

## 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday A (Matt 5:13-16)

Sometimes I feel like St. Paul must have felt when he came before the Corinthians, proclaiming the Good News, “not with sublimity of words or of wisdom. I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, proclaiming the mystery of God,” the mystery of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of Spirit and power, so that “your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on the power of God.”

And how do we, each one of us, speak of Jesus Christ in the midst of our own weakness, fear, and trembling? How are we, each one of us, “salt of the earth, light of the world, a city set on a hill,” proclaiming the saving message of Jesus to a world thirsty for that message, yet often unwilling to hear it? Our power is in the Lord Jesus, just as it was with Paul.

And how do we speak of Jesus Christ? How do we project our light into the world? We share our bread with the hungry, we shelter the oppressed and homeless, we clothe the naked, and we don't turn our backs on our own, as Isaiah puts it in our first reading. We reach out to those in need as we find opportunity each day, each in our own way, and in doing so we don't turn our backs on our own, on our families. We rather nurture each other, husbands, wives, children, growing in trust and love, putting aside fear and being a light to one another and to the world. For we do this in the power of God.

As Adam and Eve were being driven from the Garden of Eden, Adam may have remarked to Eve, “My dear, we are entering into a period of transition.” This understatement could be taken as a motto of the Church today, fifty-two years after the Second Vatican Council. Although there are great signs of vitality, freedom, a new interest in Scripture, and a remarkable persistence of prayer and faith, there is also to be found in our Church many complaints about poor liturgies and preaching, the alienation of young people, the breakdown of families, a severe decline in the numbers of priests, religious and seminarians, and a thirst for community not often being met in many of our parish churches. The world around us is beset with staggering problems of political and corporate deception, greed, and dishonesty. We experience tribal conflicts and violence in many parts of the world. Violence and terrorism are afflicting our own country. Injustice and persecution produce poverty, homelessness, and unemployment. This is the church and world in a period of transition to which we are called to minister, each one of us, and to let our light shine brightly, even in our own weakness and with fear and much trembling, for we are empowered by the Lord who loves us more than we could possibly imagine. Let us remember him and give thanks as he asked us to do. Amen.

Al Grosskopf, S.J.