



Bible Study – Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

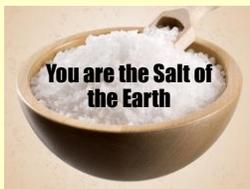
St. Maria Goretti and
St. Peter Claver
Parishes

February 5, 2017
Volume 1, Issue 10

“Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you [falsely] because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” Mat. 5:11-12 NABRE

Reading I: Isaiah 58:7-10

SHOW ME WHAT YOU GOT! This phrase is often used as a challenge to someone to demonstrate their skill, or knowledge. As Christians, we are always challenged by the world to display how we live the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The world challenges us to show what we have inside. Those who follow Christ are like salt to the world. Salt crystals cannot give flavor to food unless they dissolve. In away, salt influences the taste and composition of whatever it seasons. If we dissolve salt in a pot of rice, it disappears but does not cease to exist. It gives flavor to thousands of grains of rice. It influences or enhances the taste of the rice. Similarly, if we as Christians are not melted by the fire of love and self-sacrifice, we cannot pass on to a single soul the teachings of Jesus Christ. You are the salt of the



**Show me what you
God! I've got the
influence of the Holy
Spirit**

earth.

This first reading from Isaiah challenges the Chosen People to live the Commandments of Yahweh. He reminds them that the Law given by Moses required the Jews to love each other: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself, I am the Lord*” (Lev. 19:17). Isaiah explains that God’s concept of fasting is feeding the hungry, housing the homeless, and clothing the naked (v. 7). These acts are more important to God than living well oneself. This way of life produces many good consequences (vv. 8-10). The light of love would dispel the Israelites’ darkness. They would recover their spiritual wholeness quickly. Their righteousness (God Himself) and their right conduct (see 56:1) would precede them, and God’s glory would protect them. God said, show me what you got. Show some love to those around you and change the world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Have you lost your taste for the Gospel? How can you get it back? What does this reading from Isaiah teach us to do?

THE INFLUENCE OF SALT

Salt is used to season food (Job 6:6), and mixed with the fodder of cattle (Isa 30:24, “clean;” in marg. of R.V. “salted”). All meat-offerings were seasoned with salt (Lev 2:13). To eat salt with one is to partake of his hospitality, to derive subsistence from him; and hence he who did so was bound to look after his host’s interests (Ezra 4:14, “We have maintenance from the king’s palace;” A.V. marg., “We are salted with the salt of the palace;” R.V., “We eat the salt of the palace”). A “covenant of salt” (Num 18:19; 2 Chron 13:5) was a covenant of perpetual obligation. New-born children were rubbed with salt (Ezek 16:4). Disciples are likened unto salt, with reference to its cleansing and preserving uses (Matt 5:13). When Abimelech took the city of Shechem, he sowed the place with salt, that it might always remain a barren soil (Judg 9:45). The *Jebel Usdum*, to the south of the Dead Sea, is a mountain of rock salt about 7 miles long and from 2 to 3 miles wide and some hundreds of feet high. (from Easton’s Bible Dictionary, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003,

Reading II: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

SHOW ME WHAT YOU GOT! St. Paul’s letter to the Corinthians was in response to a request for guidance from “Chloe’s people” since factions had developed in the Corinthian Church (1:11). He also received another letter from the church in Corinth, requesting his guidance on: marriage, divorce, food offered to idols, the exercise of spiritual gifts in the church, and the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (7:1).

The light of Christ had begun to flicker and the salt of Christianity had started to lose its taste in the Church at Corinth. St. Paul showed what he had to the Corinthians. He admonished them not to dim the light of charity with selfishness and pollute the sharpness of the Gospel with lofty words that have double meaning (v. 1). He reminded them that their embrace of the Cross of Christ was made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit (v. 5) and that their actions influenced others. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: Name three things that dim the light of charity in your life. What will you do about it?

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-16

SHOW ME WHAT YOU GOT! It is a fact that a pound of meat is affected by a quarter-pound of salt. If this is true that Christians are the salt of the earth, where is the effect of what Jesus spoke? Our spiritual character is tested daily by our life's circumstances. Salt had a different meaning when Jesus walked the earth. Today, salt is associated with illnesses such as high blood pressure. Similarly, the world seems to dilute the Gospel of Christ, which is the light of Jesus Christ and its believers the salt of the earth. It is almost as though the world seeks to deplete our love of God and love of neighbor. It seeks to dim the light of Christ in us and take away our "saltiness," that is, our influence. But the salt that Jesus referred to is the power of the Holy Spirit that we received at Baptism and through life. We are required to demonstrate that power to the world. Show them what you got!

This Sunday, in this excerpt from the "Sermon on the Mount," Jesus tells what we have been called to do (vv. 13-16). This Sermon was probably not delivered on one occasion. According to some scholars, it is more likely that St. Matthew collected these sayings of Jesus that were made at different times and placed them into one complete unit. Jesus anchored His teachings with everyday images. Here, the images of *salt* and *light* are used to demonstrate how a disciple should practice the standards of conduct given in the Beatitudes. We should be *salt* and *light* to the world. He should influence the world.

Salt, used as a preservative, money, medicine, a symbol of purity, and a symbol of agreement, is the image of Christian living. If salt loses its taste (influence), it becomes not only useless, but harmful. It becomes a pollutant, a poison, and must be discarded.

Jesus uses light, which is necessary for clarity of vision, productivity and movement, as the way we must spread our faith in God. Isaiah tells us that when we share our bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless and clothe the naked, we shine the light of Christ in a dark and gloomy world (Is 58:7-10). The Light of Christ must not be hidden under a bushel. The bushel referenced here was likely a wooden container used for measuring and containing grain. To light a lamp and cover it with a container renders the light useless.

Jesus tells us that Christians must hide neither our works of charity, nor our faith in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2: 2-5). The grace given to us by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is not ours alone, but it must be shared with all mankind, just as the rays of light seek out and find the darkest corners of a room. When we show what God has given us by living the Commandments and practicing the Beatitudes, we make the world a better place. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** The Sermon on the Mount says that we are the *salt* and *light*, do you make the world a better place?

PRAY ABOUT IT!

Monday

Got prayer? Pray for those displaced by war. Read 1 Cor. 2:1-5.

Tuesday

Read Isaiah 58:7-10. Give to someone in need.

Wednesday

Read Mat. 5:13-16. Who will you influence today?

Thursday

Read 1 Tim 6:16 Perform one act of kindness.

Friday

Attend Mass and receive the Eucharist.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

LIGHT IS defined in scripture as - the offspring of the divine command (Gen 1:3). "All the more joyous emotions of the mind, all the pleasing sensations of the frame, all the happy hours of domestic intercourse were habitually described among the Hebrews under imagery derived from light" (1 Kings 11:36; Isa 58:8; Est 8:16; Ps 97:11). Light came also naturally to typify true religion and the felicity it imparts (Ps 119:105; Isa 8:20; Matt 4:16, etc.), and the glorious inheritance of the redeemed (Col 1:12; Rev 21:23-25). God is said to dwell in light inaccessible (1 Tim 6:16). (From Easton's Bible Dictionary, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

Resources: Matthew, Daniel J. Harrington; Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p. 870; *Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year A 2017*, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.ND. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 56-59; <https://net.bible.org/#!/bible/Matthew+5:11>; Salt and Light Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers; Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2014