



THE GRRAPEVINE

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

Number 80

1st Sunday of Lent

March 1, 2009

SCRIPTURE INSIGHTS

Forty days: Jesus was tempted, Noah rode out the waters of the flood, and we enter into another Lent. Mark's account of Jesus' time in the desert after his baptism and before the beginning of his public ministry is amazingly brief, especially in comparison with Matthew and Luke. At his baptism, Jesus says "the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him". Today's Gospel begins just after that; this time the Spirit immediately drives Jesus into the desert. There, in wilderness, Jesus, the beloved Son, is tempted by Satan, the adversary of God. Jesus was tested through this ordeal and proved faithful. Notice how God cares for him at this time. The first reading refers to Noah's testing, who likewise "found favour with God". Peter interprets the ark of Noah as a sort of womb that prefigured a birth into life through Baptism. That new life is now accomplished, Peter says, by the death and resurrection of Jesus our Lord.

When have you experienced temptation or testing as something that "proved" you?

WHO IS AGAINST US?

Paul asks the question: "If God is for us, who is against us?" Paul's certain faith is that "He who did not withhold his own us....will give us everything else."

This is a powerful message for us to contemplate as we begin our observance of Lent and prepare to celebrate the Easter mysteries. One comment that is often heard is "I am not good enough, holy enough, strong enough or _____ enough to be a real disciple, a real Christian, etc. Paul is telling us that we have all the resources we need in order to live out our discipleship, and to live it well and fully. God provides all that is needed; we simply need to open our hearts and lives to receive the gifts God offers and use them in living out our faith. Paul reminds us that there is nothing in creation, nothing in eternity which can come between us and the love of God; God wants to give us all we need in order to live fully the life we have been given and live in relationship with God and each other. It really is that simple!

Our Lenten observance reminds us who we are called to be as disciples of Jesus. We are to be holy, to be instruments of God's healing love in our world, to be signs of God's continuing presence in our world. The discipline and prayer of Lent are means to help us grow in our appreciation of our identity as well as in living that identity out each day in all our actions, thoughts and relationships.

Perhaps a useful exercise for us as we begin Lent would be to sit down and ask ourselves what particular gifts we might need during this Lent to help us grow in our faith. To recognize the gifts we need, sometimes we need to acknowledge the things that hold us back in our faith, the obstacles to living fully our baptism in our day to day lives. As we recognize the gifts we need, then we ask God for those gifts and open our hearts to receive them.

Paul reminds us that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ—that is, nothing outside of ourselves. Only we can separate ourselves from his love.

PRACTICE OF FAITH

Noah's ark is a powerful image of salvation and purification from fear, anger, and hatred. In the Genesis story, God's blazing wrath unleashes the primeval waters, and two of every animal take refuge in the ark. Imagine the eating and sleeping arrangements among rabbits, hawks, lions, lambs, cockroaches, skunks and humans! Their message: "If we're to survive at all, we need to live peaceably." At journey's end, God hangs his warrior's bow in the clouds, vowing never to use it again. In 1964, Jean Vanier and a friend invited two men with disabilities to live with them in a house they called *L'Arche*, "The Ark". The community life in this first of many *L'Arche* homes witnessed to the truth that the peaceable kingdom is possible. The reign of God is at hand. In our day, we are called, like Noah and the occupants of the ark, like Jean Vanier and all the members of *L'Arche*, to live peaceably, to build the kingdom, to share the Good News and the new life of the Risen Christ.

LENTEN RECONCILIATION SERVICES

March 3—Sacred Heart
 March 24—IC
 March 26—St. Mary's

All services start at 7 pm.

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: The visit home was very relaxing, and it was good to see my family again. A few hours were spent in the sheep fold, feeding, sorting, mending fence, etc. It was great fun watching the month old lamb and the guardian dog pups romping around the fold like the youngsters they are! They romp until worn out, then collapse and sleep. Not a bad life, it would seem.

Giselle: Still with Returning to Spirit. Just finished a week long workshop in Winnipeg, and preparing for one in St. Albert. In the meantime, I am in Calgary working in the RTS office, as the workshop scheduled for Saskatoon was cancelled at the last minute.

Jude: Time has been going very fast for me the last few weeks. And I don't expect it to slow down during Lent. The winter seems to keep on coming though. I really enjoyed that few days of clear dry roads. I know now it will happen. I wish you all a holy and happy Lent. It is always filled with many blessings if we use the opportunities available.

Roger: Parish life is not just spiritual but also social, interactive. We all share the same stories concerning snow shoveling and how we are getting tired of it. On a more positive note it was good to see some people share their talents and in a way let us know a little of who they are by showing us their art. This interaction gives us pleasant surprises as we discover talent within our parish family. I enjoyed discovering the various artistic talents that people have displayed.

WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO FAST FROM IN LENT?

According to Peter Chrysologus, a 5th-century Doctor of the Roman Catholic Church, the three key practices of Lent are prayer, fasting, and mercy. "Prayer knocks at the door, fasting obtains, mercy receives." These three practices are so intertwined that one cannot have one without the others.

Nowadays, many Christians choose not to fast from food, and instead fast from a guilty pleasure. This practice can help us to live the life we feel that we are called to live, but it can also lead to an excessive focus on guilt. If we are not turning our life toward God, of what use is feeling sorry for ourselves?

Many of us struggle with guilt about the environment. We know we do not want to be hurting our neighbours or our grandchildren, yet it seems that we are caught in a trap that doesn't provide any options for us. Some KAIROS groups are calling for a "Carbon Fast" for this Lenten season. Let us remember that Lent is a time for spiritual reflection, for remembering the sufferings of Christ. How can we deepen our spiritual lives? Living a fast-paced lifestyle, spending hours a day in the car, working all the time so we can buy more products - are these practices leading to a deeper, more prayerful life? Are they leading to acts of repentance? Are they leading to a deeper sense of community with our neighbours, a stronger sense of justice?

This Lent, KAIROS Prince George will be struggling with these questions with you. Please join us in prayer for a world infused with justice and a world sustainable for future generations. Watch for more Lenten messages from KAIROS Prince George as we contemplate, pray and seek hope through action.

LENTEN IDEAS FOR CHILDREN (OF ALL AGES!)

FASTING

- Give up one TV show today and spend that time helping a family member.
- Give up something you enjoy today, and donate to Share Lent
- Compliment each person in your family something today
- Choose to avoid a bad habit and do something positive instead

PRAYING

- Say a prayer for someone who is sick today.
- Pray the Our Father three times today—morning, noon and evening
- Pray for a forgiving heart and ask the people you have hurt to forgive you
- Participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation during Lent

ALMSGIVING

- Do someone else's chores one day this week.
- Bring food to the parish food basket for St. Vincent de Paul
- Write a letter or create a card for someone who is sick or might be lonely
- Show an act of kindness to a friend and to someone who is difficult to like



The opening of our new office in Asunción was a real source of pride for many of the social movement groups. DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE worked tirelessly on our behalf. We can now more easily work together on human rights issues and literacy programs.

Maria, Paraguayan Peasants' Movement



Thank you for giving.

RITE OF CHRISTIAN INITIATION OF ADULTS

The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is divided into four stages: Pre-Catechumenate, Catechumenate, Purification and Enlightenment and Postbaptismal Catechesis. The usual time for the Purification and Enlightenment is the season of Lent, when those who are part of the RCIA begin their final preparations for reception into the Church and the sacraments of Initiation. It is a time when we, the members of the Christian community, are called to journey in solidarity and prayer with the elect. As we enter into Lent, we accompany our candidates as they continue to explore their call to follow Jesus as members of our community

RITE OF ELECTION AND ACCEPTANCE

Today, the First Sunday of Lent, our candidates, **Jim West** and **Ashleigh Larsen** will go to Sacred Heart Cathedral with the catechumen and candidates from the other Catholic churches in the area, to celebrate the Rite of Election and Call to Lenten Renewal. Their godparents, sponsors, families, catechists and members of the community are invited to celebrate with them. The celebration is at 2:00pm at the Cathedral. It would be nice to have St. Mary's parishioners there to support them.

This Rite marks the final, more intense preparation for the sacraments of initiation to be celebrated at the Easter Vigil.

MEET OUR CANDIDATES

My name is **Ashleigh** and I am 26 years old. In high school I found God in a Sospel Church and it was there that I was baptized. When I graduated, I found that I drifted away from organized religion, focusing on New Age spirituality instead. When I started going out with my boyfriend, Derek, I was surprised to learn that he is a Catholic. He gave me many books to read and I decided to take RCIA to better understand his beliefs, and ended up understanding God better instead!

My name is **James West**. I was born and raised on the prairies. I was raised with an Anglican upbringing. I moved to Prince George in 1976. Maria Capule and I were married at St. Michael and All Angels Anglican Church by Peter Zimmer in 1997. My wife Maria is from the Philippines and is Roman Catholic. After we were married I started joining my wife at St. Mary's Church and have been accompanying her ever since. Our grandson, Dylan came to live with us in 2007. He goes to St. Mary's School. I have really come to feel at home at St. Mary's and have met some beautiful people here. I have decided to make a change in my life which I believe is for the better for myself and for my family.

THE MEANING OF LENT

The Church has long held to the adage *lex orandi, lex credendi*: the law of prayer establishes the law of belief. Listening to the prayers of the Church is one of the best ways of finding out what the Church believes. What do we find in the prayers of the Lenten season? That Lent is joyful: "Each year you give us this joyful season/when we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery/ with mind and heart renewed" (Preface of Lent 1). That Lent is holy: "This great season of grace is your gift" (Preface of Lent 2). That our Lenten sacrifices are a way to "express our thanks" (Preface of Lent 3), that they "correct our faults and raise our minds to you" (Preface of Lent 4). That Lent is all about Easter: "We have been preparing, by works of charity and self-sacrifice, for the celebration of our Lord's paschal mystery" (greeting on Palm Sunday).

It is safe to say that Lent has no meaning apart from the Paschal Mystery. The prayer, fasting and almsgiving we do during Lent have an Easter purpose. We do not fast during Lent because fasting is good for our health, like a workout in the gym. Rather, fasting helps us to realize our dependence; it helps us become aware of the needs of others; it empties us so that we can be filled with God's gifts. We give alms for the same reason—to increase our awareness of the poverty of others, to become more detached from things and more focused on God. The prayers we offer during Lent are prayers of repentance, prayers of reparation. That is important, but most important of all, we pray that God may "bring the image of his Son to perfection within us" (Preface of Lent 1).

For ours is a journey of hope, a fitting time to ascend to the holy mountain of Easter joy.



Leaders and Community Organizers of Asia coordinated the training of 100 women in community leadership skills in East Java, Indonesia with the help of DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE.

Thank you for giving.

Share
Lent



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**Development
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**50 THINGS YOU CAN DO
TO SAVE
THE ENVIRONMENT**

21. Don't throw hazardous/toxic waste in your garbage, down the drain, on the ground or in open bodies of water.
22. Contact the chairperson of planning and public works (city council) and tell them you want to recycle your garbage, that you want safe disposal of hazardous waste, and that you want your environmental concerns as one of their highest priorities.
23. Repair old fridges and keep them in working condition until the time when there is safe disposal or recycling of them.
24. Buy energy efficient appliances and use the energy saving cycles.
25. Consider using manual tools over gas or electric (eg. lawn mower)
26. Use natural woods instead of pressed woods, particle boards or plywood.
27. Choose latex paint instead of oil. Limestone based white wash is even better.
28. Grow houseplants. They're excellent air purifiers.
29. Set up and use a compostpile.
30. Let your grass grow a little longer.; it holds water better and so requires less water. Use mulch for the same reason.

UNSUNG HEROINES: WOMAN BLEEDING

Twelve years... What does that feel like to you? Half of your life? A quarter of your life? An eight of your life? 1987 to 2009. Imagine, twelve years of being ostracized, shunned, unclean. Twelve years of being an untouchable. Twelve years of living on the charity of others. Twelve years of searching for a cure at the hands of physicians, quacks and folk healers. Twelve years of enforced inactivity. Twelve years of slowly dying. That was the experience of the unnamed woman who suffered from bleeding for twelve years (Mark 5:21-43). We don't much about her beyond that. We don't know if she had a family, a husband or children. All we know is that for twelve years she had sought a cure for her ailment and ended up growing worse. As a woman, her bleeding ailment left her on the fringes of society and family (Lev 15:19-20). A woman seemingly with no future, a hopeless case. And yet... she has hope... she has faith. She hears of Jesus, hears of this man who can heal, who can cure. She ventures forth from her home and sees him in the midst of the crowd, enroute to see the 12 year old daughter of Jairus. Crowds of people, people she must not touch, for she would make them unclean, force them to perform rituals of purification. She pushes forward, pushes through the crowd, and touches just the fringe of Jesus' cloak... and is healed. Perhaps she slips back into the crowd, perhaps she stays frozen as the people surge around her. She is cured and no one has noticed. But then, Jesus turns and asks the question "who touched my clothes?". The woman knows she has broken purity laws, she has made Jesus ritually unclean. She comes forward in fear and trembling and acknowledges her act. Jesus, however, does not chastise her, but calls her "daughter" and acknowledges her faith. In the battle between clean and unclean... clean won the day. Her impurity could not displace his purity, rather the opposite. Nice story... but really what does it have to say to us today. We don't have these antiquated ritual purity laws. Or do we? They may come in a different guise. Do we worry about the distinction between sacred and secular? Do we worry that a giraffe in the sanctuary will "contaminate" the "holiness" of that space? Do we worry that the "sins" of those within our midst will somehow "contaminate" our worship? Do we exclude some because we believe that their impurity will sap our own purity? Do we have such little faith in the love and compassion of our God? The love and compassion that is to flow through us. The love and compassion that is to transform the world. The love and compassion that is to bring the outsider inside... to bring the impure into the pure... Our mission is not to shun and avoid... our mission is to embrace and envelop... and to transform...



MONTHLY FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Below is the synopsis of the February financial statement.

Bank Balance:	1885.09
DDF Balance:	148899.63
<u>Accts Receivable:</u>	<u>1378.27</u>
Total Assets	152162.99

INCOME

Donations	20681.00
Fees	525.00
Programs	80.00
Other	1756.02
Rentals	3552.00
Total Income	26594.02

EXPENSES

Aministration	16891.87
Programs	422.96
Operation/Maint.	5189.39
Rental Operation	1114.82
Total Expense	23619.04
Net Income	1875.94

This month we continue to do well, thanks in large part to a couple of very large Sunday donations. Our expenses in a couple of categories dropped significantly this month, although we did use about \$3000 of the rebate to pay for the new dishwasher. We also replaced \$5000 in our DDF savings account, which covered half the cost of the new roof over the conference room and Freeman foyer. It is important to remember that we rely on the Sunday collection for our income—we cannot function without the contributions of the members of the parish. Whatever you give is vital to the continuing life of our parish community. Once again, thank you to all for your generous contribution to the life of our community.