

HOMILY for 5th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's Readings talk about being the light to the world. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

A little boy forgot his lines in a Sunday school presentation. His mother, sitting in the front row try to prompt him, gestured & formed the words silently with her lips, but did not help. Her son's memory was blank.

Finally she leaned forward & whispered the cue, "I am the light of the world."

The child beamed & with great feeling & a loud, clear voice said, "My mother is the light of the world!"

Anyhow, I do not know about you, but it has been bitterly cold & gloomy this winter. The lack of sunlight could easily affect our mood & make us feel sluggish. In fact, it might have even caused some people to get grouchy & snappy even everyone around them. I recall every winter the Rector of the seminary would give a talk to the whole school & advise us to be extra patient & avoid stepping on each other's toes. For our fuse tends to be shorter in the winter due to the lack of sunlight. What do you think about the effect of sunlight on our mood & daily life?

If sunlight is that crucial to our emotions and daily life, we can only imagine how our daily life would not be the same without light. If we have ever lost power, we would be in complete darkness & without light. It would leave us feeling cold, confused, lost, & hopeless. We need light to warm our hearts & lift up our spirit. We depend on the light to show us the way & help us drive away the power of darkness. Realizing the power of light in a dark world, Jesus gave His disciples the following command in this Sunday's Gospel, "...You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. People do not light a lamp & then put it under a bushel basket. They set it on a stand where it gives light to all in the house." It goes on, "...In the same way, your light must shine before all so that they may see goodness in your acts & give praise to your Heavenly Father."

Jesus sure knew how important the light is to the world & compared it to the role of His disciples in the world. They are important to the world as light is to its daily life. Jesus has helped light us up to be His disciples, & He would like us to shine brightly in the world. He wants our light of faith to be set on a lampstand so that it could give light to the entire house. We should not hide it under a bushel basket or keep it all to ourselves. For He wishes that the whole world could see the goodness/Christ's presence in all of us & give praise to our Heavenly Father. Each good deed that we do every day would help point the world to God & witness God's love & presence in its daily life. That is how Jesus' disciples would evangelize & help share His Good News with the world.

Unfortunately, many Christians do not realize their role & duty in the world & try to do more good deeds every day to show Christ's love to people around them. They continue to hide their Christian faith or keep it all to themselves. But, Jesus reminds all Christians today that their faith is not a private matter. For they have received that faith from the Lord to share it with the world. They must not behave in any way that might bring shame to Jesus. More importantly, they should not participate in any work with the power of darkness. They should not condone or look the other way when they see sinful acts or collaborate with the power of darkness. Instead, they should condemn those acts & hold their perpetrators accountable for

their actions. Otherwise, Jesus would be very disappointed & punish them severely on Judgment Day. Sadly, we have seen many Christians have allowed the power of darkness to do all sorts of sinful acts in our world without calling it out. That is why we have witnessed lots of acts of violence & hate happen in our world every day.

In case we have not figured out what we are supposed to do as Christians or what kind of good deeds we must do every day, prophet Isaiah has this message for us in this Sunday's First Reading, "Thus says the Lord: share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed & the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, & do not turn your back on them. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, & your wound shall quickly be healed... And the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, & the Lord will answer." It goes on, "...If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation, & malicious speech; if you bestow your bread on the hungry & satisfy the afflicted, then light shall rise for you in the darkness." So, the prophet wants to point out what the Lord would like His followers to do, namely, share bread with the hungry, shelter the homeless & the oppressed, & clothe the naked. Those are usually called the corporal works of mercy in our Catholic tradition. They are also encouraged to remove false accusation & malicious speech. All those good deeds would certainly help let the light of Christ shine in our dark world & transform it.

Unfortunately, some Christians these days have avoided those good deeds & turned their back on the hungry, the homeless, & the oppressed. They have bought into a selfish thinking of "my needs would come first & any leftover blessing would be given to the social outcast & immigrants." They would claim to be a Christian, but they have never gone to God's kitchen to feed the hungry or helped out a homeless shelter. They would not hesitate to strip everything from the lowly & take away whatever the social outcast might have, including their dignity. Worst yet, they have lied & made up malicious speech & false accusations against their enemies or people they do not like. They might pretend to be devout Christians, but their hearts are far away from the Lord as the Scriptures have pointed out. These Christians have put the light of Christ under the bushel basket & let the power of darkness take over our world. That is why we have seen so much hate & violence happen all around us lately.

My dear brothers & sisters, how important is the light of faith in your life? What does it mean for you to be the light of Christ to the world? Jesus wants all Christians to be the light to the world & do more good deeds for the hungry, the homeless, the poor, & the oppressed. He calls on us to turn our dark world into a shining city on a hill by getting rid of all the lies, malicious speech, & false accusations. Following that way of life will surely help us be the light of Christ to the world.