

“You are the light of the world”

(10/01/2021)

Our Lord Jesus Christ is Light. However, He does not confine His Light to Himself. As the God-inspired Evangelist John proclaims, **“The Word [Christ] is the true Light as He comes to the world gives light to every man”** (Cf. John 1:9). As the sun when it rises fills with light all those who receive its bright rays, so does Christ, the **“Sun of righteousness”**, as the Christmas Dismissal hymn calls Him, enlightens spiritually every man who will desire to receive His life-giving rays.

How is this done?

The Liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Precious Gifts, which is celebrated on the week days during the Great Lent, revives the ancient experience of our Church which has to do with the entrance of new members in the Church. Those who were expressing the desire to become Christians were received first in the orders of the Catechumens. They used to attend catechetical instruction in a systematic way. At reaching the mid-point of the Great Lent, the Bishop was making a decision as to who among them would be properly prepared by Easter time to be baptized. These were placed in the class of those “brethren in the process of becoming adorned with the **holy illumination.**” From that day on, special prayers were offered at Church “for those brethren in the process of becoming adorned with the **holy illumination** and for their salvation”, “that the Lord God ... may **enlighten them with the light of understanding and piety** ... and make them worthy of the bath of regeneration.” As we can see, what the Church calls “illumination” is the Holy Baptism; and in the prayer before that start of the Service of the Holy Baptism the same terminology is used: “Master Lord ... invite Your he-servant (or she-servant) to Your **holy illumination**”, meaning the Holy Baptism. And later on in the Baptismal Service a prayer is recited “Let us pray for the one who is now proceeding to the **holy illumination.**” “That he (or she) may become **son (or daughter) of light**, let us pray.” After Baptism the baptized ones are called **newly-illuminated ones**; and when they are dressed with their baptismal clothing, a hymn is chanted for them that says, **“Grant unto me the robe of light**, Oh Most Merciful Christ our God, **Who have clothed Yourself with light as with a garment.**” When the service of Baptism and of the Holy Chrismation comes to an end, the priest addresses the newly-illuminated one with these words: “You are justified. You are illumined. You are sanctified.” And again, “You are baptized. You are illumined.” Thus, the “Newly-illuminated one” (Neophotistos) with the Holy Baptism has become united with Christ, the source of light and, as it is only natural, he or she, has become illumined; that is why the Lord has said: **“You are the light of the world”** (Mat. 5:14).

Therefore, Christ with the **holy Illumination** – the holy Baptism and the holy Chrismation – makes the faithful worthy of being an **offspring of light**, a son/daughter heir of His Kingdom! This is what Paul the Apostle confirms to the Christians of Ephesus: “You were once in darkness, but now [that you have believed and been baptized] **you are in the state of light**” (Cf. Eph. 5:8); and to the Philippians writes that they shine as **illuminators** – bright stars - in the midst of people” (Cf. Phil. 2:15-16). How impressive is the hymn-writer’s exclamation to the believers: “Oh children of the Church **whose faces are of light**”; that is to say, “Oh, enlightened children of the Church!”

In truth, my brethren! Have we become conscious of the great honor that our Lord Jesus Christ has endowed upon us, to have called us to be near Him and to have transmitted to us His own Light? What is most significant is that He did grant His light to us and then he left us alone! Not at all! It is in His Church that He is maintaining us in a constant communion with Himself, so that we may draw out light, out of His own light. The source of light is He! As long we are in communion with Him

we have light, too. If we stop being in communion with Him, we are falling into darkness. As an example we can see what happens with the power generator and the bulb. The bulb gives light so long as it is connected to the generator; if for some reason the wire is broken, the bulb stays dark. That is why it is absolutely necessary that the believer remains in touch, united with, Christ. The closer the believer is to Christ; the more his life is in accordance with the will of the Lord; and the more one loves Christ, the brighter one becomes. Our mind should be constantly turned towards Christ, like the Heliotrope that, from the rise of the sun to its setting, is turning constantly its disc towards the sun. We must have Christ always in our thought; not ever stop speaking to Him with the ceaseless prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me". Our words and actions must be in one accord with Christ. Christ to be pleased to have a residence inside us. St. Gregory the Theologian says: "Let our whole existence become divine light, as if we were born of light." This way, the Light of Christ will be shining ceaselessly in our soul, until we arrive at our eternal land where, as the Lord said, "*the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of my Father*" (Mat. 13:43).

My brethren, Christ has lit the candle of our soul with His divine light. Our own continuous endeavor is how keep this light constantly alive; constantly lit! Amen.