

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time\_A

February 8, 2026

St. Edward's Parish

Friends, today Our Lord continues the “Sermon on the Mount” by instructing His disciples how they must not simply keep His teaching for themselves but must give this teaching and example to the world. Our Lord uses two images for this: salt and light.

Salt is used to season food and bring out the best in its flavour. Likewise, Christianity has a power to bring out the best in human life. Things like education, art, music, healthcare, care for the poor, marriage and family life have existed from ancient times, but when seasoned with Christian faith they have all blossomed with new meaning and depth. Salt also is used to preserve food from corruption. The salting of fish is a good example. Christianity too is meant to preserve us from the decaying forces that threaten society: materialism, self-centeredness, reckless pleasure, disregard for the sanctity of human life, despair, loss of meaning and purpose etc... Clear Christian teaching and practice protects against these influences. If Christians do not give clear teaching and example then they have lost their saltiness; their faith has become worthless.

Next, Our Lord uses the image of light saying, “You are the light of the world.” Just as even a small light brings clarity to a dark room and enables us to see, so the Christian faith allows us to see the truth about life. Obscure questions such “what is the purpose of life?,” “what is truly good?,” “is there hope in suffering?” etc... all come to light with Christian faith. The world desperately needs the salt and light of Christian faith. Therefore, Our Lord instructs His disciples: “Let your light shine before human beings, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

On the surface this instruction might seem to contradict what Our Lord says a little later about not letting our good deeds be seen. For example, “do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Mt 6:4). The difference here is that we must not do good to draw attention to ourselves or impress others. That would be self-serving, and Jesus warns against that temptation. However, in the Gospel today He

does tell His disciples to allow their good example to be a positive witness to others. This is an instruction for us all: to live our lives in such a way that it can lead others toward God.

The power of good example has always been one of the most important influences to draw people to faith in Christ. Jesus Himself did not merely teach but He gave a perfect example. Speaking to our modern times, Pope Paul VI said, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 41).” Up and down the centuries the lived witness of the saints, rather than programs or learned books, has had the power to convince people of the Catholic faith: Francis of Assisi, John Vianney, Padre Pio, Mother Theresa etc.... all had an extraordinary influence because they lived the Catholic faith with integrity.

Allow me to give a personal example. When I was in my late 20s, I had a few friends who profoundly helped my faith by their personal example. One who comes to mind was Jordan, a roommate when I was working at a research center in San Francisco. He was about my own age but lived the Catholic faith with such integrity and sincerity that it deeply impacted me. He knew His faith well and embraced everything the Church taught with humility. He lived simply, attended Mass daily, and was patient and charitable with everyone. He had a good sense of humor and was a genuine friend. His example helped my discernment of the priesthood greatly.

Often we do not realize how important our personal example is. When Catholics do not take their faith seriously it is a counter witness and does much harm. The Gospel today gives us an opportunity to examine our own witness with such questions as: do I strive to know the Catholic faith well so that I can live it? Do I keep the Church’s teachings with respect and love? Do I have trust in God when things do not go well? Do I suffer patiently in union with Jesus? Am I quick to repent if I do wrong? Do I forgive readily? Do I live simply? Am I happy to share the faith? Do I have genuine love for others? Let us pray this year, that we may let the light of our faith shine before others in such a way that they may be led to God by our good example.