

26<sup>th</sup> February 2017  
All Saints, Clifton

*Until the light came  
I did not realise  
That I had become so accustomed  
To existing in darkness*

*Until the light came  
I did not realize  
How much rubbish  
I had accumulated about me*

*Until the light came  
I did not realize  
How small the dwelling  
In which I had confined myself*

*At first it was dazzling, penetrating  
It wasn't easy to adjust to the light  
Too many things stood revealed  
I'd rather not have seen  
Yet gradually  
And with fresh and startling clarity  
New hopes, new joys, new life  
Stood revealed  
Waiting for me to grasp them  
If I would*

*But I did not have to face such decisions  
Until the light came<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund Banyard, No Empty Phrases edited by Donal Hilton

Ash Wednesday is almost here, the beginning of Lent - but what does that mean to us? Historically it was a time for new converts to prepare for Baptism, but over time Lent has become an opportunity for all Christians to prepare for Easter.

Lent is a penitential season, a season when we look deep into ourselves, look at the sin, the darkness, that is present and wait... wait for the redemptive action that Christ dying on the Cross gave to us all. Forgiveness in the one true light, the light of the world.

Over the next 7 weeks we will be facing the darkness to be rewarded, if you like, with the Glory of the Resurrection!

So what of this darkness?

Gerard Mackress wrote:

*After a Mass on Ash Wednesday I was accosted by a parishioner in the porch...The man asked me if the service was supposed to frighten, depress, with its memento mori. I replied I thought that it was, to which he replied, 'These ashes on my forehead are toys, nothing compared to the acres of ashes behind my forehead. And as for the 'death and dust' I have decayed into dust before my death, and death to me is a temptation, not something to be feared' I have attempted it twice.'*...

*'Remember [you are made of] dust.' If God could disturb the dust then he can do it again. When the flame sinks to glowing embers, and the embers collapse into cold ashes, the Holy Spirit can breathe on these ashes until they glow, and breathe again until they ignite into a flame. On Ash Wednesday it is that, not death and dissolution, that [we] should 'remember'.<sup>2</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Gerard Mackress, Spirituality edition 47 March/April 2003

However, there is a comfort in darkness, a cosiness. Darkness can be a protection. Darkness can be a place of safety.

Today's Gospel tells us about the event of the Transfiguration. The disciples were blinded by the light of God, dazzled into a clumsy reaction.

So I invite you to take this season of Lent and use it. Use it to look inside your true selves, our true selves, to face the darkness in order to be dazzled by the light of the Resurrection, to be dazzled by the Alluleias, to be dazzled by Christ.

So let us face this darkness remembering that Christ is there with us, and give thanks to the Light of the World.

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If I would Amen*