LIVING THE GOSPEL

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
February 8, 2026

Theme: "You are the salt and light of the world."

Gathering Prayer

Facilitator: Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care, that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace, they may be defended always by your protection. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 5:13-16

13 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.
14 'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. 15 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. 16 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 Focus

Following the Beatitudes, where Jesus relies primarily on adjectives, Jesus here uses two nouns to share his message of the kingdom: salt and light. Both have primordial quality to them; such images make for a strong proclamation. By using these images, Jesus speaks of who we *are*. To be salt and to be light are characteristic of our greatest identity: children of our heavenly Father. From this identity, Jesus tells us what we are to *do.* Identity as children of God comes with a responsibility-to keep our "taste," to shine before others. The way in which Jesus proclaim this message is the key. He tells us of God's great love for us before telling us to share that love. Hearing the word of God and living its response is intimately linked but two separate responsibilities, with one prior to the other. In proclaiming the love of God in the Scriptures, we cannot hope to hand on that which we have not yet received ourselves. Allow God to show you love, so that you might be more effective in proclaiming God's love to those you encounter.

Gospel Reflection

Today if we say someone is "the salt of the earth," we understand that person to be solid and dependable, someone who can be counted on through thick and thin. We might also say that someone's speech is salty to mean that their language is coarse,

like that of a sailor, who has been out to sea for a long time and who has not had to be concerned about using polite expressions in refine company. But when Jesus said to his disciples that they were the salt of the earth, they might have understood the metaphor in the light of seven biblical connotations.

First, salt was a critical necessity for human life, along with water, fire, and iron, as Sirach 39:26 states. Salt was important for seasoning and preserving food. Job questions, "Can anything insipid be eaten without salt?" (Job 6:6). A second way salt important for liturgical functions. It was included with cereal offerings (Lev 2:13) and burnt offerings (Ezek 43:24). Blending salt with incense kept the fragrant powder pure and sacred (Exod 30:35). Salt was what Elisha used to purify a polluted spring of water (2 Kgs 2:19-22). In Catholic liturgical tradition, the baptismal ritual included putting salt on the infant's tongue, as a symbol of incorruptibility. Another way in which salt was used to ratify covenants (Num 18:19; 2 Chr 13:5). As a preservative, salt symbolized the lasting nature of agreement.

Jesus then queries, "But if salt loses it's taste, with what can be seasoned?" (Matt 5:13). It seems like a trick question. Salt can be diluted, but could it ever lose its taste entirely? It is possible that Jesus was quoting an ancient proverb to which his disciples would respond, "Impossible!" In the Talmud there is an account of Rabbi Joshua ben Hananya (ca 80-120 CE) who was asked by philosophers in the Atheneum at Rome. "If salt becomes savorless, with what can it be salted?" He responded, "With an after-birth of a mule" (*b. Bek. 8b*). The point is that just as it is impossible for a mule to give birth, or for salt to become insipid, so disciples cannot cease to be who they are and to season the world with the good news.

The accompanying image of disciples as light reinforces the message. As impossible as it is for a city set on a mountain to be hidden, and as unthinkable as wasting fuel by lighting a lamp only to extinguish it immediately, so inconceivable is it that disciples would cease to let their light shine before others. Although trials and tribulations may threaten to dilute disciples "saltiness" or dim their light, nothing is ever able to take away their capacity to illuminate God's love for others.

Finally, slat and light are most effective when they do not call attention to themselves. Just as in well-seasoned food the salt is not noticeable and in a properly lit room the lamps are not the focus of attention, so disciples' good deeds do not redound to themselves but lead others to glorify God.

Old and New Testament links

First Reading — Isaiah 58:7-10

7 Thus says the Lord: Share your bread with the hungry, and shelter the homeless poor,
clothe the man you see to be naked and do not turn from your own kin? 8 Then will your
light shine like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over. Your integrity will go
before you and the glory of the Lord behind you. 9 Cry, and the Lord will answer; call,
and he will say, 'I am here'. If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist, the wicked
word, 10 if you give your bread to the hungry, and relief to the oppressed, your light will
rise in the darkness, and your shadows become like noon.

Responsorial Reading — Psalm 111:4-9

R: The good man is a light in the darkness for the upright.

He is a light in the darkness for the upright: he is generous, merciful and just.
The good man takes pity and lends, he conducts his affairs with honor. ***(R)***

The just man will never waver: he will be remembered for ever.
He has no fear of evil news; with a firm heart he trusts in the Lord. ***(R)***

With a steadfast heart he will not fear; open-handed, he gives to the poor;
his justice stands firm for ever. His head will be raised in glory. ***(R)***

Second Reading — 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

[1] When I came to you, brothers, it was not with any show of oratory or philosophy, but simply to tell you what God had guaranteed. [2] During my stay with you, the only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus, and only about him as the crucified Christ. [3] Far from relying on any power of my own, I came among you in great 'fear and trembling' [4] and in my speeches and the sermons that I gave, there were none of the arguments that belong to philosophy; only a demonstration of the power of the Spirit. [5] And I did this so that your faith should not depend on human philosophy but on the power of God.

Catechism of the Catholic Church

782. The People of God is marked by characteristics that clearly distinguish it from all other religious, ethnic, political, or cultural groups found in history:

- It is the People *of God*: God is not the property of any one people. But he acquired a people for himself from those who previously were not a people: "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation."(*1 Pet* 2:9)

- One becomes a *member* of this people not by a physical birth, but by being "born anew," a birth "of water and the Spirit,"(*Jn* 3:3-5) that is, by faith in Christ, and Baptism.

- This People has for its Head Jesus the Christ (the anointed, the Messiah). Because the same anointing, the Holy Spirit, flows from the head into the body, this is "the messianic people."

- "The *status* of this people is that of the dignity and freedom of the sons of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in a temple."

- "Its *law* is the new commandment to love as Christ loved us."(Cf. *Jn* 13:34) This is the "new" law of the Holy Spirit. (*Rom* 8:2; *Gal* 5:25)

- Its *mission* is to be salt of the earth and light of the world. (Cf. *Mt* 5:13-16) This people are "a most sure seed of unity, hope, and salvation for the whole human race."

- Its *destiny*, finally, "is the Kingdom of God which has been begun by God himself on earth and which must be further extended until it has been brought to perfection by him at the end of time."(*LG* 9 § 2)

Sharing and Discussion

1. Jesus calls his disciples "salt." How do you think "salt" adds to life, and where do you see this being needed in the world around you? What might cause faith to become "bland" or hidden in daily life?

2. Jesus says we should not hide the light. What might tempt us to keep our faith private, even when we believe sharing it matters? And how have your faith touch those closest to us—family, colleagues, or friends?

3. Jesus links good works with giving glory to God, not yourselves. How can your actions point to God without becoming self-focused?

Closing Prayer

All: Living God, hear these prayers that we might be bearers of your salt and beacons of your light. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen