

Homily: 5th Sunday: Cycle A: 2017: Is 58: 7-10; Ps. 112; 1 Corth 2: 1-5; Mt 5: 13-16

“The Call to Authenticity in the Lord and to be His Witnesses in Love and Truth”

The readings this weekend call us to **authenticity** in our walk with the Lord, meaning that we are genuine or real in our belief in the Lord and in our witness to others, being a person worthy of trust, reliance and belief in pointing others to Him, not a hypocrite!

1. What are you talking about, Father? Ha-ha, well to bring abstraction into reality what I am talking about is being **the “real deal”** ☺ when it comes to our Catholic Faith. It’s one thing to say we are Catholic; it’s another thing all together to live it well on a daily basis. **Only with God’s grace can we do that.** We live in a world today that needs more and more our witness or testimony to the light of Christ and the Gospel, as Pope Francis reminds us over and over again. This Gospel brings light and life to the sons of men as the Scriptures say. In a world that grows increasingly cold and callous both in terms of respect for human life, made in the image of God from the moment of conception, and also in loving the other person instead of being selfish, we Catholic Christians are called to be **salt and light to the world.** In order to share our Faith with others we need to know it well. Not necessarily like a professor or a theologian, but to know the basic tenets of our Faith in order to live it ourselves and to “*give a reason for our hope in the Lord*” (**read 1 Peter 3:13-17**) to others. This is why I think it is such a great idea to have **the parish lending library** of good Catholic books in the basement to check out. I encourage everyone here to continue to study and reflect on a daily basis on the gift of our Faith - it is truly the pearl of great price and its depths are beyond measure. Take advantage over time of the resources God has given us to learn more: *our Parish lending library, solid Catholic television shows on E.W.T.N., listening to Catholic programming on satellite radio in our cars or on the computer; books and pamphlets in the Parish, adult education here, CD’s on the Catholic faith, little prayer cards and devotional items; and especially studying the Sacred Scriptures, the Lives of the Saints and the Catechism of the Catholic Church on a regular basis.*

2. Are we doing our part to season the world for the better and being a light pointing others to Christ and the gift of the Catholic faith which He started on the rock of St. Peter? Well only God knows for sure if we are, but we get a sense of what we need to be and do from the readings today. It still holds true that if we love the Lord, we will show it in deeds of kindness toward our neighbor. As Isaiah the prophet puts it, *“share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless, clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own. Remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech and help all those who are afflicted in any way.”* This points us to the need to be a person of practical and generous charity on a daily basis by actions of love to the people around us, but also supporting good charitable works near and far away, with our money, our time, and most of all our prayers. Sometimes the best charity we can do for others is to pray and offer our daily duties and sufferings for them in love. All conversion to the Lord ultimately begins with prayer and self-sacrifice as St. Mother Teresa put it so beautifully years ago. Growth in prayer will lead to growth in charity on a daily basis. Don't ever be discouraged; keep at it.

3. A famous quote falsely attributed ☺ to St. Francis is, *teach the Faith always to others, and use words if necessary* = If we live the way we are called to live by God and the Church, people will notice that we are the “real deal” and will want to know more about Jesus and the Catholic faith. The last few popes have said **the BIGGEST challenge** for us as Catholics in the modern world is not to divorce the Faith we profess every Sunday with the daily life we lead in the world. It is so easy to *“go along to get along.”* But if we fall into that trap, what we are doing then is losing our power to witness; or as Jesus puts it, as salt we are losing our ability to flavor things for the better and as the light of the world in Christ we are sadly hidden away. This is powerful imagery: salt in the ancient world was THE preservative to keep things from spoiling, and light was so valued, both daylight and fire, since at night it was pitch black - way before the age of electricity. Jesus is saying His followers are the key to keeping the world from going to pot, and He is counting on us to be good witnesses to Him. Are we doing this? God bless you.