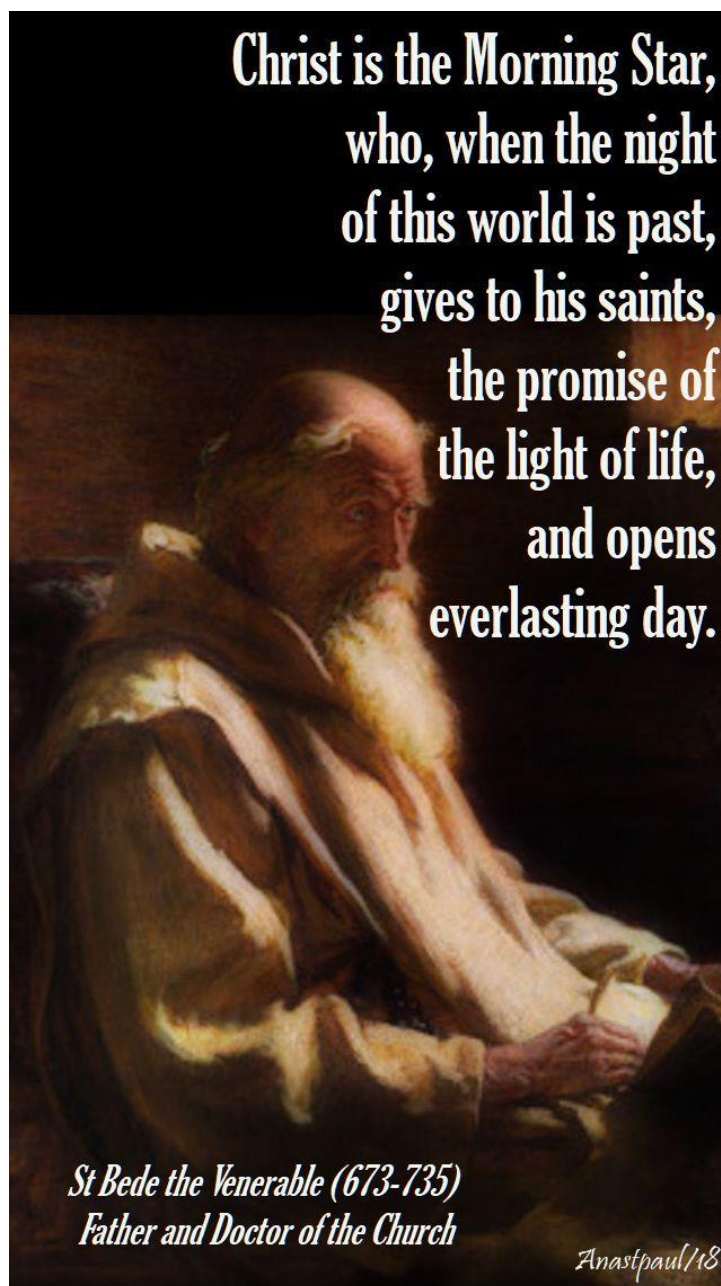


FROM FATHER JOHN – *“My soul, bless the Lord! All that is in me, bless his holy name. My soul, bless the Lord! Never forget all he has done for you. The Lord, who forgives your wrongdoing, who heals all your weaknesses. The Lord, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with kindness and compassion. The Lord, who fills your age with good things, who renews your youth like an eagle’s. The Lord, who gives fair judgements, who gives judgement in favor of the oppressed. The Lord is compassion and kindness, full of patience, full of mercy... He does not treat us as our sins deserve; he does not pay us back for our wrongdoing. As high as the sky above the earth, so great is his kindness to those who fear him. As far as east is from west, so far he has put our wrongdoing from us. As a father cares for his children, so the Lord cares for those who fear him.” ~ Psalm 102*

O God, let all the nations praise you, Alleluia!



<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/042821.cfm>

In 1985, I got a job as a systems engineer in the Information Technology department at Inland Steel. It was my first job after graduating from the University of Illinois and they had a three month training program for all the new hires in the IT department. One of the things that they wanted us to learn, in addition to training us on all the different software and hardware systems and applications that they had installed to run the steel operations, was the steel business and they wanted us to learn about it from start to finish.

The reason they wanted us to learn about the business end of things was because it was going to be our job to support the business units with applications, technology, systems and networks. Our job was to apply all the technology the company could obtain to help run the operation of the business; to make the operations run more efficiently and smoothly through the use of technology. Having some knowledge of the business would help us be successful at this.

One of the things they did was take us on tours of the various business units to learn about their operations. I learned how coke was made from coal, how iron was made coke and limestone, how steel was made, etc. I toured the Coke Mill (which is probably the dirtiest place on earth), the Blast Furnace, the Number 2 Basic Oxygen Furnace, the Electric Furnace, the 80-inch Hot Rolling Mill, the 80-inch Cold Rolling Mill, the 12-inch Shape Products Mill, the Steel Plate Mill and the Coal Mines.

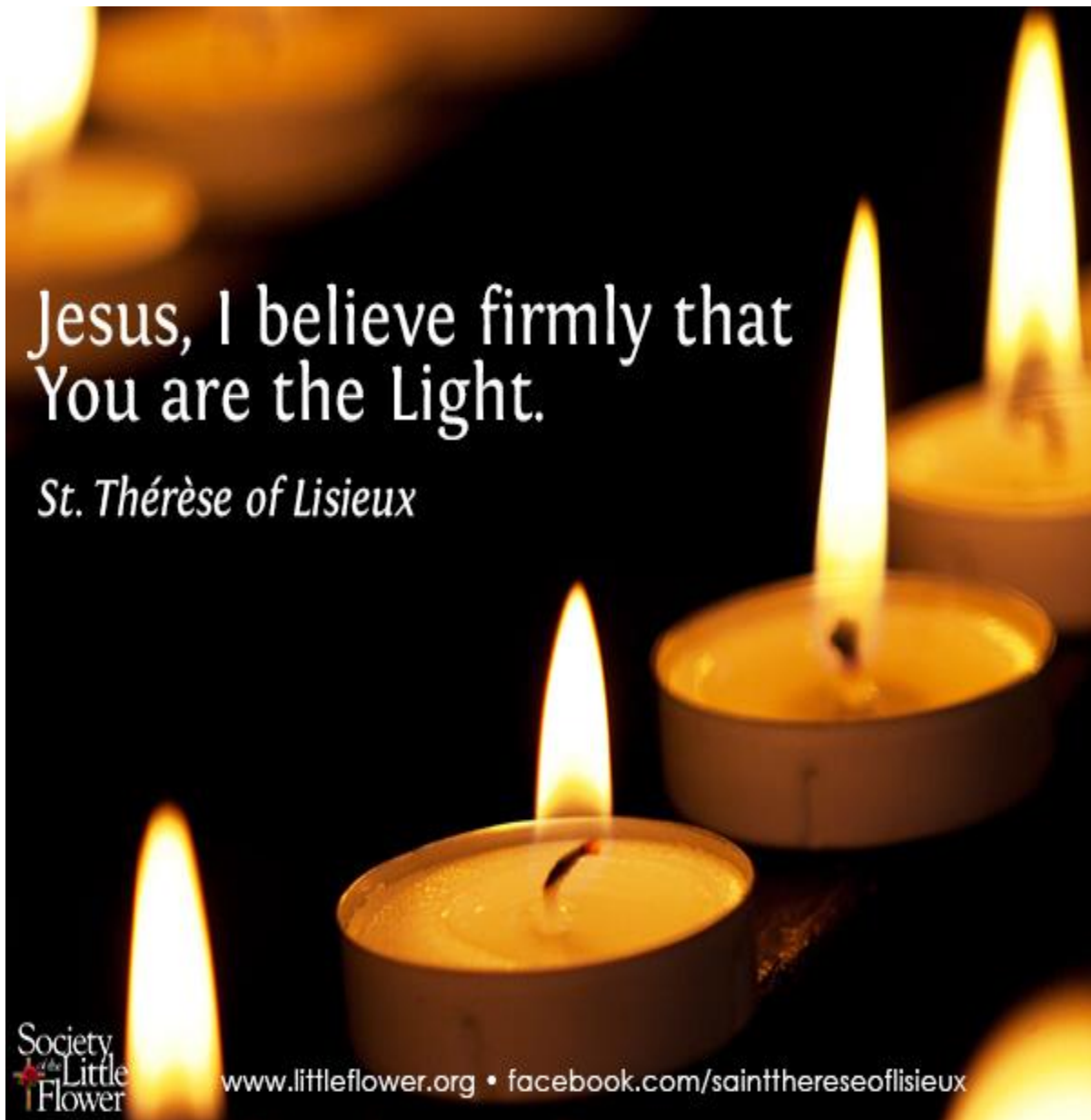
I found all them to be fascinating but the one that connected with me in a most particular way was the coal mines. One of my great-grandfathers and a number of my great-uncles worked in the coal mines in northeastern Pennsylvania so the tour of the mines in southern Illinois resonated with me. Not only was it interesting to see how coal mines were dug, supported against collapse and how the coal was actually mined, I got to see what my ancestors faced everyday working in the mines.

At one point in our tour, we were in cavern hundreds of feet below the surface. We were all sitting in these small rail cars that transported people through the mines. The tour guide stopped the cars and had each of us turn off the light that was on our hard hats. He then turned out all of the lights in the cavern.

It was absolute pitch dark.

I never knew what the dark really was until that moment. I put my hand in front of my face. It was one inch from my eyes and could not see my hand at all. If it wasn't my hand, I wouldn't have known it was there. I cannot possibly describe what that dark was like. I could not imagine how coal miners dealt with emergencies in this kind of darkness; a darkness that was debilitating, a darkness that was downright scary.

It was absolutely amazing when the tour guide turned the lights back on. All of a sudden we could see. All of a sudden the anxiety, the nervousness, the fear of the dark was gone. We all began to laugh in relief.



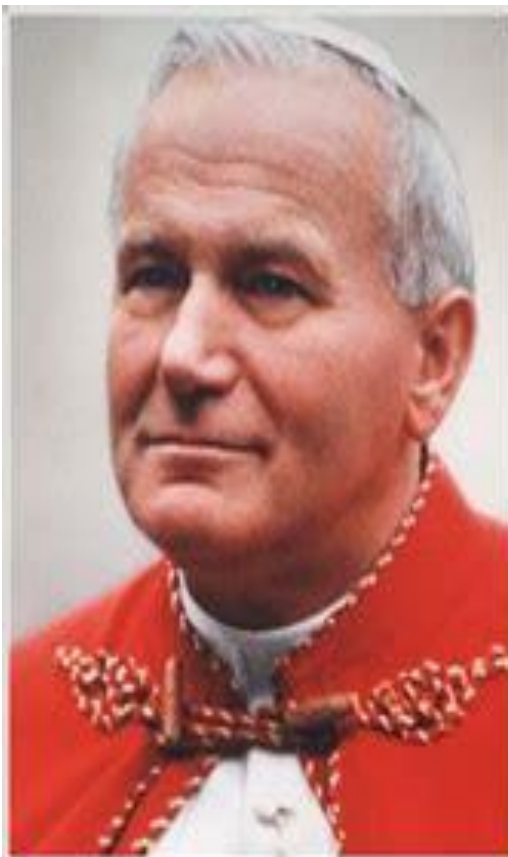
Our Lord Jesus tells in our gospel today that *"I came into the world as **light**."* In John (8:12), He says to us, *"**I am the light of the world**. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the **light of life**."* Our Lord Jesus is the light that has come into the world so that sin, death and darkness will never prevail.

If we really stop and think about it, light is an amazing thing. We never actually see light, rays of light are not visible to the naked eye, but the light makes everything else visible to the naked eye. The Light of Christ is even more amazing because it leads us out of sin and death and darkness. It leads us out of the dungeons we create for ourselves when we fall into sin. The word *'divinity'* comes from the Sanskrit root that means *'to shine'*.

St Augustine described the **Light of Christ** this way. “Urged to reflect upon myself, I entered under your [God’s] guidance the innermost places of my being; but only because You had become my helper was I able to do so. I entered, then, and with the vision of my spirit, such as it was, I saw the changeless light far above my spiritual ken and transcending my mind: not this common light which every carnal eye can see, nor any light of the same order; but greater, as though this common light were shining much more powerfully, far more brightly, and so extensively as to fill the universe. The light I saw was not the common light at all, but something different, utterly different, from all those things. Nor was it higher than my mind in the sense that oil floats on water or the sky is above the earth; it was exalted because this very light made me, and I was below it because by it I was made. Anyone who knows truth knows this light.”

The **Light of Christ** is our birthright as the adopted sons and daughters of God the Father. The Divine Son of God came into the world to shine His **Light** upon us, to illuminate the way of life that leads to the heavenly kingdom, to dispel the darkness of a fallen world.

May God Bless you and all those who love the Lord.



Do not be afraid to be saints. Follow
Jesus Christ who is the source of
freedom and light. Be open to the
Lord so that He may lighten all your
ways.

— Pope John Paul II —

AZ QUOTES