



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

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TME
October 2, 2016



Introduction to the Word:

The month of September signals the start of Fall. To kick off the 2016-2017 year we're offering an all-new series taking a fresh look at what might happen if three principles were to guide the next year for us. We pray that these will act as catalysts to help you grow in your faith, get connected, build relationships and above all grow closer to God! It's all about doing what disciples do and, in the process, finding our way to Him

Week One, we learned in the parables of the Lost Coin and the Lost Sheep that we need to *"hold our plans loosely and God's purpose tightly"*. We were also reminded that it's important to recall that often in our waiting, God is operating and that His timing is a lot more like a *"crockpot then a microwave"*, getting all the simmering in and just right before we serve.

Week Two, we discerned together using the Gospel of the unwise manager who undercut the Master to talk about *drifting* - that it's an easy happening but it can become an unhealthy habit. And that drifting which happens from within, which occurs when we feel we are without and is sure to happen when the me is bigger than the we - for sure we drift!

Week Three, we discussed that all of us have found ourselves in moments where our world falls apart. We find ourselves face down and confused, but We are still in the race. We may fall, we may be confused, but God will carry us to the finish if we give Him the Year - and walk with Him in humility, seeking His purpose, deciding not to Drift and naming our gifts, taming our pride and growing in Him. In the end - we will become His and we will be Home

Warm-Up:

Can you think of sometime in your life when you or someone you love had something very difficult happen? Do you remember how you thought of this difficulty in light of God's



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presence? Did you find yourself aware of God's presence in the midst of the difficulty, or were you praying that God would be present in this need? Were you praying that God would increase your faith?

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Leader: If we are to call ourselves disciples of Jesus, it is fitting that we bring our sufferings to the cross of Jesus and recognize that we cannot bear our burdens alone; that we are called to community, to help each other, to be Christ for each other.

Lord Jesus, you were born into this world to show us how to live: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christ Jesus, you died on the cross so that we might know death without despair: **Christ, have mercy.**

Lord Jesus, you rose to new life that we may also rise and live with you forever: **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 (Habakkuk 1:2–3; 2:2–4)

“O Lord, how long shall I cry for help and you will not listen? Or cry to you ‘Violence!’ and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise.” Then the Lord answered me and said: “Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.”

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

SECOND READING (2 Timothy 1:6–8, 13–14)

Beloved: I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his



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prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the Gospel, relying on the power of God. Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL (Luke 17:5–10)

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

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!” The Lord replied, “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.

“Who among you would say to your slave who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field, ‘Come here at once and take your place at the table’? Would you not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink; later you may eat and drink’? Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!’”

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](#)

The Gospel today begins abruptly with the request of the disciples, “Increase our faith.” This could be the universal entreaty of all followers of Jesus when they find themselves in the midst of turmoil and difficulty. As we know, sometimes these situations come upon us: a loved one becomes sick and incapacitated, a child makes a terrible choice with dire consequences, or a person loses a job with no hope on the horizon of finding a new one. Other times, the suffering or trial comes because of choices that we have made: to give up precious time to be with the one who is sick, to console and forgive the child that we love, or to stand with the unemployed person. Each of these situations calls us to trust. In the first set of scenarios, we are called to trust that for each of these persons—as difficult as the situation appears—that God is present, aligned with the person in his or her suffering, working to bring new life out of something that looks absolutely terrible at the moment. In the second set of scenarios, we are called to trust that our decisions to stand with those undergoing trials and suffering will be met by our loving God’s grace to help us in our determination to “be with” those who suffer. In the face of these difficulties, it makes so much sense to pray that God will increase our faith so that we will grow to trust that God is present and continues to be a God of compassion, a God who “suffers with us.”



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For those whose lives become more of a trial because of choices they make to help those in need, it is easy for us to see the cost involved. Time is devoted, anxieties are shared, lives are re-arranged to be with those in need. It can take courage to do this. Sometimes the courage is needed in the short term to provide assistance for a particular situation, but sometimes the courage is needed over the long haul to provide care in a situation that is prolonged, with no end in sight. In both cases, our faith in ourselves and in God is tested. We wonder if we have the resources of compassion and charity to respond as we should. We wonder if God will be there to support us in our self-giving, bringing new life when we have chosen to make sacrifices for another. In these moments, it is always important to know not only the cost of what we see immediately before our eyes, but also the promise of Jesus that he will be with us always, until the end of time. The cost of service to others is clear, but at times we can forget that God will meet us precisely at the point of our self-giving in service with the grace to respond. This is precisely what we need to trust in. This is precisely why we need to pray that God will increase our faith.

In his pastoral letter (Second Reading), Paul encourages Timothy to bear any hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God. Paul reminds Timothy that God has given him a spirit of power and love and self-control. In the context of our other readings today, we could imagine that this strength and power will enable us to endure the difficulties of life. Although these difficulties are real, we can accept them in the larger context of God's love for us and God's constant presence in Christ through the Spirit.

*(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)*

- Can you think of sometime in your life when you made a conscious effort to be of assistance to someone in need, but you wondered if you had the wherewithal of courage, strength, and charity to respond either immediately or over the long haul?
- Did you find that God met you with grace at exactly the point that you were most in need to respond with compassion and charity?
- Was this moment anticipated or unanticipated on your part?
- Were you able to see (perhaps only in hindsight) the new life that God provided you through your service and sacrifice? Were you praying that God would increase your faith?

Paul reminds Timothy that God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. Paul also encourages Timothy to “guard the good treasure entrusted to you.”

- a. Can you think of times in your life, especially in difficult times when you needed a spirit of power and love? What did this look like?



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- b. What good treasure has God entrusted to you? What have you had to do to “guard” this treasure in your life?

The disciples cry out for an increase of faith in response to Jesus’ teaching that they need to forgive those who have harmed them seven times every day.

- c. What is the most difficult aspect of forgiving another?
d. Do you find it is easier to forgive someone if you have been forgiven for the same trespass? Why do you think this is?
e. What should you do if you find a great “stumbling block” in offering forgiveness to someone who has hurt you?

Intercessions:

Leader: Let us be one in prayer for the Church, the Body of Christ: that we may deepen our reverence for the Eucharistic sacrifice which gives us life. Our response: Lord Hear us

For our parish community, may the Lord continue to bless our Family of Faith as we move forward in being a welcoming community, faithful to who God made us to be and rooted in the Eucharist as the source of our evangelization - all for His Glory. We pray to the Lord

For those who participated in our Small Group Connections Weekend, and for those who are considering joining Small Groups in the parish – may they be open to the movement of the Spirit in their lives. We pray to the Lord.

For the upcoming efforts of our Service Saturday in our parish, may many respond generously to the opportunities to be a helping hand in our community. We pray to the Lord.

For the youth of our parish: may they continue to inspire each one of us to live the gospel message in a spirit of gratitude and joy. We pray to the Lord.

For those who are suffering because of sickness: may they find hope and strength by receiving the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. We pray to the Lord.

For our loved ones who have died and the Intentions in our 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.)



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GROUP PRAYER/ ACTION:

Throughout this Year of Mercy, Pope Francis has implored us to consider how God might be calling each one of us to be an instrument of mercy and healing in the world.

GROUP PRAYER COMMITMENT

- Consider together as a group a social outreach which connects to our parish – our Haiti Mission, commitment to sponsoring a family at Advent, bringing “Canadian Tire Dollars”, making quilts, helping the Outreach program at St Patrick Parish in Hamilton.

Suggestion for the week:

Reflect upon the various relationships that you have and ask God to help you to forgive anyone that you are at odds with. It may require asking God to increase your faith that this will lead to a good end.

Let us pray (together)

*Hear our prayer, O God, for faith that can move mountains.
Give us humility of heart, so that we help grow Your kingdom,
yet recognize that we are but faithful servants, whom You have called
to reveal to all the wonders that Your love has accomplished.
This we ask through Jesus, one with the Holy Spirit and with us, God for ever. Amen*

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