

February 5, 2023 – Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Inexplicable Value of Light and Salt Symbolisms in our Daily Lives  
Gospel of Matthew 5:13-16  
Fr. Oliver

My dear friends, let me ask you a question: Is your salt salty and your light shining? If you doubt your light matters, take this little quiz:

1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America Pageant.

Do you know all these answers? Probably not.

Then ask yourself some additional questions:

1. Who fed and clothed you when you were helpless?
2. What was the name of your 1st grade teacher?
3. Who is the first friend you would call in an emergency?

You do know the answers to these questions.

They are the salt and light of the world. Today's gospel is the continuation of last Sunday's gospel. Last Sunday's gospel showed us the basic attitudes or qualities of the members of God's Kingdom. These qualities are best described in the beatitudes. Our gospel for today tells us about the task of those members: to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. I will focus on the salt and its characteristics why Jesus Christ compares us to a salt.

First, salt flavours things and makes the food tasty. We know how tasteless and sickening to bite a food if there is no salt. We eat food because it tastes well and salted perfectly. So also with us Christians, we have to radiate Christ and make Christian values credible and attractive to other people.

Second, Salt creates thirst. Do we ever make anyone thirsty for the Lord? Jesus said: "You are the light of the world." But what happened to our world today? Our world is not a better world because we, Christians, the representatives and the image of God, are not better persons, rather we are bitter persons. As Mahatma Gandhi said: "I like Christ but I don't like Christians and the way they live." This is the reason he was not converted to Christianity.

The role of Christians as Christ's light of the world is something which is meant to be seen. Christians must be visible like a "city" on a hilltop and a lamp on a "lamp stand." Jesus therefore expects His followers to be seen by the world (Jn 13:35; 17:21). In addition, they must radiate and give light. "Let your light shine before men" (Mt 5:16). By this metaphor Jesus means that our Christianity should be visible in the ordinary activities of the world, for example, in the way we treat a shop assistant across the counter, in the way we order a meal in a restaurant, in the way we treat our employees or serve our employer, in the way we play a game or drive or park a motor car, in the daily language we use, in the daily literature we read.

A little boy was taken by his mother to see a famous cathedral. On the windows were the pictures of various Christians. As he was watching the sunbeams shining through the stained-glass windows, he asked his mother, "Who are those people on the

windows?" She said, "They're saints." The little boy looked at the windows and said, "Well, now I know what saints are. They are people who let the light shine through." — That little boy got it right. That's what a saint is - someone who lets the light of Jesus shine through his life.

We need to live our short lives as traces of salt and candles of light: It only takes a sprinkling of salt to transform a dull and tasteless piece of meat. Just a little salt transforms everything. Just a pinch of soul-salt will add flavour to the lives of hundreds, or even thousands. Just as salt acts as a preservative and adds flavour to food, so the exemplary lives of Christians lend flavour to life by helping people to live correctly and by keeping society wholesome.

Just a little light empties the world of darkness. With a little Faith and Love we can light up a big social area. We may think we're insignificant – and in a way we are – but with a little bit of Christ's Light, we become a veritable lighthouse, illuminating the way for many. This Christ-light removes the darkness caused by hatred, spite, fear, and jealousy. Our good deeds and actions reflect the image of Jesus, the light of the world. We can speak with kindness and respect, we can value ourselves, we can tell the truth, and we can use our talents. We can listen and talk, we can engage in dialogue, and we can come to know people of different ethnic backgrounds, people with different lifestyles and sexual preferences, people of other Faiths and people of no Faith – and this will bring the light of Christ to illumine and change the world.

Salt is a hidden but powerful influence. Light is a visible and revealing influence. Jesus tells us that we are not only to be the salt of the earth but also the light of the world. We are called to make a visible, tangible impact on the world around us. Does our life make a difference? It should. Jesus said we are to be salt and light. Does our life make a difference? It can, if we surrender ourselves to Christ. Does our life make a difference? If we live for Him, it will!