

## IS THIS THE END

On the night before the great feast of Easter each year the Church gathers its people and turns off all the lights in the church. It is literally pitch black. In the Narthex there is a round hibachi-like pan with kindling inside. As the Easter Vigil begins the kindling is ignited and a fire begins to blaze up. The fire is blessed and then a large candle is lit. It is the Easter Candle, also called the Paschal Candle. Again, it is completely dark. A procession begins into the darkness inside the church itself. The Deacon, carrying the huge candle, sings: "Christ Our Light!" The Congregation responds: "Thanks be to God."

The procession continues into the church but now the altar servers take tapers and light them from the Paschal Candle and they carry this small flame to each person in the nave of the Church to light the taper they hold in their hands. From the one light there are now many lights. Twenty. Forty. A hundred. Two hundred. And where before there was only darkness, now there is light. Where before no one was able to see, now all can see. There is enough light from these hundreds of candles for the celebration to continue.

The symbolism is that Christ came into our world, a world completely darkened by sin and death. Into this world Christ brought the light of God. We human beings and all of creation were dwelling in the darkness caused by sin until then. But now with the coming of the light, people were beginning to see. The reign of darkness had been ended. Until that time sin and darkness and death ruled this world. But in Christ no more.

But ask yourself: Does it feel to you as if the light of Christ has been dimmed? Are there fewer who believe now? Does it matter if we believe? What difference—really—does it make? If we do, if we do not, isn't it all about the same? The answer to that question is a decisive: "No!" It makes a difference. It makes all the difference. Don't you just feel the greater darkness now? Can't you feel the growing confusion, the inability to see clearly anymore? The moral question of right and wrong has faded from our lives. All is now political. Politics and Sports/Entertainment have replaced religion in many minds and hearts. There are new categories of what is "appropriate human behavior" and what is "unallowable human behavior."

No longer is there clarity about what is a good and wholesome way to live. Rather in its place is the exaltation of what the individual wants to do or to be. How we are made or what God has endowed notwithstanding. Has this brought us greater happiness? Has this approach brought greater peace? Technologically we are greatly advanced. I believe the technological breakthrough is the work of the Holy Spirit. But that does not at all mean that everything technology offers is of God. But in the ordinary way that we interact with each other, treat each other with respect, care about what is happening to the other—have all of these improved?

The Way of Jesus is the Way of Truth. Truth is what God has deigned to be good and beautiful and one. And although we are made in the image and likeness of God we are not to be

the ones to decide what is good or right. That has already been decided by God. It was the sin of our first parents. They desired to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. That is biblical language for saying that they wanted to decide for themselves what was right and wrong. Not good. Not good at all. Not good then. Not good now.

It was flight from the world that God created and an effort to create a world of their own, to their own liking. Hmm! A Metaverse, perchance? Are we entering into greater light or growing darkness? Greater truth or more pretend world of our own making? My friends, the Son of Man is coming again at the end. He will come to renew the face of the earth, to right the wrongs, to re-establish the creation of his heavenly Father and the underlying meaning of what is god and true and beautiful and one. And what is not—no matter how much some want it to be so.

We must pick and we must pick wisely. And we must pick now. And we must tell those we love that the time for faithfulness and selflessness is now. Willfulness holds the key of its own destruction although it seems to feel pretty good for a time. Yes, for a time. But it does not last. It is not of God. Let us pray in the depths of our being this day for a change of heart, for true conversion to take place. Let us pray for the return of the many who have lost their way in life, lost their way in the darkness. And let us give thanks for the light of Christ in this Eucharist and for his nourishment. His love. It alone is everlasting.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.