

"You are... the Light... of... the World!"

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Once upon a time, a Chicago high school student, named Mike, burst into his counselor's office. Mike was clearly excited about something. His counselor said: **"You look pumped up, Mike."**

"I am pumped," Mike said. **"My dad impressed the heck out of me this morning. While I was eating my cereal, he walked into the kitchen with his briefcase, put his arm around me, & said, 'Have a good day at school, Mike.' Then, for some reason, it dawned on me that he didn't have to leave for work till 9. It was only 7:45. So, I said, 'Dad, why leave so early for the office? It only takes 10 mins. to get there.' My dad said, 'You're right, Mike, but I usually try to catch the 8 am Mass at Holy Trinity on my way to work.' That impressed me. It never occurred to me that he went to daily Mass. He never mentioned it. BUT... what really impressed me was that, lately, I've been giving him 'static' about having to go to Church on Sundays. He never said to me, 'Look, Mike, I go every day. The least you can do is go on Sunday.' He never threw that up to me."** Then, with a smile, Mike said:

"Maybe I should go to daily Mass. It might give me a new outlook on Sunday Mass."

That TRUE story illustrates, beautifully, one of the ways a father can carry out the teachings of Jesus. In verse 19, immediately following today's Gospel, Jesus says:

"Whoever obeys the law AND teaches others to do the same...will be great in the Kingdom of Heaven."

Mike's father did this. He obeyed the law and, in the process, taught his son to do the same. Furthermore, Mike's father taught his son, in the best way possible—NOT by word, BUT... by action.

"What was so powerful about his 'action'?" you ask. Well, I'm glad you asked that question!

What made it so powerful was that he didn't parade it around his son. He kept it in a low profile. That's what really impressed Mike.

You see, our actions are a lot like perfume or after-shave cologne. If we are wearing such, we don't have to tell people about it. That would destroy its charm or enchantment.

Our actions are the same way. We don't have to tell people about them. If we did, they would lose their impact. Someone once said of our actions:

"When we try to impress people with them, that's exactly the impression we make!"

The story of Mike & his father illustrates what Jesus means in today's Gospel, which I/deacon just read to you from St. Matthew, when he says:

"You are the light.... Your light MUST shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do AND PRAISE YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN."

Jesus is NOT telling us to parade our light before people. He's simply telling us that we should BE a light to them. Their story (Mike/dad) illustrates what that difference is:

the father did not go to daily Mass to impress anyone. He simply did it as an act of love & respect in response to Jesus' presence in the Eucharist. It was, simply, what it was and... NOT a parade, BUT... simply, a good action that became... a beacon of light.

Once upon a time, a boy and his dad attended Sunday Mass. For some 'scheduling reason,' the rest of the family went to Mass with the mother that week. After Mass, the adults were asked to take a few moments to answer a questionnaire before leaving.

The boy said:

"I couldn't resist looking over my father's shoulder to get a glimpse at the questions. I recall one in particular. It asked: 'Why do you go to Mass on Sunday?' I was surprised at how my dad answered. He wrote: 'To be a good example to my children.'

Commenting on his father's answer, the boy said:

"I'm glad my dad wants to be a good example to us kids, BUT, I don't think that should be his main reason for going to Sunday Mass."

You know what? The kid was ab-so-lute-ly right!

Here's another example of the difference between **PARADING** a light and... **BEING** a light:

Mother Theresa (now ST. Theresa) of Calcutta left a comfortable life in a European cloister to work among the very poor in India. She didn't do this to be a good example to other people. She did it in response to Jesus' instruction: **"Love one another, just as I have loved you."** Jn. 15:12

She did it out of love.

It was this **LOVE** that became **"a Light for the world."**

It was this **LOVE** that moved people so deeply.

She didn't set out to **PARADE** her light before other people. She simply set out to love. And in loving, she became a... **"Light for the world."**

I now close with this prayer, which speaks to the spirit of today's Scripture readings.

"Father-Abba,
creator of unfailing light,
give that same light to those who call on you.

May our lips praise you,
our lives proclaim your goodness,
our work give you honor,
and our voices celebrate you... forever."

*May Almighty God, our Abba, bless you,
the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*