

FEBRUARY 9, 2020
Sunday of the 5th Week in OT
Matthew 5: 13-16

BE THE SALT AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD

On 18 October 2015, Pope Francis canonized four new saints including two married Roman Catholic French laypeople. “Louis and Zélie (Marie-Azélie) Martin, the parents of five Roman Catholic nuns including St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the Little Flower. They are the only spouses in history to be canonized in the same ceremony, and their feast day will be July 13th, the day of their wedding anniversary. We know of Thérèse’s great love for Jesus, her desire to do all the little things we do every day intentionally out of love of God. Her parents Zélie and Louis did everything motivated by Christ’s love and kept Christ at the center of their family life as they experienced many challenges, struggles, and failures, and this is what makes them so great. Louis and Zélie show their greatness in their loving, in loving each other, and in loving their children. The first gift they gave to their children was their love for each other. Thérèse and her sisters experienced that love every day. They felt their parents’ union in faith and prayer, their longing for to be with each other. On a business trip, Louis expressed longing in a letter to Zélie: ‘My dear Friend, I won’t be able to arrive in Alençon until Monday. It seems like a long time to me, and I’m longing to be with you. I kiss you with all my heart, while waiting for the happiness of being with you again. Your husband and true friend, who loves you for life.” (*Archives du Carmel de Lisieux, October 8, 1863*). When Zélie took the little girls to Lisieux to see their relatives, she wrote to Louis: ‘I’m with you in spirit all day, and I say to myself, “Now he must be doing such and such a thing.” I’m longing to be near you, my dear Louis. I love you with all my heart, and I feel my affection so much more when you’re not here with me. It would be

impossible for me to live apart from you.” (*A Call to a Deeper Love: The Family Correspondence of the Parents of Saint Therese of the Child Jesus (1864-1885) p135, August 31 1873*)¹

My brothers and sisters, we are gathered here at this Eucharistic celebration because you heard and answered the call and invitation of Jesus Christ to become His people, His body, His presence in the world.

In most of the teaching of Jesus, he used ordinary images to convey extraordinary truths for us to think, transform and change our way of life. And in our gospel for today, we are called to be the salt of the earth through giving flavour by our presence and light of the world through helping and guiding those people around us.

Salt was a prized goods in the ancient world. They traded with it and before the invention of electricity and refrigeration it preserved food from going bad and being spoiled. It also gave flavor to food. “Jesus used the image of salt to describe the transforming effect of God's work in our lives - and how the Holy Spirit wants to work through us to bring the power and blessing of God's kingdom to others. As salt purifies, preserves, and produces rich flavor for our daily food, we, too, as disciples of Jesus, are salt for the world of human society. The Lord wants to work in and through us to purify, preserve, and spread the rich flavor of God's kingdom everywhere - his "kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).² He warns us also not to lose our saltiness by not allowing the worldly things, sins, and the Evil One to destroy, ruin and corrupt us. He wants us to maintain, safeguard and preserve our saltiness through our good works, living virtuously and always reject evil and sins not only for own selves but for others.

¹ frtommylane.com

² dailyscripture.servantsoftheword.org

Also, Jesus used the image of light and a lamp which in the ancient world served a essential function, like they do today. People able to see and work in the dark and to avoid stumbling. Jewish people even during the time of Jesus understood light as a manifestation, symbol and expression of the innermost magnificence, beauty, integrity, truth, and goodness of God. In Psalm 36:9, it says: "In his light we see light" and in Psalm 119:105: "His word is a lamp that guides our steps." The grace of God does not only illumine the darkness in once life but also fills us with spiritual light, happiness, joy, and serenity. By this, Jesus is using the image of a lamp for us to live in the light of His truth and love. "Just as natural light illumines the darkness and enables one to see visually, so the light of Christ shines in the hearts of believers and enables us to see the heavenly reality of God's kingdom. Our mission is to be light-bearers of Jesus Christ so that others may see the truth of the gospel and be freed from the blindness of sin and deception."³

So, my sisters and brothers, like Louis and Zélie Martin, let us be the salt and the light of the world by living the Word of God every day. Let us do simple things in an extraordinary way, that is with love, compassion and humility. Make us shine to the world by our good works.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus, you guide me by the light of your saving love. May my heart and mind be filled with your light and truth so that I may be free me from the blindness of sin and deception and to your ways clearly and understand your will for my life. May I radiate your light and truth to others in word and deed. Amen."

³ dailyscripture.servantsoftheword.org