



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

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

April 24, 2016

Introduction to the Word:



This is the third week of a message series for the Easter Season called “Ground-breaking”. It is a unique series for us because of its double meaning. First, in just a little over a month we are actually going to be breaking ground on a 1500sq. ft expansion which is part of our Generations campaign. This new space on to the front of our Church will connect and complete our campus and provide us with additional space for groups, activities and our growing Family of Faith. (See the drawings in Parish Centre). Second - we are in the Season which celebrates the most ground breaking event in history – Easter.

A ground breaking describes something that has never been seen or done or even thought of before - its pioneering. Usually it surprises and shocks and maybe shapes culture or redefines the way people live or work. Something ground breaking changes stuff....and certainly Easter was that..... it changed things.... it was groundbreaking - the impact is still being felt today

This first week we look at that heart of the ground-breaking of the Resurrection is the fact of its a new vision - one of Mercy. In our second week we took a look at Fear and how we can overcome it due to the Resurrection of Jesus by making three things a part of our life – the call to “feed, tend, go” This week we look at what it takes to be a ground breaking Church.

Warm-Up:

Listen to this wonderful song by [JJ Week Band – “Alive in Me”](#). It will be a wonderful way to begin your small group gathering.

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Leader: Today we are truly blessed to be able to say we believe, even though we have not seen.

Lord Jesus, you call us to rejoice in the news of the Resurrection, **Lord, have mercy.**
Christ Jesus, you breathe on us the gift of the Holy Spirit, **Christ, have mercy.**
Lord Jesus, you are the Resurrection and the life, **Lord, have mercy.**



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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 (Acts 14:21b–27)

Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, then on to Iconium and Antioch. There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying:

“It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God.” And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had completed. When they arrived, they called the church together and related all that God had done with them, and how God had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING (Revelation 21:1–5a)

Then I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “See, the home of God is among humans. God will dwell with them as their God; they will be God’s peoples, and God Himself will be with them; God will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.” And the one who was seated on the throne said, “See, I am making all things new.”

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL (John 13:1, 31-33a, 34-35)

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

Before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.



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During the supper, when Judas had gone out, Jesus said, “Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once.

“Little children, I am with you only a little longer. I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

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:

[Feel free as a group to listen once again to the Lord’s Day Message](#)

The word “new” appears several times in today’s readings. The passage from Revelation speaks of a “new” heaven, a “new” earth and a “new” Jerusalem. Jesus in the Gospel speaks of a “new” commandment. What’s supposed to be “new”? A new life in Christ, of course, is something that can come early or late into the life of a person. For many saints it came after quite a long period of loose and immoral living without God. St Augustine and St Ignatius Loyola come to mind. For most of us, it is something that may come in waves. In other words, it will not be a once-for-all experience but something that comes at different stages in our life, each time bringing us to a deeper level of understanding, insight and commitment. Something that is ground breaking is something which is new.

John’s Gospel narrative of the Last Supper takes us to the heart of what was going on in the Christian community following the Easter event. Unlike the other evangelists, John does not focus on the Eucharist but dwells on the profound action of Jesus’ washing the feet of His disciples. Clearly, Jesus wanted to impress on all who choose to follow him that this act of humble service is how we are to treat one another, *everywhere*, regardless of race, religion, creed or colour. This action and example now provides the backdrop for “the new commandment” expressed in today’s gospel. This is how all will know that we are Jesus’ disciples; this is what it means to “love one another as I have loved you.” This is the “love standard” Jesus has lived by and died for; it is the same standard he asks of us. *Love of God and love of neighbour are now truly united—God incarnate—God, in the fullness of humanity, now draws all people and all creation to Himself.*

This is an entirely new kind of love that Jesus holds out to us; a love that will require us to open doors that we have kept closed to others; to respond to appeals that cry out for our help; to forgive our own failings as well as those of others, from family members to enemies. Such a love will open our eyes to things which otherwise we might not have seen, such as the realization that the poor in the world belong to our own family; that those who live in despair can be saved by our caring for them; that peace can actually come to this planet so long as we learn to love one



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another. This type of love is ground breaking! It is this nature of love that the Church is called to be, that our parish is called to share.

The Ground breaking Message of the Resurrection is not only Mercy, It is not only that Fear has no power when we love the Lord and Feed, Tend and Go, but the ground breaking message of the resurrection is also that we must be a Church that constantly invites and invests.

In the Gospel of today John takes us back to the last supper. Judas had left the room and now Jesus was with His closet friends

- He had called them and in mercy many times healed them,
- He had fed them at that last supper the first Eucharist ,
- He had tended for them as He washed their feet,
- He was ready to send them

But now He said to them - others must know about who I am by the love you show and have for one another. This love call us to be a people - a parish - that invests and invites in others. It is too easy to become a clique - closed in with friends huddled - but that is a Church in fear. We are a church of the New Evangelization - not one in fear, not one in box, but one which goes to the community and says - we are a light on a hill.

Sometimes the people we are called to invest in don't even know the Lord has called them - something else brings them and our paths cross, but as people of faith we do - we hear the words - give them time, give them you. Give them me, and in humility we do...our faith, our experience, our time, our life learned lessons - not so that they don't learn their own - but that theirs will not be as painful as ours. This is the love that Jesus speaks of in our Gospel when He calls us to love one another - - it was ground breaking because prior to it all things had to be earned

The Church of today - the groundbreaking Church - must be one that intentionally invest in relationship with people in our school, at soccer field, in social circles, in the simple encounters we have at Chapters, Tim Horton or the grocery line. We are called to invite them to join us here at our church - not because we want numbers but because Jesus desires souls to be with Him - but sometimes we don't.

Sometimes it because we forget how good the good news really is..... that no matter past sins or current failure - His grace is enough - Christ is risen from the dead. But if they don't know that because they are not here - how will know Him? Sometimes we don't because the process can be intimidating but the result is liberating.

This become clear for us when we decide that we live in obedience to God and Him alone. When we seek to be in obedience to others, it means we must choose one over another. Choosing to



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obey one person can upset others, choosing one person's train of thought - open us to criticism from others.

But living in obedience to God means we are building a new heaven and a new earth for Him. That we have one master - God - and if we discern His will and do it - then our love for another one will show itself and we will be what the Church is called to be - ground breaking

*(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)*

- ▶ What do you think prevents people from investing and inviting others to come and experience the ground breaking message of the Resurrection?
 - Are there moments when you have invited someone? Failed to invite someone? Describe and discuss together

- ▶ What are some ways that your small group can be more intentional about investing and inviting people to join us on the Lord's Day or even to be part of our Heart to Home Small Groups?

- ▶ Our parish was recently declared an "Amazing Parish"? What makes us an Amazing Parish? How would you describe our parish to someone looking for a Church Home?

- ▶ How can our parish grow in proclaiming "a new heaven and a new earth"? How can we continue to be ground breaking?

Intercessions:

Leader: Baptized in the one Spirit into the one body, we pray for those who, with us, are members of Christ and for all the human family. **The response is: The Lord is kind and merciful.**

That as the universal church encounters the Risen Lord throughout this Easter season it will be transformed so as to become a true herald of the Resurrection to the world, we pray to the Lord ..



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That the gentle touch of the Risen Lord's peace may touch all parts of our world, bringing an end to war, violence and injustice in all its forms, especially in our parish missions in Haiti and Kenya...we pray to the Lord ...

For all the young people receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation next weekend, may they experience the fullness of Christ's love and they are sent to feed, tend and go, we pray to the Lord ...

For all the newly initiated, may the joy of new life they experienced at the Easter Vigil continue to touch their lives, and forever inspire them to announce the Resurrection to the world, we pray to the Lord ...

May the Resurrection we celebrate and proclaim be given to all those who have died and gone before us in faith, we pray to the Lord ...

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:

St Patrick Parish in downtown Hamilton offers a food kitchen and outreach for between 125 - 150 a day, seven days a week. They have reached out to us as a dynamic parish in our Diocese asking for a donations of the following – would your small group consider collecting some of these items and donating them to this as an Act of Mercy in this Year of Mercy as we seek to help the poor and disadvantaged in Hamilton. Collect and donate cans of coffee, sugar, bottled water, pop or chocolate bars... It might sound a bit "unhealthy" menu, but precisely that's what our patrons need as many of them deal with many different forms of addiction and mental health issues. These can be placed in the Adoration Chapel Hallway – mark them "Hamilton."

Let us pray (together)

*God of mercy, we no longer look for Jesus among the dead,
for He is alive and has become the Lord of life.*

From the waters of death you raise us with him and renew your gift of life within us.

*Increase in our minds and hearts the risen life we share with Christ
and help us to grow as your people toward the fullness of eternal life with you.*

We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.



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