

## 5A SFX 2023

### Salt and Light

Last week Jesus gave us a vision of the Kingdom in the Beatitudes, but today he turns directly and looks at us saying: “You are the salt of the earth.” “You are the light of the world.” What a tremendous call. What a daunting task! We are to be the salt mixed in the earth, the light shining on the hill.

Now salt. Salt is an interesting thing. We love it on our chips. We love it with anything. We don't just like chocolate we like salted chocolate, we don't just like ice cream we like salted caramel ice cream. Salt is not something that exists for itself. Salt has to be in relationship with something else. Salt works by heightening the taste, it works to give flavour to the food.

And in this salt is a rather humble ingredient, part of its quality is to be unassuming. Add too much salt and it will make the meal inedible. Salt works to bring out the flavour, not overpower it, bring out the natural taste so that it delights us. Salt is not self-serving. Salt does its job and retires.

The followers of Jesus are like salt because we are to bring out the inherent natural qualities of life. Our faith is meant to enhance our human existence, and not be some sort of substitute for it. Christianity is meant to serve not tyrannize.

Salt is an enhancer. If we are salty, it means that we leave people and situations better than we found them. Is that the effect I have on others? If we are salty we bring out the best in people to help them reach their potential.

Yes we must be careful not to lose our flavour. If salt isn't salty says Jesus, it is worthless. Does salt lose its saltiness? No. But this is probably a local reference to the salt of the Dead Sea which did lose its saltiness because of impurities.

Our task as believers is to maintain our saltiness; not to let ourselves succumb to the universal dumbing down of anything precious, but glory in the distinctiveness of our vocation, as followers of Jesus, seeing it as a way of contributing to the whole mass of humanity by somehow bring out the best in the world, its goodness, its truth, its beauty.

Pope Paul VI talked about the way we are evangelize the modern world. He said that “through wordless witness Christians can stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst? Such a witness is already a silent proclamation of the good news and a very powerful and effective one. Here we have an initial act of evangelisation.” *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 21.

As disciples of Jesus our witness should leave others to wonder. Are we a people that enhance the lives of others, bring out the best in others?

If salt is unassuming and invisible, light by its nature is visible, out there, shining for all to see. The disciples of Jesus should not hide their lights under a tub.

Whatever humility is, it's certainly not a denial of God's gifts. *"Let your light shine before all, so they may see your good deeds and glorify your father in heaven."* No doubt Jesus is speaking out of the background of Isaiah's teaching.

Our light shines when we share our bread with the hungry, shelter the homeless poor, when we do not turn from our family, when we do away with the yoke, the clenched fist, the wicked word. Then our light rises like the dawn and we become radiant. And so as our light shines we give praise to our Father in heaven.

Salt and Light. Pope Francis in his first encyclical asked how we can share the joy of the Gospel with the world. He has a vision of a Church governed by: *"a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church's customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today's world rather than for her self-preservation."* Salt and light only work in relationship and not for themselves.

The writer Molly Keane said that the world is divided into drains and radiators. Are you a drain or a radiator? Do you enhance like salt, radiate like light?

How do we as individuals enhance the life of others through our presence. How do we help the world become what God made it to be? How do we as a parish be that salt and light in Hereford? We have a purpose and a goal beyond ourselves, to help fashion a world of love and respect, kindness and truth out of our friendship with Christ.

"You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world" are words for us today.