



SMALL GROUP NEWSLETTER  
ST. MARY OF THE VISITATION PARISH  
CAMBRIDGE, (H) ONT.

**FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT**

**April 2, 2017**

**MORE OF  
HIM**

L E S S O F M E

**Introduction to the Word:**

Lent is an intentional time, a special invitational time, a mini retreat time if you like. A time to slow down, pause and reflect; to examine, reframe, and deepen our relationship with God, others and self. This Lent we will be focussing on the theme “More of Him and Less of Me.” It is a time to take the focus off of ourselves – “what we are doing for Lent” and instead to connect with “what God wishes to do within us for Lent.” I pray that this Lent will be a time of blessing for you and all in your small group.

In addition to this written guide, and our audio of the Sunday Message, we have also developed a series of video follow ups. We encourage you to use these are the commentaries during the Season of Lent – and they will form the small group questions which will guide you.

Our progress to date has been significant....we have looked at the temptations that take us away from Cross of Christ (same as Jesus in desert). We have glanced together at the invitation to Go, Join and See the will and way of God for us and how this means we trust, follow and desire a new perspective to see Christ in a transfigured way and so we can honour the God Beyond All Praising. We have heard the call to live soul fully as we quench our thirst and embrace not the fleeting things of life but the eternal things and last week we looked at saying an authentic “Yes”.

**Warm Up Activity:**

- Each of us says “Yes” a lot...to the mundane and the monumental....how many times did you say “Yes” last week and how many where of Him and how many for me ?

**CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)**



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**Leader:** Lord, as we prepare to proclaim your Word, we pray that you call us out of the death of sin, to a new life in your Spirit.

**Lord Jesus,** You open the graves of the dead and raise us up,

**Christ Jesus,** You give us *new life* in your Holy Spirit,

**Lord Jesus,** Our Resurrection and our Life! Help our unbelief !

**Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord, have mercy.**

**Let us pray together our Heart to Home Prayer:**

*God Our Heavenly Father, we long to make our thoughts your thoughts,  
and our ways your ways. As we prepare with attentive mind and open heart  
to hear your Word Lord, we long to be empowered with your Spirit  
so that we may bring your Word to our families, our parish and our communities.  
This, our prayer, we make through the intercession of Our Lady of the Visitation and in name of  
Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.*

**SCRIPTURE REFLECTION TIME** (45 minutes)

(Please select one person –not including the leader – to take a turn at reading the scripture passages below.)

**FIRST READING** (Ezekiel 37:12–14)

Thus says the Lord God: “I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act,” says the Lord. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**SECOND READING** (Romans 8:8–11)

Brothers and sisters: Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL** (John 11:1–45)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Now a certain man, Lazarus, was ill. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair;



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her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, “Lord, he whom you love is ill.” But when Jesus heard this, he said, “This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God’s glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it.” Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

Then after this Jesus said to the disciples, “Let us go to Judea again.” The disciples said to him, “Rabbi, the people there were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?” Jesus answered, “Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them.”

After saying this, he told them, “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to awaken him.” The disciples said to him, “Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right.” Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, “Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.” Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with him.”

When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.” Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.” Martha said to him, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.” Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” She said to him, “Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.”

When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, “The Teacher is here and is calling for you.” And when Mary heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there.

When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, He was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. Jesus said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, “See how he loved him!” But some of them said, “Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?”

Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Take away the stone.”

Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, “Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days.” Jesus said to her, “Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?” So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said: “Father, I



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thank you for having heard me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.”

When he had said this, he cried with aloud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, “Unbind him, and let him go.”

Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.**

*(Allow a few minutes for quiet and for a brief reflection on a meaningful word or thought)*

### COMMENTARY:

#### [Listen to our Series Theme Song](#)

[You may also as a group wish to listen again to the Audio of the Lord’s Day Message](#)

[Please watch now the Video Commentary for this Week](#)

When I was in the second grade, Sister Eleanor told us as a class: “listen carefully to the question asked of you before you answer it.” In the Gospel of today, Martha and Mary take Jesus to grave of their brother Lazarus and there Jesus asks them a very important question: “Do you believe?”

But, not just “do you believe” in the resurrection on the last day – because all faithful Jews would have believed that. But rather He asked do you believe “I am the resurrection and life?” They said “yes” and we too do as His disciples – for this means that we have life and life in abundance, not only in the future (on the last day), but also in the present as we journey with Him. With their belief stated, Martha and Mary see a great miracle. Jesus orders the grave opened and Lazarus to “come out” and as he does, then Lazarus is unbound, set free, and not only does his life change, but the lives of Martha and Mary (and all who saw the miracle) change – because of a Yes.

As we come to the almost finish line of the Season of Lent, as we soon will see the statues covered, and readings which promise salvation will turn toward the bright white vestments and the glorious fulfillment of Christ’s promise contained within His question - “I am the resurrection and life.”

Our readings this Lord’s day remind us that Jesus did not come simply to be a philosopher who asks questions or a sage who provides wisdom, but He came to bring new eternal and full life and to take away our sins. Thus the power of our Day of Mercy this Thursday and the opportunity to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This miracle of raising Lazarus is Jesus’ last recorded miracle before heading to Jerusalem, as He arrives they know He has power over death. Jesus also has power over sin and desires to work that miracle in your life today through the beauty of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



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During this Season of Lent we have been on retreat – one desiring to make it a season of More of Him and Less of Me. We have turned down the volume of the world and asked God to open our ears to His voice. So that we might grow, love and see even more His will and way. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the pinnacle opportunity to do such that, to culminate our retreat by coming out of the tomb and enter into the new Season of Easter in fullness of life

*(Allow about 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **Commentary** to identify a newly discovered insight or idea.)*

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion:** (15-20 minutes)

- a) Since we believe that Jesus is *the resurrection and the life*, what would you say to a person who says “I would like to believe it but I have some doubts”? Comment.
- b) Being able to forgive another will give a person a keener sense of being forgiven by God. What is it, do you think, that keeps us from forgiving each other? Briefly share some of your *skills* and *graces* that have helped you become a more forgiving person.
- c) Have you ever experienced a time when God may have called you back to life from “a season of death”? Share your experience
- d) Use now the other questions mentioned in the video as part of your discussion.

### Intercessions:

**Leader:** Our response: Lord Hear us

For our Holy Father Pope Francis, for health and ministry. For our Church as we continue to walk humbly with the Lord guided by the Holy Spirit. We pray to the Lord.

For our parish community as we conclude the Season of Lent, that we may dedicate this Season to More of Him and Less of Me as we use this Season to live out the spirit of surrender, invite others to worship at Mass and share in the reverence and love we have for the Eucharist. We pray to the Lord.

For all those who are preparing to celebrate Sacraments during this coming year; for those preparing for marriage, those in our RCIA process, those children who are preparing for First Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation: may their journey of faith lead them closer to the source of Hope and Life who is Jesus. We pray to the Lord.

For those areas of our life that are in need of being restored to Hope. May the weight of doubt not tempt us, faith not fail us, but rather may our relationship with Jesus abound in great measure as we adopt the mindset of Christ. We pray to the Lord.

For those who are sick and suffering at this time, especially parishioners in hospital or nursing homes. For those who have died and for all the intentions recorded in the Parish Book of Prayer. We pray to the Lord.



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Leader: Let us seek the intercession of the Patroness of our Parish as we pray: **Hail Mary**

**Closing Activity and Prayer** (15-20 minutes)

*(This time is reserved for quiet prayer as well as for an action-response to the communal reflections. You may wish to create and add petitions of prayer at this time. This time also intent to provide moments to connect and “outreach” to the larger community.)*

**GROUP PRAYER/ ACTION:**

During this week, try to be more conscious of the number of times you say “Yes” – is it More of Him and Less of Me when you do? Be ready to discuss this experience next week in Small Group.

**GROUP PRAYER COMMITMENT**

- Start preparing as an individual and a group for our Day of Mercy on April 6.

**Let us pray** (together)

*O God of eternal life, whose glory is the human person fully alive,  
in the tears that Jesus shed for Lazarus His friend  
we see the living incarnation of your tenderness and compassion.*

*Graciously pay attention to the distress of your church and by the power of your Spirit,  
call us back to life, unbind us and let us go free. We ask this through our Risen Lord Jesus,  
your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever. Amen.*

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