

February 8, 2026

SUNDAY GOSPEL REFLECTION

Dear Brothers and Sisters of St. Joseph Parish,

On this **5th Sunday in Ordinary Time** Jesus calls us to be the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World. This weekend let me focus mostly on the first part of our Call and what's the meaning behind it. When Jesus called his first followers to be the **salt of the earth**, they would have understood it in three different ways, because there were three fundamental uses of salt in the ancient world.

- The first was as a **preservative**. Salt was used to preserve meat and fish from rotting. There was obviously no electricity or refrigeration at the time. If fish or meat was going to last in the sweltering Middle Eastern climate, it needed to be salted. The salt was different than the meat or the fish, pointing to the fact that as Christians we're supposed to be distinct from the world, in it but not of it (Jn 17:11,16). There is also an ancient saying that the animal and fish that were being preserved were already dead; salt would serve almost as a life-preserver, something that would keep the meat or fish filets from likewise dying. Salt, therefore, almost had a sense of the resurrection, giving them life whereas they, like the fish or animals from which they came, should be dead. All of this points to the fact that Jesus calls us to be his instruments to prevent others from going to corruption, from dying, but rather to keep the world and others good.
- The second purpose of salt was to **start a fire**. I apologize if what I'm about to say will gross some people out, but it's key to grasping what Jesus is teaching. At Jesus' time, people would take dried animal waste, mix it with a lot of salt and then light it on fire. The waste alone couldn't be ignited, but when it was mixed with salt, the salt would be able to be lit and then would gradually heat the waste, which kept heat for a really long time. As Salt of the Earth, we're called to be God's instrument for drawing good even out of the evil environments we encounter, to help even those who were given over to wrongdoing to start producing something good. Secondly, salt is supposed to be a fire-starter. We are supposed to be easily lit and capable of heating up others. Jesus is reminding us that by our baptism and ignited by the fire of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation, we're supposed to be entrepreneurs of goodness, the people who turn things around and right side up.
- The third and final function of salt at Jesus' time is one we've maintained today: **to give flavor to the food we consume**. A little bit of salt, we know, can influence a whole meal. This points to the fact that we, as salt of the earth, are called to give flavor so that others can "taste and see the goodness of the Lord" (Ps 34:8). We're supposed to enhance the taste of all human actions by bringing authentic joy. Jesus who came so that his joy might be in us and our joy complete, so that we might have life and have it to the full (Jn 15:11, Jn 10:10). He calls us as salt to show what real joy in life is, to be people who are profoundly happy even in the simplest things, who know they are truly blessed because they live with Jesus who is the cause of our joy. By calling us to be salt, Jesus is saying that we need to bring that joy to the world, especially to those circumstances in which joy is absent.

Jesus today calls us anew to be the Salt of the Earth and the Light of the World. He wants to give us in the Mass all the graces he knows we need not only to prevent our salt from losing its saltiness and our light from going out, but to live up to this vocation and mission. Let us receive that help today and respond with courage. Let us be the salt of the earth and the light of the world today and everyday!



Have a Blessed 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time!

Fr. Rafal Ligenza

Pastor

St. Joseph Catholic Church