

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

By Al Mansfield

Isaiah 58: 7-10

Psalm 112

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

Matthew 5:13-16

SALT AND LIGHT

"Major in majors, not in minors." "Get your priorities straight." How often our Scripture readings hammer home this theme. This Sunday is no different. Our Christian life is all about loving God and loving our neighbor. And we can't say that we love God whom we don't see if we don't love our brother whom we do see (cf.1 John 4:20).

ISAIAH

The prophet Isaiah lived in the 8th century BC but parts of the Book of Isaiah have a later date. Today's reading comes from the second section of Isaiah, which is dated in the 6th century BC. The passage from chapter 58 is a classic description of love of neighbor being an expression of our love for God. Actually, the Last Judgment scene in Matthew 25:31-46 seems similar to this passage from Isaiah.

The message is simple: if we care for the poor and disadvantaged among us, God will take care of us and shine his light upon us.

The Responsorial, Psalm 112, speaks about the just man shining his light in the darkness around him.

GOSPEL

Our gospel today is a continuation of the Sermon on the Mount in St. Matthew. Jesus calls his disciples "salt of the earth." and "light of the world."

Salt has been a prized commodity from earliest times for food taste as well as food preservation. It became an important article of trade in the ancient world and nations have even gone to war over it. The word "salary" derives from the word for salt. So, to be named "salt of the earth" is a daunting call and challenge.

In the Alleluia Verse before the gospel, Jesus proclaims that he is the "light of the world" (John 8:12) But here in the gospel reading, Jesus calls his disciples to also be "light of the world." The whole point of letting our light shine before others is so that they may glorify our Father in heaven. The light in us should lead others to the Light of the World - Jesus.

1 CORINTHIANS

In our second reading, we learn some interesting and important points about the ministry of St. Paul. First, he spoke only of Jesus Christ and him crucified. Second, he came "in weakness and fear and much trembling..." Third, he depended on "a demonstration of the Spirit and power."

Paul states that he wanted the faith of the Corinthians not to rest on human wisdom but on God's power. Would that we could return to that in our day!

GOD AND NEIGHBOR

The two great commandments: love God and love your neighbor - the vertical (God) and horizontal (neighbor).

It seems our human tendency is to emphasize one to the neglect of the other. Only the grace of the Holy Spirit can help us fulfill both. If we are to truly fulfill the Scriptural mandate to be "salt and light," we desperately need the Holy Spirit!