

11th February 2021

Lightbulbs

**“Jesus bids us shine, with a pure, clear light,
Like a little candle, burning in the night.
In this world is darkness, so let us shine –
You in your small corner, and I in mine.”**

Susan Warner, Jesus Bids Us Shine, 1868

How many politicians does it take to change a lightbulb? Two – one to change it and another to change it back again. How many psychiatrists does it take to change a lightbulb? Only one – but the lightbulb really has to want to change. How many jazz musicians does it take to change a lightbulb? A-one, and a-two, and a-one-two-three-four.

There may be more lightbulb jokes than there are actual lightbulbs. But the point of all of this is that if a lightbulb needs to be changed then it should be changed – unless you want to continue to sit in darkness!

With the roll-out of the Covid vaccination programme, there is much talk about seeing “light at the end of the tunnel”. Someone said to me recently, “We’ve been waiting for this light for such a long time. It’ll make such a difference.” Yes, I get that, and I understand when people put hope in a future light. But why *wait* for the light, even if we expect it to make such big a difference, when we might have a contribution to make by changing a lightbulb and spreading a little more light right where we are?

When Pope Urban II conferred the title of *Lux Mundi* [Light of the World] on the abbey church of Cluny in France in the 11th century, St Bernard of Clairvaux is reputed to have said,

Will light only shine if it is in a candelabrum of gold or silver?

Light will not, and should not, be confined to spotlights and massive displays, grand places and glittering exhibitions, lights at the end of tunnels or in candelabra of gold or silver. We have our own lightbulbs, right here and right now. We all have a contribution to make when, as Susan Warner puts it, our “world is darkness”. If our lightbulb needs to be changed, let’s get to it, no matter how many people might be needed to change it. Let it shine now, “you in your small corner, and I in mine.”

A prayer for today

Let my light shine for all around, dispelling many kinds of darkness today. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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