

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

The Israelites who returned from exile in Babylon, took their religious obligations like fasting seriously, but God took no notice. Their piety seemed useless. **Isaiah** explained the reasons. They were ignoring the widespread injustice and oppression around. The poor, the naked, the hungry went without help. If they stirred themselves to do something about all this, then God would give them favors in abundance. Their light would really shine out in the world.

“Share our bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn.” Sounds almost like the beatitudes to me.

Like Isaiah, Jesus reminds us to be **salt of the earth** and **light of the world!**

**Salt** had many uses. Not only did it add flavor to insipid food; it was a preservative, it added energy to fuel, fertilized crops and was a means of healing. The disciples had to be and do all this for the world, otherwise their discipleship was useless. They would be trodden underfoot by men. In Matthew, this term refers to unbelievers. The real disciple in contrast enjoys the help of the Holy spirit when in trouble.

**Light** had come into the darkness of Galilee with Jesus. In John, Jesus called himself the *light of the world*. Paul told his converts that they were “*children of the light*.” In Matthew, the *disciples are themselves the light of the world*. How were they to become the light?

Their neighboring hill towns of Galilee suggest the first answer. Just as these 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. A third answer comes from the good works 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 the neighbor. The climax of such teaching is the parable of the sheep and the goats. Good works are not for self-advertisement but for the glorification of the Father, the intimate God whom Jesus knew so well.

Just as the miracles that Jesus performed are for the glorification of his Heavenly Father, they also point to what Jesus ***says and teaches***. The good works that we perform in all the many different ways that are available here at Saint Francis de Sales hopefully are performed for the glorification of our Heavenly Father. But they also serve another purpose, and that is to attract others ***to Jesus through*** us. An ongoing survey repeatedly shows that the reason many converts joined the Catholic Church was not so much what we say, but what we do in light of our professed faith.

I am sure that many visitors come here and meet our parishioners, and then they watch to see how we act out our lives in light of our faith. ***Actions speak louder than words***, and in the case of Christians, it is what attracts others to our faith. Not that we don't have anything to say, but what we say hopefully is what we believe and act on that believe. "Who is my mother, my brothers, and my sisters? Those who hear my words and keep them."

If the actions of individual Christians who live their lives out in good deeds and works is powerful enough to attract others to our faith, then imagine the corporate witness that we as a parish must attract others to our faith. The Holy Spirit works through both, but by the history of the Church obviously prefers the corporate witness of the Body of Christ through our parishes.

That is why the Eucharistic Celebration is so important since it feeds not only with God's Word but also with Christ's Body and Blood.

A parishioner recently pointed out a short article on the Eucharist which I found says it all and well and similar to what I have been saying.