



THE GRRRAPEVINE

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

Number 31

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL EDITION

December 23-25, 2006

CELEBRATION TIMES

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

CHRISTMAS VESPERS

We are celebrating evening vespers on Wednesdays during the season of Christmas. Vespers is a chance for us to stop, be still and experience a few moments of prayer and peace and calm. Christmas does not end with December 25, but is just beginning. Why not take some time this Wednesday to come and pray with us??

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

OUR WEBSITE

Check out our website for information on the latest happenings in the parish. There are also archived copies of the bulletin and Grrapevine as well!
www.geocities.com/saintmaryspg

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.

MERRY CHRISTMAS
As we celebrate the Feast of the Nativity, may God fill you with the blessings of peace and joy, the gifts announced by the angels at Christ's birth.

Merry Christmas.

Giselle Jakobs
Roberta Chartrand
Richard Beaudette, OMI

TABLE FOR TWO

Another initiative of the Parish Pastoral Council is  Table for Two. At various times throughout the year, we will give invitations to six people in the parish to a dinner hosted by the Pastoral Council. Those six people will each invite someone to come to dinner with them. The first dinner will be at the end of January, and invitations will be given at random to parishioners the weekend of January 6/7. Hope to see you at dinner!

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: Where did Advent go? Being away for the first week, and having only three weeks of Advent means that I feel like I missed it. However, the marathon of Christmas celebrations should make up for any lack in Advent! I will celebrate in McBride Christmas morning, then return to Prince George for the rest of the week. I plan a fairly quiet week catching up on some home projects that got ignored over the last while and perhaps relaxing in the shop for a couple of days. Rector and Vener will be returning from the Philippines on December 29, so I hope to have time to visit with them before they leave for Alberta for the winter semester.

Giselle: I'm not sure where Advent went either!! It's hard to believe that Christmas is just around the corner. Our regular meetings and programmes are taking a hiatus over the Christmas holidays, most of them reconvening the week of January 8. Which is good, because it'll give me some time to finishing packing and move into my new house. Well... it's not a "new" house, but it's new for me!

Once we get back on track in January, we'll have a few new things popping up on the parish horizon. One of them is Table for Two which is finally going to get off the ground in late January. Check out the front page of this issue for a teaser article... Thank God I'm not a cook or I'd be roped into that one as well!

STEWARDSHIP

There is sometimes the temptation or inclination to divide up our lives into neat little compartments, all separate from each other. We are Catholics on Sunday morning from 8:30-10:30, employees each day, Monday to Friday from 8:30-4:30, parents every day before work and after or all day Saturday, spouse when the two are together, etc. When we do this, there is little or no connection in our lives and we can easily become overwhelmed by the seemingly endless demands on our time and energy.

It is when we see life as a whole that we can truly be the people God calls us to be. Christ calls us to be disciples, to follow him. That means following him 24/7, not just at the "Catholic segment" of our lives. This has real implications for us when we reflect on the call to live lives of stewardship.

In discussing stewardship once, one person made the comment that he could not afford to live as a steward, because he could not take time off from work (or his family) to share his gifts and talents with others, much as he would like to. In looking at this comment, it is clear that there was a compartmentalizing attitude at work. In discussing the comment and the call to stewardship, we began to reflect on a deeper level on what it means to be a disciple and a good steward. The disciple lives out the call and responds to Jesus in all aspects of one's life and at every moment of life. Every thought, word and action, in a very real way, is informed and shaped by the Gospel and by the life of discipleship. So, at work one exercises good stewardship by patience, compassion and respect towards one's fellow workers. It means sharing ideas, insights, talents, helping others to learn or to do their tasks better. It means affording each one the dignity that is theirs in virtue of their being created in God's image and likeness. It means acknowledging other's God-given talents and gifts and being thankful for those gifts and talents. At home, one is still a disciple of Jesus and a good steward of the gifts God has given, sharing life, honouring the members of the family, caring for each other, assisting when needed in a generous, joyful manner and truly living as a member of the family rather than as a drop-in guest. It means being aware of the needs of the others and responding to their needs, being at one another's disposal rather than isolating self and seeking only one's own needs and preferences. Stewardship can also mean sharing time, talents and treasure with others, like the homeless, the poor, the shut-ins, etc. But stewardship is not about taking another hour out of our busy schedules to do something out of the ordinary for someone else. Stewardship means living each moment of one's life giving thanks for all that we have been given and sharing those gifts where we are and in what we are doing at all times.

UNLIKELY HEROES & HEROINES OF THE BIBLE

We've finished our foray into the Book of Jonah. It was very enlightening to see how deep this short little book is. Much more than a "big fish" story! In the new year, we'll take a look at Judith & Tobit.

Book of Judith

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



Book of Tobit

Mar 7/14/21/28 at 7:30 p.m.

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



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 references 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 study the book and it's scriptural references in more detail.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

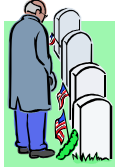
Please remember the sick and suffering in our community and families, especially:



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

REJOICING & REMEMBERING

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



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.

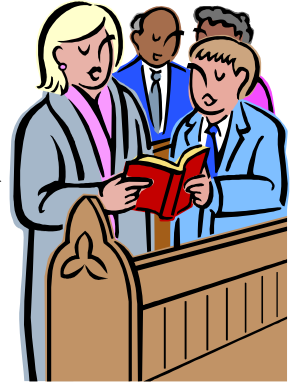
For the Engaged Encounter weekends, please call 964-2805 to register.

- 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: CONGREGATION

It might seem strange to list the congregation as one of the groups of ministers in our community, but the congregation is called to ministry whenever we gather in prayer.

The Second Vatican Council, in its Constitution on the Liturgy, speaks of this in many ways. First of all, we are reminded that liturgy is "an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ" (I, 7). Through baptism we all share in the priesthood of Jesus. The Council goes on to say that "complete and definitive public worship is performed by the mystical body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members." (I, 7) This means that it is not just the priest/presider and liturgical ministers who 'perform' the liturgy. All who gather are part of the liturgy, part of the worship. In some ways that would seem so self-evident, and yet we so often have the attitude that, if we are in the pews, we are there to be spectators. In #11, 14 the Council Fathers go on to say, "It is very much the wish of the church that all the faithful should be led to take that full, conscious and active part in the liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, "a chosen race a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a redeemed people" (1Pet. 2:9, 4-5) have a right and to which they are bound by reason of their Baptism."



Concretely, how do we minister as a congregation? Ministry of the congregation begins before we enter the doors of the building, taking time to prepare ourselves to gather, perhaps reading the scripture readings beforehand. We enter the Church with a hospitable attitude, acknowledging the presence of other members of the community, greeting each other, expressing our joy in gathering together. Ministry of the congregation means being aware of the presence and needs of others around us, making room for others, inviting others to enter into "our space" if they are searching for a place. Full, conscious, active participation means being attentive to what is going on in the liturgy, not visiting or being involved in some other activity (minding children is obviously necessary and is part of one's participation) or simply being present but totally passive. It means responding, actively listening, singing, assuming the appropriate posture and doing all with enthusiasm.

The ministry of the congregation is vital to the quality of our liturgies. If the congregation is passive and non-responsive, there can be the most wonderful music ministry, the best proclaiming of the Word, the best preaching, all the needed liturgical ministries, but the liturgy would be flat and no one would feel particularly nourished by it and those who are ministering would be discouraged in their ministry. There is a world of difference between a liturgy in which the congregation participates actively and fully, and one in which very few take part. The one is life-giving, nourishing and uplifting, while the other is simply a rote exercise that accomplishes little of its real purpose.

Next time you come to church, remember that YOU make a real difference to the life of the community.

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.

CELEBRATE THE SEASON

We all know that the secular Christmas season begins some time in November and ends on December 25. But when does our religious season begin and when does it end?

Our Christmas season begins on the evening of December 24. In many countries today, the tradition is still to set up and decorate the Christmas tree on December 24.

Traditionally, we speak of the 12 Days of Christmas, which would take us through to January 6, the traditional date to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, when Christ was revealed as the light of the world to the Gentiles. In our liturgical calendar, however, Epiphany is rarely celebrated on January 6, but rather on the Sunday between January 2 and 8. But that's not the end of the story yet either!

In the early 1960s, Pope John XXIII extended the Christmas season to include the Sunday after Epiphany, which is the Baptism of the Lord (this year it is celebrated on the Monday following Epiphany). And if that's not enough... in some countries, they leave the crèche up until February 2, the Presentation of the Lord!

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 office to register—564-4097.

DAILY PROPHET: EZEKIEL

Ezekiel was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah, who lived from about 622 BCE to 571 BCE. Unlike Jeremiah, who was left behind in Jerusalem, Ezekiel was hauled off into Babylonian Exile in about 598 BCE. We don't know a lot about the man Ezekiel, other than that he was the son of Buzi and that he was a priest of the Jerusalem Temple.

Although we might picture the Babylonian Exile as an almost slave-like existence, it wasn't as bad as that. The Jews who were taken into Exile, settled in small villages around the city of Babylon and were pretty much free to carry on their business as before. Their only restriction was that they could not return to Judah and Jerusalem. In 592, Ezekiel experienced a vision from God in which he was called to the prophetic ministry.

Ezekiel is one of the more interesting prophets, but also one of the more confusing! Ezekiel uses language which is highly pictorial and symbolic: a flashing storm cloud, strange creatures, wheels within wheels, etc. Bizarre visions and equally bizarre behaviour are characteristic of Ezekiel. On one occasion, he is bound with ropes and lies on his side for 390 days, a period that is equal to the siege of Jerusalem in 588-587. On another occasion he eats cheap and repugnant food to symbolize the conditions of life in Jerusalem under siege. Quite a character!

Ezekiel begins his ministry by proclaiming judgment against Jerusalem and Judah, which is not a new story to us if we've been following the prophets before Ezekiel! Only 5 years separate the beginning of Ezekiel's ministry and the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, so Ezekiel has to get his message across pretty quickly. After proclaiming judgment on Judah, Ezekiel proclaims judgment on the foreign nations. Finally, he concludes with a word of hope and restoration. The people will return to the land of Judah. It is in this section that we find the strangest allegorical vision of Ezekiel, in which he sees a field of dry bones which eventually begin to reassemble themselves and walk about as real people. As with most of his visions and allegories, this passage is about the people of Judah and tells them that God will blow life into the seemingly dead people of Yahweh and bring them to life again.

Ezekiel is also noteworthy for radically expanding the notion of where Yahweh dwells. The Jews were convinced that Yahweh resided within the land of Judah, within the Temple at Jerusalem and within the Ark of the Covenant. One of the reasons why Exile was so disturbing to them, was that they had been removed from the land, from the presence of the Temple and the Ark, and therefore from God's presence. Where was God? Ezekiel, who receives his vision of God in a foreign city, in a foreign country, shatters the notion that God is restricted to a certain country or place. God is not confined to Judah or to the Temple. God is in Babylon with God's people. This was an earth-shattering notion for the Jews. They could worship God in Babylon! They weren't limited to worshipping God in the Temple of Jerusalem. God wasn't limited by time or space. God was with them. Where they were, God was too. Remember what Jesus said, "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I am in their midst".



PARISH PHOTO DIRECTORY

For those of you who missed having your picture taken by the IPC photographer a few weeks ago... you can still have your picture included in the directory! Just submit a photo (between 2"x3" and 4"x6") and \$13 to the parish office by December 29, and we will forward it on to IPC in early January. You'll receive a copy of the directory and your picture will be included for posterity!