



THE GRRAPEVINE

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

Number 82

5th Sunday of Lent

March 29, 2009

STEWARDSHIP REFLECTION

Jesus tells his disciples of the immeasurable generosity God has bestowed on them by offering His only Son for their salvation.

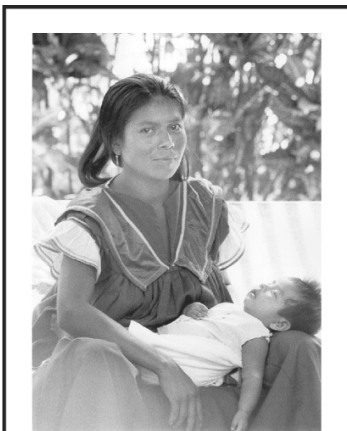
Good stewards realize this wonderful gift. God has sacrificed what is most dear to Him for our sake.

Do we rejoice in this gift of Our Savior and respond to this love with our own immeasurable generosity?

Do we allow the light of Christ to shine in the world through us?

How can we share the light of Christ more effectively?

Or do we withdraw, refusing this gift, and prefer to live in a way that denies the light of Christ?



Thank you for giving.

 CANADIAN CATHOLIC ORGANIZATION FOR
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SEEING JESUS

In the gospel reading, some Greeks approach Philip and say "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." They know instinctively that Philip can help them see Jesus. Whatever reason they had for wanting to see him in the first place, they needed to find a way, and obviously there was something about Philip that led them to believe that he could show Jesus to them. As a disciple of Jesus, one of Philip's roles was to help Jesus accomplish his mission—he was in a sense a frontrunner, someone who prepared the way for Jesus and who helped people to find him when they were looking. We would suppose that Philip eventually led the Greeks to Jesus and introduced them. In the Gospel passage that we have, the story moves on to Jesus teaching when Philip tells him about the request, but surely the ones seeking Jesus were not left out in the cold.

As disciples, we are called to continue the mission of Jesus in our world. Just as Jesus was an instrument of the Father's love, healing and compassion, so we are called to be the instruments Jesus uses to continue building the kingdom of God and sharing the gifts of God's love in our world. In our daily living, there should be signs of our belonging to Jesus, of our discipleship. It is the way in which we live our lives and relate to the people around us that others will recognize the presence of Jesus and ask us to help them see Jesus, or meet him. Jesus uses imagery and parables to teach us about our role as disciples: the images of mustard seeds, which though small grow into large plants (our good deeds produce a rich harvest), and yeast which leavens the whole mass of dough (our actions and lives have an effect on the world and on others) remind us that all of our words and actions either contribute to the building of the Kingdom or work against it.

When people see us or encounter us, do they recognize the presence of Jesus in our words and actions? Would they be moved to ask us to help them see Jesus? Would they have any idea that we are people who know Jesus and could point him out, or at least point the way toward him? Who do we turn to when we want to see Jesus?

PREPARING FOR PASSION

The climactic event of Jesus' passion and death is drawing closer; a time when the great confrontation between Jesus and the powers of darkness takes place. Jesus invites his disciples into a great mystery with curious pronouncements: Those who love their lives just as they are, will lose them. If a grain of wheat dies, it will bear much fruit. When Jesus is lifted up, he will draw all to himself. The Christian steward knows life can't be lived in complacency. We are called to die to self, bear more fruit, be raised up with Jesus. In today's Gospel reading Jesus brings discomfort to those who are comfortable. How would we respond to Jesus?

THANK YOU

Many thanks to all who participated in the Living Room Dialogues.

Special Thanks to our Hosts



who opened their homes for four weeks to a group of parishioners, some of whom they did not know before. Without your generosity we could not have done this.

And to our facilitators, one and all. You did a marvellous job and it was much appreciated.

PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: The trip to Fort Ware went off without incident—I even arrived the same day I left! The last trip up was delayed because of bad weather in the north. I will be in McBride on Saturday evening, and then again next Sunday morning. The seedlings for the Plant Sale are springing up like crazy!

Giselle: Is away in Calgary having done a Returning to Spirit workshop this past week. Will return soon!

Jude: Spring (even if it doesn't look like Spring) is always an uplifting time as our Parish prepares to welcome newcomers to the Church, and parents prepare their children for Confirmation and Holy Eucharist. Although we are already united to God and to others, our communal celebration of these sacraments deepens, strengthens and helps us "realize" it in our lives. I am also looking forward to the Spiritual Book Study beginning the week after Easter. Happy Spring!

Roger: Easter is nearing and when one project ends, another program is in view. The living room dialogue has ended and I was only able to attend two sessions, but what I experienced was two good memorable events. To hear stories of faith journeys is an affirming of the presence of God among us. I can see that these sessions build up community. They provide an opportunity to share opinions and experience in a relaxed way. I appreciated getting to know people even more.

AS MEMBERS OF THIS PARISH COMMUNITY PREPARE FOR SACRAMENTS, WE, THE FAITHFUL JOURNEY WITH THEM.

WE ARE SEALED WITH THE SPIRIT THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT

Jesus assured the disciples - and us - that when his work on earth was completed, the Spirit would be with the Church. The Spirit is the life force of the Church. The Spirit nourished the people of God, heals the Church, and helps the members of the Church act in harmony. The Spirit draws us to the message of the Gospels, enlightens us to understand the teaching of Jesus, and strengthens us to live the new commandment.

It is the Spirit who shows us the risen Lord and opens our minds and hearts to the Paschal mystery of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension to the Father. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ is present in the sacraments especially in the Eucharist and in the word of God proclaimed in Scripture. The Spirit enables the Church to become one with God and empowers the Body of Christ to create a better world.

The Church says....

Confirmation perfects the grace of Baptism. The grace of this sacrament binds us more closely to Christ and enriches the baptized with

strength of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel by word and deed.

(Catechism of the Catholic Church 1285)

Confirmation completes our Baptism and strengthens us with the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

For Reflection

What difference do the gifts of the Holy Spirit make in my life?



PRACTICE OF HOPE

Even Jesus had to face the frightening mystery of death. In Judea he had already been threatened with stoning for blasphemy, so going to Bethany was dangerous; but he went, confident of his mission. Where did he get such confidence? He would have remembered Ezekiel's words: "I will open your graves and have you rise from them." And he was in constant communion with his Father and with the commands of the Holy Spirit. How might we find serene confidence in the face of sickness and death, our own or others'? Time spent praying with and reflecting on God's word should help us live into the promise of Christ's Resurrection. Simply being with those who are dying or grieving a death is a profound experience.

As we enter into Holy Week, we hear the account of Jesus' Passion and death—a gruesome experience, yet one that teaches us much about the promise of life that we have been given, and that calls us to a deep and abiding trust and hope in God's promise of life. God's plan for us is LIFE, not death, and God calls us to life in him.

How can knowing that Jesus was 'troubled' about his coming death help us as we face the reality of our own mortality?

What have you learned about life, faith, God, yourself through suffering?

RETURNING TO SPIRIT:

Returning to Spirit (RTS) is designed to address the issues surrounding the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) legacy. The way in which aboriginals and non-aboriginals deal with the IRS experience determines the possibility (or not) of a life-giving, creative relationship between the two at all levels: social, economic, political, spiritual. RTS is a transformational process that helps participants shift from being "stuck in no possibilities" into new possibilities of creative partnership.



Who would benefit from participating in the RTS workshops? An obvious answer is all those who attended or worked in IRS. But the reality is much deeper. In aboriginal communities, the inter-generational impact of IRS has affected people who never attended the schools. The IRS legacy also affected the relationship of aboriginals with the rest of Canadian society. The IRS experience colours the way aboriginals see and experience themselves in relationship to Canadian society. Society's way of relating to aboriginals amplifies, confirms or reinforces aboriginal experience of the IRS. An unending cycle of no possibilities develops and persists. It takes on the colour of discrimination, racism and separation at all level of society. Time and time again, individuals/organizations/communities have tried to fix the situation through various projects but with little progress. It is just more of the same.

The truth is that all of Canadian society is responsible for the legacy of IRS. Our entire society is affected by the IRS experience and needs to deal with the consequences. Each member of Canadian society, whether nonaboriginal or aboriginal, is responsible for the resolution of the IRS legacy.

The RTS workshops give participants the opportunity to own that responsibility and make a difference. Through a process of awareness and transformation RTS supports participants in reaching a place of healing and reconciliation. In the space created, there is the possibility of new life for families and communities. The RTS workshop is for all those who want to make a difference in our society regarding the IRS legacy. The RTS workshop is for all those who want to create a just society in which everyone, regardless of faith, gender, race, ethnicity, can create a fulfilling life instead of just surviving life. Non-aboriginal society needs aboriginals in order to heal; aboriginals need non-aboriginals in order

SCRIPTURE INSIGHTS

Despite the great emphasis on Jesus' divinity in John's Gospel, the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead presents a touching scene of Jesus' humanity in his tears at the death of his friend. At the same time, focus on Jesus' divinity is evident in his extraordinary knowledge about what had happened to Lazarus, as well as in his self-knowledge as the Son of the Living God.

The evangelist tells us that Jesus loved Martha, Mary and Lazarus, and one can imagine that he often spent time at their home. What familiarity there is between the sisters and Jesus! "Master, the one you love is ill." In fact, after his arrival, Martha almost takes him to task: "Lord, if you had been here..."

Look at the dialogue between Martha and Jesus. She: "Even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you." He: "Your brother will rise." She: Yes, on "the last day." Her misunderstanding, like that of the disciples', becomes an occasion for Jesus' self-revelation: "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me, even if he dies, will live...." Does Martha believe? What a profound profession of faith she makes: "Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the son of God, the one who is coming into the world." Martha is the only one in the fourth Gospel account to make such a statement, to come to the full recognition of Jesus' identity. Despite her words, she cannot comprehend all that Jesus is and does: "There will be a stench."

The raising of Lazarus is the last of the seven miracles that Jesus performed in the fourth Gospel account, showing the glory of God as well as his own identity. Many came to believe because of it. What does it say to us?

How does this Gospel demonstrate that faith is a developing process?

to heal. We need to come together. Healing does NOT take a lifetime. It can happen now!

The RTS process consists of three parts:

Part 1 is a 5 day workshop for **aboriginals**

Part 2 is a 5 day workshop for **non-aboriginals**

Part 3 a 5 day workshop where the two groups come together for **Reconciliation**.

So, aboriginals take Parts 1 & 3, non-aboriginals take Parts 2 & 3.

Upcoming workshops here in Prince George:

Part 1—May 18-22, 2009

Part 2—July 6-10, 2009

Part 2—Dec 7-11, 2009

Part 3—2010

For more info, contact:

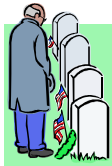
REJOICING & REMEMBERING

We welcomed the following through the sacrament of Baptism:

Duncan McLeod
Kenzie MacLeod

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

Gordon Meyer



NORTHERN CATHOLIC NEWS

The Northern Catholic News is now online! Follow the links under What's New on the diocesan web page, www.pgdiocese.bc.ca.

The website is now updated regularly and there are several new items, such as a talk given by Bishop Gerald Wiesner in March on Becoming Human, and new pictures on the Lejac Pilgrimage page.

UNSUNG HEROINES: NAMELESS SLAVE GIRL

Yes, "nameless slave girl" isn't very descriptive, and there are a lot of them in the bible! A lot of nameless women and girls. A lot of nameless unsung heroines. I could have called her "Namaan's wife's slave girl", but that would seem to imply that outside of her connection with them, she has no identity of her own. And this girl certainly does have an identity! She appears in 2 Kings 5:1-19, along with Namaan and the prophet Elisha.



Namaan is the commander of the army of Aram, a neighbouring kingdom to Israel, and a more powerful one. Namaan was a great man, thought very highly of by his king. The only problem with Namaan is that he suffered from leprosy. Enter the nameless slave girl. She was an Israelite who had been captured by the Arameans on one of their raids into Israel. We have no idea of how old she was, but early teens is probably a good guess. Her family had probably all been killed, with maybe the exception of siblings who had also been taken away as captives and sold into slavery. She is alone in a strange land, serving strange people. Yet, she is not bitter. She has a strong faith in Yahweh, a faith that has sustained her throughout all of her experiences. A faith that allows her to experience compassion for Namaan, rather than resentment and anger and hatred. She knows that Namaan is a leper and tells her mistress (Namaan's wife) that Namaan should go and see the prophet in Samaria (Elisha) and he will be healed. Pretty feisty! Because if Namaan does go to Elisha and is not healed... he is not going to be happy when he comes back. He would be in a rather foul mood and little nameless slave girl would pay the price. But her faith is strong, she knows, she believes that Elisha can and will heal Namaan... and he does. We don't hear anything else of our unsung heroine after this. Perhaps she was rewarded when Namaan came home. Maybe she was released. We don't know.

But our little heroine does speak to us today as well. Do we have the faith of an exiled slave girl in a seemingly hopeless situation? Do we have the faith that the Lord can and does work in situations that seem quite ridiculous? Do we speak out with compassion and love and believe that God will act? Do we offer hope to the hopeless?

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE LETTER

Members and donors shared their concerns with us after having read an article about the projects supported by DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE in Latin America.

I strongly and unequivocally reiterate to you that the work of DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE fully respects and follows the teachings of the Catholic Church on the inherent dignity of the human person. We do not, in any way, support projects that would contravene these fundamental principles, most certainly not projects related to abortion. It is dangerously irresponsible and slanderous on the part of some journalists, through ill-conceived conjecture and hypothesis, to deliberately misinterpret the social justice initiatives of our southern partners in this light.

Founded in 1967, for forty-two years DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE has channeled the financial and solidarity support of Canadian Catholics toward social justice and development projects in the developing world that reinforce our common humanity and join us in a global solidarity movement for social justice and human dignity. Each year, hundreds of projects in the Global South such as community-based fishing cooperatives, farmers' associations, community radio stations, voter registration drives, and reconstruction and humanitarian relief after major natural catastrophes are supported by Canadian Catholics through our organization. For more information on the various projects we support, I invite you to refer to our annual report on our website.

The work accomplished by the members and staff of DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE is strongly rooted in our Catholic faith and inspired by the values of the Gospel, particularly « the preferential option for the poor ». Hundreds of thousands of poor families and individuals all over the world, in Africa, in Asia, in Latin America and in the Middle East have benefitted from the labour of love and solidarity of our organization. Particularly in these times of global economic crisis, these most vulnerable of our sisters and brothers rely on your crucial support.

Michael Casey, Executive Director