



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

TWENTY-FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

September 20th, 2015

Introduction to the Word:

This Lord's Day Weekend we continue our four week Message Series called "A Way Forward". Any journey, long or short, is just a series of steps which we take seeking to find a way forward. Faith, as is often said, is a journey and it all comes down to simple steps moving us in His direction. We think there are basically four steps that the Bible teaches us to take toward greater maturity in our Catholic faith. To kick off the 2015-2016 year we're offering an all-new series taking a fresh look at those steps as we seek to discern *A Way Forward*. It's all about doing what disciples do and, in the process, finding our way to more successful living

Last week we discerned that we must be "of God". That this is essential to our way forward. To know that we belong to Him, that we accomplish what we do with His inspiration and that we must be people who are firmly rooted not solely in our religious tradition, but also our ability to relate to the person of Jesus.

This week our readings reflect the fact that often we tend to be much more interested in who are the *most successful*, the *richest*, the most *glamorous*. In a culture rich in examples of selfish ambition and jealousy, *righteousness* is not a quality to be prized. While we expect people to be honest, we are more apt to applaud the clever, those who know how to get ahead. Yet, we are reminded today that *righteousness* is a pillar of the reign of God, The righteous ones strive to be *people of peace*, to be willing to take *the last place*, to be *servants*

St. James, the author of our 2nd Readings, locates the center of the conflict as being seated in our passions—the spirit of *coveting*, of *envy* and of *aggression*. The fruits of righteousness, he tells us, can only be sown in peace. But to have peace we have to deliberately cultivate it. Peace, James insists, is more than the absence of war. Today's challenge highlighted in the readings is that we have to actively *wage* peace, *promote* it, and base our critical decisions on the common good as we make our Way Forward.

Warm-Up: You are invited to respond to one more of the following questions:

- i) How do you think most people generally, describe greatness?
- ii) Who do you personally consider to be one or two of the "great" people of our time?
- iii) How do you think Jesus would measure "greatness?" Share your thoughts.

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Leader: "The one who wishes to be first, shall be the last of all."



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Lord Jesus, You suffered at the hands of the unjust, **Lord, have mercy.**
Christ Jesus, You give wisdom to those who live in peace, **Christ, have mercy.**
Lord Jesus, You are Lord of all, but you came as servant to all, **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 (Wisdom 2:12, 17–20)

The godless say, “Let us lie in wait for the righteous one, who makes life inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; who reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training. “Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous one is God’s child, God will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. “Let us test him with insult and torture, so that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected.”

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

SECOND READING (James 3:16–4:3)

Beloved: Where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.

Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you?

You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts.

You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures.

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

GOSPEL (Mark 9:30–37)

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

After leaving the mountain Jesus and his disciples went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, “The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after



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being killed, he will rise again.” But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him. Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house Jesus asked them, “What were you arguing about on the way?” But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. Jesus sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.” Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.” 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:

[At this point please use the video Message for this series – Week # 2](#)

[Your group may wish to listen again to the Audio of the Lord’s Day Message](#)

It is all so human. We want success, of course, but the problem lies in the ways in which we define success. For us, as with the first disciples, there is no doubt that Jesus presents a challenge which keeps redefining our ideas of greatness and success. Jesus’ approach presumes a kind of peacemaking which is foreign to most of us—a peacemaking out of which justice is able to grow, but such peace does not come easily or without great effort. The subsequent paragraph, which is a favourite theme of the Gospel, makes it clear that in Jesus’ mind greatness does not consist in *dominating* others but in *ministering* to others, in being a *servant* to others.

Mark then tells how Jesus uses a visual aid to make His point, as He invites a child into their midst, puts His arms around him, and says “*Whoever receives me, receives not me but the one who sent me* (Mark 9:37).” At first this sounds to us like a harmless invitation; a cute child is always appealing. But in that society the culture was one of shame and honour, and a child had no legal status or honour, nor rights. Being “servant of all” means being a servant of the *least*, which this child was a very obvious example. So when one serves the *least* “in Jesus’ name,” then one is acting explicitly as his disciple, and as one who is also recognizing and acting out of relationship with Jesus. Jesus then turns his disciples’ expectations, and our own, upside down: “*The greatest becomes the least; the first becomes the last.*” It is in receiving society’s most vulnerable that we receive Jesus himself; *and in receiving him, we receive God.*

In this action, Jesus makes the message even clearer on the Way Forward, not only is He saying, as He did last week, “Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.” But now also the element of service and humility arrive at our pathway. Thus, for us the next step on the Way Forward is not only to Be Of God, but that **WE MUST KNOW WHO WE ARE AND THEREFORE WE WILL KNOW WHAT TO DO?**



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See the Disciples knew who Christ was - “the Son of the Living God” - remember Peter last week! The Disciples understood what He was to do - “die and rise again” - they got that! They said to themselves - we will accept this and Be of God, but they forget that had been commissioned - to do the same in His name! They did not take the time to discern what it meant in relation to their friendship with Christ - that can happen to us on our way forward...we can say.... I am of God and I know He is important, His Son died for me, the Holy Spirit guides me. But when it comes then to applying it to my life and how I live day to day - I am of God - is that not enough? That attitude and question is what made the Disciples argue about who was “the greatest”...who was “more of God”. Instead they should have focussed on who was seeking to see their relationship “of God” to being in the service of the least, the last and the lost. We are made for it - we are co missioned for it, this is part of who we are. We are not who the world say we are, we are commissioned by Christ to go forth in service – in His name. The only way we know who we are is by who He is – and that comes through service especially to the least, the last and the lost.

The Message this week – Are you of Serving? When we serve we grow.....are you growing? Are you serving? Are you on your way forward - of God and co missioned to serve!

*(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)

(Mark 9:33) “*But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.*” Name some unlikely people who have shown you the face of Christ. What did you learn from them?

Look deeply at the questions in the video

- Who are you?
- What do you do in relation to who you are?
- Who are the least, the last and the lost that you are called to serve.
- What struck you about the messages (audio, video and written) today?

Closing Prayer (15-20 minutes)

(This time is reserved for quiet prayer as well as for an action-response to the communal reflections. The intent is to “outreach” to the larger community.)

GROUP PRAYER COMMITMENT

- Consider this week an act of kindness in the name of your prayer partner, not toward them, but toward someone the world may call the least, the last and the lost – but do it in the name of your prayer partner.



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- Continue to 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.

Group Action:

- Take a look at last week’s question “*Who do you say that I am?* How did you find yourself addressing your relationship with Jesus? How did this help you on the way?”

Looking for More:

Consider the following background and resources as follow ups for your group, or individually

- [Tuesday Night Together](#) begins on October 6th. The title is “Me, Myselfie and I”. It is about discovering our life meaning as we seek to discover that we are here to Love God, Belong to Family, Serve, Go and Tell Others. [Sign up today](#)
- ***Bible Study: A Biblical Walk Through the Mass:*** Do you understand the meaning behind the parts of the Mass? Dr. Edward Sri will explore the roots of the words and gestures we experience at Mass and explains their profound significance in this video-based Bible Study. Dates soon.
- *Looking for a good book?:* Archbishop Charles Chaput wrote a book “Living the Catholic Faith: Rediscovering the Basics. Written in 2001, it is still very much in mode with the questions and needed answers of today.

Let us pray - (together)

With hands and hearts united in gratitude for God’s favors on us today, we pray that all those in our influence be moved to be open to your Word and your Spirit, while we pray united as one,

OUR FATHER...

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