

**February 5, 2017 A Soft Light Homily:** Brothers and sisters, in the late 1960's Malcolm Muggeridge, a respected print journalist and television personality in his native England, was assigned by the B.B.C. to film a documentary at Mother Teresa's home for the destitute and dying in Calcutta, India. Accompanying Mr. Muggeridge were members of an elite B.B.C. film crew, who had worked with Mr. Muggeridge in the past. When the time came to record scenes from Mother Teresa's Home for the dying, it was getting dark. The photographer, Ken McMillan, protested that he did not have the right film for such poor lighting conditions; whatever they shot would not come out. Mr. Muggeridge was undeterred. His photographer was ordered to go ahead with the filming. With a single, small light, they went ahead and recorded some footage. When the film was later developed, the interior of the home for the dying was bathed in a particularly soft light. It was some of the best footage the photographer had ever taken! Mr. Muggeridge called it "the first photographic miracle".

We recall the words just uttered from the gospel: "Your light must shine before others, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father". (Mt.5:16) In her ministry to the poor and dying, those words of Christ were embraced by the holy woman, Mother Teresa, and put to good effect.

In the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, we hear of a lamp kindled. "Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lamp stand, where it gives light to all in the house". (Mt.5:15) In his commentary on Matthew's gospel the scripture scholar, F.C. Fenton, is of the view that God the Father is the one who lights the lamp. He writes, "God is lighting a lamp by means of the teaching Jesus is giving to his disciples and the purpose of this lamp is to give light to the whole world". "This light will be displayed to all when Jesus sends his disciples to all nations". In the Old Testament, the Word of God is compared to light. We read in the psalms, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path". Light is the first work of God the creator and source of life.

What lessons can we derive from today's gospel? First, a light is first and foremost something which is to be seen. We must never, in any circumstance, disguise or conceal our faith. Our Christian faith must be visible to all. Our light must shine before others! To recall the words of our first reading from the prophet Isaiah, "If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday". (Is.58:10)

Our good deeds must draw attention, not to ourselves, but only to the Lord Himself. The words uttered by Christ on the eve of his passion come to mind. "I pray not only for them, but also for those who believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you Father are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me." (Jn.17:20-21)

In these dark times of unrest and social upheaval we must be mindful of Christ's words to each of us, namely, "You are the light of the world". (Mt.5:14) The temptation to be "like everybody else" is a daily struggle. We are different. We are called to holiness. Truth is not measured by opinion polls, but the gospel of Jesus Christ and his teaching Church. Christ is "the Way, the Truth and the Life". If we can no longer distinguish between light and darkness, we are doomed.

Let the world know we are Christians by our love for God and our neighbor! Let our light shine!

Amen!