

## *Even a Little Light Helps*

Several years ago at the outset of a monster storm that plagued a good part of the Midwest and Northeast, a late night power failure made for a rather comic situation. In total darkness in a cottage out in the country I stumbled around in an attempt to find some source of light. To my chagrin, I realized that not only did I not have any fresh batteries, but I couldn't for the life of me remember where I had put the matches for my stash of candles. It finally dawned on me that the only source of light I had was what came from my flip cell phone. Its eerie glow was just enough light for me to make it down the stairs to where I found one working flashlight. Even a little light helps.

The Gospel challenge today to be the light for the world is a bit daunting even for the most inspired disciple. We often have such a broad vision of the Reign of God that we might easily, and understandably, be overwhelmed. When we see a world torn by division, by injustice, by acrimony what is it that we could possibly do that would make any real difference? St. Paul confronts that apprehension:

*I came to you **in weakness and fear and much trembling,**  
and my message and my proclamation  
were **not** with persuasive words of wisdom,  
but with a demonstration of Spirit and power,  
so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom  
but **on the power of God.***

Throughout salvation history, God chooses the weak to confound the strong, the lowly to challenge the powerful. Whether it is the counter-cultural choosing of the youngest over the first born, as in the anointing of David, or the choice of a peasant girl to mother the Son of God, the least likely seem to be God's preference. Sometimes we need to remember that the advent of the Reign of God began with that young girl's humble fiat, "May it be done to me according to your word." Once we come to grips with the power evident in even the simplest human effort, we can find in the invitation to be the light of the world the humbling realization that even a little light helps.

When receiving news that a high school friend had suffered a stroke, one of our classmates got in touch with the rest of that class of over fifty years ago to send cards and letters to our old friend. The man's family began reading those letters to him and reported witnessing the impact those memories from across miles and years had on him. These were by no means heroic efforts, but their impact cannot be denied. Even a little light helps.

That's exactly the kind of discipleship today's Scriptures address, rooted in Paul's recognition that the power of our simple, humble acts rests not in us but in the power of God working in and through us. Theirs was not a call to be extraordinary, but only a call to be selfless.

The problem we are faced with is that sometimes we are so narrowly focused on our immediate needs that we fail to see the opportunities to shine the light of compassion and care beyond our own little world. Ethicist and author Julie Hanlon Rubio questioned whether the busyness that consumes so much of family life today might be a hindrance to this kind of discipleship, and offers a stunningly simple solution. She wrote:

*If we're doing sports all weekend long, how can we [as a family] possibly have time to do other things? Could we create community around a nursing home instead of a soccer field?*

The challenge of being a light in the darkness of loneliness and alienation, to say nothing of poverty and hunger, is not as daunting as we would think. What is needed is for each one of us to be willing to share ourselves with another. Some, like Mother Teresa of Calcutta, will shine as world-wide beacons of self-sacrificing compassion. But for most of us, our light will be like the simple glow of a flip cell phone, but surely enough light to make a difference, because, in the darkness, even a little light helps.

## *Sabbath Reflections for the Week*

*Where is **your** story in the Sacred Story this week?*

*What simple, humble act performed this week could be a little light that would make a difference in someone's life.*

*Reflect on a time in the past when God worked in and through you to bring about some good. Couch your reflection in the spirit of this week's letter to the Corinthians.*

*How can your family together be a “little light” in the darkness you might find around you?*