

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:1-5

In Him was life, and that light is our life. Life and light are such powerful images and experiences, as are their opposites, darkness and death. Darkness, of course, is really the absence of light, as death is the ending or absence of life—both are Nothing. St John proclaims that into the midst of this nothingness came the Word, filled with life, shining as a beacon unquenchable. Any sense that we humans might have of life or hope, of light or truth, comes from him, the Source, the Maker, our Savior.

Our lives are not His light; His life is our only hope. We are not His embers, but rather the ones he came to redeem from death and make alive in Him. The sublime testimony of St John is that the Word came to us, those “living in darkness and the shadow of death” and in divine grace opened to us the way and invited us to come to life.

No one likes to dwell on death and darkness. “This present darkness”, as St. Paul named it in his letter to the Ephesians, is the world and culture and empires that surround us, the powers and principalities, the media that bombard us with images and desires that are not of God, the systems we invent that never manage to solve the problem, governments that disappoint, the poor that are always with us, the march of disease and aging and human frailty. Darkest of all can be the blanket we hide ourselves under, or the solitary confinement we impose upon ourselves in fear of our neighbor or of those who would love us. Lord have mercy! Let Your light shine!

Into this present darkness came the Word, full of life, offering life. This is the great gift of Christmas—the life of men and women. Brought to us through Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, laid before us in human form, offered in holy love—“I am the Light” says Jesus. And how to respond? Without acknowledging the darkness and turning from it the Light eludes us. And only in that Light is there life for us or for any. Turn, and say Yes.

The great gift that we can give is not to Christ, for we are already His, but to those still in darkness. We cannot save them, our life is not their light, and rarely is our path the same that another must walk. But we can bear witness to the Light, the

true light that has come into the world. 'I once was lost, now I'm found, and I can point you to the Light, to Life, to Christ'.

A blessed Christmas to you,

David

Image: "The Nativity" George de la Tour