

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.