

Props:

- lamp
- silk scarf, printed on one side
- mirror
- icon

You are the light of the world

Let me start by thanking Con Apokis for the opportunity to speak today. It is still a rare thing for churches to provide the encouragement and opportunities for lay participation to the extent that we enjoy here at Holy Trinity.

A few weeks ago, when I was preparing this talk, Lisa asked me if I could say in a nutshell what I wanted people to take away with them from this service. It is this: that each of us is not merely a fragile participant in an uncertain world; upstream of that, each of us is also a divine, creative opening, abiding in God ~ with not a hair's breadth of separation ~ through which the world comes to be. (All this and more in under an hour!) But really, what is the point of walking out with some fancy new idea about ourselves? None, unless it provides a better vantage point to engage in being Jesus' disciples. I believe that what I am presenting here does, and I hope that some of us will want to pick it up and run with it.

Most of what I am about to say has been reworked from various sources, most significantly the writings of Albert Low (sermons are one of the few cultural activities left to us where plagiarism enjoys an open licence), and I would be most happy to acknowledge these in detail to anyone interested in further exploration.

1.

Hear what Jesus has to say to each of us:

'You are the light of the world. A city sitting on top of a mountain can't be concealed. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket but rather on a lamp stand, where it sheds light for everyone in the house. That's how your light is to shine in the presence of others, so they can see your good deeds and acclaim your Father in the heavens.' Matt 5: 14-16.

Light has always been a major motif in religious liturgy and literature. To better appreciate why, you need only recall the last time you experienced a power blackout, or had been here for our winter solstice celebration last week. Or perhaps you have been on a camping trip in the country. Cast your imagination back to a time when there was no electric or gas lighting. The night can be very dark when there is only a candle or a fire between you and the darkness and, more significantly, that which prowls in the darkness. Most carnivores hunt at night. In parts of Africa many people are still taken by animals. Recently I was talking with a refugee from Sudan. She was saying that a few years ago many hundreds of orphaned children made an exodus from the villages of her region to Tanzania, to escape starvation and the war. Most did not make it, becoming prey to lions. Sunrise, for most people throughout history, must truly have been greeted with delight

and thanksgiving.

Both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures have creation stories that begin with God expressing himself through Word and Light, by means of which the universe is created.

'In the beginning was the divine word and wisdom...It was there with God from the beginning. Everything came to be by means of it; nothing that exists came to be without its agency. In it was life, and this life was the light of humanity. Light was shining in darkness and darkness did not master it.' (John 1:1-5)

'In the beginning God created heaven and earth. Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, with a divine wind sweeping over the waters. God said 'let there be light' and there was light. God saw that light was good, and God divided light from darkness.' (Gen.1: 1-2)

Notice that in the Genesis story light is created on the first day and it is only after that God creates the physical universe. We have to wait till the fourth day for God to say '*Let there be lights in the vault of heaven to divide day from night (and to) shine on the earth*'. So there is light before there are suns, moons and stars. Perhaps this order of creation is simply a product of pre-scientific naivete. But perhaps there is something else happening here? Look around! Everywhere there is light! A symphony of colours and textures floods our experiencing. Now, have you ever considered that your brain exists in total darkness? Does this light somehow get into your brain? Are your eyes like some camera lens that momentarily lets light onto a film? Clearly that's not the case. Electromagnetic radiation hits the rods and cones in the back of your eyes and that's as far as it gets. All this colour you think you see is actually the mind's interpretation of a particular range of wavelengths of the Electromagnetic spectrum. Or consider what you remember from your dreams. The light is probably out and the room in darkness. Moreover, your eyes closed. Yet once again everywhere there is light.

Perhaps the light that the Scriptures referred to is not the light of electromagnetic radiation, that this, light that we 'see'; perhaps this light is the light of consciousness, that is, the light by which we see?

Let's pursue this a little further. You have, no doubt, heard the Zen saying "If a tree falls in a forest, does it make a sound?" Perhaps a more modern way of saying this is "if a rock falls on Mars does it make a sound?" The answer to this is "no". For our falling tree to make a sound, the air pressure waves caused by the event need to be translated into a subjective experience of sound, and this requires the presence of a sentient being, that is, something with a mind capable of experiencing those changes in air pressure as sound. We do not hear sound; our hearing *is* sound. Without minds, no world. Sure, there is a physical universe, and we are a part of it, but without the light of Knowing it may as well not exist. The relationship also most likely goes the other way as well: without world (bodies, nervous systems), no mind. Spirit is everywhere, and it is everywhere embodied. The significance of this insight is quite radical. Put simply, it means that the world comes alive as each of us.

Let us imagine the cosmos to be like this silk scarf. One side of the scarf is *Being* [*hit rostrum*] (what is); the other is *Knowing* (experiencing what is) [*"ouch!"*]. (It is tempting to

think that Being only refers to what is studied by the hard sciences, but the cosmos is not quite so one dimensional. There are psychological, sociological and cultural truths as well: complexities of Being corresponding with complexities of Knowing.) Because the scarf is one, if I alter the Knowing side, there is a change on the Being side: for instance, whenever you experience a feeling, your brain changes state. Current scientific orthodoxy is that mind, or Knowing, is a very special case of Being and that most of the cosmos is in darkness; that is, apart from humans and other higher organisms on this or other worlds, represented by a tiny speck on the Knowing side of the scarf, only the Being side of the scarf - and a very low order of physical being at that - exists. Our scarf is lop sided. Religious traditions have been much more optimistic. According to their wisdom, our cosmos has never had its light hidden behind a bushel, because wherever there is Being there is Knowing, as those two creation texts assert.

This perspective is not as anachronistic as one might think; it still has currency. The contemporary school of Process thought maintains that Knowing is as primal as Being. For this school, Knowing is not an emergent property of Being but is somehow interwoven in the fabric of the cosmos. Knowing and Being are coextensive. Knowing is the cosmos from inside; Being is the cosmos from the outside. Thus, we know what it feels like to be us, but it also feels like something to be a cat, or indeed a frog, or even a cell or perhaps an atom (it may not feel like *much*, but it feels like something)! Thus, a change on the Being side of the scarf, if of an appropriate order, will register, in some way, on the Knowing side.

Whether it turns out to be that Knowing is coextensive with Being or just a special case, it is certainly true that where there is Knowing, the quality of this Knowing will be according to the nature, the Being, of that which expresses the Knowing. For example, human vision does not register ultraviolet light. Because of this, sparrows are commonly regarded to look dull and colourless. A sparrow's coat, however, reflects a lot of ultraviolet. So to another sparrow, which can see ultraviolet, a brother or sister sparrow is a delight of colour. You take your dog for a walk in the country at dusk. You look over the rolling hills to the deepest sky bleeding red into blue and you think, "surely there is a God, a deeper mystery!" At the same time your dog, which couldn't care less for a sunset, is in ecstasy over the carcass of a dead wombat. Surely God, like beauty, is the eye of the beholder. So, not only does the world come alive as each of us, the quality of that world is dependent on the configuration, the Being, of the individual.

When thinking about the world, we tend to see ourselves as onlookers and forget that we are as much a part of the universe as anything else: when you think, the cosmos thinks, when you kick a ball, the cosmos kicks a ball. So let us return to our scarf for a moment and have the scarf represent that part of the cosmos we are most familiar with: ourselves. As we said, there is Knowing and there is Being; and as we saw with the sparrows, the shape of our being determines the shape of our knowing. So we never have a raw, unmediated knowledge of the world (that is, Being). Notice with the scarf that Knowing faces the opposite direction to Being. Being is always on the other side - the dark side - of Knowing. Knowing can only see Knowing. You don't hear air pressure waves: you hear sound; you don't see Electromagnetic radiation: you see colour. What you experience is not the world but your awareness *as* the world and, from that, if called upon, infer or deduce the nature of the world (though of course when that part of the world in question is itself your experiencing you don't need to infer anything: you don't infer what your

favourite colour is or if you like chocolate, you directly know). Not only is the world mediated by your senses and perceptions, other psychological factors such as intentions and beliefs contribute to this experience. You are always within your mind.

(Parenthetically, I have a hunch that a significant reason why God has commonly appeared so distant from us, so 'other', is that, by and large, Christian has tended to approach God in terms of Being rather than Knowing and, as we just saw, Being is always one step removed from our knowing. However the image we are exploring today, 'light' and its related images, 'word' and 'wisdom', are metaphors of Knowing. They are also metaphors of the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son, whose function, according to John's Gospel [1:18], is to disclose the otherwise unknown Father who, as creator, is typically identified with Being.)

Two primal human activities that point directly past the split between Being and Knowing and bespeak of the original oneness, (the scarf itself) are declarations and music. The original sacred word was not a description, pointing beyond itself to an external reality. It was a declaration "Let there be light!" (or "Let there be quantum strings") which brought reality to be. When a declaration is made by someone with the power to make it (such as a politician declaring a fete 'open'), the coming to be is not subsequent to the declaration. Rather, the coming to be is contained within the declaration. Declarations work from the oneness behind Knowing and Being. Music is neither sound nor the relationship between sounds (rhythm, melody, harmony) but is the play of these relationships with our sensibilities and expectations. Always instantiated as sound (be that either heard or imagined) yet never merely identical to it, music inhabits the primal oneness that is both Being and Knowing which is why it is has always been such a spiritual attractor to our sacred, always present origin. So when God uttered the first word, did he speak it, or sing it (or perhaps, danced it)?

To recapitulate: based on Jesus' words, we are exploring the notion that the divine and universal light by which the world arises is, paradoxically, you and me, whose nature, you have probably not failed to notice, being marked by particularity and finitude, would seem to be anything but divine and universal. But once we see this light as the light of Knowing we can start to gain some clarity. For it is by knowing that our manifest world comes into being and, by virtue of our being particular and finite, the resulting world is also unique and finite, and, I might add, personal. The implications of this - some of which we will explore shortly - are, to my mind, profoundly rich, though the notion itself is disarmingly simple and can be shown by means of a familiar household object..

Here we have a table lamp covered by a shade, opaque except for differently shaped and sized apertures that allow the light to shine through onto the world surrounding it. This lamp is powered by one light globe. Let's imagine this as the light of God, the Word, the light of Knowing. In this analogy, the lamp shade, containing a variety of differently shaped and sized apertures, is God's creation - the world as Being. These apertures are each of us, as well as the dogs, cats, cows, frogs, earthworms, cells - down as far as you like, really - with the more primitive things being represented by smaller holes down to pinpricks. The light shining through the apertures in the lamp shade creates individual fields - fields of experiencing: *Knowing* expressed and conditioned by *Being*. Notice that the light, shining through these apertures, lights up the surrounding environment in a way corresponding to the shape of the aperture. A dog-shaped hole creates a dog shaped

world. And, more pertinently, a dog - eat - dog aperture will experience a dog - eat - dog world. A compassionate aperture will be presented with a world available to love.

2.

We have been so used to thinking of ourselves as oblique minds locked somewhere inside opaque bodies looking out at foreign reality that it might seem strange to see ourselves as transparent fields of experiencing constituted from light and space. It is as if, when looking in a mirror we mistake the image in the mirror for the sum of who we are, forgetting that we are the subjective space in which that image appears. However, a simple meditation exercise, focussing on the question 'who am I?', may help deepen the sense of how each of us is indeed the universal light incarnated as a unique subjective space. I developed this exercise out of a meditation by the American author, Ken Wilber:

I am not going to try to get you into a different state of consciousness, or an altered state of consciousness, or a non-ordinary state. I am going to simply point out something that is already occurring in your own present, ordinary, natural state.

Firstly, I want you to spend a moment getting a sense of our own presence, the felt sense of being you at this moment: scan your body for feeling, perhaps wriggle in your chair, get a sense of yourself as an energetic field of sensation and keep this self-recollection going through the rest of this exercise. By 'recollect yourself', I do not mean you should create a mental image of yourself in your mind's eye. I mean you should try to stay awake to the fluid felt sense of yourself in the moment. Inhabit your experiencing.

Now let's start by just being aware of the world around us. Spend a few more moments staying with the sensations of your own body. Scan down your body from your crown to your toes. You can be aware of whatever bodily feelings are present perhaps pressure where you are sitting, perhaps warmth in your tummy, maybe tightness in your neck. Do that now. Notice that your experiencing takes no effort on your part. Even if some of these feelings are tight and tense, you are, nevertheless, easily aware of them - These feelings arise in your present awareness, and that awareness is very simple, effortless, spontaneous. You simply and effortlessly witness them. The same goes for taste and smell.

Look around at the room, paying particular attention to space and just relax your mind, let your mind and the space mingle. Notice the various objects occupying this space: the roof, the walls, the curtains, furniture, people. Again notice that this takes no effort at all on your part. Your present awareness, in which these objects are standing, is very simple, very easy, effortless, spontaneous. It is not something you do; it occurs upstream of effort, upstream of ego. So simply notice that there is an effortless awareness of the objects.

Now listen to the sounds around you, whether they be out in the street or here in this hall. Again notice that hearing takes no effort at all. It just is. Perhaps your senses may be a bit frail with age, and you can't see or hear as well as you wish you could. But nevertheless, whatever it is you do hear or see or taste or touch, you experience it in its natural immediacy.

If we leave focussing on our sensations and go to our meditations we can experience the same thing. Thoughts and emotions arise into your awareness with an immediacy that

requires no effort on your part. Look at the thoughts arising in your mind. You might notice various images, symbols, concepts, desires, hopes, and fears, all spontaneously arising in your awareness. They arise, stay a bit, and pass. Even if some feelings are hard to name, these thoughts and feelings arise in your present awareness, and that awareness is very simple, effortless, spontaneous. You simply and effortlessly witness them.

People commonly think that what they experience is the world; but as we have seen this is not the case, what we are actually experiencing is our experience as the world, particularised by our unique circumstances. Everything you are experiencing even now as I speak is your mind. Right now you are knowing your knowing; feeling your feeling; experiencing your experience. It's like your mind has two aspects: mind as Knowing and mind as what is known. Like a mirror and its reflections: there is the mirror - that which experiences and there are the reflections - what is experienced. Notice how different experiences, whether they be sensory or mental, rise for a while only to pass and be replaced by other experiences. Notice also how the mirror, the witness, the light, remains, immutable, unchanged by that which it is reflecting or witnessing, even though those reflections cannot be separated from the mirror. At all times you effortlessly experience your world, or, more accurately, experience your experience. So as you continue this exercise simply rest in the mirror. Rest for a while in that which is witness to your experiencing. Whatever is arising is fine. It all spontaneously arises in your own present, easy, effortless awareness.

Now, ask yourselves this question: who am I? I want you to ask this question as if you really have no idea. Normally when we ask a question such as 'what kind of day is it' we already have a notion of what a day is: the period between sunrise and sunset. But for this exercise I want you to ask in the sense of 'what on earth is that?' with no idea where to start. So, on the basis of your current experiencing, who or what, if anything, are you?

It is easiest to start by recognising what you are not: you cannot be identical to any of those passing experiences that you are currently having by virtue of the fact that they are objects of your consciousness. If you were nothing other than any of those things, you would not be aware of them: a fire is not hot unto itself.

Continue your enquiry in this way: 'there is this feeling; to whom has this feeling arisen? To me, but who am I? I now experience a thought; to whom has this thought arisen? Who am I? A desire has arisen: to whom has it arisen? Who am I?' Keep this question close to your heart as, all the while, spontaneously and naturally, these things all arise, on their own, in your present effortless awareness. If you think you have an answer, again ask 'to whom has this answer arisen? Who am I?'

In doing this you push back past your experiences into the source of your own awareness. No longer identifying with any particular thing that arises in your consciousness, you push back into that which witnesses your life, and you rest in this Witness.

Typically we identify ourselves with our separate egoic personalities and wills. But as you rest in the witness realizing, I am not objects, I am not feelings, I am not thoughts, you may feel a certain sense of freedom and release from the constriction of identifying with these finite objects, including your little body, mind and ego, all of which are objects that can be seen, and thus cannot be your deepest Self, your 'I am' which lies upstream of all these

things. In the place you thought was occupied by your individual, separate self is the Light of Knowing. This is that which, to borrow from St Paul, we live, move and have our being.

Because this light is not itself anything specific you can see, but, rather is the light by which you see, don't expect that you're going to see something, or feel something really amazing and special. You probably won't; and if you do see something, that will be just another object, another feeling, another thought, another sensation, another image. Those are all objects; those are what you are not. For, as the mirror, you are no thing, a vast emptiness, simple lucid presence, a space in which the entire manifest world arises.

Many of those who have learnt to rest in this light have noticed that their world has certain qualities, such as the background sense of freedom which has been already mentioned. One such quality is the interrelatedness of phenomena. Nothing stands on its own. Everything is interconnected, owing its being to everything else. Another such quality is its sheer lucidity: look!, hear!, feel!: all around and through you is aliveness, is mind.

A further quality is immediacy. As you continue to rest in the witness you may get an inkling that your awareness is not behind your eyes looking out at an external world but, rather that it follows the contours of that which it witnesses. The mirror is at all times coextensive with its reflections. So the feeling of freedom has no inside or outside, centre or surround. And as this mirror is what you most deeply are, it means that you are at all times coextensive with the reflections in your awareness and are not locked away somewhere inside your body. Your body lives inside you! As pure presence, you are a wide-open embrace of love, faithfully and intimately accompanying each individual entity capable of bearing you in mystical union, giving birth to numberless unique fields of experiencing, unique worlds. You are empty; you are free! So why on earth would you wish to limit yourself to that body or those thoughts?

To see this more clearly, try these simple steps: You may notice that your sense of being a separate self arises in consciousness like everything else. It is sensed as an effort of self-contraction in the face of the world - a subtle interior tension often localised behind your eyes and anchored in a slight muscle tension throughout your body. As you feel this contraction, let it be. Simply acknowledge that the Knowing which witnesses this is not the contraction, and you are that Knowing.

So, resting in that empty, free, easy, effortless witnessing, notice that all things are arising in the vast space of your awareness. You are not 'inside' looking at a world 'outside'. Rather, these things are arising within you so much so, you can taste them, you are one with them, it is as if they are on this side of your skin, they are so close. This space and your awareness have become one, and all things in this space are floating effortlessly through your own awareness. You can kiss the sun, swallow the mountain, they are that close. Zen says "Swallow the Pacific Ocean in a single gulp," and that's the easiest thing in the world, when inside and outside are no longer two, when subject and object are non-dual, when the looker and looked at are One Taste. You see?

To summarise so far: the purpose of the meditation exercise was to give you a living sense that your fundamental identity is not that of a thing, an object of consciousness, rather it is as consciousness itself: the lucid emptiness, or sheer capacity, that gives birth to your experiential world. You are no thing; you are the light of the world. This light, this

imminent and transcendental presence, shining through and on the particular combination of causal connections that make your body-mind, creates a unique living field of experiencing - the lived, unique you. These two aspects can be viewed to be like a mirror and its reflections.

Even this unique you is not 'you as object': that reflection in the water with whom Narcissus fell so deeply in love. That watery character has two eyes and a face, but as a living experience, you have, or better, are, a single eye: a unique space, or viewpoint; and you are faceless. From my perspective, one of the objects in 'the living world that is me' is your face. But from your perspective, in the very place where I see your face, on top of your shoulders, is a vortex, an all consuming, unseen light source at centre of, and illuminating, the unique field of Knowing which is you.

This point is well, but lightly made in a story told by the late Indian Jesuit, Anthony de Mello:

A woman stepped out of her shower stark naked and was about to reach for her towel when she saw, to her horror, that there was a man on a scaffolding washing her window and eyeing her appreciatively.

So shocked was she by the unexpected apparition that she stood transfixed to the ground, gaping at the man.

"What's the matter, lady?" the fellow asked cheerfully. "Have you never seen a window cleaner before?"

What we think is perception is actually perspective. Each of us is a unique opening lighting up a unique world. 'This light is one though the lamps be many.'

If we return to our light here for a moment, I would like to suggest an alteration to make the image fit more closely to our sense of the world consisting not of dead objects but myriad ways of Knowing embodied as Being. Currently, the light is shining inside the shade, illuminating, by way of these holes, an outside world. In your minds eye, imagine our model turned inside out. That is, the light is outside the lamp, shining in through the holes, so that light meets light, reflecting and illuminating itself by itself. We are embraced by light. Or imagine a light inside a room made of mirrors, each mirror reflecting both the light and all the reflections of that light from the other mirrors. Look about you to the other people in this room. They are not mere objects illumined by the light in you. They too are lights. Here we are, light communing with light! And, furthermore, if the process thinkers are right, its not just human consciousness meeting human consciousness, its also dust-mite consciousness and body cell consciousness and whatever other incarnations of Knowing that are here, all interacting in some way. Truly a room of mirrors!

3.

In this final section, I would like to suggest some implications of this way of looking for our community of faith - implications I hope that some of us might wish to pick up and run with. I have already mooted that particular kinds and states of consciousness, represented by the size and shape of our individual apertures, create quite different experiential worlds. We can see that a larger aperture would allow more light to pass

through. The living experience that is a human being, which includes Bach and Shakespeare, is richer than the living experience that is a poodle, which doesn't. I suspect that living experience that was Albert Schweitzer was likely much richer than the living experience that would be a real life Homer Simpson. It would be good to explore the profound implications of this realisation for how we might approach ethics and aesthetics, creativity and education.

For now, I would simply offer this: It has been said that life in the Spirit is a dance: God's role is to lead and our role is to be alive and responsive to God's lead. By 'God's lead' or indeed, 'God's will', I mean nothing other than the life each of us is given in its unfolding, seen through the eyes of faith. And it could be said that our role, our inner calling, (and by 'our' I mean not just each of us as individuals, but, from the perspective of the evolution of the cosmos, the calling of the entire creation) is to live deeper and love wider, allowing more light to shine through us. This is, in Jesus' words, placing your light on a lamp stand. A life of deeper embodying this light in more and more areas of our life takes time and a willingness to remain open to the life we are given. This is particularly true of our relationships. Indeed, most spiritual traditions have placed a very high role for the community as a vehicle for realisation and embodiment. The basic pattern for such growth (in theological speak, 'sanctification') is the process of love: disidentification (bringing something into consciousness by recognising its 'otherness') and acceptance (not disowning or dissociating from that of which we have become conscious). Resting in the light, as we did earlier, is a contemplative exercise that consciously engages this very process.

In exploring some of the implications of seeing ourselves as windows of light, I will leave my last word for the for how this might impact on the way we understand some of our religious practices. On the basis of this model, we can experience ourselves from two points of view: 1) as the universal light itself, and 2) as unique windows through which the light shines. This twin perspective gives rise to two valid religious responses: worship and contemplation.

- *Contemplation*, such as the exercise we did earlier, is the natural response to realising oneself as the light. As the light you play host to the experiences that arise in you. Typically, you sit and you welcome. That's it. You welcome anything that arises: sounds, sights, thoughts feelings...You are not trying to achieve anything or get anywhere because you are already there. Because it is so easy, it is very hard but also very profound.
- *Worship* is an expression of devotion, which is a natural response to seeing oneself as a finite opening. As a living space, we play host to the light of experiencing which we carry around our bodies like an aura. This is the light we worship. Worship goes wrong when we think that holiness resides over here or over there, rather than "in our midst" (to paraphrase Jesus). We think that holiness resides inherently in this particular icon or that particular sacrament or holy book: these are but mirrors, reflecting the holiness we host back to us. Indeed, when we experience a sacred place or moment, the sense of the holy is never 'over there' (that would be a sense of the demonic) we always find ourselves inside its presence. I once went to a lecture on icons. It was explained that icons are painted with many layers of gold. The intention of the painters is that the gold is reflective.

The icon is seen to act as a sacred mirror, purposed to create a feedback loop by reflecting our own holiness (which is, nevertheless, a holiness we can never own). As one author puts it, love of God is, of necessity, unrequited, in that we can never possess the beloved. Devotional practices thus "*require us to relinquish fixation, so that we may discover the fullness of love as the treasure of our own heart*".

Thus Augustine of Hippo would write in his Confessions:

"Late have I loved you, o Beauty ever old, ever new, late have I loved you. You were within me and I was outside myself and it was there that I sought you and, myself disfigured, I rushed upon the beautiful things you have made. You were with me but I was not with you. They held me far from you, those things which would not exist if they did not exist in you."

Certainly Augustine was not privileging what we usually mean when we talk about what lies within rather than without, that is, the swirl of our mostly venal thoughts and emotions! No, he was talking about the fact and structure of consciousness itself, not its contents. Suppose we were to take our cosmic scarf and tie knots in it. Each of these knots can represent the various things and experiences in our life: me, you, the kitchen sink, etc. Notice that the knots are not other than the scarf and no matter how many knots we tie or undo (the flux of life), the scarf is neither augmented nor diminished. Augustine is saying that to find God, we must stop seeking attractive, complex knots; we must look to the scarf itself.

Why search in the shadows of experience when we already are the light that we seek? The universe is a miracle, but when we experience the miracle of a sunset we usually overlook the miracle of the omnipresent light of Knowing that embraces both the sunset and the seer with wonder and delight. Worship, by reflecting that miracle, reminds us of our nature and vocation as unique manifestations of the one light.

Jesus, the host of the Eucharist, breaks his body wide apart so we might recognise ourselves in the light he so fully embodies, and, as this light, illumine all. So, as an exercise, holding onto the recognition of oneself as a space of light, see the persons next to you, not merely as human objects with various characteristics, but also as windows of the light of God - the light that is our own deepest identity. And when we come to communion, commune one another with that in mind. See how, in doing so, that makes the real presence of Christ, here, in this sacrament, more palpable.

I think that all of what I have said today has been summarised in the single sentence aphorism of the famous Jesuit palaeanthropologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin that "*We are not human beings on a spiritual journey, we are spiritual beings on a human journey*". Today's talk and the Eucharist exercise I am asking you to try are attempts to explicate this insight. You are the light of the world.

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