



THE GRRAPEVINE

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

Number 75

3rd Sunday in Advent

December 14, 2008

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES

Wed Dec 24	7:00 pm
	9:00 pm
	12:00 midnight
Thurs Dec 25	10:00 am
Fri Dec 26	8:00 am
Wed Dec 31	7:00 pm
Thurs Jan 1	10:00 am

ADVENT RECONCILIATION SERVICES

Dec 15—St. Mary's—7 pm

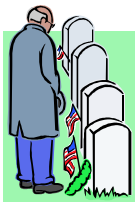
WATCHING AND WAITING

Jesus urges his disciples to be constantly on watch for the return of the Lord. To most Christians God often seems just like the man who has gone on a long journey and has left us in charge. How will we spend the days entrusted us as we await His re-turn? Do we take our days for granted? Do we waste them? Or as good stewards of God's abundant gifts, do we use our days and our gifts to hasten His Kingdom?

REJOICING & REMEMBERING

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

Anita Plante
Tonny Snyders
Maria Sirianni



ST. VINCENT DE PAUL GOOD CHEER OPPORTUNITIES

Do you want to do something special for someone else during this Christmas season? Why not volunteer some time with St. Vincent de Paul? The following, good cheer, opportunities are available:

SATURDAY DEC 20

9:00 am until completed (about 1:30 pm)
Hamper assembly.

New location—Highland School, 155 McDermid Drive

SUNDAY DEC 21

10:00 am until completed

Hamper delivery drivers, people to help load hampers and people to assist with hall cleanup are needed.

New location—Highland School, 155 McDermid Drive

WEDNESDAY DEC 24

10:30-11:30 am

Hall preparation and table setup.
Location: Sacred Heart Auditorium.

THURSDAY DEC 25

10:00 am to 2:30 pm

Some help is needed to serve, welcome guests, wash dishes and cleanup the hall.
Location: Sacred Heart Auditorium

BEFORE DECEMBER 17!!

Any gift donations for Christmas hampers for adults, teens and children need to be received at the Drop In Centre before Dec. 17.

To reduce stress, please call Bernie 250-564-3416 or Norm 250-562-6034 to confirm your assistance.

Additional volunteers are needed at the Drop In Centre from now through to Jan 31, 2009. To volunteer at the Drop In Centre, Please call Lynn at 250-564-7871.

Merry Christmas from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul

DOMANO RENEWAL CENTRE

**Please join us for
Christmas Coffee
and Open House**

Wednesday December 17
10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Bethany House #110

RSVP please call 964-4475 or
email drc@netbistro.com

Domano
Renewal Centre
6500 Southridge
Avenue



GRATEFULNESS

St. Paul offers a timely stewardship message: Pray always, live a life of gratitude and seek holiness.

During this week of Advent, spend some time in prayer reflecting on what it means to be grateful, compassionate and unselfish. Discover opportunities to say, "Thank you." Go out of your way to do something for someone else.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

We have some information on Human Trafficking in Canada available at the back of the Church. Remember the article from a few weeks ago on Prostitution in Sweden? Well, this gives us an idea of the presence of human trafficking in Canada. This is an extremely timely topic as we approach the 2010 Olympics and prostitution trafficking.

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: I'm off in Alberta visiting my family and getting a little farm time too. There is always something that needs to be done around a farm, and I am hoping that there will be a lot to do!

Giselle: I was in Saskatoon last week facilitating another RTS workshop. This past week has been a busy bustle of catching up on parish news and events. I keep having this plan to write something for the Grapevine on what exactly I'm doing with Returning to Spirit, and what the workshops are about... but we keep running out of room in the Grapevine! Maybe next time...

Jude: As Advent wends its way toward Christmas, and meetings and classes slow down, I am enjoying preparing for Christmas. The big snow certainly helped, which may be the most positive thing I can say about it. I am also looking forward to some new programs after the holidays.

Roger: Like a lot of other people, the mood and activity of this time of year catches me. In the busyness of life I fell a tinge, a slight pull to stand back and look a little deeper into the actual picture; we are coming to Christmas. When I think about this, I recall memories and conclude I should thank God for this time of year. If it wouldn't be for the birth of our lord, I wouldn't enjoy meeting family and friends, enjoy a few good meals with good company and have time to tell stories, and increase bonding. Thank god for this Holy season.

GIVING THE PRESENT OF PRESENCE

Here are two possible ways of being with someone: a) be physically present with another or b) be present "in spirit" by deliberately sending prayers, compassionate thoughts and kind feelings toward another person or group. Either approach could be appropriate for the December days leading to Christmas.

- Be with someone who really needs you...
- Be with a person who gives you hope...
- Be with those who live daily in terror and fear...
- Be with an appreciated older person...
- Be with someone who has helped you to grow...
- Be with one who lives in chronic pain...
- Be with a war-torn country...
- Be with someone who has written to you...
- Be with a child...
- Be with a refugee who is fleeing from harm...
- Be with an enemy or someone you dislike...
- Be with a farmer who is losing his or her land...
- Be with someone who has a terminal illness...
- Be with a homeless person who is cold and has nowhere to go...
- Be with hungry crying children...
- Be with a co-worker you admire...
- Be with world leaders of all nations...
- Be with someone in your family...
- Be with women and men in prison...
- Be with someone earnestly working for justice...
- Be with your loved ones...

God of Love, you were so generous, sending the presence of your Beloved to dwell among us and tell us who you are. Encourage me during this Advent season to continue in the sharing of this loving presence through my attentiveness given in prayer and in deeds. You who dwell within me, remind me often to let go of my busyness and my hurriedness so that I can be with others in a loving way. Convince me that "being" is as important as "doing." Thank you for your strengthening presence. Thank you for being with me. Amen.

Adapted from Out of the Ordinary by Joyce Rupp, OSM

CAN YOU SEE IT?

Every year, thousands of pairs of glasses could be flown to developing countries. Many of us have old pairs of glasses lying around unused. Yet 200 million people around the world need glasses every year. People who can't see properly can't do their jobs, and kids who can't see properly can't learn at school.

So, show some foresight. You can find more info at www.clerc.ca. You can donate your used eyeglasses at: Walmart Vision, Zellers Pharmacy, Superstore Eyewear, other optical stores, or participating churches or funeral homes. Give the gift of sight!



*Any kind of expectation
creates a problem.
We should accept,
but not expect.
Whatever comes, accept it.
Whatever goes, accept it.
The immediate benefit is
that your mind is
always peaceful.
Sri Swami Satchidananda*



GOING GREEN

One of the simplest ways of "going green" is to bring your lunch to work or school. Today, Canadians spend about \$2000 a year on fast food. While it's convenient, it's not always cheap (or healthy). Let's say you spend \$9 every day on a chicken sandwich and a soft drink at your local Subway. That's \$45 a week—and \$2250 a year! If you were to save that amount every year and invest it instead, in 20 years you'd have more than \$111,000.

But apart from your health and wealth, takeout food packaging is a huge waste. Each Canadian (that's me and you) throws away approximately half a kilogram of packaging a day. In fact, half of our cities' solid waste by volume and one-third of our waste by weight is made up of packaging. The alternative? Bring your lunch!

You can bring your lunch in a reusable bag, and pack your lunch items in reusable containers. Instead of individual juice boxes, why not buy a big jug of juice and pour it into a reusable container for each lunch.

Brown bag lunches don't have to be "boring". They can be yummy... get creative! Check out www.fabulousfoods.com. They list ideas for kids lunches, but with things like pesto pasta salad, they work equally well for adults! Click on Articles, then Fabulous Finds and you'll find the Brown Bag Lunch link.



STARTING AFRESH FROM CHRIST

The Church's year of grace begins with Advent and the opportunity to start afresh from Christ. As Christians, we are people who firmly believe that the promises of Christ will be fulfilled - both now and in the age to come. We are realistic about the state of humanity and the world. We do not expect Utopia, a perfect world here and now. There is much discouraging news these days. But we do not despair. Each year, the Church gives us the opportunity to begin again - and to prepare ourselves anew for the coming of our friend and brother, Jesus Christ. We believe that the promises God made to his people in the Old Testament have been fulfilled in Christ. The reign of God has begun and, so, we are profoundly hopeful about the future.

This Advent season, the Old Testament readings from Isaiah recall for us the profound longing of the Jewish people. Like us, they longed for peace and for justice; they longed for prosperity and joy; and they longed for the One who would save them from the bondage of slavery and sin. The words of St. Paul and St. James to the original Christian communities rekindle in us the heartfelt longing for Christ's return that so vividly characterized the early Church. And in the Gospel readings for this holy season, St. Matthew invites us, once again, to a personal encounter with Jesus, the Lord of history and the Savior of all humanity.

A personal encounter with Christ makes serious demands on each of us. We are called to grow - to change the way we live. And we are challenged to see things differently - with the eyes of faith in Christ. We are free to accept the call to discipleship or to reject it (like the rich young man in the Gospel story), but if we seek to follow Jesus we must give up our old ways of life and start afresh in him.

Beginning again in Christ means entering into communion with him and with all our sisters and brothers in the one family of God. It means sharing in his evangelizing mission and proclaiming the Good News through our words and our example.

Experiencing Christ in a personal way compels us to lead - to be proactive in reaching out to our brothers and sisters - especially to those family members who are poor or suffering or alienated in any way. Once we have been touched by Christ, once we have encountered his loving kindness, it is impossible to remain isolated or alone. Self-giving is the hallmark of Christian life, and we are blessed with a perfect model of generous self-sacrifice in the Blessed Virgin Mary. In response to God's call, Mary said, "Yes." But each of us also receives a unique and unrepeatable call. No one can say "yes" for us or take our place in the journey to salvation that is uniquely ours. Cardinal Newman once said that "God gives every person something to do that no one else can do." There was no runner-up for Mary, and there also is no runner-up for any one of us. And, yet, we are not alone. We are each called to live out our faith in solidarity with the entire human family and to accept responsibility for building up the Body of Christ and continuing his work on earth.

Finally, the call to start afresh from Christ challenges us to see ourselves as stewards, people who share all the spiritual and material gifts we have received from God. In truth, nothing that we have (or are) belongs exclusively to us. Everything - including the air we breathe, the water we drink, the bread we break, the clothes we wear and the roof over our heads - comes from God as pure gift. As disciples of Jesus, we are challenged to be grateful, responsible and generous stewards; to develop our gifts and talents; to use our material possessions responsibly; and to share generously with others all the blessings we have received from a good and gracious God. Communion with Christ and with all our brothers and sisters, who make up his body, is the meaning and the ultimate goal of all human life. These are the promises of Christ that are being fulfilled in and through the work of the Holy Spirit. During Advent, we recognize and celebrate the profound spiritual longing that compels us to "wait in joyful hope," confident that Christ will come again at the end of time.

Dan Stewart, *"The Good Steward Newsletter"*

PHOTOS AVAILABLE
FOR PURCHASE

The September 3 farewell gathering in honor of Sr. Margaret Quinn and the Mercy Sisters was photographed by Philomena Hughes. These pictures are available for viewing for a limited time at www.phughesphotography.ca. Click on CLIENTS, then Evening for Sr. Margaret. You will need the password, rainbows. The images presented there are available for purchase in 5x7 or 8x10 format with all proceeds going to Rainbows for Children in Sister Margaret's name. A special price has been attached to this event. There is a button that says slideshow that you can adjust to the number of seconds between images. You can also use a Zoom Tool (looks like a magnifying glass) to view images even closer. If you were there you will know what a wonderful night it was.

Please call Philomena Hughes if you have any questions (250 564-3033).

UNSUNG HEROINES: JUNIA

Do you have a bible handy? Quick, go get it! Maybe you've got two or three?? Go and get them all... Alright, now open them to the New Testament, Paul's Letter to the Romans, Chapter 16, verse 7... It should read something along the lines of:

"Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was." Or does your version read:

"Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives who were in prison with me; they are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was."

Eh? What's the difference? Well, one tiny, itsy bitsy little letter... an "s". And that little letter can transform the entire meaning of the reading. You see, Junias would be a man... and Junia would be a woman. Paul has tossed a cat in amongst the pigeons with this one. The actual Greek word/name he uses is "IOUNIAN" which could be interpreted as either Junias or Junia, depending on whether there was an accent on the "A" or an accent on the "I". Ancient texts from New Testament times however, never ever mention "Junias" as a male name, while Junia is actually quite a common female name. But... and here is the problem, if such we want to call it... if the passage reads as Junia, then Junia is seemingly an apostle. The term apostle in Paul's times was not simply limited to the Twelve, but was applied to any who spread the message of the good news. A woman apostle? Could it be??

Apparently so. Such important Church Fathers as St. John Chryostom and St. Jerome hailed the courage of Junia, a woman and an apostle.

It wasn't until the time of the Reformation (1500 AD) that scholars began to question whether Paul could really be calling a woman an apostle... surely not! And so the text was interpreted differently, and Junias was born. Interestingly enough, the Orthodox Church celebrates the feast of Andronicus and Junia (May 17), and has never had the same trouble with her identity that the West did.

Who was this woman? Perhaps she and Andronicus were a husband and wife missionary team, similar to Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16:3). They obviously spent time in prison for their Christian faith. Paul esteems them highly and recommends them to the Church in Rome with high praise. And she challenges our ideas of who can and cannot be an apostle...



THIRD SUNDY OF ADVENT: SCRIPTURE INSIGHTS

The Third Sunday of Advent is Gaudete (rejoicing) Sunday; joy is at the heart of today's scriptures.

The First reading from the prophet Isaiah focuses on the mission of the prophet, empowered by God's Spirit. To whom is the prophet sent? To the poor, the broken-hearted, the imprisoned and those held captive. Does their neediness make them more receptive to a word from God? In the second part of the reading, the prophet feels deep joy as he proclaims God's salvation. He knows that justice and the praise of God will soon "spring up" "before all the nations" (Gentiles as well as Jews). We hear the same deep joy in today's Responsorial psalm, taken from the text of Mary's Magnificat in Luke's Gospel.

Although the joy does not appear in today's Gospel, with its focus on the mission of John the Baptist, John speaks

of his joy in the third chapter of the fourth Gospel. Some people had come to the Baptist to ask about Jesus, who at that point was attracting large crowds. John's response: "You yourselves can testify that I said [that] I am not the Messiah, but that I was sent before him... So this joy of mine has been made complete. He must increase; I must decrease" (Jn 3:28, 30). As we live in anticipation of Christ's coming, may his Spirit, his presence, increase in our lives, that our joy may be full.

- What do today's readings say about the people who are most receptive to God's word? Why?
- What advice does Paul give for living in anticipation of the Second Coming of the Lord?
- Where do we find "prophetic utterances" today? Who prepares the Lord's way now?