



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

**SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER**

**April 3, 2016**

**Introduction to the Word:**



There is no doubt that the most ground-breaking event in history was Jesus' resurrection from the dead. His resurrection changed everything, proving that He is who says He is, and that He is the ultimate authority on life. It opened up access to a relationship with God and the forgiveness of sin. Easter also marks a new time in the whole history of the world. Here, a new body of believers, who would become the Church, begins to take shape with the world changing charge of introducing God's kingdom among us.

This remains the work of the Church given to us, to serve the kingdom of God in our generation: bringing more people to Christ, and helping them to grow as disciples. Over the next few weeks we will be taking some time to reflect upon what it means to be a Ground Breaking Generation - we do this with the backdrop of our new expansion about to take place, but even more so with the back ground of the Resurrection.

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.

**Warm-Up:**

Discuss what the word "Mercy" – means to you ?



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On the Second Sunday of Easter, 2000, at the canonization celebration of Sister Faustina Kowalska, Pope John Paul II declared that each year on this day “*Divine Mercy Sunday*” would be celebrated as part of the Second Sunday of Easter celebrations. This day celebrates the Divine Mercy of Jesus Christ toward all people of faith, based upon the encounters, visions and visitations Sister Faustina Kowalska experienced with Jesus. The primary message of this day is forgiveness of sin. Any person who receives the Sacrament of Confession on this day (or even any day over the previous week), and then receives Eucharist today, will obtain total forgiveness of all sins and punishments. This reveals the mercy that Jesus Christ offers to all people.

### 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.**

### **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 of the Apostles 5:12-16)

Now many signs and wonders were done among the people through the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. None of the rest dared to join them, but the people held them in high esteem. Yet more than ever believers were added to the Lord, great numbers of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on cots and mats, in order that Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he came by. A great number of people would also gather from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all cured. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### **SECOND READING** (Book of Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19)

I, John, your brother who share with you in Jesus the persecution and the kingdom and the patient endurance, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus. I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet saying, “Write in a book what you see and send it to the seven churches.”



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Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he placed his right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades. Now write what you have seen, what is, and what is to take place after this.” The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### **GOSPEL** (Gospel of John 20:19-31)

It was evening on the day Jesus rose from the dead, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the authorities. Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

But Thomas, who was called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them, when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

A week later the disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God.”

Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have come to believe.”

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

**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:**



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

Mercy – or *Misericordia* - is derived from two Latin words - miserere (pity or misere) and cor (heart). When we ask for God's mercy we are essentially asking God to relieve us of a heart that is in misery, and our heart can be in misery not just because of sin, but from the deep hurt caused by a broken relationship with a family member, from physical or mental illness, from losing a job, being betrayed, used or abandoned from spiritual or physical poverty

If we think of Mercy as being relieved from a heart of misery - than each of us has experienced Mercy a lot more than we think. Certainly the apostles in the Gospels experienced Mercy - certainly the early Church did. They were lost, filled with anguish...and Jesus appeared and continued the ground-breaking - He shared Mercy

But here is the thing - that is just as important - if misery is relieving a heart from misery - then it is also something we can share - when the Apostles experienced it - they encouraged each other - so can we. More than just offering forgiveness - the ground-breaking vision of the Resurrection calls us to Mercy.

When we invest in another person - share with them the lessons and struggles we have learned so they do not have to undergo the pain we have - we are sharing mercy. When you help instruct a grandchild in the faith, so deference to someone in traffic or the store. When we offer counsel to another - we are aiding with Mercy, and by the way, counsel comes from the Latin - *con silium* which means to offer a decision. To offer counsel is more than just listening - its giving direction - which means to show them a mind - the mind of Christ in things. Mercy - undeserved forgiveness and unearned kindness

When we say Lord Have Mercy..... Our prayer should be relieve me of a heart in misery and if life is good for you....it should then be directed to another ...child, grandchild, friend, co-worker, friend.... relieve them of a heart in misery

God's Mercy

- It comes to us in so many ways. It comes in kind comments (even if untrue)
- It comes on occasions when we are forgiven or when we forgive another
- It comes at times when things could have fallen apart but they didn't
- It comes when it just seems God is protecting us

Mercy paves the way for peace with self, with others, with God. Mercy roots us in peace. A peace that comes from within. A peace that comes from Him and is founded on His principles. Without this peace we live as people of judgement, we live as people who are self-absorbed, we live lives that are self centered and we live without happiness or joy.



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*(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)*

- Why is Jesus' resurrection central to Christianity?
- Do you find it easy to believe in the resurrection or do you struggle to believe it?
- Does the witness of the apostles reinforce your faith or help you with doubt?
- How is Mercy at the heart of the ground breaking truth of what it means for to be a follower of Christ?
- How can you bring the message of the Gospel to your friends, family members and coworkers?

### 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 ..

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, we pray to the Lord ...

For all who are in need of mercy in their lives, may experience the fullness of Christ's mercy for all people, 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.)*



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**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.

**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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