

Bishop's Reflections, Feb. 5, 2020:

Salt and Light: it is hard to believe I am either. Salt is used for healing, seasoning and for preserving. Light is meant to reveal truth, wisdom and understanding. Each is associated with the Lord himself. And yet, in today's Gospel, he attributes them to us. "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world." (Mt. 5: 13, 14). And, immediately, a conversation ensues.

We begin by refuting his statement. "How can I be salt?" "How can I be light?" It is easier for us to object, than to accept. And herein lies the conversation that God longs to have with us. For his Living Word, contained in the scriptures, is not meant to remain mere words on the page, but an encounter with the Living God who longs to speak to us.

"You are the salt of the earth... You are light of the world," he again insists. This time he may bring us to see what these words mean in light of his own ministry, both then and now. Jesus did not just come to heal a particular leper or forgive a specific sinner in the days of the apostles but he continues that self-same ministry today often quite independent of our own doings. There are many times that the pain is so deep, the wound so great that only his word, his love and his mercy have the power to heal or have the ability to lead someone to God's truth. Let's face it, if there is any forgiveness in the world, any healing, any conversion of heart, are they not at his bidding, are they not because of his persistence? Those who claim that "God is dead" are quite mistaken. They have not pondered the inner workings of God and the effect of his grace in our day to day life.

"You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world," he will not let us off the hook. Clearly this time, he wants to affirm something in us. So often we believe that God, who is all powerful and all perfect, looks upon us with a type of contempt. That, somehow, because we are less than perfect and prone to sin, that we are not good enough and can never rise to the occasion. Satan has no trouble in playing on these sentiments. After all, in leading us into sin, he would prefer that we would forget the delight God took in creating us. In telling us that we are salt and that we are light, Jesus is reminding us that we were created as "very good".

“You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world,” he still has more to tell us. Aside from the fact that he longs to heal our own self-image and affirm a basic truth about us, he is also extending an invitation to participate in his mission. To be salt and to be light; it is never without him. And yet, it is his call to us, our vocation, to be an extension of all that he does and so to welcome the Kingdom of God. And so we are placed in families, in schools and workplaces, in neighbourhoods and in our faith communities and he tells us: “You are salt... You are light... Be salt... Be light. Be conduits of my healing, forgiveness, generosity and self-giving.” This is far better than the alternative: salt without flavour, lights hidden under bushel baskets.

God longs to speak to us in and through his word. He has the same power to speak to us in and through the sacraments and in and through one another. I still may have many more questions in regards to how, what and when, and I may still wonder if I am really the person that is suited for the task at hand. But that is a matter of further dialogue and reflection. As it is, there is no doubt that he longs to be in a personal relationship with each one of us, as well as with the larger groupings to which we belong. The ball is in our court: “how do we respond and enter into dialogue with him?”