



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

TWENTY-SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
September 25, 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 "*crookpot 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!

Warm-Up:

So many of our struggles in life are due to relationships. What do you find helps when a relationship is hurting? What ways can you share which you have found which bring healing when an important relationship is hurting?

CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

The Lord is our source of model of compassion in a world in so much need of compassion.



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Lord Jesus, forgive us for the times we have failed to show charity and compassion to our brothers and sisters

Lord, have mercy

Christ Jesus, help us to open our ears, minds and hearts to listen to the needs of our brothers and sisters

Christ, have mercy

Lord Jesus, give us the wisdom and courage to respond in compassion to our brothers and sisters in need

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: (Amos 6:1a, 4-7)

Thus says the Lord, the God of hosts: Woe to the complacent in Zion! Lying upon beds of ivory, stretched comfortably on their couches, they eat lambs taken from the flock, and calves from the stall! Improvising to the music of the harp, like David, they devise their own accompaniment. They drink wine from bowls and anoint themselves with the best oils; yet they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph! Therefore, now they shall be the first to go into exile, and their wonton revelry shall be done away with. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING: (1 Timothy 6:11-16)

But you, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold of eternal life, to which you were called when you made the noble confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you before God, who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus, who gave testimony under Pontius Pilate for the noble confession, to keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ that the blessed and only ruler will make manifest at the proper time, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, and whom no human being has seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal power. Amen.

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

GOSPEL: (Luke 16:19-31)

Jesus said to the Pharisees: "There was a rich man who dressed in purple garments and fine linen and dined sumptuously each day. And lying at his door was a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, who would gladly have eaten his fill of the scraps that fell from the rich man's table.



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Dogs even used to come and lick his sores. When the poor man died, he was carried away by angels to the bosom of Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, and from the netherworld, where he was in torment, he raised his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he cried out, "Father Abraham, have pity on me. Send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am suffering torment in these flames." Abraham replied, "My child, remember that you received what was good during your lifetime while Lazarus likewise received what was bad; but now he is comforted here, whereas you are tormented. Moreover, between us and you a great chasm is established to prevent anyone from crossing who might wish to go from our side to yours or from your side to ours." He said, "Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they too come to this place of torment." But Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them listen to them." He said, "Oh, no, father Abraham, but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." Then Abraham said, "If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead."

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](#)

All of us have found ourselves in moments where our world falls apart. We find ourselves face down and confused:

- a relationship has been broken
- a friendship is in question
- there is a loss of a child or a parent or illness of a loved one or friend
- something that we relied on fell through
- our job is shaky, our grades are poor,
- a decision we made has caught up on us

In these moments we feel as if we can not get up, but yet the Lord says to us – finish the race. St. Paul, in his Letter to Timothy, is calling all the baptized to live fully the life that God asks of us, and blesses us to fulfill in His name. What we are called to embrace is definitely not what we see in the First Reading. There are no hints of righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience and gentleness in that time and place. St. Paul makes it very clear that the inheritance we have received from Jesus Christ is to bear witness to him as King and Lord. This challenge continues today, to embrace a life that bears witness to the gospel. This is what it means to be a Christian.



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Jesus has risen from the dead. He has been revealed to us as the Son of God, but still we do not always listen to him. We do not always open ourselves to his saving grace and allow ourselves to be transformed. The rich man was a child of Abraham, united to God through the blood of the lamb. Yet he was closed to the true message of the Law (Moses) and Prophets, lacking in charity and faithfulness to God. We too, as children of God, are united to God through the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. Yet, in our human condition, we sometimes fail to reflect that charity and faithfulness to God. We fail to bear witness to Christ. Once again, the theme of compassion speaks to me in a special way through this gospel. The rich man was oblivious to anyone or anything outside of his immediate family and his business. Lazarus was a 'nobody' to him, not even recognizing his plight and how easily he could have alleviated his suffering. His heart was hardened to the needs of others, even those who lingered outside his property. He could have easily tripped over Lazarus when leaving his house, but he was blind to Lazarus. Like in the gospel of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46) Jesus is calling us to be conscious and compassionate to the needs of others. The 'goats', like the rich man, were blind to the needs of others, and showed no compassion. If we truly listen to he who has "risen from the dead" our lives will be marked with exceptional charity, and sincere compassion. The words of Jesus leave no doubt that here and now is the time to make a change. We cannot plead 'after the fact' and think we can cross that chasm to eternal life. We cannot change from a goat to a lamb just by wishing it.

Lazarus was without and on the outside - but in fact he had a lot more than he thought and was closer to being "in". He may have fallen, but he learned from the Fall, grew because of the Fall, became purified in his intentions from the fall.

You're going to go through tough times - that's life. But I say, 'Nothing happens to you, it happens for you.

- God is at work in the things we can't understand
- God is at work in the conversations that are difficult
- God is at work in the relationships he has brought together
- God is at work as you grow and those you love grow.

To humble oneself does not only mean lowliness and misery, but also a willing acceptance of sometimes being without as an act of service. But in those moments we take comfort as Lazarus did - this is not where we want to be - the more and the better is yet to come.

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

*(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)



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St. Paul presents us with the goal to strive for in our life with Christ.

- a) How do we identify with righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, gentleness?
- b) Are we aware of being "called" to eternal life?
- c) As Jesus gave testimony, how do we give testimony?

The rich man had been blessed, and (according to appearances) Lazarus had been forsaken.

- a) What was the regret of the rich man as he was in torment?
- b) How could compassion have been expressed by the rich man during his life?
- c) What words would you have to the five brothers?

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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- 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)

God of compassion and mercy, hear our prayers as we cry out to you.

Save us from the fate of the rich man.

Unite us in poverty of spirit with Lazarus, so that we too might share in eternal life with you.

Give us gratitude for what we have, good judgment in what we do,
and humility in seeking what you want of us.

We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, the Lord of compassion,
who suffered with those who were sick, possessed, poor, and mourning,
who reached out and touched all in need. Amen.

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