

Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time 2020

My beloved brothers and sisters, because every word He spoke was the Divine Word, because He is the Divine Word made flesh! The words of today's Gospel, are part of the section of the Gospel we call: The Sermon on the Mount, which is the highlight of all of His teachings. It is like the missive that a General uses before he sends out his troops into a very dangerous battle to encourage them and to give them resolve.

In this Gospel, Jesus gives us our mission:, **it is to be Salt and Light!** This Gospel teaching is very difficult for us to understand, because we take these two things for granted, but the people who were first listening to Jesus did not. Even my grandparents would not have taken these two images for granted.

Salt was absolutely essential for daily life, it was not just a seasoning. In fact it was so very important, that Roman Soldiers were paid their wages in Salt. It is from which we get the word: Salary. It came from: Salarium. Salt was used to preserve food, for flavor, but also for medicine, for purifying wounds. We still have an ancient saying: "Like pouring salt into an open wound." Salt was antibiotic and so it was also used for the preservation of food. No doubt, many of you have had salt cured bacon, or salt cured Salmon. Refrigerators are a relatively new phenomena. When I was a boy, we lived in France for three years. For the first year, we had an ice box, but not a refrigerator. Many of our favorite foods are still preserved with salt: pepperoni, salami, ham, bacon, cheese, etc.

Light had the same purpose then as it does now: it pushed back the darkness! What we take for granted, the ancient world did not! Before the invention of electricity, darkness was a dramatic reality. Even the tiny flame of an oil lamp was a comfort and a necessity. Our Grandparents, and our Great-Grandparents, understand and experienced how helpless they were without light—have you ever fumbled around in the dark going to the bathroom in the middle of the night, and jammed your toe? Have you ever been terrified in the middle of the night that you might step on a deadly scorpion or a snake, or whatever else might be out there in the middle of the night?

Jesus did not say: “Be like salt and light.” He said to us: “You are Salt and light!” The purpose in life as His disciples is not self-contained, and self-interested; rather, it is to make a positive difference for others in the infection of the world: to be a cleansing and healing force; and to illuminate the darkness of society, by not only **bringing them the Gospel, but by being the Gospel!**