

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday per Annum - A  
Isaiah 58:7-10;  
I Corinthians 2:1-5;  
Matthew 5:13-16  
Little Flower - 2/9/14

My Brothers and Sisters,

In today's Gospel, Jesus challenges us: "*You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world.*"

In the ancient world, salt was both a seasoning and a preservative. In this Gospel passage, Jesus is referring to salt as a seasoning. As a seasoning, salt adds taste to, or enhances the flavor of, food. It seems to me that Jesus is asking us as individuals to be game changers, to make a difference in the world, to enrich the world, by our witness. It seems to me that Jesus is asking us as a community to witness to the world the best version of human community.

The first and second readings show us what this might look like. In today's reading from First Corinthians, Paul suggests that the heart of our message must be "*Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*" As Christians, we have to tell the story of Jesus over and over again in our words and in our actions. The Christian Gospel is the Good News of Jesus Christ and of our salvation in Christ. Paul went on to write, "*...my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of Spirit and power...*" In other words, if and only if, and only to the extent that, we have been transformed and our lives have been shaped by the Gospel, do we proclaim the Gospel with Spirit and power.

Today's reading from the Prophet Isaiah shows us the kind of witness that most effectively proclaims the Gospel. Isaiah wrote, "*Thus says the Lord: Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own.*" This is what Pope Francis means when he calls the Church to go to the peripheries.

Jesus mentions salt losing its taste. In other words, it no longer makes a difference. It becomes bland. The same can be true for Christians as well. As Christians we can become so comfortable in our own lives that we cease to try to make a difference in our world and in the lives of others.

We are also to be the light of the world. Jesus tells us that our light must shine before others. Jesus, of course, is the one true light of the world. However, he can only shine as brightly as there are Christian lights in the world. Light guides us on our journey. This suggests that we are called to be an example to others. If as Christians we are called to be followers of Christ, we are also called to be leaders among people. Finally, we are to be lights to the world not to glorify ourselves or to gain glory for ourselves but that others may see "*your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.*"

My brothers and sisters, today is also World Marriage Day. As Christians, we believe that by creating man and woman social and sexual, God also created marriage and is the binding, or bonding, force in every marriage. We also believe that God is part of every marriage because all love comes from God and wherever there is love, there is God. As Catholics, however, we believe that Jesus elevated marriage to a sacrament of his love for the Church. Therefore, we believe that the love of Christian man and woman in marriage signifies and makes present among us Jesus' love for the Church in their love for each other. Married couples are called in a special way to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world especially in relation to their children.