

5th Sunday of the Year A



You are the salt of the earth.

You are the light of the world. (Mt 5:13.14)

First Reading

Isaiah 58:7-10

Thus says the Lord: Share your bread with the hungry, and shelter the homeless poor, clothe the man you see to be naked and turn not from your own kin. Then will your light shine like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over.

Your integrity will go before you and the glory of the Lord behind you. Cry, and the Lord will answer; call, and he will say, "I am here".

If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist, the wicked word, if you give your bread to the hungry, and relief to the oppressed, your light will rise in the darkness, and your shadows become like noon.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

As for me, brothers and sisters, when I came to you, it was not with any show of oratory or philosophy, but simply to tell you what God had guaranteed. During my stay with you, the only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus, and only about him as the crucified Christ. Far from relying on any power of my own, I came among you in great "fear and trembling" and in my speeches and the sermons that I gave, there were none of the arguments that belong to philosophy; only a demonstration of the power of the Spirit. And I did this so that your faith should not depend on human philosophy but on the power of God.

Jesus said to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men.

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven."

Meditation

Today's gospel complements the previous account of the beatitudes. "Happy are you!" declared Jesus to those to whom he announced persecution. Today he reveals who they are. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. The images must be explored. The scriptures prescribed the use of salt, a covenant sign, on all the offerings made to God. Salt was also considered a fertilizer. For Israel, light was a symbol of messianic revelation triumphing over the darkness of paganism.

We must live, then, as salt for the earth and light for the world. The prophet Isaiah points the way. If we pursue justice for the oppressed and care for those in need, we will be true to our mission to preserve, to nurture and to enlighten all humanity. Through our lives, Jesus Christ, the true light of the world, will shine on in the darkness, a darkness that will not overcome it.