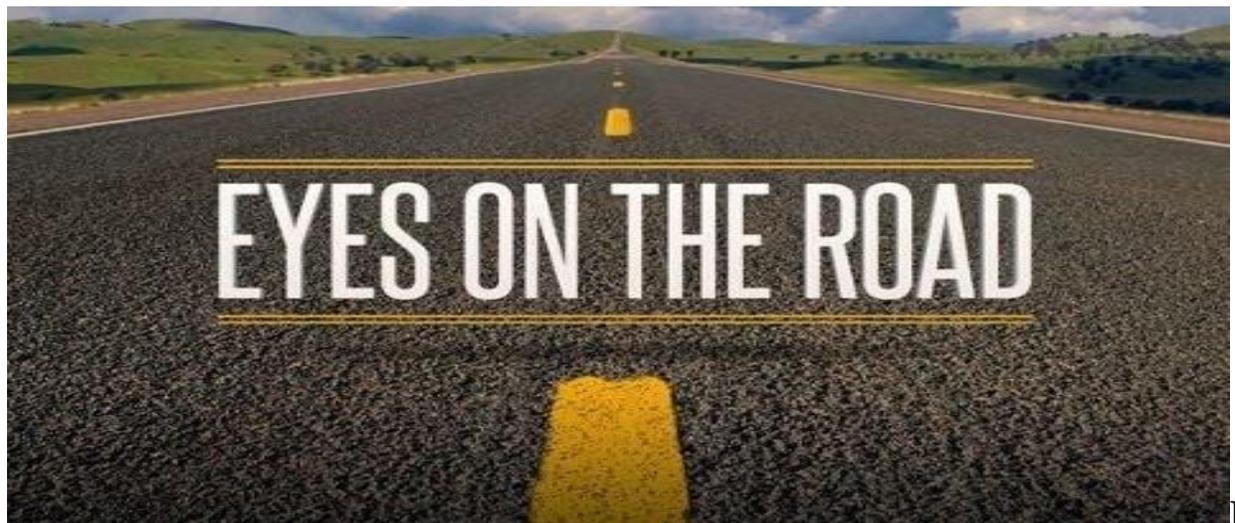




SMALL GROUP NEWSLETTER
ST. MARY OF THE VISITATION PARISH
CAMBRIDGE, (H) ONT.

THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER
April 30, 2017



Introduction to the Word:

The Easter Season is a 50 Day Period Where Jesus Shows Himself to His Disciples. He often does this "on the road". So for several weeks we are going to look at how Jesus show Himself and ask if we His followers today show Him the same way by keeping our **Eyes on the Road**.

Warm Up Activity:

The Resurrection appearance stories are filled with examples of how the disciples did not recognize Jesus, they took their eyes off the road (the way) and focused instead on doubt and whisper. They thought he was a gardener, a ghost, or a stranger. Have you ever had an experience where you realized that you had encountered Jesus, although at first you did not recognize Him?

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Remembering the two disciples who did not recognize Jesus when He was in their midst, let us pray that our eyes and hearts always be open to the presence of Jesus among us as the Risen One.

Lord Jesus, you died, and rose from the dead.

Christ Jesus, you come to us, in Word and Eucharist.

Lord Jesus, you come to us, through each other.

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*



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*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 2:14, 22b–28)

When the day of Pentecost had come, Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know – this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. “But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. For David says concerning him, ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; more-over my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’” The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING (1 Peter 1:17–21)

Beloved: If you invoke as Father the one who judges each person impartially according to each one’s deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. Christ was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL (Luke 24:13–35)

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

On the first day of the week, two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, about eleven kilometers from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And Jesus said to them, “What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?” They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?” Jesus asked them, “What things?” They replied, “The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before



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God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of Angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him.”

Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the Scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.

They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the Scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem: and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. These were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. 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:

Luke’s Gospel devotes a section to illustrating how the disciples of Jesus are “on the way,” learning what it means to be a follower of Jesus. This way of Jesus is a paradoxical one, where saving yourself means losing yourself for Jesus’ sake, where being first is about being the least, and where being the greatest means that one must be the servant of all. Interestingly, the first name given to Christians appears in Acts 7, where they are referred to as “followers of ‘The Way.’” This is an apt image for our journey as disciples.

Today’s readings remind us that part of our journey involves coming to deal with the scandal of the cross. The disciples on the way to Emmaus had lost faith and had become discouraged. They could see no possible life in the death of the One who had been their hope. Certainly, this is not a foreign experience to us when our own dreams and hopes are shattered in unexpected and, at times, devastating ways. The Christian way, however, rooted in the Paschal mystery into which we are immersed in Baptism, is to continue to hope that new life is found in and through suffering and death. We believe this hope is well founded, for it ultimately is in the God who has demonstrated faithfulness in raising Jesus from the dead. For God’s love, demonstrated in this great act, is stronger than death itself.”



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Our reading from Acts reminds us that, whatever good any one of us may do, it is by God's power and not our own. Peter, whom Jesus had earlier pre-ordained to be "the Rock," the head of his Church, earlier displayed leadership qualities that are anything but exemplary. When Jesus was in His last hours, and would have treasured Peter's presence, he slept. When Peter was questioned by the high priest as being a friend of Jesus, Peter denied it: "I do not know the man."

When Jesus was beaten and forced to bear the cross to His crucifixion and death, Peter was nowhere to be seen. Yet after Jesus had risen, Peter preached with a boldness, a clarity and a conviction that amazed everyone. At a time when this new Christian sect was little known and very much suspect, Peter is not deterred in the least by the possibility of reprisals or even death. Peter would be the first to acknowledge that, because of Jesus' Resurrection, he was *transformed*. The one and only reason for this dramatic change in Peter's manner and presence is that he was now a receptive agent for God's empowering *Spirit*. As such, he shares in God's own power and love. While few of us really fully comprehend this, every one of us, who is baptized receives the same power and Spirit as did Peter.

It is most helpful to frequently recall the heart of today's message: the testimony of the apostles from that first Easter Sunday has stirred our faith. While our faith journey will always have its stumbling blocks, we now know that our life has a goal, that the windings of the road will not leave us befuddled, that our search and our journey is that of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and that *our life is our Passover* to new life, because of the risen Christ, who meets us again in every Sunday's Eucharist, this is why we must keep our eyes on the road.

It requires from us three important qualities:

FOCUS: To always have the Lord before us - to determine each day to not allow others to take your focus away from God, from His will, His way, His walk

FIRMNESS: To hold steadfast to the principles of God. To know, embrace accept in totality the personage of the Lord and His ways and to allow your life to be encompassed by His grace first and foremost.

FAITHFULNESS: To stay the course - LOOK FOR HIM and if we think we missed Him and His grace, well to simply pray "**if you were there today God; I missed you -help me see you.**" This week how will you "keep your eyes on the road", so that like the Disciples – your heart can be burning with His presence.

*(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)

1. (Luke 24:32) "*Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road,*



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while he was opening the scriptures to us?”

- a) Can you see some parallels between the recent disturbing happenings in those two Emmaus-bound disciples and your own life situations? Share your experiences.
- b) Can you recall a time when you experienced something similar to the “heart burning” sensation described by Cleopas and friends in their encounter with Jesus? What were the circumstances? Explain.

2. (Luke 24:30-31) *“When he was at table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.”*

- a) Are you able to “see” Jesus in the assembly, in the Word, and in the Breaking of the Bread? How does this happen or not happen for you?
- b) What enables you to see the Risen Lord in the stranger? What prevents this from happening?

3. (Luke 24:17) *“Jesus asked the two disciples, ‘What are you discussing with each other, while you are walking along?’”*

- i. We all need, at times, a sounding board, someone to listen to our personal struggles, frustrations, disappointments, etc., or to share a “good news” personal event. This can be a spouse, a friend, confessor or counsellor. Was this not the role Jesus did with the two companions, while walking with them to Emmaus?
- ii. Share in your small group, and try to name, if possible, a few people in your lives who sometimes fulfil this role.

Intercessions:

Leader: Our response: Lord Hear us

That the our parish community, may more faithfully reflect the presence of Christ among us by our daily witness to Jesus, especially those whose faith is weak, and those struggling with faith in God, we pray ...

For all those who are preparing to celebrate Sacraments during this coming year; for those preparing for marriage, those who completed 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 ...

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 ...

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



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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:

- Prayerfully consider whom you know that is doubting and would being a part of a Small Group help them (or even part of Starting Point) – have you considered inviting them?
- Prayerfully discuss as a Group what might be a “Easter Project” for your group and begin to put on your radar – May 27th for our Service Saturday...how will your group help?
- Spend time as a group in Eucharistic Adoration – sense the burning of your heart as He is there!

Let us pray (together)

*O God of power, on the first day of the week
on which you raised Jesus from the dead,
we disciples on our journey implore you: “Stay with us.”
As we hear your Word which brings salvation, make our hearts burn within us.
And whenever we break bread, open our eyes to your presence
in every friend and stranger we meet, through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen*

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