



Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time January 22, 2017

A Great Light

By Mary Katharine Deeley

In the upper Midwest, where I live, deep winter sets in around mid-December, and generally it gets really cold at the beginning of January. That's followed by two or three months of more clouds than sunshine, more wind than calm, and days when the cold seems to go right through all outerwear.

Sometime in the last two weeks of March, after weeks of gray and gloom, there comes a day that holds all the promise of glorious summer. The sun shines, the sky is blue, and the

temperature suddenly soars to sixty degrees—or even seventy. Neighborhood streets and lakeside paths are filled with folks just glad to be alive. We suddenly realize why our ancestors worshiped the sun.

Scripture says, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Isaiah and Matthew knew the power of light shining in darkness, but for them, it wasn't the sun. It was the Word of God piercing a world in which power and greed seemed rampant. That Word was incarnate in Jesus, calling all to conversion.

I don't think it's an accident that Matthew recalls the words of Isaiah just before he records the call of the disciples. Perhaps light is what Peter, Andrew, James, and John saw when Jesus walked by their boats and called them into new lives as his disciples. It was light that made them drop everything to follow him. Jesus is our light, too, and he's never stopped calling us to follow him. Maybe it's time to come out of the dark ourselves. †

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”

A Word From Pope Francis

There is an urgent need to see once again that faith is a light, for once the flame of faith dies out, all other lights begin to dim. The light of faith is unique, since it is capable of illuminating every aspect of human existence. A light this powerful cannot come from ourselves but from a more primordial source: in a word, it must come from God....Transformed by this love, we gain fresh vision, new eyes to see....Faith, received from God as a supernatural gift, becomes a light for our way, guiding our journey through time.

—Lumen Fidei,
June 29, 2013



Sunday Readings

Isaiah 8:23—9:3

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone.”

1 Corinthians 1:10–13, 17

“I urge you...that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.”

Matthew 4:12–23

“He said to them, ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.’”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- When has Jesus been a light in darkness for you?
- How can you bring the light of Jesus to someone this week?



Conversion: Our Response to God's Call

By Rev. James B. Dunning

Over and over we are born again and again. Over and over God rolls back stones from our tombs of complacency. Some unexpected event—whether heart-lifting or heartbreaking—nudges us toward questioning the meaning of life. A baby is born. Someone betrays us. We lose a job. We find a friend. We celebrate a marriage of twenty-five years. A relationship sputters and dies. A child leaves home. A

spouse dies. Catholics believe that these are revelation times. These are times when life pushes us to our limits. Therefore, such times can be conversion times. These moments of revelation are God's call, God's reaching out to us. Conversion is our turning toward God, who is always turning toward us. Conversion is the ongoing response of our whole person turning in faith and love to the God who loves us. If revelation and grace are the gift of God's very presence and life and self to us, faith is the giving of our whole self back to God. That takes time. It takes time and humility to find that healing

love is not self-made but pure gift.

Catholics agree that God's Spirit is behind it all. Catholics also believe in a Spirit incarnate, a Spirit enfleshed in persons and events. The Spirit was never more incarnate than in the person of Jesus. Jesus reveals this Spirit of God's love to us in what he says, but more by who he is and what he does, as embodied in the events of his life: healing the sick, forgiving and eating with sinners, caring for the poor, dying and rising. He is the Word made flesh by the power of God's Spirit. Jesus gives us that same Spirit who speaks through the events of our lives—babies born, jobs lost, and friendships found. In these times the Spirit can reveal the God of hope and healing. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, April 1988
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God's Will, Our Joy By Fr. Dan Lacke, OFM

What is God asking of me? We face all kinds of dilemmas: midlife career changes, decisions about medical care, life vocations, or just looking for that something more....When faced with these difficult decisions, the saints can make discerning a vocation look simple.

Image St. Clare, the first female follower of St. Francis, leaving the refined luxury of her noble home, dodging guards in the dark of night, and joining Francis and his companions outside Assisi's city walls. In doing so, she committed herself to a life of poverty and dependence on God alone. But these decisions don't come easily, even to saints.

Historians researching saints' lives often

find realities closely mirroring ours. Christ's followers, then and now, are immersed in social tensions—violence, division, materialism. The saints didn't deny these forces had infected them, nor did they magically rise above them. They probed their hearts and faced their life decisions, guided by the Spirit and Christ's example.

Whatever the context of our vocational discernment, we can be assured that, as disciples of Jesus Christ, where two or more are gathered, there he is in our midst, ready to confound, delight, and orient us in the direction of our deepest joy.

In the end, blessed hungers or holy longings will head us to where God wants us to be. Daily prayer, facing our fears, and being honest about our own habits of

thinking and acting are fundamental in approaching life decisions. When they're rooted in a personal assurance of God's loving embrace, we can make life choices that reflect God's will in our lives. †

Source: *Catholic Update*, July 2013
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Lord, fill me with the desire and courage to be your instrument of peace and love.

—From *Peaceful Meditations for Every Day in Ordinary Time*,

Rev. Warren J. Savage
and Mary Ann McSweeney

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 23–28

Mon. Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children:
Heb 9:15, 24–28 / Mk 3:22–30

Tue. St. Francis de Sales:
Heb 10:1–10 / Mk 3:31–35

Wed. Conversion of St. Paul:
Acts 22:3–16 or Acts 9:1–22 / Mk 16:15–18

Thu. Sts. Timothy and Titus:
2 Tm 1:1–8 or Ti 1:1–5 / Mk 4:21–25

Fri. Weekday:
Heb 10:32–39 / Mk 4:26–34

Sat. St. Thomas Aquinas:
Heb 11:1–2, 8–19 / Mk 4:35–41