



THE GRRRAPEVINE

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

Number 30

3rd Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2006

CELEBRATION TIMES

Fourth Sunday of Advent	
Sat Dec. 23	7:00 pm
Sun Dec. 24	9:00 am
	11:00 am
Christmas	
Sun Dec. 24	7:00 pm
	9:00 pm
	12:00 midnight
Mon Dec. 25	10:00 am
Tues Dec. 26	10:00 am
Holy Family	
Sat Dec. 30	7:00 pm
Sun Dec. 31	9:00 am
	11:00 am
Mary, Mother of God (New Year)	
Sun Dec. 31	7:00 pm
Mon Jan 1	10:00 am

A HUGE THANK YOU!!!

We'd like to extend a huge thank you to all of our committed and dedicated phone volunteers who have spent the last week or so phoning everybody on our parish list. Thank you!!! Thank you!!!

We'd also like to thank the organizing committee: Rose Palfy, Terry Hawkes & Dorothy Reimer. Without their dedication and time, this parish directory would not be happening! Thank you!!!



DO YOU KNOW...?

One main focus in all the deliberations of the Parish Pastoral Council is building community. We have looked at many different facets of this topic, and there have been different initiatives to help achieve that aim.



One thing that we realize is that it is difficult to build community if you don't know the people who make up the parish. How to get people to know each other is a fundamental question. We try different things like coffee after Mass (not many stay), pancake breakfasts (more stay for this, but again it is a small segment of the parish), different kinds of social events, and the list goes on. Perhaps the problem with so many of these efforts is that people are required to make an effort to go somewhere outside of their normal routine. So, we are going to try another initiative that will only require a stop at the bulletin board as you enter or leave the church.

DO YOU KNOW...? will feature a poster with a photo and a short introduction of a family, couple or individual in the parish on a fairly regular basis. A member of the Parish Pastoral Council will kick off this project, and then will invite someone else to prepare a poster for the bulletin board. In this way, we hope that people in the community will start to recognize other members of the community and perhaps take a moment to say hello to the people featured on the bulletin board.

The introduction that is part of the poster could include, besides names, information such as:

- How long you've been in the parish
- Year you got married (if a married couple)
- Years of children's birth, if applicable
- Kind of work you do
- Where you were born and grew up
- What you like about the parish, or what you hope for the parish

If you are invited to prepare a poster, please take the time to respond; we would like to get to know you.

ADVENT VESPERS

We are celebrating evening vespers on Wednesdays during this season of Advent. Vespers is a chance for us to stop, be still and experience a few moments of prayer and peace and calm. Yes, we're all very busy during this season of Advent, but we also need to take/make some time to savour the beauty of this season of breathless waiting.

Why not take some time this Wednesday to come and pray with us??

St. Mary's Church
7:00 to 7:30 p.m.

PARISH FOTO DIRECTORY

The photography is over and now we're just getting the paperwork together. We have 30 days to submit the addresses, editorial pages and design. After that... we wait... about 8 to 16 weeks...!

A PURPOSE DRIVEN LIFE

Have you read the book, *A Purpose Driven Life*? Are you interested in discussing the book with others? Interested in looking at some of the scriptural texts that are referred to in the book? Then why not give Nives Pastro a call at 562-1735. Nives is hoping to get a group together in January to meet weekly or biweekly and study the book and it's scriptural references in more detail.

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: Sometimes the best laid plans go awry. While in Fort Ware, I got word that my mother was at the point of death. I had to wait for the plane the next day, then left Prince George to go to Alberta, hoping that mom would still be alive when I arrived. That meant a change in many plans, including the weekend in McBride. I spent the week at home with my mother, who did have a rebound, although she is dying of cancer. I now just await further news. Please continue to keep my family in your prayers at this time. I spent last Sunday with the community in McBride and thank Fr. Ken Forster, OMI for stepping into the void at St. Mary's. Except for a possible trip home for the funeral, I will be here until January 7!

Giselle: These past few weeks, I've been busy studying Jonah for our bible study on Wednesday evenings. Last week was very much taken up with the photography for the parish photo directory. Looking ahead, I'm beginning to plan for Theo-Tidbits in the new year, RCIA and Religious Education. Our sacramental preparation classes will begin in February as well. The website has taken a temporary backseat to all of this other stuff, but I'll hopefully have some time to do a house-cleaning of it soon and bring it up to date again. Keep on checking it out!!

And in amongst all of that, I'm packing up my apartment and planning a move into a house.

STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship is part of our Christian vocation. We remember that a steward is one who is entrusted with the management or care of something on someone else's behalf. The Christian vocation is a call to be a disciple, a follower of Jesus. It is Jesus' call to us - not our call. Christians, therefore, are called to be good stewards of the personal vocations they receive. Each of us must discern, accept, and live out joyfully and generously the commitments, responsibilities and roles to which God calls him or her.

We are reminded in the scriptures of the personal nature of a call from Jesus Christ. He does not summon disciples as a faceless crowd, but as unique individuals. Even though we are called us individuals, the vocations of all Christians do have elements in common. The common vocation of Christians is discipleship; to follow Christ and to try to live his life as our own.

While our call is personal and individual, Christ does not call us in isolation from one another. Vocations are communicated, discerned, accepted and lived out within a community of faith. The members of the community try to help one another to hear the Lord's voice and respond.

Jesus not only calls people to him, but also forms them and sends them out in his service. Being sent on a mission is a consequence of being a disciple. Whoever wants to follow Christ will have much work to do on his behalf - announcing the good news and serving others as Jesus did. Discipleship is not just for the one called, it's consequences are for the good of all people.

So, we begin to understand that our VOCATION is the call to follow Jesus as a disciple and STEWARDSHIP is what we do with and about that call. Good stewards hear, accept, welcome and live out joyfully the call to follow Jesus, sharing the good news and serving others. We will continue to reflect on what that stewardship may look like in future articles.

THEO-TIDBITS

Thank you!! For coming out to Theo-Tidbits! We had our four series' this past fall and they were a great success. We are going to continue with our next set of series from January to May. Keep your eyes on the bulletin boards for more information and schedule cards. Send us an email or drop us a line if you have any ideas.

UNLIKELY HEROES & HEROINES OF THE BIBLE

We've almost finished our foray into the Book of Jonah. One more session this Monday at 7:00 p.m. in the Parish Office. In the new year, we'll take a look at Judith & Tobit.

Judith
Wednesdays
Jan 24/31 &
Feb 7/14
7:00 p.m.



Tobit
Wednesdays
Mar 7/14/21/28
7:30 p.m.



We'll continue to meet in the Parish Office Meeting Room downstairs.

BAPTISM PREPARATION

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. Drop us a line to let us know what you think... Anything you'd like to see on the website? Come across any good links lately?
www.geocities.com/saintmaryspg

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

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



- Ann Beaudette (Fr. Richard's mother)
- Joseph Glasser (Kathy Labonte's father)
- Beverly Teegee
- Judy Nelson
- Nick Palfy
- Don Binnie
- Anne Whyte
- Kai Peterson
- Peter Alexander
- Suzanne LeFebvre
- Mary Pfliger
- Sr. Margaret Quinn

REJOICING & REMEMBERING

There have been no baptisms, marriages or funerals in the last 2 weeks.

RECONCILIATION

Only two more Advent Reconciliation services: Dec 19 at COS and Dec 21 at IC.

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.

- Feb 1 to Mar 8
- Six Thursday evening sessions at St. Mary's
- Mar 23-26
- Engaged Encounter Weekend
- May 11-13
- Engaged Encounter Weekend

MINISTRIES IN OUR COMMUNITY: HOSPITALITY

Over and over again we hear the call for people to provide hospitality as we gather for our weekly celebrations. Perhaps we are asking the wrong thing. We perhaps need to become a hospitable community rather than ask for hospitality ministers.



First of all, what is hospitality? The dictionary definition states: "generous and cordial reception of guests; being readily receptive". We understand clearly what it means to be hospitable at home when we welcome guests. We do not leave them in the entrance or ignore them as they enter the house. We greet them at the door and lead them into our home. We invite them to have a seat, we enquire about their well being, we offer them refreshment. We know instinctively how to be hospitable at home.

What does it mean to be a hospitable parish community? It doesn't necessarily mean to have a couple of people stationed at the entrance to greet everyone who comes in the door. That is a good thing to have in a community, but if that is the limit of our hospitality, then we miss the mark. Hospitality in the parish is not the ministry of a few, but is the ministry of the whole community. We are all called to be hospitality ministers in our parish. Each of us, as part of the parish, is called to be welcoming, warm, receptive, caring, cordial. That can be exercised in many ways. It can mean simply acknowledging the presence of someone who sits next to you in the pew. It can mean taking a moment to greet someone that we do not know as they enter the church or as they sit beside us, welcoming the person, introducing ourselves, asking the other person's name, where they are from, if they are here as part of the parish or visiting. A few moments of care and welcome can make all the difference in the world for someone who is in the community for the first time.

There are others ways we can be hospitable as well. The décor of the church can either be welcoming, warm, inviting, or it can be cold and off-putting. The physical attributes of the facility can also play a part in our hospitality. For example, we are making cushions for the elderly members of the community who find the pews uncomfortable to sit in. A long term project may be to have the seats of all the pews cushioned. The sound system and the lighting are also key elements of our hospitality. Some work has been done on the sound, and more is scheduled. There are some plans to provide warmer, more welcoming lighting.

The way the community gathers is another element of hospitality. If people come in and it does not appear that there is any room for them, they may stay for that celebration but not come back again. When we come into the church, it is nice to be near an aisle (especially when quick exits are a necessity!), but if everyone sits at the end of the pews, it gives the appearance that the church is full, even when the centre sections of the pews are empty. Make an effort to move in, leaving room at the ends of the pews. Another option is to sit closer to the front of the church when you come in, so those arriving later can easily find room as they enter.

Our participation in the celebration is another key element. If visitors come in, and the community is dead, not responding, singing, participating, chances are they will not be back. Our celebrations should nourish each member gathered, but in order for that to happen, each one must consciously, fully and actively participate in the celebration. We truly minister to each other by the way that we participate.

Hospitality, as we see, consists of lots of small elements. The key is that every member of the community gathered for the celebration is a minister of hospitality. Greeters can be part of that ministry, but we ALL share in the ministry.

THINK PINK ON THE 3rd

Today we celebrate the Third Sunday of Advent, also known as Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is Latin for "Rejoice"! If you listen carefully to today's readings, you'll hear that word coming up again and again. The Entrance Antiphon begins the celebration with "Rejoice in the Lord always"! The first reading from the prophet Zephaniah urges the people "rejoice and exult with all your heart"! In the second reading, St. Paul urges the Philippians to "Rejoice in the Lord always".

All of this explains why we light the pink candle on the Advent Wreath today. Pink breaks up the more somber colour of purple and reminds us that we should rejoice during this season of Advent. We are a little more than half-way through Advent and we rejoice at the birth of the Saviour and joyfully await his Second Coming. The presider may also wear rose-coloured vestments (commonly a rose-coloured stole).

The season of Lent is also broken up in a similar way, with the somber, more penitential colour of purple being replaced on the Fourth Sunday of Lent by rose-coloured vestments. In Lent, we call this Sunday, Laetere Sunday, which means "delight" or "rejoice".

The pink/rose colour is a visible symbol that reminds us of the changing tones of the season and call us to reflect more deeply on the salvation brought to us by Christ.



DAILY PROPHET: JEREMIAH

This week, we take a look at one of the major prophets in Judah, Jeremiah. His ministry spanned about 40 years, from 627 BCE to the Fall of Jerusalem in 587/586 BCE. He saw it all! He experienced the religious reforms of King Josiah in 621 BCE which encouraged a religious nationalism. He witnessed the decline of the Assyrian Empire, and the struggle for power in the Near East. Egypt tried to shore up the Assyrians only to suffer defeat at the hands of the Babylonians. Jeremiah saw how Judah tried to play power politics by aligning itself with Egypt only to surrender to the Babylonians in 597 BCE. It was in this year, that the cream of Judean society (priests, craftsman, elders) were carried off into exile. And if that wasn't enough, Jeremiah actually experienced the capture and destruction of Jerusalem, when the majority of the remaining population was carried off into exile, leaving only a small remnant (including Jeremiah).



Jeremiah was called to be God's prophet at a fairly young age, and throughout his ministry he preached relentlessly against idolatry and injustice. He repeatedly called Judah back to Yahweh, and was repeatedly rebuffed. Jeremiah was a sensitive man who was tender and filled with compassion for God's people. When they rebuffed Jeremiah & God, he felt the anguish of the rejection personally. He stressed the divine compassion and mercy of God, urging Judah to turn to God and avert disaster.

When King Josiah died in 609, he was succeeded by a series of bad kings (3 of his sons and one grandson). These kings reinstated many of the pagan practices and changed their political allegiances almost daily. While other prophets in Judah (e.g. Hananiah) proclaim that all will go well with Judah, Jeremiah is a lone voice proclaiming that all is not well. If the people do not return to Yahweh, if they no forsake their evil ways and their pagan practices, then God will surely permit an enemy to destroy them. On one occasion, Jeremiah went to the Temple and warned the people that the Temple would be destroyed, something that was inconceivable for the Jews. God dwelled within the Temple, did he not? No one could therefore destroy God's dwelling place. Needless to say, Jeremiah was not very popular with the leaders of the day or the people. He was often threatened with death and experienced a great deal of anguish. Yet, he continued to speak and to proclaim the message that God had given him. Jeremiah wrestled with the whole ministry of prophecy and spoke against the other prophets who only saw blue skies and sunshine ahead. For Jeremiah, the only true prophecy was one that challenged people, called them to a conversion of heart and jolted them out of their sense of complacency.

Although we might think that Jeremiah is a book full of doom and gloom, yet there is also a message of hope. Jeremiah sees a time when the people will return to the land. He sees a time when God will transform human nature and will make a new covenant. "I will be their God, and they will be my people."

A NOTE FROM RECTOR

Greetings to all the Parishioners: I want to express my sincere thanks for all your prayers and support since the time I arrived in the Diocese of Prince George. It is with joy that I want to share with you that I have just completed all the academic requirements for the Seminary Program and for my Masters Degree in Pastoral Ministry here in Loyola School of Theology, Ateneo de Manila University. I am scheduled to arrive in Prince George on December 29. I hope to celebrate part of the Christmas Octave and New Year with you. In this season of Advent, I am remembering all of you in my prayers as one parish community joyfully waiting to celebrate the Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ. May you all have a joyful celebration of Christmas!