

The Very Rev. Dr. Hilary B. Smith  
Holy Comforter  
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## **Light for the Journey**

As many of you know, I'm studying Spanish – estoy estudiando español – Hola a todos.

Un día, hablaré español desde el púlpito más que esto, pero no hoy.

One day I will speak Spanish from the pulpit more than that, but not today.

Still, even now, learning a new language helps me to see things I had not seen before.

A new way of seeing comes when a new light shines.

In Spanish “to ask for directions” is preguntar el camino” and to give directions is “indicar el camino.”

The translation in English being to ask about the road and to tell the road.

To know how to go, how to travel, how to journey, is not about understanding information but it is about seeing the way.

When Christianity was first getting started, it was known as the Way.

We think of Jesus as the Way – in John's Gospel, we hear Jesus say, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

What would we like people to know about the Way of Jesus for whom Christianity would be a new light

for their journey?

What do we hear in today's Gospel reading?

We hear what Jesus wanted his friends and followers to know and what Jesus wants us to know about the Way and our part in it.

Such beautiful words we hear Jesus say—

“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?....

You are the light of the world...No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

We are filled with the light of God because we have been created in the image of God and through baptism the we have been empowered through the Spirit to be for God and others in this world in a distinctive way – not a unique way, many who are not Christian are also for God in the world, but in a distinct way – the way of Jesus, the way of those who embrace the light of Christ and desire to share with it will all.

Light shines forth from you – you don't have to do a thing for that to happen, but let's not hid our light.

Our world needs all the light and openness to new ways

of seeing that we can get.

I subscribe to the email's that comes from Inward/Outward Together, from Church of our Savior in Washington D.C.

A recent post from them introduced me to Joy Harjo, a Native American poet – poets and poetry often give me a new way of seeing – hearing, sensing and the bring light to matters of life and death in ways that open me, maybe you.

Harjo has book of poems entitled, *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings*. The title itself gives me hope.

Inward/Outward shared just the opening dedication form this book, which itself spoke to me and I think to this moment in history and many moments in the past:

She writes: “Bless the poets, the workers for justice, the dancers of ceremony, the singers of heartache, the visionaries, all makers and carriers of fresh meaning.

We will all make it through, despite politics and wars, despite failures and misunderstandings.

There is only love.”

No matter what you think of Jesus, believe or don't believe about him, he was a maker and carrier of fresh meaning – he looked at people like you and me and said – you have something to offer, through your love and your love of God,

you are the light of the world – don't  
hide it.

Last Sunday, we held our annual parish meeting, and  
we have published booklet about our ministry and  
mission in 2019 – not all of it as I said last  
week because that would be way to big a book to print –  
but it does detail many ways you and our church have  
been light, how we have let our light shine, not  
for our glory but for glory of God.  
I commend that report to – it is available electronically.

Our lives are to God's glory.

My life is an absolute miracle given how it started; the first  
18 years -- though God was there,  
God was never mentioned.

Three days ago was the 19<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my ordination  
to the priesthood.

This summer I will celebrate 20 years of ordained ministry  
and all of this time in parish ministry.

I was ordained to the transitional diaconate in June 2000.  
I did not grow as a Christian and my family was somewhat  
confused by this path that lit up for me about 25 years  
ago.

They may still be confused; our relationships are all much  
better, closer now.

But for me it was always the church – the people of the  
church that were light for my journey.

Who has been light for your journey?

Who have you been the light for – do you even realize  
how bright you shine?

You are beautiful – God shines through you.

I've been going through some boxes.  
You know the ones – the ones that never seem to get  
up packed or sorted through, perhaps you don't have  
that issue but I do – some boxes I've moved  
around from town to town over the last 20 years.

In sorting through one recently – I found a card from  
a group of women of Holy Comforter sent to me  
on the occasion of my ordination.  
I had met them when I did my summer internship here  
when I was in seminary in the late 1990s.  
They wished me congratulations saying it was great that  
I was ordained a priest and they sent me a copy  
of the article and picture that appeared in the  
Virginia Episcopalian.

Card, signed, Holy Comforter ECW

Betty,  
Kay,  
Louise,  
Mildred,  
Jane,  
Margaret,  
Kathryn,  
Ginny,  
Dulcy,  
Edith –

many of whom have gone on to their reward; for some, I  
presides at their funeral; and some are still with us.

This is one example of how loving Christians let their light shine – and when I opened  
that card for the first time in years – the light  
shone just as bright, maybe even brighter.

That is what Christian love and light are – powerful, strong  
not bound by time.

They let their light shine and it still does.  
We might all be surprised by how much an act of kindness  
means to someone, or will mean – how much the light  
of Christ shines through us.

What if we are not feeling the light, or do but want to go  
deeper into our experience of God/Christ/Spirit being  
the source and our ground in this sharing  
of light?

I recommend hymn we are singing during communion  
today for your prayer.

The music is strong and the words are powerful for  
singing and for personal prayer and reflection.

As the hymn names – we long for light, we long for truth,  
we turn to God and pray that God will make us light  
for the world to see.

We long for peace, we long for hope, in our troubled world  
where many despair,  
we pray to God, make us your living voice.

Longing for food, many are hungry; longing for water may  
thirst, make us bread broken for others, shared until  
all are fed.

Longing for shelter, many are homeless, longing for  
warmth, many are cold, make us your building  
sheltering others.

And the refrain, which can our refrain everyday –  
Christ be our light!  
Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ, be our light!  
Shine in your church gathered today. Amen.