

Are we allowing our light to shine

C-c-Epiphany 2022

One of the things I don't like about political elections
is the way many of the politicians promote themselves.
Instead of saying what their platform is,
they spend the majority of time making their opponents look bad.
If all of them promoted their platform, we could choose the best among the best options.
Instead, it seems, we are stuck with choosing the best of the worst options.
Not very encouraging.

2500 years ago the prophet Isaiah gave us another option. "Arise, shine for your light has come."

Let me share with you a story I read a little while ago.

At the end of a lecture someone asked the speaker, "What is the purpose of life?"
The speaker began by taking his wallet out of his pocket,
he bought out a very small round mirror.
He turned the mirror over in his fingers, and began.
"When I was a small child during the war, we were very poor and lived in a remote mountain village.
One day on the road I found the broken pieces of a mirror.
A German motorcycle had been wrecked in that spot.
I tried to find all the pieces of the mirror and put them together, but I couldn't,
so I took the largest piece—this one.
By scratching it on a stone I made it round.
I began to play with it as a toy
and became fascinated by the fact I could reflect light into dark places
where the sun would never shine—in deep holes, crevices, dark closets and behind walls.
It became a game for me to get light into the most inaccessible places I could find.

I kept the mirror, and as I grew up—I would take it out once in a while in idle moments,
and continue the game.
I grew to understand that this was not just a child's game, but a metaphor for what I must do in life.
I came to understand that I am not the light, or the source of light.
But light—the light of Christ, the light of truth, understanding and knowledge—
is there, and that light will only shine in the many dark places if I reflect it.
I am only a fragment of a mirror whose whole design and shape I do not know.
Nevertheless, with what I have, I can reflect light into the dark world—
into the dreary places in the hearts of others.
Then perhaps others may see and do likewise.
This is what I am about. This is the meaning of life.

When politicians are campaigning and they are slinging mud at their opponents,
they are not casting light into the dark places.
The end result is not more light, but actually less light in the world.

The world is not a better place...it is actually a worse place.

Christmas Eve, when I was driving from parish to parish

I was listening to the radio and they were broadcasting Miracle on 34th Street.

In it, Macy's had hired the real Santa Claus to portray Santa Clause,
and when children asked for a specific toy that Macy's didn't have,
that Santa would direct the moms to a different department store
that did have that toy.

Macy's became the "Store with a heart" and instead of sales decreasing they actually went up.

This is what happens when we allow light of Christ to reflect from us.

The whole world becomes a better place.

Can you imagine the wise men arguing on the way to Bethlehem.

My gift is better than yours.

Burning frankincense will cover the smell of dirty diapers...just what a new family needs.

O yeah, with all my gold they will be able to buy as many diapers as they want.

Casper over there, just brought myrrh, what are Mary and Joseph supposed to do with that.

If all we do is sling mud, we make the world a darker place.

Think about how the Word of God begins on Christmas Eve—

"The people who lived in darkness have seen a great light...

those who lived in a land of deep darkness...on them a light has shone."

For thousands of years enough mud had been slung,

that the light of God was almost completely extinguished.

When Jesus was born, that light shone in all the dark places of the world...

and continues to shine in all the dark places of the world.

Think about what happened in the gospel story.

Herod's only concern was that his light, and his light only, would shine.

He was so paranoid that that someone else's light may shine,

that he had hundreds of babies slaughtered—just to protect himself.

Fear is the result of darkness.

St. John in his letter to all Christians states,

"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear...

fear has to do with punishment,

and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love."

Think about what is happening in our world today.

COVID is breeding fear...

people are using all kinds of fear mongering to get others to agree with them.

Many are suggesting that Pope Francis cannot be trusted,

breeding fear, and letting their light, not the light of Christ shine.

War, global warming, political stances...

almost all the arguments you hear are based in fear.

"Whoever fears has not reached perfection in love."

And I would add whoever promotes fear, is even less perfect in love.”

Think about what Jesus did. He was never concerned with making someone look bad.
He was always trying to make them into the best person possible.
He was always reigniting their light and letting it shine for all to see.
He knew that if he took the low road and threw mud at his opponents,
he would not, actually could not accomplish his Father’s mission.

In Pope Francis’ Christmas message to his Cardinals, he asks the question,
“Can we accept God’s way of doing things...can we accept the challenge of Christmas,
can we be a mirror reflecting the light of Christ,
or will we simple do what we have always done,
sling enough mud at the people around us,
that our light, as dim as it may be...will be the only light shining.
On the contrary, we need to ask for the grace of littleness...humility.
Recognize that we are small, mirrors, not lights,
but merely reflecting the light of Christ to others.

Arise, shine.
This needs to be our guiding mantra in 2022.
We need to stand up and shine, so that others will see the light of Christ.

But I need to include a word of clarification.
There is a small, but significant, difference between reflecting the light,
and allowing the light of Christ to shine,
 (new) and standing up allowing the light in us to shine.
Because, if all we are standing up and allowing the light that is within us to shine.
We are not reflecting the light of Christ,
we are allowing the pride that is within us to shine forth,
and if all we are doing is allowing our pride to shine...
we are not making the world a better place...
rather on the contrary, we are making it a darker place...
indeed, we are making it harder for others to see the true light of Christ.

Let us do, as Pope Francis suggests,
Let us rouse ourselves, for a light has been lit, reminding us that we children of the light.
Let us rejoice in this year ahead,
for no one will ever extinguish this light, the light of Jesus,
who tonight shines brightly for all nations
After all this is what Epiphany is all about.
Jesus manifesting him to all nations.