



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

**THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

**January 22, 2017**



**Introduction to the Word:**

A few weeks ago we celebrated a festive season and many of us made New Year resolutions. Every Christmas we long for and pray for peace—peace on earth and peace in our communities. And regularly we renew our hopes, our intentions and start over again as we experience the weaknesses of the human condition. Humans long to belong, we hunger for harmony, and yet we are funny creatures, as at times we avoid divisions and the pain they may present. Fear, mistrust, old hurts, or alienation may discourage us from addressing disunity. We have been calling that the Baggage of Life. Let's review where our series has led us so far

Week number one we saw 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. Week number two our call was to recall that sometimes we can feel trapped and that there can be “prisons” of our own creation and choosing which bind us. So we are called to release and let go” of the baggage by allowing ourselves to be reshaped by God and know His vision for us which give us ultimate freedom.

**Warm-Up:**

In the movie Rogue One, there is a scene in which the Jedi warrior is in prison and he replies to his cell mate *“there is more than one sort of prison to be trapped in, and I feel like you carry yours with you.”* Discuss what this means and how it applies to our journey as Disciples.

**CALL TO PRAYER (5 MINUTES)**

**Lord Jesus, you announce the presence of the Kingdom of God, Lord, have mercy.**



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**Christ Jesus**, you are calling all your disciples daily to follow you, **Christ, have mercy.**

**Lord Jesus**, you love us and invite us by your Word and Spirit, **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** (Isaiah 9:1–4)

There will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time the Lord brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder. For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### **SECOND READING** (1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17–18)

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

#### **GOSPEL** (Matthew 4:12–23)

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

When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what



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had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.’ From that time Jesus began to proclaim, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.” Immediately they left their nets and followed him. As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him. Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

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](#)

[Consider this article from our Parish Blog on Prayer as further reflection material](#)

The prophetic text of Isaiah serves not only to offer hope and freedom to his people from their burdens and oppression, but also speaks to us for our challenges. The prophet’s voice beckons to be heard *today* with the same passion as long ago. Isaiah’s words of invitation are *today’s words*, to ‘see a great light’ bringing hope and renewal of our spirit.

Paul confronts the disunity in the Corinthian community. Rivalries and individual opinions are detracting from the gospel and Paul stresses the focus is not to be on himself or other ‘heroes’ but on the message of the Cross. The suffering, dying and resurrection of Christ is the saving power of God. The Paschal Mystery is the revelation of God’s love.

Today’s gospel is about Jesus beginning His mission, calling His first disciples, and beginning to travel from place to place, to proclaim that the kingdom of God was close at hand. As it happened, the prophet had foretold that this would come about. But rather than being influenced by the prophets, I think Jesus was led by the Spirit, and that led Him into the fulfilling of all the prophecies: “The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who lived in the land where death cast its shadow, a light has shone.” Jesus would later refer to himself as the light of the world; and, in commissioning his apostles, he would tell them that they, now, were to be a light to the world.

At this time of year one of the most common “complaints” is the lack of sunshine (light). It cause at times a feeling of gloom. This gloom puts us at times in a fog – emotionally, relationally and



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even spiritually. We can all become “fog people” but there can also be people in our life that we “right off” as fog people. Often this happens because we have not let go of the hurts, hurdles or heresies in our life which can make us judge others, or even dismiss ourselves.

This is why it is so vital that we remember a basic biblical fact - **God has a way of making the most wonderful from the least expected.** This is so clearly seen in the fact that the leaders of the people dismissed a “Crucified criminal” when He is the Son of God. It’s the logic of scripture.... light can come from foggy darkness. Grace comes from the most unexpected corners.

It is interesting the kinds of people Jesus chose to be apostles: a waffling fishermen, unpopular tax collectors, wimpy brothers who had their mother beg their case to Jesus. They were all flawed in some way but Jesus called them for the persons He knew they would grow into and become. And we know from their life stories that there was one primary reason for the success of Jesus’ followers: they were convinced from the outset that they were always in the fine company of God’s personal presence and energized by His Own Spirit. And we too can respond to the offer of Jesus and avail ourselves of all that He gained for us, as the Spirit within us makes that possible.

The world teaches something different – advertising: success builds on success, and go getters don’t have weakness or failure, yet every single saint - and remember we want to be one - focuses on the centrality of the cross - the cross is the key to knowing and loving God. This is why the deepest experience of God comes through suffering, failure and even loss

St John of the Cross was asked by his spiritual direction what do you want of your life - “I want to be forgotten.” What was he saying? Well that he wanted to not be known for what he did - but what Christ did in him? He didn’t want his own light to shine - but God’s to shine in the fog of his life

What right now in your life is foggy?

- what does not make sense for you right now?
- what right now is the baggage which is making things heavy?
- what right now is prison which is trapping you?

Don’t wallow in - don’t stay in that fog - but consider it might be the place where light will dawn and say Lord let me be forgotten (what I want) and let your light lead me. Where is God working where you feel vulnerable, alone, lost - to say to that foggy reality.... I will drop the baggage. I will step out of the cell. I will choose to say Lord, let me see your light

St Thérèse of Lisieux was so transformed by the light of Christ in the moments of foggy darkness in her life that she could write... “I feel the need and the desire of carrying out the most heroic of deeds for You, O Jesus...” (from her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*)



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What even in your foggy moment is God calling you to drop in order to carry for Him the deeds which will make you whom He is calling you to be?

*(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)

1. (Matthew) “He said to them, “*Come follow me and I will make you fishers of people.*”  
The disciples were able to hear and follow the Spirit. To be attentive presumes a relationship with Jesus, and as prayer is the basis to enrich this, it is important to establish space and a place for this time out. What insights or discoveries in regard to your Christian faith have you come to better appreciate in recent years?
2. What right now in your life is foggy? What does not make sense for you right now? What right now is the baggage which is making things heavy? What right now is prison which is trapping you? How can you let go?
3. What even in your foggy moment is God calling you to drop in order to carry for Him the deeds which will make you whom He is calling you to be?

### 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.



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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:**

- ✓ 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.”
- ✓ Looking back over your week (or ahead to the coming week), was there (or will there be) an invitation or challenge for you to be Jesus’ disciple? How can you help each other in your walk of faith?

**Let us pray** (together)

*O God, You have established your church,  
on the faith of the apostles and on the example of their response.  
Let your light shine , in splendour upon our community  
to dispel the shadows of division and the gloom of discord. United in the bond of your love,  
may **we become a radiant light** of salvation and hope for all who journey from darkness  
toward the light of your new day. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,  
your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,*



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*one God for ever. Amen.*

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