

Read

Isaiah 58:7-10

Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Matthew 5:13-16

LIVING THE WORD

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 5, 2023



REFLECTION

Have you ever known somebody whose life seemed to enrich everyone they met? In this week's Gospel, Jesus compares his followers to the salt of the earth. Salt doesn't overwhelm or overshadow other flavors; instead, it enhances them, helping us appreciate the goodness of other foods.

Nobody in recent history has become as well known for sharing God's love in this manner as the host of the long-running children's show "Mr. Roger's Neighborhood." In a 2001 commencement address at Marquette University, Fred Rogers described his understanding of his ministry. At the core of his ministry is valuing and appreciating the other person. As the salt of the earth, we aren't here to remake others to be more like us. Instead, we are called to love and draw out what is good in the people around us!



ACTION

We cannot change lives merely by telling people "I like you." We can only bring Christ's love to others if we are open to accepting it for ourselves. St Paul says that nothing can separate us from God's love (Romans 8:38-39). This week, begin each day by thanking Jesus for loving you as you are. Ask him to help you see each person you encounter today through God's eyes, so that you, too, can be a light of God's love in the world.



Fred Rogers' commencement address at Marquette University:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qdcEGvk5764>

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What would it look like if you let your faith inform your choices every day?
- ❖ Do you know anyone who seems to bring out the best in others, in whatever situation they are in?



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FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

LECTIONARY #73A

Isaiah 58:7-10

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Matthew 5:13-16

Prepare for the Word

The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.

Leader's Context

In this week's Gospel, we hear a very well-known passage from Matthew's Gospel. Jesus tells his disciples that they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. He cautions the disciples not to hide their light from the world. When Jesus speaks to his disciples, he also speaks to us, using these same words. We are modern-day disciples of Jesus, following in his footsteps, learning how to be in the world. We must live in a way that shows we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

Q FOCUS: As Jesus' modern-day disciples, he speaks to us today. Let your light shine for the world to see.

Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week, we celebrate the feast day of St. Paul Miki and companions on February 6. In 1587, the Japanese leader, Hideyoshi, banished Christians and burned many of their churches. Priests and missionaries went into hiding. Paul Miki was born into a wealthy Japanese family and became a member of the Jesuits. He and his companions were killed because they were Christians in Nagasaki on February 5, 1597, at a place now named, "The Holy Mountain." Paul Miki and his companions are martyrs, which means that they were put to death because

of their religious beliefs. Christianity continued to be outlawed in Japan until the mid-1800s. Yet, thousands of Christians had continued to practice their faith in secret over those years.

Church Teaching Connection

"So it is that that messianic people, although it does not actually include all men, and at times may look like a small flock, is nonetheless a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race. Established by Christ as a communion of life, charity and truth, it is also used by Him as an instrument for the redemption of all, and is sent forth into the whole world as the light of the world and the salt of the earth" (*Lumen gentium*, 9).

Hear the Word

Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.

Gospel Acclamation

Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.

Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Matthew 5:13-16

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.

Jesus said to his disciples: "You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it

under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”

Reader: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Everyone may be seated.

Reflect on the Word

When beginning the reflection and discussion about today's readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection:

The phrase “salt of the earth” is often used to describe people who are down-to-earth and humble. Humility demands that a person know his or her limitations and also helps them recognize that they are completely dependent upon God. The salt of the earth is a necessary staple, a simple ingredient to season food. Jesus tells his disciples that they are the salt of the earth. They are humble, regular men who do not have flashy possessions or impressive jobs. The men whom Jesus calls as his disciples are simple men: fishermen, tax collectors, and other ordinary people.

► **Who are modern-day examples of people who are the “salt of the earth”? How does society view them or react to their actions?**

We remember too that whenever Jesus speaks to his disciples, he speaks to us as well. We are Jesus' modern-day disciples. We have been called to follow closely behind him and in his footsteps. So, today, Jesus speaks to us as well. Jesus tells his disciples that they are necessary to his mission; he needs his disciples to spread his message of love, compassion, and forgiveness to the world. You are also integral to the mission of Christ.

► **How are you an integral part of the mission of Christ?**

Jesus explains the mission of the disciples further: his disciples are the light of the world.

► **What comes to mind when you hear this? Any other Bible stories? Anything you learned as a child?**

Imagine you are in a dark room. Now, imagine lighting a candle in that room. The light *always* dispels the darkness. Christ dispelled the darkness with his final act of sacrifice. This might sound contradictory; we often associate someone dying with their light going out. But this is not true of Christ's death. Yes, Jesus died. But the light of God's love and his eternal being was never extinguished because in his act of sacrifice, he set the world ablaze with the enormity of his loving act.

With so much pain and suffering around us, we need to testify to this light every single day. We experienced a serious darkness in our world: the pandemic. We were called to care for our neighbors, our grandparents, deliver groceries, and write cards to those in nursing homes. You were the light in the dark and scary world by your actions, FaceTime calls, and Zoom classes. You show others that there are alternatives to violence, hate, aggression, and disappointment.

► **What are some ways you were the light for others during the pandemic? How was someone else the light for you during that time?**

We are called to be the light of Christ. We must remember that we were given the light of Christ at our baptism, and we must continue to shine with that light in all aspects of our lives: at home, in the classroom, on the sports field, in the rehearsal room. Wherever we go, we shine the light of Christ for all to see.

Wrapping It Up

Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 120.

Even as teenagers, you have the ability to bring light into the world.

Where do you see darkness in your life, school, wider community?

How might you bring light to the world, allowing everyone to see?

Act on the Word

The Light of the World

For this activity, you will need a candle with a candle holder, a lighter or matches, and a prayer. An electric candle can be used as an alternative to an open flame. Also, prepare a presentation with photos of different items that provide light, such as a lighthouse, flashlight, candle, sunrise, and so on.

Assign one person to be the candle bearer. Ask them to step out of the room with the unlit candle. As much as possible, darken the room where the students are gathered. Then help the young person with the unlit candle to light the candle outside of the room. Instruct him or her to step into the darkened room with the lit candle. Prepare a prayer that can be read by a student or leader as the candle is placed in the center of the room.

After two or three minutes of quiet prayer, turn the lights on. Ask the students what the experience was like:

- * How did it feel to be sitting in complete darkness? Have you ever felt that way emotionally or spiritually in your life?
- * What sorts of feelings and thoughts did you have as the candle was brought into the room?
- * Where is the darkness in another person's life? How might you bring the light into that darkness, to dispel the darkness for another?
- * In what other areas of your life could you bring the light for others to see? Family, school, in the wider community?

Show the teens your prepared presentation that includes various images of light. Discuss with them the different kinds of light in the world and how each item functions. Invite the students to think about how they function in the world: would they consider themselves a sun, a small candle flickering, a lighthouse, or some other light emitting object?

Closing Prayer

*You have sent your Son, O God,
to be a light for the nations
and a savior of all people.
Grant to us an untiring spirit
that we might transform the darkness
of the world by actions that are just
and merciful.
May our light reflect that of your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.*

For Next Sunday

To help teens prepare for next Sunday's Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at www.ltp.org/lwgr. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.