**5th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME [9th February, 2014]**

READINGS: Isaiah 58:7-10 / 1 Cor. 2:1-5 / Matthew 5:13-16

THEME: YOU ARE SALT AND LIGHT

By Very Rev. Fr. John Louis ([http://frlouis.com](http://frlouis.com/))

Jesus saw beyond the ordinary things of the earth and sky. He saw messages literally written on the earth and in the environment – messages that penetrated the very hearts and minds of his audience. For instance, knowing how people of his time cherished salt for flavour, preservation and as a sign of purity, He proclaimed: ‘You are the SALT of the earth’ (Matt. 5:13). Again, in his days, there were no electric lights but knowing how people cherished and protected their lighted lamps, he stated: ‘You are the LIGHT of the world’ (Matt. 5:14).

‘YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH’

Let us consider this further:

1. SALT AS A FLAVOUR:

First and foremost salt gives flavour to food or makes it tasty. Thus, according to William Barclay, Christianity is to life, what salt is to food: the Christian lends flavour to life. So, as ‘salt of the earth’, we should be people of joy and hope; and in turn, we are to bring joy, hope and meaning into the lives of others.

1. SALT AS A PRESERVATIVE:

Some fishes are preserved with salt. In the ancient world without refrigeration, this was a key usage of salt. Salt was used to keep things from going bad, and to hold decay at bay. Therefore, if the Christian is to be the salt of the earth, he/she must have a certain **antiseptic** influence on life or society. We must be the people in whose company it is easy to be good, decent speeches are made, bribery cannot be done, and corruption is defeated.

1. SALT AS A SYMBOL OF PURITY:

In the days of Jesus, salt was connected with purity. No doubt its glistering whiteness (like little diamonds) made the connection easy. It was for this reason that already in the Old Testament, Moses instructed the Israelites: ‘to every offering you are to join an **offering of salt** to Yahweh your God’ (Lev. 2:13). And in 2 Kings 2:19-22, the prophet used a **bowl of salt** to purify a pool of water. So then, if the Christian is to be the salt of the earth, he/she must be an example of PURITY in thought, speech and conduct.

‘YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD’

An experience I had abroad is that some people do not know of the existence of the country Ghana. However, when I referred to then UN Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan, as a Ghanaian, such people began to show me some respect. In other words, the glory of this illustrious son of Ghana began to shine on me. Similarly, Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5). So, if today he calls us the ‘light of the world’ (Matt. 5:14), it is a great compliment to us to reflect to the world, His light shining on us (Phil. 2:15), just as the moon reflects the light of the sun.

Now, how can we reflect this light of Christ to the world? We can be helped by considering the uses and a symbolism of light:

1. LIGHT IS MEANT TO BE SEEN

Jesus says: ‘No one lights a lamp and covers it; instead it is put on a lamp-stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house’ (Matt. 5:15). So, then Christianity is something which is meant to be seen. Christianity should not be visible only within the church; for Christ did not say, ‘you are the light of the **Church**’; but ‘you are the light of the **world**’! Therefore, in our families, neighbourhoods, offices, markets, schools, playgrounds, etc what we say and do not say, what we do and do not do, our jokes and the jokes we do not countenance, should reveal the light of Christ to the world.

1. LIGHT AS A GUIDE

A light can be a guide. We know how difficult it is to find our way in darkness, especially when there is a sudden lights out. A light shines to make our path clear. Similarly, we must shine to make the way clear to others. That is to say, a Christian must of necessity be a good example. D. L. Moody says: ‘A holy life will produce the deepest impression. Lighthouses blow no horns; they only shine’. Yes, actions speak louder than words. Let our good examples attract people to Christ, just as light in darkness attracts certain insects.

1. LIGHT AS A SYMBOL OF GOODNESS

St. John says: ‘**God is light** and there is no darkness in him’ (1 John 1:5). God, who is the Absolute Light, is Absolute Goodness; thus, often where goodness is contrasted with evil the former is symbolized by light and the latter by darkness. So as children of light we are called to opt for goodness and spread it.

CONCLUSION: Beloved, let the salt of our lives make a difference in people’s lives, and our light so shine before them, so that seeing the goodness of the Lord through us, they will give glory to our heavenly Father (Matt. 5:16). Amen!