

God of God, Light of Light (Gen 1:1-4; Joh 1:43-51)

* Today we start with the story I used once as an illustration for the article posted in our Newsletter dated last month. The story was told by a man who heard the conversation of three little girls when he walked down the street. The girls were staring at a shop window filled with Christmas decorations and talking. The man noted that two of them described the toys and gifts in the window; meantime the third was quiet about. It aroused the man's attention; so, he stopped behind them and listened. As he followed that talk, he noted that the silent girl couldn't see. Later the man said, *It was most interesting to hear how two girls described the different articles to their blind friend.* Surely it is a difficult task for the young tellers to describe a "twinkling star" and especially for their blind listener to understand because she cannot help herself even with a touch.

* Speaking broadly it is again quite right that if there is a vacancy in knowledge or vocabulary, a narrator is not able to break down the subject in fashion way. Similarly a listener cannot understand a subject as the result of a vacancy in his/her knowledge. But where the Word speaks of God's work of art, a chance to understand it correctly is completely hopeless until the stumbling block is removed and we receive an ability to get a handle on that matter, (Mat13:13).

* According to the Scripture, at the beginning the world sat in darkness up to the time when God created the light making the invisible things visible. The same idea flashed through darkness where the human race was found before Christ's advent. People were hopeless to see and understand the vital things due to their spiritual blindness. That is why God sent the Light which was foreseen by the prophets, *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined,* (Isa 9:2). Here the prophet didn't speak of the sunlight, but the Light mentioned in the prologue of John's Gospel as well as in the Nicene Creed. The first mentioned source says, *In him was life, and the life was the light of men,* (Joh 1:4). And with the second, it says, *I believe, ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only – begotten Son of God, ... God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God*

* Thanks be to Almighty God who has already come in the flesh, full of grace and truth. He was named by the Father – "Savior," (Mat 1:21); and he has dwelt in the world as oppose to the darkness, (Joh 1:11,12). So the Light has come, the Light is shining, and the stumbling block is removed from a 'cave,' and both the living and the dead are able to see, (Mat 4:16; 1Pe 3:19). When Jesus began the ministry of our salvation, he called people to his attention, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (v.17). From that time up to now the Light is shining making the work of proclamation acceptable to the human mind.

* And here we call your attention to the meaning of Epiphany so far as all together we are travelling through the Epiphany season. While on this earth and going out, sometimes you will hear of Jesus in the symbolic language of Epiphany. You might have noticed that in the course of this discussion the Christ was linked to the Light. We did it because there is the undoubted connection between the meaning of the Greek word ἐπιφαίνω and the very nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus the combination of the verb *phainō* - *to shine*, with the preposition *epí* - *over, upon or to*, points at one who shines light upon men's spiritual and intellectual faculties. The Christ came into the world as the natural light comes with the risen sun pouring everlasting day for all people, Jews and Gentiles, (Lk 2:32).

* And here is another insight; speaking of the first day of creation, the Scripture traces the newborn light back to the Son of God who has this light within himself. As he entered into the realm of darkness possessed by human flesh, he brought the ongoing conflict with the diabolic forces within it to the next point, - the people's crafty thoughts and wild desires he has revealed along with the victory over the king of darkness and all his forces. By virtue of Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection from the dead, a great number of hopeless people have been freed from their spiritual death and led by the way of righteousness.

Now it makes sense to proclaim the way of life for there is no time like the present.

* Thanks be to God the Father of the Light; with His coming He has shone upon us in His Word and deeds. We've somehow perceived Him by our inner sense and followed Him by faith. The Scripture abundantly assures us that what we have seen and experienced are not night dreams along with fiction, but the reality has been seen and experienced by many other people - by the apostles and evangelists in the first place and then those who have been able to see and understand after them. Significantly, our gospel reading from (Joh 1:43-51) is a remarkable illustration of how the *Light of Light*, and *very God of very God* have been perceived and followed.

* Actually, the story took its start from (v. 36) where the Baptist pointed at Jesus passing him. *Behold*, he said, *the Lamb of God!* This uttering produced the amazing effect upon Andrew and John as they somehow perceived "*the light of man*" in Jesus, (v.4); and they came closer. When Jesus saw them following, he asked, "*What are you seeking?*" And they said to him, "*Rabbi where are you staying?*" "*Come and you will see,*" was the answer, (vv. 38, 39). Being kindly invited, the explorers came near to the Light proceeding to his dwelling place. Then, it says, they abided with Jesus all day. It is believed that a place where Jesus stayed was not a house but a cave or tent; and they ate not toasted bread with goat milk but the wild honey and figs from the trees. Soon they realized the great benefits of being with Jesus.

* It was a significant discovery of Him. In addition to the inner revelation, the disciples discerned the external marks of the Messiah upon Jesus written in the Law and Prophets. As they have seen and understood, they made out for their brothers, Simon and James. Shortly after that, Philip was called by Jesus. The final outcome can be summed in such way, - Andrew found Simon, John found James, Jesus found Philip, and Philip found Nathanael.

* But it is still not the end of our gospel reading. It says somehow Nathanael was assured in Jesus' deity saying to that effect, *"Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"* And here we affix our signatures to each word of his confession. In response to what was confessed and affirmed, the Lord replied, *"Truly, truly, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."* (v.51). Therefore, what we have seen and experienced are not night dreams along with fiction, but the reality has been seen and experienced by the apostles and many after them.

* The particular promise, even it might seem as an exclusive address, is given to all who have seen the Light and faithfully follow him to the end. On the other hand, while people remain in spiritual darkness, they are like the blind girl from the memorable illustration. However, it is still not so bad; meantime for the people who have seen the Light and rejected Him for some reasons, the Word of God is about to say something like this. "Behold, because You have plugged your ears from hearing the truth, and shut your eyes from believing My works in your lives, you will be utterly blind to your actual state," (Joh 12:40).

* By the way, the realities of this life are not in conflict with what we've heard today. The Light has come, the Light is shining, and the blind receive their sight and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up by the power of *the only –begotten Son of God, ... God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God ...* .

Beloved of the Lord!

Stay away from the darkness; stay with the Light!

Amen