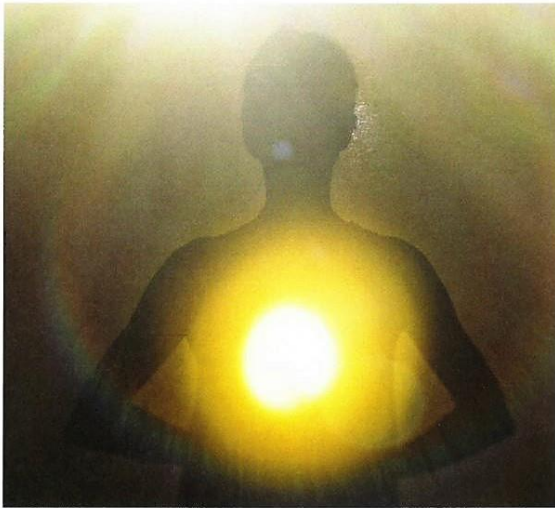


SUNDAY PLUS

The light that shines

The light that guides



By Sr Mary Burke FMDM

In today's world of dramatic climate events, we are frequently reminded what it is like to be without light. As our news programmes show thousands of homes without electricity, we see the ordinary activities of life coming to a standstill. There is no light to guide us in our normal way of being and everyday life becomes very difficult.

Similarly, without an inner light to guide us, our souls and hearts suffer and are without the light needed to see clearly and to love deeply. All our lives have moments of darkness when it can be difficult to find light for ourselves, let alone allow our light to

shine before all. And yet Jesus tells us today, "You are the light of the world." Even in a city on a hilltop with plenty of light shining from it, each light will have its own degree of brightness. So, with each one of us, at times in our lives our light will be brighter than at other possibly darker times.

It may be that the secret is to keep even the tiniest light of Christ aflame in our own hearts. We can do this by offering the smallest acts of love to ourselves and to those around us. A smile of acknowledgement or a tender touch can bring great healing. It helps us to remember that the most gloriously lit city on the highest of hills consists of thousands and thousands of small lights!

Sr Mary Burke is a Franciscan Missionary of the Divine Motherhood.

Shining in shared love

By Lucy Russell

My Dad was a very keen gardener. According to my niece, he grew all kinds of cabbages. In fact, he grew potatoes, onions, shallots, garlic, herbs, tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers. He grew shrubs and poppies and sunflowers. He planted up some lovely pots of bulbs, practising "lasagne planting" with layers of assorted bulbs. The garden was beautifully kept. Dad enjoyed sitting on the bench by the greenhouse with a glass of beer

when he had finished working in the garden for the day. We used to sit with him and enjoy the garden. Sometimes we did some watering. He did the jobs, the planting and the tending. Now, my niece says, we all are gardeners. And we are. Edgar and I have planted up dwarf raspberries. My brother has planted potatoes and lavender. James is growing tomatoes and carrots. My nieces are growing a butterfly garden. And together we are growing in love.

Dr Lucy Russell is the author of Who Do You Say You Are?, available from Redemptorist Publications, www.rpbooks.co.uk

The light of Jesus is ... the light of knowledge. But also something more. The light that the world offers us is artificial. It may be bright like the flash of a camera but it is artificial. Jesus' light is gentle, a quiet light, a light of peace. It is like the light of Christmas Eve: unpretentious. It is a light that glows from the heart.

Pope Francis

Feast of the week
Wednesday 8 February

St Josephine
Bakhita (1869-1947)

"If I was to meet those slave raiders that abducted me and those who tortured me, I'd kneel down to them to kiss their hands, because, if it had not have been for them, I would not have become a Christian and religious woman."

St Josephine Bakhita, the patron saint of her native Sudan and of the survivors of human trafficking, was abducted as a child and during the next twelve years, was so mistreated that she even forgot her name. Her captors

called her "Bakhita" and forced her conversion to Islam.

Yet even as an abused child, she experienced God without ever knowing God's identity. She said, "Seeing the sun, the moon and the stars, I said to myself: Who could be the Master of these beautiful things? And I felt a great desire to see him, to know him and to pay him homage..."

Eventually, Bakhita found freedom, was baptised Josephine and became a Canossian Sister. Before her death she declared, "The whole of my life has been God's gift."

Lord, the days are becoming longer and spring flowers are starting to appear. It's almost as if you have flicked a switch and told them it's time to grow. Thank you for the loveliness you place in our world.

✚ Amen.

Today:
Isaiah 58:7-10
1 Corinthians 2:1-5
Matthew 5:13-16

Monday:
Genesis 1:1-19
Mark 6:53-56

Tuesday:
Genesis 1:20 - 2:4
Mark 7:1-13

Wednesday:
Genesis 2:4-9, 15-17
Mark 7:14-23

Thursday:
Genesis 2:18-25
Mark 7:24-30

Friday:
Genesis 3:1-8
Mark 7:31-37

Saturday:
Genesis 3:9-24
Mark 8:1-10

Next Sunday:
Ecclesiasticus 15:15-20
1 Corinthians 2:6-10
Matthew 5:17-37