



THE GRRRAPEVINE

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

Number 32

EPIPHANY

January 7, 2007

THANK YOU!!!

Thank you to all who contributed to our Christmas celebrations. It truly does take a lot of people to get ready for and to execute our celebrations. For example, nine people gathered on Sunday afternoon to decorate the church for Christmas. This year was a bit hectic with Christmas being on Monday, but everything got done in an hour and a half, thanks to the many willing people who participated. Music ministers, servers, communion ministers, lectors, ushers all gave generously of their time and talents to ensure that our celebrations went smoothly and that they truly were celebrations of prayer and praise. There were other people behind the scenes who made sure the church was clean, that the linens had been laundered and ironed, that the publications were prepared and in the church, that there were extra chairs available and a myriad of other details provided for. To everyone who participated in any way (and especially those we may have forgotten at this point), a sincere thanks. To all the members of the parish and to our visitors who came to celebrate, to you also is due a warm thank you. Without your presence and participation, we would not have been able to celebrated this wonderful feast.

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.

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!

EPIPHANY CUSTOMS

One of the traditions surrounding Epiphany is the *Chalking of the Door*. Family and friends in some countries (e.g. Britian, Germany) gather at the main entrances to homes and ask God's blessing on their dwellings and all who live or visit there. People use chalk to inscribe the following inscription on the lintels or doors: 20 + C + M + B + 07. The numbers stand for the current year (20 + 07). The letters CMB come from the traditional names for the three magi: Caspar, Melchior & Balthazar. Some also suggest that CMB may stand for "Christus Mansionem Benedicat" which means "May Christ bless this dwelling"!

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: We are back in the swing of things again. Some of the Christmas parties extended into this first week of January, so it has not all been hard work! I will be going to Dawson Creek on Sunday afternoon, take part in Venerando's diaconal ordination on Monday evening, and then go on to Alberta to spend a few days with my family after dropping Rector and Vener off at the seminary in St. Albert. I intend to return on Saturday, January 13. Pray that the weather co-operates and the roads remain usable!

Giselle: I took most of last week off and have been busily painting and getting the new house in order. The movers have come and gone and now it's just a matter of unpacking. This coming week, things settled down into a regular routine again in the parish, with RCIA, Religious Education and Theo-Tidbits all off and running again. The next few months promise to be quite busy and action packed as Easter approaches!

RECTOR & VENER

Rector and Vener landed in Prince George on Dec 29, a little travel-weary, shivering a little in the cold, but joyful at returning to Prince George. Vener journeyed to Dawson Creek on Tuesday to prepare for his ordination to the diaconate on January 8, and Rector will join him this weekend. They will go to St. Albert for a final semester of studies. Their priestly ordination is scheduled for May 18 at the Cathedral.

STEWARDSHIP

Near the end of Advent and all during the season of Christmas, we meet Mary in the scriptures. As we encounter her, we are presented with a model of stewardship. Mary teaches us how to live as followers of her Son.

Mary's life is centred on her relationship with God. Even though we do not have long descriptions of Mary's character or life, we quickly understand that she is a woman of deep prayer, that she spends time growing in her relationship with God. In the Annunciation, Mary places herself at God's disposal. Given her relationship with God, she is able to trust in God's love and gifts when God asks her to respond to the request to become the mother of the messiah. She is open to whatever God asks of her, because she knows deep in her soul that her life is a gift from God, and that in a real sense she belongs totally to God. In putting herself at God's disposal ("Here I am, the servant of the Lord"), she is certain that God will continue to provide for all her needs.

Immediately after saying yes to God's request, and hearing the good news of Elizabeth's pregnancy, Mary responds to Elizabeth's need and joy by hurrying off to be with her. She is constantly willing to give of herself for the good of others, knowing that God will provide for her needs through the generosity of those around her.

In the Magnificat, Mary's song of praise, we have a picture of Mary's attitudes. She gives glory to God for all that God is accomplishing for the human race, rejoicing that she is able to offer herself in order that God's plan might be fulfilled. In this she expresses her gratitude to God for the gifts that God gives her - she gives herself totally to God. Mary acknowledges that everything she has and is comes as gift from God and she is willing to use those gifts for others. (take time to read the Magnificat, Luke 1:46-55)

As we continue to watch Mary in the Christmas season, we see her in the stable, listening to (and presumably welcoming) the shepherds who come to see the infant and to tell others what they had been told. Over and over, we hear of Mary treasuring these words and pondering them in her heart, as Simeon and Anna speak of him during his presentation in the temple, as the wise men come from the East. As she shares her infant son with the world, she reflects on this wonderful gift God has given her and the world. As she reflects, of course, she prepares to give her son totally to God in fulfilling his mission.

We know that Mary's life continues past the infancy narratives, but we hear little of her after this except for a few brief glimpses - at the wedding feast at Cana, a few times as Jesus preaches, and finally at the cross. In all of these times, we see a woman faithful to her relationship with God, seeking to serve God's plan as it is expressed in the life and ministry of her Son, and finally giving her Son back to God in the crucifixion, in order that we might all have life.

As we contemplate Mary during this season, we are given a pattern for living out our discipleship, recognizing that our life is a gift from God, seeking to share all our gifts and talents as an expression of our gratitude for all that God has given us and participating in God's plan to share God's love with all people.

THEO-TIDBITS

Our new series is starting this coming week! We'll take a look at religions of the world. Living in a multicultural world as we do, it helps to "know our neighbour". Understanding is better than misunderstanding and knowledge is better than ignorance. Come and learn a bit more about the Far-Eastern religions, and then we'll take a look at the Peoples of the Book: Judaism, Christianity and Islam, all firmly rooted in Abraham as their Father in Faith.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

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



- Joseph Glasser
(Kathy Labonte's father)
- Beverly Teegee
- Margaret George
- Teddy French
- Becca Kennedy
- Judy Nelson
- Nick Palfy
- Anne Whyte
- Kai Peterson
- Peter Alexander
- Suzanne LeFebvre
- Mary Pfliger
- Ann Beaudette
(Fr. Richard's mother)
- Sr. Margaret Quinn
- Detta Quinn
(Sr. Margaret's sister)

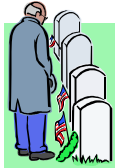
REJOICING & REMEMBERING

We welcomed the following members in the sacrament of baptism:



- Cynan Compo
- Lucas Astorino
- Gabrielle Poole

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



Don Binnie

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

MINISTRIES IN OUR COMMUNITY: FINANCE COUNCIL

The Finance Council is mandated in the Code of Canon Law – the rules and regulations governing the life and ministry of the Church. The responsibility of the Finance Council is described as “assisting the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish” (Canon 537). This responsibility would normally include such activities as preparing a budget of income and expense for the coming year, monitoring the income and expenses throughout the year, preparing a financial statement of income and expenses at the end of the year, managing parish assets (real estate, savings, etc.), overseeing maintenance and upkeep of the real assets and ensuring that there is enough money for the operation of the parish and the proclamation of the Gospel.



The members of the Finance Council are parishioners who have some expertise in business, money management and other skills necessary for this ministry. They are to work in conjunction with the pastor, offering advice and expertise, sharing in the pastor's responsibility to exercise good stewardship over the financial and other assets of the parish. It is always to be remembered that the finances of the parish derive from the offerings of the members of the parish, and that the buildings and other assets of the parish are the result of the generosity of the parishioners and must be cared for and managed, not only for the present, but also for the future. In other words, the members of the Finance council manage the financial affairs of the parish on behalf of all the members of the community,

The present members of the Finance Council have been serving for many years. The guidelines for the Council outline a term of service, and most members have served generously well beyond their term. We will be seeking two new members for the Finance Council during the coming months, to take office at the end of the fiscal year, and will be seeking one other new member in another year. In the meantime, we thank the present members of the Council for their dedication through the years and for the faithful stewardship which they have exercised over our common assets.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT—DECEMBER

Below is the synopsis of the December financial statement.

Bank Balance:	380.53
DDF Balance:	170,075.64
<u>Accts Receivable:</u>	<u>1225.38</u>
Total Assets	171,681.55



INCOME		EXPENSES	
Donations	28,606.75	Admin.	24,026.79
Fees	250.00	Programs	427.18
Programs	751.00	Oper./Maint.	5261.36
Other	68.62		
<u>Rentals</u>	<u>33,401.37</u>	<u>Rental Op.</u>	<u>3465.70</u>
Total Income	33,401.37	Total Expense	33181.03
Net Income	220.34		

We have finished the first half of our fiscal year, and there is good news and more good news. We continue to pay all our bills with relative ease, even though some of our expenses have increased (salaries and benefits is one category with an increase - Giselle is now full time). Sometimes we end the month with only a few dollars, but our utilities, taxes and insurance are paid on a monthly basis, so we are very current and there will not be any large bills at year end. Our regular collections have increased by almost \$9000 over the same time period last year, and that indeed is good news. Once again, thank you for your generous support for the work of the parish.

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.

LENTEN PARISH MISSION

Just to let you know... that we'll be having a Parish Mission from March 4-7. Bishop Gerry will lead us and give us presentations on the Eucharist. Mark your calendars ahead of time!!! And plan to come and join us!

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

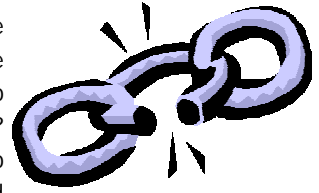
Engaged Encounter Weekend

May 11-13

Engaged Encounter Weekend

DAILY PROPHET: DEUTERO-ISAIAH

As the Jews languished in Exile in Babylon, it would have been easy for them to lose hope and trust in Yahweh. The Babylonian Empire seemed so large, and they were so small. How could things possibly turn around for them? And yet, within 25 years of their Exile, things did begin to turn around. In 562 BCE, King Nebuchadnezzar died and left the Babylonian Empire to his sons. And, as with most empires built and held together by a single person, once that person disappeared, things began to fall apart! Kings followed each other in rapid succession and there was an overall more relaxed atmosphere towards the conquered peoples. In 555 BCE, a new king, Nabonidus took the throne of the Babylonian Empire. He didn't have much love for the capital city of Babylon and chose to make his capital elsewhere, apparently earning the disfavour (at least in the eyes of the inhabitants of Babylon!) of the chief Babylonian deity, Marduk,



If internal tensions in the Babylonian Empire weren't enough to give the Jews hope of restoration... a new player was entering the game as well. Cyrus, King of the Medes & Persians was making a name for himself farther north. He started in what is now northern Iran and his rapidly expanding empire raced westwards, eventually encompassing what is now Turkey. Eventually he turned his eye southwards and captured Babylon in 539 BCE. He didn't even have to besiege the city... the inhabitants were so fed up with their absent King and his disrespect to Marduk, that they opened the gates for Cyrus and hailed him as their new King and Marduk's chosen one.

It is in this era that we have the ministry of Deutero-Isaiah. As we know from reading the article on First Isaiah, the biblical book of Isaiah is composed of 3 distinct parts. First Isaiah was written in the 7th century, before the Babylonian Exile. It encompasses Chapters 1-39. Second Isaiah, also known as Deutero-Isaiah includes Chapters 40-55. Deutero-Isaiah has a markedly different tone and context from that of First Isaiah.

Deutero-Isaiah was written after the Fall of Jerusalem, and was written by someone living in exile in Babylon. Beyond that, we know nothing about the author. The message of Deutero-Isaiah is rooted in the prophecies of First Isaiah, but his tone is completely different. The message of Deutero-Isaiah is characterized by a spirit of unbounded joy and celebration. He can see the light at the end of the tunnel getting larger and larger, whereas First Isaiah could only see the tunnel. For Deutero-Isaiah, the judgment promised by First Isaiah is a thing of the past. Judgment has come and gone and now the Jews can look forward with hope to restoration and redemption. Deutero-Isaiah, writing shortly before the fall of Babylon, can see the writing on the wall, and how King Cyrus is an instrument of God. Luckily for the Jews, Cyrus had a very different policy towards conquered peoples than did the Assyrians or Babylonians. Instead of hauling them off into enforced exile, Cyrus believed that they would be more cooperative if they were allowed a fair degree of autonomy, including freedom of religion on their own native soil. The Exile is almost over!!

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. Sessions will be held in the Parish Office building.

It is important that you phone the parish office to register—564-4097.