

# Encountering the Sacred Mysteries

BULLETIN SUPPLEMENT OF LITURGICAL CATECHESIS



Christ The King Parish

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

## THE PASCHAL CANDLE



The Paschal candle represents Christ, the Light of the World. The pure beeswax of which the candle is made represents the sinless Christ who was formed in the womb of His Mother. The wick signifies His humanity, the flame, His Divine Nature, both soul and body. Five grains of incense inserted into the candle in the form of a cross recall the aromatic spices with which His Sacred Body was prepared for the tomb, and of the five wounds in His hands, feet, and side.

## A Light Shines in the Darkness

Based on the Reading for this Sunday.

As I reflect upon the readings for this Fourth Sunday in Lent, there seems to be many themes and images contained within them that can directly relate to the current stressful and uncertain circumstances that we are all experiencing these days. It also seems ironic that as the Church celebrates a “joyful” Sunday during the Lenten season, most of us are feeling less than happy. A lot has been happening across the world and within our own country. Our lives have all been completely upended in some way. Some people within our family or our community are feeling a greater burden than others but all of us are not untouched by the COVID-19 pandemic. So what is God trying to tell us during this time of uncertainty? I think many of us are trying to remain faithful and trust in God’s providence and care but sometimes it feels as if He is so far away and we even question whether God cares about us. Although those thoughts and feelings are real, the message of the Scriptures assure us that God does indeed care! Let’s look



“Those who have been freed and raised up follow the light. The light they follow speaks to them: *I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness.*”

~St Augustine of Hippo

at the first reading from first Samuel. The prophet Samuel is sent to anoint the next king of Israel and he sees one of the sons of Jesse whom he believes “looks” like he should be king. However, the Lord tells Samuel, “Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). In other words, there is a difference between appearance and reality—what seems to be the case and what is really going on. So what can this tell us about what might be taking place in our world right now?

From the appearance, we see suffering, fear, economic hardship, the painful separation of friends and family, and the suspension of many activities that were part of our daily routine. From all appearance, we are experiencing dire and unprecedented times. And yet, could there be an underlying reality that God sees in all of this? Well, with all of this “social distancing” that is taking place we have been forced to “slow down.” How many of us have complained about being too busy with too much to do and always on the go? Although there are certainly unpleasant aspects of this “down time” there are also many positives as well. For instance, families are now forced to stay at home together. It can be a time of reconnection and unity. For those of us who must be alone either because we are self-isolating or because we don’t have children in the home, or because we are living in a nursing home, these circumstances force us to contemplate the reality of the message in today’s Psalm: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ...Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side” (Ps. 23: 1, 4a). All of us are familiar with this famous passage, but are these just nice sounding words or do we

*continued on the back*

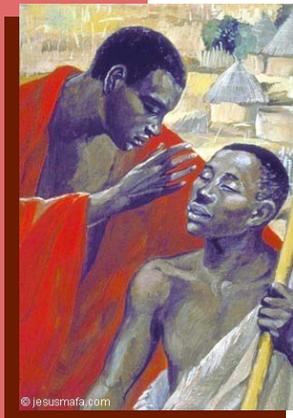


“A light shines in the darkness for the upright and the strong”

*Darkness: where the seeds of conversion are thereby sown; and the light that shines makes it known .*

“You are God, ineffable, inconceivable, incomprehensible, always existing and ever the same.”

Anaphora of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom



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**“Light” continued from the front**

really believe them? I believe that God is trying desperately to see inside our fearful hearts to assure us that He is still on the throne, that nothing happens without His knowledge and that He is the good shepherd. That means that necessarily, we are not! Perhaps the reality behind what is going on in the world is to remind us all that we have been too self-reliant, self-sufficient, too independent. The greatest shepherd image in the Bible is that of

*God Himself.* As protector and leader of his flock God naturally takes on the identity of a shepherd, an image and description of God employed by several inspired writers. Although it seems like we are walking in very dark valleys right now, the reality is that God says He will be our guide. This truth is echoed in today’s Gospel where Jesus says to all of us: “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (Jn. 9:5). It is Jesus who is our Way, Truth, and Life. Nevertheless, perhaps we’ve been

asleep to this reality. Paul’s words from the Second Reading should challenge us: “Awake, O sleeper...and Christ will give you light.” Maybe this time of apparent darkness is actually a time for all of us to wake-up and see the true light of our calling. Paul reminds us that we were one in darkness “but now you are light in the Lord” called to “produce every kind of goodness.” Maybe these circumstances are not really about us after all but point us to the reality that God is the one to whom our trust will bring true light.

## Holy Darkness

Darkness gets a bad rap. We hear a lot about the light, and we understand what it means to live as “children of the light and children of the day” (1Thes. 5:5). However, without the darkness, how could we distinguish the light? Darkness must be present in order for light to be known for what it is in relation to the darkness. ...Holy Darkness is the place of unrealized potenti-

ality, where matter and energy combine to take form, receive its goodness, and where sacred mysteries are brought forth into our reality.



it those first few shafts of light that He had just spoken into existence. As the light received its form, its destiny as mystery was revealed to be that which

God reached His holy arm into the abode of darkness pulling from

will always chase away the darkness. ...Holy Darkness experienced every year when the Church waits in solemn vigil until it is chased away by the light of a “flame divided but undimmed, a pillar of fire that glows to the honor of God.”

“I Am the Lord, there is no other; I form the light, and create the darkness (Isa. 45:7). Yet darkness is not dark for Me and the night shines as the day (Ps. 139: 12). For I Am the light, and there is no darkness in Me at all (1 Jn. 1:5).

## Pray the Liturgy

“It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord. By the mystery of the Incarnation, he has led the human race that walked in darkness into the radiance of the faith and has brought those born in slavery to ancient sin through the waters of regeneration to make them your adopted children.”

*(Preface to the Eucharistic Prayer for the Fourth Sunday in Lent)*

**TO PONDER:**

- ◆ What are the “dark areas” in my life that need to be illuminated by the radiance of faith?
- ◆ What can I do this Sunday to express my joy as a disciple of Christ?
- ◆ Have I been faithful to my Lenten observances? Am I preparing to celebrate Easter eagerly?