

'SALT AND LIGHT' - HOMILY – 5 FEBRUARY 2017

Jesus calls us to be salt of the earth and light for our world.

We can agree with the statement, but do we appreciate the rich tradition and deep meaning behind it?

DO WE KNOW THE FAITH INSIGHTS ABOUT SALT AND LIGHT IMAGES OVER MANY HUNDREDS OF YEARS BEFORE JESUS CAME ON EARTH?

WHEN WE SAY, THROUGH JESUS, THAT WE ARE TO BE SALT AND LIGHT, HOW DO THESE IMAGES INSPIRE AND MOVE US?

WOULD YOU ACTUALLY DESCRIBE YOURSELF NOW AS SALT? AS LIGHT?

It is worth the time to dive down into the depths of the Bible in its use of these images. Images so powerful, that Jesus chose them to explain -

- OUR PURPOSE IN LIFE
- OUR MEANING IN LIFE
- OUR MISSION IN LIFE

This homily is prepared as a reflection when we have time to sit with it and pray with it.

SALT

There are many types of salt today in our multicultural cuisine.

But if it loses its taste?

Luke's Gospel 14:34-35 is pointed. It says

*"Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?
It is fit neither for the soil nor the manure heap; they throw it away.
Let anyone with ears to hear listen!"*

Mark's Gospel 9:50 gives more detail about how it applies to us

*"Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it?
Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."*

Today in **Matthew's Gospel 5:13**, it goes beyond comparing salt is something within us.

*"You are the salt of the earth;
but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?
It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot."*

Salt is compared to that, which helps us to peace with one another,

And the Christian disciple is the salt of the earth.

The Christian both gives flavour to our world and is the flavour for our world.

And it should never be taken for granted. Otherwise it will lose its saltiness.

We know from the Old Testament that salt can be given as a covenant.

In **Numbers 18:19** it is a covenant to one important part of Israelite religious society.

"It is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord for you and your descendants as well."

In **2 Chronicles 13:5** it is given as kingship in covenant to David's line.

“Do you not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel for ever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?”

Jesus, in the line of David, in Matthew’s Gospel, calls the disciples the salt of the earth.

WHAT IS THIS VERY SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP, COVENANT AND IDENTITY WE HAVE BEFORE GOD?

WHAT WORD OR PHRASE DO WE USE?

Perhaps if we consider the two greatest commandments: **LOVE GOD** and **LOVE NEIGHBOUR**. We experience what it is like **when love disappears and becomes indifference or even hatred.**

One only has to look at an individual or group or nation that has been terribly and unjustly assaulted. There is the **strong temptation for hatred to take over, and the salt of love has lost its saltiness.**

But whereas salt can’t recover its saltiness, God continues to love us. God calls us be truly just. The injustices must be faced and justice restored. But God’s love is also healing, it is restorative and merciful.

LIGHT

We might move to the second part of today’s Gospel.

Matthew 5:14-16

*“You are the light of the world.
A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.
No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket,
but on the lampstand,
and it gives light to all in the house.
In the same way, let your light shine before others,
so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”*

We might take some time this week, to ponder the Gospel for us now.
And to let the quotes from the Bible below, flow over us.
Enjoy the richness of God’s Word.

OLD TESTAMENT ON LIGHT

Below are some quotes from the Old Testament to ponder when you get the opportunity.

- **GENESIS**

God gives us light.

HOW IS GOD THE LIGHT OF OUR LIVES?

Genesis 1:3 *“Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light”*

Gen 1:4 *“And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from darkness”*

- **EXODUS**

In Exodus 13:21 we hear about the Exodus out of Egypt. God leads the way.

“The Lord went in front of them and in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light”

- **PSALMS**

Ps 4:6 *"... Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!"*

Ps 18:28 *"But it is you who light my lamp; the Lord, my God lights up my darkness."*

Ps 27:1 *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"*

Ps 43:3 *"O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me;"*

Ps 56:13 *"For you have delivered my soul from death, and my feet from falling, so that I may walk before God in the light of life."*

Ps 97:11 *"Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart."*

Ps 118:27 *"The Lord is God, and he has given us light."*

Ps 119:105 *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*

Ps 119:130 *"The unfolding of your words gives light;"*

Ps 139:12 *"the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you."*

- **PROVERBS**

4:18 *"But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day."*

13:9 *"The light of the righteous rejoices"*

- **ISAIAH**

2:5 *"O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!"*

9:2 *"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined."*

42:6 *"...I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations"*

42:16 *"I will turn the darkness before them into light"*

49: 6 *"I will give you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*

60:1 *"Arise, shine; for your light has come"*

60:20 *"...for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended."*

- **MICAH**

7:8 *"... when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me."*

7:9 *"... He will bring me out to the light; I shall see his vindication."*

NEW TESTAMENT on LIGHT

And we move forward to **some New Testament quotes as we ponder Jesus Christ as the Light. And our own calling in Jesus, to be disciples of Jesus and children of the light.**

- **MATTHEW'S GOSPEL**

4:16 *"... the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."*

- **JOHN'S GOSPEL**

9:5 *"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."*

12:46 *"I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness."*

- **2ND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS**

4:6 *"For it is God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness',*

who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

- **LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS**

5:8 *“For once you were in darkness, but now in the Lord you are light.*

Live as children of light-for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.”

- **1ST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS**

5:5 *“for you are all children of light and children of the day”*

- **1ST LETTER OF JOHN**

1:5 *“... God is light and in him there is no darkness at all”*

2:10 *“Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light”*

NOW THE CHALLENGE. NOW DO WE LIVE OUT THIS DEPTH OF SCRIPTURE?

Let us lovingly respond to the invitation of Jesus to be salt and light to our world,

Always giving thanks and praise to God.

And remembering, at the same time, Jesus invites us to be humble in our response.

Amen.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Salt and Light – 5 February 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/020517.cfm>]

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