

Lent 4 B

When the oil lamp was invented in 1783 by a Swiss woman chemist by the name of Amy Argand, many people felt man's, or in this case woman's', genius had gone too far. The new lamp produced a light equal to nine candles and burned on whale oil. An encyclopaedia of the time advised the use of a small screen between the eyes and the lamplight. At parties, ladies were accustomed to open their parasol against the 'uncomplimentary' glare of the lamps.

When we stand under the searchlight of the Gospel we too **may have to face up to some 'uncomplimentary' things** about ourselves.

St. John's gospel draws quite a bit on the themes of light and darkness where Light symbolises faith in Christ and darkness the opposite. The battle between these two is dramatically brought out during the trial and **passion** of Jesus. The powers of darkness pinned their hopes on His death being the end of Him. But they were wide of the mark – Resurrection was the sequel. By his death on the cross Jesus atones for our darkest deeds.

Lent is the time to put the **spotlight on ourselves**. Jesus says: *'anyone who does wrong hates the light and avoids it'*. When I was at Auschwitz last week we were told by the guide that just before liberation most of the camp was blown up so that the evidence of the crimes committed there wouldn't be brought to light. The gospel emphasises, however, that if we come out into the light and confess our wrongs the Lord will take all the shame of our sins away. If we have no desire to change then we are opting to stay in the darkness like the enemies of Jesus.

Jesus says: *'those who live by the truth come out into the light'*. We talk about the light of reason and the light of faith. These two luminaries working in tandem will help inform our

consciences so that we will come to the right moral decisions. So it is important to enlighten our conscience with objective truth before we make any major moral decisions. Last Sunday the first reading was about the **Ten Commandments**. They're not ten suggestions take them or leave them. They light up our way to Heaven.

Our responsibility also is also to **pass on the light of faith** to others. Do we help our growing children or grandchildren to form moral judgements in the light of the teachings of Christ and His church or leave them to make up their own minds with little or no guidance from us at all? However, as we all know, there is no guarantee that anyone will follow our guidance.

As this (tomorrow / today) is **Mother's Day** we acknowledge the important contribution different generations of mothers from this parish and beyond have made in passing on the light of their faith to their offspring. Some have scored better than others.

*St Paul says that at the end of our **lives 'all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ.** Isn't it better for us to come under the spotlight of truth now rather than leaving it 'till the last moment'? Jesus says: 'work while you have the day for the night is coming when no one can work.' We are all children of the Day – we do not belong to the night or to darkness.*