

**Dominic DeLay, O.P.**  
**Passing the Torch Closing Preaching**  
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I had a dream last night. I had a dream in which a black and white dog carried a torch. His path was around the entire globe, but the dog was old and limped. Would he be able to continue? The globe was dark, but the torch's flame was too dim to light it. The globe was darkening still more, and the torch was dimming. The old dog pushed on but limped and panted. His head nodded from fatigue, and the torch threatened to drop to the ground. Or worse, to fall off the darkening globe and into the even darker space. The old dog did not trust the flame to stay lighted. Some would call this lack of trust in the flame a blasphemy. Was it?

A young dog went galloping by in the other direction. This young dog was black and white as well, only sleek and fast. She also had a torch in her mouth. Only her torch was not lighted. In fact, she had despaired of finding a flame left alive in the world. Some would call this a blasphemy. Was it?

Some spark within her beckoned her to turn around. And she did. She turned around and called after the old dog: "Give me your flame. Give me your flame, for you are old, and your torch is old, and your flame is old and dimming. But I am young, and my torch is young. Give me your flame, and I will carry it. I am young and fast."

"But where are you going so fast?" asked the old dog.

The young dog answered, "I am meant to circle the entire globe with my torch, of course. But when I saw your flame, I thought, "Wouldn't it be grand to carry a beautiful, true flame with me as I went."

"But you are going the wrong direction," said the old dog.

"But the earth is round. In the end, we go to the same destination."

"But your torch," said the old dog, "it's too green to carry the flame."

"But my torch is new and large."

"Yes, but your torch must be seasoned before it can sustain a flame."

"But how do I season the torch?"

"Come, walk with me," said the old dog to the young dog.

"But you're going in the wrong direction. Your path is as old and tired as you."

"Then let us rest awhile right here under this tree. Look, there is even a stream where we can answer our thirst."

"But I cannot stop. I must not stop."

"And I fear I cannot go on, in either direction. Drink from the stream, then sit but for a while, and tell me your dreams."

The old dog drank from the stream, and the young dog drank too then told her dreams. "I dreamt of a man carrying a torch, and I thought it was me. This man was meant to bring light to the darkening world."

"That's a familiar dream," said the old dog.

“Yes, I remember it now. I had a dream when I was young. A woman carrying a torch, and I thought it was me. This woman was meant to bring light to the darkening world. But tell me more about your dream.”

And the young dog spoke of her dream. And the old dog listened. And then the young dog asked about the old dog’s dream. And the young dog listened. They talked and listened. And they fell asleep.

When the old dog woke, the leaves had fallen from the tree and covered them. The old dog’s flame was almost smothered by the wet, dead leaves. The young dog was still asleep. The old dog woke the young dog. “Awake. Your torch is seasoned and ready. It’s time for you to carry the flame.” Then the old dog hesitated. “Only which way will you go if I give you the flame?”

“I had a dream while we slept here,” said the young dog. “I shall go where the flame leads, whether it be my path, yours, or yet another.”

“Yes, you are a fine dreamer,” said the old dog. And the old dog lit the young torch. But the effort drained the old dog of breath and spirit, and his old torch dropped from his mouth and into the stream, which doused the flame and carried the torch away. “Go now,” he said to the young dog. Go wherever the flame leads you.”

“But in my dream, we go together,” said the young dog. “I carry you, and you carry the torch.”

And the young dog passed her newly-lighted torch from her mouth to his. Then the young dog scooped up the old dog onto her back. And they went, the old dog encouraging her along the way. They went where the flame led them. And the flame grew stronger and stronger. And the darkened world brightened behind them as they went.