

4th Sunday Lent Year “B” Laetare Sunday

March 11, 2018

Readings: 2 Chronicles 36: 14-16, 19-23; Ephesians 2: 4-10; John 3: 14-21

It is never an easy moment when one admits to being afraid of the dark. For example, why are some afraid of the dark in their own homes? Why are some afraid to go down to the basement late at night? We have been told that homes “settle,” that is not unusual to hear unfamiliar sounds over time. The darkness hides so many things; it remains mysterious, it shield us from being clearly seen. There’s even an element of risk involved.

A year ago, I received notice that our church alarm had tripped 90 minutes after the Sunday evening Mass had concluded. I entered the sacristy to re-set, assuming it was a false alarm. As I prepared to turn on the lights in church just to check, I heard movement. Now my heart skipped a beat, I froze. In reality, someone had fallen asleep in a pew, the alarm was set, the church locked until he awoke. But I had 911 on speed dial in a heartbeat!

We are afraid because we temporarily lose some sense of control. I may be in control of my environment, but only if I can see it. I most likely will not be able to control when in the dark. Logic somehow takes a backseat to emotion and perception.

I say this by way of a rather long introduction because the message in today’s readings centers on how Jesus Christ came precisely as the light to enlighten our darkness. Darkness itself is not evil; it is not a moral ‘subject’ at all- it is simply the absence of some or all light.

Still, darkness is a symbol for the spiritual hunger we experience due to our sin. Our sin keeps us from being in the light; we do not want our deeds to be seen or even acknowledged. As long as we keep things hidden, we will never experience peace of mind because something will always be there. So what choices do we have? While we do not wish our sins to be broadcast to others, if we keep them to ourselves, we will feel that burden on our shoulders. Jesus

revealed to Nicodemus that indeed he is the light, telling him that he did not need to remain in spiritual darkness any longer.

The Book of Chronicles recounts the Jewish people during the reign of Cyrus, king of Persia. When he conquered the Babylonians in 538 B.C., the Jews were living there in exile. God calls Cyrus “by name” so as to use him to deliver his people from captivity in Babylon and return them to the Promised Land to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. He was seen as the liberator for the Jews.

The book of Chronicles refers to Cyrus as being raised up by God himself, even though he was not of the Jewish faith. The darkness of exile was in large part due to the fact that the Jews had turned away from the Lord and were steeped in their own darkness. Now, finally the veil had been lifted.

The lesson for us in today’s first reading is that the time for exile and darkness has passed. God is looking after us. The misfortunes of yesterday may in fact be blessings in disguise, if we are able to see God’s hand underneath us, ready to lift us up. Out of the rubble and ruin springs forth new life.

Consider the plight of our brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico, still suffering greatly six months since Hurricane Maria. Many still live in darkness, without power in their homes. Nearly 58,000 homes here have roofs made of blue tarps while they await federal assistance. More than 200,000 have fled the island, giving up hope for now that their life will be able to get back to normal. This promise of God for new life is especially challenging for these people today.

We have something to say about helping to bring light to the dark corners of the world, and we begin by considering ourselves and our need to choose the paths of light, turning away from sin and darkness. In so doing, we can work towards dispelling the darkness around us through our acts of virtue and our charity for those in need, our brothers and sisters.

Only when we allow others to see us as we truly are, will we ever reach our God-given potential. Let us do nothing this Lent to frustrate that design. Rather, let us embrace and accept it- shedding the darkness and walking into the light.