



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

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
January 31, 2016

Introduction to the Word:

This is the final week of our message series – “Your Move”. God’s will is our happiness and fulfillment. His grace seek to transform us into His image so that we can truly be His beloved child, but at the end of the day - it’s your move!



Warm-Up:

Unfortunately, in our human condition, we can sometimes be fickle. One moment we are in favour of something, or someone, and in another moment we can turn against that which, or the person whom, we defended. Rejection is a part of our lives and of the human experience.

Take a few minutes to reflect and share on the following:

- What do you think of when you hear the word ‘prophet’?
- Who (other than the people mentioned above) do you think of when you hear someone considered to be a prophet?
- How have you identified yourself with this prophetic life to which you were initiated in Baptism?

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Leader: The Word of God is fulfilled today in our hearing.

Lord Jesus, Good News for the poor,

Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, Liberator of the oppressed,

Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, New sight to those in darkness,

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 (Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19)

The word of the Lord came to me, saying: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. But do you gird your loins; stand up and tell them all that I command you. Be not crushed on their account, as though I would leave you crushed before them; for it is I this day who have made you a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of brass, against the whole land; against Judah's kings and princes, against its priests and people. They will fight against you but not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord. The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING (1 Corinthians 12:31 - 13:13)

Brothers and sisters: Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way, If I speak in human and angelic tongues, but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge, if I have all faith so as to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. If we know partially, and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gospel (Luke 4:21-30)

Jesus began speaking in the synagogue, saying: "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing". And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that



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we heard were done in Capernaum." And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But Jesus passed through the midst of them and went away.

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:

[Before beginning – check out this video on our Starting Point Program](#)

During this past month of January we have been reflecting on our relationship with God. Our Good Good Father is one on whom we can Cast our Cares. He calls us - He knocks on the door of our heart - and it's your move - if you respond.

During Week #1, we looked at the need to trust His voice. God's voice is for Good, and when we do, we take the first step - Listen and Look. Listen to message of gracious goodness that God offers and we Look at the area of our life that God is calling us to open or close - so His grace may grow within

During Week #2, we accepted that our failures need not be final or fatal but that we take our mistakes in life and turn them into stepping stones for superior success if we simply follow the example and advice of the Perfect Disciple – Mary – and in reference to Jesus : “ **do what ever He tells you.**”

This advice helps us to discern and look for the signs of the Lord and ask ourselves “what is gripping you, and is it from the Lord?” It helps us to search in prayer and find what His Word says and then to seek His peace! Even with this peace we may feel there are moments of not enough - time, resources, abilities, courage - all these grip us, but our God can transform...in fact He wants to.... but first we must make Him our reference point and desire a happy soul with our Reference Point - Jesus Christ as the one on whom we cast our cares.

During Week # 3 we ask ourselves if we have the Disposition and the trait of Docility. Christ lived with the full knowledge that His life was not His own - God the Father chose Him at Baptism (my beloved) but it was His move to allow it to be fulfilled. His life was not His own.



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He was not just the carpenter's son – He was the Son of God – beloved and chosen. His move would be for the Father!

[Pause here and listen to this song, it is our theme for this series](#)

The Gospel today continues the story of Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth. At first He is universally accepted: the townspeople marvel at the gracious words He utters and identify Him as Joseph's son. By the end of the story, however, these same people actually try to kill Him. So, what happens in between to cause such a dramatic change of heart? These are religious people, not an unruly street mob. They are friends of the family. They are familiar with their sacred texts and traditions and presumably want to understand them more fully. In fact, they are like most of us who take time out on a weekly basis to come together in worship and prayer with those who share our faith.

Unfortunately, the people of Nazareth seem to be carrying a sense of exclusive entitlement to God's favour, as well as some deeply entrenched prejudices against the neighbouring people. Their history is largely one of conflict with neighbours, of struggle for survival, and some are unwilling to relinquish their unhealed local and national grievances. When Jesus suggests that God's prophetic and healing power is accessible to and may even be more readily received among foreigners than within Israel, their anger knows no bounds: it spills over into violence. They have little patience with the implicit criticism and the prophetic challenge of his words.

The story thus becomes a microcosm of the gospel as a whole. When the message is comforting, the messenger is well received. When it is less palatable, the messenger is in danger of being attacked, more often than not at the hands of people who are basically good, people like us. This can happen in our fast paced consumer society. We can find ourselves even in our faith life, or our connection with the parish and its leadership, becoming consumers. As long as I like what is going on, or people say it the way I like it, or people do the things the way I want it – then I am in favour but if not, well, sometimes we go looking for the cliffs to throw people off of or decide ourselves to leave town. The consumer picks and chooses based on what they want, how they feel or what they perceive. The faithful one remembers who their reference point is – and is open to growing and walking with the Lord.

This is where the power of the second reading comes in. These most famous words of St. Paul speak to us of a love inspired by God. This is the love that reflects the love of God for us, the love that heals and saves, the love that transforms and raises up. St. Paul tells us that love is the supreme virtue, and without it the most noble gestures are pointless. Love must penetrate all that we say and do. Our move must be to ensure that our example would benefit the people of God. Prophecy (although sometimes a bitter pill to swallow) is itself an expression of love. If the prophet didn't care (and thus, if God didn't care) he would run in the other direction, or remain silent, and let the people 'die' in their sin, without the opportunity to change. But to be prophetic is to be a person who in our move is willing to be lead by the Lord, in docility and with disposition. To be a person who does whatever the Lord tells us to, and to be a person who listens



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and looks with a happy soul solely to Jesus Christ as the one on whom we cast our cares. As always – its your move.

Message this week – Are we consumers of our faith or committed to being disciples of the Lord as we walk in faith with Him as our reference point always. After all our lives are His? It's your move.

*(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)

"Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury."

Which of these words speaks to you the most about the love of God for you, that you have experienced? Which of these qualities of love is the most challenging for you, and why?

- Jesus is referred to as a Prophet – one who proclaims God's Word. When are you uncomfortable sharing the Word of God with others?
- Jesus is the source of life. He is our reference point. He is both Truth and Life. How do you respond to Jesus as both Truth and Love?
- As a parish we are a people called to have something for everyone. This means expressing and sharing our faith as we continue to be open to inviting others to join us. How is your practice of the faith inclusive or exclusive? Who would you invite to be part of our [Starting Point program](#)? Would you invite them?

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.

For the Church, may all members live out their individual vocation in service to others and in union with our Holy Father, our Bishop and our Pastor, we pray...

For nations grieved by conflict and peoples oppressed by war, remembering our parish missions in Haiti, Kenya and Bethlehem: May a serious commitment to the work of justice pervade all hearts, we pray...

For those whom society dismisses as weak or inferior: May they receive from believers the respect due them as children of God, and may the Lord protect the members of our parish who on February 7th will be travelling to Toronto to help feed the homeless, we pray...



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For each of us and our parish family. That our lives may bear witness to Christ, and announce His love and truth, we pray ...

For all of us gathered in small groups at our parish: may hearing the Word of God help bring us together as a parish family working for the common good of our Family of Faith, 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:

- ✓ Speak together about the Year of Mercy and the upcoming Season of Lent. Begin to discuss how you may wish to make these special times for your group – how will you and your small group connect with the parish activities for the Year of Mercy (First Fridays of Mercy) and the Lenten Mission (March 5-10, 2016)?
- ✓ Sometimes we are reluctant to share our faith – to be a prophet even in our home town. Discuss and come up with a list together on how faith can be shared without having to knock on anyone's front door. These witnesses are quiet references to Christ as our reference point. (e.g. saying grace before a meal at a restaurant).
- ✓ 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? Maybe on First Friday?
- ✓ 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.

Let us pray (together)

Holy is your Word, O God!

Throughout salvation history you have spoken to your people,
calling them to be faithful to the covenant.

In our own time and place you continue to call prophets.

Through our Baptism you have graced us for prophecy.

Raise us up, O God,

that we may accept this challenge,

beginning by embracing the announcing and denouncing directed at us,

and sharing this new life with others,

especially our family, co-workers and friends

by being your prophets.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord,



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and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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