



UT CHRISTUS REGNET

A publication of the School Sisters of Christ the King



The *Light* shines in the darkness

“O send out
your light
& your truth;
let them lead me.”

(Psalm 43:3)

I had the recent experience, again, of “having my eyes opened just a little” to see more clearly how my interior experience was driving some of my behaviors in ways that were not glorifying God or serving my Sisters, as I had considered myself doing. The first awareness brought a wave of shame over me, but as I sat with that shame in Jesus’ light it was quickly dispelled and replaced by real repentance and a great gratitude and awe for God’s merciful love and goodness in revealing the truth to me.

How the enemy of our souls would like to convince us either that we have no sin or that we are hopeless failures, that our sins and failings make us unredeemable! In this way he attempts to steal our true identity as beloved sons and daughters of the Father, and to identify us by our sins and our faults, which has the effect of making us feel shame and wanting to hide from God.

On the other hand, the Church frequently places on our lips the words of King David in Psalm 31: “In you, O Lord, I take refuge. Let me never be put to shame.” It is neither by perfect performance nor by hiding that we can overcome shame, but by running to Jesus, asking him to shine his light in our darkness.

In the winter darkness, as we celebrate the liturgies of Advent and Christmas, we will be frequently invited to turn to the light, to rejoice in the light, to live as children of the light. “Arise, O Jerusalem, stand upon the height and look toward the east, and see your children gathered from west and east, at the word of the Holy One....For God will lead Israel with joy, in the light of His glory, with the mercy and righteousness that come from Him” (Baruch 5:5, 9).

When Jesus, the true light, came into the world, He revealed to us the love of the Father, who sent him “not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him” (John 3:17). As we prepare for and celebrate Christmas, may we all be more deeply imbued with this truth and filled with gratitude to God for the great gift of his own beloved Son to be our Savior and Redeemer.

In the Heart of the King, I am,
Mother Margaret Mary, C.K.
Mother Margaret Mary, CK



In this Issue ...

Merry Christmas! In this issue we contemplate the mystery of the light of Christ in the midst of darkness. Whether through illness, desolation, disagreements or other types of struggle, we all experience times when Christ seems far away or we feel alone. May Emmanuel, whose name means “God with us,” draw each of us more deeply into the light of his truth and love.

A Picture Study

Title: The Annunciation
Artist: Henry Ossawa Tanner
Date: 1898
Medium: Oil on Canvas
Location: Philadelphia Museum of Art

Tanner's Background: Henry Tanner was born in Pittsburgh, PA, in 1859. His father was a bishop for the African Methodist Episcopal Church and his mother was an escaped slave from Virginia. In 1879, Tanner became the first African American student in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. He went on to study and work in Paris, France, where he spent the rest of his career.



A Closer Look: One of the striking aspects of Tanner's Annunciation is his choice to depict the Archangel Gabriel as a pillar of light. Fire drew Moses to the burning bush, where he received his mission to free the Israelites from slavery to the Egyptians. Another "pillar of fire" led the Israelites from slavery into freedom. In both cases, God was not only leading Moses and the Israelites physically, but also teaching them how to live in freedom. Gabriel brings the same message to Mary. The "true light that shines on every man was coming into the world" (John 1:9). Like Moses, we see Mary on "holy ground" as she gazes on the angel, contemplating his invitation.

Consider: Take a moment to ponder Mary's face, her expression and demeanor. Tanner's life-like setting seems to be catching Mary in the midst of her ordinary, daily routine.

How is she taking in Gabriel's message?

What is she feeling?

How has the True Light enlightened her life?

By Sister Mary Gabriel, CK

At the service of the Light

It was made of paper, cardboard, and Lego pieces, and carefully arranged with glue. I could tell it was a building of some kind, with columns and a small red box in the center. I looked up from the cardboard creation at Henry, one of my second graders who just arrived to the classroom, and asked, “What is it?”

“A temple! See?” he responded, his eyes bright, “There’s the tabernacle inside, where Jesus is. You know, I basically made myself, because I am a temple. Jesus is inside of me.”

Henry intuited, through his purity of heart, a deep truth about himself: he was a temple. What is a temple? The answer lies in Henry’s words: a temple is a place where God dwells. In the Old Testament, the temple was the physical building where the glory of the Lord abided. In the New Testament, Jesus revealed that each heart is called to be that sacred place where the Lord comes to dwell. St. Paul says, “Do you not know that you are God’s temple, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). At all moments since our Baptism the glory of the Trinity is sanctifying us from within. He is intensely present, and when a heart is stilled, open, and listening, then He can take His rest there.

Bishop Flavin told our Sisters, “You are a sacristan, called to adorn the little temples of God, tabernacles of the Holy Spirit.” The gravity of this great calling has instilled in me a kind of awe as I approach the hearts of my students.

It is the job of the sacristan to keep the church in good order so as to preserve its dignity. The sacristan busies himself with humble tasks such as sweeping and collecting dead leaves from under the plants. He makes the sanctuary lovely by arranging flowers and lighting the candles, both of which show the worthiness of the One to whom we give everything. He is the keeper of the tabernacle key, guarding the Body of the Lord. He

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Bishop Flavin

takes care to make sure that the altar cloth and all the linens are carefully pressed and prepared for the sacrifice in which they will play a crucial role. He arranges everything in beauty, from the cruets to the chalice veil. After the sacrifice of the Mass, it is the sacristan who gathers the used linens, carefully purifying each one, to reverence the Body and Blood they have touched. And in all this, the sacristan is hidden. When people enter a magnificent church, they think immediately of God. They rarely think of His sacristan, who prefers to serve in anonymity.

It is not difficult see what Bishop Flavin was calling us to be. As mothers of souls, we place ourselves at the service of the little temples in our care, working in hidden ways to keep everything in good order. We prepare each soul for the great sacrifice to which it is called, for the presence of the Lord to be made manifest. Often we can see the gifts with which God has adorned each heart, and we work to cultivate these gifts and guard them against the attacks of the enemy. When people meet these little temples, they are touched by their purity and joy, and immediately think of God. What an honor it is to be a spiritual sacristan, working in small and hidden ways to make beautiful the dwelling-places of God.

By Sister John Marion, CK



How can you be a *Light* to others?

We asked some of our students and Sisters. This is what they said:

“By living your faith with joy and shining that joy to others.” Ray, Grade 6

“I think we have a candle in our hearts and when we do good things the fire shines out more.” Louise, Grade 1

“By smiling at others.” Asher, Grade 6

“By simply loving others at all times no matter how they treat me.” Paxton, Grade 8

“I think of what is the best thing I can do right now and lead by example.” Ambrose, Grade 6



“Do everything for the glory of God.”
Helena, Grade 6

“Doing small acts of charity.” Angel, Grade 8

“By being there even if I feel like I have better things to do.”
Sarah, Grade 7



“I can be a light to others by asking them to pray with me.” Michaela, Grade 7

“By being a cheerleader.” Eva, Grade 1

“Be who you are and don’t try to hide your identity behind false things.”
Sophia, Grade 6

“Encouraging others when they are down.” Elizabeth, Grade 7

“By showing virtue.” Violet, Grade 8

“If the light is in you, you can do anything.” Gabriel, Grade 6

“Giving others my full attention when they are speaking.”

Sister Regina Marie



Upon you the Lord *shines*

The steely sky reflected well what my interior experience had been of late: a dense fog, seemingly impenetrable. The gray clouds and my sadness intertwined in my mind and heart.

I had plenty of reasons to find joy: a fresh start in the apostolate, a beautiful class of vibrant students, a loving community of Sisters ... why did it seem like the joy was somehow out of reach, outside of me, like beads of water that rest on top of a leaf, and instead of being absorbed, roll off onto the ground?

That morning at Mass, the words of one of the readings jumped off the page at me: “See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; But upon you the Lord shines, and over you appears his glory (Isaiah 60:2).” I had a sense that this message was for me. If the first part of the sentence was true—yes, there were definitely clouds and darkness—then the second part must be true also—upon me the Lord is shining and

pouring out his glory. **A fresh hope arose in my heart.**

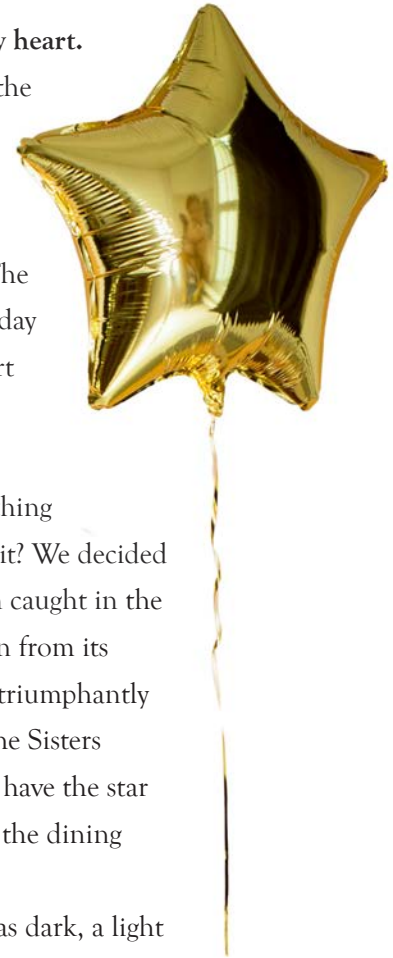
I continued to pray with this text, and the grace stayed with me, gently unfolding. A few weeks later, it was January 21st, the feast of St. Agnes, which, because it landed on a Sunday, we celebrated in every way, except liturgically! The kindnesses expressed by the Sisters on my feast day were manifold, and a crevice opened in my heart to be able to receive them.

That afternoon, on a frigid walk under the charcoal sky, my Sisters and I spotted something in the frozen and desolate cornfield. What was it? We decided to investigate and discovered a gold star balloon caught in the remnant cornstalks. After unwinding the ribbon from its stronghold, we saw that it still had helium. We triumphantly carried our trophy back to the Motherhouse. The Sisters decided that, since it was my feast day, I should have the star balloon, and they lovingly tied it to my chair in the dining room.

That night at dinner, though the sky was dark, a light shone over me—the light glinting off the gold of the star balloon—and yes, the light of Jesus, shining out from my heart.

The grace I received through God’s voice in Sacred Scripture and a shiny balloon was not only for me. It overflowed into the classroom as I shared the story of God’s providence with my students. And that year, for Confirmation, each student received, not only the grace of a deeper manifestation of the Spirit, but also a gold star balloon. I wanted each one of them to know and remember: “Upon you the Lord shines, and over you appears his glory.”

By Sister Mary Agnes, CK





Gathered with fellow clergy and consecrated women at the Institute for Catholic Liberal Education's (ICLE) National Conference held in Lincoln, NE.

Jesus, My Light

When I was a child, my sister Kitty and I shared a room. I was afraid of the dark and insisted on keeping the closet light on so that I could fall asleep. Kitty liked the dark, but, being the good big sister that she was, she agreed to leave the sliding door open a crack each night so that I could feel safe.

Darkness or dryness in prayer can bring about similar responses of fear, anxiety, confusion and even hopelessness. When I experience this spiritual darkness I long for light, clarity and consolation.

One of the most poignant times of prayer for me this year was when I reflected on an ancient homily from the Divine Office on Holy Saturday. It spoke of the time after Jesus' crucifixion when he descended to the dead and hastened to find our first parents. They were longing to be freed from the pain of darkness and suffering. Upon finding them, Jesus approached with such eagerness and delight, calling them out of darkness and filling them with his love and his light. As I reflected, I asked Jesus to enter into my spiritual and emotional darkness. He came to me in my darkness of spirit. He spoke to me as he spoke to Adam and Eve, inviting me to "leave this place" and come into his light. Light pervaded my soul and I experienced an outpouring of his care, his compassion and his healing touch. May he be praised!

Jesus is my light! A song of long ago that I have always had an affection for has these lines: "I want to walk as a child of the Light, I want to follow Jesus." He is my loving King, my light. To stay in his light I try to be faithful to a personal and loving conversation with the Lord, daily letting him know my thoughts and showing him my feelings. Other times I've experienced his light are when I have shared my darkness with a trusted friend, who acts as a bridge to the Lord, who will see, know and care for me.

May Jesus be your light, your love, your King.

By Mother Joan Paul, CK

A reading from an ancient homily for Holy Saturday

Truly he goes to seek out our first parent like a lost sheep; he wishes to visit those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death ...

The Lord goes in to them holding his victorious weapon, his cross ... And grasping [Adam's] hand he raises him up, saying: **"Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light."**

"I am your God, who for your sake became your son, who for you and your descendants now speak and command with authority those in prison:

Come forth,
and those in darkness:
Have light,
and those who sleep:
Rise."

Blessed Christmas!



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“We are disciples of Christ.
Christ goes before us.
The world needs his light!”

(Pope Leo XIV)

You and your loved ones will be remembered in our
Christmas novena of Masses at Villa Regina Motherhouse.