

Homily For Tuesday of the 10th Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - June 8, 2021

2 Corinthians 1:18-22 "In Jesus Christ, the Son of God, every one of God's promises is a 'Yes'."

Psalms 119:129-135 "Your decrees are wonderful. My soul keeps them. Your unfolding words give light."

Matthew 5: 13-16 "Let your light shine so others may see your good works and give glory to the Father."

Be What You Are: Light

Coming of the Light

Matthew tells us that Jesus began his ministry by quoting the prophet Isaiah. "The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. For those who sat in the shadow of death, light has dawned." So, Jesus cites the Old Testament prophetic tradition that God will shed light like a sunrise, like new life. Remember also that the Magi came following a star, a light in the sky. The coming of the light is a cosmic event, meant for the whole world.

Luke's Gospel tells us about Simeon in the temple, who says, when he sees the infant Jesus: "My eyes have seen your salvation, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel." Again, this light will not be restricted or limited in any way. No person or nation is outside of its rays. John's Gospel gives us the activity and power of this light: "Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it."

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul puts it in an entirely different way. He says that "In Jesus Christ, every one of God's promises is a 'yes'." Well, if God's promise is that a light will dawn, as the prophets testify in advance, it is a person who fulfills that promise to be the 'Yes' of God.

You Are The Light

I don't think we have too much trouble appreciating that message. That's the faith we profess, after all. However, it is a bit shocking that Jesus turns to a crowd, an ordinary crowd of people - like us, trying to live our lives the best we can - and he says: "YOU are the salt of the earth" and "YOU are the light of the world." Wait a

minute! What? Me? Yes, Jesus said YOU are the light of the world. But only God is light. How did WE get to be the light?

I remember a comedian talking about being a child watching TV by himself when the commercial came on about forest fire prevention. In a humorous way, he talked about being traumatized when Smokey the Bear pointed directly at him through the TV and said: "Only you can prevent forest fires." That was quite a burden to place on a child. But, how much different is that sense of responsibility when Jesus says YOU are the light of the world. Your deeds must be for others a sign of the glory of God.

Well, I suppose, in a sense, we can reflect the light of God: like Mary, like Joseph, like the saints, like the angels who are in the presence of God and see the beatific vision, and radiate that to those who will allow it into their lives.

The Magna Carta of Christian Life

Yesterday, the daily Gospel reading began what will be a series of readings from Chapters five to seven of Matthew's Gospel. These three chapters, Augustine called the 'Magna Carta of Christian life'. He says that if we had nothing else from Jesus' teaching, we would know his heart and the summary of his teaching from these three chapters. Of course, we call these three chapters, 'The Sermon on the Mount'. It is a great time to familiarize ourselves with this teaching. Yesterday, it was the Beatitudes. Today, it is the teaching on salt and light.

The New Law of Light

Jesus is presented as the fulfilment of the Old Covenant, the Torah, the life giving law which transformed ordinary human existence into a covenant relationship with the one holy God. This remarkable psalm 119 goes on for page after page describing how wonderful and full of light and life is the law of God. His decrees are wonderful. His commandments are righteous, his precepts fill human longing, his ordinances are good. It is one long love song to God, whose love is pure light and grace.

That old covenant was sealed by the sprinkling of an animal's blood on the people. We just celebrated the new covenant in Christ's blood poured out on the cross. Now, Jesus is the perfect fulfilment of that law of love, that light. He is the new love song and, on that mountain, he tells us that our identity is wrapped up in his own precious light.

Where Is the Light

Sometimes the world reflects the light better than at other times. Right now, the world is demanding a light to shine on the tragedy of residential schools, a government policy, frequently carried out by the churches, to take First Nations children away from their family and community identity. Even while the secular culture wants abortion and euthanasia as human rights, there is still an awareness that children's lives ending in unmarked graves is a terrible darkness.

Our job, our task, our very identity, is to be in the world what Jesus says we already are. How the world longs for a light to shine in the darkness.

Linda Ellis wrote a poem called The Dash.

I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend. He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning... to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth and spoke of the following date with tears, but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time they spent alive on earth and now only those who loved them know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own, the cars... the house... the cash. What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

To be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.

I will conclude with Cardinal Newman's prayer, ***Radiating Christ***

"Shine through me, and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel your presence in my souls. Jesus, stay with me, and then I shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be a light to others. The Light, O Jesus, will be all from you. None of it will be mine. It will be you shining on others through me."

That's who we are, the light of Christ, not our own light, but light nevertheless. The world needs us.

Key Scripture Passages

2 Corinthians: *God is faithful. For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, in him every one of God's promises is a YES. It is God who has anointed us, by giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.*

Psalms: *Your decrees are wonderful. Therefore, my soul keeps them. The unfolding of your words gives light. It imparts understanding. With open mouth I pant, because I long for your commandments. Keep my steps steady according to your promise. Make your face shine upon your servant, and teach me your statutes.*

Matthew: *Jesus said to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the world ... Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.*