



THE GRRAPEVINE

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

Number 50

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time

September 16, 2007

GOD PURSUES US RELENTLESSLY



In this Sunday's readings we have some powerful examples of how God pursues us tirelessly, no matter who we are or how many times we fall short of our calling. In Paul's first letter to Timothy we are assured that Jesus came to invite all to come closer and believe. Even though, like Paul, we may consider ourselves sinners, God continues to love each of us and wants us to turn again toward that endless Love.

In the three parables Jesus tells the guests at dinner - the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son - he symbolically emphasizes God's relentless pursuit "until" finding what was lost and welcoming home those who are lost. In so many different ways God pursues us until at last we give in

to God's invitation to us to be loved and to love others.

And in the Exodus reading about the chosen peoples' 40 years of crossing the desert into the promised land, Moses sees the people turn away from God again and again. Instead of being discouraged by this, Moses urges God not to give up on them. He reminds God of the choice God made for them to be the chosen people and to show mercy to them once again. Finally, his persistence pays off and God relents and welcomes the people back into favor - once again.

These parables and stories are not just about God's actions, but also about our call to respond. Today in the parish we celebrate our response to God's continuing call through 40 years of the Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace - or Development and Peace, as we've come to know it.

40 years ago Pope Paul VI wrote the encyclical, Progress of Peoples (*Populorum Progressio*) which set the Church in a new direction. Based on Jesus' example recorded in the Gospels, the Pope encourages us to help all people develop their full human potential. He set the foundation not just for labourers as Pope Leo XIII did in *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, but that every person deserves to become who God created them to be.

The Canadian Bishops wanted Catholics to be able to respond in an organized way, to help as many folks as possible develop their full human dignity. Development and Peace has been the organized effort of the Canadian Church for these past 40 years and today we celebrate that milestone.

We acknowledge the efforts of parishioners who have taken the lead in the parish to make us aware of the issues people struggle with in countries of the Global South - Africa, Asia and South America. Our assistance to them has been and continues to give hope, to be consistent and effective. To make it possible for people in the Global South to realize their dreams and aspirations of providing for themselves and developing humanly, CCODP also depends on our involvement in responding to God's call to give something back, to make relationship right to create justice.

Development and Peace calls us to be co-workers on behalf of the Gospel and the development of more just relationships among peoples and nations.

CREATION HIKERS



Our next hike is Saturday, September 22. We're going to hike half of the Cranbrook Hill Greenway Trail, which extends from UNBC to the Otway Ski Centre. The whole trail is about 18 km, but we'll stop at the Takla Forest Road which makes our hike only about 9 km. It's mostly rolling with a few ups and downs. We'll meet at the St. Mary's School parking lot at 8:30 a.m. The hike should take anywhere from 2.5 to 3.5 hours. Bring a water bottle!! And pray for good weather!

NEXT WEEK

Richard will be away at meetings and Study Days all week, Giselle will be gone from Wednesday on for Study Days and Jeannine will be away on Tuesday. If you are calling, please leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

LAY FORMATION

We have seven members of the parish enrolled in the Lay Formation program, which begins this weekend. As these members embark on this exciting journey of faith, we wish them well and ask you to keep all of them in your prayers.

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: The quiet week wasn't! It is said that nature abhors a vacuum, and my schedule seems to have the same abhorrence. The coming week will be taken up almost entirely with diocesan events - Priests' Council and Study Day, Diocesan Finance Council, Study Days, Catholic Schools meetings, and the odd meal, just to keep up our strength. At the end of the week, we have *Table for You...and your Friends*, for students at UNBC and CNC. There have been a few reservations for that already, and I am really looking forward to meeting some of the students who have come to Prince George to study.

As the summer continues to decline, it is nice to sit and look at all that developed in the garden this year, and to begin to plan for next year. Gardeners and farmers rarely wait until the end of harvest before planning the next crops! That might explain some of my ways of doing things in everything else!

Giselle: Yes, summer is certainly over! Our different activities are slowly getting off the ground and there is definitely a lot happening in our parish. Berry picking season is pretty much over... who has time at this time of year anyhow!

Next week I'll be attending the Diocesan Study Days and the RCIA workshop. And then there's the usual meetings, the *Table for You...* and your Friends, and then a hike next weekend. The trick is to keep balance in my life!! Something we all struggle with... oh well...

BELONGING - AND BEING PART OF

Sociological research has shown that people today want the benefits of being part of a group or organization, but do not want to make a commitment to the group or take any responsibility for the life of the group. In other words, no volunteering to do anything for the larger group. The research has shown that this applies across the board - whether it be a social club, a sports group, a service club or a church or community group.

In baptism, we are initiated into the Church - we become part of the Body of Christ. As members of the Church, we are called to be disciples of Jesus and continue his mission in our world today. ALL members of the Church share responsibility for this mission in virtue of our baptismal priesthood. When Jesus called disciples, their first task was to listen to him, to learn what he was sent to teach. They were to make the teaching their own, to accept it for their own life and to live it as fully as humanly possible. Finally, the disciples were commissioned and sent out to continue the work of Jesus. They had to take responsibility for the life and mission of the Church.

Through our baptism, we are called to be disciples of Jesus, in union with the members of the whole Church. After the baptism with water, we are anointed with Chrism, being reminded that "As Christ was anointed Priest, Prophet and King, so may you live always as a member of his body, sharing everlasting life". St. Paul reminds us often in his letters that each member of the Body of Christ is given gifts, which are to be used for the building up of the Body. As baptized members of Christ's Body, we don't have a choice - we are committed to living a certain kind of life and to continuing the mission of Christ entrusted to the Church. We cannot be complacent, sitting back and allowing "someone else to do it". We are called to use our gifts for the good of others, to roll up our sleeves and be involved, to take responsibility for the life and mission of the Church. We are stewards of those gifts and they are to be used for their intended purpose, for our good and the good of others. In one sense we do not have the option of not volunteering, not being involved. By our baptism we are involved, and we must respond to the call to minister to others using whatever gifts God has given us.

MONTHLY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Below is the synopsis of the August financial statement.

Bank Balance:	19.00
DDF Balance:	172256.85
Accts Receivable:	<u>2981.97</u>
Total Assets	175257.82



INCOME		EXPENSES	
Donations	12959.14	Administration	9686.60
Fees	1075.00	Programs	99.99
Programs	000.00	Operation/Maint.	6340.84
Other	284.50		
<u>Rentals</u>	<u>3725.00</u>	<u>Rental Operation</u>	<u>1000.49</u>
Total Income	18043.64	Total Expense	17127.92
		Net Income	915.72

Summer is normally a low time for parish income, although we have been having collections that are fairly good for summer time. Hopefully, with everyone back from holidays and into a regular routine, our income will rise to its normal level. This, coupled with lower maintenance costs during the fall (most work is done during the summer months) should give our bottom line a healthier look each month. Thank you to all for your continued generous support of the work and mission of the parish.

THEO-TIDBITS

Our new season of Theo-Tidbits is in the works! If you check the bulletin boards, you'll see that we have our schedule posted, along with some bookmark-schedules for you to take home. Pick one up today and see what interests you!! Our second series begins Sept 24 and is entitled "God is Love". Bishop Gerry will facilitate this series.

BROWN BAG IT



Did you get your brown bag that was included in this week's bulletin??

Once again, we are inviting parishioners to fill the bag with non-perishable food items (see the red list on each bag), and bring it back on the weekend of Oct 6/7. We will bring the bags up during the Collection, just as we did during this past Lent.

Fall is a time when the St. Vincent de Paul Society could really use some assistance, and we are encouraging all St. Mary's parishioners to contribute what they can!

NEW TO THE PARISH??

Are you new to the parish? Have you filled out a parish registration form yet?

They're available on the bulletin boards at the entrances of the Church.

Better yet, introduce yourself to Fr. Richard or Giselle after Mass. We'd love to meet you and get the chance to know you.



A GREEN CHURCH

An old joke says that when God put Adam in the Garden of Eden, He gave him a rake. Then, he added, "I made the garden perfect. Now take care of it."

That might be a crude way of encapsulating Christian environmentalism, but it is far from the age-old Christian tradition of understanding nature as a servant of humanity, meant to be dominated and exploited. Rather, it turns the relationship upside down.

The Orthodox Christian tradition has long understood human beings are meant to be servants of God's creation. Our treatment of the environment is symptomatic of our treatment of ourselves and our relationship with God. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, says that "when we violate sacredness of creation, we disturb the harmony God desires us to uphold. We're violent with the Earth as with one another."

In the Orthodox tradition, reverence for the earth and a desire to protect it are an obvious outcome of a close relationship with God, one fostered by prayer and repentance.

Though not as developed, the Roman Catholic Church is beginning to find within its theology sustenance for a more nurturing, supportive stance for the environment. In their 2003 Pastoral Letter on the Christian Ecological Imperative, the Canadian bishops said:

"God's glory is revealed in the natural world, yet we humans are presently destroying creation. In this light, the ecological crisis is also a profoundly religious crisis. In destroying creation we are limiting our ability to know and love God. 'The ecological crisis is a moral issue' and 'the responsibility of everyone,' says Pope John Paul II. 'Care for the environment is not an option. In the Christian perspective, it forms an integral part of our personal life and of life in society.'"

The bishops add that: "To enter into ever-deeper relationship with God - this 'Lover of Life' - entails striving to develop right relations with nature and with other human beings. But life on Earth today is plagued with an unprecedented and accelerating ecological crisis. Deforestation, species extinction, climate change, ecosystem collapse, contamination of air and water and soil erosion are just a few of the enormous ecological problems which we face in Canada and elsewhere in our world. ... Environmental health concerns are frequent, arising from the Sydney Tar Ponds in Nova Scotia to urban smog alerts in Toronto or Montreal, from contaminated mine sites in northern Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories to the safety of food that every Canadian family will eat."

Today we can add Alberta's oil sands to that list of environmental disasters in the making. Religious faith may not be necessary to have a deep abiding concern for the Earth, but it helps to explain why we cannot shirk this responsibility.

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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). We have a basket on top of the Food Bank cabinet to collect material.

VESPERS

This Sunday afternoon, we will celebrate Vespers at 4:30 pm. Vespers is sung evening prayer and is a wonderful opportunity to come together and pray. If you haven't yet come to a celebration, why not make this your first one!!

WEBSITE

Check out our website! We have recently added an online parish calendar!

www.geocities.com/saintmaryspg

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Daniel Correale of St. Mary's Parish for making the Spruce Kings line-up as a forward. We wish him well in all his endeavours! And if you're at a Spruce Kings game, keep an eye on him!



WHAT DO YOU NEED... OR WANT??

One of the roles of the parish pastoral council is to help the pastoral team address the needs of the parish. The question is... what exactly are the needs of the parish?? We really can't interview each and every member of the parish, so we'll try something else.



The Parish Pastoral Council decided that we could try a needs assessment survey. We want to know what YOU want or need!! Maybe you don't want to attend a bible study, but you'd love to come to an evening of Taize prayer? Maybe you don't "do" small groups, but you love it when the parish has a potluck dinner? Only you know what you want and need. And we, as the parish pastoral council, want to hear about it!! We plan to have a survey in a couple of weeks. Keep your eyes peeled for it!

TABLE FOR TWO

Table for Two is an event that had great success last year. We welcome any people who would like to share their talents for cooking, serving or cleaning up for the evenings coming up this year.

There are usually 10-14 guests, and 4 or 5 people working, which means that one cooks for up to 20 people. The evenings are a lot of fun, and community is built in the kitchen and the dining room!

PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL

In case you were wondering... no, we did not have parish pastoral council elections last weekend! We had three openings on council, but we did not receive any nominations prior to that weekend. Therefore Terry Hawkes and Andrew Ross were re-elected to council by acclamation. We thank Andrew and Terry for their continuing service.

We did, however, receive a late nomination last weekend and welcome Paul Laliberte to council as well.

At our first meeting of the new council this past Thursday, we reviewed the mandate of the parish pastoral council, and brainstormed ways in which we can build community in the parish and foster a sense of ownership within the community. Stay tuned for some of the results of that brainstorming!

LIVING THE LITURGY AT HOME

#1 - Faith Talk

Discuss in your household or small group:

Share about a time when you lost something.

What did you do?

Read the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7).

How do people get "lost" from God?

How does God respond?

What does it mean to repent?

How does God treat those who repent?

#2 - Devotional Practices

Jesus told a parable about a woman who, when she lost a silver coin, searched carefully until she found it (Luke 15:8-10). He compared the woman in the story to God, who searches out sinners and rejoices when they turn to him. Place jar of coins in your family devotional area. In your family devotion times this week, invite family members to take a coin and share something from their day they would like to say sorry to God for. Finish by saying this prayer together: "Thank you, God, for searching for

us when we stray from you. Thank you for finding us and forgiving us. Amen."

#3 - Rituals and Traditions

With younger children: Hide either real coins or chocolate coins in your house and play a good old-fashioned game of "hide and seek". If you use real coins, spend what you find on a treat for the family. Talk about how God rejoices when people who are lost from him return. With older children: Work together on completing a jigsaw puzzle. As you do, talk about how each piece in the puzzle is needed and has a special place - in a similar way, each one of us is valuable to God and is sought out by him. Share about the special qualities you see in one another.

#4 - Service

Take a large garbage bag and go for a family neighborhood walk. Collect as many "lost" or discarded items as you can find.