

ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, TOWN OF TONAWANDA, NEW YORK

21st Sunday After Pentecost, Year "A" Proper # 22

(The Rev. Fr.) Russell Jay Amend + "Rector Emeritus" (Retired)

TEXT: "...and his eyes were as a flame of fire" (Rev. 1:14, 2:18, 19:12)

TITLE: "The Seven Eyes of the Glorified Christ"

THEME: "7 Red Eyes of Jesus, in the 7 Virtues, & the 7 Spiritual & 7 Corporal Works of Mercy"

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE ENGAGEMENT AND WEDDING RINGS

Did you know that there are two sets of vows used at the ancient marriage rite in the Church? First, **engagement vows** are taken at the nave, and then, at the altar rail, **the espousal or wedding vows** are recited. Originally the engagement lasted a minimum of 6 months to a maximum of a year. The groom gave his intended bride a ring with a faceted diamond or other precious stone for the engagement. When they appeared before the priest the 2nd time, a second ring, the 'marital ring' was placed on the woman's hand. That second ring had no faceted stone. Ever wondered why? It just represented the man's ability to support a wife, to produce wealth. The wedding ring had no faceted stone (representing the man) because she had already accept him in her engagement vow.

The engagement diamond was -and still is- faceted. These cuts in the stone depict an interplay of light and dark shadows, giving the diamond its "sparkling" effect. Understand the symbolism. The **setting** of the engagement ring stands for the man's ability to produce wealth and support a wife. The precious stone with its facets of light and dark, represent the man himself: his light side and his dark side; his 'ups' and his 'downs.' When the couple appeared before the priest for the wedding vows; the bride removed her glove, and if the faceted stone was turned up, it meant she accepted the man, with his attributes both positive and negative, as represented in the diamond. If she decided not marry him, when the glove was removed, it would display the ring with the diamond **turned down**, away from view. From it came the expression that "she turned me down!"

DO YOU KNOW WHAT JESUS' EYES OR 'FACETS' LOOKS LIKE NOW IN HEAVEN?

Now, keep that twinkling and sparkling diamond in your mind's eye when I ask you this question: "What does Jesus' face look like right now, at this very instant?" Before Jesus' suffering and death, he asked the Father to glorify him with the glory that he, Christ Jesus had, before the universe was created (John 12:28, 17:5). And the Father said he would do just that, And...did so! So Christ Jesus now looks like he did before the Incarnation. Before he became "Man." And he is overwhelming!

Some of you may, perhaps, have a "dimmer switch" on one of your lamps at home? Well, after the Ascension, Jesus revealed himself to St. John (Rev. 1:17-18) in all his pre-existent glory, and the Apostle had...a heart attack, and collapsed in a coma. Jesus turned down the "dimmer switch" of his glory, and said quietly, "Fear not. I am the first and the last. I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death." Jesus is now brighter than the sun, and human eyes cannot stand the glory.

St. Teresa of Avila, the 16th century Carmelite nun, received a vision of the ascended Christ, and, in a spiritual ecstasy collapsed. When she revived, her counselor, St. John of the Cross, held her, and whispered: "Did you see him? Did you see him? What did you see?" And all she could reply was: "Oh, the glory, the glory..." When she recovered, she said: "I saw his glory. I saw a part of his finger nail and oh, the glory!" Small wonder the pre-existent Christ in Exodus, hid Moses in the crevice of a rock, and just allowed him to see the remnant of his glory as he passed by!

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From St. John the Divine, we know, from his description, the color of Jesus' eyes. Three times John describes them. They burned like fire. The color of the risen Christ's eyes are...RED! "His eyes" writes St. John "were as a flame of fire!" Jesus, with...red eyes?

'RED EYE' AS HUMAN BEINGS EXPERIENCE IT -

Perhaps our only experience with "**Red Eyes**" are negative ones. In photography it can sometimes 'spoil' a picture. When someone takes a photo, and their flash is placed too close on the camera to the lens, the human pupil cannot contract fast enough, and the light wave pierces to the back of the eye, to the retina, striking the red pigment of the melanin on the fundus. The red pigment is then bounced back to the camera. Too much light means, for humans, red eye. Christ's light is so bright, we perceive him with eyes of fire. The melanin on our retina's can only see it that way. Too much light. Too much glory for the human eye to handle it. In a sense, one could speculate that St. John had photographic "Red Eye" when he beheld the glorified Christ. Then there are the "Red Eye" plane flights which folks often take in times of family emergencies. Such trips are often reflective of a ministry to be present for the needs of others.

JESUS' SEVEN EYES SPARKLE, ARE BLOOD RED, AND HAVE NO DARK FACETS

In the Hebrew Scriptures God's eyes are seen as having "seven facets" or "seven eyes." Seven eyes of fire which range around the entire globe (Zech. 3:9, 4:10). Faster than the speed of light!

So, if we had to wear a 'wedding ring' with us as his "bride" and he as the "groom," the stone would be not a diamond, but a 'ruby!' All seven facets of the stone would glow brightly, and there would be no dark facets at all, for he is light and "in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1:5).

The Apostle John also sees Christ in heaven transformed into a lamb. He writes: (Rev. 5:6)

"And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne ...and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven \ Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth..."

Sound familiar? Look on the inscription (from Rev. 4:5) on the arch above the communion rail! The sanctuary of this building is a reduplication of this chapter of Jesus' revelation to St. John. It has the altar, with the slain lamb holding the banner of victory, with the 'green marble' emerald rainbow about the altar (Rev. 4:3), while the seven seals of the Lamb are inscribed on the missal desk-stand and the seven lamps of fire on the door to the sacramental ambry.

THE 7 LAMPS OF FIRE IN REV. 4:5 & 5:6 ARE THE RUBY RED EYES OF JESUS

So. The red lamps of fire above us stand for the '**SEVEN EYES**' OF JESUS, BURNING LIKE FIRE -EACH REPRESENTING ONE OF THE SEVEN SPIRITS OF GOD! Remember, the glorified eyes of Jesus burn like fire, which is fitting, since "*Our God is a consuming fire!*" (Hebrews 12:29), and "fire" is one of the hallmarks of God the Holy Spirit who distributes graces at Jesus' command as Our Lord hears it from the Father (John 16:13-14).

3 OF THE LAMPS ARE HIGHER THAN THE 4 LAMPS BELOW THEM. WHY?

Understand now, that the SEVEN LAMPS OF FIRE, OR THE SEVEN 'FACETS' OR EYES OF JESUS, STAND FOR THE GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. WHEN YOU USE THESE GIFTS, YOU ARE THEN 'ON FIRE' WITH THE SPIRIT.

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Traditionally, the seven lamps in our sanctuary area stand for the SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. The top three, represent the three theological gifts of the Holy Spirit:

(1) 'FAITH, (2) HOPE AND (3) LOVE.'

They are called the 'THREE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES'

'Theological' because they are God-given ("Theos" is the Greek word for "God") to those who love him and are so described in Scripture (I Cor. 13:13, I Thess. 1:3, Gal. 5:5-6, Col. 1:4-5).

Beneath the three lamps of "Faith, Hope and Love," are found four more lamps. They represent the **FOUR CARDINAL VIRTUES:**

(1) PRUDENCE, (2) JUSTICE, (3) TEMPERANCE, AND (4) FORTITUDE

These are called "Cardinal Virtues" because they are "primary" or "cardinal" gifts given by God to all mankind, whereas the three Theological Virtues are given only to those who love the Lord.

Before we go any further, let's all memorize these 7 virtues: (1) Prudence, (2) justice, (3) Temperance, (4) fortitude -("Cardinal Virtues"), (5) faith, (6) hope and (7) love ("Theological Virtues"). (Repeat with the congregation over and over).

THE 7 LAMPS ARE JESUS' GRACE FOR US TO DO THE WORK OF THE CHURCH - THE 7 SPIRITUAL AND THE 7 CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY!

These then are the seven gifts of fire distributed to the human race by the Blessed Trinity. They are effectual in what we call CHURCH WORK. That is, the "work" that is to be done by all members of the Church.

THREE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES INFUSE THE 7 SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY -THE FOUR CARDINAL VIRTUES INFUSE THE 7 CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

The work of the Church is expressed in what we call the:

SEVEN SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY -Help us minister to others spiritual needs

SEVEN CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY -Help us minister to others bodily needs

THE SEVEN SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY ARE SET ON FIRE BY THE TOP THREE GIFTS OF "FAITH, HOPE AND LOVE." THE SEVEN CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY, ARE SET ON FIRE BY THE CARDINAL GIFTS OF PRUDENCE, JUSTICE, TEMPERANCE AND FORTITUDE!

THE SEVEN CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY, ENABLED BY THE 4 CARDINAL VIRTUES, ARE TO:

(1) Feed the hungry, (2) give drink to the thirsty, (3) cloth the naked, (4) harbor the stranger (5) visit the sick, (6) minister to prisoners and (7) bury the dead. All seven of these works are listed in Matthew 25:34-39.

These seven acts can be compared to the seven facets on the engagement ring of the bride. Except that these are 'ruby facets' aflame with the eyes of spiritual fire from Jesus through the Holy Spirit. When you do these works for others you use your four cardinal gifts of prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude.

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THE SEVEN SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY, ENABLED BY THE 3 THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES, ARE TO:

(1) convert the sinner, (2) instruct the ignorant, (3) counsel the doubtful, (4) comfort the sorrowful, (5) bear wrongs patiently, (6) forgive injuries and (7) pray for the dead

CHURCH WORK IS FOR “PEOPLE.” ADMIRABLE WORKS PERTAIN TO “THINGS”

These corporal and spiritual works of mercy are what we call “CHURCH WORK!” They are exclusively oriented to PEOPLE. Many other things are done by Christians to help the financial and/or other structural needs of the church. Technically, they are not Church Work, but would be considered “ADMIRABLE PURSUITS” done to God’s glory, for “things.” But they are technically not Church work, which is not about “things” but about ‘ministry to people.’ When you perform any of the 7 spiritual and corporal works of mercy, and I know many of you have done, and continue to do them, then the fire of the Holy Spirit, the flaming red eyes of the Ascended Christ, burns in your life. You are ‘on fire’ for the Lord.

You minister to other people’s souls when you perform the 7 Spiritual Works of Mercy. When you minister to other people’s physical needs, you are performing one of the 7 Corporal (or bodily) works of mercy. These “mercies” are all printed out in this homily so that you may take it home and reflect of them and how they can be used in your ministry to others.

THE CHURCH IS THE ARK OF NOAH, THE SHIP OF SALVATION

God’s people are seated in what we call the “NAVE” of the church. The word “Nave” is from the Latin “Navus” meaning “ship” -from whence we get the word “Navy.” Notice the ceiling here. It’s like the keel of a ship, and we are both its crew and its passengers. Noah’s ark had three decks. So does the Church. Jesus’ seven lamps of fire (his “red eyes”) lead as the pilot of the ship. The Seven Divine Virtues are the top deck. This top deck guides the two beneath it. The Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy are the central deck, and the Seven Corporal works of Mercy, the bottom deck. It’s a ministry to both body and soul.

THE CORPORAL & SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY AS CHILDREN PERCEIVE THEM

I would close, with two examples of how the 7 Corporal and 7 Spiritual works of mercy are seen by children, who, though they may not know the terms, yet can effectually perceive and/or perform these ministries to others -both corporal and spiritual. For the sum of all ministry is a ministry of love -the prime nature and the essence of the Triune Godhead itself.

Author and lecturer Leo Buscaglia once talked about a contest he was asked to judge. The purpose of the contest was to find the most caring child by asking each: “What is love?” “**Rebecca,**” age 8, said: “*When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn’t bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So, my grandfather does it for her all the time, even though his fingers are crooked ‘cause he has arthritis too.*” This young child just described one of the 7 Corporal Works of Mercy. Ministering to one’s bodily needs.

The winner of the contest was a four-year-old boy, named “**Mark.**” The young lad’s next door neighbor was an elderly gentleman who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the old man crying, while seated on his porch, the four-year-old went into the old gentleman’s yard, climbed onto his lap and just sat there. When his mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said: “*Nothing. I just sat on his lap and snuggled close to him.*” That was one of the seven Spiritual Works of Mercy. Ministering to the soul of another human being. The flaming eyes of Jesus were upon those two children. As Jesus once said, in Luke 10:37 (KJV) to someone in his day: “Go, and do thou likewise!”

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