

Today is a triple-header homily. First. On a clear night when the moon is full, you can read the newspaper or a novel by its light. That is because the albedo of the moon is quite high. Albedo is an astronomical term meaning reflectivity. The moon has a highly reflective surface. Now we learned as children that the moon does not shine on its own. It reflects the light of the sun. That is its mission in the universe.

This provides us a wonderful metaphor for describing the mission of John the Baptist. He was a lunar man. He reflected the light of Jesus to those around him. The moon directs our ultimate attention away from itself and toward the sun. So too, John directs our ultimate attention away from himself and onto Jesus. Listen again to a portion of today's gospel.

“He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through Him. He was not the light but came to testify to the light. John has a very high reflectivity when it came to the Lord.

Jesus had His John the Baptist whose mission was to lead the people to Him as the Messiah. John the Baptists have come into our lives who have led us or lead us to the Lord Jesus. Perhaps family members, friends, classmates, co-workers, certain authors like Scott Hahn or Matthew Kelly, priests or religious or whoever.

Perhaps a particular saint or two inspired us and were catalysts in our becoming more committed disciples of the Lord. We observed their words and actions; noted how they responded to difficult and trying situations in faith; and how their lives bore witness that Jesus had affected them and changed them for the better. They testified in their lives to the light of His love, forgiveness, and truth. They became lunar people for us.

We have been blessed with John the Baptists in our lives. Now, we are to become John the Baptists for others. We are to lead them to Jesus or at least witness to what He has done in our lives. We are to have a high albedo, a high reflectivity. Our words, actions and life-styles are to direct attention away from ourselves and onto our Lord Jesus. We are to testify that He is the source of our hope, our power to forgive, to lead, not perfect, but changed lives. As the sun is the source of the moon's light, the Lord is the source of our light to others.

A recent Astronomy magazine dedicated the issue to the two Voyager satellites launched in the seventies that transformed our knowledge of the solar system, especially about the gas giants, Jupiter and Saturn and their moons. In recent decades, we have sent other planetary probes that have revealed so much more. For instance, Saturn's third largest moon, Iapetus, has an interesting story to tell. One hemisphere easily reflects sunshine, but the other hemisphere is dark – probably the result of being struck by a comet that deposited its dust on the moon's surface.

I am enjoying metaphors today. During the days leading up to Christmas, let us pray to be more like the hemisphere of Iapetus that shines brightly with the light of Christ and not like the dark side that does not reflect His goodness, forgiveness, mercy, patient and understanding.

Second. I imagine that most of us in Church this morning have loved ones, friends, co-workers, etc. who no longer go to Church. Parents agonize about what they might have done wrong in raising their children in the Catholic faith when one or more abandon the Catholic faith. It is particularly painful if the grandchildren are not baptized. Responses to this crisis may vary but one thing is certain – all things must begin and be sustained by prayer.

Please pass the rose-colored piece of paper and pencil to your neighbors in the pew. Let me read what is on the sheet. Please take a few moments and jot down the names of those for whom you want us to pray. This will be confidential. When you are done, fold the paper in two and in two again. The ushers will now collect the *Coming Home Prayer Intentions*. Our prayer requests will be part of the Offertory Procession.

At the Eucharist, the Lord Jesus offers Himself to the Father for our salvation. We ask Jesus to carry our intentions for all the persons named in the intention basket to His Father and ours. We will also pray for them the next three weekends. Because of the Christmas decorations, we will place the Coming Home Intentions Basket by the Holy Family Statue – very appropriate as we pray for our families to be reunited spiritually. When you come to Church and see the basket, remember to not only pray for your intentions but also for everyone's.

Third. Now you will have an opportunity to register for Discovering Christ. First, I want to recount an episode in the life of the prophet Elijah. Elijah had just roundly defeated and killed the 450 prophets of Baal. King Ahaz's wife, Jezebel, was a worshipper of this false god. She was furious with the prophet and sought to kill him. Elijah flees for his life. After walking forty days and forty nights, he arrives at Mount Horeb and enters a cave. The Lord tells Elijah that the next time he hears the Lord speak, he is to go to the entrance of the cave.

First, there was a great and powerful wind that tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks. Then there was an earthquake. Then there was a fire, but the Lord did not speak His voice in any of these violent acts of nature. Finally, there was a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. The Lord revealed to the prophet what He wanted him to do. In this instance, anoint two kings and his successor, Elisha, as prophet of Israel.

You do not have to walk forty days and forty nights to discover God's will for you concerning your participation in Discovering Christ. I just invite you to listen for the Lord's voice. God often speaks in a gentle whisper. We will spend a few moments in silence so you can hear the whisper if God speaks to you. If you have completed the registration form, please place it in the collection basket along with your offering. Thank you.