

# Being Part of the Diversity of the Light of Christ

C-Epiphany 2; 1 Corth. 12:1-11, John 2:1-11; 1/20/19

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**The Collect:** Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ is the **light of the world**: Grant that your people, illumined by your Word and Sacraments, **may shine with the radiance of Christ's glory**, that he may be known, worshipped, and obeyed to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Our opening prayer, our collect for the day, says that Jesus “is the light of the world.” We pray that we might “shine with the radiance of Christ’s glory;” that the light of Christ might shine through us, so that we can love and bless others.

What is the “light of Christ”? What is light, really? What would our world be like without light? Light allows us to see, to be aware of what is around us, to experience beauty and the awesomeness of Creation. But what is light made of? If we had a prism that divides light, and we shined a normal light through it, we would be able to show a rainbow on the wall, made up of many beautiful colors. What if we only had red light or blue light or yellow light? Things would look and be very different. True Light is made up of a large diversity of colors, coming together to show us the true beauty and diversity of God’s creation.

We are all supposed to let the light of God, the diversity of our gifts and passions, shine through us to others, so that they too might experience the wonder, mystery, glory and love of God.

Paul, in our reading from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, was trying to help the newly formed church in Corinth, understand the variety of gifts we need to share in the Church, and how these variety of gifts and ministries can all come together and let us be the **light of God**. So, if we listen to Paul, we realize, we, as Christ followers, as the Church, should strive to support a huge variety of gifts, a variety of services, a variety of activities, which are all inspired and activated by the same God, and which come together to create the **light of love** which is the real **light of Christ**.

At Rec, some of us are good at cooking and make great breakfasts and coffee hour snacks; creating a time and place for us to visit, make friends, create a family. Some of us are good at caring for the sick and disabled and are good at visiting and sharing communion with Reconcilers who are not able to come to church. Some of us are good at caring for our campus, caring for the plants and trees and shrubs and flowers, to share with us the beauty of Creation, and help connect us to our Creator. Some of us are good at singing and making music and participating in our choir; and through music, letting God touch us deep within our hearts. Some of us are good at organizing and preparing our altar for communion, so we can all experience the Body and Blood of Christ. Some of us are good at working with kids and youth and helping them develop a deep connection with the church and each other and our neighbors, and especially with God.

A few years ago, we had a small team of people who were deeply focused on Environmental issues in our world; trying to find ways to overcome the impact of pollution and

other ways we are damaging Creation. They decided they wanted to install solar panels at our church to reduce our dependence on normal electricity generated by coal and gas, which is having a negative affect on the air we breathe. So they got the vestry on board, and raised the money, and we became the first church in San Antonio to ever install solar panels. As I was writing this sermon in my office, the energy coming into my computer, was coming from the sunlight on our roof; not from a power plant polluting our world.

Some of us are good at discussing challenging issues about our ministries, campus, budget, *etc.*, and making sometimes difficult and wise decisions to help us continue to walk the path of Reconciliation we've been called to. We elect those people to the vestry to help guide us through the many challenges we face.

Many Reconcilers, inspired by their faith community, go out in the world and through their job or volunteer positions love and serve others, to let the light of God flow through them.

We are a thriving, vibrant faith community only because we have all these very diverse variety of gifts and passions, like a variety of colors of light shining together to become the light of Jesus, the light of love. If each of us did our things by ourselves, or only with a group of people that had the same gifts and passions, we would not make much of a difference in the world. We would not be able to come together and shine the true light of Christ. Maybe just a little yellow or green beam.

For me, this image of a variety and diversity of gifts coming together to create the light and love of God, is a also a good image or metaphor to also help us see and try to understand the disfunctions of the Church in our world. Our churches are segregated in so many ways. We have churches that are mostly white, and churches that are mostly black, and churches that are mostly Latino. We have churches where everyone is expected to be conservative in their theology and ministries. And we have churches where everyone is expected to be liberal and progressive. Jesus, and later Paul, never asked the Church to be all progressive or liberal. Or all Jews or Gentiles. Or all white or black. Jesus and Paul always invited a diversity of people, a diversity of skills and passions to all work together for the common good, to shine the light of Christ.

I love the diversity we have at Reconciliation. It's the most diverse church I've ever known. Definitely the most inclusive, anyone and everyone is welcome, regardless of color.

But we are not perfect. We are still predominately white. Why? I don't think we intentionally want to exclude people of color. But the fact is, we haven't intentionally done a whole lot to figure out why, in a very racially diverse neighborhood, we are still predominately white? We haven't made the effort to figure this out: what it might look like to be intentionally inclusive of all our neighbors.

Why have we had only white, privileged, male rectors, like me. Why? That's very normal for the Episcopal Church. But what does that say?

Rec has done an amazing job of encouraging and welcoming diversity, welcoming people who had been rejected by the church, welcoming people with a diversity of passions and skills. But we aren't perfect yet. We need to continue to listen to voices, especially those of younger generations, that are challenging us and trying to stretch us to continue to be a very diverse community, that working together, can create the true light of Christ.

I think Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians is encouraging us to strive to bring together an even more diverse community with a very diverse set of skills, so that we are better equipped to love **everyone** and to address **all the challenges** in our changing world.

And if we continue to stretch, so we can be even more diverse in our gifts, and skills and backgrounds, we will be more able to shine the light of God and of Jesus even brighter in our neighborhood, and in our world.

As we prayed in the beginning, “. . . may **we** shine with the radiance of Christ's glory.”

Amen