

5A 2017 SML  
MT 5:13-16

If the point of life on earth is to become the kind of people who can live with God forever in heaven, to be the kind of people who can bring a little bit of heaven right here on earth, then one of the first places we should look for clues is the Sermon on the Mount, which one Catholic moral theologian calls a “charter for the Christian life.” And the first place we should look in the Sermon on the Mount is the Beatitudes (which was last Sunday’s gospel), for “beatitude,” or “real happiness,” is what living with God means.

The Beatitudes are sometimes understood to be the preamble to the real meat and potatoes of the Sermon on the Mount, in that, in the Beatitudes speak to the multitudes, while the verses that follow speak to us:

From Blessed are “they” who yada yada yada, to “You” are the salt of the earth. “You” are the light of the world.

Why? Because Our Blessed Lord mandated that we make a difference in the world.

- ✓ You are the salt of the earth.
- ✓ You are the light of the world.
- ✓ A city set on a hill.

In other words, we need to be conspicuous. We can't be missed, which is completely counter-cultural. It's the difference between "freedom of worship" which means you are free to "worship,"

- ✓ over there
- ✓ in that building
- ✓ behind those closed doors

as opposed to "freedom of religion," which means you are free to live your religion in the public square. You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world says, "NO!" Take your religion, your gospel way of life, into the public square. And frankly, for us as Catholics, freedom of worship is synonymous to freedom of religion, because for a Catholic, worship is more than praising, singing and praying inside a Church. Worship is a lifestyle of:

- ✓ enjoying God,
- ✓ loving God and
- ✓ giving ourselves to be used for His purposes,

**IN THE WORLD!**

Why? Because that is exactly what the Apostles, as salt of the earth, did. They turned the world upside down. So when Our Blessed Lord said to His disciples, and - because we too

are His disciples - He also says to us today: 'You are the salt of the earth'. What picture was He painting in that illustration?

Well, the first thing I want you to note is the reason there needs to be salt. If you go into the Old Testament, you find that the sacrifices there were never ever made with leaven. Leaven was symbolic of sin (hence the term “the leaven of the Pharisees” (MT 16:6) - and never was leaven to enter into any sacrifice, but the sacrifices were always to have salt within them. Leaven is sin - but salt is:

- ✓ something that is pure,
- ✓ something that is white,
- ✓ something that is holy,
- ✓ something that is acceptable unto God.

We find that throughout the whole of Scripture, salt becomes a symbol of the covenant between God and His people. In Numbers 18:19: “This is a ‘covenant of salt’ to last forever,” and in 2Chronicles 13:5: “Did you not know that the Lord, the God of Israel, has given the kingdom of Israel to David forever, to him and to his sons, by a ‘covenant of salt’?” In ancient times, in the secular world, salt was a symbol of fidelity, purity and friendship.

A second reason is salt was used as a way of to keep food fresh. In the ancient world there were no ice-making machines, there were no refrigerators, so the only way they had to preserve meat was to salt it down, rub salt into it, or soak it down in a saline solution. Without salt, food would decay. Food would corrupt.

Since the time of Noah, the world has been corrupt.

- ✓ you have Abraham, who knew the corruption of Sodom and Gomorrah, yet he prayed that the city might be spared.
- ✓ you have Joseph in Egypt
- ✓ you have Daniel in Babylon
- ✓ you have Paul in Rome.

All of these men, in the midst of a decaying world that was falling apart around them, were divine salt for good! Granted, their ministries did not prevent the ultimate collapse of the nations - but let me say this: they left everyone in those nations without an excuse.

I read a great book entitled Called to be Holy by Timothy Cardinal Dolan. It's a book on the priesthood. His Eminence warns against those priests who are so afraid of losing their popularity and unsettling people that they turn into fluffy, least-

common denominator Christians. It was Christ who said, “You are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world! Our Blessed Lord has no time for least common denominator priests. The same thing can be said about least common denominator Christians, because, as a result of least common denominator Christians:

Christianity in modern America is, (as Dolan says) innocuous. It tends to be easy, upbeat, convenient, and compatible. It does not require self-sacrifice, discipline, humility, an otherworldly outlook, a zeal for souls, a fear as well as love of God. There is little guilt and no punishment, and the payoff in heaven is virtually certain. The faith has been overwhelmed by the culture, producing what is rightly called cultural Christianity.

Christians, who model Our Blessed Lord, who came to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world” are counter cultural. So what he said about priests could just as easily be said about counter-cultural Christians:

- ✓ In a society of violence and revenge, counter cultural Christians stand for peace and forgiveness;
- ✓ In a world satiated with sex, counter cultural Christians are modest and chaste;
- ✓ In a society frantic to spend, to own and to hoard, counter cultural Christians model simplicity and sharing;

- ✓ In a country that blames the poor, counter cultural Christians urge care and justice.
- ✓ In a world that divinizes the will, and holds that true happiness comes only when you have the license to do what you want, when you want, with whom and to whom you want, how you want, and where you want; and that any restraint to a higher authority is unjust, oppressive and to be defied;
- ✓ In a society that urges us to keep all options open, not to be tied down, to always be ready to move on to something more attractive, to place conditions on all promises, to protect our own interests above all else, to move up and make more, and to demand rights and resist restrictions

St. Paul says in Romans, “Do not conform yourself to this age.”

(12:2) In society, we need to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Why, because if we are not affecting the world, then the world is affecting us. If we are not salting the world, then the world is rotting us.