



THE GRRAPEVINE

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

Number 46

16th Sunday in Ordinary Time

July 22, 2007

TO WELCOME... OR NOT...

The readings for this weekend focus on offering hospitality. In the first reading, Abraham offers table hospitality to the three strangers who happen to pass by his tent. As we read the passage, it is obvious that they were headed over to visit Abraham, but he may not have been so aware of that fact. As Abraham sees the strangers, he goes forward to make them welcome. He invites them to take their ease, and he goes off to make arrangements for a meal so that they can be nourished, refreshed and strengthened for their journey. For the people of the Middle East, hospitality was a hallmark of their living. One would not think of not offering hospitality, even if one did not have much more to offer than a simple drink. Looking at Abraham, living in a tent, we would be led to believe that he is a nomad, following his flocks and herds. As such, he would not be a wealthy person. However, he asks that cakes be made of the finest flour and he selects a tender calf for the meal. He has some means, and is willing to share generously what he has. As the strangers are made welcome and fed, they bless Abraham for his hospitality – Sarah will bear a son!

In the Gospel, we have the wonderful story of Martha and Mary welcoming Jesus into their home. Rather than get caught up in the debate whether action or contemplation is the preferred stance of the disciple, we are invited to look at the meaning of what is being done. Jesus responds to an invitation to share the women's hospitality, which is extraordinary (a commentary of the day states that it is better to burn the Torah than to teach it to women!). They are opening their home and their hearts and lives to Jesus and to the word that he is speaking. In welcoming Jesus, they offer him a time of rest and relaxation and they will nourish his body as well. The blessing is his presence in their home and the word that he shares with them. The response of both Martha and Mary to Jesus' presence is true hospitality. Having opened their home to him, they make him welcome, listen to him, provide companionship and also feed him. In order to feed Jesus, the food must be prepared.



In both passages, we are reminded of the importance of welcoming others and sharing with them. Obviously table hospitality is important, but it is a symbol of the hospitality of the heart – being open to receive others, to be attentive to them, to share our lives with them. There are many times in the Gospels when Jesus focuses on the kind of hospitality that is portrayed in the readings today – the Parable of the Last Judgment reminds us that every gesture of welcome and assistance that we make is an act of discipleship, in other moments Jesus speaks of giving a cup of water in his name, of welcoming strangers, etc. We need to be attentive to the message that all of our actions are a reflection of our discipleship and that, as disciples, we are called to reach out to those around us, especially those in need. Even the smallest actions are expressions of our discipleship and of God's love for all people. With what do we equate discipleship – being at Mass for an hour on Sunday morning, or all the actions of our lives, both large and small as we relate to those around us each day?

CREATION HIKERS

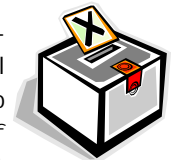
Our next hike is on Sunday, August 5 and will take us to the Ancient



Cedar Forest about 100 km east of Prince George. These trees, part of a proposed cut-block, are absolutely amazing, one is 43 feet in circumference. The hike is relatively easy takes about 2 hours (that includes photo time!). We'll leave the St. Mary's parking lot at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday afternoon.

PARI SH PASTORAL COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Three members of council have come to the end of their first term, and so we need to have elections this year.



There will be nomination forms in the church over the next six weeks or so and we invite all members of the parish to prayerfully consider who might serve on our council.

Before nominating someone, please be sure that you have that person's consent. Our elections will be held in mid-September.

WEBSI TE

Check out our website!

www.geocities.com/saintmaryspg

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: Summer is speeding by at an incredible pace! There has been time to work in the vegetable garden (5 weeks of neglect did not do it any good) as well as the flower garden. The flowers are ahead of the veggies!

This coming week I will spend time at home in Alberta with my family. I will also be attending the Episcopal ordination of Bishop Elect Kenneth Nowakowski, OSBM, the new Ukrainian bishop of New Westminster. When I get back for next weekend's celebrations, the "summer" will be half over. So much to do, and so little time. The time in August will be spent preparing for the programs in the parish in the fall as well as the sessions I will be doing at Lay Formation. There won't be a lot of time for fun in the sun.

Giselle: I spent a few days back in Terrace a couple of weeks ago, and enjoyed visiting with my mom and sister and my little niece. She's growing by leaps and bounds!

Last weekend, I even managed to get out camping for a few days at Purden Lake!

Here in the parish, I'm looking ahead to the fall and preparing for the new season of Theo Tidbits and other activities, such as Bible Studies and Book Discussions, etc.

In the meantime, I'm also looking forward to the berry picking season. The Saskatoons are almost ready in certain areas, although the blueberries and chokecherries are a long ways from being ready!

LAY FORMATION WANTS YOU!!

The current session of the Lay Formation Program in Prince George is coming to an end, and a new session will be starting in September.

The Lay Formation Program is a two year program, held one weekend a month for ten months each year. The focus is on learning more about our faith, the teaching of the Church, Scripture, Theology, ministry, liturgy, etc. It is a rich and exciting journey discovering in a deeper way what it means to be a member of the Church and a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The object of the program is to help participants grow in their faith as well as in understanding of their faith. For some, this means a greater involvement in the ministry of the parish. For others, it means involvement in other areas of our broader community. In any case, ministry is not the main focus of the program; growth in faith is the main focus.

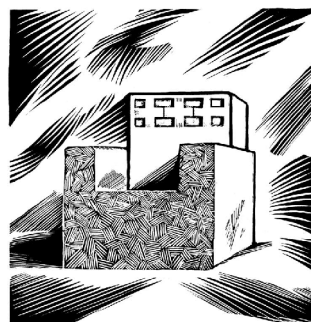
Is your curiosity piqued? Brochures available at the main entrance of the church in the brochure holders. You can also contact Susan Campbell at the Diocesan Pastoral Centre if you would like more information. Application forms are available from Fr. Richard. It is our hope that we can fill the upcoming session again—there is room for up to 20 participants in each program. So, if interested, register early.

As well... you might get a tap on the shoulder from a member of the pastoral team or perhaps from previous participants in the Lay Formation programme, inviting you to consider this grow experience. Give it some thought!



OUR WORSHIP SPACE: THE CHAIR

The ancient Latin word *cathedra*, used to designate the chair of a high-ranking civic official, was adopted by the early Christian church to refer to the cathedra or chair of the bishop. It was from the cathedra that the bishop presided at the liturgy and preached on the scriptures. Other chairs (*sedilia*) for attending priests and deacons were placed to the side. Later developments of church architecture saw the cathedra of the bishop elevated on a podium, and more throne-like in design. As parishes developed in the fourth century, a less ornate chair was used in the local church by the priest. The presider's or presidential chair soon became superfluous as the priest stood at the altar for most of the liturgical action.



The liturgical reform of this century has sought to recover the function of the chair of the presider. The materials and design of the chair should identify it as part of the particular place of worship. Its style should speak of the ministry of presiding, not of remoteness or prestige. Since we now have a fuller understanding of Christ's presence in the assembly of all the faithful, the presider's chair cannot signify privilege, but rather a sense of leadership in prayer, as well as the dignity and service that are inherent in Christian ministry.

From this chair, the presider calls the people of God to prayer, joins them in attentiveness to the word, keeps with them moments of silence, leads them in petitions of forgiveness, invites them to profess their faith, lifts up their intercessions for every need and sends them forth with God's blessing. And although rarely done by anyone other than a bishop, the rubrics allow preaching from the chair, too.

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FRUITS OF THE HARVEST

Do you have fruit trees or bushes in your backyard? Do you have time to pick all of the fruit? If you're already dreading the harvest season, because you have too much fruit and don't know what to do with it... Well, we have a solution that might benefit everybody!!!

There are some people in the parish who love to pick fruit or berries. And there are others who love to make jams, jellies or pies from the aforementioned fruit and berries. If we put all three of these groups together (provider, picker & preserver) we could have some fun and use our gifts to harvest God's gifts to us!

We thought that maybe those of you who have fruit trees or bushes that are too much for you to handle, could phone the parish office and leave your name and number and the type of fruit that is overwhelming you. At the same time, any pickers could phone the parish office and learn of potential harvesting.



SCRIPTURE INSIGHTS

Hospitality: the Middle Eastern virtue, par excellence, as anyone who has traveled there knows! Literally, the Greek word *philoxenia* means "love of the stranger"—an alien concept in western culture today where "fear of the stranger" predominates.

"Do not neglect hospitality," writes the author of the letter to the Hebrews, "for through it some have unknowingly entertained angels," a clear allusion in today's first reading. Little did Abraham know that the three men whom he saw from the entrance to this tent were the Lord and two of his angels. (In the Old Testament, God and his heavenly messengers are frequently manifested under the guise of a human being.) In receiving Jesus into her home, Martha welcomed the very Son of the Most High. Was Jesus a stranger to her at this point? Possibly. This is the first mention of Martha and her sister, Mary, in Luke's Gospel. Their meeting takes place as Jesus "continues his journey" to Jerusalem. Here, as in John's story of the Samaritan woman, Jesus' hosts, like Abraham and Sarah, are always recipients of what God has to give. Luke's Jesus warns against the preoccupations and distractions that can impede reception of these gifts. "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing." Mary, portrayed as a disciple sitting at the feet of the Master, listening to his every word, "has chosen the better part." Throughout his Gospel, Luke highlights the themes of listening to the Word and acting on the word. Those who do so have chosen the better part. They are blessed.

- What is the "word" Paul speaks of in today's second reading?
- What distractions or anxieties impede my discipleship?
- Do you find it hard to make prayer a priority when you have a lot of work to do?

SACRAMENTALS: HOLY WATER



Holy water is another common sacramental that we encounter each time that we enter a Church. As we walk in, our eyes automatically look for the holy water font into which we dip our fingers and make the sign of the cross.

As we dip our fingers into the holy water, we are reminding ourselves of our baptism. As we make the sign of the cross we are restating our commitment to our Christian faith as expressed in the Creed and in our baptismal promises. In blessing ourselves with the holy water, we are expressing repentance for our sins and asking for God's help in the future.

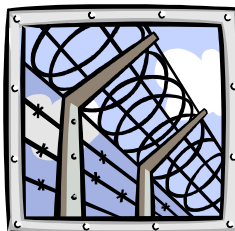
In some Catholic cultures, people even have holy water fonts in their houses, perhaps at the front door or in the bedroom. Holy water is also used in the blessing of people and or things. It is used, for example, in the blessing of vehicles and animals.

At the same time, we must remember that holy water is not some magical substance that acts as a forcefield against sin and evil. It serves to remind us of who we are: baptized children of God. It serves to remind us that we are always in need of repentance. It serves to remind us that God loves us far more than we could ever imagine and watches over us. It serves to remind us that we are not alone.

PRISON MINISTRY

Jesus told us that whenever we visit or care for those in prison, we are visiting or caring for him. While visiting prisoners may not be feasible for many people, there are ways in which we can still minister to those in prison.

Frank Jamin is the chaplain at the local correctional centre. He has expressed a need for bibles and other spiritual reading (e.g. prayer cards, booklets, Catholic Digest, etc). Perhaps you have some good reading material in your house, or maybe you've got too many bibles (is that even possible)? There are people at the prison who hunger and thirst for the Good News. We have a basket on top of the Food Bank cabinet to collect material.



MARTHA OR MARY??

Are you a Martha? Are you a Mary? Is one really better than the other? Let's face it, if we were all Mary's, nothing would get done in this world. We'd all starve or end up eating cold canned ravioli!

In the past, this reading has been used to support the idea that the contemplative (a.k.a. religious) life is somehow better than the busy (a.k.a. secular) life. And yet, there is more to the story if we dig a little deeper.

The problem with Martha is not that she is busy preparing a meal for her honoured guest. The problem is that she is "worried and distracted". There's nothing wrong with being busy and getting things done. The problem arises when we let the business of our lives take over and affect our sense of spiritual balance.

In actual fact, all of us need to hold the Martha and the Mary in tension and in balance. Things need to get done in life, but we also need to make sure that our spiritual life is nourished as well. We can take time out for prayer, or we can allow our work itself to be our prayer. Pray as you clean the house, mow the lawn or fix the motorcycle.

FROM OUR BISHOP

Dear Pastors and Faithful:

More and more in our faith-world we speak of co-workers in the vineyard of the Lord, collaborators in carrying on our Lord's work. In our Diocesan Prayer for Vocations we pray for priests, consecrated persons, married and single people, asking our Lord to bless us with all the vocations needed to enhance our life of faith.

On May 18th we celebrated the ordination of Fathers Rectorino Tolentino and Venerando Sabacan. It was a beautiful celebration and everyone had a sense of how we were being blessed by God with the presence of two new priests.

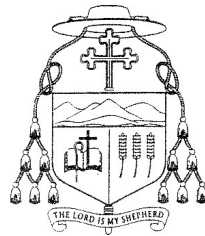
On Sunday, August 19, 2007, at the 11 o'clock Mass at Sacred Heart Cathedral, we will celebrate the religious profession of Sister Maria Paz Arnes Barrutieta, hermit.

The Eremitical Life (the way of life of a hermit) has been part of the life of the church from the very first centuries. The Christian hermit is the person who retreats to a simple life in solitude for the sake of prayer. We are blessed in our diocese by the presence of Sister Maria Paz, a hermit completely dedicated to a life of solitude and prayer all for the greater well being of the persons and works of our diocese. Church law requires that by the eremitical life "the Christian faithful devote their life to the praise of God and the salvation of the world through a stricter separation from the world, the silence of solitude and assiduous prayer and penance."

Come join in the celebration on August 19th as we give special thanks to God for yet another gift by which God is blessing our diocesan family. We pray for Sister Maria Paz that she will have the help she needs to faithfully live out the special way of life to which God is calling her.

Sincerely in our Lord,

Gerald Wiesner, O.M.I.
Bishop



DO YOU KNOW...?

Here's a quickie quiz... Do you know which family last had their photos on the bulletin board for the Do You Know... Poster?? Right now we have Mike Vogel & family... Who was before that? The poster idea is a great way to get to know the people of our parish a bit better!

NEW TO THE PARISH??

Are you new to the parish? We'd love to hear from you!! Please introduce yourself after Mass, or fill out a registration form on the bulletin boards.

THIS WEEK AT ST. MARY'S

Sun July 22	Mon July 23	Tues July 24	Wed July 25	Thurs July 26	Fri July 27	Sat July 28
9 am—Mass 11 am—Mass	7 am—Morning Prayer 7:20 am—Mass	7 am—Morning Prayer 7:20 am—Mass	7 am—Morning Prayer 7:20 am—Mass	7 am—Morning Prayer 7:20 am—Mass	7 am—Morning Prayer 7:20 am—Mass	
				7 pm—Pr. Group		7:00 pm—Mass