

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

February 9, 2020 A

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask him to help us to hear the Word he wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

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.*

Response to last week's Word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the Word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the 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.

Let us listen to God's Word to hear what it is he wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 58:7-10

This reading is from Third Isaiah (chps. 56-66), a post-exilic prophet. 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.

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Matt 5:13-16

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us. Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

GOSPEL: Matthew 5:13-16

Commenting on this Gospel, Fr. Flor McCarthy writes:

Matthew has already introduced Jesus as the light of a darkened world (4:12-16). Now the function of enlightening and guiding a morally confused humanity is shared with his disciples.

Salt and light are powerful images. In the ancient world, salt was one of the most important necessities of life, especially for preserving and seasoning food. So too was light for obvious reasons. Both images are making the same point: Christians are called to

bear witness to Christ before unbelievers through their good deeds. When the disciples stop witnessing through their deeds, they become as useless as salt that has lost its taste or a lamp that doesn't give light.

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FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what word/s or image/s in the readings caught your attention. Did they comfort or challenge you or touch you in some way?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. The first reading speaks about “sharing bread with the hungry and clothing the naked.” If there is a food pantry in your area, do you bring food for the needy? If there is a thrift store in your area, do you donate clothes and other stuff? If you do not support a local food pantry or thrift store, why not?

3. Paul went to the Corinthians “in weakness and in fear.” Have you ever had that experience of approaching someone in weakness and in fear? If so, how was that experience for you?

4. Who is a ‘salt of the earth’ type of person in your life? What does it mean to you concretely to be salt and light in your environment?

5. Name one thing today’s Gospel says to us that we disciples of Jesus need to heed and act on.

RESPONDING TO GOD’S WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week’s readings. Suggestion: Look in your closet and see what the Holy Spirit may lead you to take to the local thrift store.

JOURNALING. *Having listened to God’s Word and listened to others’ reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as he asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

PRAYING WITH THE WORD

FACILITATOR: Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: *Good and caring God, in your word today you call us to be light in the world by sharing our blessings with others. Help me to act on that word by word and deeds.*

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

Facilitator: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

*Jesus, you call us to be salt and light to the world.
Help us to not lose our flavor
nor allow us to hide our light.
Help us daily to give glory
to your heavenly Father.
Amen.*