



THE GRRAPEVINE

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

Number 86

Ascension Sunday

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CHALLENGE OF PEACE

In 1968, a roman teenager, Andrea Riccardi, and some friends, began gathering weekly at the Church of San'Egidio. They prayed and read the Bible together, looking for some non-political, Spirit-inspired way of living. What they read and shared in their prayer time led them to befriend the poor, specifically gypsies who lived on the outskirts of Rome. Here they realized that their new friends had to endure discrimination, so they began a ministry of mediation. From that simple beginning—merely listening to scripture and following its demands—has grown an amazing global ministry, which has received the Mahatma Ghandi Medal for their peacemaking. Today, sixty plus Communities of San'Gigidio can be found worldwide. Read about them at www.santegidio.org/en/index.html.

Then spend time reflecting on the question: What is scripture saying to me, to our community today? How and with whom can I/we share what has been heard in the scriptures? What practical work am I called to do in our world?

PENTECOST

For the Jewish people, Pentecost was a feast of thanksgiving that marked the conclusion of the grain harvest; it was also a time to commemorate the giving of the law at Sinai. It was celebrated 50 days after Passover. For the first Christian believers, gathered to celebrate this feast in Jerusalem, the giving of the Holy spirit reinvented Pentecost. It marked a new beginning: God would be present among his people not in words carved in stone, but in a whole new way, living in their hearts, and speaking through them. Just as the old feast was a time to celebrate the abundances of God's gifts by giving back to god the first fruits of the fields, so the new Pentecost celebrates the incredible abundance of God's giving, the many gifts of the Holy spirit.



Pentecost is the 'joyful conclusion of the season of Easter'. It ranks with Christmas, epiphany and the Ascension. It is a day to celebrate the truth that the gift of the Holy spirit has been given to us. Jesus is here!

Pentecost, like Easter, has a vigil. The character of this vigil is not baptismal, as in the Easter Vigil, but is one of urgent prayer, after the example of the apostles and disciples, who persevered together in prayer with Mary, the mother of Jesus, as they awaited the Holy Spirit.

As we celebrate Pentecost next weekend, we can reflect on what we need today in order to continue living out our mission of proclaiming the Good News and building the kingdom.. How can we invite the Holy Spirit more fully into our lives?

STEWARDSHIP REFLECTION

Before he ascended into heaven, Jesus instructed his disciples to proclaim the Gospel to all of creation. As stewards of this legacy, we too are called to give witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our words and actions; in how we live and how we treat others.

Are we sharing the life of Christ with others in our day-to-day lives?

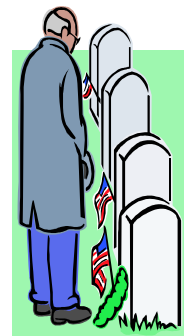
In what ways do we see ourselves proclaiming the Gospel?

In what ways can we do better?

REJOICING & REMEMBERING

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

Harvey Anderson



PASTORAL TEAM

Richard: Prince Albert had snow when I was there, and I thought that was the end of winter for me! I thoroughly enjoyed the plant sale again this year. It is a real thrill to watch all those plants going out the door, hoping that others will enjoy them as much as I do. With Roger on the road so much, it is back to living alone again, and that is taking some getting used to. I look forward to a bit more time in the garden over the next little while. Next Sunday I will leave for Fort Ware after the Masses here at St. Mary's. I look forward to the visit, as it has been a couple of months since the last visit.

Jude: Hello again, I guess this is another busy time of year. I am enjoying working with the CWL as they prepare for the BC & Yukon Provincial Convention taking place here in Prince George this week. The Dominicans from Adrian celebrated our 125th anniversary last weekend and three of us did it from afar, but Beverly brought back all the excitement for us.

Roger: Back on the road again—a week in Jasper, as weekend in Terrace, a trip north and now back to Kitimat on Monday. An interesting study of the geography of our diocese!

THE CALL—THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is costly, because it requires us to put aside the craving for domination, possession, and control, for Jesus.

Discipleship is grace, because it confers true liberation and eternal life.

Stewardship: A Disciple's Response,
a Pastoral Letter on Stewardship



Jesus says, "I came so that you might have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10)

But discipleship is not an easy way. "If you wish to come after me," Jesus also says, "you must deny yourself and take up your cross daily and follow me. For if you wish to save your life you will lose it, but if you lose your life for my sake you will save it."

Initially, I am hard pressed to think of what being a disciple of Jesus has cost me. But I am also hard pressed to think of what being an adult or a parent has cost me - even though I know I've made sacrifices. Certainly, moving out on my own and paying my own way as a gainfully employed adult meant giving up some of the fun and carefree things I used to enjoy when living and depending on mom and dad. And unquestionably, the pursuits and possessions I have foregone to have children are many. But the reality is that the joy one derives from the results of those sacrifices totally obscures and blots out any of the costs. I believe the same is true with the costs of being a disciple of Jesus Christ and discipleship.

When we begin with the far greater challenge of being a disciple of Jesus, stewardship becomes a response that is part and parcel of who we are and what we believe. Stewardship formation and education must begin with a radical call to be disciples of Jesus.

Archbishop Thomas J. Murphy

Questions:

- Who do you know who has sacrificed significantly for Jesus sake?
- What have they given up? Have they gained anything? Do they seem less concerned with possessions or control?
- What exactly have you given up in possessions, prestige, or power to follow Jesus?

Compiled, edited and written by Scott Bader, Director of Parish Stewardship for the Archdiocese of Seattle.

PLANT SALE FOLLOWUP

The plant sale depleted our stocks of pots and plant paks, and while this may seem a strange time to be thinking about next winter/spring, it is the perfect time to ask for 2", 4" pots and plant paks, as people are getting them when they purchase plants. Remember us and drop of the above in the box at the church entrance.

LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME

How do we lead the little children to God?

When children are very small they inadvertently lead us to God just by being their beautiful innocent selves. That is the time to start leading them to Jesus, who said, "Let the little children come to me." Children have a built in sense of wonder and awe that can be enhanced when you share it with them. When we take those moments to share with them how God enters into our lives through all the beautiful gifts like flowers and birds and animals and fish and trees and rivers and mountains. Let them tell you what they especially like, then together thank God for all his delightful gifts.

You might even teach them a little poem like:

The Fly by Ogden Nash
The Lord, in his wisdom made the fly.
And then, forgot to tell us why!

Or The Bee
Bzzzzz

God, to some sticky stuff
Not yet alive in a hive, said
"Come, hummmmm, glorify me
Be my bee and bzzzzz as I bid."
And sure enough, it was and it did.



Another important way to introduce Jesus is to take young children to Jesus' house. Take them to church first, at a time when few people are there so you can show them around and tell them about the things they see there, like the tabernacle, candles, altar, crucifix, stations, pews, kneelers.

SCRIPTURE INSIGHTS

Today's scriptures offer insights into Jesus' glorious return to his heavenly Father at the end of his earthly ministry. In the First Reading, we hear the beginning of the second volume of Luke's writings, the Acts of the Apostles. This book begins where his account of the Gospel ends. Like the author of any good sequel, he summarizes what happened in the previous episode. However, Luke's presentation of events in Acts is different from his Gospel account. There, he situates Jesus' Ascension on the day of the Resurrection (Luke 24:49-50). In Acts, the Ascension occurs 40 days later. Luke does not intend to provide a factual chronology, but a story rich in symbolism. Forty days suggests a long period of sacred time and evokes other significant Bible events. By the fourth century, the Church was reckoning its celebration of the Ascension 40 days after the Resurrection.

The work of his earthly life completed, Jesus entrusts the continuation of his mission to the apostles, promising that they will be empowered by the gift of his Holy Spirit, which will arrive after he has departed. In today's Gospel, we read the longer (and probably later) ending of the Gospel according to Mark, which tells us about that mission of the apostles. The letter to the Ephesians also speaks of mission, addressing all believers, including us, concerning the gifts of the Holy Spirit that will empower our work.

In the middle of the letter, the author included a quotation from Psalm 68 to show how Jesus' enthronement in heaven fulfilled this ancient text that was originally intended to celebrate Yahweh, enthroned on Mount Sinai. In the same way, Christians sing Psalm 47 as a hymn of joyful praise for God the Father and the Son, enthroned together.

- In today's readings, what important experiences prepared the 11 apostles for their mission? What resources do all disciples need for their mission?
- Why is the Ascension a cause for joy rather than sorrow?
- Describe your role in continuing the mission of Jesus.

This may take several visits, but it is worth it as it helps them to be a little more at home when they come to Mass or a service. Telling a child how special God's house is and how we praise God in this place by listening, watching and singing sometimes helps too.

Capitalizing on the different seasons of the Church year, you can make a point of getting ahead

of the advertisements that start so far ahead of time helping them to think Easter is only about bunnies and candy or Christmas about sparkling trees, Santa Claus and presents. They enjoy the real story any time of year and then you can remind them why we are celebrating when the Holy season or day comes.

GENERATIONS OF FAITH: MOTHER, DAUGHTER & GRANDSON

I have to admit, I was pretty worried when my daughter married that unbeliever. Oh sure, he said he believed in a God and stuff, but we all know he wasn't a true believer. But what can you do? The young people, they fall in love and they lose sight of the important things, like God. To be fair, my son-in-law wasn't all that bad, he allowed her to practice her faith and things seem to go well for them.



When my grandson was born, I was worried again! Would my son-in-law exert his role as head of the household, or would my daughter be able to raise the young lad in the faith? Ah, all these questions and this useless worrying! Turns out we were able to raise the boy in the faith and what an amazing experience that was! He was like a sponge, soaking it all up and always wanting to know more, and more and more. He had this most amazing connection to the Creator. He would come running inside as a little boy and tell us of how he had seen the creator at work in the flowers, in the birds, even in the stones. He was always joyful and full of enthusiasm. And always willing to help. My goodness, I would turn around to call him to fetch something and there he would be, waiting to see what I needed, before I even knew it! A grandmother couldn't wish for a better grandson. I always had a sense though, that he was waiting for something bigger, that he knew a call was coming, and one day it did.

The preacher came back to town and my grandson was absolutely enthralled. He was only 16 years old... so young! But he knew what he wanted and you can't keep them tied to your apron strings forever. He was mature before his time and when he came to my daughter and I, and asked if he could join the preacher on his journeys... well, I knew we couldn't refuse him. Off he went, all over the place. We'd receive news that he was in Judea, or Corinth or Rome or Antioch, places I'd only heard of. Of course I worried... I worried that he wasn't settling down. I worried that he wasn't starting a family. I worried that he was too young! But did it do me any good? No! So I trusted in God. I trusted that my grandson would thrive with Paul. He was the best helper I ever had, and he was Paul's best helper as well. In time, he took on his own ministry and even became bishop! Imagine... my grandson a bishop...

So, if I have any words of grandmotherly wisdom for you sisters-in-faith, it is this: don't worry. Worry helps nothing! It just turns you into a knot and makes you think the whole world rests on your shoulders! Believe me... your shoulders are not that big!... My advice... simply believe. And let God take care of the details. It will all work out in the end... far better than you can imagine! Ah yes... my name... Well, my name is Lois. My daughter is Eunice. And my grandson, yes, you've heard of him... Timothy (2 Tim 1:4,5).

PRACTICE OF CHARITY



Today's liturgy is filled with festivity as we glorify Christ, who takes his place at the right hand of the Father after ascending. Saint Augustine, in a homily for the Ascension, reminds us that despite the pomp and formality of our throne room metaphor, our Lord nevertheless remains intimately concerned with us: "Christ is now exalted above the heavens, but he still suffers on earth all the pain that we, the members of his body, have to bear. He showed this...when he said 'I was hungry and you gave me food'" (Matthew 25:35). The Son does sit in majesty, and at the same time he is always with us in our trials; he is in every sufferer. As his followers, we rejoice and sing glad praises, yet we never forget the still suffering Christ in the members of his body. We are always poised to take the next caring action.