

Most children don't like to be **in the dark**. I don't have to tell you that. And I'm talking about literally (although it applies figuratively too). They want night-lights on and bedroom doors left ajar while they are sleeping --- comforted by a **steady glow** from the wall socket or a **sliver of light** streaming in from the hallway. And if they are ever alone in a room when someone else accidentally turns off the lights --- well, you know what happens --- they often begin crying and screaming until they are once again **in the loving arms of a parent**.

And most of this behavior seems to be pure **instinct**. Of course, as they grow up, as they learn more about the world, **darkness** begins to be associated with **bad** things, **scary** things --- things that could **hurt them**. And so they start imagining all sorts of monsters and creatures and bad guys and such lurking in closets and under beds **each time the lights get turned off**.

And if they are watching a "scary" movie, every light in the room has to be ablaze.

Kids, it seems, instinctively know to be **wary of the darkness**.

But then we grow up, and pretty soon we're not so scared of the darkness. At first we kind of tolerate it --- wanting to be "brave" --- and so we give up the night-lights and the doors left ajar. Not long after that we get a little more and more comfortable with the darkness, and may even come to **prefer it**.

As a teenager I loved sleeping half the day (when I could), shades drawn tight. And then I would stay up until the wee hours of the morning, watching TV in complete darkness, or (later in life) would stay out with friends half the night at someone's house or in a bar or just driving around. No longer was I concerned about - **remaining in the light** as I had been as a child.

The darkness/light divide had sort of become - a non-issue. In a sense, I no longer even **paid attention to** or **cared about** the dangers. Put simply --- I guess I no longer even noticed.

Hmmm . . . Am I still talking about the same thing?

**"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son . . .
. . . (and) the light came into the world."**

Well, we're getting there. Lent is a little more than half over. Hopefully it has been fruitful for you so far. One of the great blessings of the Church is that it (in its wisdom) provides us with **different "seasons"** over the course of the Liturgical Year. It doesn't simply stress everything all the time. Rather, it invites us to **embrace certain things to a greater extent** during particular times of the year.

And as you know, Lent is the most **penitential** season of the entire year, a time when we take a **serious, deep, and honest look within** --- take an assessment of how we are “doing” in living out our Christian calling, how we are “doing” in our **relationship with our God**. And that means taking an honest look at our sin --- yes, those three little letters --- those times when we have **failed to live up to being the beautiful, loving people God created us to be**.

And even though we don't all see sin - in precisely the same way, my guess is that many of us (maybe all of us at certain times) see sin primarily as a **failure to follow God's “rules”**. And that's unfortunate --- because it doesn't really give an **accurate picture** of what sin is.

What the life God is calling us to is not a life of simply adhering to a laundry list of “dos” and “don'ts”, is not just following commands **blindly, begrudgingly, fearfully**. Rather, God's “commands” are really a **divine and loving invitation** to step out of darkness **into the light** --- an invitation to let the **One who is Light** --- Jesus --- dispel the darkness from every corner of our hearts, every corner of our minds, **every corner of our very being**.

Unfortunately, we sometimes can get a little comfortable with the darkness, get used to being **less than we can be**, get to a point where we don't even notice anymore that our lives **aren't as bright as they can be** --- as God wants them to be. And after a while, we don't want the light because it might illuminate things we are not **proud of**. Yet, that's precisely how we will give God a chance to forgive us and render those things powerless in the face of his infinite mercy.

“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world . . .”

And so maybe this Lent we need to do what we can to sort of turn back the clock --- return to a time when we did all we could to avoid the darkness and stay in the light, **stay where we were safe**. In other words, let's use this Lent to **leave the door to our hearts ajar**, letting the light of Christ dispel the darkness from our selfishness and greed, from our anger and resentment, from our laziness and apathy, from our cynicism and prejudices.

***“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son . . .
. . . (and) the light came into the world.”***

It's time to get up --- time to allow God to **raise us up from the darkness**, from our patterns of sin and disobedience. And may each of us - **take the light that is Jesus** to each corner of the world, helping others see just **how beautiful this life can be**.