

Salt of the Earth, Light of the World

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Mt 5:13-16

Ave Maria Catholic Church, February 5, 2023 - Fr. David M Vidal

Last week, we heard the gospel of the beatitudes. We were invited to climb the mountain of the Lord and walk in the path of peace, righteousness, meekness, mercy, purity, and fortitude. This Sunday, we continue reading this passage from the gospel of St. Matthew, and after proclaiming the beatitudes, Jesus now invites us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

First, Jesus says: "You are the salt of the earth."

In the old rite of baptism, salt was blessed and given to the catechumen in preparation for the baptism itself. Christ's followers must influence the world for good and preserve the truths received from Christ from corruption. In this context, salt is primarily a symbol of wisdom.

This is the meaning we grasp from St. Paul. Writing to the Christians of Rome, Saint Paul asks them to show clearly that their way of living and thinking was different from that of their contemporaries: *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect"* (Rom 12:2).

We must be transformed by the renewal of our minds in Christ; then, we must influence the world by preserving from corruption the truths received from Christ.

For a long time, salt was used to preserve food since there was no electricity or refrigeration. Salt kept food from rotting. Therefore, it was essential to society. So, it is easy to see that salt was vital to those who lived in the first century.

The Roman government even paid part of the Roman soldiers' salary in salt. The word salary is derived from the Latin word "sal" which means salt. Over time, the term has been adopted into the English language as salary. What this all meant in the first century was that salt was precious! It was more valuable than money.

Our faith has far greater value than all the riches of this world. And we must preserve it. As the salt of the earth, we are called to preserve the faith we have received and to pass it on to others (See 2 Th 2:15; 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:14).

We must re-discover our Christian roots, learn about the Church's history, deepen our knowledge of the spiritual heritage passed on to us, and follow in the footsteps of the witnesses and teachers who have gone before us! This is what we must do if we want to be the salt of the earth!

Second, Jesus also says: "You are the light of the world."

On the day of our baptism, we received the light of a little candle that shared the light coming from the Paschal Candle, which symbolizes Christ.

Jesus is the "Light of the world." Jesus tells us: "*I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life*" (Jn 8:12). Every Christian participates in the Light of Christ and must be an extension of the light of Christ.

We must never forget that "*No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a bushel basket*" (Mt 5:15) or under a bed. On the contrary, the light must be placed on a lamp stand, so that it will illumine the whole house.

What does it mean to be a light?

First, to be "a light" means to be visible. The primary duty of the light of a lamp is to be seen. Christianity is something that is meant to be seen. It has been said, "There can be no such thing as secret discipleship." If you belong to Christ, you cannot hide it. Christianity is meant to be perfectly visible to all people.

Even more, Christianity should not only be visible within the Church. Christianity must be visible in the ordinary activities of the world. Our Christianity should be visible in how we treat our employees or serve our employer, in the daily language we use, in the entertainment we choose, and in all our daily choices. Jesus did not say, "*You are the light of the Church,*" but he said, "*You are the light of the world.*" You must show the world your Christian values.

Second, to be "a light" means to be a guide. A Christian, for the very reason of being a follower of Christ, must be an example to follow. Is this not what St Paul tells us when he says: "*Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.*" You must shine before others. Your light matters. Your light is necessary. Someone needs your guidance. Someone needs to see your good works and be inspired to follow you because you are following Christ.

Finally, to be "a light" means to stand before darkness. Light and darkness cannot co-exist in the same place. Where light is present, darkness disappears. Therefore, those who choose to be light must be ready for the fight because darkness will never endure the presence of light.

In this secularized age, when many people think and act as if God does not exist, we must show the light of our faith and be ready for the struggle.

We must be “salt” and preserve Jesus’ teachings. We must be “light” and communicate to others the goodness, truth, and beauty of blessed life in Christ. We must show others the Christian values of peace, righteousness, meekness, mercy, purity, and fortitude.

Let us shine before others; let us serve as guides and be ready for the struggle. Let us be the “light of the world.” Let us preserve Jesus’s teachings in our hearts and in the hearts of others. Let us be the “salt of the earth.” Amen