

# Baptism by Rembrandt's prints

by [Kathy Coffey](#) in the [June 17, 2008](#) issue

His fascination with light begins  
in a lantern held by a shepherd,  
over a little family against inky velvet.  
Then light shifts; Christ becomes core.  
When he preaches rays fall like song on  
some earnest, captivated faces, some  
distracted by other conversations,  
and a dog facing the wrong way.

From his raised hand light spills  
like waterfall over Lazarus and  
lifts him, pale and twisted  
into that luminous aura.  
Even on the cross, the thin  
etched lines leave an ivory  
bowl around him, gather  
from dimness the only dawn.

The limp corpse with extended  
ribs still radiates. Its slide starts  
at a peasant face, guided into arms  
that catch the contagious light,  
leaking onto the stocky official,  
plumply supervising procedures.  
Visual poems carved on copperplate:  
I stood rinsed in that light.