



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

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
September 11, 2016



Introduction to the Word:

This Lord's Day Weekend we begin a three week Message Series called "Give Him A Year".

Warm-Up:

- Discuss the highlights of your summer – what one or two memories stand out?
 - How do you feel about Summer being over and Fall be upon us ?
 - What plan do you have for the Fall?
- Have you asked God what His purpose might be for this coming Fall – for you?

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Let us now prepare to celebrate the presence and compassion of Jesus before we listen to His Word.

Lord Jesus, you always welcome home the lost and the wayward, Lord have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you always celebrate our "return," Christ have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are always with us, bringing joy to our world, 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.*



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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 (Exodus 32:7–11, 13–14)

The Lord said to Moses, “Go down at once! Your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have acted perversely; they have been quick to turn aside from the way that I commanded them; they have cast for themselves an image of a calf, and have worshipped it and sacrificed to it, and said, “These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!””

The Lord said to Moses, “I have seen this people, how stiff-necked they are. Now let me alone, so that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; and of you I will make a great nation.”

But Moses implored the Lord his God, and said, “O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, how you swore to them by your own self, saying to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants like the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’”

And the Lord changed his mind about the disaster that he planned to bring on his people.

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

SECOND READING (1 Timothy 1:12–17)

Beloved: I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence.

But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the foremost.

But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

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

GOSPEL (Luke 15:1–32)

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



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All the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

So Jesus told them a parable: “Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbors, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

“Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

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 image that Luke is trying to evoke in today's masterpiece of stories of returning and welcoming and designed to help the reader appreciate how *conventional wisdom* differs from, and will even block out *alternative wisdom* – how the popular wisdom and cultural values of the day tend to cloud and obscure God's wisdom and God's ways.

So often in our lives we make Plans and the new Season of the Fall, which follows the more relaxed and restful Summer Season, is a New Year where often we make plans. The Shepherd in the Gospel, and the Women who lost the coin, each had plans. Plans for their days, and for their life. Yet each encountered a moment that distributed their plans and resulted in loss. They responded though not with the anxiety which often follows a new season, but a serenity which seemed to encompass their life. This reminds us that we must keep all things in perspective..... **Hold your plans loosely but your purpose tightly**

The Shepherd knew what his purpose was and he held it tightly. I am sure he had plans to send all his sheep to a new field - but when he noticed one missing he knew his purpose was to lead them all, to care for them all. Sometimes in our life we must set aside what our plans are - a program, an undertaking, an adventure - for the one. The shepherd recalled the sheep whom He had with gratitude but He recalled His mission tightly.



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There are moments when we focus on the hurt of today (small bump) and not the bucket of blessings, when juggle the disappointment of the moment and not the blessing on the horizon. - We don't see it while He is working...but He is at work! Our moment is the “waiting room” is God’s occasion in the “operating room”. He simmers us (like the cooking of a crockpot seeking the best seasoning, not a microwave seeking the quickest result) into achieving His purpose, even if it does not fit with His plan. Ultimately He desires for us to return to Him, remain connected with Him and be embraced by His Will. Our impatience in the “waiting room” should be compensated by the solace and serenity that our name is on the List – we are a child of God...so He is at work in us and for us! What God does in you while is often more important than what you are waiting on.

The bottom line of these powerful parables is this: God rejoices when one repentant sinner returns. Statistically, that is not very interesting, we must admit. But for God, numbers do not seem to matter. Who knows whether the world is kept from destruction because of one, two, or three people who continued to pray when the rest of humanity had given up? From God’s perspective, one hidden act of repentance, one little gesture of selfless love, one moment of true forgiveness “...is all that is needed to bring God running from his throne to the returning son or daughter to fill the heavens with sounds of divine joy.” (Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*)

God rejoices, says Henri Nouwen, not because the problems of the world are solved; not because all human pain has come to an end; not because the churches are filled with dutiful and disciplined worshippers. God rejoices, ultimately, every time anyone of us recognizes that my *one act of forgiveness* “... is enough to bring God rushing from His throne to welcome me home”

This reminds us that we must keep all things in perspective..... **Hold your plans loosely but your purpose tightly**

*(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)

The fruit of silence is PRAYER. The fruit of prayer is FAITH. The fruit of faith is LOVE. The fruit of love is SERVICE. The fruit of service is PEACE. –Mother Teresa.”

- a) When have you discovered that God’s purpose and your plan can at times be different – what do you do?



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- b) Who has often helped you to discern such a difference, or what has helped you to move forward when this differences causes you to feel lost or anxious? Name some folks who have invested in you.
- c) How do you handle moments when you are asked to wait? Do you find such really disappointing you?
- d) Here is a tough but good challenge: share in you small group what you think God has invested in you? What have *you* invested in God? Share your thoughts.

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 all involved in Eucharistic Adoration, may this devotion continue to lead us in genuine peace and prayer and may many respond to the invitation to spend time with the Lord. 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.)

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



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- Have each person in your group take a piece of paper and write their name on it. Place the sheets in a basket, tin. Each person take one as the tin is passed along. That person is now your “prayer partner” for the year. Do little surprises for them this year, pray for them each day. *(if someone new arrives in your group next week don't forget to try and include them too)*
- 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.

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)

What do you look like, O God of compassion?

A shepherd who carries the lost sheep home; a woman who sweeps the whole house to find a single coin; a father mistreated who never gives up hope that the child who hurt him will come home to be loved. So in Jesus you have come searching for us. May we never forget how much we are loved. May we never refuse to love others as much.

*We ask this through Jesus, your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God for ever. Amen*

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