

Wellspring Fransalian Center for Spirituality

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we celebrate the fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time. We continue our journey with Jesus through the Gospel of Mathew. On the first Sunday, we met Jesus as he was being baptized, identified and affirmed as the beloved son of God and empowered with the Holy Spirit. On the second Sunday, we heard John the Baptist's testimony about Jesus being the one God sent to baptize with the Holy Spirit. On the third Sunday, we met Jesus leaving Nazareth, taking up residence in Capernaum to begin his ministry and beginning to call his disciples... Simon, Andrew, James and John followed him. On the fourth Sunday, we listened to and reflected on the most important, the central and the core of his message, the Beatitudes. (Mathew 5:1-12)

After giving us the essence of the teaching of Jesus, Mathew gives us the great command of Jesus to all his followers: "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?" "You are the light of the world...your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father." (Mathew 5:13-16) Each of us must become the salt and the light - witnesses to God's Light, Truth, Life, Peace and Steadfast Love.

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?" (Mathew 5:13) Salt is a flavoring, cleansing, purifying, healing, preserving, and stabilizing agent. And that is what disciples of Jesus are called to be in the world! Take a few moments and reflect on being the salt of the earth – the flavoring, cleansing, purifying, healing, preserving, and stabilizing agents in the world. What does this mean for you at home, in your work place, in the supermarket and other places where you find yourself? And what would a Christian be in the world without these qualities of Christian living?

A certain church had the names of ten families scheduled to receive food baskets on the eve of Thanksgiving Day. A local merchant donated hams, and groceries were purchased from the local food bank. As the boxes were being packed in the fellowship hall, these families were getting excited over the food they were taking home. It would be the best meal many had enjoyed in months. As they were picking up their boxes, another family arrived - Father, mother and three children piled out of an old pickup truck and came inside the hall. This was a new family, not on our list. They had just heard there was food being distributed by a church.

The pastor of the Church explained that they did not have enough for an extra family. He tried to assure them that he would do what he could to attend to the needs of this new family. Then

an amazing thing happened. With no suggestion from anyone, a woman put down the box she was carrying and quickly found an empty box to place beside it. She began removing items from her box and put into this empty box. Soon others followed her lead, and these poor people created an eleventh box for the new family. I like call it the “Witness of the Eleventh Box.”

This is an outstanding example of Christian living. This is truly being salt of the earth and light of the world too. Ten people brought the Christian flavor into a difficult situation, healing into a sad and uncomfortable experience and preserved the dignity of a family that came uninvited. What an amazing witness of generosity...real salt of the earth and light of the world!

Jesus said, “You are the light of the world...your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.” (Mathew 5:14-16) Light makes things visible, gives us warmth, brings us comfort, makes us feel safe, and it has the power to heal. And that is what disciples of Jesus are called to be in the world!

Take a few moments and reflect on being the light of the world – making things visible, bringing warmth and comfort to those around, making others feel safe, and helping to heal the brokenness of the world. Think about enlightening the ignorant, bringing truth where lies seem to be the norm, light into darkness, peacefulness into fearful situations, joy into sorrow, etc. What does this mean for you at home, in your work place, in the supermarket and other places where you find yourself? And what would a Christian be in the world without these qualities of Christian living?

An American tourist bought a special jewelry box in France with the assurance that it would glow in the dark. He took it home and put it on his dresser, but it didn’t live up to the promise he was given. A friend, who was able to read French, looked at the instructions and read, “Put me in the sunshine during the day and then I will glow in the dark.” Put yourself in the light of Christ and see what happens! We must be in his light to be light of the world! We must also remember that we can not all be shining bright in the sky. But we can all twinkle a little and that is what makes the difference. Take a moment and pray...

Lord, You are the light in which I see all truth,
even the truth that is hard to see,
truth about myself, my character, my strengths, my weaknesses,
truth about the world and all that is in it.
Lord, help me to walk in your light and be your light for others.

I encourage you to take a few minutes each day of this week to be still and reflect on how your day has been and on how you have tried to be the “salt of the earth and the light of the world” as Jesus called us to be.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

The Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 5, 2023

**God loves us. This is the great truth of our life.
It is what makes everything else meaningful. We are not the product of blind chance
or absurdity; instead our life originates as part of a loving plan of God.
(Pope Benedict XVI)**

Collect

Keep your family safe, O Lord, with unfailing care,
that, relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace,
they may be defended always by your protection.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Liturgy of the Word

Prayerfully read the first reading and then read my reflections below and spend a few moments of personal reflection. Do the same with Responsorial Psalm and other readings.

Isaiah 58:7-10

The Prophet Isaiah invites us to change not only our behavior but also our heart. True worship includes caring for the needs of the poor, the oppressed and the homeless.

Vatican II document says, “the poor cry for a change of heart and mind” (ES) and that is what Isaiah calls for. An attitudinal change, change of heart is what brings about genuine change in the person and the world around the person.

Justice and the care of the orphans, the poor and the widows are integral part of covenant relationship. They are also our Christian responsibility.

Psalm 112

The Psalmist proclaims, “Happy are those who fear the Lord”. The Greek word for “fear”, phobia, is found in more than seventy-five compound words in English. Most of the terms have been coined by psychologists and moral philosophers to cover the many aspects of modern man’s basic fear of life. The fact is that fear is one of the great threats to mental health today. Our children are constantly exposed to many things such as war and violence that makes them

afraid. Does “fear of the Lord” mean one of these phobias? Is it the “hell-fire” that was instilled into some of us during our early formation?

Hebrew verses very often employ two lines in parallel, the one-line interpreting or adding to the thought in the other line. So here, if our poet declares “Happy” the one who fears the Lord and if he delighted in the Lord’s commandments, then his “fear of the Lord” must have been a glad awareness of the awe-filled mystery of God’s loving kindness. This “fear” should be translated as “reverential awe” or “awe-inspiring” – it is fear that frees and not freezes. This “fear” cannot be translated into one single English word. The word captures all that happens inside of a person who has become aware of the awesome presence of God, the tremendous and fascinating mystery that God is.

**Light shines through darkness for the upright;
He is gracious, merciful and just.
Well for the man who is gracious and lends,
Who conducts his affairs with justice.**

I Corinthians 2:1-5

Paul taught the Corinthians to trust the wisdom of God and not any philosophical arguments. He did not come with any particular eloquence or “wisdom” but with the message of Jesus, crucified. Faith, he said, rests not on the wisdom of men but on the wisdom of God and this wisdom is revealed in Jesus, in his death on the cross.

Let your faith come to life...let it be visible in the way you relate to one another.

Mathew 5:13-16

You are the salt of the earth...What if the salt loses its taste? What if it loses its quality to flavor and to cleanse and to purify and to preserve and to stabilize?

Disciples of Jesus are called to be the “salt” of the earth! To be the “salt” is to be the cleansing, purifying, healing, preserving and stabilizing agent.

Disciples of Jesus must remain “flavoring, cleansing, purifying, healing, preserving, stabilizing” agents. What would a Christian be in the world without the qualities of Christian living?

You are the light of the world. Your light must shine before all so that they see goodness in your actions and give praise to your heavenly Father.

Light dispels darkness, light makes things visible, light gives warmth, light heals, lights makes the way visible...This is what the disciples are called to be for the world...to be men and women whose presence dispels darkness, reveals the truth, encourages warmth of affection, facilitates healing of brokenness, awakens the sleeper, shows the way...

Darkness never feels at home with light! Light shines in the darkness! Darkness cannot shine in the light! Lean toward the light that God sends... Let God's light dispel all the darkness inside and out and around and about.

Be Still for a few moments!

Pray for your needs and those of your family and community.

Spiritual Communion

Lord Jesus, I believe in your real presence in the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Altar. I place myself in your presence and adore you, worship you and glorify you. I am unable to receive you in Holy Communion at Mass today. I hunger and thirst for your way, your truth and your life. Come into my heart Lord and satisfy my hunger and quench my thirst. Bless me that I may give witness to your presence in my life. Amen

Be Still for a few moments!

Saint of the Day, February 5 - Saint Agatha and 11 other saints are remembered this day

Almost nothing is historically certain about saint St. Agatha. She is, however, one of the most highly venerated virgin martyrs of the Catholic Church. It is believed that she was born around 231 in either Catania or Palermo, Sicily to a rich and noble family. From her very early years, Agatha dedicated her life to God and became a consecrated virgin, giving herself wholly to Jesus and the Church in a life of prayer and service. That did not stop men from desiring her and making unwanted advances toward her. As she resisted the advances of men, she was betrayed as a Christian during the persecution of Emperor Decius. Tradition tells us that Agatha was arrested as a Christian, tortured, and sent to a house of prostitution to be mistreated. She was preserved from being violated and was later martyred in Sicily in 251. The year after her death, the stilling of an eruption of Mt. Etna was attributed to her intercession. As a result, apparently, people continued to ask her prayers for protection against fire.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

**"Be steadfast, persevering, my beloved brothers,
fully engaged in the work of the Lord"
(1Corinthians 15:58)**

