



THE GRRAPEVINE

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

Number 56

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 16, 2007

GAUDETE SUNDAY

This is the "Sunday of Joy". "Gaudete" is the Latin first word of the entrance antiphon for today's celebration (Rejoice in the Lord). While Advent is not a particularly somber season, the darkness of our environment, with the shortening daylight hours, can move us into a somber mood. Advent is essentially a season for joy, since we anticipate the coming of Christ into the world. We rejoice that our God came to live among us, that he came to save us, that he has given us new life through the Resurrection. We are called to be people of JOY. Paul insists on it - "Rejoice in the lord always; again I say, rejoice." (Phil. 4:4)

Questions for us as we gather and celebrate this Sunday might be: Do we live our faith joyfully? Do we believe that God has made all things new in Christ, and that we are called to live in hope and trust? Do we hope and trust?

Too often we seem to feel that this gift of faith is a burden to carry rather than a gift to be lived joyfully and shared generously. God's plan for us is that we live in peace and joy, experiencing the wonder of God's love, and sharing that love with those around us. We can spread joy, or we can deepen the gloom around us.

FLAMES FOR THE FAITHFUL

Have you wondered what the paintings on the sanctuary wall are all about? Did you notice them? Have you asked anyone, or talked about them with anyone? If you said yes to any or all of these questions, congratulations! An enquiring mind will eventually get the answers.

The paintings are part of a series that builds to the last Sunday of Advent, when there will be a complete circle in the centre of the display, with the four Advent candles burning. The pictures are taken from a Daily Devotion for Advent resource that was available, and they depict four rich symbols of the season, and the traditional name for each candle - Prophet, Bethlehem, Shepherd and Angel. Each candle has a specific call to us:

The Prophecy Candle urges us: "LISTEN". The prophets called Israel, and call us to "Hear the Word of the Lord." God has a lot to say to us, but we need to listen if God is going to communicate with us.

The Bethlehem Candles urges us: "PREPARE". So much to do and so little time. It is a refrain we hear so often leading up to Christmas. But we are preparing for more than Christmas. The candle urges us to open our eyes and be aware of what's really going on.

The Shepherds' Candle urges us "BEHOLD". The shepherds did as they were told, and there was a lot to see. We are challenged to keep our eyes open; may we not miss the miracle in the busyness of the season.

The Angels' Candle urges us "REJOICE!". The angels began their announcement with the call to "Fear not", and when the shepherds saw the infant, they rejoiced. Darkness has given way to light; we are called to draw near to the One who is the Light of the Word, and to move forward in faith.

Darkness—
 Thick, Suffocating, Heavy
 Darkness—
 Weighs upon the sons of Adam
 And upon Eve's daughters, too.

Until...
 With a Word (Prophets' promises flicker with hope)
 A Spark (Lamps are lit in a stable cave)
 A Crackle (Shepherds huddle 'round a fire)
 A Crash (Heaven's chorus fills the sky)
 Into our darkness... LIGHT APPEARS!

Circle 'round this LIGHT,
 God's children, Circle 'round!
 For this strong LIGHT is nothing less
 Than....
GOD, COME HOME!



Peter J. Mead

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: Be still, watch, wait, prepare. So many great words to describe what Advent should be, and yet there is the continual work of the parish and diocese to be attended to. Luckily most the meetings are over until after Christmas, and the visits to the various regions of the diocese are completed, so there is more time at home for the R & R as well as the catching up that needs to be done after the time away. There will be at least one more trip out West after Christmas, and a meeting for Oblates in February, but that is so far in the future that it doesn't need to be considered! I realized on Monday morning that it was only two weeks until Christmas, and began to wonder where the rest of the year had gone. That might be a sign of something!

Giselle: Most of our meetings and regular events have taken a break now for the Christmas holidays. It's nice to get some time to rest and recuperate!

I'll be staying around Prince George for Christmas. Last year, I was packing and moving around this time, so I just want to stay in one place and enjoy the Christmas tree!

I have to admit, I am enjoying the snow. It's much better than the rain or the sloppy slush stuff. And it makes awesome photographs!

All this rest and relaxation is nice, but at the same time I'm looking ahead to the new year and starting to plan and prepare for some new initiatives and programs...

PATIENCE OR IMPATIENCE

The common thread in the words of the prophets is a call to fidelity to God's Word. The prophets were often impatient with Israel's lack of fidelity, with their stubbornness of heart, with their unwillingness to respond to God's call to live the covenant.

The other side of the prophets' message is God's unending patience with our lack of response, and the continual promise of salvation. In the words of Isaiah today, we find that promise of salvation is not just "spiritual". Salvation will encompass all of creation - harmony will be restored to creation, the desert will bloom, all creatures will live together in peace, and all people will be given what they need to have integrity of body and soul once again. So the lame will walk, the blind see, the deaf hear, the mute speak, the frightened will be encouraged and all people will see the salvation of God. Do we believe that message as we gather and wait? Are we willing to patient with God and ourselves, in order that we can ultimately enjoy that gift of salvation? What do we need to do in our lives, our community, our world to help that vision of salvation become an ever greater reality today and in the days to come?

In the Gospel, Jesus responds to John's question by referring back to Isaiah's prophecies. Do we see the work that Jesus is doing in our midst today? Are we offering ourselves as instruments for Jesus to accomplish those things? What in us needs healing and renewal in order that we can reach out to others and share the gifts of God's love with them?

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.



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

John the Baptist was sent by God to witness to the coming of the Lord. We are sent too, to witness to our belief that Christ has come to witness by our everyday use of time and treasure.



CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Dec 22—7 pm
Dec 23—9 & 11 am

Christmas Eve
Dec 24—7 & 9 pm
Midnight Mass (12:00)

Christmas Day
Dec 25—10 am

Feast of St. Stephen
Dec 26—8 am

Holy Family
Dec 29—7 pm
Dec 30—9 & 11 am

New Year's Eve
Dec 31—7 pm

Mary the Mother of God
Jan 1—10 am



REJOICING & REMEMBERING

In faith and in the sure hope of the resurrection, we bid farewell to
Walter Nachbauer
Marie Plante

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. We are offering a 6 week session starting Jan 24 (Thursday evenings). Phone Fr. Richard for info.

ACTS OF STEWARDSHIP

A lot of the reflections and teachings about Stewardship focus on attitudes – of gratitude, trust, hope, generosity, etc. We can easily relegate Stewardship to the realm of attitudes and ideas, and forget that an essential part of Stewardship is action. We are called to live the Stewardship attitudes in our daily lives.

We can connect our attitudes of Stewardship in many different ways, remembering that we are members of families, of various groups, of communities, of neighbourhoods. Some individual acts of Stewardship might include:

- Be informed about our community – read the newspaper, listen to the news.
 - Get involved in election campaigns – at least to the point of being informed about the candidates – and then going out to vote.
 - Pick up any litter you see as you walk along the street.
 - Participate in a neighbourhood watch program.
 - Meet the people who live next door.
 - Shovel a senior neighbour's walk.
 - Volunteer for an hour or two a week.
 - Phone a friend you haven't seen for a while.
 - Stop to talk to people – after church, in the store, on the street.
- In practicing these acts of Stewardship, we acknowledge the gifts God has given, and we give thanks for those gifts.

HOW DO YOU PRAY?? VISUAL INTELLIGENCE—PICTURE SMART

In a previous issue of the *Grrapevine* (#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 *Grrapevine*, we'll take a look at the different multiple intelligences and draw connections with different prayer styles.

Those who have a strong visual intelligence (picture smart) have an ability to perceive the visual. They generally tend to think in images or pictures. They often enjoy drawing, painting and other arts. They love to work on jigsaw puzzles, read maps, watch movies and find their way around new places. Often they are excellent at performing tasks that require "seeing with the mind's eyes", such as visualizing, pretending, imagining and forming mental images. People who have a strong visual intelligence tend to think in pictures and need to create vivid mental images to retain information. They often report clear visual images when thinking about something.

Those who have a strong visual intelligence, will enjoy prayer forms that focus on imagery. Some might enjoy praying or meditating on icons. Others might enjoy prayerful drawing or painting, for example, meditating on a passage of scripture and then painting or drawing an image of that passage. Some might enjoy praying with pictures or photographs. Others might enjoy praying with mandalas.

Those of us who are not strong in the musical 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: GARMENT

"Clothes make the man," they say (at least they used to). While we can probably object in a thousand ways, we have to admit that what we have on us can both symbolize and affect what is going on inside us. Wearing a favorite blouse can lift our spirits; noticing a smudge on our jacket can erode our confidence. With some people, if they're wearing a certain outfit, you know it's a bad day.

When we were baptized, our parents or godparents helped us put on a new white garment — maybe the family christening gown, or a simple white robe, or a brand-new suit — and there we were, new creations, stunning creatures glistening from the water and the oil, brighter than the sun. And that outward appearance told the truth about the inward reality — we were, in fact, new creatures, reborn in Christ Jesus, alive as never before. "Bring this garment unstained to the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus Christ," we were told. Each Easter we deck ourselves in our very best and remind ourselves how glorious we are: We are children of God, holy and chosen and loved.

Great outfit!



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TRUE GLORY COMES THROUGH FORGIVENESS, COMPASSION

We all nurse a secret dream of glory. We daydream that in some way we will stand out and be recognized. And so we fantasize about great achievements that will set us apart from others and make us famous. The daydreams vary but, inside them, always we are at the centre - the most admired person in the room, the one scoring the winning goal, the ballerina star, the actor picking up the Academy award, the author writing the best-seller, the intellectual winning the Nobel prize, or even just the one in the circle who tells the best story.

What we are chasing in all this is notice, appreciation, uniqueness and adulation so that we can be duly recognized and loved. We want the light to be shining on us. This isn't all bad or unhealthy. We are built to stand in the spotlight. Our own reality is massively (sometimes oppressively) real to us and scientists today tell us that the universe has no single centre but that everywhere and every person is its centre.

So it is not a big secret that each of us feels ourselves at the centre and wants to be recognized as being there. We nurse a secret dream of glory and, partly, this is healthy.

What's less healthy in our daydreams is how we envision that glory. In our fantasies, glory almost always consists in being famous, in standing out, in achieving a success that makes others envious, in somehow being the best-looking or the brightest or the most talented person in the room. In our fantasy, glory means having the power to actuate ourselves in ways that set us above others, even if that is for a good motive.

For instance, some of our fantasies are daydreams of goodness, of being powerful enough to squash evil. Indeed, that was the messianic fantasy. Before Jesus was born, good-hearted and religious people prayed for a messiah to come and, in their fantasy, that messiah was generally envisaged as a worldly superstar, a person with a superior heart and superior muscles, a messiah who would reveal the superiority of God by out-muscling the bad.

But, as we see from the Gospels, real glory doesn't consist in out-muscling the bad, or anyone else. When Jesus was being crucified, he was offered precisely the challenge to prove that he was special by doing some spec-

tacular gesture that would leave all of his detractors stunned and helpless: "If you are the Son of God, prove it, come down off the cross! Save yourself!"

But, with a subtlety that's easy to miss, the Gospels teach a very different lesson: On the cross, Jesus proves that he is powerful beyond measure, not by doing some spectacular physical act that leaves everyone around him helpless to make any protest, but in a spectacular act of the heart wherein he forgives those who are mocking and killing him. Divine kingship is manifest in forgiveness not in muscle. That is real glory, and that is the one thing of which we really should be envious, namely, the compassion and forgiveness that Jesus manifested in the face of jealousy, hatred and murder.

We see this illustrated in the Gospels in the incident where James and John come to Jesus and ask him to give them the seats of glory at his side. Jesus takes their request seriously and does not, on that occasion, caution them against pride. Rather he asks them: "Can you drink from the cup (of suffering) that I shall drink?" In naiveté, they answer: "We can!" Jesus replies: "The cup that I shall drink you shall drink, but as for the seats (of glory) at my right hand or left, these are not mine to give."

What Jesus is saying, in effect, is this: You will taste suffering, everyone will, and that suffering will make you deep. But, it won't necessarily make you deep in the right way. Suffering can make you deep in compassion and forgiveness, but it can also make you deep in bitterness and anger. However, only compassion and forgiveness bring glory into your lives. Jesus defines glory very differently than we do. Real glory, for him, is not the glory of winning a gold medal, of being a champion, of winning an Oscar, or of being an object of envy because of our looks or our achievements. Glory consists in being deep in compassion, forgiveness and graciousness - and these are not often spawned by worldly success, by being better-looking, brighter, richer or better muscled than those around us. We all nurse the secret dream of glory. Partly this is healthy, a sign that we are emotionally well. However, this is something that needs to grow and mature inside of us.

Ron Rolheiser—Western Catholic Reporter—Dec 3, 2007

BULLETIN & GRRRAPEVINE EMAIL

One of the suggestions in our recent survey was that we email out the Bulletin and Grrapevine. We would be happy to do so! Just send us an email request and we will be happy to put you on an emailing list. Our email address is:

stmarys.parish@shawcable.com

Back issues are also available on our website.

CHRISTMAS GIFT BLESSING

Before you open your gifts with your family, you might first gather together and offer this prayer:

Loving God, giver of all gifts, we thank you for these gifts before us. We have carefully chosen each one and wrapped it with love. As we now offer them to one another, we thank you for the love we share and the joy you have given us by your coming among us on this night.