



This coming Saturday, February 11, is World Day of the Sick. This year is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the celebration started by St. John Paul II. The primary celebration is at Lourdes, at the grotto of Massabielle where this statue of the Immaculate Virgin stands. This commemoration recalls: “amazement at what God has accomplished ‘the Almighty has done great things for me ...’” (Luke 1:49).

This is a special day where we can carry all our sick that they are in our hearts to Mary our mother, as she beseechs her son for healing of our loved ones.

*Mary, our Mother,  
in Christ you welcome each of us as a son or daughter.  
Sustain the trusting expectation of our hearts,  
succour us in our infirmities and sufferings,  
and guide us to Christ, your Son and our brother.  
Help us to entrust ourselves to the Father who accomplishes great things.*

As we strive to be salt of the earth and light to the world, let us pray:

**Prayer for Others**

(inspired by Matthew 5: 13-16)

*There is no part of life you do not touch, O God,  
infusing your rich fragrance— gritty and real—  
getting in underneath the surface,  
drawing out and lifting up winding love around  
until defences are lowered, barriers broken down  
and the power of your love reveals the beauty  
you intended for all your children.  
May our actions draw attention to you,  
to the richness you bring to all life  
and the abundance you share, setting the scene for us to share too.  
Help us to bring light into all the darkness of life, spreading hope for a better world,  
a world where justice is made real by your children living together in harmony.  
Help us to bring salt into the blandness of life,  
encouraging vitality and joy in living in a world that dares to hope  
for the future that you promise where all your children will know themselves  
loved and valued and treasured, created in your image,  
bringing you glory forever.*

*Amen.*

~ written by Rev Liz Crumlish, and posted on the Church of Scotland's  
**Starters for Sunday** website. <http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/>

Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

February 5, 2017



*Keep your family safe, O Lord,  
with unfailing care, that,  
relying solely on the hope of heavenly grace,  
they may be defended always by your protection.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Collect for the Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time

Last week we had the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount for Matthew's Gospel. This week we continue with this sermon with many interesting directives. We hear Jesus speaking to his disciples, and now us, who are called to continue his work. Jesus begins by saying, “You are the salt of the earth.” In today's world we take salt for granted. Maybe, we may be placed on a salt free diet. Then we really miss salt. At the time of Jesus salt was a very important commodity.

A little understanding of the history of salt may put this whole command in perspective.

*“There is a renewed interest today in the ancient sacramental of blessed salt, especially by charismatics, in healing and deliverance situations, etc. To understand its proper use and its efficacy, it would be helpful to review the Scriptural symbolism and its history, since Vatican II urges us to participate “intelligently and actively” in the use of sacramentals, just as in the use of Sacraments.*



*... Being costly, it was an appropriate offering to God as a “covenant of salt” (Lev. 2: 13; II Chron. 13:5; Num. 18:19) used in sacrifices by the Israelites (Ezek. 43:24) and for the accompanying sacrificial meal (Gen. 31:54). Belief in its preservative and healing properties led to its use to dry and harden the skin of newborns (Ezek. 16:4) and to prevent umbilical cord infection. Used for 3500 years to preserve meats from deterioration, it became a symbol of preservation and spiritual incorruptibility that was to characterize anyone offering sacrificial worship. Shared at the sacrificial meal, salt became a symbol of friendship and hospitality, a custom-symbol still used today in Arab culture.*

*Jesus referred to this salt-symbolized friendship covenant (Mark 9:50): “Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another”—that is, “preserve that quality (flavor) that makes you a blessing to one another.” (Note the double symbol of preservation and flavoring.)*

*This double primary symbolization is also found in Paul's advice (Col. 4:6): 'Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.' That is, let it be wholesome and savory, preserved from the corrupting conversation of worldlings (3:8 and Eph 4:29). (His use of the word salt may also have referred to another of its symbols: spiritual wisdom, since the Latin word for savor or taste, "sapientia", is the same as for wisdom.)*

*Some or all of these symbols may have been implied in Jesus' words to his chosen ones, describing them as the "salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). He especially indicated that they were to oppose the world's corruption, reminding them that, as salt must preserve its own anti-corruptive quality, they too must preserve their anti-corruptive influence in a sin-corrupted world. (See Luke 14:34)*

*The blessing promised by God on food and water, as well as the prevention of miscarriages and agricultural catastrophes (Exod. 23:25-26) was extended by God through Elisha in Jericho (II Kings 2:20-21), when he was inspired to put salt into the contaminated water. Adding salt to already brackish water to decontaminate it, made the miracle all the more impressive, since one would expect the opposite effect. This first miracle of Elisha is the primary Scriptural basis for the sacramental use of blessed salt today, as the Roman Ritual indicates.*

*As a Catholic sacramental, salt blessed by the liturgical prayer of a priest may be used by itself, unmixed, as in exorcisms, and formerly in the exorcistic prayer at baptism, or it may be mixed with water to make holy water, as the Ritual prescribes (reminiscent of Elisha's miracle). In whichever form, it is intended to be an instrument of grace to preserve one from the corruption of evil occurring as sin, sickness, demonic influence, etc.*

*As in the case of all sacramentals, its power comes not from the sign itself, but by means of the Church's official (liturgical, not private) prayer of blessing—a power the Church derives from Christ himself (see Matt. 16:19 and 18:18). As the Vatican II Document on the Liturgy (#61) states, both Sacraments and sacramentals sanctify us, not of themselves, but by power flowing from the redemptive act of Jesus, elicited by the Church's intercession to be directed through those external signs and elements. Hence sacramentals like blessed salt, holy water, medals, etc. are not to be used superstitiously as having self-contained power, but as "focus-points" funneling one's faith toward Jesus, just as a flag is used as a "focus-point" of patriotism, or as handkerchiefs were used to focus faith for healing and deliverance by Paul (Acts 19:12).*

*Thus, used non-superstitiously, modest amounts of salt may be sprinkled in one's bedroom, or across thresholds to prevent burglary, in cars for safety, etc. A few grains in drinking water or used in cooking or as food seasoning often bring astonishing spiritual and physical benefits, as I have personally witnessed*

*many times. As with the use of Sacraments, much depends on the faith and devotion of the person using salt or any sacramental. This faith must be Jesus-centered, as was the faith of the blind man (John 9); he had faith in Jesus, not in the mud and spittle used by Jesus to heal him.*

*In light of this, we can see why Vatican II states that 'there is hardly any proper use of material things which cannot thus be directed toward the sanctification of persons and the praise of God.' (#61 Document on the Liturgy). Hence new sacramentals may also be added when rituals are revised (# 79). Blessed salt is certainly not a new sacramental, but the Holy Spirit seems to be leading many to a new interest in its remarkable power as an instrument of grace and healing.*

*Any amount of salt may be presented to a priest for his blessing, using the following official prayer from the Roman Ritual: 'Almighty God, we ask you to bless this salt, as once you blessed the salt scattered over the water by the prophet Elisha. Wherever this salt (and water) is sprinkled, drive away the power of evil, and protect us always by the presence of your Holy Spirit. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.'"*

*by Rev. John H. Hampsch C.M.F. (<https://www.catholicsacramentals.org/blessed-salt>)*

Having this historical and theological understanding of salt helps us understand and live being the salt of the earth!



Jesus then goes on to say: You are the light of the world. Living in the North country, we are awed with the Northern Lights. Going out to McLain State Park or going to Princess Pointe we can see God's grandeur as he paints the sky in riotous colors. Driving along some of our rural highways and coming into town we can have a deep appreciation of lights of various towns. Looking at the Portage Lift Bridge is

the real treasure. This gives us a little understanding of how we need to be a light in our world.

The Prophet Isaiah (58:7-8a) tells us how to be lights in our world:

*Is it not sharing your bread with the hungry,  
bringing the afflicted and the homeless into your house;  
Clothing the naked when you see them,  
and not turning your back on your own flesh?  
Then your light shall break forth like the dawn...*

In our area, with our aid, the St. Vincent DePaul Society does just this. Because our parish tithes, we reach out well beyond our boundaries to serve those in need. Individually and communally our Spring break mission trips allow us to serve those in need. Our socials allow us to welcome and share with friends and strangers alike, international students as well as those from the United States.