

5 th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isaiah 58:7-10
1 Corinthians 2:1-5
Matthew 5:13-16

A. Text/Context

- In the gospel today that we heard a few minutes back Jesus gives 2 metaphors for his disciples: they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world
- Of course we know what salt is! It gives flavor to our food. In chemistry we know it as the NaCl or sodium chloride the ordinary salt that we use in the kitchen and the table
- In Palestine during the time of Jesus, the people get their salt from the Dead Sea to give flavor to their food
- And this Dead Sea is a geographical wonder of the world. In fact, one of the 7 natural wonders of the world
- The Dead sea is so interesting because it is the lowest depression or the lowest point on the face of planet earth 1,300 feet below sea level
- There are plenty of rivers and tributaries that empty into the Dead Sea but the water level does not rise up because it also evaporates at the same time because the climate is very hot
- So, what happens, the water becomes so saturated because all the minerals are left behind during evaporation
- The rivers flowing into the Dead Sea like the Jordan River bring with them a lot of minerals making the sea a mixture of different chemicals or minerals making the water in the Dead Sea very salty
- Because the water is so dense and buoyancy is so high you can simply float without any effort

- So, the water is so salty so that no marine life survives, even a single fish that is why the name is Dead Sea
- The Dead Sea is the source of salt for the Jews and because it is not pure salt not pure sodium chloride, after a period of exposure in the atmosphere it loses its saltiness
- So, we can see here the intelligence of Jesus using the geographical situation of the Dead Sea just to make him well understood by his disciples
- Jesus compares his disciples to a salt if it loses its saltiness it will just be trampled upon
- Another metaphor is the disciples as the light of the world
- In biblical Palestine the houses have single room only, they are just divided by curtains so the light has to be placed in a lampstand to illumine the whole house

B. Human Situation

- With the disciples as examples, as salt of the earth and light of the world what Jesus is really driving at is our role as models in the practice of Christian faith albeit as Catholics
- Jesus is talking about discipleship ang pagsunod kang Jesus, being a model to others in whatever state of life we belong
- Now let us focus on the family. As a father for example: Son, do not gamble because it's a vice and it's bad; but the father gambles
- And the mother, my daughter do not curse or swear because it's bad; but he daughter hears the curses everyday
- So, the son or the daughter will now be confused what is correct now, what we say or what we do

- Applying the message of the gospel, the words of the father lacks saltiness because what he says is different from what he does
- The daughter is confused because cursing is bad but the mother keeps doing it everyday
- If it is like that then we are not really modelling to our own children because we are sending confusing signals
- What is the 1st reading saying? Your light shall break forth like the dawn. Eventually the darkness will soon dissipate and morning arrives and it will soon be bright
- Nothing can hinder the sun to shine except if there are thick clouds when the rains are so imminent. But still the rays of the sunlight are there but only covered
- So, do you see now the difference? The sun will shine brightly if there are no clouds. The words of the father or mother will reach the ears of their children with clarity because there is no hindrance
- Now, if parents have all their negative attitude do they lose the right to discipline their children? No, you will continue to discipline your children
- It is sad to say that more often than not, we are not really good examples and that becomes a setback. We also have our own weakness our shortcomings our limitations
- But our prophetic role to teach our children does not stop even if we are sinful, even if we are unworthy even if we are not good models
- Whether we like it or not, in the daily grind of life we make judgments of what is right and what is wrong but it does not mean that we stop telling others of their wrongdoings
- We only have to give correction in the spirit of love and humility and not in a way that we are so arrogant

- Because we need to give corrections to those who wronged but with love charity and compassion
- And that is very different when we give judgment condemning a person as if we have never done any wrong
- Your children may listen to you not really because you are a good model but because they are afraid to oppose you
- Of course the best model is to really do in action what you say
- If you stop exercising discipline on them who will do that for you? Nobody
- Because again, the most important thing is that our prophetic role does not stop even if we are sinful

C. Challenge

- The challenge that the gospel brings us today is that there must be no ambivalence in modeling
- As a disciple to our children we model only what is the best and not the worst
- If you say it then do it. We witness what we preach by doing what we say
- It is unfortunate that sometimes we are really sending confusing signals to others making them even more confused
- We speak of one thing, we do another thing. In discipleship there is no ambivalence. We must be committed, we must be firm, we must be determined
- Otherwise we lose our saltiness and we lose our brightness
- In the book of Revelation it says: If you are neither hot nor cold, I will spew you out. The reality is that there is just simply no middle ground, there is no indecisiveness, there is no ambivalence
- Our words of wisdom, our good counsels will have very little effect on the lives of others if we do not practice what we preach