

This is the message we have heard from him **and** proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

Words of St John the Divine whose feast day we celebrate today.

And at the beginning of his Gospel John writes; *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.*

Throughout Advent we lit the Advent wreath – one candle for each Sunday until Christmas when the white candle in the middle was lit representing Jesus.

And when we have Christingle oranges, they hold a candle to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world.

This message from God that he is light and Jesus as the Light of the world gives us a message of hope for us today when the world seems to be especially dark. Covid19 has plunged us into a dark tunnel from which there is no escape. Occasionally there have been chinks of light in the tunnel but we still haven't got to the end. And the light at the end of the tunnel keeps getting further and further away. As soon as things start to improve, the virus has another trick up its sleeve.

But there is light at the end, light in the form of a vaccine. But the message of John is that there is a greater light. Jesus is the light who will lead us out of darkness. So we need to stick close to him. While others cannot hug us or hold our hands. Jesus can and he will. He will guide us and lead us to safety.

In our darkest moments, let us turn our eyes upon Jesus, ask him to hold us in his loving arms and give us the hope and strength to overcome the difficulties of living with the virus.

Jesus is the light of the world, the light not just at the end of the tunnel, but also the light **in** the tunnel dispelling any darkness around us.

To benefit from light we need to open our eyes and to benefit from the Light of Christ we need to focus on him – to pray, to trust him, to believe in him and allow ourselves to be guided by his light.

We can so easily be influenced by the media, by gossip, by fake news, instead of letting Jesus influence us. There is so much false news going round that it can be confusing so unless we check what we hear or know it is from a reliable source, we should not believe it.

Instead believe the message proclaimed by John – that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

John also wrote that Jesus said to his disciples *You are the light of the world.*

We, the disciples of today are meant to be lights in this darkened world. Our job is to light the way for others – to guide others to the Light. A light is first and foremost something which is meant to be seen. We are to shine as lights in the world to the glory of God the Father.

Our light should be visible in the ordinary activities of the world – in the way we behave, the way we react to situations, the way we speak, the way we treat our fellow human beings: in fact in everything we do. Many people are put off Christianity by the doom and gloom of certain Christians, by their lack of tolerance, by their holier than thou attitude.

But that is not true Christianity, for Christians should have a message of hope, be loving and caring, welcoming to all people of whatever race, colour or creed, and realising they are sinners and not better than others.

A light is meant to be seen if it is to be of any use. The light of Christ is meant to shine at all times.

But of course there are times when we simply do not feel like shining. We may feel overcome with the darkness of the world, things have gone wrong for us, we are lonely, depressed, or feeling unwell.

But Jesus understands this. He knows our weaknesses. He knows our problems and he will not desert us. Our lights may be dimmed or even gone out for a while, but the Light of Jesus never fades or goes out. And if we cling to him in the darkness, he will light up the way ahead, slowly perhaps at first but gradually he will lead us out of the darkness. That is what he will do now – lead us out of the darkness of covid and we must help to lead others out by reflecting his marvellous light, showing others the way.

I don't know about you but I gave up making New Year's resolutions years ago as I never kept them for long. But I believe a good resolution for 2021 will be to *Walk in the Light of Christ – to spread words of encouragement and hope – to be cheerful, counting our Blessings.* This will help in dispelling the darkness and gloom which can so easily overcome us and others. Let the light of the Lord shine in us reflecting that light to all around us. Another saying of John is that nothing, nothing at all can separate us from the Love of God. The virus can mutate as often as it likes but it can only come between us and our Lord if we let it.

So away with darkness and despair and turn to Jesus, the Light which shines in the darkness, lightening up the way to salvation.

I think it's worth listening and praying again words from today's Collect –

Merciful Lord

Cast your bright beams of light upon the Church:

That being enlightened by the teaching of Saint John,

we may so walk in the light of your truth, that we may at last attain to the light of everlasting life.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.