



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

**SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

**January 15th, 2017**



**Introduction to the Word:**

We are now in a period of Ordinary Time—an *in-between-time*. This is a time when the Gospel's focus shifts from the *life of Jesus*, to the kind of life expected of *His disciples*. It seems that God expects much more of us than we expect of ourselves, as we will learn in today's readings.

As we discover this together we are in the second week of our Message Series. Last week we learned that for all us there is often baggage in life which comes in forms of hurdles, hurts and heresies. We were encouraged to not covet the baggage of this world, but to seek the Light – the Star – follow it – and drop the baggage. This week the invitation made to Isaiah in the first reading, and the event in the Gospel with John ask us not only are we willing to do so, but why we should.

**Warm-Up:**

Talk about how your experience of receiving an invitation – what do you do when such arrives...how do you feel, what do you go and check and what means do you use to decide if you will attend.

**CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)**

**Lord Jesus**, you came to bring Your love to people of every race and nation, **Lord, have mercy.**

**Christ Jesus**, you came to love the fragile and the forgotten, **Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord Jesus**, you came that all may know you, and be one in you, **Lord, have mercy.**

**Let us pray together our Heart to Home Prayer:**

*God Our Heavenly Father, we long to make our thoughts your thoughts,*



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*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** (Isaiah 49:3, 5–6)

The Lord said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified.” And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honoured in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength. He says, “It is too small a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light *to the nations*, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### **SECOND READING** (1 Corinthians 1:1–3)

From Paul, called to be an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and from our brother Sosthenes. To the Church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus.* The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### **GOSPEL** (John 1:29–34)

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

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel.” And John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God.” 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](#)



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The invitation made to Isaiah in the first reading, and the event in the Gospel with John, are like the unnerving moment of the shocking event of our own BAPTISM. Service or ministry for us is the means for us to become *the sacrament of Jesus Christ*. In our service to one another, in our real love for one another, we express the FAITH which Jesus implanted in us at our Baptism. We are the visible SIGN of evangelization. We have this one only sign: a loving community. We are the servants and priestly people in whom God has chosen to be glorified.

Our first reading for this Sunday from the prophet Isaiah is one of four passages in Isaiah that are referred to as a “Servant song”. They describe the identity and mission of God’s people, which the Church has traditionally seen as being most perfectly lived out in the person of Jesus. He is the ideal servant of the Lord who came not to be served but to serve. He was honoured in God’s eyes as God’s beloved Son at His baptism and transfiguration. His mission was not only to save the people of Israel, but also to be a light to the nations (the entire world). God the Father empowered (strengthened) him for His mission by sending down the Holy Spirit upon him. He has been glorified by the Father in His resurrection and ascension. He is the one who baptizes us with the Holy Spirit and shares His identity and mission with us.

When we bear the name of *Jesus, as in baptism*, we actually are *commissioned* to do the same work He did, which was to be *a light to the world*. Being a *servant of the Lord* sounds somewhat small and humble but being *"a light to all the people of the world"* sounds simply impossible. However, despite all of this, if we *really listen* to this Sunday's Word with faith and trust, God has promised that we will receive the necessary power and grace to be such a light. In today's Readings, for example, we will hear His promise to make *lights* of us all. All God asks of us, surprising as it is, is the same He asked of His own Son: to surrender ourselves to God’s will in order that God may empower us with His own Spirit and related gifts.

The Gospel reading for the day captures what has become the Christian tradition’s favourite icon of John the Baptist: the rugged ascetic standing in clear view of all, pointing **away** from himself towards Jesus. *Follow him; He is the way to salvation; He is the one we have all been awaiting*. God’s gift to us in Christ is also a call to discipleship. Salvation does not come by some magic trick or stroke of luck but by the *transformation* of human lives and of human society. If one should ask how to find the way to such transformation, Scripture answers in the Baptist’s words, *“This is God’s Chosen One. Follow Him.”*

But in each of our lives we know that there things which prevent or prohibit such action. As we discerned last week we call that baggage. This baggage of life comes often in forms of hurdles, hurts and heresies. So how do we “drop the baggage” because to not do so often makes us feel like we are trapped – we know we want out and want freedom to be that Disciple of Jesus and to proclaim and even finish His work – but we find ourselves unable. This is why the Prophet Isaiah gives us the clue on how to “release and let go” of the baggage.

He tell us that we were created in the image of God – as God’s child, But that the dents of life – hurdles, hurts, heresies – have deformed us. So He implores us to be “reshaped” according to the ways of the Lord – here is how:



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### Find our Rootedness in Christ

That the rock solid foundation of our life, and the only one we seek to please with our lives, be God. That we not reshape ourselves, our values or belief to please others. To do this we have a well - oiled soul - everything - mind, will, public life, private life – it must be in harmony with God’s will for us. Rootedness in Christ is alignment to Christ in all things. Sunday life and our Weekday life must equal....this is why honour the Lord’s Day every week - crucial! It becomes “food for the journey” and encouragement for the soul as we walk into a new week.

### That we who we are before the Lord – imperfect

John the Baptist in the Gospel had done an amazing thing: he had just baptised the Messiah. But he is not sitting there feeling great about himself - nope - he is aware he is not worthy of what just happened to him - but humbled by it – because what he proclaimed and who he was were equal! Therefore he lived by the philosophy “ I am who I am before the Lord and nothing more”.

Soren Kierkegaard a danish Danish philosopher, theologian, poet, said once “ **a saint is someone whose life is about one thing – belonging to Christ**” Does your mind, will, passion, energy belong to Christ - *is there a harmony, a symphony with all that you are about.* Do you sing the same songs on Sunday that you sing on Monday or do you put away what we do here til next week?

### That our life is not our own.....

St John of the Cross often use to speak about our lives at times being so separated in who we are before God and who we are every other day of the week that we put our lives in an “interior wine cellar” pulling our prayer life, our spiritual life out when we need it and the rest of the time it simply ages. In our 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading - St Paul to Corthinians says that in a certain way when he invites us to know that if we are called to be saints (which we all are) then it is for others - in the service of others. If our focus is on “just one more”, then we find ourselves not trapped by baggage, but encouraged by opportunity to bring another to know God by the example of the consistency of our life.

The high point of this is Mercy and it is always found in our encounter with Christ in the Eucharist...here...making Sunday Matter...is crucial! This means dropping our stuff and leave it for the Lord – seek not to focus on our lives but instead on “just one more soul” that we work on toward coming to the Lord. God does the rest in their life and ours if we trust Him. This requires us to “drop” the baggage and hold on to Christ.

Do you drop your stuff before you pray?



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Do you desire to be rooted in the Lord - so you drop the worries of life?  
Do you acknowledge your sinfulness - so you can be molded in prayer to Him?  
Do you seek to be free from the feeling trapped in what ever prison you might be in - anxiety  
worry, fear, anger - so you can strive to do one more for the Lord?

Is there something holding you back from pursuing your dreams or accomplishing whatever  
might make life better? What unnecessary baggage do you carry? Are you burdened, for  
example, with guilt and self-reprisals over past mistakes and lost opportunities, as if they still  
had a life of their own? Find the faith to let Jesus take them away.

Lay down your burdens and move on. In the name of Jesus who takes away the sins of the world,  
it is all right to let it go. Unburdened, not trapped but rather free - you become able to take  
advantage of all the future has to offer.

May we pray that God will continue lead us to Him and as we drop what weights us – the  
baggage - maybe it help us to be saints for that is the goal that counts.

*(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)

Do you drop your stuff before you pray?  
Do you desire to be rooted in the Lord - so you drop the worries of life?  
Do you acknowledge your sinfulness - so you can be molded in prayer to Him?  
Do you seek to be free from the feeling trapped in what ever prison you might be in - anxiety  
worry, fear, anger - so you can strive to do one more for the Lord?

(Isaiah) “...*I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of  
the earth.*”

- a) These words of Isaiah helped to shape Jesus’ awareness of His own identity and mission as  
He identifies Himself as “the light of the world” (Jn.9:5). How have you experienced the  
light of Jesus shining in and through your life?
- b) Jesus has taken these words of Isaiah (“*I will give you as a light to the nations*”) and also  
applied them to you and to me as His chosen disciples. Have you considered these words as  
addressed to you personally? A little? A lot? Not at all? Comment.
- c) If you really choose to take these words seriously (i.e. Jesus’ call for you to be “*a light to the  
nations*”), what or where might be a good place to start?



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Intercessions:

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

For our Holy Father, the Bishops, our Pastor, and all the Pastors of the Church, may the Lord give them the graces they require as they lead God's people. We pray to the Lord.

That those suffering from famine may receive the food and assistance they need to grow in health and strength. Let us pray also for our parish mission work in Haiti, Kenya and for persecuted Christians in the Middle East especially our parish mission in the Holy Land. We pray to the Lord.

That the dignity of all human life, from the moment of conception until natural death, be respected and that we promote respect for all of God's creation. We pray to the Lord.

That young people, especially those enrolling for the Sacrament of Confirmation, may turn to Christ, the gentle and loving Shepherd, and find in Him the meaning and purpose of their lives. We pray to the Lord.

For loved one and family members who are away from the practice of the faith or who wandered from the church and carry heavy baggage, that they may return to God and His Church and find freedom. We pray to the Lord.

For our loved ones who have died, and for all the intentions recorded in the 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:**

**GROUP PRAYER COMMITMENT**

Please consider offering a **Holy Hour in our Adoration Chapel** – either as a group or individually – for the intentions of the parish common good and for the objectives of our pastoral priorities. Remember also our Pastor, our Pastoral Team.

**GROUP ACTION:**



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- ✓ Our parish is blessed with two young men discerning the Call of Priesthood. Would your group consider writing a letter of encouragement to either Hayden or Robin – see Father Freitas for address and details.
- ✓ St Patrick Parish in downtown Hamilton offers a food kitchen and outreach for 150 people a day, seven days a week. They have reached out to us as a dynamic parish in our Diocese asking for a donations of the following – would your small group consider collecting some of these items and donating them as we seek to help the poor and disadvantaged in Hamilton. Collect and donate cans of coffee, sugar, bottled water, pop or chocolate bars... It might sound a bit “unhealthy” menu, but precisely that’s what our patrons need as many of them deal with many different forms of addiction and mental health issues. These can be placed in the Adoration Chapel Hallway – mark them “Hamilton.”
- ✓ How many of the **seven** gifts (Isaiah 11:1-03; Catechism #1831) of the Spirit and the **nine** fruits of the Spirit (Catechism #1832) can your group recall? Decide as a group on which ones you will focus on living out in a special way this coming week.

### **Let us pray** (together)

God of all nations, in Christ, the paschal lamb and light of the world,  
you have formed a covenant people, gathering together from every time  
and place all who call on the name of the Lord Jesus. Confirm in us the grace of our baptism,  
that the Spirit may descend afresh upon each of us; remain with us to transform every aspect of  
our lives into a living and joyful proclamation of the gospel. We ask this  
through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, one with the Spirit, one God forever. Amen.

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