

3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. One time I went on a canoe trip that was only supposed to be for a few hours. It wasn't too long, maybe fifteen kilometres down a river. Well, I got into the river and it turned out to be one log jam after another. Only right before dark did the log jams stop. It was fall, the water was cold and the few hours turned into twelve hours. I was on my own but I had a walkie talkie so every once in a while, I could contact my friends. At one point, when it was really dark, the river grew into a bay. I could not tell where to go as I couldn't see far enough. My friends fired a rifle to give me a sense of where I was going. I kept paddling and paddling. It was dark for the last five hours and all I had was a head lamp. As I got to the lake, my friends drove their quad out on the beach and I could see the headlight and it was such a relief.

I was thinking how almost all of our media comes in the form of light. I have heard that TV apparently mimics our desire to have a fire. When we see it, it gives us a certain level of comfort. Yesterday morning when I woke up early, I checked my cellphone, because what else does one do when it is two in the morning. When I put it back, I was surprised how the image was burned into my eyes for a brief moment. Light seems to have a powerful effect on us, almost hypnotic. It seems to lower our senses. It makes us want to relax and take something in. I mean, if a couple started making out, or worse, in front of our children in our house, we would probably ask them to leave, saying that this was not appropriate. Or if someone got violent and started swearing up a storm, we would be likely to get out. However, if these things happen on media, we seem to be more ready to accept it. For the most part, it seems that the light of media takes away our life and we become spectators instead of people who live life anew.

The people who walked in great darkness have seen a great light. What does this mean to us, this great light? To me it is a light that brings us home and guides us when we are lost. The light reaches into the darkness of our lives. I am not just talking about sin. I am talking about ugliness. I am talking about woundedness. I am talking also about the darkness of our experiences of loneliness and abandonment. I am talking about the areas in our lives that we feel deep shame and hurt. I believe that this is the light of our Lord. Think when this light was cast on the poor fishermen of today's Gospel, they felt fit to follow Jesus. They felt a desire to leave everything. They experienced a richness that made them forsake everything. What is this light? I believe this light is the Scriptures.

It is interesting that Pope Francis declared this Divine Word Sunday. I think for us it will be that the light gets brighter and brighter as we read the Sacred Scriptures and we will follow more and more closely as the Apostles did as they encountered the Word of God. It is very valuable to read the Scriptures. GK Chesterton, a great English convert, said for years he had heard people talk about Jesus but when he took the time to read about Jesus, Jesus was even more than he expected. Imagine and put yourself in the story of Jesus flinging over the tables in the temple or raising the dead or walking on water or at the Last Supper or the Crucifixion. What scenes. Why did they happen? What do they mean for us today? These are important.

Reading the Scriptures with the Holy Spirit gives us the insight into the darkness of our lives and brings it into the light so we can say in Christ there is no shame. Amazing. These promises are amazing. How important it is for us to spend time each day in the Sacred Scriptures and to allow them to shine on our lives.

It is interesting that in today's world we see that people are afraid to offend people. We see in Scripture, Jesus is not afraid to offend, over turn, challenge false authority and teaching. We see that when Jesus comes demons come out. Why? Because they cannot abide in truth. This is what our reading of Sacred Scripture does: it heals, brings out the demons, breaks down strongholds that they have created in the darkness of the world. Each time you have that encounter with Scripture, you must ask, "Why do I experience this, my God? Why am I so hurt or angry?" Scripture is a bright light. You might think, "Well, Father, that is nice for you, you have a degree in religious things." I tell you, my degree does not help me when it come to the Scriptures healing my life. It is the Holy Spirit who guides and enlightens. We all have the Holy Spirit.

In one tribe, one custom was for a young man to spend a night in the forest. And so a young man did, and when he heard noises he wondered what they were. His imagination was powerful and he was terrified. He spent the night in fear. At the morning dawn, he looked over and there was his father with a rifle. His father had been there all night. His fear was for nothing.

In darkness we feel alone but God promises that you are never alone. Think of a time when you felt most afraid or felt the most shame, and ask God where He was and when you imagine the scene, you will see God right beside you weeping with you or consoling you. *The people in darkness have seen a great light.* The God who loves us is reaching out to us, especially with His Scriptures.