



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

THE ASCENSION OF THE LORD

May 8, 2016

Introduction to the Word:



This is the fifth 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 it 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 ground-breaking - 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 it due to the Resurrection of Jesus by making three things a part of our life – the call to “feed, tend, go.” Then we looked at what it takes to be a ground breaking Church. Last week we are invited to ask ourselves if we are willing to “stand up?” and this week is all about presence and investment.

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)



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

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 1:1–11)

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

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

SECOND READING (Ephesians 1:17-23)

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious



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inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL (Luke 24:46–53)

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

Jesus said to the disciples, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. “And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

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 feast of the Ascension can best be described as a connecting time in this Easter season. It is “a time between times”—a moment when we have left one place in our faith journey but have not yet reached the second. Today’s narratives describe the Ascension as embellishing and *enriching* the meaning of the Resurrection: the same Jesus we have come to know and love in his humanity, we now celebrate in the fullness of his divinity at the right hand of the Father. Jesus is one and the same.

With his two brief accounts of the Ascension (in the Gospel and in Acts), Luke remains our main source of information about Jesus’ Ascension to heaven. What is striking here is that the passage speaks more about the disciples—their fears, their questions and their mission—than about Jesus himself. Throughout the resurrection narratives, Jesus has helped the disciples to understand the story of Jesus within the larger story of salvation history. Beginning with Moses and all the



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prophets, Jesus indicates that the messiah would not immediately be a glorious king, but on the contrary, that it was necessary that he should suffer and die before entering into his glory. In this light, the suffering and death of Jesus do not destroy the messianic credentials as the disciples had feared. Indeed, their hearts now “burn” as he opens the scriptures to them. The angels in the tomb (“Remember what he said to you...that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners and crucified.”), Jesus on the road to Emmaus (“Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”), and now Jesus at the supper with all the disciples (“Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day.”)—all contain words that try to help them to understand this. This is what makes them witnesses of the resurrection and ministers of the word...they just need to wait for the outpouring of the Spirit (an allusion to the prophet Joel 3:1-5, who looks forward to the day when God will “pour out the Spirit upon all flesh”) which they will receive at Pentecost. It will be through the Spirit’s presence and power that Jesus’ commission for mission will be extended to the entire world.

Our current Scripture readings will guide us through this paradox as they help us commemorate a *turning point* in the life of the Church...a groundbreaking of sorts. With the celebration of Jesus’ Ascension to the “right hand of the Father,” one part of the story now comes to an end. We will soon celebrate *the coming of the Spirit*—Pentecost—the energizing power and guiding light of all the baptized: God’s reign is now at hand; the Spirit is now with us; the Kingdom is beginning to flourish; the Master Plan is unfolding as it should and each one of us has a major part to play in the process.

Yet, in this process, the disciples have their own “sweet sorrow” to go through. They are understandably sad that Jesus in His bodily form had left them. No doubt they are blankly staring after him as the angels say to them: “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there looking at the sky?” Yet, the message of the angels also gives hope, when they continue: “This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will return in the same way.” Indeed, in the gospel reading, Jesus tells the disciples that he has not left them “orphans,” for He will send “the promise of my Father upon you [which will] clothe you with power from on high.”

This speaks to the power of an impression. It’s like that in our relationship with Mothers too. They may not be physically with us, but we can hear their voice, sense their advice and even know what “they would want us to do.” The Ascension reaffirms for us that the power of our presence and investment in the life of others is significant, but it connects us to the reality that Christ’s enduring presence remains active and alive in His Church – a groundbreaking Church – called to embrace others with a new vision - one of Mercy. Called to overcome Fear due to the Resurrection of Jesus by making three things a part of our life – the call to “feed, tend, go.” Called to be willing to “stand up and called to invest and invite others into our midst. May it be so!

*(Allow about 5 – 10 minutes for the participants to react to the **Commentary** to identify a newly discovered insight or idea.)*



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Questions for Reflection and Discussion: (15-20 minutes)

► “And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; and they were continually in the temple blessing God” (Luke 24:52-53).

Through this verse, Luke connects the disciples with the significant figures in the infancy narratives, as well as those many who have been beneficiaries of Jesus’ ministry throughout the gospel.

- a) Have there been moments in the Lenten and Easter season that you regard as moments of great joy?
- b) How has the knowledge of salvation come to you in this Lenten and Easter seasons?
- c) For what do you find yourself blessing/thanking God?
- d) “You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1). How, concretely, am I called to carry this mission of being a groundbreaking Church forward in my life?

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: Lord, hear our prayer**

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 ...

For the people and nations suffering from natural disasters throughout the world remembering especially those in Fort McMurray: that the world will respond generously to the sufferings of their families and the loss of their homes: May they be lifted up by caring people and God's own Spirit, 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 150 a day, seven days a week. They have reached out to us asking us to consider donating items as an Act of Mercy in this Year of Mercy. Please 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 is needed 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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