Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 5:13-16): Jesus said to his disciples: “You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”

“You are the light of the world”

Fr. Josep FONT i Gallart
(Getafe, Spain)

Today the Gospel makes a strong appeal to us to be witnesses of Christ. And it invites us to do so in two ways that seem, at first glance, contradictory: as salt and as light.

Salt is not seen, but it is noticed; it adds flavor, it can be tasted. There are many people who “do not draw attention to themselves,” because they are like “little ants” who never stop working and doing good. In their presence, one can savor peace, serenity, and joy. They have —as people like to say nowadays— “good vibes.”

Light cannot be hidden. There are people who “can be seen from far away”: Saint Teresa of Calcutta, the Pope, the parish priest of a small town. They hold important positions because of their natural leadership or their specific ministry. They are “set on the lampstand.” As today’s Gospel says, “on the top of a hill” or “on a lampstand” (cf. Mt 5:14–15).

All of us are called to be salt and light. Jesus Himself was “salt” during thirty years of hidden life in Nazareth. It is said that Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, while playing, was once asked what he would do if he knew that in a few moments he would have to die, and he replied: “I would go on playing.” He would go on living the normal life of every day, making life pleasant for his companions at play.

There are moments when we are called to be “light” in the world. We become that light most clearly when we remain faithful during difficult or uncomfortable situations. The martyrs are powerful examples of this, because their faith shone brightest when they were suffering. Even today, in some environments, simply going to Mass can bring ridicule or criticism. In those situations, quietly choosing to practice your faith is already a way of being “light.” Light is always noticeable — even a small light. A tiny flame can

brighten an entire dark room. In the same way, small acts of faith can make a real difference in a world that often feels dark.

Let us pray for one another to the Lord, that we may always know how to be salt, and that we may know how to be light when it is necessary to be so. May our daily conduct be such that, seeing our good works, people may give glory to our Father in heaven (cf. Mt 5:16).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Again He refers to the world, to the entire orb; light that must be understood in a spiritual sense. With these words, the Lord insists on the perfection of life that his disciples must lead.” (Saint John Chrysostom)

- “You, who have accepted in your hearts the saving message of Christ, are therefore the salt of the earth because you must contribute to prevent the deterioriation of the life of the man or that it may be corrupted by pursuing false values.” (Saint John Paul ll)

- “The fidelity of the baptized is a primordial condition for the proclamation of the Gospel and for the Church's mission in the world. In order that the message of salvation can show the power of its truth and radiance before men, it must be authenticated by the witness of the life of Christians (....).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2044)