

## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday OT – Matthew 5:13-16

SALT and LIGHT! **Salt** had many uses. Unfortunately, the common person usually thinks of sodium chloride, but it can be any combination of ions, like potassium chloride, etc. Not only did sodium chloride add flavor to insipid food; it was a preservative. Other forms of **salt** added energy to fuel, fertilized crops and was a means of healing depending on which kind of salt. The Church uses salt, sodium chloride, sometimes in the blessing of Holy Water, just a pinch as a reminder of today's gospel.

The followers of Jesus were to be like salt in the world. Otherwise, our discipleship would be useless. We would be trodden underfoot. This term refers to unbelievers, but real disciples in contrast enjoy the help of the Holy Spirit when in trouble.

The other symbol of **Light** had come into the darkness of Galilee with Jesus. In John's gospel, Jesus called himself the **light** of the world. Paul told his converts that they were "sons of light." In Matthew, the disciples are themselves the light of the world. How were they to become the light? The neighboring hill towns of Galilee suggest the first answer. Just as these cities on a hill could not be hidden, neither could the real disciple.

A second answer comes from the lamps used in houses. A hidden disciple like a hidden lamp was useless. After Pentecost the disciples were sent out into the world. We are sent out after our Eucharist into the world. And a third answer comes from the good work that the disciple performs. Salvation does not come from such works, but such works are an appropriate response to the gift of salvation and make sure that it is not jeopardized. Matthew has much to say about social justice and the needs of neighbors. Good works are not for self-advertisement but for the glorification of the Father, the intimate God whom Jesus knew so well.

An image that came to my mind was **lighting bugs**, that flash in the early summer evenings after sunset. By themselves they are interesting and catch our attention, young and old. It is when there are many flashing throughout the fields, signaling one another, almost like dancing but using their lights to communicate. Whatever they are saying, their mesmerizing dance of light catches our attention.

What a great example for the body of Christ. One Christian can catch our attention, especially when they spread their joy around through the good works

for others. Imagine the powerful witness when several Christians gather together for corporal works of mercy, as here at St. Francis de Sales. It can be like a field of fireflies, only setting the world on fire by our corporate witnesses. Anyone can read the bible, but Christianity can only be caught from someone else and passed on. In the end, Christianity is a religion of the heart. The head can read and understand the bible, and even be impressed by the figure of Jesus Christ, but as John the Evangelist reminds us that God is Love. The brain will certainly keep us thinking, but only our hearts will put us into action.

The dogma, the laws, the commandments and even the rubrics might catch us for the moment, but only the heart will keep us coming back. Rubrics is Latin for "red", that is, the directions for the priest in our Sacramentary for how far apart we should hold our hands, and how many sign of the cross we make over the unconsecrated bread, etc. But the love of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine can never be understood or figured out by the head but only by the love in our hearts.