

Dear Friends,

There are many examples in literature of people who, thru the course of story, move from despair to hope, selfishness to generosity and darkness to light. Rarely do they do this entirely thru their own efforts. Usually someone is rooting for them, encouraging them, or coaxing them towards something better. This persistent support empowers them, not only to do better for themselves, but also to do better for others.

In many cases, the path is not straight. Life is messy, and ups may be followed by downs. Characters resist support. Or they accept support but nevertheless encounter hurdle after hurdle. As in real life, there may be no fairy-tale ending. But it is usually clear that goodness makes a difference, and that even one good person can transform how another experiences the world. Indeed, those involved in young people's services know that having "one good adult" is crucial in helping a young person to flourish. And surely this continues to apply in adulthood.

In John's Gospel, it is Jesus who has the power to transform the lives of those he encounters. This applies in the sometimes abstract, theological sense of how people live their lives.

John describes how people "have shown they prefer darkness to light because their deeds were evil." They have avoided the light because they fear it will expose their wrong actions. In the first reading, we hear of "infidelity, shameful practices", and the repeated resistance of the people when God sent "messenger after messenger" until it seemed "there was no further remedy."

But Paul tells us that God persisted. Even when we were dead thru our sins God brought us to life with Christ. We were saved thru grace and faith, gifts from God given in Christ Jesus. He is that one good person who empowers us "to live the good life". He is the one who John says was sent by God to save the world, empowering us to live by the truth "so that it may be plainly seen that what we do is done in God."

Living the life God intended is impossible if we go it alone. That is why we open our hearts to Jesus as the one who brings light, grace and faith into our lives. Spending time in prayer and reflection, pondering on the scriptures, and celebrating our faith in community can help us experience the transformative light of Christ. This light is not just for us as individuals, even if we experience it thru deeply personal prayer. Our life in Christ is not simply an "inward" or "upward" spiritual exercise. Just as we see the power of one good person on many a character in literature – and as we may have experienced in our own lives – so we are called to reach into the world.

Each of us is just one person, but our influence can be transformative if we are the one who brightens another's day, offers a word of comfort, lifts another up and treats our environment and every person with the respect they deserve as part of God's creation. Our gestures do not need to be grand, although some of us may be in a position to do great things. Today, let us think of one way in which we might be one good person in the world.

Your friend in Jesus

Msgr. Zach