

If you are familiar with filming using video cameras, you know that having the right amount of light is crucial. Our eyes are much more sensitive to light, so they don't require as much brightness to be able to see. However, film cameras are a much different animal. If you've ever seen the behind the scenes of any movie or television show being filmed inside, you've probably seen quite a few lights set up to get the proper amount of brightness for the camera to pick everything up.

In the 60's, British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge was in Calcutta with a cameraman documenting the work of Mother Teresa and her sisters, the Missionaries of Charity, who spent their days serving the poorest of the poor, picking them up off of the streets, providing them love and care, and treating them with dignity. In the course of their documentary filming, Muggeridge and his cameraman, Ken, found themselves following the sisters into a home for the dying run by the sisters. Here is how Muggeridge described the situation: "We had only one small light with us, and to get the place adequately lit in the time at our disposal was quite impossible. It was decided that, nonetheless, Ken should have a go, but by way of insurance he took, as well, some film in an outside courtyard where some of the inmates were sitting in the sun. In the processed film, the part taken inside was bathed in a particularly beautiful soft light, whereas the part taken outside was rather dim and confused."

Muggeridge saw this inexplicable phenomenon as something miraculous. As he put it: "I myself am absolutely convinced that the technically unaccountable light is, in fact, the Kindly Light [Cardinal] Newman refers to in his well-known exquisite hymn. ...[The love in the home is] luminous, like the halos artists have seen and made visible around the heads of saints. I find it not at all surprising that the luminosity should register on a photographic film." The holiness of the sisters was literally lighting up the dark rooms they entered.

Mother Teresa's religious order has sisters stationed all over the world, wherever there is great poverty. I had the great privilege of spending some time with the Missionaries of Charity on a mission trip in some very poor

areas in Kentucky. I can confirm that with many of these sisters, there is a holiness that is almost tangible. I wouldn't be surprised to see them lighting up dim rooms just by their love and joy.

The secret behind this tangible joy of Mother Teresa and her sisters is the fact that they have taken to heart the teaching of Jesus that we hear in the Gospel today. Jesus teaches us: "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all." This teaching goes against all of the wisdom of the world. When we think of powerful people in worldly terms, we think of those who have control over others, people who are able to exert their will on those lower than them. But this is precisely the opposite of the dynamics of power in the Church.

Within this worldwide family which Jesus has gathered together through the centuries, those in authority are called not to exert power, but to pour themselves out in loving service. This is because the Church is more than just an organization, but a living organism. And the Head of this organism is the ultimate servant--Jesus. He poured out his perfect life on the Cross to pay the price for each and every one of our sins. This was the culmination of His life. Everything Jesus did was focused on others. He was and is totally for us. That is what the Cross reminds us.

And the Cross is meant to be the pattern of all our lives. As members of the living Body of Christ, we are called to become like our Head. Unless our lives become like His, we will never be truly happy and will put ourselves in real danger of Hell, that separation from God and others for all eternity!

So what is the call for us this Sunday? It is to allow Jesus to reorient our priorities. The temptation is for us to put ourselves first in life, to prioritize our own needs and to use others as tools for meeting those needs. Like the disciples in the Gospel, we are tempted to focus on being the greatest to the exclusion of others. But this is not what God intends. He has destined us for greatness, but a greatness which is only found through service. The most powerful people ultimately aren't those who can exert their will against others, who can have every one of their needs provided for but those who

bring new life to others through serving them, who are forgetful of their own needs in order to meet those of others.

The selfless life is one which brings joy. It all goes back to the Cross. Notice that in the Gospel, Jesus talks to the disciples about his coming death and resurrection but they are too afraid to ask him to explain it. I would guess that this fear came from their pride--the fact that they didn't want to look stupid in front of each other. After hearing about the true source of joy--death transformed by the resurrection, they choose to focus on the worldly concern of who is the greatest. They trade the joy found in the selflessness of the cross for the empty pleasure of the self-centered life of worldly power.

Let us take our cue this Sunday from the Missionaries of Charity and their example of selflessness. In radical ways, those women give up many worldly pleasures in order to serve the poorest of the poor. They have nothing, and yet they have everything. They are filled with luminous joy because they allow themselves to be emptied out for others. We are meant to find that joy by focusing on those we are called to serve.

And all of us know people who can use our service. We may not be called to the radical service that the Missionaries of Charity devote themselves to, but we are all called to serve somebody. When Jesus puts his arms around a child and says, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me," He is speaking about service to those without anybody to help them. In the surrounding cultures of Jesus' time, children were considered at the bottom of the totem pole. Some pagan religions even used them for sacrifices to their false gods! But Jesus identifies himself with a child to remind them: those who others see as disposable, you are called to serve as precious. Who is that person who is overlooked by others who could use your service? When you receive them through your service, you receive Jesus himself, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

I want to leave you this Sunday with an acronym which can help you remember the priorities you are called to have by God's grace: J.O.Y. This stands for: Jesus, Others, Yourself. J.O.Y. When you die to yourself through service to Jesus and others, you will enter into that new life of the Resurrection which brings joy that the world cannot give and you will be someone who changes the world not with worldly power but with that selfless, humble and life-changing power which flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus Himself.

*+ Heavenly Father, thank you for sending us your Son to save us and give us new life. Jesus, give us Your grace so that we can truly live through service to others. Holy Spirit, help us to thirst more deeply for that true joy that only comes from dying to ourselves. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen. +*