

Cycle A – Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time - Feb. 5, 2023

“You are the salt of the earth ...”

OPENING PRAYER (Psalm 112)

Leader: Those who fear the Lord rise in the darkness
as a light for the upright;
they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.

All: **It is well with those who deal generously,
who conduct their affairs with justice.**

Leader: For the righteous will never be moved;
they will be remembered forever.

All: **They are not afraid of evil tidings;
their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord.
Amen**



First Reading – Isaiah 58:7-10

Historically called “Third Isaiah” this passage was written at a time when the exiled people had returned to Jerusalem and faced the harsh realities of their new situation. The people got caught in scrupulous and strict observance of the law for self-preservation. But Isaiah’s language is blunt: in order for God to bring light and healing, there has to be more than pious devotion. Selfishness, greed, indifference and exploitation have no place in a people who sincerely wish to live the covenant with God. Religious practices and rituals are empty unless the real needs of the poor are met, injustices are confronted, and the oppressed are liberated. Isaiah is painfully blunt about this.

1. How do Isaiah’s words challenge our western affluent lifestyle?
2. In what ways does your parish make its liturgy and rituals flow into concrete actions outside the church or chapel doors?

Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

A spiritual elitism has taken hold in this community so dear to Paul’s heart. Competitive rivalries have no place in God’s plan of salvation. More than anywhere else in his letters, Paul openly speaks of his own weakness and inadequacies, in order to strengthen his claim that he is sent by God to fulfill the mission of proclamation of the Good News. It is the great interpretive key to Paul’s theology: it is in human weakness that the power of God’s Spirit is most active and most visible.

1. Why, in your opinion, do rivalries and elitism, work contrary to God’s plan?
2. How does God’s Spirit shine through our weaknesses and inadequacies?

Gospel – Matthew 5:13-16

Sentences beginning with “you are” are meant to demand our special attention. Part of Jesus’ discourse following the Beatitudes, Jesus employs the images of salt and light to make a crucial point also made in the two previous readings for today: the way you live expresses or obscures the truth of God’s love and mercy. In the words of the Redemptorist Priest Fr. Leo English, “you may be the only Bible someone reads today, so act it.” God is to be manifest in all we do, think, and feel, as well as in the attitudes and motives which govern our behavior. St. Augustine reaffirms this notion that an impure, or violent thought is only slightly behind a thought becoming an action – so be aware of thy self.

1. How do you try to be “salt of the earth”?
2. Is your light hiding under a bushel basket or sitting on a lamp stand for all to see?
3. What is the most challenging message for you in this passage?
4. Who do you look up to, who lives a good “salty” life? How do they shine forth with the light of God in our world?

LIVING THE WORD

What is God’s challenge for me this coming week?

PRAYING THE WORD

Intercession: We pray for our parish community as we strive to be salt and light in our compassion for those most in need far and near. We pray to the Lord.

Invite other intentions, then end with “Our Father ...”)

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: Almighty and eternal God,
fount and source of all light,
the coming of your Son Jesus the Christ
brought light and salt
to flavor the world with your love.

All: Let the radiance of your grace
fill our hearts with love and compassion
for the poor, the hungry, the imprisoned,
so that we can be your salt and light
in our dark and broken world.
Amen.

Leader: Let us share with one another the sign of Christ’s peace.