

December 2/3
First Sunday of Advent
Bulletin Article

Happy first Sunday of Advent! As I mentioned in the bulletin last week, I will be writing a weekly article for the bulletin exploring our theme for this Advent season: Christ will bring light to the world! In last week's bulletin, we looked a little at what a symbol is and why we use them so much in our liturgy. I also suggested a prayer activity for you to do by yourself or with your family. If you missed the article in the bulletin, it is posted on our parish website.

This week, I want to look at one particular aspect of candlelight as it appears in the Bible: *Revelation*, or God revealing himself to humans in some sort of visible manifestation or image. God does this frequently throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, this visible manifestation often takes the form of fire. Think of the story of Moses and the burning bush. God becomes visible to Moses in the form of the fire surrounding the bush, and in this way, reveals himself to Moses. Similarly, when the Israelites have fled Egypt and are wandering through the desert, God directs the people to the Promised Land in the form of a pillar of fire. Once again, God becomes visible, and reveals himself to the people of the Old Testament in fire. Fire is also used in the New Testament to demonstrate God's particular presence in a situation. Think of the story of Pentecost, when the tongues of fire rested above the heads of the Apostles as the Holy Spirit came to dwell in them. In all of these instances, and in many others, God uses fire to indicate his presence in a space and to reveal himself to people. So too, the fire of a lit candle serves to remind us of God's presence in a holy place, and his desire to make himself known to us, or to reveal himself to us. God wants us to know him, deeply. He does not wish to remain hidden to us. And, in fact, he is constantly seeking ways to help us know him more fully. The light of the candle symbolizes all of these things for us.

Jesus is also a revelation of God. In fact, he is the most perfect revelation of all time because he is God himself, taking on human form. Remember our definition of symbol from last week? God uses visible realities, especially creation, to show us invisible, spiritual truths. Well Jesus is the visible reality showing us the invisible God. He reveals God to us, and shows us who God is, simply by showing us himself.

Connecting our above understanding of light as revelation with our understanding of Jesus as revelation, when we say "Jesus will bring light to the world," or "Jesus is the light of the world," one aspect of what we mean is that, just as God revealed himself to the people of the Bible in the form of fire, so too, God reveals himself to us in Jesus. Jesus brings the light of God's revelation of himself to the world, the light of who God is, how much he loves us, how much he wants to know us and be in relationship with us. This is truly what Christmas is all about: God becoming human so that humans can know him better and be more united to him in mutual love.

Jesus says in the Scriptures: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also." (John 14:6-7a) There is nothing in God that is not also in Jesus, so to get to know God, we must get to know Jesus, who is the light of the world because he reveals God to us.

I encourage you to spend some time praying with candle light and reflecting on how fire reveals God in the Bible and how Jesus reveals God to us now and therefore, how Jesus brings this light of revelation to the world.

Christ will bring light (the light of who God is and how much he loves us) to the world at Christmas. How can you prepare yourself to receive that light? How can you work on knowing Jesus better so as to know God better?

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