



SUNDAY GOSPEL

A Light for the World

Matthew 5:13-16

“Jesus said to his disciples: ‘You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men.

‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be

hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.’” ■

GOSPEL REFLECTION

Fr. Michael J. Dyer

When reading a specific text of Scripture, a useful rule of thumb is to study the passages preceding and following the text. This contextualises the reading/s and provides a methodology for better appreciating the Scripture. By applying this rule of thumb for today’s Lectionary readings the rich metaphors of ‘salt’ and ‘light’ can be clearly savoured and seen. For example, we discover that prior to instructing/exhorting his disciples to be ‘flavoured illuminations’ for the world, Jesus was sermonising on the Mount. His teachings were delivered to a few chosen disciples and not directed initially to the crowd from which he had retreated. His trusted inner circle was taught that to be salt and light for others involved adopting specific ‘be-attitudes’ including: being poor in spirit, gentle, empathetic, hungry and thirsty for justice, merciful, pure in heart, peace makers, and undergoing persecution for what is right. Let us pray, by God’s grace, that we can embrace the ‘be-attitudes’ required of Christians and not mindlessly follow a crowd. By doing so we will be full of flavour and beacons of light for others, not for personal glory but so our good works may empower others to glorify and praise our Heavenly Father. ■

A WORD FROM POPE FRANCIS



In this Sunday's Gospel passage, immediately after the Beatitudes, Jesus says to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth ... You are

the light of the world" (Mt 5:13-14). This surprises us a bit when we think of those who were before Jesus when he spoke these words. Who were these disciples? They were fishermen, simple people... But Jesus sees them with God's eyes, and his assertion can be understood precisely as a result of the Beatitudes. He wishes to say: if you are poor in spirit, if you are meek, if you are pure of heart, if you are merciful... you will be the salt of the earth and the light of the world!

To better understand these images, we must keep in mind

that Jewish Law prescribed that a little bit of salt be sprinkled over every offering presented to God, as a sign of the covenant. Light for Israel was a symbol of messianic revelation, triumph over the darkness of paganism. Christians, the new Israel, receive a mission to carry into the world for all people: through faith and charity they can guide, consecrate, and make humanity fruitful. We who are baptized Christians are missionary disciples and we are called to become a living Gospel in the world: with a holy life we will "flavour" different environments and defend them from decay, as salt does; and we will carry the light of Christ through the witness of genuine charity. But if we Christians lose this flavour and do not live as salt and light, we lose our effectiveness.

This mission of giving light to the

world is so beautiful! We have this mission, and it is beautiful! It is also beautiful to keep the light we have received from Jesus, protecting it and safeguarding it. The Christian should be a luminous person; one who brings light, who always gives off light! A light that is not their own, but a gift from God, a gift from Jesus. We carry this light.

If a Christian extinguishes this light, their life has no meaning: they are a Christian by name only. I would like to ask you now, how do you want to live? As a lamp that is burning or one that is not? Burning or not? How would you like to live? As burning lamps! It is truly God who gives us this light and we must give it to others. Shining lamps! This is the Christian vocation. ■

TALKING POINTS

1. In the gospel reading we are asked by Jesus to be 'salt' and 'light'. What do these images mean for you and in what ways do you already express these qualities in your own life?
2. Drawing on the Beatitudes, Pope Francis invites us to realise that: if you are poor in spirit, if you are meek, if you are pure of heart, if you are merciful... you will be the salt of the earth and the light of the world! Where do you see evidence for this reality in those around you?
3. What change would you like God to make in your life in order that you can become more 'flavoursome', more 'light-bearing' for those around you? How can you keep the light of life burning in your life?

PRAYER POINTS

Pray for each other: Ask about and pray for the needs of the group members. Individuals might pray for themselves or ask someone else to pray for them

Reflect: Spend a few moments in quiet reflection thanking God for all that he has given you and asking him how you can put these gifts to work in his service.

Response: *Jesus, help us to share our light with one another.*

Closing Prayer: Loving Father, all that we have comes from you as gift. We thank you for all we have. Through your strength give us the courage to share these gifts with one another in humility and gentleness. Amen.

