

A Word on Wednesday from Pastor Tonia

"Wanderings in Roma" 11/09/22

God's Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. (Ps 119:105)

God's word shows us the way, throws a beam of light in the darkness. I love to travel. I have found, a trip to a new place includes well-lit roads and dark paths. On my Sabbatical last month, I was blessed to be - lost in Rome.

The tiny streets seemed to be laid out like a skein of yarn my cats got into. The cobble stone streets each ran parallel or perpendicular to something, but that didn't mean they were straight or actually led anywhere. They were so narrow, shops, outdoor seating for the restaurants, entrances to apartments and palaces all vying for space which was at a premium. And come evening – it was dark as you tried to find your restaurant or the way to your hotel. Thank heavens for the flashlight on my phone to light up my path.

The Romans will tell you it's easy to get lost in Rome, but you're always finding yourself in a new place, seeing something for the first time. As old as it is – it never gets old – there's always a new discovery. Such is life.

Rome is filled with secret gardens and sacred spaces. Light and dark. History, stories, lives, love, and deceit around every corner. Religion highjacked for political purposes. Whatever the reason, God is evident on walls, in windows, on ceilings, on the corner of buildings. Scripture was brought to life through art.

In a book I read to prepare for my Sabbatical, *How Catholic Art Saved the Faith*, the author, Elizabeth Lev, tells how Rome itself was laid out "with roads leading to sacred places, dotted with sparkling fountains at the major crossroads, which seemed to invite the weary traveler to refresh the body as well as the mind. Roads both wide and narrow, straight and meandering would suddenly open up into a piazza which would guide the pilgrim to their sacred destination, here the dancing waters of a fountain greets and delights, refreshing the body and the spirit. The art of the architect tells of the glory of God on the outside of a church, drawing the spirit toward a journey of faith as they enter the sacred presence of God."

Life IS like a labyrinth. We are born at the beginning, and we spend our days navigating toward the exit. There are many twists and turns, paths to follow; at each intersection we need to make a choice, one path leads us toward a goal, one away from it. With each choice we realize we will be made stronger or become frustrated, we will accomplish something or will be confounded. Which path to choose?

Some choices are inconsequential, some life changing – or even life making. Nothing is meaningless. Will this road lead to where I'm supposed to be, or will it cause me to lose my way?

When one tours an unfamiliar place, they need a map or a map app on their phone. The roads won't be straight or level or always well-lit. There will be detours and dead ends. One will miss turns, become lost - more than once. This is why it's a good idea to join a tour or hire a local guide.

To guide us in both light and darkness, God gives us His word, which shines a light on our path. His Spirit who guides us. And His Son - to not only show us the way, but to be the way.

On my journey I had sore feet and weary bones. I was on sensory overload. The winding narrow cobble stone paths, the steps, the sights, the smells invigorated me and wore me out. I never knew where I was, but I definitely knew I was there.

Life, like art, is made up of light and darkness. Open squares and tiny unlit roads. Twists and turns. We look for signs pointing toward a known spot, hoping for a light to shine on the black path.

Paul wrote to the Romans, "Whoever follows Christ will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (Rom 13:12)

We are to walk in the light. As we journey through life, we miss flights, we lose our luggage. We wear out the soles of our shoes, our patience, and our endurance. We grow tired and frustrated. We are impatient. Our feet are sore, and our pockets are empty. But we go and seek, because we have been invited to come and see, led - by the Light of Christ.

Please pray with me.

God of Light, we praise You for shining Your Light on our path, for guiding us along the way, for protecting us on the journey. Be with all who feel lost, may they turn to You and safely find their way. Be with all who journey this day.

Amen.