

In recent memory, Toronto has been plunged into darkness. In the winter of 2013, we were plunged into darkness by the ice storm...not so much in the city, but living in the suburbs it was dark...and because it was winter...it was cold. We didn't have much sunlight, shortest days of the year, and so it was much more difficult to cope. When things were getting dark, we needed light. It could be anything...a candle, a flashlight...or even the flashlight app on the phone...anything that could scatter the darkness. I remember very clearly it being a Sunday, having Mass by candlelight...and the first thing I did when Mass was over was get some candles at the shop before they ran out. There I found these lanterns which required tea light candles. Although small, these tea light candles would radiate in the darkness because of the plexi-glass. However, after a few uses of them, they stopped functioning because the plexi-glass got dirty and dimmed the light. For these lanterns to be effective, the plexi-glass had to be cleaned...purified continually so that the light can shine forth in the darkness.

We are like these lanterns. With Christ as our light, given to us from the moment of our baptism, we are to continually seek the Lord to purify our hearts so that His light might shine forth in the darkness through our joyful witness.

An example of being a lantern for Christ's light is in the two figures we meet in the Gospel, Simeon and Anna. When the Lord Jesus came into His temple to fulfill Malachi's prophecy, both Simeon and Anna were waiting with hope for the Messiah to come and set the people of God free. They are the ones who Malachi was referring to when he writes: *Who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears.* When Simeon encounters the infant saviour in the temple, he is filled with great joy. Here we can imagine as he took the child into his arms that he would brake out into song singing the psalm: *Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors! That the king of glory may come in* and would praise God for allowing him to see with his own eyes the light and the salvation of the world. Anna, too, as she encountered the Lord was filled with joy and began to spread the good news that the redemption of Jerusalem was at hand.

Simeon and Anna, as lanterns, allowed Christ's light to shine forth through their words and actions revealing that Jesus is our light and the effect of receiving that light into our life is joy - the true and authentic joy that can only come when we encounter Jesus.

Like Simeon and Anna, we receive the light of Christ into our lives and allow that light to radiate out with joyful witness. Unfortunately, like the lanterns from the shop, our sinfulness creates dirt on the plexi-glass dimming the light of Christ. And with Christ's light dimmed how can we be joyful witnesses? Sin robs us of the joy that comes with our encounter with Jesus. And one of the dominant sins of all times is pride which produces disobedience (my will not thy will be done), self-seeking, self-indulgence and self-absorption. We see God and his rules as inhibiting freedom and constantly we are tested and tempted to do things "my way" and not "God's way". Yet, God comes to us and with his mother and our mother also, shows us the way of obedience. As the fathers of the Church write, to undo the disobedience of Adam and Eve, Jesus and

Mary become subject to the law to which they did not have to follow. Mary, ever virgin, would have had no need to be purified according to the Mosaic laws found in Leviticus and Numbers. Jesus did not need to be presented in the temple...He is the temple...he is the glory of the Lord...he is the ONE high priest who offers sacrifice for us all...obedient unto to death and rising from the dead. Yet, they follow the law to show us how to live our lives as joyful witnesses - lanterns of Christ's light by being obedient.

When we do sin and are disobedient to God's laws, we turn back to Jesus our light and cause of our joy by going to the Sacrament of mercy, Confession. In turning back to Jesus, he will purify our hearts like a refiners fire. He will restore us so that we can once again reflect the light of Christ as joyful witnesses.

So, let the King of glory enter our hearts today. Let he who takes away the sins of the world, enter our hearts and purify us to make us presentable to God by his grace - a grace that we receive in this Mass, in the sacrament that we are about to receive. Open your hearts to him, and pray that he might make us the best lanterns that radiate the light of Christ in the darkness through our joyful witness.