



## Light of Dei: Exploring the Light Devine

by Jim Austin, M.A., A.C.E.

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**A large window lit column in the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C.**

"What does light talk about? I asked a plant that once, it said, "I am not sure, but it makes me grow."

>>St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274, born Aquino Italy)

When you imagine, you image the divine.

I am not a religious photographer. Christ figures, Buddha figures, and icons of faith do not inspire me to make photographs of them.

Light does inspire. It awakens me. Something lights a fire in my consciousness when I see the blues and golds of stained glass. My imagination irrevocably takes over. I begin to wonder: "Where did the first light of the universe come from?" and "Where is it going?"

And what a wondrous process it is - the spine chilling feeling of the divine within the light and what it might signify for you. Trying to photograph light may not mean being sure of what light is in a scientific way. Instead, it can be a personal exploration of your own humanity, of hope, faith, and gratitude. Photographing sun light on the ocean or in the forest allows exploration of light's blessings. Light makes us grow.

Let me share some images of light that has inspired me, putting aside photography technique.



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**Behind the alter, an arch of stained glass invites sunlight down to the floor of Saint Mary's Cathedral in Newport Rhode Island. The floor is scuffed by many footprints, perhaps even by those of JFK and Jaqueline Bisset when they married here. Along the side walls, round stained glass windows, like jeweled eyes, allow more light in. I can breathe in the luminous air and I imagine that these inspirations of light dispel any darkness and calm my mind.**



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**I stand in the dining hall of Flagler College in Saint Augustine, Florida. Flagler, a railroad millionaire, built the hall as a hotel and used Tiffany stained glass for the windows. The room is lit by small electric candles on the walls. Next to the candles, tropical sunlight streams in and lends the plaque honoring the Spanish explorer Cadiz a golden hue. I pull a chair over. I sit. I make a photograph of the chair, empty, as if waiting for the next explorer of light.**

**Marble from Italy and Africa under my feet, I walk the first floor of the Temple of Knowledge. Built in Washington to organize President Jefferson's library collection, it also serves to**



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house the Library of Congress. When the light meets the marble, it seems to caress it with soft blue and white hands. I imagine this light to be hope - the kind that uplifts and raises one up by the bootstraps to try again. Seeing this light, I feel Jefferson's love for knowledge.



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A beautiful light caresses the inside of the National Cathedral in Washington DC. As the sun moves across the sky, every few moments a different stained glass window is illuminated from behind and emblazoned beams fill the cathedral space. I feel drenched by these colors, by this delighted liquid air that hums with sacred spectra. After some time the details of arches, columns and fan vaulting seem to darken; I am conscious of only the light play. I imagine that this light is an energy that I receive to keep making images.



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**Pillars immersed in the glow -  
National Cathedral in  
Washington, D.C.**



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**Stained glass windows at the  
National Cathedral in  
Washington, D.C.**



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**Crossing the NW Channel**

Dei light, or light that inspires you, is everywhere. You are never separate from it, even in gloaming of deep winter. The more you photograph it, the more you can imagine it with your eyes closed.

If god created light, as the Bible says, then it was good. It ceases to matter if the god of light is a personal, natural, or pagan god. Underneath our sun, our little plastic cameras still can click with dedication, humility and an open shutter. So, wherever you are, let your ecstatic eyes go forth, and imagine . . .

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James Austin, M.A. taught digital photography at Metro State College in the Industrial Design Department. In 2008 he was published by Apogee Photo Magazine, Southwinds Magazine, The New Yorker Magazine, and The

Digital Story. An award winning photographer, he was awarded a Nature's Best prize with a print exhibited in the Smithsonian. Austin lives with his family aboard the sailing catamaran "*Salty Paws*" and practices photography every day.

His new book, **Dei Light: Exploring Divine Light** shows how he made beautiful images of interiors of divine and sacred cathedrals with the HDR process. **Dei Light** is for sale at a special price at:  
<http://www.blurb.com/my/book/detail/479149>

Jim Austin M.A. , A.C.E , is the author of a hardcover photography book titled **Sight Lines: Thinking in Pictures** on sale at <http://www.viovio.com/shop/14884>

*An Adobe Certified Expert, Jim Austin teaches Photoshop for Photographers at the [Apogee Online Campus](#).*

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