

Head and Heart

7th January 2024 First Sunday in Ordinary Time Epiphany

Readings

Genesis 1: 1 - 5

Psalm 29

Acts 19: 1 - 7

Mark 1: 4 - 11



Let's have some light here ... again!

I love storms and I fear storms! It is both the fear and the love, the drama, power, and beauty, which draws me to them. I am thinking of real storms I have known, tropical and sometimes the severe ones we know in the north, and that one in the south Lebanon mountains pictured here in today's psalm. It's a favourite of mine among all the psalms. I have a framed copy of it in my study.

This breathtaking account of thunder and lightning, of winds stripping oak trees of their leaves, invites me to join the chorus, *'Glory to God.'* It draws me in faith and fear, closer to the Father. Perhaps we all have something of the love and the fear of creation as scientific exploration and the search for *'how it all began'* brings us pictures of unfathomable universes. The Genesis scripture reading may not contain the detail we know today, but it does draw us to a fear and love of our origins *when God created our universe* and when amid the enormity of Space there was stirred, like a mere speck of dust, a planet destined to be the stage for an enactment of divine purposes! *Earth* was then, formless, and desolate, engulfed in total darkness obscuring the raging oceans which had developed on its surface. It was the water needed to bring life into being. And then the spirit of God entered. He moved like a mighty wind, causing a tumultuous merging of material and spiritual life. In the darkness a life-plan was unfolding. Then all creation shuddered with a master's first word – *Let's have light!* So, in the course of time the darkness was divided by the sunlight – for the sun, like the creator, had been waiting there from the beginning! Waiting to mould a glorious blue planet, full of life and love, hope and faith.

It will be obvious how, like the first enquirers, my factual knowledge is very limited – unlike my faith in God who has made himself real to me. Like those first people of faith, I acknowledge the smallness of mind which draws me to love and fear what I see. It prompts me to ask, *'where does God fit into all this? How is my whole being, mind and spirit, see all this?' It stirs my wonder and longing to know, not just the creation details, but Him, the Creator, and to be part of his purpose for the planet and for all life upon it.*

This takes on a greater sense of awe as I read the other scriptures for today and see how God continually repeats that first lightning epiphany, merging spirit and humanity again, and again! We have marked Christmas with many lights, remembering how, again, darkness was shattered as Spiritual life merged with material and God entered our life in the same way we do – as a child – a Son who was and is the likeness of himself. The coming was wrapped in a parcel of angels and heavenly glory.

Soon, a prophetic herald appeared in the Judaeen desert, at a regular place of baptism east of Jerusalem, to announce the imminent arrival of a great Saviour for all people. The baptisms marked further merging with God's spirit. At that, time against a restless background of military oppression accompanied with national and religious corruption, there was an intense, universal sense of need for a Saviour. War, poverty, hunger simmered throughout the land and John, the Baptist, had been given God's promise that the divine spirit would merge again with hearts and minds as people returned to live God's way. John, like Jesus, called for personal acts of faith to be shown in life-changing repentance and openness to the Spirit in everyday life. Jesus spoke of it as like being born again. It was one more of God's *light-breaking or epiphany/faith* moments. The Word was spoken again – *Let's have light in our world – yours and Mine!*

Luke relates how it happened once more when the world had seen the height, depth, and breadth of God's love in Jesus' life and self-giving. Many were ready for God, the Holy Spirit to merge with their personal life and then through them in the life of the world. The light grew brighter with vision and hope. Luke gives another instance when God did it again in Ephesus. It was with a handful of first *Christian* believers learning the scriptures, knowing the spirit of Jesus in their lives, their fellowship, their city. The fires were kindled. The light and power of God's love was growing stronger.

The light of God is still growing brighter. Apostle John assured us the darkness will never extinguish it. There are times, as in today's world, when the light seems to flicker and its power grows less but there are many more occasions when the Word is spoken again and faith, hope, love, flare like a renewed candle flame for us and billions like us.

I am sure many will cherish moments entertaining an excited toddler, with one of those silly games we play with them. I recall one such infant listening to the mystery of her own voice on an ancient tape-recorder. With happy excitement, waiting for the re-play she pleaded - *'Again, again. Do it again – for me!'*

That should surely be the Epiphany prayer of all who with childlike faith find courage to say, *'Lord, let the light come. Do it again. Do it again for me!'*

A Prayer (with Psalm 29 in mind)

Lord, there are times when your creation works cause me to think deeply about you:
to feel the smallness of my mind, my heart, my life.
Storms can make me to listen to your words:
giving me a 'whole-being' glow,
humbling me to learn, to trust and to renew my love for you.
There are times when morning and evening glow remind me of
how, like the sun, you are always there.
You are the Light which is the source of all life.
Light which reaches even me,
Inviting me to pray – 'Let that light shine all over the world,
ending all life's conflicts and needless sufferings
as your love reaches all people.
with peace and healing, compassion and sharing.



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