

FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – A; Feb. 8th 2026
Isaiah 58:7-10; 1Corinthians 2:1-5; Matthew 5:13-16

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

The preparation and taste of dishes vary from country to country. For instance there is no comparison between American food and Indian food, but we have something common in the food which **is salt**. We may prepare any dish with all the ingredients, but if the salt is lacking in it, though prepared well, it would never give any taste at all. So we can say that a pinch of salt adds or boosts the taste of the dish.

In today's gospel passage, which is part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, **"You are the salt of the earth. He continues, "You are the light of the world."** When Jesus asks his followers to be the salt he means that we should be the agents to add a little taste to the people with whom we live who have lost their taste of life; we should give a little light or guidance to people who are in darkness. In other words, God has given us this life in the world to do something good for all those who are in need of our help; **they may be our own family members, neighbors, the homebound, the sick, the poor, the lonely, and the orphans.** We all can add a little joy to these people in different ways, by our smiles, kind words, a short visit and a little monetary support where needed. These kind acts look very simple and also we all can do them without the involvement of thousand dollars. But they make a big difference in the society.

The Benedictine nun Joan Chittister says, "Small actions in social life, small efforts in the spiritual life, and small moments in the personal life, all of them become great in the long run. But all of them look like little or nothing in themselves." Mother Theresa is the best example of that. In 1950 she landed in Calcutta single handed, without money and not even a house to live in. But she wanted to make a little difference in the streets and slums of Calcutta. Mother Theresa says about her humanitarian work, **"I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."** She started it by picking up the first dying man from the street and nursing him in her own little rented house. Thus she cast the first stone and the ripples of which spread all over the world. She never waited for big things to do which could draw the media attention; rather she believed only in doing small things. She says, **"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love. It is not how much you give but how much love we put into giving."**

Prophet Isaiah, in today's first reading, asks the people of Israel to do the small charitable things for their fellow Israelites, thus they could boost a little joy in them. The context of Isaiah's instruction is the home coming of the people of Israel after 50 years of

Babylonian exile. Most of the people who returned to the homeland were the children and grandchildren of the originally exiled. When they came back, nothing was there and they had to rebuild everything from the scraps. Naturally in the struggle of survival, people became selfish and uncharitable. The needs of the weak, the sick and the poor were neglected. This is the situation where Isaiah asks the people to do simple things like feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and sheltering the homeless. According to the Prophet those acts of kindness would please God and He would listen to their plea. Here Isaiah does not demand very challenging tasks rather small things, easy to do. Isaiah says, **“If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then light shall rise for you in darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday.”**

The world religions believe unanimously that simple charitable acts only will save your life. Jesus is very emphatic about this in his parable of the Last Judgment in Mt. 25:31ff. Here we are judged by the King based on what difference we have made in the life of a needy person. He says, **“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink,”** and he continues. At the end he affirms, **“Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.”** Jesus is asking us to do simple things to add a little joy and difference to our brothers and sisters who are suffering and to see Jesus in them.

Today we live in a fast moving world where we don't have time for anyone else except for ourselves. Unfortunately, in the modern age people are least bothered about what happens to the person next door. Mother Theresa says again, **“The greatest disease in the West today is not TB or leprosy; it is being unwanted, unloved, and uncared for.”** Perhaps there are many people in our community who are suffering from poverty; poverty not for food, but for love, for a short visit, for encouraging words and support. Only you and I can make a difference in those people. While we have our life remaining let us do something for others by which we will be saved. Finally I would like to quote the words of William Penn, the founder of the state of Penselvenya; he says, **“I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore, there be any kindness I can show, or any good thing I can do to any fellow being, let me do it now, and not defer or neglect it, as I shall not pass this way again.”**