



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

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

February 21st, 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 in 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:

So Lent asks us to make a dramatic change of mindset from the daily norm; it requires a **transfiguration** of our minds and hearts. Let's make this Lent a time in which our words and our actions give evidence that we believe that God in His immense Mercy exists not in far beyond the stars, but with us right here, right now, in the very sharing of Merciful Moments and in the hearing of the Word.

St Paul reminds us in the **2nd reading**, “But our **citizenship is in heaven**, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will **transform** the body of our humiliation that it may be **conformed to the body of His glory**, by the power that also enables Him to make all things subject to Himself....Stand firm my beloved in the Lord!”

As you get started as a group – discuss what you think the word “transfiguration” means. Try and agree on how a Merciful Moment can bring about a “transfiguration” in the life of another. (example: a person felt pardoned and they went on to be more forgiving, a person know they are loved and they go on to lead a life of feeling secure). Feel free to draw examples from your own life as you discuss what you think the word “transfiguration” means.

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.



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

Lord Jesus, you are the new covenant of God's goodness,
Christ Jesus, by your cross you opened our way to glory,
Lord Jesus, you are the chosen Son of God and our brother,

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
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 (Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18)

The Lord said to Abram: "Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them." Then the Lord said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And Abram believed the Lord: and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness. Then the Lord said to Abram, "I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess." But Abram said, "O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?" The Lord said to him, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." Abram brought the Lord all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates." The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING (Philippians 3:17-4:1)

Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory



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

is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm, my beloved, in the Lord in this way.
The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL (Luke 9:28b–36)

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

Jesus took with him Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. And while he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became dazzling white. Suddenly they saw two men, Moses and Elijah, talking to Jesus. They appeared in glory and were speaking of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions were weighed down with sleep; but since they had stayed awake, they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. Just as Moses and Elijah were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tents, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” Peter did not know what he was saying. While Peter was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were terrified as they entered the cloud. Then from the cloud came a voice that said, “This is my Son, my Chosen; listen to him!” When the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And the disciples kept silent and in those days told no one any of the things they had seen. 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](#)

In today's Gospel the three Apostles witness Jesus transfigured in all His dazzling splendour, as a glimpse of His divinity. “Lord, it is good for us to be here!” I hope that this is your sense of your Lenten journey this far – that it is good that we have this time to be here. During this Season of Lent - we are looking at Merciful Moments. We all have them in our life - times when God in His Mercy offers to us a second chance or when we are called to do the same. It is good that we pause and reflect on them and realize that a Merciful Moment is not just the expression or actualization of a Corporal Work of Mercy (i.e. I fed the hungry therefore it must have been a merciful moment), no, it's also what happens because you fed the hungry – what did that action do to your heart and how did that action affect the heart an life of the one fed, and even the ones who witnessed the feeding? This is where the power of **transfiguration** takes place. We are called to be a people who are touched by the lives we touch. It is where the power of relationship comes in.



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

Jesus took Peter, James and John up the mountain. Here they saw Jesus “changed” before their eyes. It wasn’t that He physically changed (yes His clothes before dazzling white but Jesus was the same physical man). It was that because of what they saw and the realization of who Jesus was and is about, that their lives changed from that moment forth – their relationship with Him was different. This is so with us and our relationship with Jesus and others (or so it should be).

So often we give people’s negative comments “free rent” in our head instead of giving Christ “free reign” in our hearts. We remember the moments we failed, or the moments others hurt us, or the occasions when we “could have or should have.” Instead, we are invited to root our lives, our “citizenship”, in Christ and the merciful moments He gives us where we can be transfigured and His will, way, purpose and plan for our lives becomes – dazzling white.

Last week Jesus began in the desert. There He was faced with temptations but even more so He was faced with something else: solitude and isolation. It was a reminder to us that it wouldn’t be the brokenness of busyness, but rather the solitude and isolation of a time in the presence of God, that would instill in Jesus – Mercy. So too for us in our relationships. What echoes in your head? The comment of failure or the casting of grace? Do you allow the Lord to show you the merciful moments in your life where He and He alone is seeking to show His transfigured self to you and seeking at the same time to transfigure you into His beloved child – or does something (or someone) have free rent in your head?

Our definition, purpose and significance must come from God - a girlfriend will not complete us, a boyfriend will not define us, an engagement will not be the answer to all things. **Jesus the beloved and chosen Son of God will be and is the only one who can be!** If we decide that our definition as a person - our purpose as people – will be determined not by popularity, power or persuasion but by the Son of God and His purpose, plan and provision in our life, then not only will **Christ and Christ alone** be the one behind our corporal works of mercy this Lent, but He will be behind the merciful moments in our life. What a transfiguration that would be! No more “free rent”, only a “free reign”!

*(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)

1. (Luke) “A cloud came and overshadowed them... Then from the cloud came a voice that said, ‘This is my Son my Chosen; listen to him!’”

Where and when are you most awake to God’s presence in your life?



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

Was there ever a time in your life when you felt you have been chosen for something or other? Comment on your experience

2. The Gospel speaks of three tents – for Moses, Elijah and Jesus. It is often said that three tents of a Christian life of Prayer, Study and Action. Discuss ways together as a group how you can grow in prayer, study and action.
3. Discuss what you think is the distinction between something or someone having “free rent in your head”, and only Christ having a “free reign in your heart”! How does one take away from and the other lead to a Merciful Moments? (***) this is a really important question makes sure to give it lots of time ****) {by the way Father would love to hear the feedback here}

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, and that we will support them in their role of leadership for our community, 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 and experience 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 our missions 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 those who have wandered from the faith because of hurt, misunderstanding or a sense of abandonment may see in Christ and His Church an opportunity for transfiguration, 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)



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

(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 his 2016 Message for the 50th World Communications Day, Pope Francis wrote: *“Communication has the power to build bridges, to enable encounter and inclusion, and thus to enrich society. How beautiful it is when people select their words and actions with care, in the effort to avoid misunderstandings, to heal wounded memories and to build peace and harmony. Words can build bridges between individuals and within families, social groups and peoples. This is possible both in the material world and the digital world. Our words and actions should be such as to help us all escape the vicious circles of condemnation and vengeance which continue to ensnare individuals and nations, encouraging expressions of hatred. The words of Christians ought to be a constant encouragement to communion and, even in those cases where they must firmly condemn evil, they should never try to rupture relationships and communication.”*

- Consider together as a group ways to continue to communicate God’s Mercy into your daily actions or prayer life.
- Is there a hurt or mis-communication in your life which has “free rent” in your head? Is there a way that you can turn that over to God so that He can have “free reign”?
- Could there be a “Corporal Work of Mercy” you could take as a small group which would lead to a merciful moment?

Upcoming Events



March 5/6, 2016 - 5th Sunday of Lent



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

Saturday 5:00 p.m. Sunday 8:00am, 9:30am, 11:30am

Monday, March 7th - 7:00pm -

Evening Prayer/Vespers - "God's Love"

Tuesday, March 8th - 7:00pm -

Reconciliation Service - "God's Mercy" (6 priests)

Wednesday, March 9th - 7:00pm -

Healing Service - "God's Healing"

Thursday, March 10th - 7:00pm -

Closing Mass of Holy Spirit - "God's Enduring Presence"

* reception to follow - provided by CWL

During each evening activities a Children's Program for those from Age 2 – Grade 4.

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.*

Heart to Home, copyright © 2016 by Father F. Freitas. It is copyrighted and cannot be published without permission of the author. The Scripture version used in this commentary is the New Revised Standard Version