

Reflection for the 3rd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death, light has arisen. Matthew 4:15,16

Have you ever sat outside waiting for the sunrise? As a child I would go backpacking with my Dad, we would camp out in the mountains away from everyone. Early before the sun rose my Dad would make coffee and oatmeal on the camp stove and then turn off the stove and we would eat breakfast in the dark waiting for the sun to rise. A couple of years ago I was blessed to be at the sea of Galilee and was blessed to wait for the sunrise that came over the waters. Watching the world go from darkness to light is just amazing, be it in the mountains or near the sea. The experience of witnessing the sun coming forth from the darkness speaks of a new day, a new beginning.

Today in our First Reading taken from the Prophet Isaiah and our Gospel Reading from the Gospel of Matthew, we hear of a new light. This new light is of course Jesus Christ and how He presents Himself to a people living in darkness. The message that we have this weekend found within our Readings is Christ is the Light of the World. But what does it mean that Christ is the Light of the World? Is it just a title or is there a deeper message that should speak to us? In looking through the Bible, one can find 38 references to Christ being the Light of the World. Looking at chapter 2 of the Gospel of Matthew, we hear of the arrival of the Magi from the East following the star to the newborn King. A light in the night sky announces the arrival of Jesus Christ. The Magi and the star, like the other 37 references to Christ as the Light of the World are all pointing out that the presence of Christ changes everything and brings clarity to one's life.

Just as the sunrise enables one to see what surrounds us, bringing focus and clarity, so Christ in the world enables us to truly see the world for what it is. The world is not our permanent home; it is not in our relationship with the world that we find true peace and meaning. It is in our relationship with Christ that we can clearly see the world and our place in it. Be it the Magi, or the people living in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, they saw a great light, and all was changed for them. It can never be overstated what Jesus Christ brings into the world and into our lives. The question we can and should ask ourselves is what more do we need to do once we see Christ for what He is, the Light of the World?

Embracing Christ as the Light of the World requires us to be like the Magi, the Shepherds, the Disciples, and Apostles. Their encounter with Christ forever changed them. So, our encounter with Christ the Light of the World should have the same profound impact on us. Just like many living at the time of the Magi, the Shepherds, the Disciples, and Apostles we could see the Light of Christ and chose to allow it to have no impact on us. With the sunrise every day, we can pause take a moment and see it for what it is, announcing a new day that God has given us, providing us with a new opportunity. So, Christ walking among us 2,000 years ago provides us with the light shining in the darkness providing us with a new beginning.

May we see this new beginning not as something theoretical, or poetic, rather may we see this new beginning that comes from Christ the Light of the World as concrete and subsumptive. Christ among us and walking with us is not just a nice thought or a feeling but rather the true reality. Jesus Christ is truly God and Man and He is the “*one mediator between God and man* (1 Timothy 2:5-6).” In closing may we recognize the fact that in the 38 times Christ is mentioned in Sacred Scriptures as the Light of the World, we are being reminded, that Salvation comes through Jesus Christ alone (Acts 4:12), who paid the price for our sins. Every day of our lives may we know that we were people living in darkness, but we have now seen the great light, Jesus Christ the Light of the World.