

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 8, 2026



REFLECTION

During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus compares his followers to salt and light. He says we are like salt, meant to preserve goodness and bring flavor to life. However, just as salt can lose its flavor, we lose our ability to improve the world when we water down our values or grow tired of doing good.

Jesus also calls us the light of the world, emphasizing our role in being examples of truth and righteousness in our daily lives. We're like a city on a hill, meant to stand out and be visible. Our faith shouldn't be hidden but should be clearly expressed in our words and actions so that others might come to see God at work in the world.

The message is clear: live authentically, be a positive influence, and let your actions glorify God. Using our unique gifts and talents, we take up Christ's call to be his witnesses in the world.



ACTION

Grab some colorful sticky notes and write uplifting messages on them. Stick these words of kindness, inspiration, and gratitude anonymously around your school and at home. Include notes of thanks to those who you see as sources of salt and light in your community.

“All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.”

—St. Francis of Assisi



? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Reflect on the past week: How were you salt? How were you light?
- ❖ How can we shine our light without seeking attention for ourselves?



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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

This week's reading about the way we are called to be salt and light comes from the Sermon on the Mount, an extended series of teachings that Jesus gives in Matthew 5:1—7:29. Though brief, today's passage is an important lesson on how our actions should reflect our faith. Reflecting on the inherent benefits and dangers of salt and light help us understand better the way Jesus' metaphors apply to our lives. These items can be transformative to the things they interact with, but too much of them can cause harm. When we use our gifts at the service of God, we can be salt and light in their best sense. When we hide our gifts or use them to focus on ourselves, our works stop being effective for the building up of God's kingdom.

Q FOCUS: *We can use our gifts to build up the kingdom of God.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

On February 10, we honor the life of St. Scholastica. She was the twin sister of St. Benedict (the man who founded the Benedictine order and is known as the father of Western monasticism). She founded her own community of women religious close to her brother's monastery. She and Benedict would come together once a year to pray and discuss spiritual matters. On February 11, we celebrate Our Lady of

Lourdes. The Virgin Mary appeared several times to a teenaged peasant girl, St. Bernadette Soubirous, in Lourdes, France in 1858. Mary instructed Bernadette to dig near the grotto in which she appeared to her. Bernadette did and a spring of water came up out of the ground. This water provided healing to those who bathed in it or drank it. It is still a popular pilgrimage site today.

Church Teaching Connection

"The light of our faith, in giving of oneself, does not fade but strengthens. However it can weaken if we do not nourish it with love and with charitable works. In this way the image of *light* complements that of *salt*. . . . Salt is an ingredient which, while it gives flavor, keeps food from turning and spoiling. . . . Thus, Christians' mission in society is that of giving 'flavor' to life with the faith and the love that Christ has given us, and at the same time, keeping away the contaminating seeds of selfishness, envy, slander, and so on" (Pope Francis, Angelus Message, February 5, 2017).

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:

In today's Gospel, Jesus compares us to two items that we can easily find and are important parts of our life: salt and light.

► **What are some of the uses of salt? How does it benefit or help us?**

Salt not only adds flavor to food, but it preserves food as well. This was especially helpful in Jesus' time when they didn't have refrigeration. Salt can help keep us safe when roads are icy and can be used medicinally to soothe sore muscles and help heal various types of wounds.

► **What are some ways that we can preserve our faith? How can we help or aid others in their faith journey?**

► **What are some of the uses of light? How does it benefit or help us?**

Light allows us to see, which can prevent us from encountering dangerous situations (like stumbling over something when the lights are out or encountering an unsavory character in a dark alley). Light also keeps us safe on the roadways. Light helps things to grow.

► **How can our faith help us to see situations more clearly? How can it help us grow?**

While salt and light are both helpful and necessary in our lives, too much light or salt can be harmful. If a plant that does not need a lot of light gets too much, it can die. Bright lights can impair our vision. Too much salt in the foods and drinks we consume could lead to high blood pressure.

Light and salt can transform plants, food, and our lives for the good, but we also need to find a proper balance of them. Jesus always points us to transformation and balance in our lives. He wants us to use our gifts to bring about transformations in the world, so that it is being built up into the kingdom of God. However, if using our gifts becomes more about us and our egos, we stop being good witnesses of God's love. If we overextend ourselves trying to help and don't take care of ourselves, we might miss out on opportunities God is calling us to.

► **Has using your gifts ever caused you stress or even exhaustion? What are some things you can do to maintain a good balance when using your gifts in the world?**

Jesus doesn't want our light to dim or our salt to lose its flavor, so we must be careful to preserve the gifts that we possess. At the same time, we can't keep them hidden because then we aren't using the tools God has given us to give him glory. We all have unique gifts to offer the world and to use in our work to bring about God's kingdom.

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 132.

Jesus uses ordinary items to teach us about our work of discipleship.

Jesus wants us to use our gifts in the world to bring about the kingdom of heaven on earth.

In order to be effective in our Christian witness, we need to take care of our own "light" and "salt."

Act on the Word

Salt and Light Tag

For this activity, you will need a saltshaker (one with a closed lid would be ideal), a flashlight, and a large room that has some hiding spaces and can be somewhat darkened.

Before you gather with the teens, set up a large room for a game of tag. There should be places the teens can hide, but also plenty of space to run around. In the room, you should also have a chair or a certain area marked off as home base. Place a saltshaker on a chair or table that is somewhat far away from home base, but that is still clearly visible to the players.

When everyone has gathered, explain to the teens that this is a variation on the game of tag. The goal of the game is to get the saltshaker and make it to home base without being tagged out. The player who is “It” will tag other players out by shining the beam of a flashlight on them. This is why being able to dim the lights in your space is helpful. If a player is tagged by the flashlight, he or she must sit out for the remainder of the game.

To start the game, select a player to be “It.” Have that person close his or her eyes or move to a separate room and count to ninety. Everyone else will find places to hide in the main space and then the lights will be dimmed. When the “It” player is finished counting or returns to the room, play begins. The player who is “It” uses the flashlight to tag others and can also use it to search for players. The players in hiding should try to sneak out of their hiding places and run to grab the salt without being tagged by the flashlight. The player who has the saltshaker must make it to home base with the

saltshaker to win. If that person is tagged while holding the saltshaker, he or she puts it down immediately and goes to sit out. Another player must try to get the saltshaker to home base. The game continues until everyone is out or someone successfully makes it to home base with the saltshaker.

At the end of the game, remind the teens that, like in the game when they were trying to get the salt to a specific location, we have to keep trying to bring our faith to the world. The light from the flashlight helped the player who was “It” find and tag others—so too can our faith shine a light in the darkness of the world to find others who are seeking Christ and bring them out of the darkness.

Closing Prayer

*Good and gracious God,
you are steadfast in your care for us
and call us to be a light where
darkness reigns.
Keep us mindful of our call
so that we may serve you
in all whom we encounter.
Through Christ our Lord.
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.