

## FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 5, 2017 A

**Opening prayer:** *Jesus, our Brother, you came among us to show us the way to live. You call us to be the salt of the earth and a light for people living in darkness. You call us to work not for our own glory but that our actions may lead others to praise you and follow your ways. May your Holy Spirit be with us now and open our hearts to hear your Word. Amen.*

**Sharing life:** How did you experience God's presence and action in your life this week?

**Facilitator reads focus statement:** The Christian is called to be a light to others (Gospel), especially by reaching out to the person in need (first reading). In the second reading, Paul continues his discussion about divine and human wisdom.

If you had not read the commentary prior to your meeting, consider doing so before or after each Scripture reading.

### FIRST READING: Isaiah 58:7-10

The people of Israel who had been taken into exile have just returned. Their land is devastated and their religious life is in chaos. To seek the Lord's favor, they begin a series of penitential fasts. But it seems their fasting is not the type that pleases the Lord. If they want to please God, they need to practice a religious piety that leads them "to share their bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and homeless, clothe the naked." They also need to "remove from their midst false accusations and malicious speech." If they do these things, their "light shall break forth like the dawn and their wound shall quickly be healed."

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM 112

The theme of light and righteous living is echoed in this Psalm.

### SECOND READING: 1Corinthians 2:1-5

Corinth has many learned people who may have expected Paul to possess great oratorical skills. But Paul lets his audience know that he comes to them, not with fancy verbal tricks, but with humility, fear and trembling. He trusts, not in his own preaching gifts, but in the power of the Holy Spirit to touch hearts. Preaching a crucified Christ may be a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who believe, it is the power of God.

### GOSPEL: Matthew 5:13-16

Commenting on this Gospel, Alice Camille writes:

*The second-century historian Pliny declared that nothing is more useful than salt or sunshine. Yet salt that cannot be tasted and light that cannot be seen are absurdities, devoid of the properties that make them valuable. Jesus warns us that we who call ourselves disciples had better do what Christians do if we are not to be rendered ridiculous.*

*Is there anything more foolish than the preacher who speaks of God's love and treats people with contempt? Or people who pray to the God of mercy while presiding with intolerance and judgment over others? It is equally ludicrous to hear the good news that Jesus proclaims and to quietly deposit it in your purse or back pocket as a possession of your own. Sometimes we behave as though baptism saves our souls and communion sanctifies our hearts, with no responsibility implied. It is not enough to be salt and light! We have to be salt "of the earth," and light "for the world" (God's Word is Alive, p.61).*

### FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. What verse speaks to you most in the first reading? How does the first reading challenge us as a nation, as a Church family, and individually?
2. How prevalent is "malicious speech and false accusations" in our homes, Church and society? Why is this so?
3. What verse speaks to you most in the second reading? Paul came to the proud Corinthians in "weakness, fear and trembling." How hard or easy is it for you to talk about your faith to people, even to a good friend? Why is this so hard for most of us?

4. Name one person whom you consider “salt-of-the-earth” and light in your life. What makes this person salt and light for you?

### **RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD**

Name one way you can act on today’s readings. Fast from seeking material things so that you can have something more to give to the poor. Fast from all forms of malicious speech.

### **CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF PETITION AND INTERCESSION**

Pray for all who daily or weekly work to help the less fortunate and those oppressed by society. ©