

St. John the Evangelist Church

903 Giffard Street, Whitby, ON L1N 2S3

Rectory Office: Ph: 905-668-3676

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*Father, You revealed Your Son to the nations
by the guidance of a star. Lead us to
Your Glory in Heaven by the Light of Faith.*

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Message from the Pastor

Peace to all of you!

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. This feast underlines the manifestation of Christ as Savior of all the nations. The First Reading, from the Book of the prophet Isaiah, encourages the people of Israel to trust in God's promise. After a long and painful exile in Babylon, they have gone back to Jerusalem. However, the city is still in ruins and people seem lost and discouraged. Addressing this situation, God assures them that He will come to dwell in His city and that the light of His glory will bring hope and joy into their daily lives. Seeing this, other nations will come to Jerusalem drawn by this resplendent glory of the Lord. We all go through moments of discouragement and darkness, but God comes to our rescue with the brilliant light of His mercy so that in Him we may find peace and consolation. The Second Reading, from the Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians, offers us the exhortation from the apostle in which he explains that God's mystery of salvation and redemption has become available now for all peoples. With Christ's incarnation, God's invitation to salvation is offered to every single person on earth and not just to the Jewish people. The will of God is that all of us can experience His love and mercy. Let us be grateful because we can also participate in the salvation that Christ has won for us. The Gospel, from St. Matthew, offers us the account of the visit of the Wise Men to Bethlehem. They came from Babylon and Persia. They studied the stars, and they were expecting the birth of a very powerful king. In the Book of Numbers there was foretold the birth of a great king through the sign of a rising star that will shine greatly. They saw the star when the baby Jesus was born. They were guided to Bethlehem, to the manger. Seeing Jesus as a baby, they recognised in Him the Savior and they offer Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Gold to symbolize that He is the King of the Universe, frankincense which means that He is God and myrrh to symbolize that He will die on the Cross and be buried. We are all called to adore Jesus as the Savior sent to us to give us Eternal Life. Let us follow the star of Bethlehem, which represent God's mercy for us and that leads us to encounter Jesus in the daily events of our lives!

Fr. Francisco Fernandez, Your servant and your Pastor

Pope Francis' Homily on the Epiphany of our Lord (January 6, 2022)

Today, the Solemnity of the Epiphany, the Gospel speaks to us about the Magi who, arriving in Bethlehem, open their treasures and offer gold, incense and myrrh to Jesus (cf. Mt 2:11). These wise men from the East are famous because of the gifts they offered. Considering their story, however, we could say that, above all, they receive three gifts. They received three gifts, three precious gifts that regard us as well. They give gold, incense, and myrrh, but what are the three gifts they received?

The first gift is the gift of the call. The Magi were not alerted because they had read the Scriptures or because they had seen a vision of angels, but they sensed it while they were studying the stars. This tells us something important – God calls us through our aspirations and our greatest desires. The Magi allowed themselves to be amazed and discomfited by the novelty of the star and they set out on a journey toward the unknown. Wise and educated, they were fascinated more by what they did not know than by what they already knew. They were open to what they did not know. They felt called to go beyond. They did not feel happy remaining there. No, they were called to go beyond. This is important for us as well – we are called not to be satisfied, to seek the Lord by stepping out of our comfort zone, journeying toward him with others, immersing ourselves in reality. For God calls every day, here and now. God calls us, each one of us, every day. He calls us here and he calls us now. He calls us in our world.

But the Magi speak to us about a second gift: discernment. Seeing they are looking for a king, they go to Jerusalem to speak with King Herod, who, however, is a man hungry for power and wants to use them to eliminate the baby Messiah. But the Magi are not stupid, they do not allow themselves to be taken in by Herod. They know how to distinguish between the goal of their journey and the temptations they find on the way. They could have remained there in Herod's court, serene. No, they move ahead. They leave Herod's palace and, attentive to the sign from God, do not pass that way again, but return by another route (cf. v. 12). Brothers and sisters, how important it is to know how to distinguish life's goal from the temptations along the way! Our goal in life is one thing, the temptations on the way are another. To know how to renounce what seduces, but leads down the wrong road, to understand and to choose God's ways! Discernment is a great gift and we should never tire of asking for it in prayer. Let us ask for this grace! Lord, grant us the ability to discern what is good from what is evil, what is better from what is not better.

Finally, the Magi speak to us about a third gift: the surprise. After a long journey, what do these high-ranking men in society find? A baby with his mother (cf. v. 11) – certainly, a tender scene, but not astonishing! They do not see angels like the shepherds did, but they meet God in poverty. Perhaps they were expecting a powerful and prodigious Messiah – and they find a baby. And still, they do not think they made a mistake, they know how to recognize him. They welcome God's surprise and experience their encounter with him with amazement, adoring him – in his littleness, they recognize God's face. Humanly, we are all inclined to seek greatness, but it is a gift to know how to truly find it – to know how to find greatness in the littleness that God loves. For the Lord is encountered like this: in humility, in silence, in adoration, in the smallest and in the poor.

Brothers and sisters, we are all called – the first gift, the call – we are all called by Jesus, we can all discern – the second gift, discernment – discern his presence, we can all experience his surprises – the third gift, the surprise. Today, it would be beautiful to remember these gifts: the call, discernment and the surprise, these gifts that we have already received – to think back to when we sensed God's call in our life; or even when, perhaps after quite a struggle, we succeeded in discerning his voice; or even still, of an unforgettable surprise he gave us, astounding us. May Our Lady help us remember and treasure the gifts received.

FIRST EUCHARIST PARENT INFORMATION MEETING TUESDAY JANUARY 23RD 2024

7:00pm-8:00pm

In the Church. Parent only meeting.

**First Eucharist workbooks and Rite of Enrolment card
will be distributed.**

CONFIRMATION PREPARATION

Classes begin Saturday February 3rd 2024

Parish Centre

More information coming January 2024.

**ShareLife Update GOAL \$148,700
Collection to date as of December 19, 2023
\$134,478.90**

Development and Peace/Caritas Canada Fall 2023 Campaign

Let's Stand for the Land!

For Development and Peace — Caritas Canada's Create Hope : Stand for the Land campaign, our partner ERIC—Radio Progreso has asked that we support the defenders of human rights and the environment in Honduras. Since 2015, the communities of Guapinol and the San Pedro sector have been fighting to preserve their rivers and the Carlos Escaleras National Park from mining. To find out more, visit devp.org/campaign.

"Communities are displaced. Rights are violated. Access and rights to water denied. All this to give priority to the extraction and pillaging of resources."

— Leonel George, member of the Committee for the Defence of Common and Public Goods of Tocoa, Colón.

The D&P group at St. John the Evangelist Church will carry out the sign-up campaign on the weekend of January 13-14. We thank you in advance for your support to the people of Honduras and the work of D&P.

Stand in solidarity. Sign the letter to the Honduran ambassador to Canada at devp.org/act.



Masses For The Week

Sat Jan 5— 5:00pm

+Frank McNulty

req. by Society of St. Vincent de Paul

Mon Jan 8 — 8:20am

+William & Hannah Waugh

req. by The Deehan Family

Tues Jan 9 — 8:20am

+Darrell McNeil

req. by Maire Fitzpatrick & Family

Wed Jan 10 — 7:00pm

+All Souls in Purgatory

req. by Joe & Joy Broderick

+Mark Harris

req. by His Family

+Frank McNulty

req. by The Lay Pastoral Visitation Team

+Charles McAlinden

req. by Rita McAlinden

+Vincent Nannery

req. by Brid Rooney

Thur Jan 11 — 8:20am

+Lorraine Campbell

req. by Linda & Kathie

Fri Jan 12 — 8:20am

+Susan & Harry Friel

req. by The Deehan Family

ATTENTION ENGAGED COUPLES!
MARRIAGE PREPARATION CLASSES

Our next Marriage Preparation Course at St. John the Evangelist will begin on Monday nights, April 8 to May 13, 2024 from 7pm to 9pm. Call 668-3676 to register. Cost is \$300 per couple.

CWL GENERAL MEETING

Ladies of the parish, mark your calendars for Thursday, January 18th at 7:30 p.m. in the main room of the parish centre for our January general meeting. On the agenda is giving away our money to our charities and the opportunity to renew your CWL membership. Not a member, you are welcome to join us. If you have any questions, or require transportation, please contact Lynne Childerhouse at 905-431-6582 or lchilderhouse@hotmail.com.

Prayer Group

Meet Wednesdays from 1pm to 3pm - Parish Centre

Hi everyone, please come and join us at St John's

Prayer Meeting on Jan 10th at 1 PM

We will be presenting a DVD video on

"The 4th Wise Man"

The meeting will be in the Parish Centre with refreshments halfway through.

All are welcome, hope to see you there, blessings for the New Year.

Indigenous Reconciliation Fund Update

On December 12, 2023 the Archdiocese of Toronto announce the first phase of funding as part of our \$6 million commitment to the Indigenous Reconciliation Fund (IRF). Through the tremendous generosity of parishioners through the Archdiocese, including our own parish, more than \$2.7 million has been directed through the IRF to organizations and projects committed to promoting healing and reconciliation for communities and families.

Recipients include the Indigenous Spirit Fund, a branch of native Child and Family Services of Toronto, Ontario that will receive \$400,000 over four years to enrich their *On the Land* culture camp program curriculum.

Thank you for your continued prayers and ongoing support as we journey together on the path of healing and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples of This Land.

www.archtoronto.org/healingandreconciliation

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