

## LEAPING LEANERS

*"For it is not ourselves that we preach; we preach Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. The God who said, 'Out of the darkness the light will shine!' is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts, to bring us the knowledge of God's glory shining in the face of Christ. Yet we who have this spiritual treasure are like common clay pots, in order to show that the supreme power belongs to God, not to us ." (2 Cor. 4:5-7)*

### "OUT OF THE DARKNESS LIGHT WILL SHINE"

I have always been fascinated by light. When I was a youngster, I was first attracted to light, as LIGHT, when I noticed the squiggle patterns of light busily dancing along the sides of ships. From time to time, when visiting my Grandfather, he would take me with him to call on some of his friends aboard ships in Boston harbour. It was on one of these excursions, I first noticed this phenomena. The invisible rays of sunlight reflecting off the water formed fascinating golden patterns of light along the hulls of the ships. They gave the appearance of being alive and dancing in unison to music from the rippling water below. When I pointed them out and asked my grandfather what they were, he told me that they were called "leaping leaners."

I loved to watch their friendly sparkle. Back home when playing my yard, and the angle of the sun was just right, I would show them off to my friends. In mid-morning, my mother would call us into the kitchen for cookies and milk. By setting my glass on the table, in just the right spot, in front of the window, and carefully jiggling it, we could all watch the "leaping leaners" dance on the ceiling above. Even to this very day, when my grandchildren are visiting, and eating their breakfast in our dining room, I still can't resist wiggling my wristwatch to see if I can capture a "Leaping Leaner ." When the morning sun is just right, I can hold my arm up in the right position, and let sun's rays reflect off my watch crystal. With a little manoeuvring, I can project a "leaping leaner" or two, on the ceiling over our dining room table, to the surprise and amazement of my young visitors. I guess some grandfathers are still children at heart, and never really grow up. As far as I'm concerned "Leaping Leaners" are still "in."

As Boy Scout I also learned to use a magnifying glass to focus sunlight into a tight beam on little piles of dry leaves and twigs in order to start a campfire. I learned very early in grade school that light's rays are invisible, but their reflections can be seen and felt in many different ways. Light fills our daily lives. Light is always with us, even on the darkest night. Light is a necessary part of our existence. We can't live without it, even though we take it for granted most of the time.

For thousands of years the human race has worshipped light, and even made the Sun their God. Hundreds of devices have been invented to collect, capture, store, project, transmit, and display light waves, using their energy in multiform ways. But, in spite of all we do know about the physics of light today, it still remains a mystery. When I read my daily office the words in Psalm 36: *"you are the source of all life, and because you are light we see light, "* I remember the time I felt God's presence in those happily dancing "Leaping Leaners" many years ago, and rather than saying the "Amen." I say "aha." Sister Joan Acker HM, a scientist and teacher, confirmed my feelings with an example she used in her homily on Trinity Sunday, at our "Cosmos and Creation" conference at Loyola College in Baltimore. She described a wonderful historic event: Almost three centuries earlier, the great Sir Isaac Newton had his own "aha" moment during his early experiments with light. In the year 1666, he tells of procuring a triangular glass prism, darkening his room, and making a small hole in the window shutters to let in a convenient quantity of the sun's light. He placed his prism in just the right position to refract the light to the opposite wall and viewed with amazement the vivid and intense colours produced. But for Newton, the most surprising effect was to make the colours of the

prism converge again and be mixed as they had been in the light before it was incident upon the prism. He wrote: "The reproduced light was entirely and perfectly white, not at all sensibly differing from a direct light of the sun." Its perfect WHITENESS left Newton in complete awe. Somehow God had been transparent in the newly discovered phenomenon of Nature.

Because of his discovery we are now able to send our thoughts, words and numbers to each other around our planet through carefully selected wavelengths of light. We have the capacity of transmitting knowledge at the speed of light, through fibre optics made of glass, and by bouncing invisible beams off orbiting satellites. Internet and Cyberspace have become physical realities that allow millions of people all over the world to communicate with each other. Whether we realize it or not, modern science has given us the golden opportunity to delve into the depths of the mystery of light that encircles us. Each one of us has the capacity for realizing a mystical experience, and experiencing our own "aha" moment. As confusing as this may sound, and as difficult things seem to be for us in this rapidly changing world, I believe that with our scientific discoveries are in the process of producing that which is good.

Holy Scripture tells us God created the human race out of his own goodness. Accepting this fact, and coupling our current knowledge of the universe to God's grace, it appears we are gradually outgrowing our unruly, self-centred, pre-historic survival oriented nature. I believe that as we gain further knowledge about ourselves and our purpose in the universe, we are moving ever closer in our spiritual relationship God. Through our continued study of Holy Scripture and the Science of God's activities in the Realm of Nature we will see more clearly how God's life and human life are being woven together. As Albert Einstein liked to put it, the intelligibility of the universe compels rationality on our part and rest ultimately on the will of the Ancient One. Reason incarnate in the depths of the reality of the universe belongs to this One. Therefore, with this kind of thinking in hand, I believe that we must understand that it is more precise and pious to go out into the world from the communion table to the study of God's creation, than it is to come from creation to the communion table. But, in any case, recognizing the evidence of God's handiwork in the realm of nature sets us free to have our own "aha" moment.

Dr. John McKenna, theologian, and ordained minister with the American Baptist Churches, made a very important point recently, when he wrote: "There is nothing in creation itself which can meet the deepest need [forgiveness and reconciliation] of the humans' race. The need is met in union and communion with the Creator or it is not met at all." I believe, we are being brought back to the belief in the utter constancy, invariance, faithfulness, of truth of God in all his relations towards us, which we find being disclosed in the activity and nature of God's eternal Light. The very Light of God could not be consistently Light, and certainly could not be known as such, if the Holy Christ in Jesus were not also Word of Word as well as Light of Light, and thus immutably, eternally God of God as both Light and Word. I would like to end my homily this morning by dedicating it to the members of the Society of Ordained Scientists, in the twelfth year its founding, and to all believing men and woman of science, wherever they may be, with these words taken from Deut. 29:29: "*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law and obey it forever.*" And also by repeating the words with which I began this morning. 'Out of darkness the light will shine.'

**Amen.**

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