



THE GRRRAPEVINE

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

Number 54

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

November 18, 2007

BE PREPARED... NOW!

Be prepared. It's a motto that we hear in many different areas of our lives. Boy Scouts and Girl Guides try to live by it. When we venture out on winter highways, we are told to be prepared. In many ways, however, this preparedness is for the future, for something that might happen, but that might not happen. We all want to be prepared for the future, for events that might happen. We try to cover all eventualities, but something usually slips through the cracks. Because we can't be prepared for every eventuality and even when we think we are prepared, often we are not.

The crowd in today's gospel wants Jesus to tell them when the Temple will be destroyed so that they can prepare. Jesus doesn't answer their question however, at least not in the way that they wish. He tells them that many things will happen, disasters of all sorts and that they will be persecuted and even killed. But he doesn't tell them to be prepared, he actually encourages them not to prepare their defense. Why? Because in preparing for the future, we often lose track of the present.

Jesus says "don't be afraid, don't be terrified, no matter what happens and how horrible it is, remember I will be with you". He encourages us not to look to the future trying to prepare for imagined dangers, but to focus on the present. Live each day as if it were your last. If you live each day according to God's will, deepening your relationship with the Creator, then when the bad things happen, you don't need to prepare, your entire life will be a preparation.

We have trouble with that though. We want to know when things will happen so that we know whether we have 10 years or 10 days in which to prepare or to change our ways. And Jesus says no. Live each day as if it were your last. And that's the question, if you knew that the world were going to end tomorrow, how would you live today? Would you do anything different? Would you phone people to tell them that you love them? Forgive them? Hate them? Would you spend the whole day in church? Would you go about your normal routine but with a new sense of intentionality and awareness of the presence of God in the relationships around us? Martin Luther, when asked the same question said "I would plant a tree".

We live in an age in which hope seems to be disappearing. People are driven by fear, fear that there will be a nuclear war, fear that they will lose their job, fear that they will get sick, fear that they will die. What are we afraid of? Jesus tells us that he will be with us, no matter what comes. Instead of living our lives according to fear, we need to live our lives according to hope.

So how will you live your life today? Live today as if it were your last. Live each day as if it were your last. Tell people you love them. Forgive them. Plant a tree. Have a baby. Rescue a lost animal. Smile at the cashier. Visit your friends. Care for the earth. Don't spend your entire life trying to be prepared to act or change at some point in the future. Act now! Change now! Forgive now! Love now! Live now!

REJOICING & REMEMBERING

We welcomed the following in the Sacrament of Baptism:
Kadance Beardwood
Trent Varley

POSITION POSTING

We are looking for people at each of our weekend celebrations who are willing to take on the ministry of Ushers.

Ushers would:

- Help people find seats, especially after the celebration has started
- Be responsible for finding helpers to take the collection
- Be available to assist with information when needed
- Greet people as they enter the church
- Distribute or collect materials as needed
- Help provide a hospitable environment

Applicants should apply to the parish office - guidelines and "training" will be provided.

THEO-TIDBITS—HARRY POTTER: FRIEND OR FIEND

This Tuesday, November 20 at 7 pm, we'll take a look at the much maligned Harry Potter. Is he really a bad influence on children today? Or are there elements of good within the books? Whether you've read the books or not, come and join us in our discussion!

We will meet at 1088 Gillett Street in the Parish Meeting Room in the basement of the Parish Office. (Not the Conference Room!).

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: As usual, life is a blur. Preparing for a new diocesan initiative has meant visits to two regions of the diocese so far, with two more visits to go. Teaching at Lay Formation this weekend and three days in Fort Ware during the coming week are part of the overall plan! Before I know it, we will be well into Advent, and I'm not quite sure where the fall went. However, life is never boring, nor is it a burden, and for that I am thankful. If there was another week or two in the month, there would still be projects left over, so I am learning to just play it as it comes. Hopefully the snow will hold off until I can get some birch rounds cut for the Children's Liturgy of the Word group so they can make their Advent wreaths.

Giselle: I think I'll agree with Fr. Richard here, life is a blur! Our bible study on the parables of Jesus is almost over and we'll be taking a break until January when we tackle another topic. This coming week doesn't look too bad, and I will take a trip to Vancouver to visit my niece (not a research trip this time!). The last week in November is quite heavy on the meeting end of things, Finance Council, Parish Pastoral Council, Central Region and Diocesan Appeal meeting, all taking place in two days. I'm not sure when the next issue of the Grapevine is going to get done, but we'll probably manage to cobble it together somehow. I'm hoping that Advent will be a bit quieter... we are a people of hope right!

TO BE FIT FOR HEAVEN, WE MUST LET GO OF BITTERNESS

(Article by Ron Rolheiser—Western Catholic Reporter—Nov 5, 2007)

Recently after a lecture, I was confronted by an angry man who accused me of being soft on God's judgment and justice. "I cannot accept what you say," he muttered, "there's so much evil in the world and so many people are suffering from other people's sins that there must be retribution, some justice. Don't tell me that the people who are doing these things - from molesting children to ignoring morality - are going to be in heaven when we get there! What would that say about God's justice?"

I don't deny the existence of hell, nor the importance of God's judgment, but the itch to see other people suffer retribution reveals, I believe, things about ourselves that we might not want to admit. But at least we're in good company: The prophet Isaiah was no different. For him it was not enough that the Messiah should usher in heaven for good people. Along with rewards for the good, he felt, there needed to be too a "day of vengeance" on the bad (Isaiah 61:2). Interestingly, in a curious omission, when Jesus quotes this text to define his own ministry, he leaves out the part about vengeance (Luke 4:18). Too many of us today have a need to see punishment befall the wicked. It is not enough that eventually the good should have its day, that we should be rewarded, no, the bad must also be punished.

To my mind, this desire for justice (as we call it) is not always healthy and, in a way, speaks volumes about a certain frustration and bitterness within our own lives. All that worry that somebody might be getting away with something and all that anxiety that God might not be an exacting judge, suggest that we, like the older brother of the prodigal son, might be doing a lot of things right, but are missing something important inside of ourselves. We are dutiful and moral, but bitter underneath and are unable to enter the circle of celebration and the dance. Everything about us is right, except for the lack of real warmth in our hearts.

Julian of Norwich once described God this way: "Completely relaxed and courteous, he himself was the happiness and peace of his dear friends, his beautiful face radiating measureless love like a marvelous symphony." That is one of the better descriptions of God written, but it can make for a painful meditation: Too often, for too many of us, far from basking in gratitude we feel instead the bitterness, self-pity, anger, and incapacity to let go and dance that was felt by the older brother. We are inside the banquet room, amongst all the radiance and joy, but we are unhappy, pouting, waiting for the Father to come and try to coax us beyond our sense of having been cheated. Such is too often the feeling among us, good people: Like the older brother of the prodigal son, we protest our right to despair, to be unhappy and demand that a reckoning justice one day give us our due by punishing the bad.

Alice Miller, the famous Swiss psychologist, suggests that the primary, spiritual task of the second half of life is dealing with this. We need to grieve, she says, or the bitterness and anger that come from our wounds, disappointments, bad choices and broken dreams will overwhelm us with the sense of life's unfairness. Her formula for health is simple: Life is unfair. Don't try to protect yourself from its hurts - You've already been hurt! Accept that, grieve it and move on to rejoin the dance.

In the end, it's mostly because we are wounded and bitter that we worry about God's justice, that it might be too lenient, that the bad will not be fully punished. But we should worry less about that and more about our own incapacity to forgive, to let go of our hurts, to take delight in life, to give others the gaze of admiration, to celebrate and to join in the dance. To be fit for heaven we must let go of bitterness.

Like the older brother, our problem is ultimately not the undeserved and excessive love seemingly shown to someone else. Our problem is more that we have never heard in our hearts the gentle words the Father spoke to the older brother: "My child, you have always been with me and all I have is yours, but we, you and I, need to be happy and dance because your younger brother was dead and has come back to life."

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.

TABLE FOR TWO

We had another Table for Two this past Friday and another dozen or so people enjoyed the hospitality and cooking of the Chez Nous team. We're taking a break over Christmas and our next Table for Two will take place sometime in the New Year. It might even be that we'll have another *Table for You... and Your Friends* for the UNBC/CNC crowd... We'll have to see how much energy we have after Christmas!

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.



HOW DO YOU PRAY??

LOGICAL/MATHEMATICAL INTELLIGENCE—NUMBER SMART

In a previous issue of the Grapevine (#52), we introduced the idea that different prayer forms may be more comfortable for us based on our giftedness in the areas of multiple intelligence. We were also invited to take a Multiple Intelligence Survey (link on our website) to discover where our intelligence strengths lie (verbal, numeric, images, music, movement, nature, etc). Over the next few issues of the Grapevine, we'll take a look at the different multiple intelligences and draw connections with different prayer styles.

Those who have a strong logical/mathematical intelligence (number smart) are good with finding and understanding the various patterns that occur in our lives. They have an ability to think more conceptually and abstractly and are often able to see patterns and relationships that others miss. They enjoy working with numbers, solving puzzles and are systematic and organized. They are very curious and like to do experiments and solve logic puzzles. They tend to learn best by categorizing, classifying and working with abstract patterns and relationships..

Those who have a strong logical/mathematical intelligence, will enjoy prayer forms that focus on patterns and relationships. The Rosary, or a version of it, might appeal to those who have a strong logical/mathematical intelligence. Others might enjoy prayerfully reviewing their life and identifying key moments in their spiritual journey and how these events have enriched their relationship with God. Others might enjoy bible studies in which they can look for patterns and connections in scriptural passages. Mandalas and labyrinth walking might also appeal to a logical/mathematical intelligence.

Those of us who are not strong in the logical/mathematical intelligence, might find such prayer forms tedious and difficult. It's all a matter of finding out what works best for us. We just need to try some of them!

SYMBOLS OF BAPTISM: WATER

Over the past few weeks the Sunday readings have been focusing more and more on the end of time, on death, on resurrection, on the hope of eternal life and finally on Jesus' promise of eternal life. We are coming to the end of the year! As this liturgical year ends, we are invited and challenged to reflect on our faith as well as on our lives. How do the two intermesh? Is there a relationship between what we profess to believe and the way that we live and relate with others? How does the Word of God inform and form our attitudes and actions? How do we share the Good News with those around us? What is Good News for us as individuals and as community? These are not easy questions, but they are vital ones.

In a few weeks, we will begin a new year of grace, a new year of celebrating our redemption, of living out the reality of Christ's salvific actions in our lives. As we move through Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time, we are not just remembering something that happened long time ago; we are experiencing anew the Lord's presence among us, his forgiveness, his proclamation of the Father's love for us, his sharing of God's peace and love. So as we come to the end, we are preparing for a new beginning. As we prepare for this new beginning, we are challenged to open our minds and hearts to enter fully into the mystery that we celebrate, and to grow more and more in our response to the call to live as disciples of Jesus. During the coming year, what opportunities will each of us take to continue in this journey with greater awareness and renewed commitment?

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THE END

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ADVENT APPROACHES

If you'd like to mark your calendars, the city parishes have scheduled most of their Advent reconciliation services:

Monday Dec 3—7 pm

St. Mary's Parish

Wednesday Dec 5—7 pm

Christ Our Saviour Parish

Wednesday Dec 12—7 pm

Immaculate Conception Parish

Wednesday Dec 19—7 pm

Sacred Heart Cathedral

We will be celebrating Vespers on Wednesday evenings during the Season of Advent—Dec 5, 12 & 19 at 7 pm in the Church. Please come and join us as we celebrate the season of Advent!

WEBSITE

Check out our website! We have photos of past events!

www.geocities.com/saintmaryspg

MARRIAGE PREPARATION

Are you planning to get married in 2008? Check out the poster on the bulletin board for the different marriage preparation options offered in the Diocese. The weekend preparation session at the end of November is full, but we are offering a 6 week session starting Jan 24 (Thursday evenings). Phone Fr. Richard for more info.

LIVING THE LITURGY AT HOME

#1 - Faith Talk

Discuss in your household or small group: What is a hope you have for the future? What is a fear you have about the future? Jesus tells us that one day this world will end (Luke 21:9). How does that make you feel?

It has been said: "We don't know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future". What does this say to you? What promises does Jesus give to us about the future? (look up Luke 21:19).

#2 - Devotional Practices (USA lectionary reading!)

Isaiah 65:17 tells us that God will "create new heavens and a new earth". Verses 24-25 of that chapter describe a new place where "the wolf and the lamb will eat together and the lion will eat straw like the ox". Share your personal "pictures of heaven" with each other (e.g. "I picture heaven as a place where..."). As an additional activity, draw or paint these images. Place them up in your home together with the words of Isaiah 65:17a.

#3 - Rituals and Traditions

Psalm 98:7-9a calls on all of creation to "sing before the Lord." Go on a walk or a drive and make a list of all the sounds of nature you identify. Then write your own version of Psalm 98:7-9a, mentioning the various nature sounds you heard.

#4 - Service

In Luke 21, Jesus warns that some Christians will face persecution because they follow him. This is the case today in various parts of the world. Pray this week for:

- Christians in North Korea. In this country following Jesus is considered an act of treason, and Christians face the real threat of imprisonment and even execution.
- Christians in northern Nigeria and in various parts of India or Pakistan. Christians in these areas live in fear of being physically attacked by followers of other religions.