



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

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT
February 28, 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:

During the First Sunday of Lent we looked at the **brokenness of busyness**. Jesus in the Desert tempted by evil and faced with solitude and isolation taught us that for us to face and respond to the Merciful Moments of life we must find a way to put aside busyness, even though it is a reality in our world, and find the time to hear a still small voice – otherwise we miss moments.

During the Second Sunday of Lent, we looked at the Transfiguration, and came to consider moments when we are called to change how we view God, and view ourselves. It comes by deciding that **the world (and others) will not have free rent in our head - but Christ will have free reign in our heart and lives.**

But in order to experience Merciful Moments we have to: *We have to Fess Up to our Mess Up!*

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Leader: Let us approach the Lord, recognizing His love and mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are the fount of mercy poured out upon your people

Lord, have mercy

Christ Jesus, your mercy frees us from our sins and opens us to your grace

Christ, have mercy

Lord Jesus, you call us to be merciful, as the Father is merciful

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 (Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15)

Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian. Leading the flock across the desert, he came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There an angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in fire flaming out of a bush. As he looked on, he was surprised to see that the bush, though on fire, was not consumed. So Moses decided, "I must go over to look at this remarkable sight, and see why the bush is not burned." When the Lord saw him coming over to look at it more closely, God called out to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." God said, "Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your fathers," he continued, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But the Lord said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey." Moses said to God, "But when I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them? God replied, "I am who am". Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you." God spoke further to Moses, "Thus shall you say to the Israelites: The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, has sent me to you This is my name forever; thus am I to be remembered through all generations." The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING (1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12)

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea, and all of them were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank from a spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. Yet God was not pleased with most of them, for they were struck down in the desert. These things happened as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil things, as they did. Do not grumble as some of them did, and suffered death by the destroyer. These things happened to them as an example, and they have been written down as a warning to us, upon whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore, whoever thinks he is standing secure should take care not to fall. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL (Luke 13:1-9)



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Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of the sacrifices. Jesus said to them in reply, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them - do you think they were guiltier than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!" And Jesus told them this parable: "There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, "For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil? He said to him in reply, 'Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down. 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](#)

The rubber is hitting the road for the Apostles and Disciples of Jesus. Their sonar is pinging, and though they believe in Jesus, after all they have been with Him long enough now - probably 3 years - and they are thinking:

- We do good work, we see Him heal the lame, the blind, the deaf
- His teaching are changing Hearts...and the crowds are getting bigger
- He seems to be feeding people not only with fish & loaves, but also spiritually
- But trouble is brewing - the leaders are going to kill Him - and He doesn't seem worried

So the Disciples instead of "fessing up" to their faith, well they "cover up" their faith in Jesus out of fear. Jesus knows their hearts, and know what awaits them at the groan of the cross, and so He calls them forth and tells them a parable - about the fig tree. To all appearances, it is a useless twig, not producing any fruit, just taking up room in the orchard. But the gardener saw something in that fig tree that gave him hope, and he convinced the property owner to give it one more year. At the same time he was asking for one more year for himself, so that he could do all humanly possible to revive the fig tree and give it the opportunity to bear fruit. Both took a claim of responsibility and the desire to make a significant change in the pattern and scope of life. The old way of caring for the fig tree was not going to do it, so a new way would be required for the gardener. It is so also with us. If our current way of life is not bearing the fruit of mercy. If we are missing merciful moments, then we must do all humanly possible to revive and give ourselves the opportunities to bear fruit.

This is why, while the fig tree is the focus of the story, it's actually the soil which is the most important. Its sort like our own lives, if we look wonderful but our root is rotting - well in time



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we too will not flourish. One thing that aides in this is when we take responsibility for the times we mess up. Too often in our lives, when our soil is not producing we blame others, seek to cover it up, claim someone in leadership lacks or an institution has failed instead up “fessing up” for ourselves the mistake and seeking to change. Failure to accept responsibility for our failures prevents us from receiving the forgiveness from God we desperately need. It also prevents us from experiencing that new beginning we all desire.

Merciful Moments come not just in solitude when we escape busyness. Merciful Moments arise not just in transfigurations when we let God reign in our heart and life and no one has free rent in our lives. But Merciful Moments come when we take a hard look at ourselves - and say Jesus Son of the Living God Have Mercy on Me a Sinner and then change! We have to Fess Up to our Mess Up!

As we get ready for our Parish Mission next weekend - where is God calling you to escape from busyness? Where is He seeking to invite you to see Him in a new way? But this week also consider - where is God calling you to Fess Up? Make plans for the parish mission and this encounter with the Lord this Lent. Without doing so - not only might a new beginning escape you, but so too will a life changing Merciful Moment pass you by!

*(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)*

“The place where you stand is holy ground” (Exodus 3:1a-8, 13-15)

1. How have I experienced a manifestation of God in my life that surprised me?
2. How do I feel that life in this moment, in this Lenten season? What is God calling me to do?

“That we might not desire evil things” (1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12)

1. How is Jesus my rock?
2. In my Lenten journey, am I aware of “not desiring evil things”? What have I done about it? Am I dependent on myself in this conversion process, or on God? In whom have I put my security?

“I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it” (Luke 13:1-9)

1. How has Jesus, during this Lenten season, “cultivated” and “fertilized” me? What actions of God can I identify in these first weeks?
2. What is the fruit I want to bear, after this Lenten journey?
3. How am I giving hope and example to other ‘fruitless’ fig trees in my life?

Intercessions:



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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 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 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:

- Makes your plans together to be part of our Parish Mission



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

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"

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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