



PRAY, PONDER, PREACH AND PRACTICE THE WORD OF GOD

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John the Evangelist's Three Ls

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With the Baptism of Jesus, the Light has now been revealed to the Jews. It began with Mary and the angel, expanded to Joseph, then the shepherds, poorest of the poor, who were the first group to learn the Good News. Then comes those foreigners, the Magi. Next, it shines upon the Jews in the Baptism, when Jesus goes public for the first time. Finally, the apostles begin to learn who it is they are following at the wedding of Cana...so John tells us. And then there is us...and there is today. There is the evening News.

John is the writer for all of this revealing of the Light into our darkness. He is all about **Light, Life,** and **Love**...the three "Ls." In this first section of Ordinary Time, keep looking in the texts for the Light blinking, the Life springing up in the most surprising places, and the Love gently replacing the cruelty, bigotry, and woundedness of our broken humanity. Watch the evening news carefully.

The readings of the small section of Ordinary Time are working from the mystery of the Incarnation and what that mystery will eventually do to the world. The Light, Life, and Love are shining from these readings. They are stirring up Light, Life, and Love in us all over the world. Do you see it? Are you ready to have it wrap you round about?



You shine, Jesus...

and I find myself blinking in the Light.

You fill me with Life, Jesus,

and I find myself watching with expectation.

You fill me with Love, Jesus,

and I find myself weak in the knees.

What was that Infant up to back then?

And today?



Special thanks to associate Doug Gundlach for these reflections

February 2 – Presentation of the Lord – Luke 2:22-40

The revelation of Jesus continues from the Christmas season; perhaps here not so much to others as to his parents. Mary and Joseph were ordinary people being asked to do extraordinary things for Jesus. We forget they were human. They did not have it all figured out. Just 40 days ago they had no reservations in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' delivery.

Here they gain affirmation from Simeon and Anna that they were on the right track. They were doing what was prescribed for Jewish parents. This child was special, but they were to simply stay the course for now. How does God call us to great things yet with only limited understanding of how it will all play out? How might we be attentive to God's messages of affirmation through others or through prayers or Scripture?

February 9 – 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Mt. 5:13-16

"You are the light of the world," Jesus tells his disciples. Light has many purposes and benefits. Small lights can act as reference points for us. Like LEDs on many devices, they can indicate where to go and what is happening.

In our spiritual lives we can watch for these indicators in our prayers, Scriptures, and sacraments. More importantly, our lives and our attitudes can serve as indicators to others as to what a good follower of Christ can be.

Our behaviors can be the larger flood lights that not only indicate direction but are also efficacious. In that sense, they are sacramental. The light of Christ illuminates our lives and the lives of others we help. In our loving actions we bring forth both hope in dark times and progress toward a more loving family, workplace, or neighborhood.

Where are my opportunities to project Christ's rays of light on what to do and the grace to do it?

February 16 – 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Mt. 5:17-37

Jesus casts a new light on several laws of the Old Testament. While he does not discount the importance of not crossing these thresholds of sin, he now emphasizes the importance of even the direction of sinful thought.

Going all the way to murder or adultery is bad, but even letting ourselves begin to drift in that direction is bad enough. How might I reexamine my focus in life? How might I reorient myself to turn toward God and goodness even if I can only take small steps in that direction? How might this be far better than letting myself be drawn to even looking in the direction of evil?

February 23 – 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Mt. 5:38-48

"Love your enemies." This assertion by Jesus is perhaps the most radical and difficult of all. It is hard enough to love family members and friends all the time, much less people who seem to be my enemies.

No humans are perfect and even those with overall good intentions toward us can be annoying, and we occasionally strike back out of revenge or spite.

Still, those who seem overtly "out to get us" apparently deserve any ill will we have towards them. So it goes in a purely human emotional economy. Yet Jesus came not with a love of exchange, but with the love of God – love as a choice; love that is undeserved. This is the love of a radical man. He was. He is. He is so radical because He is God, too. Am I ready to love in imitation of this radical divine human? God help me.