

A man whose brother had just died went to his pastor and asked him to tell everyone at the funeral that his brother was a saint. The pastor knew that those brothers were both crooked and corrupt men,...so he told the man he couldn't lie and tell people that his brother was a saint. ...But the man was very persistent. He offered to donate \$10,000 to the church if the pastor would simply say those words about his brother...Now this put the pastor in a very tough spot.. He was a man of great integrity,.. but that money could get his parish a lot closer to its CMA goal...And so on the day of the funeral,..the pastor stood by the man's casket and said, "This man was a dirty, rotten sinner, but - compared to his brother - he was a saint." {Now this wasn't Fr George, but it could've been...So just in case, let's up our CMA pledges, ok.}.

We all want the priest to say nice things about us at our funeral – right?...We love compliments – especially if we're around to hear them... In today's Gospel, Jesus is delivering His Sermon on the Mount, to a large crowd,...and when His disciples come up to Him,...He pays them two compliments...1st, He tells them they are "the salt of the earth," and then "the light of the world." ...Jesus didn't hand out compliments lightly, so He must have believed that His disciples – His followers - were indeed "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."... His words likewise apply to you and me if we are truly His disciples – His followers...We too are the salt of the earth and the light of the world,...By calling us "salt and light,"... Jesus is saying that if we have truly made Him the "Lord and ruler of our lives,"...then we have what it takes to make a difference in the world, to have a positive effect on the world.

So, how can we as disciples go and be salt and light and make a real difference in this big world ? ...Well, since I only have a few minutes,...I'm going to focus on what I think Jesus expects us to be and do as "light of the world." (*I'll save "salt of the earth" for next time.*)...Ok, now, in John's Gospel, ..Jesus is called the "true light" who came to enlighten a world living in darkness,...a light that the darkness could not overcome,...a light it could not extinguish even by killing Him,...because He left behind His Church, His disciples,..you and me..to bring His light into that darkness...So, what does it mean for us to shine, to bring His light into the world?

Well, it means at least 3 things..**The 1st is:** we have to be COUNTER-CULTURAL; we have to be different. ...We live in a dark, sinful world that continues down a path that's taking it further and further from God...In John's Gospel, Jesus told His disciples: "You are **in** the world, but not **of** the world."...St. Paul tells us, "Do not conform to the standards of this world, but let God change the way you think."...To be a light of the world, ..to make a difference, we must conform **NOT** to the ways of the world,.. but to the ways of God. ...It's like this:

The world says, "If someone wrongs you,.. get back at them. Get even." ...God says, "Forgive one another as I have forgiven you." ...The world says " abortion is a

fundamental right.” ...God says, “ I formed you in your mother’s womb.”....The world says, “It’s your body...You can do whatever you want to it.”...G. says “your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit...The world says “you have to look out for number one.”...God says “Look out for the lost and the least.” ...The world offers money, sex and power as the prizes we should pursue. ...God offers only one prize: eternity in heaven....When we follow God’s way and not the world’s way, we will be a light to the world...We will impact the world for good.

The 2nd thing is: We’ve gotta put ourselves out there...Jesus said that we can’t hide our light under a bushel...Our light has to give light to everything and everyone around it,...especially in places where there are people living in darkness, ...people who really need to know the light of Jesus in their life....And there are a lot of them out there...We don’t have to look very far to find someone who is hurting,...someone grieving, ...someone anxious, fearful, ...someone lonely, unloved, without friends, ...someone losing hope,...someone angry at God,... someone tortured with guilt. ...So many troubled souls shrouded in darkness who need to see and feel the warm light of Jesus. ...And **IT IS TO you and ME**, that Jesus holds out a flaming candle and says, “Here, take my light to my troubled people...Tell them of my love and care for them. ...Tell them I am with them in their suffering and pain,...Tell them to trust that I will never abandon them, ...Tell them of my forgiveness and mercy...And let your words,...your compassion,...your kindness... brighten their darkness and give them strength and hope.” ...

This is what Jesus calls us to do as a light of the world...to put ourselves out there to help people in need of His light....And it isn’t always gonna be easy...Sometimes it will be inconvenient. Sometimes it will be awkward and uncomfortable...And like Moses,.. we will say, “Lord, Lord,...please send someone else...I can’t do it...I won’t know what to say.”...And as He said to Moses, the Lord will say to us, “Don’t worry, I’ll tell you what to say.”...We have to trust that Jesus will lead us to people He wants us to help, and will give us what we need to do it.

Ok, here’s the 3rd thing: we have to recognize that the light we bring into the world by following God’s way,.. the light we bring to people who are living in darkness,...is NOT our light...We are NOT the source of the light...We reflect the light of Jesus Christ – the true light of the world - just as the moon reflects the light of the sun...We reflect the life- transforming light of Jesus when we answer “Yes” to His call to be His light in the world....And the good works we do are not done to make ourselves look good...As Jesus tells us in the Gospel,...our good works are not for our glory, but to give glory to our heavenly Father.

My friends, Jesus is the true light – the brilliant sun - that can overcome the darkness of the world, ...but it can only happen if those of us in the world who are His disciples, His followers, take His light into the places and lives where it is so greatly needed When enough Christians answer the call to be a light to the world,...the world will

listen. The world will see. The world will not be able to ignore us....And the world will change. ..It will change.

In a few minutes, as we partake of the Body and Blood of Christ, let us ask the Lord to strengthen us in our commitment to be bearers of His light to the world. AMEN.