



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

**EPIPHANY OF THE LORD**

**January 8, 2017**



**Introduction to the Word:**

Whenever we are hurt, we feel as if someone owes us something. We can hold onto our hurts for a long time, we can hold onto our hurts for a lifetime. Our hurt can slow us down and it can mess us up. It can even damage other relationships moving forward. As we begin a New Year together, we will look at the importance of forgiving others and how it helps us even more than the person who hurt us. More than anything, it helps us grow like Christ, but down the baggage and become His light to others.

Today we celebrate that we have discovered the star: we have found Jesus Christ, whose birth we celebrate. However, we not only celebrate that he was born in time, but that he is born anew in us as we celebrate this Christmas season, and this Epiphany, this manifestation that Jesus is the “Light of the World”.

**Warm-Up:**

Reflect on your life experience: Which ‘star’ (hopes, dreams, values, virtues) have you been searching for? Which ‘star’ have you discovered? Which ‘star’ are you following? What might be some blocks to that “star” in your journey?

**CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)**

**Lord Jesus**, you are the light in the darkness that we encounter around us, **Lord, have mercy.**  
**Christ Jesus**, you enlighten us, and save us, **Christ, have mercy.**  
**Lord Jesus**, you are the light in the darkness that we encounter within us. **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*



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

*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 60:1–6)

Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you!  
For darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### **SECOND READING** (Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5–6)

Brothers and Sisters: Surely, you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation. In former generations, this mystery was not made known to humanity as it has now been revealed to his holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### **GOSPEL** (Matthew 2:1–12)

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

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage."

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priest and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the Prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"



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

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, “Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.”

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. 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](#)

On this Feast of the Epiphany, we celebrate that we are the **people of the light**. We have sought the star, we have discovered the star, and we have followed the star (without the help of Google Maps!). Jesus is the light of our life, and we wish to be radiant with his life, sharing his light – his love and his truth – with others. Jesus said in Matt 5:14 “You are the light of the world!” Being the light of Christ, here and now, is done each and every day, in ordinary ways that reflect the extra-ordinary power and grace of God. We bring light when we show unconditional, generous, and merciful love to others. Each day we have opportunities to ‘enlighten’ others with that love and truth. When we find others in darkness, we share with them the truth of God’s love and mercy and help them – through the light of faith – to overcome darkness, fear, doubt, uncertainty, and to find the light of God’s truth.

But in each of our lives we know that there things which prevent or prohibit such light – we call that baggage. This baggage of life comes often in forms of hurdles, hurts and heresies. Let us take a look at all three briefly as we spend the next month discussing how to drop the baggage.

First, the hurdles. St Philip Neri once remarked “Heaven is Heaven and Earth is not.” Our eternal focus and destiny is not here, it is with the Lord. So this life, until by His grace we get there, will be filled with hurdles. How we handle those hurdles, deal with those hurdles makes all the difference. In this we know that people are imperfect (even priests), that the events of life don’t always run smoothly, that mistakes and even “bad things” do happen, the families disagree and even drift – all of this can be heavy baggage.



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

Yet if we hold on that baggage, with mandates then we are losing the opportunity to grab hold instead of Mercy. Mercy lets is forgive often, try again regularly, get up when we fall, seek help, find balance and adopt peace. Are you praying for these?

Another great piece of baggage in our life is hurts or what I called often, “the nicks” of life. We nick ourselves, and others can nick us, often in word, action or deed. Many of the times these are in error, and we can either keep “nicking” by reliving the hurt or we can seek instead the light of the Lord which often comes in letting go and moving on. Is there anything you are constantly holding on to and letting “nick you” some more?

Thirdly, we often handle the baggage of “heresies”. These are the half truth or the lies of life. They often are appealing, look good, seem easy and even manageable, but that small inner voice says they are wrong. The best way to drop this baggage is to seek the light of the Lord by seeing if it is for His name.

The Magi kept their eye on the star, avoided Herod, and the easy way, because they wanted to honour His Name – they wanted to meet Christ. Stay away from Half Truth and embrace and check for His name – it will get you the point of meeting Christ. Don’t covet the baggage of this world, seek the Light – the Start – follow it – and drop the baggage.

*(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)

(Matthew 2:11). “...they knelt down and paid him homage.”

- a) When we reflect on our lives, we may recognize that we **sought the wrong star**. Can you relate to that? What were we seeking anyway?
- b) When we reflect on our lives, we may recognize that we **discovered the wrong star**. Can you relate to that? How long did it take you to realize it was the wrong star?
- c) When we reflect on our lives, we may recognize that we have **followed the right star**. Do we make the Lord the first priority of our life and, as the Magi did, “kneel down and worship the Lord?”

### Intercessions:

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

For the wisdom to recognize the signs of Christ’s presence in our world today and the humility to approach God in prayer with a spirit of wonder and awe. We pray to the Lord.

For our parish community, may we continue to be a Family of Faith which is connected to our past, committed to our future and who confidently walks with the Lord in faith and trust each day. We pray to the Lord.



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

For those who are searching to know God in their lives: may the peace of this holy season lead them to worship Christ, the Saviour of humanity. We pray to the Lord.

For the sick and suffering members of our parish and our families: May they experience comfort and peace. We pray to the Lord.

For all who have died and await the kingdom, and for 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:**

This week, reflect on your sharing in that light (and life) of Jesus Christ, and how you can be light for others. Each evening, during your examination of conscience, review your day and recognize the times that **you were light for others** – by your words and actions. You might be surprised at some of the occasions – when you least expected or were not prepared – when the light of Christ shone through you. In those moments, you were an instrument of God, and proclaimed Jesus Christ to be your King.

**Let us pray** (together)

*Go before us with heavenly light, O Lord  
always and everywhere,  
that we may perceive with clear sight  
and revere with true affection  
the mystery in which you have willed us to participate  
through Christ our Lord.  
Amen*



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

**Heart to Home**, copyright © 2017 by Father F. Freitas. It is **copyrighted and cannot be published without permission of the author**. The Scripture version used in this commentary is the New Revised Standard Version