



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

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

February 14, 2016

Introduction to the Word:



In this Season of Lent we begin a new message series called “Merciful Moments”. We all have them in our life - times when God is His Mercy offers to us a second chance or when we are called to do the same. Let’s review together this Lent how to find them, how to seek them, how to express them and how to extend them.

Warm-Up:

The forty days of Lent are often described as a penitential season. Traditionally we are invited to alter our lives in spiritual ways during Lent in order to prepare ourselves for the great celebration of Easter, the unfolding of the Paschal Mystery. The three areas of our spiritual lives we are encouraged to develop during Lent are prayer, fasting and works of mercy. In other words to pray more, to fast more and to carry out more works of mercy. How will you address this call during Lent? How can we assist one another in this spiritual endeavour? What are some examples of works of mercy?

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Leader: Mindful that this merciful season of Lent calls us to seek forgiveness of sins, we turn to our loving God in humble prayer ...

Lord Jesus, you were sent to heal the contrite of hearts,
Christ Jesus, you came to call all sinners to yourself,
Lord Jesus, you are seated at the right hand of our God,

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,



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*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 (Deuteronomy 26:4-10)

A Reading from the Book of Deuteronomy.

Moses spoke to the people, saying: “When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, you shall make this response before the Lord your God: 'A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, almighty and populous. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labour on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me.' You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God.” The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING (Romans 10:8-13)

A Reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Brothers and sisters: what does Scripture say? “*The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart*” - that is, the word of faith that we profess; because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. The scripture says, “*No one who believes in him will be put to shame.*” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, “*everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL (Luke 4:1-13)

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



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Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” Jesus answered him, “It is written, worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.”

Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

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:

The *Gospel of Luke* recalls Jesus in His confrontation with the Devil during His forty days in the desert. Note that the temptations Jesus faces are not just a one-time event, one day out of forty, but rather temptations throughout the entire forty days, “*where for forty days He was tempted*” (v. 2). Turn stone into bread to feed your hunger, “*one does not live on bread alone*” (v. 4); the power to rule the kingdoms of the world, “*worship the Lord your God, and serve only him*” (v. 7); call on the angels of God to protect you, “*do not put the Lord your God to the test*” (v. 12). These three creed-type statements by Jesus send the Devil on his way. However, there is reference to a possible sequel to this encounter with the Devil, “*he departed from him until an opportune time*” (v. 13). Four interesting tidbits of information concerning this temptation account by Luke. One, Luke has no angels assisting Jesus, such as you will find in the accounts of Mark and Matthew. Two, Luke emphasizes the Holy Spirit (v. 1) as a preparation for the prominent role the Holy Spirit will have in the *Book of Acts*. Three, Luke clearly identifies Jesus as the Son of God, identified as so by the Devil (v. 3, 9). Four, Luke highlights the importance of Jerusalem by placing it as the third temptation, a literary position of importance (Matthew and Mark both make it the second temptation). As in *Deuteronomy*, Luke reminds us that God will assist us in our hardships, challenges and temptations, God will lead us to the Promised Land.



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While in the desert, Jesus faced these temptations but here even more so He is faced with something else: solitude and isolation. We are afraid as a society not of temptation - that faces us every day - and we develop ways with maturity for dealing with it, but we are afraid of solitude and isolation - people busy themselves with digital devices, with music and noise, with conversations (even about other people) all with the goal of avoiding solitude and isolation. There is a productivity to busyness but there is a cost to busyness - you can't hear a still small voice in busyness.

Our world often resists solitude, yet Jesus desired it before He went forth to be a source of Mercy to others. In fact our scriptures tell us throughout Lent it was because of this initial isolation that He was better able to deal with moments that called Him toward Mercy. There is truth here, for in our busyness we miss so much and so many people. We often are critical, snappy, judgmental, incentive - not because we want to be - but because it is what we have time for.

Jesus knew it would take effort to resist the idolatry of wanting too much, seeking too much, worship the wrong things, and putting God to the test, but Jesus also knew it wouldn't take the brokenness of busyness but rather the solitude and isolation of a time in the desert to transform them in to the blessing of blooms in our life - it would take merciful moments and the willingness not to stand up holding a wall of busyness - but to well dance into the solitude of looking for merciful moments by taking on the things that matter most.

May this Lent lead us toward many Merciful Moments of hearing His Call in our life and responding to it with greater dependence on His Grace. It is how we truly move forward - as always - it's your move - so why not make it toward seeking not busyness but rather seeking merciful moments with, for and by those that you love.

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

[Take a few minutes now to listen and watch the video by Father Thomas Rosica](#)

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

- a) Do you recall ever having put the Lord to the test - *get me through this and I will do ...?* Did it work? Did you fulfill your end of the bargain? As you reflect upon this, how do you feel?
- b) ***“Worship the Lord your God, and serve only Him.”*** Our world in its busyness calls us toward so many things and asks us to “worship” them...what are some of those and how can we resist?



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- c) Busyness has a price. What are some of the elements of busyness which you would like to remove from your life so that you have more time for solitude? What is your plan this Lent to make them happen?
- d) Often Merciful Moments come at us when we least expect them – can you name a moment when God’s mercy was powerful and undeserved?

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 Lord Hear Our Prayer.**

That during this season of Lent, our Holy Father, Bishops and Pastor will continue to call us to seek God's mercy and love in all its abundance, we pray ...

That the Lord Jesus, who became like us in all things but sin might teach us how to share with others their joy and sorrow, that our love may grow deeper every day as we seek and share Merciful Moments, we pray ...

That peoples of all nations and faiths may come together to build up the earthly city, with our eyes fixed on the city that lasts forever, remembering especially those in Haiti, Kenya and Bethlehem we pray ...

That those who this day will be numbered among the Elect preparing for the sacraments of initiation this coming Easter, may be inspired to deepen their faith through our example, we pray ...

That all the dead may rise in your glory, to enjoy your love forever, we pray ...

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:

In [Misericordiae Vultus](#), Pope Francis asks that we strive for our lives to be rooted in the mercy of God. One way we can grow in this mercy is by being receptive to the message of mercy and love that is proclaimed in the Scriptures and in the Christian witness to faith in Jesus (MV, no. 13). Discuss as a group what the passage from the Gospel of today reveals to you about God's



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mercy and love. How can you this Lent invite, welcome and encourage others to join Small Groups in our parish.

God's word, which is the message base of Mercy, is a treasure. Come up with one concrete way to incorporate this revelation of mercy into your daily actions or prayer life.

- ✓ Consider making a Holy Hour for the intentions of our parish community this week. Would you consider a common day when your group could do it together – maybe taking each one hour?
- ✓ Consider as a group writing a common letter to those from our parish family who will be received and baptized at Easter through the RCIA. If you need the names or wish to see their pictures, let the parish office know.
- ✓ Our parish is blessed with two young men discerning the Call of Priesthood. Would your group consider writing a letter of encouragement to either Hayden or Robin – see Father Freitas for address and details.

Upcoming Events

Make sure date of the Lenten Mission (March 5-10, 2016). It will be an amazing time of blessing!

Let us pray (together)

*Lord our God, through our observance of Lent,
help us to understand the meaning of your Son's death and resurrection,
and teach us to reflect it in our lives by the Merciful Moments we share, see, and seek.
Grant this through Jesus, who is Lord, for ever and ever. Amen.*

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