

THE GRRRAPEVINE

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

Number 34

5th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 4, 2007

THEO-TIDBITS



Our new season of Theo-Tidbits has started!

Our next series is entitled: Pastoral Care to the Sick and the Dying. It will take place on Tuesday February 6 and Thursday February 8. Both evenings begin at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room. Our guest presenter is Bishop Gerry.

In March, Fr. Richard will lead three sessions on Sin and Grace: Tuesdays, March 13/20/27.

In April, Susan Campbell will tackle the Paschal Mystery and in May, Sr. Hazel will look at annulments & divorce.

Check out the schedule on the bulletin boards for times and dates and places. We have business cards in a pocket on the posters...

ASH WEDNESDAY ASHES



Last year we forgot...! So, this is a reminder that Ash Wednesday is February 21, and we need your old palms to burn to produce the ashes for our celebrations that day. There is a box at the door of the church - please drop off your old palms in it before the weekend of February 17/18.

TABLE FOR TWO

Our first Table for Two took place on Friday, January 26. Six couples arrived at the door, hungry and eager for an evening of fine dining! Chef Richard and his kitchen help served up an exquisite meal (see menu below), along with wine and dessert. All enjoyed themselves and the comments were overwhelmingly positive.

Menu

- Appetizer:* Exotic Salad
- Soup:* Country Harvest Soup
- Main Course:* Grilled Marinated Bison Sirloin
German Potato Salad
Garden Medley
Pickled Vegetables
- Dessert:* Apricot Polenta Cake



For those of you who missed out on this experience, don't despair, there will be more! In fact, our next one is on February 16, with a Mexican theme. Six lucky people will receive invitations over the next week or so. Again, they can invite a companion of their choice to dinner and remember... it's FREE!! There are no strings attached and this isn't a recruiting drive. Just a chance to have a meal and fellowship!

SPRING IS COMING!!!

It is not too early to start thinking ahead and putting some plans into action. Remember last year's plant sale for St. Vincent de Paul? Well, we are planning another one this spring, and we are hoping that it will be bigger and better than last year. Last year, if you remember, we raised a little over \$1000 for the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and we would like to help again this year.



Everyone is invited to contribute to the sale. If you have a green thumb, now is the time to put it to work. Start those cuttings rooting, get some of the seedlings started, plan ahead on ways that you can contribute to the sale. There are already at least 75 geranium plants started, with maybe about 60 new geranium seedlings popping up out of the ground. The geraniums, of all varieties, were a big hit last year. If your plants need a haircut to get them bushing out, don't throw the clippings away. Put them in a glass of water! If you are into seeding perennials and want to contribute some seedlings, they would be more than welcome. Houseplants are an item that was in short supply last year, so if you want to start some houseplant cuttings, now is the time. Anything you can contribute will add to the success of the sale. We plan to make it more of a fair atmosphere this year, with some lawn chairs, coffee and perhaps a doughnut or two and lots of opportunity to browse, schmooze and get some plant material for your summer enjoyment.

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: It's been a quieter couple of weeks in Prince George. After the rush of Christmas and the flying visit home, it is good to have a regular routine again. Our various parish group meetings have been productive, with lots of ideas and projects underway. The first Table for Two has taken place, and all seemed to enjoy the evening. We had many questions and comments from others about getting an invitation. It seems to be an idea that has caught the imagination. They will continue. We are always open to new ideas, and just because they may seem to be outlandish doesn't mean that they won't get implemented!

Giselle: Yes, things have been a little busy the last few weeks. Our new bible study series is halfway over already. Judith is proving to be a challenge for us, but we're wrestling with her. Tobit is next, beginning March 14. Theo Tidbits is up and running again with our next series this coming week. Other than that, the regular meetings are ticking along!

STEWARDSHIP

If disciples can be described as stewards, what does that mean in concrete terms for us today? Remembering that a steward is one who is entrusted with another's property, to care for the property, manage the affairs and make the resources yield, we can look at ourselves today and say the following:

"We are people who are entrusted with many gifts by God: the gift of life, the gift of creation, the gift of faith, of church, of community, the gift of our particular talents and abilities". That means that everything we have and are is a gift from God, entrusted to us to be cared for, managed and made to yield or increase. That has tremendous implications for us if we are serious about living as disciples and not just having the name and the appearance of disciples.

Obviously, discipleship means more than attending Mass on Sunday, receiving communion and celebrating Reconciliation once a year. Reducing discipleship to those bare essentials makes us disciples in name only. As the people gathered around John the Baptist once asked, so we also must ask: "What must we do?"

First of all, a decision needs to be taken. We must decide, each for ourselves, to follow Christ as disciples. It needs to be a personal decision that flows from a desire to follow Jesus and to enter into a closer, more intimate relationship with him. (And before you run away in horror, not everyone is called to enter the monastery, convent or seminary!) It means doing one's best to live as a disciple each minute of each day, in whatever circumstances one might be. Having decided to live as a disciple, then one must take time to grow in relationship with Jesus. That means celebrating Eucharist on Sunday, it also means taking time for prayer each day, taking time to read and reflect on God's Word, taking advantage of opportunities to learn more about our faith and to grow in that faith, gathering with other members of the community for prayer and study, being attentive to what the Church is teaching and seeking to put that teaching into practice. It doesn't mean spending all day in church, but it does mean being aware of our relationship with the Lord and taking moments throughout the day to be aware of his presence with us, to be in communication with the Lord.

A few years ago, there was a fad that had everyone wearing WWJD bracelets. The letters stand for What Would Jesus Do? It is a good question for the disciple to ask in any and all situations. We seek to model our lives, relationships, attitudes, thoughts, words and actions on Jesus' teaching and example. Being a disciple means living our lives in that way; it is a whole way of life, not just part of a life.

We will continue to explore this aspect of discipleship/stewardship in the coming issues.

MONTHLY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Below is the synopsis of the January financial statement.

Bank Balance:	34.11
DDF Balance:	170075.64
<u>Accts Receivable:</u>	<u>1221.65</u>
Total Assets	171331.40

INCOME		EXPENSES	
Donations	16136.62	Administration	16460.93
Fees	700.00	Programs	595.43
Programs	465.80	Operation/Maint.	2520.13
Other	275.00		
<u>Rentals</u>	<u>3225.00</u>	<u>Rental Operation</u>	<u>1706.08</u>
Total Income	20902.42	Total Expense	21252.57
		Net Income	-350.15

You might notice that at the end of each month there is often very little left in the bank (bank balance - the first line in the statement). Some months that can be a bit worrisome, as there are often unexpected expenses. For example, last week we had a major water leak in the conference room from the roof drain, and the cost of that was not expected or built into our budgeting. The income has increased over last year by over \$6000 to date, and that is wonderful, but we cannot become complacent. As always, we need to remember that the income to pay the bills for the parish comes from each one of us.

INTERCESSORY PRAYER

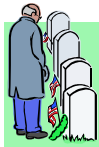
Please remember the sick and suffering in our community and families, especially: Joseph Glasser (Kathy Labonte's father), Beverly Teegee, Margaret George, Teddy French, Becca Kennedy, Judy Nelson, Nick Palfy, Anne Whyte, Kai Peterson, Peter Alexander, Suzanne LeFebvre, Mary Pfliger, Ann Beaudette (Fr. Richard's mother), Valerie Kabai, Cyril Abreau, Rob Marwood, Dorothy Smith, Sr. Margaret Quinn, Detta Quinn (Sr. Margaret's sister).



REJOICING & REMEMBERING

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

Antoni Obuchowski
Donald Stafford



OUR WEBSITE

Check out our website for information on the parish.

www.geocities.com/saintmaryspg

CONFIRMATION & FIRST COMMUNION

Our date for celebrating the sacraments of Confirmation & First Communion with the Grade 2's is Sunday, April 22 at 2:00 p.m. The preparation sessions will take place on the following Tuesdays from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the school gym: February 20 & 27, March 13, 20 & 27, April 17 & 24. School children and Religious Education children will receive a schedule soon!

MINISTRIES IN OUR COMMUNITY: YOUTH MINISTRY

Youth ministry is ministry FOR youth, TO youth, BY youth, and WITH youth.

There have been many, many documents and articles published on the origin of youth ministry. One thing that has proven true over the past three decades: as youth realize that groups were being created just for them, youth ministry spread like wild fire across North and South America.



The Catholic Bishops of the United States published, *Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry* in 1997.

This document was created to renew their commitment to young people and to help parish communities make room for a new generation of disciples. The Bishops celebrate the growth of youth ministry and call on the church community to reach out to youth with passion! They also ask us to realize what youth face today (with its many challenges) as they grow into adulthood.

In *Renewing the Vision*, three goals serve as directions for ministry with youth. The first is Empowerment. Youth are trying to find adventure in their life. They look for a way to contribute something important to the world. They want something to belong to. As a faith community, we offer youth a way to draw them into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We do this by providing opportunities for youth to join in service, ministry and leadership. For example, St. Mary's youth have done activities and carolled for seniors, served breakfast at St. Vincent de Paul, been a part of Camp Morice and (as they grow older), given the chance to lead small groups at retreats and youth conferences.

The second component is Participation. As noted before, youth need to feel that they are part of something meaningful. They want to feel connected to people who they feel safe with. As a church, we support youth and their families by providing resources and information, try to integrate youth into the life of the parish community and promote the Catholic schools. For example, the St. Mary's youth have hosted parent/teen fun nights. They have also stood as sponsors to other youth participating in RCIA.

The final part is Growth. Everyday, our youth are growing. It is a time where life brings dramatic physical, social, intellectual and spiritual changes. As a body of Christ, we want to support the development of healthy, compassionate and faith-filled youth, address their needs (whether it be developmental, social or religious) and offer experiences and opportunities for youth to grow in positive ways in a nourishing environment. St. Mary's does this simply by having a weekly meeting where youth can be with others of the same faith, share experiences, laugh, learn and love.

St. Mary's Youth Group has done extremely well for over a decade. And, this ministry is not a one person job. Many thanks to all who have helped lead, chaperone and support this wonderful group.

"Youth Ministry" may be defined as the response of the Christian community to the needs of young people, and the sharing of the unique gifts of youth with the larger community. ("A Vision of Youth Ministry," USCC, 1976)

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.

Mar 23-26: Engaged Encounter Weekend

May 11-13: Engaged Encounter Weekend

REMEMBER THE LISTENING CENTRES?

The Listening Centres are small, neighbourhood faith-sharing groups that were set up during the Oblate Parish Mission in the Fall of 2005. It was hoped that these groups would continue to function after the Mission, but most have not.

There is a small group of people in the parish who would like to get a listening centre going on a bi-weekly basis, but they would like more members to be involved. The plan is that the group would meet at the rectory in one of the meeting rooms. If you are interested in exploring this possibility, you can contact Terry Bopp 564-2635, Paul Laliberte 563-8465 or Dorothy Reimer 562-3749.

UNLIKELY HEROES & HEROINES OF THE BIBLE

Our new bible study is half-way done. We have two more sessions and will then take a break for a few weeks before tackling Tobit.



Book of Tobit
Mar 14/21/28 & Apr 4
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!

DAILY PROPHET: ZECHARIAH

Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai, our previous prophet, and we can date his ministry very precisely to 520-518 BCE. Like Haggai, Zechariah reassures the Jewish community that God is on their side and that things will get better. Zechariah was the son or grandson of a priest and as a result is more concerned with the cultic aspects of Temple worship and with the priesthood.



The book of Zechariah has been divided into two parts by scholars, Chapters 1-8 which include a number of visions and oracles (First Zechariah), and Chapters 9-14 which are quite different and probably came at a later time and from different hands (Second Zechariah).

Unlike many of the earlier prophets who communicated God's word quite straightforwardly, i.e. "Thus says the Lord", First Zechariah is characterized by a number of visions which contain apocalyptic elements. Apocalypse, contrary to widespread belief, does not mean "end of time" visions, rather, the word itself means to "reveal" or to "pull back the curtain". Thus, the visions and oracles of Zechariah reveal God's word and will, but are cloaked in bizarre symbols and imagery. Zechariah is not the first prophet to use symbols in his visions and oracles. We have, for example, Ezekiel, and his image of the valley of dry bones. Yet, with Zechariah, we see the visions taking on a new form, which will ultimately result in such books as Daniel and Revelation. The visions in Zechariah are mediated by angelic beings, who interpret what the prophet sees. This results in a more distant God, a God who is more majestic and transcendent than earlier perceptions of Yahweh.

In order to understand Zechariah, therefore, it is quite helpful to understand some of the symbolism surrounding the images that he uses. Everything is cloaked in a secret meaning, a meaning that was understood by the Jews, but was basically "Greek" to the Greeks and other pagans. For example, in Zechariah's second vision (2:1-4), he speaks of 4 horns and 4 blacksmiths. The horns are generally understood as being a metaphor for world powers, in this case, the enemies of Judah who scattered the people and took them into Exile. In the fifth vision (4:1-6a, 10b-14), the prophet sees a lampstand with seven facets, and the angel helpfully explains that the facets are the eyes of the Lord that range over the whole earth. Later, in the books of Daniel and Revelation, the angels won't be quite so helpful in their explanations of mysterious symbols!

Behind these bizarre symbols and visions, we get to the core meaning of Zechariah. The prophet is basically reinforcing the prophecy of Haggai, reassuring the Jewish community that it is Yahweh's will that they rebuild the Temple and encouraging them to restore the Davidic throne to Zerubbabel. He also foresees a messianic age that is about to come, a time of peace, justice and plenty in world where Yahweh will be acknowledged as sovereign by all, Jews and Gentiles alike. Thus, Zechariah is ultimately a message of hope for the future of humanity, a message that we often desperately need here today, surrounded as we are by so many wars and injustices.

WHAT AM I DOING FOR LENT THIS YEAR?

In a little bit over two weeks we begin the season of Lent. So in the next issue of the Grapevine, we are including a little booklet which will help us work out a plan for celebrating Lent with Easter in mind. The booklet will invite you to fast, pray and give alms with a purpose. So often, Lent seems to slip by and we're celebrating Easter before we know it. This year, may you arrive at the end of Lent ready to make new your baptism in the Easter Triduum.