

From the Director

Christmas lights

I like Christmas lights. In many suburbs of Australia there are marvellous displays of Christmas lights. In the northern hemisphere I enjoyed the lights with the snow and the cold. They bring a wonderful feel to the whole season. Jesus said, "I am the light of the world". Is this our experience? When we see all the confusion and darkness of our world, do we think of Jesus as being the light? What could he mean?

There is the darkness of ignorance, of oppression by others and depression suffered by many. There are many people who have no hope and ask whether they should keep going on with life. Many also suffer with the tedium of the regular routines of life. What does it mean to say that Jesus is the light of the world, when we think about the many dark things of political life, of criminal life, of greed etc.?

One thought that comes to me is that light helps us to see what is already there. If we walk into a dark room, we can bump into the table if there is no light on. Or if it is night and there is no moon, we cannot see the trees and the gardens, but when the sun comes up there is light. We can now see what is already there. So too with the baby in Bethlehem.

With the coming of Jesus, we can see what is already there. Jesus came to tell us and show us what is true about God. The story of Jesus casts light on the truth of God's wonderful love for each and every one of us.

The early followers of Jesus came to see the truth that God is intertwined with the whole universe. God's ongoing creating of us, of the trees, the animals, the earth and everything we can think of, is an amazing truth that is wonderful for us to take in. As Christians, our ecological understanding of the world includes God. The message of Jesus brings light to a solely scientific understanding of the world. Christ is the light that helps us to see that God's love embraces and sustains the whole of creation. To ponder this truth helps us to know more deeply the power of love.

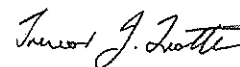
Jesus is the light, but he also spoke of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has been at work since the very beginning of time. The Spirit hovers over the chaos of our world and brings forth form and beauty but would we have come to know this if Jesus had not been the one to reveal the truth of God and the universe? If Jesus had not been the light, we would be much poorer.

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We Christians belong to a strong and vibrant tradition. Men and women over the ages have struggled to see what God is doing in our world. They have written poetry, painted many pictures, given many lectures and written many books. We have inherited all of this. With the light of Christ and the enlightenment of the Spirit, we have come to see so much.

We heard the story of Jesus from family, from teachers and preachers. We read books and discussed our questions among ourselves. Jesus is the light of our world. Jesus is the light of each of our worlds. We do not understand everything that is happening to us, but we now trust that Jesus will support us and lead us even though parts of our world are still unknown to us.

This is the missionary impulse. We want others to see what we see. Like our Columban friends and supporters, we missionaries have also seen that Christ is the light that overcomes the darkness. As we celebrate and remember that baby in Bethlehem, the light of the world, we remember all those who are still searching for the light wherever they may be. Let us pray for them. Let us continue our missionary effort. In this way we continue the work of God the Father who sent his only Son, the light of the world.



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