



Transform the world!  
By Tony Magliano \*

You are the light of the world.”

Don't take my word for it, that's Gospel truth from Jesus himself (Mt 5:14). And it's a tall order, indeed.

Now on the other hand in John's Gospel, Jesus says “I am the light of the world.” Now that at first glance makes far more sense. After all, Jesus – God in the flesh – is obviously “the light of the world.”

But then, Jesus assuredly adds, “Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn 8:12).

And so the light that you and I are to be to the world – which sounds like a daunting task – is the light of Christ and not our own. We don't need to fret over how we are to somehow enlighten the world, our task is to faithfully follow Jesus, and in the process his light shines as a beacon through us.

To deeply experience Jesus' loving, joyful, peaceful presence and to radiate that transforming presence out into the world requires us to be very open – to surrender to the will of God. This narrow path needs from us a deepening trust in the risen Lord, and a life filled with prayer and good works.

A very wise Christian principle, often attributed to St. Ignatius of Loyola, urges us to “Pray as if everything depends on God, work as if everything depends on you.”

But in today's complex world, attempting to really do all the good you can, sincerely trying to make the absolute best difference, often requires us to get at the root-causes of injustice.

Because only by systematically addressing the root-causes of humanity's ills can we fully be the light of Christ and transform the world.

Make no mistake about it; disciples of Jesus are called to transform the world!

In their 1971 document titled "Justice in the World," the international Catholic Synod of Bishops prophetically declared: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."

And so let us ask, and honestly seek the answers to these questions: Why are so many people poor, vulnerable and powerless? Why is the sacredness of unborn and born human life often treated with such total disrespect? Why is our earth-home so polluted and dangerously warming? Why are so many families dysfunctional? Why are countless people hungry in a world of plenty? Why are the multitudes morally numb to the ongoing mass-murder of war? And why are millions of people so accepting of all this darkness?

It seems like our culture is drugged.

The famous peace activist, Jesuit Father Daniel Berrigan, issues this warning: Beware! Beware! Or the culture will swallow you whole. It's easy to be swallowed whole and drowned by our culture. It is a kind of narcotic.

We need to place our culture into detoxification. We need the true and lasting euphoria of the Gospel! We need to walk in the footsteps of Jesus; thus walking in solidarity with peoples of all nations, co-creating with God a morally just and peaceful world for all people, everywhere.

By inviting the risen Christ ever more deeply into our lives, we can indeed be "the light of the world," radiating his transforming love upon our often misled culture and hurting planet.

Tony Magliano is an internationally syndicated social justice and peace columnist. He is available to speak at diocesan or parish gatherings about Catholic social teaching. His keynote address, "Advancing the Kingdom of God in the 21st Century," has been well received by diocesan and parish gatherings from Santa Clara, Calif. to Baltimore, Md. Tony can be reached at [tmag@zoominternet.net](mailto:tmag@zoominternet.net).

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