

Scripture Study

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle A



Opening prayer

Isaiah 58:7-10

(Ps 112:4-9)

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Matthew 5:13-16

Overview of the Gospel:

- Completing his Sermon on the Mount which we heard last week, Jesus applies the Beatitudes to hearers of the sermon. He does this by using the metaphors of salt as seasoning and the single lamp that was used in the one-room house of the time.
- Salt has several characteristics: it preserves food from corruption, it makes food taste more pleasant, and it tends to dissolve into whatever it is seasoning. In biblical parlance, an “agreement of salt” (2 Chronicles 13:5) is one between friends, the idea being the more time one spends dining with someone, the better they know them. Salt also was necessary for ritual purity (Leviticus 2:11-13).
- The purest salt was used for sacrifice and meals. Inferior, impure salt, however, was used to coat roads and pathways, i.e., “trampled underfoot” (verse 13).
- Just as there is good salt and bad salt, there is also useful light and useless light (verses 14-16). All Christians are called not only to personal holiness, but to seek the sanctification of others by word and example.

Questions:

- In the 1st Reading, what are the things the Lord tells us we should both do and avoid that will cause our lights to shine brighter? What other rewards result from this? As a people, how well are we doing this? How well am I doing this? How can I do better?
- In the 2nd Reading, what are the things St. Paul tells his readers that they should *not* base their faith upon? What is it does he say it *should* rest upon? In practice, what does that mean?
- In the Gospel, to whom is Jesus referring when he says “you” are the salt/light of the world?
- Why is salt and light essential to life? Why is it essential to the life of the Church?
- How are the Beatitudes we heard last Sunday related to being salt and light (verses 13-16)? How are Christians called to penetrate society?
- How is your “seasoning”? What do you do to be a positive influence to those around you? What are you doing (or what can you do) to help your parish be “salt” and “light” in a broken world?
- Based on the Beatitudes, is the light in your life shining like a 300-watt bulb? A 100-watt bulb? A night-light? A tiny spark? Why? How can Jesus enable you to “shine brighter”?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 782, 1216, 1243, 2105, 901

Closing prayer

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

I see above all that charity must not remain hidden at the bottom of our hearts: 'nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.' It seems to me that this lamp is the symbol of charity; it must shine out not only to cheer those we love the best but all in the house. -St. Therese of Lisieux

"You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world"

Scripture: *Matthew 5:13-16*

"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Meditation: What can salt and light have to teach us about God and his reign on earth? Jesus used ordinary images, such as salt and light, to convey extraordinary truths about the kingdom of God. Salt was a valuable commodity in the ancient world. People traded with it, like we trade with gold and stock. Salt also served a very useful purpose in hot climates before the invention of electricity and refrigeration. Salt not only gave food flavor, it also preserved meat from spoiling. Jesus used the image of salt to describe how his disciples are to live in the world. As salt purifies, preserves, and penetrates, so the disciple must be as salt in the world of human society to



purify, preserve, and penetrate that society for the kingdom of God and of his righteousness and peace.

Jesus also used the image of light and a lamp to further his illustration. Lamps in the ancient world served a vital function, much like they do today. They enable people to see and work in the dark and to avoid stumbling. The Jews also understood "light" as an expression of the inner beauty, truth, and goodness of God. *In his light we see light* (Psalm 36:9). *His word is a lamp that guides our steps* (Psalm 119:105). God's grace not only illumines the darkness in our lives, but it also fills us with spiritual light, joy, and peace. Jesus used the image of a lamp to describe how his disciples are to live in the light of his truth and love. Just as natural light illumines the darkness and enables one to see visually, so the light of Christ shines in the hearts of believers and enables us to see the heavenly reality of

God's kingdom. In fact, our mission is to be *light-bearers* of Christ so that others may see the truth of the gospel and be freed from the blindness of sin and deception.

Jesus remarks that nothing can remain hidden or secret. We can try to hide things from others, from ourselves, and from God. How tempting to shut our eyes from the consequences of our sinful ways and bad habits, even when we know what those consequences are. And how tempting to hide them from others and even from God. But, nonetheless, everything is known to God who sees all. There is great freedom and joy for those who live in God's light and who seek this truth. Those who listen to God and heed his voice will receive more from him. Do you know the joy and freedom of living in God's light?

"Lord, you guide me by the light of your saving truth. Fill my heart and mind with your light and truth and free me from the blindness of sin and deception that I may see your ways clearly and understand your will for my life. May I radiate your light and truth to others in word and deed"

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