

Light and Darkness: Pondering God's Paintbrush

“Abwoon d’bwashmaya ...”

These Aramaic words, which begin the familiar Christian “Lord’s Prayer” as spoken in the native language of Jesus, express recognition and honoring of an original birthing power behind all of our known, created reality. This active, generative power not only initiated the unfolding process of creation, but continues to radiate outward thru all realms of vibrational form: light, heat, atmosphere and sound. This ultimate cosmic birther, toward whom Jesus felt deep kinship and profound devotion, is the mystery we call God. “O Birther, Father/Mother of the cosmos, from whom comes all that rises and shines in space...”

We are familiar with images of God cast in the radiance of shimmering light and/or harmonious sound. What is harder for us to conceive is how God relates to darkness: to dense matter, confusing shadow, sorrow, pain, chaos, violence and death. Recent discoveries in physics and cosmology invite us to embrace darkness, as well as light, within the ongoing revelation of the evolving universe. We are challenged to let go of simplistic thinking that equates darkness with evil, even as we stay soberly mindful that evil can lurk within darkness, just as it can also masquerade as light.

The prayer of Jesus helps us embrace dark form as potent material for God’s creative energy: “Create space within for your name to dwell;” “Your one desire then acts with ours, as in all light, so in all forms.” Personal and global history teaches us to notice the power of light emerging, particularly in the depth of darkness. With the artists of the world we come to appreciate that, while light offers clarity and illumination, darkness offers depth, dimension and perspective.



It may be with mixed emotion that we sense the September calendar moving us toward the Fall Equinox, the balancing again of the forces of light and darkness. Some of us quickly mourn the receding of the light, while others are relieved to encounter again the long shadows that cut the intensity of heat and forecast a possibility of less external busyness. This month offers us opportunity – even in the midst of shifting schedules and adjusting wardrobes – to ponder the interactive presence of light and darkness in our lives, and to know them both as gifts offering us insight into the heart of God.

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Tips for Pondering:

1. Lift your heart to Holy Mystery which offers itself to be known through and behind the specific events/colors of your life. Sing a hymn such as “Lord of All Hopefulness” (check a hymnal). Pray a psalm such as Psalm 139 (check your Bible). Ponder poetry, such as “I Am a Little Church” by e.e.cummings (partial text is offered at the end of this reflection).
2. Take a walk, a bike ride, a relaxing drive...or simply sit by an expansive window. Enjoy the interplay of light and darkness in the landscape before you. Notice how the light offers clarity and illumination, while the darkness offers depth, dimension and perspective. Praise the mystery of life in its wholeness.
3. Give your energy to the spreading of light: be active in the justice advocacy sponsored thru the IHM Justice, Peace and Sustainability Office. If you do not receive their weekly email action alerts, you can access them at http://www.ihmsisters.org/www/Justice_Peace_and_Sustainability/actionalerts.asp They are updated every Thursday.
4. During September, experiment with the interplay of dark and light colors in your wardrobe choices. Enjoy this time of balancing darkness and light. Mark the Equinox (Sept. 22) with some simple, meaningful ritual.
5. For help with grief, sorrow or pain in your life, reach out to a friend or talk with a professional. Darkness is borne more easily when it is shared, and can even give up its riches of wisdom and creative growth through dialogue. Trust your inner light to guide you toward the help you need; act in your own behalf.
6. The IHM resident community in Monroe marks their days with a rhythm of prayer – communal morning prayer at 9:30 a.m. (10 a.m. Sundays), the ringing of the Angeles at noon and again at 6 p.m., communal evening prayer at 4:30 p.m. You are most welcome to join them when your time and location allow. What pattern of prayer or ritual marks your day? There is wisdom in the adage: “When your day is hemmed with prayer, it is less likely to unravel.”

*i am a little church (no great cathedral) ...
i do not worry if longer nights grow longest;
i am not sorry when silence becomes singing*

*winter by spring, i lift my diminutive spire to
merciful Him whose only now is forever:
standing erect in the deathless truth of His presence
(welcoming humbly His light and proudly His darkness)
e.e.cummings*