

LENTEN REFLECTION, 2012

As I write this Lenten reflection, the funeral service for Whitney Houston has just ended. It was a moving ceremony, a tremendous outpouring of love for a beautiful woman who captured the hearts of millions of people all over the world with her soulful voice. The funeral service was a wonderful celebration of Whitney's faith, a glowing testimony to the heart-warming truth that the light of Christ shines for everyone, in everyone, in different ways, in every walk of life.

Our theme for Catholic Education Week, 2012 is "Walking in the Light of Christ," and I propose that we ponder these words as part of our Lenten renewal of heart, mind and spirit. When we walk in the light of Christ, we find that life's journey is less burdensome, and the way ahead less frightening. When we walk in the light of Christ, we become more aware of those of those walking alongside us on life's journey. Did not the Rabbis of old believe that the first thing God created, the original light, was the light of awareness? And don't the ancient prophet Micah's words, "walk humbly with your God," really tell us to walk with awareness that we are not the only ones on the road? Walking in the light of Christ, we are moved by **Christ's awareness**. We become more concerned for each other, more attentive to others' needs. That is what our Holy Father, Pope Benedict, quoting from the Letter to the Hebrews, has asked us to do this Lent: "Let us be concerned for each other, to stir a response in love and good works" (Heb. 10:23; *Lenten Message*, November 2011)

When we walk with others in the light of Christ, we become more grateful for their gifts. And our gratefulness is transformed into prayer. That is what happens to Jesus' gratitude to his heavenly Father for letting the children we teach be included in God's conversation with his people. He prays. "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because... you have revealed these things (that most adults think kids have no hope of understanding) to the little ones" (Mt. 11:26).

When we walk in the light of Christ, what we learn most of all is **reverence**. **Reverence for him** who is not only "a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105), but the very light of the world. **Reverence for the earth**. Isaiah said many centuries ago what we still acclaim at Mass: "The whole earth is full of God's glory," or, as Gerard Manley Hopkins called it, "God's grandeur." In that beautiful poem, which Hopkins wrote in Wales back in 1877, the saintly Jesuit imagines the divine grandeur "flaming out... like shining from shook foil." What a magnificent and striking image! Looked at one way, gold foil appears dull, as does the world to eyes that are unaware. But when the foil is shaken, it gives off glares of sheer light. When we walk in the light of Christ, we will learn how to look at the world to see it aflame, with what St. Augustine calls "*fides oculata*," the faith that has eyes. We will see it as holy ground and tread it with

reverence. **Reverence for others.** When we walk in the light of Christ, we all become reflections of his light. “For it is the God who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). The Christ in whose light we walk is the light of the world. He not only guides us by his light. He shares his light with us. “**You,**” he announces to us, his fellow-pilgrims, “are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:14).

I would like to conclude this reflection with words from someone who surely walked in the light of Christ, Thomas Merton, monk, mystic, and poet: “At the corner of Fourth and Walnut... I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realization that I loved all those people, that they were mine and I theirs... Now I realize what we all are. And if everybody could realize this! But it cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun” (*Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*). Well, maybe there is. Folk managed to tell it to Whitney Houston. Could we translate our praying, fasting and almsgiving this Lent into making even one child, one parent, one fellow-worker, aware of their grandeur, and be with them to celebrate the glorious moment of their transfiguration, the moment when their light shines forth for all to see and applaud.