

I think that after two weekends without Sunday Mass, you deserve a long homily. And I know you all agree with me.

We all know that currently, a lot of things are not going well in our world. We have divisions, political polarization, racism and hate, violence, all kinds of immorality, and many people suffering or living with fear and anxiety. According to Rev. Benjamin Cremer, a pastor who calls himself, "Digital Pastor," some Christians see mercy as offensive, empathy as a sin, and diversity, equity, and inclusion as a threat. In the midst of this challenging reality, some of us may ask ourselves, as Christians: "How we are to respond to the darkness and despair that we have almost everywhere?"

This is a very deep and mature question. And in this Sunday's Gospel, Jesus says to us, "You are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth." Jesus does not say, "You must be lights in this dark world." Rather He says, "You are the light of the world." He doesn't say, "Go out and see if you can give some flavor to a tasteless world." Rather He says, "You are the salt of the earth." When Jesus said this to the first disciples, they still had to grow in their faith and understanding of Jesus. But Jesus told these imperfect disciples and sinful followers that He was going to work through them for the enlightenment of the world. They already had a job to do: salt, light. And today, with our different degrees of understanding and commitment, Jesus says to us, "You are the light of the world, Let your light shine." "You are the salt of the earth, give some flavor to the world."

Often, we hear opinions of what others think of us. But today, Jesus tells us what He thinks of us: "We are the light of the world, we are the salt of the earth." Jesus knows each one of us well. He knows our limitations and our frailties. He knows our sinful tendencies, and attachments. He knows we are imperfect, and still He says you will enlighten the world, and you will add some good flavor to the earth. He places a huge and challenging mission upon us. We may feel it is too much, because He is placing his beloved world in our frail hands. We didn't call ourselves "Light of the world" or "Salt of the earth" Jesus himself says we are light, we are salt. And our challenge is to trust that Jesus knows what He is doing when we calls us, even us, "Light, Salt."

How are we supposed to shine in the world or to give some flavor to the earth? God responds to this question in today's First Reading from Isaiah: "Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless, clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own." Does anyone feel incapable of embracing this mission? Whatever Jesus Christ wants to do in this world, he chooses to do it with people like you and me. We have been given what we need to enlighten the world with good deeds and to add some good taste in the life of those who suffer.

How?

We are to feed those who starve for physical bread or spiritual nourishment; we can give a drink to the person who thirsts for justice, like the poor, a lonely neighbor, or an anxious teacher. We are to clothe with dignity those seen by society as unwanted or unworthy: the foreigner, the immigrant the sick, those who struggle with their sexual orientation, and those who have made poor decisions in life. And we are not to be indifferent towards our suffering brothers and sisters, especially those who endure persecution and hate. Every action of loving kindness is a way to shine in this world. Every action of generous charity is a way to give some good taste to those going through a lot. The Lord is clear, "You are lights, so then, go and shine." "You are salt, so, go and give strength to the broken and a taste of heaven to the lost."

This is our baptismal vocation. And we are to believe in what Jesus tells us today, or we will reject His commandments. Let's pray that we may be open to accept the mission entrusted to us. Let's shine with righteousness and love, let's give some flavor to this world with our generous mercy and charity.

The Universal Prayer  
Sunday 8th February 2026  
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Celebrant:

Sisters and brothers, we are called by Jesus to be a light to the world and salt for the earth. May we live this mission with dedication and trust.

1. May the light of Jesus Christ shine through the ministry of Pope Leo and guide every Christian along the path of holiness.

We pray to the Lord.

2. May the light of Jesus Christ guide world leaders to do away with the clenched fist and wicked word, with a commitment to feeding the hungry and sheltering the homeless.

We pray to the Lord.

3. May the light of Jesus Christ guide more young women and men to be consecrated as religious sisters in the Daughters of St. Mary of Guadalupe, and as priests in the Diocese of Raleigh.

We pray to the Lord.

4. May the salt of Jesus Christ preserve the faith of Christians who are being persecuted for their faith in him.

We pray to the Lord.

5. May the salt of Jesus Christ protect all who are rebuilding their lives after natural disasters of flood and drought, fire and freezing temperatures, earthquakes and volcanic explosions.

We pray to the Lord.

6. May the salt of Jesus Christ give flavor to the bitter lives of all who are victims of human trafficking, child abuse, persecutions, racism, hate and war.

We pray to the Lord.

7. May the light and salt of Jesus Christ lead the departed into the home of heaven so that they live in the joy of the Holy Trinity.

We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

Lord God, true Light, generous, merciful and just, show your tenderness to those who suffer at this time. Through Christ our Lord.