



HOMILY by Father Robbie Low

22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time - Year B

The Father of light

Readings: Deuteronomy 4: 1-2, 6-8, Ps 14, James 1: 17-18, 21-22, 27, Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

‘God is the giver of all good things. He is the Father of all light.

In Him there is no change or shadow of turning.’

It is now thirteen years since Saint John Paul the Great added a set of mysteries to the devotion of the Rosary. His aim was to focus on those parts of the earthly ministry of Christ where the revelation of Jesus as the Light of the World became extraordinarily apparent. He named these the Luminous Mysteries, ‘The Mysteries of Light’.

Light itself has been, for most of human history, a mystery. The history of scientific enquiry has seen a variety of theories. From the 5th century BC the Greeks, via Empedocles, thought the gods had given light to the eye itself. (You would have thought a decent pair of bedroom curtains would have done for that argument.) The Hindus believed light was one of the ‘subtle elements’. We owe early ‘particle theory’ to Lucretius. ‘Wave theory’ emerges with Descartes and electromagnetic theories with

Faraday. Finally, at least finally so far, Quantum theory apparently accepts both wave and particle theory.

Light, to most of us, remains a mystery. We know, courtesy of the natural scientists, that it travels seven and a half times round the world in one second and that, by the time this homily is over the light that left the sun 94 m. miles ago will be dancing through these stained glass windows.

We know also that light is a constant. We know also that without it we cannot see and nothing is revealed. We know also that light illuminates way beyond the limited spectrum of our human sight and that this unseen light can carry and retrieve information otherwise unavailable to man.

Theologically we know that it was the very first of all God's creation. Fiat Lux. 'Let there be light'. And it is in this light that all other things came to be by the power of God's Word.

So when Jesus calls Himself 'Lux Mundi', the Light of the World, and God is described as dwelling in 'unapproachable light', we begin, dimly, with the aid of natural scientific enquiry, to understand more profoundly the mystery of the God who has created us.

In today's reading, St James refers to God as the giver of all good things, **'the Father of all light**, in Him there is no change or shadow of turning.' All revelation proceeds from God. He is the illuminator of all things. He is the divine constant, without shadow or alteration.

His Word, the Second Person of the Trinity, who becomes Man in Jesus Christ, is the supreme communicator of the hidden mysteries of the nature of the infinite, otherwise hidden to the view of mortal man.

It is in this Mystery of Light that biology, theology, anthropology and cosmology intersect. The natural sciences and the spiritual sciences need one another for a fuller understanding of each other – something that the ancients up to Isaac Newton understood well and which the modern warriors of atheistic Darwinian extremism now vigorously reject.

Catholics should never be afraid of scientific enquiry. The great revelations of genetics and the origins of the cosmos, for example, belong to Catholic priests. (Gregor Mendel and George Lemaitre).

The truth is indivisible and proceeds from both revelation **and** reason. That reason however is not to be confused with the knockdown simplification of modern debate nor the autonomy of personal thought. Reason is part of the gift of God to Man in his nature as 'being in the image of God'. So reason and revelation should never be at war. They proceed from the same light source.

St. John Paul II, in 'Fides et Ratio', explains that faith and reason are not only compatible, but essential together. Faith without reason, he argues, leads to superstition. (Observe the tyrannies of religious fundamentalism). Reason without faith, he argues, leads to nihilism and relativism. (Look around you. It neatly defines the gurus of our culture of death.)

Where the former rules (faith without reason) unreason is enthroned and persecutes truth and relegates mercy.

Where the latter reigns (reason without faith) there is a faulty assumption that 'reason' is a process uncircumscribed by revelation. In other words Man's reason produces its own revelation. (A new version of 'the eye has its own light' theory). Human reason, it declares, is both supreme and autonomous. This is a proclamation of the sovereignty of Man. Such hubris leads to an agnosticism that inevitably dethrones God and worships the self and the material world. In its arrogance it also necessarily abandons history in the supposed light of its supreme temporal wisdom. Revolutions from Jacobin France to Pol Pot declared their triumphs as Year Zero. ISIS blows up anything pre-Islamic . Europe attacks the fabric of marriage and family and ramps up its homicidal assault on the vulnerable in an attempt to destroy its now unfashionable Christian heritage. The idolatry of reason ends in slaughter.

The Magisterium alone, especially Saint John Paul II and Benedict XVI, has held the ring in opposing these two destructive heresies.

Revelation and true reason, the Church teaches, reflect the Father of all lights. That is the true light that enlightens every man that comes into the world. That is what is revealed in Christ and what His disciples reflect in the world. In Him there is no shadow of turning, no change. It is the same light that engulfed the three Apostles on the Mountain of Transfiguration and gave them a foretaste of Heaven. It is part of our faithful meditation on the Mysteries of Light and part of our daily witness, as St. James implies, working out through the Spiritual and Corporal works of Mercy, in

the world. For the Church it is not Revelation OR Reason but 'both and'. It is not Faith OR Works but 'both and'. Both come from the Father of all light and we must be about the Father's business.

If we want to know how this looks in practice this week's homework is to acquaint ourselves with the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy and then get on with them.

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