

Connecting faith and daily life

Georgina Byrne *reflects on*
Isaiah 60:1-6, Ephesians 3:1-12 and Matthew 2:1-12

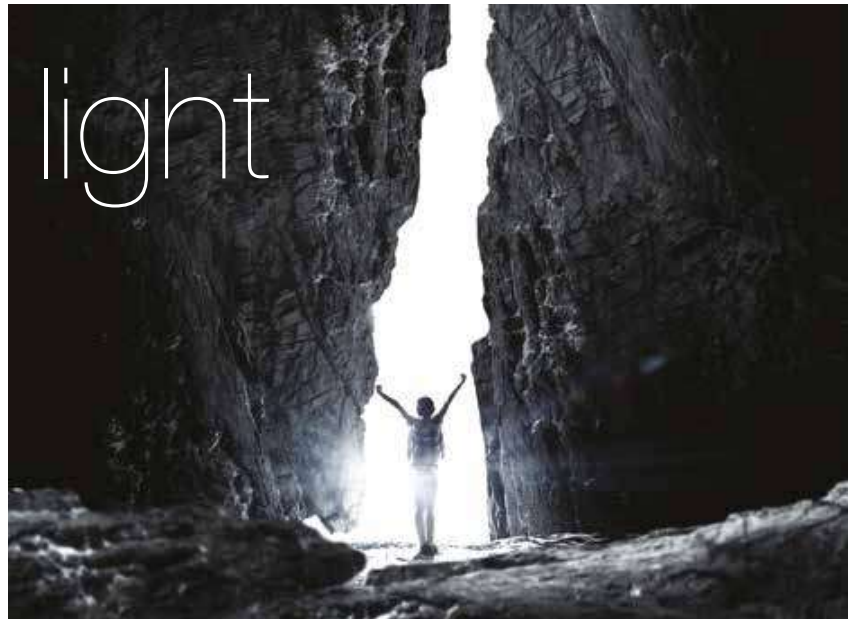
It is difficult to contain light. Light will find a way through the smallest of cracks, gaps or hinges. Light spreads, spills out beyond itself, into the dark, transforming the darkness as it travels.

In the season of Epiphany we celebrate Christ, who is the light to the nations, the fulfilment of the promise made in Isaiah 60. Even foreigners will, the prophet says, be drawn to the light. It is irresistible. And even as the nations come, God's servant people will become more radiant – because seeing the delight of others will thrill them even more.

That promise made to God's people becomes real in Christ, as the Magi – foreigners – come and offer gifts to him. The light of God is radiant in Jesus, drawing people in. Paul, steeped in the promise of the Old Testament and transformed by the light of Christ, goes out to the Gentiles, to the nations, to preach the Gospel. The light of Christ floods out further, transforming the world with the radiance, warmth, and brightness of God's grace.

Jesus is God's gift for the whole world. We cannot contain, box in, or control the light. Christ will ever find ways to touch and transform the lives of others. The Light of the World is irresistible. All we need to do is allow it to shine out from our lives. ☺

Drawn to the



Ephesus

Part 1 – hope for harmony and understanding

by Sr Janet Fearn

Last summer, Sr Janet Fearn visited Turkey. Here she gives us a tour of Ephesus.

Many people believe that Mount Koresos is where St John brought Mary following the ascension, and where she spent her last days on earth. The House of the Virgin Mary, in its exquisitely beautiful setting, is also a place of prayer and pilgrimage for both Christians and Muslims.

People who are comfortably secure in their religious beliefs can respect and appreciate differences

without feeling threatened in their relationship with God. That is why, when working as First Counsellor to the Turkish Embassy to the Vatican, Deniz Kiliçer, a committed Muslim, studied for a theology degree at the Gregorian University – understanding Christians helped her do a better job. It also explains why she and her friend Dundar Bey, happily and peacefully ensured that two Christians could recently visit the House of the Virgin Mary (Meryem Ana Evi). I was privileged to be one of them.

Sr Janet is Editor for Special Projects for Redemptorist Publications. ☺

“Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”

Isaiah 60:3

Light of the World, your brightness draws all people to you. Shine in the dark places of our hearts and fill our lives with light. Shine in the dark corners of the world and transform the lives of your children. Amen.

Books of the Old Testament Jonah

by Richard Greatrex

Despite its brevity – just forty-eight verses – Jonah is rich in vocabulary, theology and psychology, and cannot be reduced to a simple message. Repeated readings reveal new layers of meaning and mystery, and almost every element – from its date to its genre and purpose – is contested by scholars.

God instructs Jonah to preach divine displeasure at the wickedness of the Assyrian capital city, Nineveh. Jonah immediately disobeys and flees in the opposite direction. The adventure that results in him

being swallowed by a great fish is one of the best-known Bible stories.

The second half begins with God again calling Jonah, who this time obeys and delivers his message of imminent destruction to Nineveh. The Ninevites listen and repent, and God relents. But that wasn't what Jonah wanted. He furiously hopes that God might obliterate the city. Yet when a worm kills the bush that God had caused to sprout up and shade him, Jonah's empathy for the withered plant breaks through anger. This sorrow over one living thing's demise becomes a microcosm of God's compassion for the human population of Nineveh. ☺