



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

**FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT**

March 5<sup>th</sup>, 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 these next six weeks will be times 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:**

- 1) Reflect briefly with your group on some of your memories of Lent as you recall them from your childhood. In your small group you may find the customs from different families and different cultures very interesting.
- 2) What does the phrase “More of Him and Less of Me” mean for you? Share your views. How do you hope to make it impact your Lenten journey?

**CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)**

**Leader: Be merciful to us, O Lord, for we have sinned, and open us to your Word.**

**Lord Jesus,** you value us as your prized creation, **Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ Jesus,** fully present to us in our hearing of your Word, **Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord Jesus,** you come to us to bring us to where you are, **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** (Genesis 2:7–9, 16–18, 25; 3:1–7)

The Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree in the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it, you shall die.” Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed. Now the serpent was craftier than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

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

#### **SECOND READING** (Romans 5:12–19) [for the shorter version omit [...]]

Brothers and sisters: Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, so death spread to all, because all have sinned. [Sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of that one person’s sin. For



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the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification.]

If, because of the trespass of one, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one, Jesus Christ.

Therefore just as the trespass of one led to condemnation for all, so the act of righteousness of one leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the disobedience of one person the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one person the many will be made righteous.

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

### **GOSPEL** (Matthew 4:1–11)

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

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished.

The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Again, the devil took him to a very mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

Then the devil left him, and suddenly Angels came and waited on him.

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:**

[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](#)



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C. S. Lewis, is one of my favourite Christian authors and he suggests that good people know a great deal about temptation whereas bad people know very little. Only the good who try to resist temptation know its strength. “After all,” said Lewis, in his classic work *Mere Christianity*, “you find out the strength of the wind by trying to walk against it, not by lying down!” In yielding too quickly to temptation we never get the strength to deal with it because we don’t fight it. And because Jesus is the only one who never yielded to temptation, He is the only one who fully knows its meaning—the temptation to take care of His own needs ... the temptation to test God’s love and care ... and finally, the temptation to worldly power. We all face similar temptations in our lives, certainly not to the extent and intensity that Jesus did. Jesus has shown us, though, that God’s grace is sufficient to resist these temptations. The scene of the temptation, which opens the public life of Jesus, declares in the Gospels in a very forceful manner the great change in our lives that He introduces into the world by His work of redemption. Where the first man and woman fell, (as our first reading from Genesis told us) Christ, the new Head of humanity, triumphs over the power of Satan. The Gospel of the temptation heralds Christ's victory in advance.

But Jesus focused on His purpose – not just His actions. He knew that the Cross was needed to fulfill the Father’s will for His life and for humanity. The Cross was His purpose and the Cross is our focus too – it is part of our life and if we are to embrace Christ in our life then we must also embrace the Cross in our life.

By declaring this Gospel for the beginning of Lent, the Church proclaims that this victory should be ours also. In us, as all around us, it is Christ's temptation, Christ's struggle, Christ's victory which is prolonged; our effort is His and so is our strength; His will be our victory at Easter.

So this Lent is right from the start – More of Him and Less of Me. How will you permit the Season to be about Him?

*(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)

1. *“To be tempted by the devil.”* The three temptations used by Satan reflect the three sources of sin which distract us from God’s heavenly Kingdom: i) “turn stones into bread” ii) “throw yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple” iii) “I will give you the Kingdoms of the world”.
  - a) Share how the three acts of penance requested by Jesus on Ash Wednesday (Matt 6:1-18)—i) fasting; ii) prayer; iii) almsgiving—relate to these three temptations.



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- b) How does the compassion of God help me/us face my/our temptations? Explain.
- c) What desert images hold Lenten meanings for you? Do you ever hear the Spirit calling you to pray when you feel you are in a wilderness?
- d) 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:**

**GROUP PRAYER COMMITMENT**



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Please consider offering a **Holy Hour in our Adoration Chapel** – either as a group or individually –for the intentions of Pastor, our Pastoral Team, in their work to build up our parish.

Your discipleship and stewardship are essential to the building-up of the kingdom of God! With the grace of God this will be a week of grace, and strengthening of your ties and loyalty to Jesus Christ.

What is your group plan for service, prayer, action during the upcoming Lenten Season.

*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.”
- ✓ What activities will you invite others (not in your group) to come and be a part of during Lent?

**Let us pray** (together)

*Lord Jesus Christ, we offer you our continued praise  
for revealing to us on the cross that you truly are the Lord of Glory.  
Grant us the wisdom to believe this in our minds and feel it in our hearts,  
so that we may courageously proclaim it to the world.  
We pray this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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