

## **Sermon about 2 Cor 4, 3-6 on Epiphany 2024 in Brussels (V<sup>n</sup>)**

**Blessing:** Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come. (Amen.)

**Bible:** (3) And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. (4) In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (5) For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Prayer:** Lord God, who fills all eternity and whose name is holy. By your Holy Gospel enter my heart and make it Your own dwelling place. As Your Holy Word is being preached and Your Holy Sacraments given to me, let me receive Your grace with a believing heart, that being strengthened I may be not only hearer of Your Word, but also a doer of Your will to my neighbour. Through Your only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. (Amen.) [words taken from the LBP, p.14]

**Sermon: *Opener 1 – Life can be dark:*** Life can be "pretty" dark sometimes. And I'm not talking about our winter darkness, which I don't really like either. If we look back on the past year, there are certainly many good, beautiful, happy - all in all "light" moments. I know about some of them and have accompanied them. I was able to rejoice with you. Improved life situations, family celebrations and friendly visits, revitalised relationships that had long been considered dead, births and baptisms, confirmation, exams passed. But there were also other moments full of worry, illness, lack of perspective and loneliness. It is not uncommon for the one and the other moments to be close together. Not always, but regularly, such events affect our faith - both positively and negatively.

We are now at the start of another new year. What does it look like for you on the horizon? Is the morning dawning with a silver lining, do you see the dawn pink-red or rather dark, low-hanging clouds obscuring the morning star?

**2. *Having the faith:*** I don't know what my life would be like if I didn't have faith. Perhaps I would sometimes live a more carefree and enjoyable life. That could be. I doubt whether it would really be a better life. I'm doing very well anyway. - But I do believe. "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." I believe that God created me and wanted me, just like the people around me, and has a plan for me. I believe that the Holy Spirit has filled me and called me to believe in His church and to have fellowship with all the saints and believers - especially with you here. And I believe that Jesus Christ as a human being and a brother came into this world with its light and its shadow for me to give me a hope and a purpose, to illuminate my darkness, to be a light unto my path and to set me free at the end of my days from all the dark threats of this world - of worry, sickness, death.

**3. *Keeping the faith:*** Unfortunately, not all people can confess such a faith. "And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." The worries of this world, triggered by what opposes God - Paul calls it the "god of this world" - can become so strong that they swallow up all light, like a black hole.

My faith, and I hope yours too, is sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker and full of doubt, but it is always there. I thank God for that. It is a bright light that God has kindled in me and that I can discover in the testimony of Jesus Christ, in his face, so to speak. And so I can discover this blessing in my life again and

again. When things turn out well, when reconciliation succeeds, when I look back and see that I was protected, when I realise what blessings I can experience in my life - materially, but also through the people at my side.

**4. *Living out of faith:*** What does it look like in your life? I am sure that you too can discover the light of the good news of our God between dark clouds. Otherwise you would not be here today. It is also possible for us to know that the morning star is always in the sky, even if it is obscured by bad weather. But the star is higher. The bad weather lies beneath it and will disappear again at some point. The star has long since shone into our hearts and lit the fire of faith there. On Epiphany, we celebrate the fact that we ourselves have become a manger for our Lord. At Christmas, we celebrated the fact that he once lay as a child in a manger in Palestine. Today we celebrate that he has laid himself in faith in the manger of our hearts. - In my home parish, the nativity play used to involve a lighted candle rather than a doll in the manger. It now burns as a light of faith, hope and guidance in you too. Let it guide you, especially when it is dark around you. God our Father has placed you in a more beautiful and brighter light. He also has a plan for you and this new year. He is with you, you are not alone.

**5. *Let the faith shine:*** And if you discover this light and do not shut it away in your heart, the people around you will also see it shining in your face. "For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake." Then we hope and pray that it may also illuminate them and lead them to recognise the glory of God.