

Children of Light  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Trinity  
July 3, 2011

After 2 cups of coffee, the newspaper, an hour of work, and a shower, I step into the early morning, Santa Fe, NM light. At 6:45, the air is still cool in June, compliments of the altitude, which is 7,260 feet. Later, the day will heat up to close to 90, but for now the air is delicious. At the Old Santa Fe Trail I turn northward toward the historic Old Santa Fe Plaza. Around me are a surprising number of pedestrians for the early hour in this sleepy town. Some are shopkeepers preparing for their day of commerce, some are tourists heading for the nearby pastry shops, and, as I am soon to discover, many like me are sojourners making their way to the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Francis.

The tintinnabulation of the Cathedral Bells beckons us. Church Bells transport me to my childhood more than 50 years ago when the Angelus tolled from the Sacred Heart Church Steeple in the south side of Indianapolis. It was my signal to come home for dinner, supper as we called it in the Midwest. I did not hurry then because the solemn strains of The Angelus and the waning light evoked a melancholy that, even as a child, I could feel, but could not explain. Likewise, this morning I have no need of hurry for we have 15 minutes till Mass begins at 7:00. The reverential stillness is rarely broken and then only by a subdued, but friendly "Good Morning" or "Buenos Dias." My steps have taken me several short blocks, and just ahead I see the Plaza. At the La Fonda, I round the corner to my right.

There it is, a dazzling edifice, of locally quarried, yellow limestone, the color of adobe, with two towers that soar above a gorgeous Rose Window. As I draw closer, I will see the bronze likeness of St. Francis, a wolf leaning against his leg and two birds perched on his arm. I will see also the likeness of the first beatified Native American, and the likeness of the Bishop, under whose hegemony the Cathedral was built in the 1880s. But, it is the light that captivates me. Its radiance backlights the Cathedral like a halo. Amidst the achingly azure sky, and the earthy Spanish architecture, the scintillating rays seem to highlight the Church like a student highlights a stunning Shakespearean passage.

As I walk the few hundred feet, cross Cathedral Way and prepare to enter St. Francis, I realize that I have come for the light. John writes that God is Light and we are Children of the Light. Divinity flickers within each of us, and that flame unites us with all creation and with our Creator. But shadows shape light just like an artist's pencil shapes images on his canvas. Just so, our light is susceptible to the blurred edges of experience, replete with success, failure, fear and joy.

Harken the words of today's Collect, Epistle, and Gospel. "God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all." "May our hearts be so irradiated by the glory of thy Divine Love that we may ever shine as beacons amid the stormy sea of life." We are all beacons who reflect the irradiating joy of God's spark of life and love. In this simple community, with souls making their humble pilgrimage to 7:00 Mass, I can feel the spark emanating around me. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you, for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not wither he goeth."

I must admit to a touch of uncertainty, for I am in a strange city, amidst unfamiliar people. I have not attended a Roman Eucharist in many years. I do not want to interfere with anyone's worship by standing at the wrong time, or singing off key, or some other liturgical gaffe. I open the door and walk into the stained glass glow of this 130 year old sanctuary and kneel among the hundred or so celebrants. A few smile. Most continue with their silent meditation.

An ancient lady cozies into the pew to my left, only to leave shortly after the Mass begins. The Mass proceeds in a chorus of English, Spanish, and Latin. Like Luke Skywalker I close my eyes, allowing the force to fill me, and begin to chant the Agnus Dei in Latin, something I have not done since I left High School. The crone who left earlier returns just before Father confers Peace upon the congregation. I shake hands with the lady to my right, and with the two men in front of me. I extend my hand to the withered one to my left, but she will have nothing of it. Instead I receive a toothless smile and a fierce hug before we sit to hear the lesson. My trepidations vanish.

The priest stands at the lectern, surveys us with his intelligent, good-natured eyes, and smiles upon us as though we were his Children. He begins a lesson of St. John the Baptizer. This lesson, though, has little to do with repentance and atonement, much to my relief. Rather, the priest spins a tale of humility. You all know the story. The Baptizer is a superstar to whom souls come from miles around to repent and to be immersed in healing, baptismal waters. When asked if he is the savior, John replies, "after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to touch." (Matt 3:11)

I realize that in John the Baptizer, the lines are never blurred. His humility speaks eloquently. He truly projects the light of Godliness. I feel the artist's pencil begin to work where my meanings are: an erasure here and a scribble there. Around me strangers are becoming a community. Light and shadow play upon my palette in harmony once more. By the time communion comes around, I must suppress a fatuous grin. Instead, when it is time for communion, I file forward with the other sojourners and receive the symbol of God's Light.

Soon, Father Tony will confer the Peace of God upon us. Look for the spark in those you hug. Never forget that the spark always flickers in you, just as it flickers in everyone around you, though, now and then, our light is veiled by the existential blur. Children of light we are and will always be. I wish you Peace, Love, Joy and, above all, Light!

Greg Hayden  
Vice-President of the Vestry