

Lectionary
Readings for every day
You Select!



in the HCUC

No. 8

For 5 June 2011

Dear Friends

What is it about darkness? Open that cupboard and a thousand things tumble out ... fears, scary memories, times of not-knowing, dark nights of the soul, and childhood experiences that left their mark on our psyche. When I had just started my teen years there was the night I came home from a scout camp. Walking up the long tree-lined driveway in the dark was no problem. After all I was already imagining the welcoming living room with its bright light, the open fire and hot meal. Most of all the reassuring presence of my parents. None of that was there. Disappointment slid into scaredness. The darkness of the house suddenly seemed hostile and sinister. Why were my parents not home? Was anyone hiding in the rooms off the long inner hallway? Did I imagine I saw someone in the bushes before I pulled down the blind in the dark dining room? I think I sat in the darkness until I heard the car come and saw my parents return. Fear froze me.

Why is it that darkness tends to draw out of us negative reactions? Many people feel uncomfortable in the dark. It conveys a sense of not-knowing, of lifelessness, oppression, or a sense of being lost. Mostly we treat darkness as something to disperse, eliminate, control or conquer.

One day years ago when I was a student a friend told me he had discovered an intriguing verse in the Bible: *"I will give you the treasures of darkness."* It comes from the prophet Isaiah's writings (Is 45:3). We discussed it—not very profoundly. However I have often thought of those words, and more and more meaning has crept into them. Paradoxically light has shone out of them.

It was Miro the Spanish artist who made me aware that we can actually see further in the darkness than in the daylight. At night we see stars that are thousands of light years away which can't be seen in the sunlight. On a more inner and spiritual level many people have experienced a fresh meaning to their life as they stumbled along a dark path of illness, deep sorrow, a near death experience, or some devastating disappointment. So what is it about darkness?

Sincerely, Lester

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 6 June:	68:1-end	Acts 19:1-8	John 16:29-33
Tuesday 7 June:	68:9,10,19,20	Acts 20:17-27	John 17:1-11
Wednesday 8 June :	68:27,28, 32-36	Acts 20:28-38	John 17:11-19
Thursday 9 June:	16:1,5-end	Acts 22:30;23:6-11	John 17:20-26
Friday 10 June:	103:1-2, 11-12,19-20	Acts 25:13-21	John 21:15-19
Saturday 11 June:	11:4-end	Acts 28:16-20,30-31	John 21:20-25
Sunday 12 June <u>Pentecost</u> Ps 104:24-34,35b; Acts 2:1-21; 1 Cor 12:3b-13; John 20:19-23			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 13 June:	98	2 Cor 6:1-10	Matt 5:38-42
Tuesday 14 June:	146	2 Cor 8:1-9	Matt 5:43-end
Wednesday 15 June:	112	2 Cor 9:6-11	Matt 6:1-6, 16-18
Thursday 16 June:	111	2 Cor 11:1-11	Matt 6:7-15
Friday 17 June:	34:1-6	2 Cor 11:18,21a-30	Matt 6:19-23
Saturday 18 June:	89:20-33	2 Cor 12:1-10	Matt 6:24-end
Sunday 19 June <u>Trinity</u> Ps 8; Gen 1:1-2:4a; 2 Cor 13:11-13; Matt 28:16-20			

	Psalm	Epistle/OT	Gospel
Monday 20 June:	33:12-end	Gen 12:1-9	Matt 7:1-5
Tuesday 21 June:	15	Gen 13:2,5-end	Matt 7:6,12-14
Wednesday 22 June :	105:1-9	Gen 15:1-12,17-18	Matt 7:15-20
Thursday 23 June:	106:1-5	Gen 16:1-12,15-16	Matt 7:21-end
Friday 24 June:	128	Gen 17:1,9-10,15-22	Matt 8:1-4
Saturday 25 June:	24	Gen 18:1-15	Matt 8:5-17
Sunday 26 June <u>Pentecost 2</u> Ps 13; Gen 22:1-14; Rom 6:12-23; Matt 10:40-42			

DARKNESS AND MYSTERY

A recent writer suggests that we live in an age when our Western civilisation puts the emphasis on producing more and more light. Think of the giant steps taken since Edison's first light bulb to the TV screens that dazzle us with brightness, colour and size. Think also of the emphasis in so much modern religion. There are too many hymns that ignore the dark, or reduce the great mystery it harbours to the rather trivial and pathetic dimensions of human sin. An out-of-balance emphasis on light often means we become afraid of the dark. A flight from darkness is closely linked to the fear of death. An American Indian, Starhawk, in writing on the holiness of darkness asks what is the dark? She says that "the dark is all that we are afraid of, all we don't want to see—fear, anger, sex, grief, death, the unknown." Then she adds: "The depths of our beings are not all sunlit; to see clearly we must be willing to dive into the dark—the inner abyss, and respect what we may find there." That's a very powerful challenge. Maybe a bit baffling, and scary too.

Starhawk is not alone in saying this. Some refer to it in gentler terms, such as 'embracing the darkness', or being willing to be enveloped by the mystery that lies within the darkness.

Turning to artist Miro again; his friends discovered that he was an Orpheus who could go into the underworld of the night and darkness and could emerge unscathed, bringing out mysterious signs. He saw links between the world in which we live and the unknown mysterious world we don't see which envelops and influences us. He didn't become obsessed with darkness. Rather he had a unique ability to appreciate the contrast between night and day. Miro's paintings are intriguing. He sometimes painted his night skies white, and the stars and moon, even the sun, became black.

One art critic declares that 'the dark night of the soul' (which is an age old term used by mystics and others who have experienced spiritual loneliness and inner dryness) tends to be disturbed by the glare of modern technical discoveries. Which seems to hint that most of us find it difficult to embrace the darkness we encounter on life's journey.

So how do we embrace and honour the dark patches of life without wallowing in them? That's for another issue.

THE TREASURES OF DARKNESS

I said to my soul,
be still, and let the dark
come upon you
which shall be
the darkness
of God.
(T S Eliot)

On sinking into the darkness

Thomas Aquinas says:

"Then alone do we know
God truly,
when we believe
that God is far beyond
all that we can possibly
think of God."

The ground of the soul is dark.
Meister Eckhart

- ~ Night offers solace in silence,
and calm.
- ~ the confidence of bliss and
sleep
- ~ the fecundity peculiar to the
hours of darkness
- ~ conception and growth
- ~ visions to which night gives
birth.

(Reflections on Miro's art by Ro-
land Penrose)

⊙ There is no under-
estimating the
importance of our
meditating on our
dark and silent origins
if we are to make
touch with our
spiritual depths.

⊙ All mystery is about
the dark.

⊙ All darkness is about
mystery.

Love

Winter

When the

Plant

Says

Nothing.

Thomas Merton

From the words of
Isaiah the prophet:
"God says: I form light
and create darkness ..."

Is 45:7