

Lent 4B

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 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 search-light of the Gospel we too may have to face up to some 'uncomplimentary' things about ourselves. No better time than Lent for doing this.

St. John's gospel draws quite a bit on the themes of light and darkness where Light symbolises faith and darkness the opposite. The battle between these two is dramatically brought out during the trial and passion of Jesus. When Judas left the room of the Last Supper, for instance, scripture tells us 'night had fallen' and Satan entered him. The powers of darkness pinned their hopes on His death being the end of Him. But they were badly mistaken. In His Death and Resurrection he shares his victory over sin and Satan with us by atoning 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'*. They say that most sins are committed at night. But when we wake up in the cold light of day we often feel guilty at what we did or said. But if we come into the light and confess our sins the Lord will take all the guilt and shame of our sins away. A good example is Peter. After he denied knowing Jesus, he went out and wept bitterly and later Jesus made him the principal founding father of the early church. This was in stark contrast to the enemies of Jesus who opted to stay in the dark. He said

they would die in their sins if they turned their backs on Him as the one sent by God.

Jesus says: *'those who live by the truth come out into the light'*. We talk about the light of Truth and the **light of conscience**. So it is important we examine our conscience in the light of the **Ten Commandments**. They're not ten suggestions by the way. They are based on the Natural Law which is built into our human nature. But because our human nature is damaged by Original Sin there is need to inform our conscience in line with the Church's teaching on important moral issues and not rely solely on our own flawed judgement. Otherwise we might end up with an ill-informed or erroneous conscience and be led astray. Fallen human nature on its own has a tendency to follow the course of least resistance when deciding what's right or wrong. That's the problem.

St Paul says that 'all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ'. When our lives in this world are guided by the light of truth, our lives in the hereafter will bask in the eternal sunshine of His love.