



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

SIXTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

May 1, 2016

Introduction to the Word:



This is the fourth week of a message series for the Easter Season called “Ground-breaking”. It is a unique series for us because of its double meaning. First, later this month we are actually going to be breaking ground on a 1500sq. ft expansion which is part of our Generations campaign. This new space on to the front of our Church will connect and complete our campus and provide us with additional space for groups, activities and our growing Family of Faith. (See the drawings in Parish Centre). Second - we are in the Season which celebrates the most ground breaking event in history – Easter.

A ground breaking describes something that has never been seen or done or even thought of before - its pioneering. Usually is surprises and shocks and maybe shapes culture or redefines the way people live or work. Something ground breaking changes stuff....and certainly Easter was that..... it changed things.... it was groundbreaking - the impact is still being felt today

This first week we look at that heart of the ground-breaking of the Resurrection is the fact of its a new vision - one of Mercy. In our second week we took a look at Fear and how we can overcome up due to the Resurrection of Jesus by making three things a part of our life – the call to “feed, tend, go” Last week we looked at what it takes to be a ground breaking Church. This week we are invited to ask ourselves if we are willing to “stand up?”

Warm-Up:

Listen to this wonderful song by [JJ Week Band – “Alive in Me”](#). It will be a wonderful way to begin your small group gathering.

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Leader: Today we are truly blessed to be able to say we believe, even though we have not seen.



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Lord Jesus, you are the Way, the Truth, and the Life
Christ Jesus, you are the sign and source of this love of God for us
Lord Jesus, you hold out the truth to us to lead and guide us

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 (Acts 15:1-2, 22-29)

Some who had come down from Judea were instructing the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the Mosaic practice, you cannot be saved." Because there arose no little dissension and debate, by Paul and Barnabas with them, it was decided that Paul, Barnabas, and some of the others should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders about this question. The apostles and elders, in agreement with the whole church, decided to choose representatives and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. The ones chosen were Judas, who was called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers. This is the letter delivered by them: "The apostles and elders, your brothers, to the brothers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia of Gentile origin: Greetings. Since we have heard that some of our number who went out without any mandate from us have upset you with their teachings and disturbed your peace of mind, we have with one accord decided to choose representatives and to send them to you along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have dedicated their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are sending Judas and Silas who will also convey this same message by word and mouth: 'It is the decision of the Holy Spirit and of us not to place on you any burden beyond these necessities, namely, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meats of strangled animals, and from unlawful marriage. If you keep free of these, you will be doing what is right. Farewell.'" The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

Second Reading (Revelation 21.10-14, 22-23)

The angel took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God. It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal. It had a massive high wall, with twelve



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gates where twelve angels were stationed and on which names were inscribed, the names of the twelve tribes of the Israelites. There were three gates facing east, three north, three south, and three west. The wall of the city had twelve courses of stones as its foundation on which were inscribed the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. I saw no temple in the city for its temple is the Lord God almighty and the Lamb. The city had no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gave it light, and its lamp was the Lamb.
The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God

Gospel (John 14:23-29)

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

Jesus said to his disciples: Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me. "I have told you this while I am with you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I told you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. You heard me tell you, 'I am going away and I will come back to you.' If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father; for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you this before it happens, so that when it happens you may believe."

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](#)

Pope Paul VI spoke so beautifully that "If you want peace, work for justice". I believe the two are intimately related. Why do I fight with my neighbour over our property line? I feel it is not right (unjust). Why does one nation enter into war with another? Because they are encroaching on our territory (not just).

We have all experienced peace personally, and also the lack of it. This may have been in relation to a family member or friend; a co-worker, boss or employee; or a classmate, teacher or student. Perhaps today we are not proud of the way we related to them at that time. Perhaps we felt they were unjust in their words, actions or decisions. That lack of personal peace perhaps even spilled over into the wider family or group of friends, the office staff, or the school. Before we knew it, things were exaggerated and people were not talking to each other, avoiding each other, and 'camps' were being formed for or against 'the enemy'. Sound familiar?

The Ground breaking Message of the Resurrection is not only Mercy, It is not only that Fear has no power when we love the Lord and Feed, Tend and Go, but the ground breaking message of



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the resurrection is also that we must be a Church that constantly invites and invests. But also a Church, a people of faith who are willing to stand up for what is just and true and right – as defined by the Lord.

The Gospel of today inspires joy and confidence. God is with us! First of all, he assures us that he is sending us the Holy Spirit that will lead and guide us, encourage us and challenge us, as we live out our life in Christ. Indeed, we need not be "troubled or afraid". The Spirit will "teach" and "remind" us, so we are never abandoned or 'left to our own resources'. Then, Jesus promises us peace, HIS PEACE. He is promising His very self to us. How intimate this giving of Himself for us. Although He is going to the Father, we are definitely not alone or abandoned. If we love Him "and keep His word" we can achieve the peace of Christ. If we follow Him faithfully that peace will not only sustain us, but will encourage and call others to the peace of Christ.

The Church of today - the groundbreaking Church - must be one that willing to stand up. The Bishops of Canada are asking us to be ground breaking in our voice toward a new Federal Government bill which would seek to put at risk sacredness and dignity of human life - it would make euthanasia legal and further would compel Christian health care providers to undertake actions which are contrary to their moral code for some of the most aged, disabled and infirmed in our society. We have a moment to speak up and sample letters which you can write to the Minister of Health are available at the Small Group Desk in our Parish Centre. This is a threat to our moral fabric as a society and we are encouraged to make our voice and the voice of the Cross heard on this issue

In the Gospel Jesus promises us peace - HIS PEACE. Connected to His peace - is His truth - the two can not be separated from each other. Jesus makes a distinction between His peace, and the peace of the world when He says, "Not as the world gives do I give it to you". There is real peace, and then there is pseudo-peace. The pseudo-peace lasts a short time, usually hastily or frustratingly agreed upon just to 'get it over with', or 'to move on'. Pseudo-peace is a peace we can put up with, in the short run of things. However, true peace endures.

True peace is built on two important principles: love and truth. This peace is animated by love, introduces love, preserves love, and celebrates love. This calls for sincerity and integrity in the hearts of both parties (groups, nations, etc.). This peace does not know 'winners' and 'losers', but only brothers and sisters in Christ, seeking the well-being of each other. Sacrifices must be made in relation to this peace, each 'giving in' to a certain extent. True peace also demands the truth.

What is right and good is right and good, and what is wrong and bad is wrong and bad. Christian peace will not allow sin to dominate or control. Rather, dialogue and agreement (or disagreement) must be based on the truth as revealed by God and taught by moral authority. It is not a 'relative' truth, or what is the fashion, or the 'thing' this year. As people of God, we seek His peace, recognizing the call to love (and His great love for us), and embracing God's truth. When



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we embrace and proclaim - and stand up for Christ - we are instruments of His peace. When His peace and His truth are seen in our lives - well - its ground breaking!

*(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)*

► *“Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid”* (John 14:23-29)

Jesus has assured us He is with us, and Has sent us the Holy Spirit. We should not feel vulnerable, insecure, or alone.

- a) Can I identify a moment of being “troubled or afraid” in which the grace of God was revealed?
- b) How do I feel the peace of Christ at this time in my life?
- c) What do I need to do, in my spiritual life, in order to possess that peace that only Jesus can give?

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: The Lord is kind and merciful.**

That world leaders may promote and secure the peace in their nation, and between nations, we pray to the Lord ..

That the gentle touch of the Risen Lord's peace may touch all parts of our world, bringing an end to war, violence and injustice in all its forms, especially in our parish missions in Haiti and Kenya...we pray to the Lord ...

That the light of Christ may bring us peace, and help us to be light for others, especially in our outreach efforts as we approach our annual Service Saturday, we pray to the Lord ...

That we may seek “what is right” in all that we say and do, and that law makers may protect and defend the sanctity of life from conception until natural death, we pray to the Lord ...

May the Resurrection we celebrate and proclaim be given to all those who have died and gone before us in faith, we pray to the Lord ...

Leader: Let us seek the intercession of the Patroness of our Parish as we pray: [Hail Mary](#)



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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:

St Patrick Parish in downtown Hamilton offers a food kitchen and outreach for between 125 - 150 a day, seven days a week. They have reached out to us as a dynamic parish in our Diocese asking for a donations of the following – would your small group consider collecting some of these items and donating them to this as an Act of Mercy in this Year of Mercy as we seek to help the poor and disadvantaged in Hamilton. Collect and donate cans of coffee, sugar, bottled water, pop or chocolate bars... It might sound a bit “unhealthy” menu, but precisely that’s what our patrons need as many of them deal with many different forms of addiction and mental health issues. These can be placed in the Adoration Chapel Hallway – mark them “Hamilton.”

Consider action this week to make your voice heard on the Physician Assisted Suicide Debate. Statements and resources on Euthanasia from our Canadian Bishops <http://bit.ly/1NiDYoj>.

Let us pray (together)

Grant, almighty God,
that we may celebrate with heartfelt devotion these days of joy,
which we keep in honour of the risen Lord,
and what we relive in remembrance
we may always hold to in what we do.
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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