

# Grace Notes from the System Chaplain

October 2018

This morning as I awoke to a grey, dismal morning, I became very aware of the shortening hours of daylight and the 'drawing in' of the season. Although I am not sure that I suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), I do believe that many of us find it harder to be enthusiastic about the day when waking up before dawn. It gives me a greater appreciation for the devotion of many centuries of Religious men

and women who have risen during the dark hours to pray and sing for all of us.

## CHRIST, BE OUR LIGHT/SÉ NUESTRA LUZ

Bernadette Farrell



1. Long-ing for light, we wait in dark-ness. Long-ing for
2. Long-ing for peace, our world is trou-bled. Long-ing for
3. Long-ing for food, man - y are hun - gry. Long-ing for
4. Long-ing for shel-ter, man - y are home-less. Long-ing for
5. Man - y the gifts, man - y the peo - ple, man - y the



1. truth, we turn to you. Make us your own,
2. hope, man - y de - spair. Your word a - lone
3. wa - ter, man - y still thirst. Make us your bread,
4. warmth, man - y are cold. Make us your build - ing,
5. hearts that yearn to be - long. Let us be ser - vants



1. your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.
2. has pow'r to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.
3. bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.
4. shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.
5. to one an - oth - er, mak - ing your king - dom come.



Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the dark - ness.  
¡Sé nues - tra luz, Cris - to Se - ñor, en las ti - nie - blas!

Text: Bernadette Farrell; Spanish tr., Pedro Rubalcava and Jaime Cortez.  
Text and music © 1993, 2011, Bernadette Farrell. Published by OCP. All rights reserved.

Reprinted with permission OneLicense # A-707054

In confirmation we accept the responsibility, entrusted to our parents and godparents if we were infants at baptism, to keep the light – the flame of faith - burning. In receiving the flame from the paschal candle, we recognise that it is Christ's light which shines through us and that this light is synonymous with love. We need to remember constantly the adage that any one of us may be the only Jesus someone ever sees in the way that we let our light shine and our love touch others.

It was heartwarming to hear how our schools and Board communities reflected Christ's light and love in their Faith Day activities; this speaks very loudly as our response to Jesus' question, "Do you love me?" because we have heard the message that whatever we do to the least of his brothers and sisters we do to and for him. May I remind you that the Faith Day resources for the last three years are available on StaffNet and you are encouraged to use the reflection activities, ice breakers and prayers during the school year. You are also invited to share the monthly **Focus on Faith** reflections, written by our high school chaplains, which are posted on the Board web site and on StaffNet.

This is when hymns and songs like Bernadette Farrell's "Christ, Be Our Light" take on greater significance and I find it helps to get these, or similar, words going in my brain as I struggle out of bed – even at the cost of having them become an 'earworm' for the day!

I'm sure that it was not by chance that early Christians made the decision to celebrate the birth of Christ at the time of the winter solstice. Our pagan antecedents worried about the days continuing to shorten and had many rituals to entice the light back into their lives. The Easter/Paschal candle being brought into the dark church at the Easter Vigil is also a very powerful symbol of how much we hunger for the 'Light of Christ' to be present to us.

It is worthwhile to reflect that one of the strong symbols of our baptism is the receiving of the Light of Christ in the form of a candle lit from the Easter or Christ candle:

"this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly."

## Grace Notes from the System Chaplain

This year, we have the Bishops' document, ***Renewing the Promise A Pastoral Letter for Catholic Education*** on which to reflect. Recognising that the **Promise** exists at many levels and with so many possibilities gives us a fresh and new opportunity to celebrate who we are as a Catholic educational community. There will be plenty to follow in the months ahead.

The process of breaking open this pastoral letter develops through study of the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35). I found myself reflecting on this story as a response to Theology on Tap last week. Our speaker, Paul Nalli, was talking about resilience and how the Paschal Mystery is a part of teaching our students to recover from failures and go on to be successful. Imagine how the disciples on the road to Emmaus must have felt: we can understand that they might have considered all they had experienced with Jesus to be for nought, to be a failure. And yet, their encounter with him on the road filled them with new zeal, especially after they recognised him in the "breaking of the bread". And, two thousand years later we are still telling this story and trying to live our lives in the way Jesus had taught them.

Pope Francis stresses the importance of ***accompaniment***, and every one of us is called to practise the art of accompaniment in our daily dealings with all we encounter. If we can offer anyone comfort, hope and joy through witnessing Jesus' love as we walk with them, we are helping them to a new opportunity to succeed. Knowing that we are loved and supported helps us to risk being successful and to believe in ourselves.

With the end of October, we look to the Solemnity of All Saints and the Commemoration of All Souls. The tradition of remembering those who have died - saints, ancestors and loved ones – at the beginning of November goes back many hundreds of years and is generally attributed to Pope Gregory III in the early eighth century. Much of our Hallowe'en activity (Hallowe'en = Eve of all Hallows or all Saints) comes from the Celtic observance of Samhain/Samhuinn, which was a harvest festival during which the community remembered and honoured the dead. This would be a great opportunity for students to learn about a saint who is their namesake or who shares their birthday.

We also honour our Fallen in November, on Remembrance Day. This year brings a special observance as we mark the one hundredth anniversary of the "eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month" which ended "the War to end all wars". The poppy, written about so eloquently by John McRae in his poem, "In Flanders Fields" continues to be a strong symbol to us of a commitment yet to be realised. The Royal Canadian Legion, which offers the poppies in exchange for a donation, uses the moneys raised to assist needy veterans of all ages and their families. In addition to the poetry of McRae, the Legion quotes Rudyard Kipling: "Lord God of Hosts be with us yet, lest we forget, lest we forget" and Laurence Binyon:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,  
We will remember them.

Although Remembrance Day falls on Sunday, you may wish to have a moment of silence on Friday in your school.

Peace, *Gillian*