

## *Different Types of Darkness*

**Sunday, December 24, 2012**

**By Roy G. Pollina+**

There are different types of darkness and all lights are not the same. When I was a child I was afraid of the dark. The darkness in my bedroom at night was somewhat relieved by the light left on in the hallway. My fear of the dark was also somewhat diminished because I shared my bedroom with my older sister, Barbara. About the time I was in the 1<sup>st</sup> grade, Barbara decided to exert her privilege as the oldest child in the family and appealed to my parents for a later bedtime. To my horror, Barbara was allowed to stay up one half hour later than me. I had been condemned for, the first time in my life to face alone the terror of a dark bedroom by night. In the darkness, I remember sneaking out of the bed and tip toeing across the bedroom floor to the hallway. There for 30 minutes, I would sit huddled in a blanket safe in the glow of the hallway light.

The Book of Genesis tells us that on the first day of creation, the first thing God created was light. Not the sun, not the moon and not the stars, God created light. This was something more than natural, luminescence. There is an old joke that goes, "In the beginning there was nothing. Then God said, 'Let there be light.' And there was still nothing but now you could see it." Again, the light created on the first day should not be limited to radiant energy within the visible spectrum.

There are different types of darkness and all lights are not the same. The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." This year, when I read this familiar Christmas reading, the 1<sup>st</sup> reading of Christmas every year for the longer than I can remember, the scene this

verse brought to mind was a picture I am sure most of us have seen more than once in the last ten days. The picture I cannot get out of my mind is that of a line of the 1<sup>st</sup> graders hands on the shoulders of the child in front of them being led by a teacher out of Sandy Hook school in Newton, Connecticut. When the first responders gave the teachers the all clear for the children to safely leave the building, the teachers lined the children up and told them to put their hands on the child in front of them and to follow the leader. They were told to do this with their eyes tightly shut; under no circumstances were they to open their eyes. Teachers know that young children do not like the darkness and they are terrified of the dark with eyes shut. But the teachers knew that what they might see in the school hallways would be more terrifying than the dark.

"In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then, an angel of the Lord stood before them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified." Sometimes light, bright and unexpected, a lightning flash or a light bulb popping, can be terrifying. There is no description of the glory of the Lord other than it is a light that shines. "But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see I am bringing good news of great joy for all the people." In the night, in the darkness a light has come into the world. The Angel said, "For see, I am bringing good news of the great joy." Later, this dark night, the shepherds will say to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place." The Shepherds will find lying in a manger, wrapped in bands of cloth the Light of the World!

There are different types of darkness and all lights are not the same. I do not remember how old I was when a night light was no longer necessary; I am sure it happen before I got to college. Now a day, any light shining in my bedroom keeps me awake. A dark room does not hold me in fear. I cannot say the same thing about souls and darkness. My fear is not normally of the dark soul; my life has been blessed to the extent that I have faced few truly evil people. Mostly, I fear for the soul in darkness. I wonder how the person facing tragedy without the light of Christ in their life, I wonder how they keep from despair. What meaning and purpose for life is there for the person who does not believe in the living God? We know that the churches in Newtown, CT were full to bursting on Friday night December 14<sup>th</sup>. I would love to be proven wrong, but I fear those same churches were half full on Sunday December 9<sup>th</sup>, five days before the horrific tragedy. How dark does it have to get before we go to the light? Is it not better to teach our children to seek the light than to have them learn to live with darkness?

There are different types of darkness and all lights are not the same. There are lights in the world that burn bright and are very alluring. Our children will be drawn to these lights. Gold shines bright, fame can dazzle, and sensuality is flashy. Yet all these lights fade to darkness. Only the light of Christ has the power to overcome all of the darkness in the world. Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. There is no sin so dark that the love of Jesus cannot vanquish it. What evil kills, Jesus raises to new life never to die again. Only the light of Christ reveals our true selves: that we were created in the image and likeness of God, that destruction is not our end but union with the Father who loves us, that God's desire for us is so great that God

emptied himself of divinity and took on human flesh being born of a woman and laid in a manger.

There are different types of darkness and all lights are not the same. I have been looking forward to this service for months. Back in October we bought the candles that you were given when you entered church tonight. At the end of the service we will have some fun, some serious fun, with light and darkness. After the final blessing, I will light my taper from the Christ Candle and the lights of the church will be darkened. I will light the tapers of the Eucharistic Ministers and then, we will light the candles of those sitting at the end of the pews. From there the light will be shared with the others in the pew until all of the candles are lit. All of this will happen while we sing Silent Night. As we finish the hymn, the church should be a spectacle of darkness and light. I want you to consider the sacramental nature of this candle lighting. How one candle brings light. How one candle expels darkness as its light spreads to other candles. These candles are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace. Let the light of Christ in your soul spread the light to some dark place. Someone you know is walking in darkness and needs you to share your light. If you remember to do that then you have found the Christmas light. You have found the Christ child, the Light of the world.

Merry Christmas, Amen.