

## GOSPEL

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.’”

## A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

These Sundays the liturgy offers us the so-called *Sermon on the Mount*, in the Gospel of Matthew. After presenting the Beatitudes Matthew emphasizes Jesus’ words describing his disciples’ mission in the world. He uses the metaphors of *salt* and *light*, and his words are directed to the disciples of every age, therefore also to us.

Jesus invites us to be a reflection of his light, by witnessing with good works. He says: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven”. These words emphasize that we are recognizable as true disciples of the One who is the Light of the World, not in words, but by our works. Indeed, it is above all our behaviour that — good or bad — leaves a mark on others. Therefore, we have a duty and a responsibility towards the gift received: the light of the faith, which is in us through Christ and the action of the Holy Spirit; and we must not withhold it as if it were our property. Instead we are called to make it shine throughout the world, to offer it to others through good works. How much the world needs the light of the Gospel which transforms, heals and guarantees salvation to those who receive it! We must convey this light through our good works.

The light of our faith, in giving of oneself, does not fade but strengthens. However it can weaken if we do not nourish it with love and with charitable works.

In this way the image of *light complements that of salt*. The Gospel passage, in fact, tells us that, as disciples of Christ, we are also “the salt of the earth”. Salt is an ingredient which, while it gives flavour, keeps food from turning and spoiling — in Jesus’ time there were no refrigerators! Thus, Christians’ mission in society is that of giving “flavour” to life with the faith and the love that Christ has given us, and at the same time, keeping away the contaminating seeds of selfishness, envy, slander, and so on. These seeds degrade the fabric of our communities, which should instead shine as places of welcome, solidarity and reconciliation. To fulfil this mission, it is essential that we first free ourselves from the corruptive degeneration of worldly influences contrary to Christ and to the Gospel; and this purification never ends, it must be done continuously; it must be done every day!

Each one of us is called to be *light and salt*, in the environment of our daily life, persevering in the task of regenerating the human reality in the spirit of the Gospel and in the perspective of the Kingdom of God. May there always be the helpful protection of Mary Most Holy, first disciple of Jesus and model for believers who live their vocation and mission each day in history. May our Mother help us to let ourselves always be purified and enlightened by the Lord, so as to become, in our turn, “salt of the earth” and “light of the world”.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Pope Francis talks about salt being something that adds flavour but also preserves food. If we are called to be salt, what do you think this means for us?
- Jesus also refers to us as the light of the world. Considering he also calls himself the light of the world, how does this title make you feel? How do you think we should fulfil this great responsibility?
- Have you ever felt like you are hiding your “light”? Why do you think you might have done that?

## PRAYER

*Spend some time in prayer with one another*

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the ‘Glory Be’ or similar prayer.