



Boston Catholic Journal



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Fire and Light

“Now no man lighting a candle covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it upon a candlestick, that they who come in may see the light. For there is not anything secret that shall not be made manifest, nor hidden, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore how you hear. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given: and whosoever hath not, that also which he thinketh he hath, shall be taken away from him.” (Saint Luke 8.16-18)

OUR CONTENTION WITH DARKNESS

At first glance, the Gospel of today appears to be stating what is quite obvious.

Everyone knows that a covered light it will soon be extinguished, and if we were to place it under a bed it would be without effect, for it could not be seen. A light, we all understand, needs to be placed in such a way that it illuminates its surroundings.

In Psalm 119 (118) David exclaims,

“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path!”.

Today Christ tells us that His word — which we have received, that we have made our own — must not become a light concealed: it is given to be shared with others.

We are not mere spectators in this drama of salvation that is still unfolding before us. We must enact, speak, proclaim, what has been given to us. The very thing imparted to us and that we hold most sacred we must, in turn, out of love and in obedience, impart to others. The unspeakable beauty of our sacred faith cannot, must not, be buried in a field, hidden under pride, concealed beneath the fear of reproach. Our shameless and undying love for Him should be, was given us to be, a beacon for others, offering direction, consolation, love, and yes, even salvation.

Our own faith grows to the degree that it is shared. Faith, loaves, fish, God multiplies everything good; gives beyond measure, unstintingly, generously, lovingly. Nothing God gives us is to be kept for ourselves alone. It is given to be multiplied in others.

The fact that all things will be made known, that all things will be revealed is at once challenging, consoling, and frightening. These words challenge us to live in the truth, they challenge our deceptions and lies and call us into God's light.

They console us when we are caught in the snare of injustice, in the complexities of misunderstandings, when we bear calumny, reproach, the unjust penalty of false witness. We know that, inevitably, the truth of the situation will come to light at Gods moment. At His moment we will be vindicated, not at the moment of our choosing. The truth will emerge — because Christ Himself has said so. All that is concealed beneath the putrefaction of sin will one day come to light. We both rejoice and tremble at this.

That is to say, these words, if we are honest with ourselves, as much frighten as console us. If we have sinned (and who has not?) and in our willfulness, our obstinacy, refuse to repent, to bring our sinfulness in humility to God; if in our humanness we shrink back and attempt to hide, thinking that we can deceive God,

He is warning us that it will avail us nothing: all will be made known. All will be brought to light.

Light and Truth

Light has ever been equated with Truth. And the truth of the matter is that each us, for all our darkness in sin, yet remains in possession of light, even if it is reduced to a smoldering wick. Sometimes it simply needs to be rekindled by another flame, a stronger light.

For this reason, we should never be tempted to think that our little light does not, will not, or cannot matter; that it makes no difference; each flame of faith, no matter how low it burns, can be that one more spark necessary to set another aflame, and is therefore indispensable to the Church of Christ. Each person within it has a unique beauty in that light that is totally disproportionate to place and time, for in all history, from its beginning to its culmination, it is unrepeatably flicker against a constant darkness, and because it is unrepeatably, each soul possesses inestimable, inexhaustible value. Purchased, as it is, through the Blood of Christ on the Cross, it is of such value that the Son of God Himself laid down His life for it.

From the very beginning, the history of creation and salvation has been set against darkness, against a void; either a void of matter on the one hand (Gen.1.2) or a

void of sanctity on the other. We are children of Light ever in contention with darkness. Abraham was told to look up and number the stars to count the offspring of his act of faith, and they were, each of them, points of light in an expanse of darkness, innumerable lights penetrating the darkness. Abraham was not blinded by a tiny star; he was overwhelmed by constellations of scintilla beyond calculation, such that the very darkness of night was dusted with light.

A flicker or a raging fire, each soul contributes withal to that constellation through which the history of salvation is traced by the Finger of God.

What difference can I — or do I — make?

Do you still ask, “What difference can I, or do I, make?” Alone it may seem little, the light of itself small and unable to kindle the very chaff threatening to extinguish it — but joined to the light, the flame, the fire, of others, it becomes an inseparable part of that holocaust of Light we call the Church to which Christ calls all men. He calls it to a light on a hill. He kindles the merest ember, and the breath of the Holy Ghost sets it ablaze in a divine wind until, fire upon fire, it consumes the hearts of all, and even the darkness itself!

An analogy may be helpful in an event that took place in Berlin shortly after the war. In an enormous stadium before a great multitude of people — one single

priest lit one single match! Virtually imperceptible, except to those in the immediate vicinity, it flickered against the night. A pin of light in a sea of darkness ... until all present were asked to light a single match as well, in a combined, a unified act of hope, faith and commitment to Christ. Soon the entire stadium became a blaze of light! No longer was darkness encroaching on the light, but a great light was now encroaching upon a receding darkness!

The victory of Christ over evil, death, sin and darkness was heralded by a star, a tiny spark of light in an expanse of darkness. We are, each of us, called to be heralds of Christ, a constant and unfailing light; smoldering wick, ember, fire, or furnace, we all are one light in that conflagration of Love we call the Church, that Pillar of Fire on our journey through darkness to the unquenchable promise of everlasting light and life in Christ.

A Poor Clare Colettine Nun

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