

## There Is Light

**Intro.** Darkness comes early this time of year. The autumn equinox occurs in September when the night and day are of equal length so the days start getting shorter. In November we turn back time, gain an hour but the darkness seems to come even earlier. These changes make a dark time even darker. But there is hope. In late December, around the twenty-first or twenty-second, the winter solstice marks the shortest day of the year. The days start getting longer. This week the sun sets around 5:30, but the dark starts creeping in earlier. We take lights for granted today. Imagine living without electric lights. (Some of you don't have to imagine.) The darkness affects us in different ways. Some claim they sleep better in the longer darkness. Some of us try to get home before the dark completely envelopes us. One man tried to push back the darkness of his time.

**I.** In the time of John the Baptist, for those who could afford it, olive oil lamps provided a modicum of light. Many people couldn't afford that and tried to get their work done before the sun went down. John's work was to bring a different kind of light. A light for the heart and soul. He was clear that *he* wasn't that light. The emissaries of the Pharisees and other authorities wanted to identify John and put him into a nice, tight box so they could either ignore him or find ways to shut him up. They kept asking the wrong questions and therefore not understanding John's answers. John wouldn't let *them* identify him; *he* identified *himself*. He said he was not worthy to do the job of the least servant: to loosen the sandal strap of the "one mightier" than him. He was not a prophet, but a servant. The Pharisees and others didn't understand that either. John wasn't worried about what *they* thought of him; only what the *Lord* thought of him.

**Concl.** A friend of mine lives in a place where winter is very cold and seems to last forever. After several months of darkness, her mood is affected by the dearth of daylight. One of the ways she deals with it is a special light that raises certain levels in the body and also raises the mood. It is interesting that near Christmas, daylight begins to increase until the other equinox around March that leads us to the other major celebration in our tradition, Easter. From now on the days get longer; there is more natural light. This month the moon is almost full on Christmas. But there is another light: the light for Christians is the Lord. His light is what John the Baptist was witnessing to. Unlike the light and dark of the seasons, the Lord's light does not get dark. Sometimes the events of our lives *feel* like the darkness closes in on us. Other times *we* dim his light or lose it amid our worries. And we do have plenty. People who used lamps had to keep adding

oil or kerosene. What do we add to our lives to keep the Light of Christ burning? Sometimes just more stuff. We can keep the Light burning within us by faith, prayer and good works. But ours is one, small light. Our mission as Christians it to *increase the light by sharing it with one another. We got a note from the Waste Not, Want Not food rescue group. Thanks to your donations of food and money, over 22,000 pounds of food were given to people who needed it. That is a lot of light in the darkness. Last week I suggested we could take up part of John's mission and be a **voice in our wilderness** of today. This week we could take up another part: be a **witness to the light by being the light of Christ.***

Fr. Michael Pendergraft

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