

Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

ENRICHING OUR NEIGHBOR



SUNDAY READINGS:

Isaiah 58:7-10

Psalm 112:4-9

I Corinthians 2:1-5

Matthew 5:13-16

BE SALT, BE LIGHT

Our Gospel today contains Jesus' challenge to his disciples to be salt of the earth and light of the world (Mt 5:13-14); this passage immediately follows last Sunday's Gospel on the beatitudes. Simply said, if one lives the beatitudes, one authentically becomes salt and light for the world.

As we strive to live and give witness to the life and teachings of Jesus, we are actually sharing the taste and the light of Christ with others. Pope Benedict XVI once spoke of this mission, noting that we are called "to live the longing and the passion to illuminate all peoples with the light of Christ that shines on the face of the Church, so that all may be gathered into the one human family under God's loving fatherhood."

Our Christian Calling. As Christians we fulfill our vocation in Jesus Christ when we strive to build a culture and civilization of life and love in the world. It is in our concrete daily life where we can truly be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Confronted with our current environment that has a tendency to detach itself from religious faith and tradition, we are called to become builders of a culture that develops "the whole human person harmoniously and integrally, and will help all people to fulfill the tasks to which they are called" (GS 56).

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By our witness of Gospel values, we, as one body united in Christ, become agents of change and transformation, not only in religious spheres but also in the political, economic and other facets of human life. To be the salt of the earth and the light of the world means to penetrate culture with the radical values of Christ so the world will be transformed to become a culture that values life and appreciates what is good, beautiful and true. Such a culture would usher in the dawning of God's new creation shining in our world and thus kindling authentic hope for new life.

Linking Gospel and Life. It is then proper to be always conscious of the “many links between the message of salvation and culture” knowing that the “Good News of Christ continually renews the life and culture of fallen humanity” and “combats and removes the error and evil which flow from the ever-present attraction of sin” (GS 58).

When the disciples preached the Good News and people accepted it, a new culture emerged—a culture shaped by the way they lived by loving one another. Love, therefore, defines the character of this new culture. It is a kind of love founded on the truth of Jesus Christ. Ultimately, this love becomes very concrete in the act of serving our brothers and sisters, letting our light shine before others.

Conclusion. We are daily challenged to fulfill our mission of becoming the salt of the earth and the light of the world by making the Good News we have received from Christ a living reality in our life and in the lives of others we meet.

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NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

First Reading - Isaiah 58:7-10: Today's first reading is drawn from the second part of the book of Isaiah. Its message is that our religious feasts as well as our daily lives should be marked by personal integrity and assistance to the underprivileged. If there is coherence between these two aspects of our lives, then God will pay attention to us and honor us.

Responsorial Psalm - Psalm 112:4-9: This psalm selection asserts that the just person is a bright light in the world. When one "conducts his affairs with justice" and "his heart is steadfast" and he "lavishly gives to the poor," he "shall be in everlasting remembrance." "His generosity shall endure forever; his horn shall be exalted in glory."

Second Reading - I Corinthians 2:1-5: Here Paul is addressing the Corinthian community where divisions had emerged. He asks community members to humbly focus on the crucified Christ. Paul notes that when he preached the Good News, he did it "with much trepidation," relying only on "the convincing power of the Spirit." This was to show that faith relies, not on human wisdom, but on God's power.

Gospel - Matthew 5:13-16: Our Gospel today from Matthew continues the remarkable Sermon on the Mount, possibly the most famous passage in all of Christian literature. If we live by the beatitudes, we will truly be salt of the earth and light of the world. As salt keeps food from spoiling and rotting, we are to keep society healthy and productive through our Christian witness and generous service of our neighbors, especially the weakest and the most vulnerable.

Notes and Commentary by Maryknoller James H. Kroeger, who has recently published *Walking with Pope Francis: The Official Documents in Everyday Language* (Orbis Books) as well as *Exploring Vatican II Treasures: Actors, Events, Insights* and *A Joyful Journey with Pope Francis* (Faith Alive Books).

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