

Memorial Compline Reflection
September 11, 2008
Saint Thomas Aquinas Chapel

Reflection 1

Darkness threatens. Yes, darkness threatens. The dark of night brings out goblins in the minds of children. The dark night of the soul leaves us blind to God's peering eyes. The dark side of our desires and dreams can trump and overpower the innocent. Day after day, darkness threatens to bring an end to light and life, hope and joy. Sometimes only the dimmest light shines in our darkness.

Erupting in the darkness time and again is that Morning Star – which stubbornly shines even when we're surrounded by darkness as dark as pitch. That Light that Never Sets beckons us all when immorality, idolatry, hatreds, and rivalry lure us down their empty paths.

In every season and at every moment, there is reason to look for the light. And for all those who have seen the Light of the World, there is always reason to hope for that moment when the world will be bathed in pure and elegant light, not the light of hostile explosion or destructive fiery fury, but that peaceful light that burns off impurity and yet illumines a path to freedom: freedom from hatred, from violence, from envy, from war.

Reflection 2

It is the light and its power, these dispel all evil, wash guilt away, restore lost innocence, and bring mourners joy. It is the light of the resurrection and its power that shine brilliantly on a cross, casting a cooling shadow on the horrific visions of fallen towers, gutted buildings, scorched fields, bodies sacrificed on the altar of misunderstanding, families made holocausts on the fire of hatred, peace violently cast onto the coals of suspicion.

The light does not simply illumine the goodness of God's own beloved, but illumines the corners of the world that belong in the dark. That light of grace will bring love, joy, peace, patience and all the rest, but sometimes brings these gifts to replace hatred, despair, chaos, and impetuosity that we have seen. The light of resurrection shines upon the beautiful and the horrific alike. The light of the resurrection shines upon the wolf, mouth dripping with the blood of the lamb. The light of the resurrection shines upon those not interested in a future for little children, much less their ability to lead us. The light of the resurrection melts frozen emotion, warms chilled hearts, guides straying steps.

The same light of new life that glowed in the burning bush, that led faithful people by night, that shone above a humble manger, that shattered earthquake's darkness, that glowed atop the work of bees a few months ago, that burns at the head of the dead and calls attention to the eternal presence, that light calls us out of fear into freedom, calls us out of apathy into justice, calls us out of darkness into its own warming rays that we might live, that we might LIVE.

Reflection 3

Terror, war, anger, division continue to rage, even in the light of the resurrection. How can it be? When darkness is conquered, truly CONQUERED by the light, how can division persist? How can bigotry endure? How can suspicion continue? How can jealousy go on? How can envy persevere? How can power-play and hostile action and intimidating gesture keep finding expression? It all goes on as we bear one another's burdens, as we shatter the delusions we have built about ourselves. But the light endures when we, with Christ, build the Kingdom.

Reflection 4

And so, let the kingdom come: the kingdom of peace where people act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with our God. Let the kingdom come, where differences command profound respect and bigotry of every kind melts away. Let the kingdom come, where speaking is *always* paired with listening to the other. Let the kingdom come, where the Spirit of God takes up permanent and affectionate residence. Let that kingdom come, where all live in safety, where terror is no more.

Let the kingdom of light come, so that fearsome shadows are banished. Let the kingdom of light come with light that warms hearts and settles consciences. Let the kingdom of light come that warms souls and demands growth. Let the kingdom of love come where all are made one. Let the kingdom of love come where only loneliness is exiled. Let the kingdom of love come where all are citizens in the glory of Christ.

Let the kingdom of wonder come, where its King is known in His creation. Let the kingdom of wonder come, where enemies speak, where the estranged reach out in friendship, where peace is the universal aim. Let the kingdom of wonder come where life itself – all of life – is held in highest esteem, because God saw it to be good.

Yes, friends in Christ, let the kingdom come: the kingdom of light and love and wonder. Let it come and take flesh in our lives, in our words, in our hearts. Yes, let the kingdom come!