



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

**TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**  
**October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017**



**Introduction to the Word:**

Two readings today talk about **vineyards**. The Gospel in particular offers a striking contrast to what we often think of a vineyard to be. The picture painted for us is not one of abundant harvest (as this Thanksgiving Fall Season might want us to believe), but one of ingratitude among the tenant. **We are all tenants** in God's creation. All of us have different circumstances, gifts, and resources, but those do not belong to us in the eternal sense. They **are gifts from God** to allow us to work on His behalf to the best of our abilities and circumstances. The question this Lord's Day we as we seek to remember that "[We Are Better Together](#)" is asking us what type of tenant are we in this vineyard? Let us move forward on a common pathway with the principles of the past few weeks in mind with one single chant which we must be about as a parish family: **offering every person in our community a life changing encounter with Jesus.**

**Warm Up Activity:**

As you prepare to enter into your group discussion, pause first of all to reflect on the following – maybe even consider writing some of these things down in a journal or on a sheet a paper – these you might share with your group – or you could keep them just for your own reflection:

- If I had to pick one thing for which I am most grateful for – it would be....
- If I had to select one person (living or deceased) for who I am grateful for...it would be...because....
- If I had to identify one talent that I am grateful God gave me – it would be....and this is how I use it for His glory.....

Ok - "**What do you think?**"

- What stands out to you about the last few weeks of our message series?
- What principle do you take with you as we enter this week and continue to move forward?

**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** (Isaiah 5:1–7)

Let me sing for my beloved my love song concerning his vineyard: “My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dug it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; he expected it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.

“And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it? When I expected it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes?

“And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the people of Judah are his pleasant planting; he expected justice, but saw bloodshed; righteousness, but heard a cry!”

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

#### **SECOND READING** (Philippians 4:6–9)

Brothers and sisters: Do not worry about anything, but in everything let your requests be made known to God by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

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

#### **GOSPEL** (Matthew 21:33–43)

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

Jesus said to the chief priests and the elders of the people: “Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country.

“When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way.



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“Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him.

“Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures; ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’? “Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom.”

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:**

#### **Consider hearing again the Sunday Message**

The Gospel today introduces us to an absentee landlord, the **owner of the vineyard**. In first-century Israel, this form of governance over one's property was very common, so people would be able to easily relate to its use in the vineyard parable by Jesus. Owners would lease their land to sharecroppers, who in exchange for working the farm would receive a percentage of the profits at harvest time.

The Gospel passage begins by making clear that Jesus is addressing this parable of the vineyard to “the chief priests and the elders of the people” (21:33). *It* serves as a warning to them that the kingdom of God may be taken away from them (21:43). But immediately the tone of the parable begins to expand to include others who might be able to relate to living in a spirit of ingratitude. You see the tenants had a great deal of success in their vineyard, and yet they forgot who it all belongs to – they even wanted to kill the heir in order to claim full rights to the vineyard themselves. That sort of ingratitude was one which Jesus was seeking His disciples to stay away from.

It might seem odd, on Thanksgiving, to speak of ingratitude, after all this is a celebration of gratitude. Yet so often people walk away from Thanksgiving feeling unappreciated. Such lack of appreciation is often not because another person does not have “a feeling” of appreciation for them, but because the feeling has not been expressed. This often results in hard feeling, broken relationships and lost opportunities. When the “cycle of gratitude” does not take place then most often the “cycle of ingratitude” begins.

The “cycle of ingratitude” is best described as “hard feelings” which, then depending on the maturity of those involved, can either resemble a Junior Kindergarten classroom, or a mature series of adult discussions. Every family, relationship and organization becomes subject to this.



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Sometimes when the “cycle of ingratitude” goes too far, we see violence, selfishness and everything opposite to what our Second Reading called us to live like.

So for a parish family, and for people of faith, we must always recall that our hearts gravitate towards acceptance and our hearts are repelled by rejection. God made us that way – and even if you don’t believe in God - you have to admit that is the way we are – none of us likes to be rejected! This is why it’s not enough to feel grateful, think it, know it – you have to figure out a way to keep the “cycle of gratitude” going so that the “cycle of ingratitude” can stop.

Regardless if you are introvert or extrovert..... Regardless if you if you say “well that is just not me...I don’t do that”, regardless if you think it’s their job, regardless if you are male or female. Our hearts gravitate towards acceptance and our hearts are repelled by rejection. Thanksgiving reminds us – we have to find a way – and this is a perfect day to make sure to keep the cycle going - why? – FOR THE HEALTH OF THE VINEYARD YOU ARE IN!

This is why Service Saturday, Tuesday Night Together, outreach efforts by our Small Groups – all of these are important because they keep the “cycle of gratitude” going. This is why a simple hand written “Thank you Note” is so powerful. This is why the Eucharist and weekly being at Sunday Mass is so vital. It keeps the “cycle of gratitude” in motion.

After all, the cycle of gratitude began with God (His created the vineyard and it is His) and it continued with His Son who died on the cross in spite of our “cycle of ingratitude” called sin. Our presence on the Lord’s Day is our “thank you note” for His invitation into the vineyard as a tenant. Are we faithful? Do we hold back? Do we think the vineyard is ours and become subject to the “cycle of ingratitude” by desiring to define the terms of the vineyard?

How will you keep the “cycle of gratitude” going in this vineyard which is our parish family – for when we do – well – we are better together!

*(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)

What are some experiences of the cycle of ingratitude which you have experienced?

What are some moments where the cycle of gratitude was alive and well in your life?

What are some ways you can keep the cycle of gratitude positive in our parish family?

One way to keep the cycle of gratitude going is to mentor or encourage someone in their walk of faith. Who is one person in your life you can disciple? Even if you don’t have anyone, talk about who you might hope to influence positively in your life?

### Intercessions:



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**Leader:** Our response: Lord Hear us

- For the Church throughout the world, may we deepen our love and reverence for the gift of Jesus really and truly present in the Holy Eucharist. We pray to the Lord.

- That all Christians may we give witness to Christ by reaching out in kindness with our neighbour and share the gift of faith that has been placed in our hearts. We pray to the Lord.

- For our parish community, may we continue to strive to be place of acceptance, welcome and a home where we feel connected to the Love of God, and each other, with the Eucharist as the centre of our lives. We pray to the Lord.

- That all married couples may they deepen their commitment to Christ and to one another, and for families, may they continue to be examples of God's mercy and love. We pray to the Lord.

- For areas of the world filled with turmoil, remembering those seeking healing with medical anguish, victims of violence, those witnessing to faith in the midst of terrorism, remembering those impoverished and struggling in our parish missions in Kenya and Haiti and areas of the world impacted recently. We pray to the Lord

- May the sick and suffering members of our parish and our families. For areas of the world in anguish, for those dealing with struggle and strife in their lives - may we all unite our struggles to the cross of Christ and experience the power of His compassionate care. We pray to the Lord.

- For those who have died, and for those grieving the loss of a loved one, and for those we have promised to pray for. 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**

- Consider together as a group a social outreach which connects to our parish – our Haiti Mission, doing a Service Saturday activity together, making quilts, helping the Outreach program at St Patrick Parish in Hamilton.
- How can we help each other pray this week? Take a sheet of paper and write one personal intention or struggle you are facing that needs prayer. Make sure not to put your



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name on it. Fold the sheet of paper and place in the centre of the group. Mixed up the pile, and each person take a sheet. Pray that intention for a member of your group this week.

- Consider making a Holy Hour for the intentions of our parish community this week.

**Marian Pilgrimage:** Join us as an individual or as a small group on October 14<sup>th</sup> for this wonderful day of prayer – check your calendars and our bulletin or website for details.

**Tuesday Night Together:** Come join us on October 17<sup>th</sup> for our TNT night – but it's important to bring someone who has wandered away from faith or our parish.... Gentle way for them to reconnect....

**Looking for More:** Have you heard about [Starting Point?](#) Check out details and consider helping someone who has wandered away from faith or our parish to come back home.

**Let us pray** (together)

*Almighty and eternal God, Creator of the earth and the universe,  
The source of all we have: help us to be faithful stewards in your vineyard,  
Trusting that you will transform our bungling, to bring about a fruitful harvest,  
Through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

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