



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

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT—YEAR A

March 19, 2017

MORE OF
HIM
L E S S O F M E

Introduction to the Word:

Lent is an intentional time, a special invitational time, a mini retreat time if you like. A time to slow down, pause and reflect; to examine, reframe, and deepen our relationship with God, others and self. This Lent we will be focussing on the theme “**More of Him and Less of Me.**” It is a time to take the focus off of ourselves – “what we are doing for Lent” and instead to connect with “what God wishes to do within us for Lent.” I pray that this Lent will be a time of blessing for you and all in your small group.

In addition to this written guide, and our audio of the Sunday Message, we have also developed a series of video follow ups. We encourage you to use these are the commentaries during the Season of Lent – and they will form the small group questions which will guide you.

Warm Up Activity:

- Can you identify things which you “thirst” for in your life?
- Do you think that people see you as one of the “happier” people who have Jesus and the Church as part of their lives? What is it about you that might radiate this happiness of fulfilment to others.

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Leader: Lord Jesus, you call us to be persistent in our prayer, to not lose hope, and to know that you will not abandon us in our time of need.

Lord Jesus, you are the living water that quenches our thirst, Lord, have mercy.
Christ Jesus, you are the light that allows us to see clearly, Christ, have mercy.
Lord Jesus, you are the new life that raises us from death, 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 17:3-7)

In the wilderness the people thirsted for water, and the people complained against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” So Moses cried out to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” The Lord said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. I will be standing there in front of you on the rock of Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

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

SECOND READING (Romans 5:1-2, 5-8)

Brothers and sisters: Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God.

And hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person someone might actually die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

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

GOSPEL (John 4:5-42)

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

Jesus came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob who gave us this well, and with his



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children and his flocks drank from it?” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.

Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” The woman said to him, “Sir, I see you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.”

Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.”

The woman said to him, “I know that the Messiah (who is called the Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or “Why are speaking to her?” Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?’ They left the city and were on their way to him. Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?”

Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest?’ But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labour. Others have laboured, and you have entered into their labour.”

Many Samaritans from that city believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world.”

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:



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[Listen to our Series Theme Song](#)

[You may also as a group wish to listen again to the Audio of the Lord's Day Message](#)

[Please watch now the Video Commentary for this Week](#)

Our first reading offers a portrait of the Israelites after God's mighty deeds had freed them from slavery in Egypt and from death at the Red Sea and that is of "grumblers." Granted, they are in the desert, but they seem to have quickly forgotten all that God had done for them. Also, they do not seem to be able to grasp that the God who had saved them and freed them is a faithful God who will never abandon them, for they are God's people. Here, they are complaining about a lack of water, and later they will complain about a lack of food. In both cases God provides for the people with water from the rock at Meribah and manna in the desert. Still, however, the continuation of these mighty deeds does not quench the grumbling of the Israelites. Eventually their grumbling turns into rebelliousness. While Moses communes with God at Mount Sinai, they fashion a calf out of precious metal. Psalm 106 depicts this act most starkly when it summarizes the grumbling and rebelliousness of Israel in these words: "They exchanged their glorious God for an image of a bull, which eats grass" (Ps 106:20).

Now contrast that with the portrait in the 2nd Reading. We might think about this reading as Paul's testimony about the type of love that God has for God's people. It is a steadfast and faithful love that is made manifest in the willingness of Jesus to die, not just for His friends, but for sinners. This is the ultimate and convincing proof that God loves us. This steadfast love is something that all Christians can continue to trust in, for this hope will never disappoint. This reading introduces for us a very important point – that we are a unique Child of God – and as such, God has a unique and personal dream for each of us which leads us, if we accept it, to live soul fully.

Finally, how about the portrait in the Gospel. The richness of the Gospel reading cannot be contained in this short commentary. One place of focus in the gospel is the way it resonates with the human yearning for something that fulfills and endures. One might think of St. Augustine's claim that "our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." This Samaritan woman has attempted to fill the emptiness in her life with many relationships that have not been satisfying. She has become alienated, not only from these men, but from the other women of her village—after all, she is at the well by herself in the heat of the noon day sun when she sees Jesus. But, through her encounter with Jesus, she gradually shifts her focus from the demands of material necessities to a longing for a deeper satisfaction in her spiritual and eternal life. Another place of focus is at the end of the passage when Jesus stays with the Samaritans for two days. We are told that "many more believed because of His word." What they say to the woman at that point is quite remarkable: "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Saviour of the world." These Samaritans actually



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came to believe because of the testimony of this woman. Their encounter with Jesus was a confirmation of what they had already encountered through her.

So here again – More of Him and Less of Me. Each of us - as we seek to be the Unique Child of God thirst :

We thirst for relationships

We thirst for satisfaction in the tasks of our life

We thirst for meaning and purpose

We thirst for a proper and balanced understanding of the dignity of life

We thirst for justice

We thirst for serenity and peace

But the fundamental question becomes - Do you go to the well of God daily with the desire to KNOW HIM? Do you go to the well of God daily with the desire to SERVE HIM ? Do you go to the well of God daily with the desire to LOVE HIM ? Do you go to the well even in the uncomfortable moments (high noon) of your life?

It is Christ and Christ alone who can quench our thirst. The woman at the well wanted the life giving water. She went to the well, and when she met Jesus – she stayed at the well to Know Jesus, to Serve Him and in time to Love Him as the Saviour of the Lord. She knew she was not living as the unique child of God that she was made to be, and she wanted to become that person – she wanted to live soul fully. You know when you're living soulfully, and you know when you're not.

I think deep down, all of us, every single one of us, want to live soulfully, in a way that is really beautifully handmade, and unique, and just us. We don't want to live the way everyone else is We don't want to live the way society is living. We don't want to not be unique. And guess what? - God wants you to live soulfully like that as well.

His desire is for you to live with HIM as the first - because when HE IS THE FIRST - then we live as we were made to be. So what are you really thirsting for ? How will you quenched it ? How will you strive to be who God is calling you to be? How will you seek to Know, Love and Serve Him in a greater way? Because that's when we're most fully alive. That is when you thirst is quenched. That is when your life is about MORE OF HIM AND LESS OF ME

*(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)

- a) Have you ever experienced a “desert” type event in your life that caused you to question the presence of God? Was it similar to the Israelites' experience in that they were blinded to the many examples of how God really was among them?
- b) When Paul tells the Romans to boast, what do you think he was specifically asking them to



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do? How are we called to respond to this request from Paul in our own lives?

c) God's love for humanity is without question, and it is beyond all one could imagine. Jesus Christ died for all humanity, Jesus died for me! How does this make you feel?

d) Do you believe yourself to be a "unique child of God"? How does that make you feel?

e) Use now the other questions mentioned in the video as part of your discussion.

Intercessions:

Leader: Our response: Lord Hear us

For our Holy Father Pope Francis, for health and ministry. For our Church as we continue to walk humbly with the Lord guided by the Holy Spirit. We pray to the Lord.

For our parish community as we enter the Season of Lent, that we may dedicate this Season to More of Him and Less of Me as we use this Season to live out the spirit of surrender, invite others to worship at Mass and share in the reverence and love we have for the Eucharist. We pray to the Lord.

For all those who are preparing to celebrate Sacraments during this coming year; for those preparing for marriage, those in our RCIA process, those children who are preparing for First Reconciliation, Holy Communion and Confirmation: may their journey of faith lead them closer to the source of Hope and Life who is Jesus. We pray to the Lord.

For those areas of our life that are in need of being restored to Hope. May the weight of doubt not tempt us, faith not fail us, but rather may our relationship with Jesus abound in great measure as we adopt the mindset of Christ. We pray to the Lord.

For those who are sick and suffering at this time, especially parishioners in hospital or nursing homes. For those who have died and for all the intentions recorded in the Parish Book of Prayer. We pray to the Lord.

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:

During this week, try to be more conscious of the presence of God, and how He may manifest Himself to you. Look for those moments when Jesus is revealed to you, in His glory and in His suffering. Give glory and praise to God for these and (in hindsight) ask forgiveness for those opportunities lost to recognize, acknowledge and respond to Jesus during the day. (Lord where did I see you? Lord where did I miss you?)



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GROUP PRAYER COMMITMENT

- Please consider offering a **Holy Hour in our Adoration Chapel** – either as a group or individually –for the intentions of our Pastor and his Pastoral Team, in their work to build up our parish.
- Start preparing as an individual and a group for our Day of Mercy on April 6. Consider individually and as a group attending the Pilgrimage to be part of our visit to St Michael's Cathedral in Toronto and hearing Cardinal Collins speak.

GROUP ACTION:

- ✓ Is your small group helping with our commitment to aide St Patrick Parish, Hamilton and their downtown outreach? Remember any of these items can be placed in the Adoration Chapel Hallway – mark them “Hamilton.”

Let us pray (together)

*God, author and source of every mercy and goodness, who in fasting,
prayer, and alms-giving have shown us a remedy for sin:*

*Wash us clean in the living waters; quench our thirst for all eternity,
and bring us home to you one day as we gush up to eternal life.*

*Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.*

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