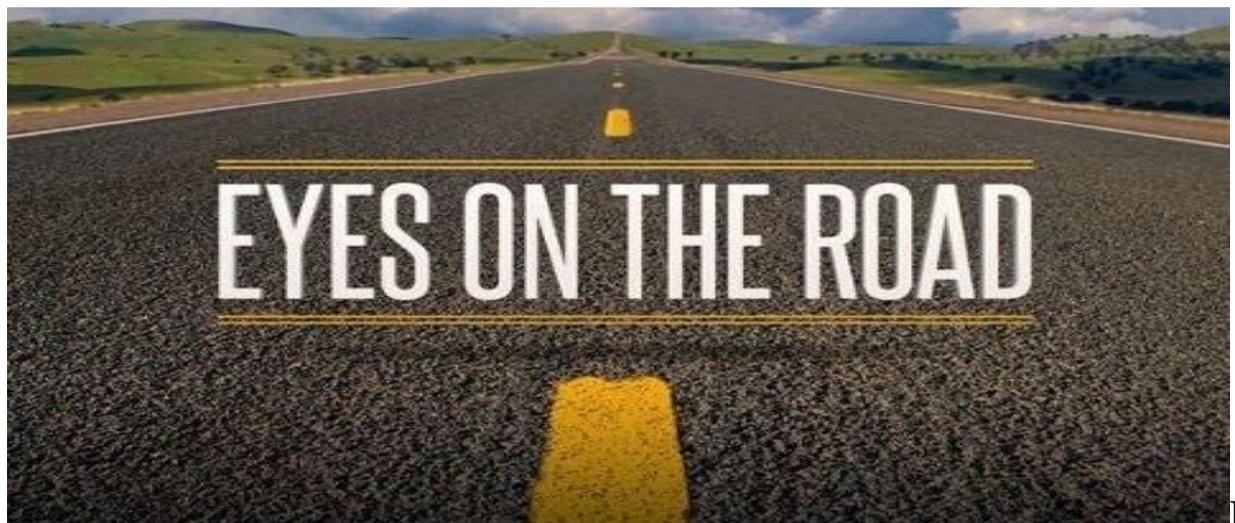




SMALL GROUP NEWSLETTER
ST. MARY OF THE VISITATION PARISH
CAMBRIDGE, (H) ONT.

FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER
May 14, 2017



Introduction to the Word:

The Easter Season is a 50 Day Period Where Jesus Shows Himself to His Disciples. He often does this "on the road". So for several weeks we are going to look at how Jesus show Himself and ask if we His followers today show Him the same way by keeping our **Eyes on the Road**.

The Resurrection appearance stories are filled with examples of how the disciples did not recognize Jesus, they took their eyes off the road (the way) and focused instead on doubt and whisper. They thought he was a gardener, a ghost, or a stranger. As we walk on the way we must keep our "eyes on the road."

Two weeks ago we began with the gentle nudge that it takes *focus, firmness and faithfulness*. This week we continue our walk and our series of messages to help us see the distractions and learn tools we need.

Last week with we reminded that the Good Shepherd calls out to us, we need on the road to listen for His voice – not just travel in our direction. [Check out the message from last week](#) and bring a friend this Lord's Day to Mass

Warm Up Activity:

The Gospel introduces the image of "Home" as we travel the road – home many homes have you lived in during your life? What did you like about each and why?

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)



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Leader: Confident that Jesus is with us always as “The Way,” we pray to be mindful and convinced of His consuming compassion and boundless mercy.

Lord Jesus, you taught us to love and care for one another, **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you taught us to have compassion for one another, **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you charge us to be “living stones” for your faith community, **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 6:1–7)

Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait on tables. Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and serving the word.” What they said, pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a convert of Antioch. They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.
The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING (1 Peter 2:4–9)

Beloved: Come to the Lord, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight. Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: “See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner,” and “A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.



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But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL (John 14:1–12)

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

Jesus said to His disciples: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way to the place where I am going."

Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?"

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father."

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:

In the Gospel of today Jesus shares this identity in a way well known to us who travel on the road with Him "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." Here Jesus is telling us of the life of communion which He experiences with the Father. He and the Father share the same life and mission and are united by a bond of love which is the Holy Spirit. Since we have been created in God's image and likeness, we will find our deepest fulfillment when we are in communion with God and with one another. **Jesus is the Way** into this life of communion by being **the Truth and the Life**. To be in communion with another, we have to **first know the truth** about the other. Jesus has come to reveal to us the truth about our God and the plan which God has for each of us. To be in communion with another we also have to share life with that person. **Jesus shares his life**, which is God's life, **with us in baptism**, and nourishes that life in the Eucharist, and makes it possible for us to live not only in communion with the Father but also with Himself and with one another. We are already able to live this life of communion now, and we can look forward to living it in its fullness when we take possession of the **home** which Jesus is preparing for each of us in heaven.



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But Jesus is also saying something about our time with Him here on the road. He is tell is that first - 'I am the Way' – Jesus is a road. A road is a journey. And we go to God the Father through Jesus and we call Jesus the *Way*, because He is the visible manifestation in human form of all that His Father is. Therefore we must keep our eye on Him.

Second, 'I am the Truth' – the Truth that meets us on the road. We Christians have not got the Truth. The Truth has got us. Jesus is God's gift of His true self to us. As God revealed His true self to Jesus, we look up to Jesus to reveal God to us. As Christians we **see Jesus as the unique image** of God in His humanity. Through Baptism we are all made one with Jesus, as St Paul says, “I live, now, not I, but Christ lives in me!” Making us united with Him as the “living stones” in this “temple”, the “Mystical Body”, the Church, where God is to be *encountered, experienced* and brought to all people.

Third, 'I am the Life' – this journey of Truth gives us life. When we believe in Jesus, we find life. More, He becomes our life. In short, what living the Christian life is really all about is living with Jesus in faith. It is to make the Truth and the Life - the Father Himself - really ours by following Jesus who is the Way. In Jesus' own words, He is “**the Way, the Truth, and the Life.**” Just as the Father's dwelling is not a place, but an *experience* of Jesus' presence, *the way* which leads there is not a path, but a *person*, namely Jesus

We handle all of this practically by ensuring that each day we have an “Appointment with God” and give Him the most precious gift we have – our time! This means making the Lord's Day and unmovable reality, and that each day we have some moments with Him – in quiet discussion. Second by being willing to “Go and Follow”. It is easy with our GPS to state the destination but even with it we must press “Go”. Jesus loves us so dearly He has already programmed the destination, we need only to press “Go” and then “Follow.”

How will you choose this week to differently Go and Follow the Way, Truth and Life this week as you keep your eyes on the road?

*(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)*

Acknowledging that Jesus is “The Way” and wanting to draw closer to you, share in your Small Group a few of the strategies (favorite prayers, activities, etc) you have found helpful in your personal attempts to get closer to the Lord.

Discuss ways that you keep your “appointment with God” – what does it look like, why is it so important, what tries to get in the way of it?



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Take a few moments to reflect on how Jesus has directed your life to date and how you have chosen to Go and Follow. On an imaginary road map of your life's journey, try to identify a few sign posts that have influenced the direction of your life, so far; i.e., persons, happenings (e.g., illness or accident) or other circumstances. Share your experiences.

As we make our way through this Message Series which is on Discipleship and our walk of faith as Christians and the Church - If you could see one change through this series, what would it be?

Intercessions:

Leader: Our response: Lord Hear us

- For Pope Francis: may God strengthen him in his apostolic ministry as the successor of Peter and the shepherd of Christ's faithful people here on earth. We pray to the Lord.
- For the young people of the parish who received the Sacrament of Confirmation: may the Holy Spirit be a familiar friend in their lives. We pray to the Lord.
- For the children of the parish who are receiving their First Holy Communion: may their childlike trust remind us to open our hearts to the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. We pray to the Lord.
- For parents who are preparing for the baptism of their child: may they be the best teachers of their child in the ways of faith by the good example that they offer. We pray to the Lord.
- For those from our parish community considering a Vocation to priesthood and religious life. For our two seminarians Hayden and Robin. May they experience the love of the Risen Lord as they seek to discern His will for their lives. We pray to the Lord.
- For areas of the world in need, especially in Kenya and in Haiti. May our prayers and support aide them and bring them closer to Christ. We pray to the Lord.
- For all who have died, as well as 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:

- Prayerfully consider whom you know that is doubting and would being a part of a Small Group help them (or even part of Starting Point) – have you considered inviting them?
- Prayerfully discuss as a Group your involvement in our May 27th Service Saturday...how will your group help? Check our website for the opportunities – something for everyone!



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- Prayerfully talk about the summer plans for your group. Heart to Home editions conclude at the end of June – but your group can continue to meet – how can we help?
- Spend time as a group in Eucharistic Adoration – prayer for our shepherds in the Church

VBS/Camp Brebeuf/Steubenville 2017

Our parish is blessed with an outstanding Children's Ministry which attracts over 100 children each Lord's Day at our 9:30am and 11:30am Masses and each year welcome almost 50 to be part of VBS (July 10-14). We also have a great Youth Ministry program – Kids Klub (Grade 5-8) and Da Crew (Grade 9-12). A highlight event each summer for our Kids Klub is "Adventure Day at Camp Brebeuf" on July 6th and for our high-schoolers the Steubenville Conference from July 28-30. Is there a way that you could help Shepherd some of our young people in these events as a small group? :

- Could you be a prayer partner for our teens?
- Could you consider as a group sponsoring a child(ren) (\$35 for VBS, \$25 for Adventure Day, \$200 for Steubenville or even all three for \$260)?
- Could you consider inviting a teen to be part of our Youth Ministry or pass on the word about our amazing Children's Ministry

Let us pray (together)

In your house, O God, there are many dwelling places, and your Son has gone to prepare a place for us, that where Christ is, there we may be also. Do not let our hearts be troubled but fill our lives in deeds of service. Make us follow this Jesus with joy, the way, the truth, and the life. Then shall we come to you through the One who is the Resurrection and the Life, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever. Amen

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