"People Of Salt And Light"
Fifth Sunday In Ordinary Time 2017

Reflection By: Deacon Paul Hursh

Our Gospel for this Sunday is a continuation of the Sermon on the Mount begun last week with the Beatitudes. Today we hear Jesus teaching about salt and light as metaphors that emphasize the importance of actions that flow out of our ascent to faith. When we recite the Creed at Mass, do we truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God? If we truly believe that Jesus is the Son of God and we hear his teaching today, are we impelled to act on His teaching?

In 1994 the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) issued a reflection on the social mission of the parish titled, Communities of Salt and Light. This reflection starts with today’s excerpt from Matthew. (Matthew 5:13-16) Within this context our bishops stated emphatically, “We cannot proclaim a gospel we do not live, and we cannot carry out a real social ministry without knowing the Lord and hearing his call to justice and peace.” St. James harshly retorted to the man who claimed he had faith, but does not have works, “Do you want proof, you ignoramus, that faith without works is useless?” (James 2:20)

At St. Andrew the Apostle our mission is commitment to the “mission of Jesus Christ: dedicated to the formation of disciples, who use their gifts to fulfill His mission.” Jesus’ mission is clear,
and many in our community put their faith into action each week to carry out this mission in the
corporal and the spiritual works of mercy. Their faith is not dead, it is alive! …and the work their
faith inspires brings life to others. Here is a list of the many good works done by the faithful at
St. Andrew’s the Apostle Parish.

The corporal works of mercy include:
1. To feed the hungry.
2. To give water to the thirsty.
3. To clothe the naked.
4. To shelter the homeless.
5. To visit the sick.
6. To visit the imprisoned.
7. To bury the dead.

The spiritual works of mercy include:
1. To instruct the ignorant.
2. To counsel the doubtful.
3. To admonish sinners.
4. To bear patiently those who wrong us.
5. To forgive offenses.
6. To console the afflicted.
7. To pray for the living and the dead

These works are done by groups like the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Knights of Columbus,
Grow Haiti’s Children, and the various Caring Ministries. Please excuse me if I have overlooked
some groups in our parish (ie. Marian Missionaries of Divine Mercy), who works, because of
their humility, will remain hidden.

Based on their approach to ministry, the actions of these faithful disciples are like salt and
others’ actions are more like light. What does a ministry of salt or a ministry of light mean? In
which way does their approach differ & why? It is based on their God-given gifts. As mentioned
above some folks don’t like to draw attention to themselves. You may be a shy person, but
don’t let your honest humility keep you from living your faith.

SALT: There are many ways you can serve that don’t require you to get up in front – which may
be the last thing you want to do. That’s OK – it is the way God made you. That may mean that
you are meant to be subtler – like a good seasoning that brings out the good flavor of food
without being noticed. There are many in our parish that prepare and serve food for funeral
receptions. In doing this you are performing two of the corporal works of mercy (#1 & #7 above)
and one of the spiritual works of mercy (#6). As a good cook you already know that the right
amount of salt doesn’t leave the food salty. Good seasoning is always subtle. But maybe you
know that cooking isn’t your thing. Well, maybe the Sophia Sewers would be your way to active
faith. These folks minister by sewing garments for Smile Train and working collaboratively with
the teens at OLPH Orphanage in Jeremie to make garments and cards for sale to raise money
and awareness of our brothers and sisters in Haiti, the poorest county in the Western
Hemisphere.

LIGHT: However, if you have been given the “gift of gab” and you don’t have any inhibitions
about speaking your mind in front of a group, than you may be that light that is placed on a lamp
stand that gives light to the whole house. Perhaps you may be the right person to participate in
the R.I.C.A. (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults). There is a need to sponsors and teachers
where you will have the opportunity to instruct and counsel those who are curious about our
Roman Catholic faith. Do I need to go on? I think you get my drift…

As mentioned above in the quote from the USCCB, ministry is both active and prayerful. As a
community, we at St. Andrew the Apostle try to reflect our concern for the poor during each
liturgy. When our children bring up donations of food during the offertory along with the bread and wine, for consecration and distribution, we are connecting all the various parts of the Body of Christ. With these gifts, both the sacramental elements for Holy Communion & the food staples for the poor, we are giving thanks and sharing in the One Body. This Holy Communion is within our sanctuary building, beyond our church, into the streets, and out into God's creation – a sanctuary without walls. When we do this we build bridges of conscious loving service. We begin to transcend all boundaries based on race, color, creed, or national origin. - - - or any other human division that threatens to divide the family of God. In all this we “glorify (y)our heavenly father”(cf. Mt 5:16b) and we become Kingdom-builders in the mission of Jesus Christ.