

Salt – Light – Hope

reflections and care for those who serve in pandemic
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Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

—Matthew 5:15-16

Light. This is who we are—lovely, numinous light. Light of the world, Jesus tells us (Matthew 5:14-16). We are built to shine rather than crouch under baskets. Paul writes something similar in Philippians 2:

“Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.” The irony of this verse in the current moment struck me this morning, since our seclusion may well feel more like crouching and less like shining.

Paul exhaustively exhorts the church at Philippi here to adopt the mind of Christ, to work in concert with each other, to root themselves solidly and joyfully in the Gospel, to shine in the midst of people and institutions that are corrupt. To be light in and to the world—beacons of hope and love. To be light to the world means to be other-directed. And this makes sense because the light, the hope, the love, the grace that shines through us is meant for others to see.

Thomas Merton writes of one numinous moment in downtown Louisville of all places when he is struck by an overwhelming vision of light:

I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world, the world of renunciation and supposed holiness... This sense of liberation from an illusory

difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud... I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.

May we so shine!