



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

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 1, 2015

Introduction to the Word:

We conclude our series called the “Pursuit of Happiness”. We discerned together that - **HAPPINESS IS SOMETHING RECEIVED NOT ACHIEVED.**

What else have we discovered during these few weeks together?

- That it is not a goal but a wonderful gift offered to us by God
- That it is not automatic with just getting up but requires us to Come and See.
- That Happiness entails proclaiming and living a Good News that it rooted in not a position, promotion or pay cheque but instead a Promise - Jesus said **“I will”**

Many of us think that our faith is just one of those components of our life that will make us Happy: I have the music I listen to, the friends I converse with, the hobbies I do, then there is faith that I subscribe to. It becomes one of those things I fit in - well to make me happy. But our faith has everything to do with our happiness

Today’s scripture readings, in particular the Gospel, we are told that as Jesus travelled to Capernaum He gets up and teaches the people. He knows the truth, and wants to share it. He desires to share the truth, not give them a new “teaching” but to share with them a new path of happiness. His power is also revealed and confirmed in His freeing of the possessed man. Interestingly we see that man call out “*what have you to do with us Jesus of Nazareth?*”

Warm-up Activity (about 8-10 minutes):

Has there ever been a moment or time when you thought that Happiness was lost, either forever or for a season and you said “*what have you to do with us Jesus of Nazareth?*”

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.)



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FIRST READING (Deuteronomy 18:15-20)

Moses spoke to the people; he said: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said” ‘If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die’.

“Then the Lord replied to me: ‘They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command.’” Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak - that prophet shall die”. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

SECOND READING (1 Corinthians 7:17, 32-35)

Brothers and sisters, I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about the affairs of the world, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. The unmarried woman and the virgin are concerned about the affairs of the Lord, so that they may be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is concerned about the affairs of the world, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to put any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and unhindered devotion to the Lord.

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

GOSPEL (Mark 1:32-38)

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Mark. **Glory to you, O Lord**

The disciples went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in the synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, “What have you to do with us Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy one of God.” But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” And the unclean spirit, convulsing the man and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this! A new teaching - with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” At once Jesus’ fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

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:

At World Youth Day in Toronto Canada - Saint John Paul II told about half a million young people: “*I have felt the longing that beats within your heart...you want to be happy!*” These words rung true for those of us assembled there and I would dare to say they echo true for each of us today. We desire many things. We work for many goals. We yearn for many objectives - but I would say that the Pursuit of Happiness is a common walk we are all on.



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Do you know what robs our happiness - we forget He is there and we don't recall His Promise. When the first sign of trouble (or sadness) comes, or even the possibility that it will not go our way we yell out "what have you do with us?"

- the disappointment comes - "what have you do with us?"
- the downturn appears - "what have you do with us?"
- the direction is different - "what have you do with us?"

We forget that faith is not a component of Happiness; it is the very root of it, and the very reason our heart yearns for it. For in our discernment of faith we come closer to the reason for that yearning – Jesus Himself - and it is He who will get you there...to Happiness... but we have to remember **Jesus has everything to do with Happiness - want proof - look at the cross!**

On the cross, Jesus is detached from, what St Thomas Aquinas called the distractions to true Happiness. On the cross Jesus is without Wealth (He is Stripped), He is without Pleasure (He is Beaten), He is without Power (He can be Condemned). Jesus on the cross is without worldly Honour (He is Mocked) - BUT He is doing the will of the Father - single hearted one, bearer of divine mercy - it is on the Cross that Jesus is the picture of freedom, it is the penultimate of Happiness. He is going to be with the Father, He is going to heaven, He has fulfilled His purpose - - Happiness before Him, heaven ahead of Him, Love to surround Him, Peace to envelop Him, Serenity to sooth Him, Angels attend to Him.

If we wish Happiness - don't seek to achieve it - receive it - don't seek to pursue it by looking at the temptation to make faith one thing that we are part of – "what have you do with us Jesus of Nazareth?"everything ! Pursue Jesus in your life and Happiness will Pursue you

*(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)

Discuss this series and offer comments on each of the points we have discerned together:

- Happiness is something received not achieved.
- That it is not a goal but a wonderful gift offered to us by God
- That it is not automatic with just getting up but requires us to Come and See.
- That Happiness entails proclaiming and living a Good News that it rooted in not a position, promotion or pay cheque but instead a Promise - Jesus said **"I will"**
- Pursue Jesus and Happiness will Pursue You

What one point struck the great cord with you?

Which part of the theme seemed to lead you to understand the journey of Happiness?



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Saint John Paul II said: *“I have felt the longing that beats within your heart...you want to be happy!”*
Comment on this and your own journey. Does this yearning underpin all aspects of your life? Do you pursue Happiness or Jesus and let Happiness pursue you?

Closing Prayer (15-20 minutes)

(This time is reserved for quiet prayer as well as for an action-response to the communal reflections. The intent is to “outreach” to the larger community.)

GROUP PRAYER COMMITMENT: / GROUP ACTION:

1. Lent is not far off. Discuss as a group your plan for service, prayer, action during the upcoming Lenten Season.

With hands and hearts united in gratitude for God’s favours on us today, we pray OUR FATHER

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