*Franciscan Lectionary* July 15: St Bonaventure (Mt 5:13-19)

**LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE**

Jesus told his disciples about the Kingdom of God in private, but his metaphor of the lamp (Matt 5:15; Mk 4:21) stressed that his message should not remain hidden. In fact, the Christian community after Pentecost placed the lamp on a lampstand, to shine out to all.

Jesus, the Word of God, reveals the transcendent God through his human life. He unrolls the mystery of the love of God in a human body like ours.

The Church is the Body of Christ on earth now, in the time between Pentecost and his return in glory. The Church is in the slow process of growing to full stature, like a human body.

As members of the Church, our task is to reveal the light by which we are enlightened, in spite of the burdens of our earthly condition, our weaknesses, errors and downright sins.

The full revelation of the Kingdom of God is reserved to the Lord’s return at the end of time. Still, even now, we must give out the message faithfully and courageously. We must translate it into real life and proclaim it to all in the face of unbelief, rejection, or whatever.

It is not as though we own the message and can modify it to please ourselves. But since we have received so much, we have greater responsibility to give it out, whole and entire.

St Bonaventure taught that it is not sufficient to read the Lord’s message of the Kingdom of God or to reflect on it or to study it or indeed to know it. He stressed that we should love the message, admire it and rejoice in it.

He wrote: “Do not think that reading is sufficient without unction, reflection without devotion, investigation without admiration, observation without exultation, industry without piety, knowledge without charity, intelligence without humility, study without divine grace”

(*Itinerarium*, Prologue, n. 4).

St Bonaventure let his light shine through his teaching and writing, and by guiding the infant Franciscan Order.

We too have been chosen to tell about the Kingdom of God. We can’t just stand there, shading a lamp. Let our light shine on everyone, through what we think, say and do, about everything that matters, and for our love and affection for the Word of God.

Let us make our own a prayer, attributed to St Bonaventure, for the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit:

*Lord Jesus, as God's Spirit came down and rested upon you, may the same Spirit rest on us, bestowing his sevenfold gifts.*

*First, grant us the gift of understanding, by which your precepts*

*may enlighten our minds.*

*Second, grant us counsel, by which we may follow in your footsteps*

*on the path of righteousness.*

*Third, grant us courage, by which we may ward off the enemies' attacks.*

*Fourth, grant us knowledge, by which we can distinguish good from evil.*

*Fifth, grant us piety, by which we may acquire compassionate hearts.*

*Sixth, grant us fear, by which we may draw back from evil, and submit*

*to what is good.*

*Seventh, grant us wisdom, that we may taste fully the life-giving sweetness*

*of your good.*

*Amen.*