

- Last Sunday I spoke about how throughout the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, Holy Mother Church repeatedly reminds us that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World.
- Through the use of candles, as well as through the readings of Mass, we are reminded repeatedly that Christ is the Light that shines in the darkness, the light that the darkness cannot overcome.
- And this symbol of Christ as our light found its culmination last Sunday as we celebrated the beautiful Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the feast during which the candles used at Mass for the upcoming year are blessed.
- Now, after 2 months of meditating upon Christ as our Light, and after learning last week from the aged Simeon that the Christ Child is “a sign that will be contradicted,” today’s Gospel parable shows us that contradiction between Christ’s light and the devil’s darkness.
- As we know from the parable, the evil one is at work in our world, and he has many who help him sow his dark cockle – even in the beautiful fields of our Church.
- The evils of Hollywood and big media, the corruption of corporate capitalists, as well as the devilish politics of so many of our elected officials, are the enemies that are easily seen.
- Unfortunately, the devil has far more subtle agents as well. For example in our Church, we must always be weary of those who preach of God’s mercy while at the same time bending and twisting the moral truths of our Catholic faith.
- There seems to be no end to the legions that the evil one can call upon to do his bidding.
- But rather than live in sorrowful resignation of this fact, we must fight nonetheless to win souls for Christ. This we do by being the light of Christ out in our dark world.
- Last Sunday, we received blessed candles at the beginning of Mass, a potent reminder of the tremendous gift of enlightenment we first received at our baptism, when the light of Christ first entered our souls to dispel the darkness we inherited from our first parents.
- At our baptism, we were each given a lighted candle with an instruction from the priest that we have received the Light of Christ through that august Sacrament, and that, by living as a child of the light, we are to keep that flame of faith alive in our hearts, so that when the Lord comes we may go out to meet with all the saints.
- Those lighted candles we receive at our baptism are a sign of the divine radiance of Christ, Who came to expel the darkness of sin and division and to make the whole world shine with the brilliance of His eternal light.
- Those baptismal candles also remind us how brightly our souls should shine when we go to meet Christ at the end of our lives.
- This is why I love the saints of our Church so much. Each of the saints of our Church is like a brilliant, burning torch whose good works shine brightly for all to see.
- Each is like a lighthouse, and by their lives and good works they shine out as beacons into our dark and fallen world, illuminating for us the pathway to the safe harbor of sanctity and union with our Triune Lord.
- Many saints of the Church, like St. Benedict and St. Augustine here to my left, shined forth in such major ways that they not only enlightened the Church, but the world!
- Think about it. We know good St. Benedict as the Father of Western Monasticism. It was he who not only founded the Benedictine Order, but who provided the template for the way monasticism is practiced in the western Church.

- We know as well that it was his monasteries that persevered our cultural heritage during the so-called “dark ages.” Without St. Benedict and the incredible legacy he left to the Church, western civilization would no doubt be greatly impoverished.
- And dear St. Augustine, perhaps more so than any other person in the Church’s history, has given shape and form to our theology. Even though he died nearly 1600 years ago, all who study the Church’s theology keenly feels his influence even today!
- Yet St. Augustine’s greatest legacy is not his enlightening theology, but rather his autobiography – known as his *Confessions* – which give voice to the dynamics of spiritual conversion, of coming to see the light of Christ, better than any other work known to man.
- Of course not every saint accomplished works as grand as St. Benedict and St. Augustine. Not every saint’s brilliant light was placed on a lampstand for all to see.
- Some saints lived quite hidden lives. Perhaps these “hidden” saints are the most inspiring and consoling saints of all, for these hidden saints show us that great holiness can be attained even through very ordinary and simple means.
- Think of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower, who grew up quietly in Normandy, entered a Carmelite monastery at the age of 15, and died when she was only 24.
- In her short life she accomplished nothing extraordinary, and she was not well known outside of her family or religious community. Yet now, just a little more than 127 years after her death, she is considered one of the greatest saints of the Church!
- This is because of her spiritual legacy known as “the Little Way,” which teaches us that holiness is not attained by accomplishing much in this life, but rather by loving much.
- St. Thérèse wrote that true glory is reached not by performing striking works for all to see, but by hiding oneself and practicing virtue “in such a way that the left hand knows not what the right is doing” (cf. *Story of a Soul*, Manuscript A. IV; Mt. 6:3).
- The Little Flower thus teaches us that great holiness is achievable for all of us, no matter what our state in life, no matter how small our accomplishments may be.
- Thus, each of the Church’s saints, in his or her own way, not only shines forth like a brilliant light, but through his or her holiness is an inspiration and a consolation to those of us struggling for sanctity ourselves.
- What we learn from beholding their lights is that all growth in holiness begins with those little decisions we make each day to be good, to be charitable. So if you wish to be a saint, simply begin with little acts of charity towards others.
- When we concern ourselves with the needs of others before the needs of ourselves in little things, our wills naturally are strengthened and the light of Christ within us grows brighter so that we can love our Lord even more – and this makes us holy.
- This is precisely why St. Paul encourages us today to put on “the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty [and] patience,” being willing to bear with other and to forgive others, and above all else to “have charity, which is the bond of perfection.”
- As we see the darkness of the devil at work in our world today, we can be tempted to despair or cynicism. But neither despair nor cynicism accomplish anything worthwhile; they only drag us closer to the darkness of the devil.
- Rather, let us be intent upon shining with the light of Christ in this dark world of ours, most especially through the little, ordinary actions of our daily lives – and may we do so with a humility that glorifies God and draws those souls in darkness into the light of Christ.
- May we all be saints someday.