

Our Gospel reminds us today that Jesus comes into the world as a light through darkness.

I guess darkness can seem very thick at times,  
and it looks like we are in the midst of one of these times.  
The rumble these past months about violence in the world,  
hatred between races, distrust among nations, terrorists attacks.

**Christmas Day /  
1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas  
Rev. Fanny Belanger  
John 1:1-14 (14-18)**

In these times for a lot of us it would be good news indeed to have -  
coming through the darkness  
in an armor of light -  
a hero dissipating all the troubles and putting an end to the fear and the pain.

I am of this generation of girls who grew up fed with bottled milk and fairy tales  
- ready made food and ready made understanding of faith and life -  
where unhappy king's daughters would wait patiently in their castle for their prince to set them free.

Well, isn't it an image of our own souls?  
Today looking all around, I guess  
It's not only little girls who dream of white knights  
This is what most novels, movies, and sometimes the political scene, are about.  
The world is waiting for a savior  
who can beat the darkness all around  
And I guess the darkest the times, the brightest the knight has to be  
promising us to just  
switch on the light  
and all the demons and nightmares would just flee.

Fairy tales unveil profound truths about humanity.  
All stories are stories of salvation, aren't they?

Yet the question we should ask ourselves isn't if we need to be rescued  
The question we should ask is how we want to be rescued, and what we want to be rescued from.  
The thing is  
I am afraid the kind of salvation we sometimes dream of today  
could be worst than the problem itself.  
I guess I am afraid of quick fix and *final solutions*  
and I pray we don't have the temptation to believe that this is  
*the kind of salvation that is going to save us*  
And to be clear, this is not the kind of salvation Jesus is bringing.

Jesus comes into the world, true.  
Jesus comes to us in the darkness of the night of Christmas, all right.  
But it never reads that he turns all the lights on.

Jesus is not as a policeman switching on the flash lights on the crime scene,  
Jesus is not a school superintendent turning on the neon in the dormitory.

Jesus comes to be himself a light in the darkness we inhabit today.

Jesus comes to walk with us silently through the darkness of our own lives  
- as of course the messy world around us is often only the mirror  
of our messy inside world.

We all go through our personal darkness  
brokenness, struggles and pains  
nobody knows about.

Sometimes we don't even know them ourselves, afraid as we are to only  
look at them.

Yes, we are afraid of darkness  
outside of us, and inside of us.  
But, surprise, it looks like Jesus does not really care about it  
- the very opposite actually -  
the darkness, he comes to walk through it.

In his Gospel, John does not oppose light and darkness  
as a black and white reality – as we so often do:  
Good/bad, right/wrong, saved/condemned and so on.  
In John's Gospel, there is no magical power button  
to make everything all right, good bright and shiny.  
But John promises us that, in this very world as dark as it is or can be  
in the thick and the thin  
we can still *find our way – in unexpected ways.*

In her book *Learning to walk in the dark*, Barbara Brown Taylor mentions  
Jacques Lusseyran, a man who  
by the age of seven  
became completely blind.  
Yet, instead of thinking of himself as a poor blind boy,  
Jacques Lusseyran claimed that he learned to see things in a way he might never have experienced  
before.  
For example, he said he found out that he could recognize trees by the sound they make.  
He said the air doesn't move the same in a tree  
according to its size, its wideness, according to the shape of its leaves.  
Each tree has a different song – something your eyes cannot see.  
Jacques Lusseyran said that *the light outside him moved inside*  
He said he could not see the light of the world anymore,  
Yet the light was still here, in the depths of his darkness.

Well, I wonder who has the patience to bear with the darkness, as he did?  
Most of the times, we want the easy way out  
We want simple solutions to complicated problems.  
We are so little ready, with Jesus, to walk through the night.

Yet because all these things that today seem cursed have once been blessed,  
because these things have been created through the word of God, Christ,  
by Christ they will be saved.  
Not eliminated but transformed  
Brought back to their true meaning and origin.

*The world came into being through him* reads the Gospel  
This world belongs to Christ from the very beginning, and he is not going to let go of it, believe me –  
Well, believe *him*.

And so in this world, there is no power button  
we all have lost our connection to our God, to fellow human beings, to creation  
and we cannot reconnect in a click,  
with a few prayer formulas like a magic password  
but we all can *learn to walk in the dark*.

Darkness teaches us about ourselves and about God,  
as we have to acknowledge who we are, our dependency  
*Our profound incapacity to love and to forgive and to hope*  
We need to learn how much we need God in Christ,  
as it is for him that everything was created.

Mother Teresa was an example of somebody who let the darkness teach her  
or better  
who let Jesus teach her through the darkness.  
We learned from the letters she wrote that  
in spite of all her faith  
she always doubted.  
She endured the pain of feeling far from God, alone, unwanted and rejected.  
The very pain she was trying to cure around her,  
touching the untouchable.

But in her sufferings not only did she touch the suffering of the poor,  
but she touched Jesus's suffering  
This suffering John is talking about today  
*His own people did not accept him*  
the pain Jesus had to bear during his life and finally on the cross.

Through her darkness, Mother Teresa was brought to  
the very heart of Christ  
as Christ rested on the Father's heart  
from the beginning  
*God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart* says John  
a heart broken by our unfaithfulness, and yet still hopeful and wholly joyful  
because filled with love for all people and all creation.

We want not darkness at all  
but Jesus is standing in the darkness  
holding a little flame  
bright enough so we can find our way -  
sometimes the flame is very flickering  
but we need to trust him to keep it going.

God is with us  
not in shiny light, plain sight but  
in a loving hiddenness so tender and discreet we almost miss him.  
We do miss him actually,  
fleeing as we are from our own darkness  
we don't see the one who comes through it.

Our Gospel today invites us to continue to love our world  
not because it is what it is  
but because it can be transformed  
we can be transformed  
and be brought back together with the light that created us.  
This is not easy  
We have to bear with this world, with one another  
we have to bear with ourselves, too.

Christianity is not about fleeing to another dimension.  
It is about inviting another dimension  
into this very life  
right here and right now.

We have to believe that love will be enough to cure us and to save us.  
In this love Christ gives to the world  
there are reasons to hope  
we see a glimpse of the light coming from the true light.

Maybe the Gospel today wants to teach us  
that darkness is not our doubts, our suffering, our hopelessness,  
the only real darkness is rejection  
rejecting the grace and the truth  
we need to say yes to God  
which implies also  
to say yes to our life, to say yes to the world, to welcome one another  
Bearing darkness and pain for one another, with one another.

Sometimes the greatest suffering comes from our unwillingness  
to welcome what makes us suffer  
to understand it, to offer it up  
and to grow out of it.

But with Jesus, the darkness can teach us.

In the darkness a child was born,  
in our darkness we can be born to ourselves and to God  
May our actual struggles around us and inside us  
help us to grow into Christ's likeness  
so in the night of this world  
all God's children may be delivered. Amen.