5th Sunday of Ordinary Time - Cycle A  
February 9, 2014

Isaiah 58:7-10  
Psalm PS 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9  
1 Cor 2:1-5  
Matthew 5:13-16

CALLED TO BE SALT FOR OUR WORLD

*Become the salt of earth by stepping out of our comfort zone, experiencing the unimaginable first hand, and doing the work of the Lord.*

Recently Karen and I decided to improve the lighting in our upstairs hallway by installing all new fixtures. It’s amazing how much the small but powerful LED lamps inside them reveal details in the pictures lining our hallway. Gone are the historical artifacts muted by the sands of time. In their place are all the original emotions, colors, and textures. You know, it’s almost if the people in these pictures have been transformed by the light from those LEDs, that they too are in some extraordinary way experiencing their world in a whole new light.

My brothers and sisters, we were created to reflect the *divine* light that changes the way people see themselves, their place in the world, and the world around them.

But “how” do we shine with that light without stumbling over our own shadows? And how do we manifest that light in the first place?

Let’s break open this mystery by joining Jesus on the mount, where he’s just finished coaching on the inner nature of discipleship… Blessed are the poor in spirit, they who mourn, the meek, etc. and that the “blessed” already possess the kingdom, although in a hidden manner.

It’s from this point in Jesus’ sermon that our Gospel reading begins with two powerful images:

“*You are the light of the world.*”  
“*You are the salt of the earth.*”

You see salt is the answer to our question of “how.”
In Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is no longer concerned with having salt or restoring flavor, but in his disciples *becoming* the salt of the earth, the fertilizing influence, the catalyst for action, the enhancer of all good things!

Today Jesus is calling us to move beyond ourselves, the creature comforts of home, and even the walls we cannot see, to a public ministry of good deeds. These are deeds with a missionary function, in that they point beyond themselves and the doers to “your Father in heaven.”

Together, as a Church, we are to venture into unfamiliar places and clothe the naked, share our bread with the hungry, and give shelter to the oppressed and homeless.

In 2005, after months of kicking and screaming, I took a huge leap of faith and joined my eldest son and daughter on a mission to Comayagua, Honduras. Families welcomed us into homes where hammocks hung over dirt floors and sheet metal roofs were held down only by rocks. We listened to a mother speak of the difficulties of raising her children without a father. We spent time with children, communicating only by the crayons and coloring books we brought with us. We jokingly commented on the street vendors selling lemonade only to learn this was their only source of family income. To all the parishioners who supported our mission, we are forever thankful.

There we came to know needs that we had not experienced – and really could never have imagined – without listening to their stories and witnessing their lives first hand.

As for me, I went to Honduras to be light and salt, never expecting to experience the light and salt of the beautiful Honduran people of God. In so doing they opened my eyes to the meaning of social justice. I returned knowing that if I hadn’t of used the means and methods available to me, I’d still be saying things like “we have enough problems of our own” or “they just need to work harder” or “they should have studied more.” But I learned the Honduran people can’t. Their cultural and institutional hurdles are far too great to overcome on their own. Our Honduran brothers and sisters need our help in ways that promote dignity and self-reliance, and in turn enables them to break the cycle of their poverty.
I share this missionary God-story with you not to be proud or pompous or promote a political agenda, but as a small example of how the Spirit calls all the blessed, no matter where they live or their economic status, to be *light of the world, salt of the earth*.

There are many ways to do good works right here in central Virginia. A great starting place is Commonwealth Catholic Charities. Last year they witnessed to over 36,000 of the most vulnerable.

For those called to more distant lands, the Haiti Kidz Foundation provides holistic healthcare to over 500 Haitians. Members of our parish are actually there right now experiencing their culture and traditions. Yesterday they enjoyed the game of Trouble with boys at an orphanage. Tomorrow they will joyously re-open the doors of their clinic.

And there’s our diocesan Twinning Program where Catholics from all over the diocese have been encountering Christ in the land of Haiti for more than 25 years.

Today, in churches all over the world, Christians are hearing the call to celebrate a public life of faithfulness, where we share in the experiences of the less fortunate and address social injustice.

We need not use beautiful words or awe-inspiring wisdom. We need not flatter or show conceit or even self-confidence in our faith. Strengthened through Eucharistic communion and the graces of the Holy Spirit, God will give us what we need to be that beacon of love, hope, and charity that shines before others.

So rejoice, and be glad! For the blessed will be satisfied and they will see God!

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