

3 Ordinary A 2008
St. Raphael, Springdale, AR

We all go through moments of doubt and despair at some time in our lives. If it hasn't happened to you yet, just wait, it will. We can't all be happy like Dc. Chuck and go around saying: "Does it get any better than this?!" I remember a very trying time for me while I was in the seminary studying to become a priest. I had already been in the seminary for five years but that fifth year was a dark one for me. I was no longer sure that God was calling me to be a priest. I began to wonder if I had just fooled myself into wanting to be a priest; that it was all in my head. At the same time, it was becoming more and more clear what **I wanted to do**, what **my will** was. You see, I wanted to teach philosophy at some Catholic college and marry a good, Catholic girl and have 10 children. Now you know the real reason I became a priest: *I'm no good at philosophy.*

Well, at that time I had a close friend to whom I confided my doubts and desires. He told me something very simple. He said: "Sometimes, it's better *not* to know God's will and still want to do it, than to know exactly what God wants and not want to do it." In other words, just wait and God will eventually tell you what He wants you to do. Now, I gotta tell ya, he really saved my vocation. At a time when I felt like I was walking in the dark, his words brought me light: the reassurance that God was still there, and He still loved me. You see, often God give us light, not as a bolt out of the blue, but rather in something simple, like the loving words of a friend.

In the gospel today we see that Jesus' great desire is to bring light into the darkness. His very first step in His public ministry is to preach the good news to two forgotten towns in Galilee: Zebulun and Naphtali. Why? Because Isaiah had prophesied that this is precisely what the Messiah would do. He said: "Land of Zebulun and Naphtali...the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light." And then Jesus second step was to invite others to help Him in bringing the light to the whole world, and so He called Peter and Andrew, James and John. You see, just like my friend's words brought God's light into my life, so these apostles preached the good news of Jesus to the whole world; bringing His light to all. My friends, it is Jesus' light that really shatters the darkness of the world.

Recently a friend gave me a new book on Mother Teresa, called "Come Be My Light." Now, I'm a big fan of Mother Teresa and have read several books by her and about her, but this book taught me something I never knew. For many years of her life, Mother Teresa experienced an intense darkness in her spiritual life. She felt abandoned by God, that He no longer loved her; that He was not close to her. Listen to what she said in one of her letters to a priest friend. "Now, Father, since 49 or 50 this terrible sense of loss, this untold darkness, this loneliness, this continual longing for God, which gives me that deep pain down in my heart. The place of God in my soul is blank. There is no God in me." Wow! And this was the same Mother Teresa we saw on T.V.: smiling, serene, and simple. And yet, inside she experienced a cavern of darkness created by the absence of God. But what's even

more amazing is what she did in the darkness: instead of giving up on God, she sought out others who lived in darkness and she tried to bring them light. The same book goes on to say: "Beyond providing care for the downtrodden and outcasts of human society, she was willing to embrace their material and spiritual suffering, their state of being 'unwanted, unloved, uncared for,' of having no one." You see when times were tough for me, I was thinking of jumping ship and taking care of No. 1. But not Mother Teresa: her darkness motivated her to become light for others, to bring Jesus' light to others.

Folks, have you ever felt like you were walking in the dark and had lost hope? Some of us have felt that way after losing our job and we face financial uncertainty. Others have felt lonely and unloved after a bitter divorce and they come home every night to an empty house. Yet others experience darkness and doubt when a parent dies, or even worse when a spouse or a child dies. You know, I feel despair when I see how low our collections are and think the parish will have to file for bankruptcy. (Just kidding!) And what do we do? Instead of looking for the light, we try to run from the darkness. We sometimes try to **escape** the darkness by turning to excessive work or sex; we **distract** ourselves from the darkness by material possessions or power; we try to **drown** the darkness in beer or booze. But the darkness doesn't just disappear.

Instead, my friends, look for the light of Jesus. This precisely why He has come! To give us His light and dispel

the darkness in which we walk. However, His light is found not in earthquakes and lightning bolts, but rather in the simple things. You can find His light in the beauty of nature; His light shines in the comforting words of a friend; His light glows when we read the Scriptures slowly and prayerfully; we glimpse His light when we approach the sacraments with devotion and humility; and His light shines out in the inspiring lives of the saints, like Mother Teresa. And, and you know, if all that fails, just pick up the phone and call Dc. Chuck and listen to him say: "*Man, doesn't it get any better than this!?*" And I promise, you'll begin to see the light.

Praised be Jesus Christ!