

Children of Light
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Ephesians 5: 8–14

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Walk as children of light, for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness; rather, expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly, but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light.

Therefore it says,

“Sleeper, awake!

Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

The words we heard at the imposition of the ashes on Ash Wednesday are intended to remind us of our mortality as we prepare to embark on a time of penitence, fasting and prayer. But what if we are also meant to keep the season by engaging in acts of love, as the Ash Wednesday liturgy of the *Book of Common Worship* suggests?

As Ash Wednesday approached this year, I was intrigued to notice suggestions popping up in my Facebook feed of a markedly different way to observe that somber day. In more than one post from more than one part of the country, pastors were pondering mixing glitter in with the ashes that mark the foreheads of the faithful. Why? As a way of suggesting that, along with the reality of our mortality, we reflect on the implications of what it means that in the Lord we are children of the light. Of course, we need to be cautious in employing the metaphors that contrast light and dark, lest we communicate something negative about dark things that we do not intend to imply. But there is value in engaging in this season in concrete actions that focus the light of compassion and justice on those dark places where injustice festers and grows.

This fifth Sunday in Lent, with one week before we enter the starkly dramatic events of Holy Week, we might reflect on whether our prayer and penitence is leading us to walk ever more confidently as children of the light. Are our actions increasingly good and right and true? Does what is being made visible in our lives stand up to the scrutiny of the clear, strong light of Christ? As a community, we recently engaged in one such concrete action, Build-a-Bed, where we joined together to create beds for children whose lives have been marked by insecurity. As we continue to pray and reflect on scripture, perhaps we can consider, not only the beds we built, but how we might renew our energy to build actions that address the systemic problems leading to such vulnerability for many children and their families.

Lent is about remembering we are dust, and acknowledging that to dust we shall return, to be sure. But with Holy Week on the not-too-distant horizon, we also can renew our calling to walk as children of light, knowing that the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

Prayer: God of justice and peace, open our eyes to those unfruitful works of darkness that need to be exposed to your refining light. Renew our energy and commitment to walk more confidently as children of light. Amen.