

Silent Word, Shining

‘Shine like lights in the universe, as you hold out the Word of life’ (Phil. 2: 15, 16).

A season of silence ends: now back to airports, bills, staff management, and decisions, big and small. 2020 marks our 40th year as a ministry. I shall covet quiet around the edges to reflect on where we’ve been, where next.

It helps to trust the Word has been sown deeply in our hearts and will bring forth fruit—His will deepening, growing, breaking forth as He sees fit. We position ourselves before Him as to reflect something glorious, His very Presence fanning into flame what pleases Him, be it at full volume or in quiet encounters.

I caught a glimpse of this last week as my son Nick preached an excellent sermon on the ‘holy family.’ (After much therapy, he wisely made no allusions to ours.) Afterwards, a young woman unknown to me but a big fan of Nick asked me who I was. When she discovered I was the preacher’s dad, she kind of fawned over me and I demurred: ‘Reflected glory.’

So it is with each of us. The Light has dawned in our darkness—the Word has found good ground in the broken soil of our lives and pleads to unfurl. God’s glory goads us, His silence begs to be broken by the Word declared!

Here we see the genius of this Church season. Advent begins with the promise of Light, with Christmas the Light dawns in Jesus, and now Epiphany—the showing of Christ through the witness of our lives. Epiphany calls us out of what can become an ingrown culture of missals, beads, postcard saints and swoony devotion. Yes, the chaos outside and within demands quiet. But the Word demands a hearing through the story of our messy radiant lives.

Show Christ! Use words! Break the silence between you and a host of delightful creatures in darkness who listen only to their own soundtracks and meandering, fractured narratives. I want everyone to know that Jesus can heal ‘LGBT+’ anything. He surpasses our tendency to settle on misbegotten ‘feeling’ states.

In saying nothing, we stoke deceived powerbrokers who criminalize our good news. Every new presidential candidate wants to outlaw ‘reparative therapy.’ Remember, this is not about a type of counseling. This is about silencing anyone with the courage to say: ‘I’m not sure LGBT+ identification is the best expression of your true self. Let’s walk together in Jesus; He will show you who you are...’

Our transformed lives say it best. Let us heed God’s word to Jeremiah: ‘If you utter worthy, not worthless words, you will be my spokesperson’ (Jer. 15:19). To be sure, silence helps us to separate the wheat from the chaff, what to say and what not. St. John Paul II counsels us wisely:

'We need to learn a silence that allows the Other to speak when and how He wishes.'

Sensitized by silence, the Word commands a hearing—treasures from darkness ready to flair into fireworks. This is our season to shine: God revealing Himself through our witness of His transforming love.

I won't soon forget Jesus' invitation last November to declare that love before the Kansas City Council. Sandwiched between the darkened minds of that Council and several rows of disgruntled LGBT+ers, I declared several truths that provoked satanic rage. A roar went up as the Spirit directed me to declare that persons like me deserve choice, that we who pursue chastity are now the endangered minority, and that the Council was in no way ready to vote on something they knew nothing about.

Surprised by my own words, I realized they were not entirely mine, in the Spirit of Lk. 11: 11 and 12: 'When you are brought before rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.'

As the Word received in silence burns in us, fan it into flames. Speak. Entrust the fire to heaven. Shine.

'If I say, "I will not mention Him or speak any more in His Name", His Word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot' (Jer. 20: 9).

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