

Faith: We must find God's love in others

We know darkness at every turn: preparation for war by the United States government, unemployment, suffering in two-thirds of our planet where people do not have the safety or freedom to live. We know as God's people that the light of Christ shines deeply. But where? In our hearts, if only we could see. Human beings love in the moment, in the present moment of time. Always when we touch each other, when we touch the heart of another, we see the light. Simone Weil, the wonderful philosopher of the Second World War said, "We must ask the other where is your heart, where are you at? Then we must act!"

But where and how? Where do we look to get inspiration? My faith was transformed by a recent trip to Kingston, Jamaica, with Food For the Poor. Kingston is a city of 1.7 million people, and 70 percent of these people live in poverty in shacks of cardboard and used metal for roofs. It is there, in the middle of the city, that one finds a place called "Mustard Seed." It is a shelter for children who have been born deformed and left on the street to die. A Mexican Catholic priest start-



Photo courtesy of Food for the Poor

ed this wonderful place, and what Mustard Seed does is take in these children and care for them. It also takes in children who are seemingly healthy in appearance, but they are not healthy. These beautiful children have AIDS and HIV. But the tragedy is that Mustard Seed cannot get any medicines from the industrialized world for this terrible disease. The shelter feeds them with the best food it can get, and when the food runs out, they still have Eucharist. There are meditation chapels at every Mustard Seed shelter in Jamaica, and what those little children do is to pray 24/7 for the rest of the world. The children that

Faith: Jesus offers hope our entire lives

As a newly ordained priest for the Diocese of Rochester, I look forward to my first Christmas as a priest at the Roman Catholic Community of Geneva. Christmas is a time for hope and a realization that Jesus is the way of hope and the "light that shines in the darkness."

I have experienced the hope of Christ since the day I was ordained by Bishop Clark. My ordination liturgy was a glorious celebration attended by many people who showed great support. The praying, the singing, the support in a time of scandal in the church was a great sign of hope for me. The people's joyful support was not just for me but also for themselves as the church of Jesus Christ, our source of hope.

Throughout my ministry in the Ro-

man Catholic Community of Geneva I have shared happiness as well as sad moments with the people. Darkness creeps into our lives and makes us hurt, but with Christ as our light, we come together each week and celebrate Jesus, who is our strength and hope. The Gospel of John, read on Christmas morning, establishes Jesus as the light that "shines in the darkness." The theme of Jesus as our light is not mentioned just once but is used throughout the parables and writings in John's Gospel.

Jesus is our light and hope not just during the Christmas season but throughout our entire lives. May the light and hope of Jesus Christ, that we experience this Christmas, permeate our lives throughout the year.

Father Jim Fennessy, who was ordained in June, is parochial vicar for the Roman Catholic Community of Geneva.

Deacon William F. Coffey is a parishioner and deacon on staff at St. Mary Church in Rochester.

Happy Holidays



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10:30pm Christmas Carols, 11pm Mass, 12-25 10am



Faith: Hope comes from light of Christ

As I reflect on the Christmas Scripture from Isaiah, I imagine myself as one of "the people who walk in darkness" of whom the prophet is speaking. The plunge toward war, rising unemployment, corruption and moral ambiguity, a grieving church and a world with all manner of pain all present a very dark lens through which to view our global state.

But, I am also one of the people who stand in that darkness and "have seen a great light."

This great and saving light which is Christ, penetrates even the darkest night and the heaviest lenses. The Christmas Scriptures invite us to revel in this light, contemplate it, refill our wells of hope from it and watch how it transforms the darkness.

The interface of light and darkness is a rich image, and I am grateful for the church's yearly reminder to seek God in that image. This year I am struck by the realization that our lives, in a very literal sense, are spent negotiating and managing darkness and light on a daily basis.

Take a walk on a sunny, wintry day and you pass through shadow and light. Enter a room, flip a switch and you flood the room with light. We "save up" daylight by seasonally changing our clocks and adjusting to the shifting amount of light and dark.

We must also deal with light and darkness as an integral part of our human, spiritual reality. As human beings we do not always feel bathed in the light of God's love. We have pain, we experience dark times, we doubt and we have fear. These are not bad things; they are just human. We yearn for God's light; we move in and out of shadow. With God ever present, we manage the light and dark of our souls. The gift of our faith is knowing that as dark as it gets, the light of Christ is always there.

I am noticing the play of light and darkness more these days. I toy with the light and dark in my physical world and think about what it means in my spiritual world. I would like to remember to do that, not just at Christmas, but throughout the year as I move through the light, dark and shadow of my life and our world.

Sister Christine Wagner, SSJ, is executive director of St. Joseph's Neighborhood Center in Rochester.