at later, is a fitting complement to the book of Nahum, for in Jonah, even the evil Ninevites, when given the chance to repent, find mercy from the God of all compassion. We too, might be tempted to exult over the destruction of evil empires or regimes or people... but are always called to remember that the God of mercy and compassion is always at work, calling each person to repentance. Who knows what happens in the heart of each person? Only God.

BAPTISM PREPARATION FOR INFANTS

Our next baptism preparation session for parents who wish their infants or young children (under 5 years old) to be baptized, will be held on January 17 & 18, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. Parents are expected to attend both sessions. Please phone the parish office to register—564-4097.

OUR WEBSITE

Check out our website for information on the latest happenings in the parish. We'll have our Advent stuff up pretty soon!
www.geocities.com/saintmaryspg