

The Roman Catholic Parishes of

St. Margaret Mary, Herscher

St. James the Apostle, Irwin

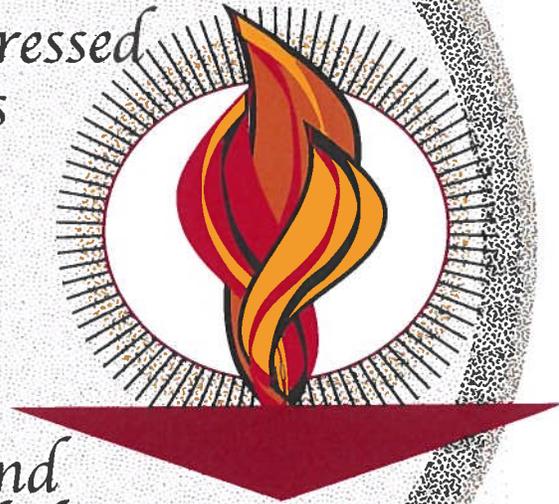
FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

FEBRUARY 7-8, 2026

Thus says the Lord

*Share your bread
Shelter the oppressed
and the homeless
Clothe the naked*

*Then shall your
light break forth
like the dawn
and your wound
shall be healed
quickly*



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Weekend Masses:

St. Margaret Mary Sat. 5:00 pm Sun. 10:30 am
Sacred Heart Sun. 7:30 am
St. James Sun 9:00 am

Confessions:

St. Margaret Mary Sat. 4:15 pm -4:45pm

Church Mailing Address:

207 E. 5th Street

Herscher, IL 60941

Phone: 815-426-2550

Quotable: "This salt . . . is not for keeping, because if the salt is preserved in a bottle, it does not do anything—it is good for nothing." — *Pope Francis homily (May 23, 2013)*

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time			February 14-15, 2026	
Liturgical Schedule	St. Margaret Mary Saturday, Feb 14 5:00 pm	Sacred Heart Sunday, Feb. 15 7:30 am	St. James Sunday, Feb. 15 9:00 am	St. Margaret Mary Sunday, Feb. 15 10:30 am
Celebrant	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron	Fr. Ron Deacon Ron
Ushers	Dave Emling Roger Jensen Bob Schultz Todd Datweiler	David Kirkpatrick Kyle Ferris	Jeff Steinke Dallas Ferris Dave Ladehoff Dan Forsythe	Joe Smolkovich Wayne Bisailon Brent Fulton Dustin Truetner
Lector	Dave Emling	Cindy Gagnon	Carrie Abrassart	Dana Masching
Eucharistic Minister				Lynda Wolles
Servers				Avery Adams
Greeters			Greeter—Dallas Ferris R. Leader—Rita Thiesen	Kim Smicker

Mass Intentions for the Week

Monday, Feb. 9 (SMM)

8:00 am +Marie Duval (Rosemary Brooks family)
+Ronald Schneider (Denise Lecocq)

Tuesday, Feb. 10 (SH)

8:00 am +Janet Denault Menke (John & Sharon Wagner)

Wednesday, Feb. 11 (SJ)

8:00 am +Laura Jensen (Tom & Maureen O'Connor)

Friday, Feb. 13

8:00am +Aldine O'Brien (Sandra Ryan)

Saturday, Feb. 14 (SMM)

5:00 pm +Sheila Koerner (The Family)

Sunday, Feb. 15

7:30 am (SH) +John Schafer (Don & Marie Feller)

+Dorine Schafer (Raymond & Laurie Gulquist)

9:00 am (SJ) +Pat Perreault (Larry & Birdie Stevenson)

+Virginia Gadbois (Mary Ann Lambert)

10:30 am (SMM) All the Parish Family

Tuesday, February 10 — **Correction** Combined Parish Councils at 7:00 in St. Margaret Mary parish hall

Tuesday, February 10—Sacred Heart CCW Meeting 6:30PM

Pastor— Fr. Ron Neitzke- 815-426-2550

Deacon – Ron Gagnon— rjgckg@aol.com

Home—815-933-4077

Parish Email – smm_sja_sh@yahoo.com

TriParish web page – www.triparishcatholics.org

Like us on Facebook [triparishcatholic communities](https://www.facebook.com/triparishcatholiccommunities)

Tri Parish Church office –Barb Riker 426-2550

Julie Bisailon 426-2550

Bulletin – Debbie Jensen - 426-2550

debjen04@gmail.com

Religious Education –

St. MM – Jill Fulton jfulton.stmm@gmail.com

Sacred Heart – Rhonda Berns – 426-5015

St. James—Tanhya Osenga tosenga81@gmail.com

Parish Nurse – Jackie Eberle – 815-421-4048

Prayer Line—

SMM -Janice 815-426-2574 Jdstreefarms@aol.com

St. James— Mary Offerman—602-670-8888 (call or text)

Sacred Heart—Marilyn Pfeiffer 815-955-8246 (call or text)

Terri Weakley— 815-514-8171

Question of the week: How can I and my parish increase the light we shine in our community?

Collections Weekend of Jan. 31/Feb. 1, 2026

St. Margaret Mary—\$ 2,265

St. James—\$ 3,796

Sacred Heart— \$ 1,254

Thank you for your generosity!

Gospel Shorts This Little Light of Mine

Many of you can remember singing “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.” Back then, the greatest darkness most of us experienced was being grounded or having a pet die. But through the years, we have realized first-hand the power of all kinds of darkness that threatens to put out our light. Few of us have ever taken our Lord’s command seriously “To let your light shine so that others will see your good works and glorify God.” We are called to witness to the Light, show forth the Light, walk in the Light. However, that means walking into the darkness. As we will seek to understand this Light, we realize the tremendous power it has to destroy the darkness around us.

Reflection - The Golden Rule

One evening the chief of a Native American tribe in Delaware was sitting by a fireside with a friend. Both were silently looking into the fire. The friend broke the silence by saying, “I have been thinking of a rule, given by the Author of the Christian Religion, which is called the Golden Rule.”

“Stop,” said the chief; “don’t praise it. Tell me what it is and let me think for myself.”

The friend replied, “The rule is for one person to do to another as he would have the other do to him.”

Silence ensued for several minutes. Then the chief said, “Brother, I have been thoughtful of what you told me. If the Great Spirit who made man would give him a new heart, he could do what you say, but not else.”

This is exactly what God does when we turn penitently to him for his mercy and forgiveness: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh” (Ezek. 36:26).

Parish News:

All Parishes—

- ⇒ **If you would like your statement of donations to the church for tax purposes, please call the office.**
- ⇒ Adult Ed will be held on Wednesday February 11 at 7:00 at St. Margaret Mary. This will be our last session until the fall.
- ⇒ Envelopes are in the back of the church, if you don't see yours please call the office and we will get them to you.
- ⇒ The next prayer meeting will be held on Monday, February 2 at St. James at 7pm .
- ⇒ Tri-Parish Office Hours— Our office hours are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday 9am—12 pm.

St. Margaret Mary-

St. James-

Sacred Heart—CCW Meeting 2/10/26 6:30pm

- ⇒ The week of February 8th, the Blessed Virgin Mary candle burns in memory of Al Hubert..

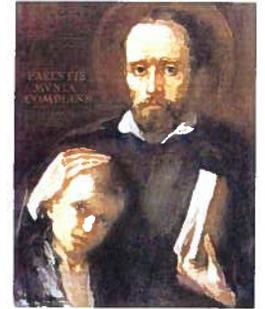
Statue donation plates

Now that the statues have arrived at St. Margaret Mary and St. James, we would like to put together the plaque recognizing all the donors. If you contributed to either of the statues, please contact the office (815-426-2550) and let us know how you want your name plate to read. A suggestion would be “gift of the (your family name) family, or “in memory of (your loved one’s name). Please let us know at your earliest convenience so we can begin this process.

A Lenten Opportunity

The Christmas Season is over for another year. Was “Jesus the reason for the season” for you? Maybe now is the time to start feeding that Christmas light so that it burns brighter in your life all year. The Season of Lent will be here before you know it. Lent is a time for inner conversion of our hearts as we seek to follow Christ’s will more faithfully. It’s an opportunity to reflect on how our walk with Jesus is unfolding. Do you hear him calling? Jesus never wants us to walk alone; rather, he wants us to walk arm and arm with each other. Something to try on the Mondays of Lent is the Stations of the Cross at St. James 6:30 pm, followed by the Prayer Meeting at 7:00 pm. We again invite you to come and see; there is no commitment. Come join us during the first five Mondays of Lent, beginning on February 23rd, as we experience growth in our spiritual life through prayer, scripture, and song.

Saint of the week: St. Jerome Emiliani (Feb. 8) was born wealthy, the son of Angelo and Eleanor Mauroceni Emiliani. His father died when Jerome was a teenager, and he ran away from home at age 15. After a dissolute youth, he became a soldier in Venice, Italy in 1506. He commanded the *League of Cambrai* forces at the fortress of Castelnuovo in the mountains near Treviso, Italy, where he was captured by Venetian forces on August 27, 1511, he was chained in a dungeon. He prayed to Our Lady for help, was miraculously freed by an apparition, and hung his chains on a church wall as an offering. Jerome was ordained in the spotted-fever plague year of 1518.



He cared for the sick and housed orphans in his own home. At night he roamed the streets, burying those who had collapsed and died unattended. Jerome contracted the fever himself but survived. He founded six orphanages, a shelter for penitent prostitutes, and a hospital. Jerome founded the *Order of Somaschi (Company of Servants of the Poor, or Somascan Fathers, or Regular Clergy of Somasca)* c.1532, a congregation of clerks who vowed to the care of orphans. They were named after the town of Somasca where they started, and where they founded a seminary; the society was given approval by Pope Paul III in 1540, and continue their work today in a dozen countries. Jerome is believed to have developed the question-and-answer catechism technique for teaching children religion. Jerome was declared the patron of orphans and abandoned children in 1928 by Pope Pius XI



Obscure saint of the week: St. Cuthman (Feb. 8) was a poor and pious youth from the south of England. He cared for his invalid mother following his father's death and worked as a shepherd, spending his time with the flock in prayer. He built a church near his property outside of Steyning, Sussex, England. Cuthman was known to be a miracle worker in life and afterward.

Ask and You Shall Receive

A preacher who was popular with his congregation explained his successes as the result of a silent prayer he offered each time he entered the pulpit. It went like this:

"Lord, fill my mouth with worthwhile stuff, and nudge me when I've said enough!"

What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
what God has prepared for those who love him.

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You prepare a table for me, O Lord



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Friendly Visiting Program Volunteers Needed:

Catholic Charities is seeking volunteers to provide free friendly visits, virtual calls, and phone calls to older adults who are homebound or socially isolated, experiencing loneliness, and seeking companionship.

As a volunteer you will:

- Build friendly and caring connections
- Make a positive impact on the lives of older adults
- Share common interests and have good conversations.

Be the reason someone smiles today!

Interested in becoming a Friendly Visiting Volunteer? Call 815-221-6020, or email FVP@cc-doj.org

Catholic Snacks, Get Fed

What does it mean for a relic to be incorruptible?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the Christian whole person.

For centuries, Catholics have venerated the physical remains of they remind us of lives wholly lived for God. Among them are a as incorruptible. But what does it mean when a body is called Church take notice?

In the Catholic tradition, the resurrection of the body is a core teaches that the bodies of the faithful will share in Christ's eternal Church honored martyrs and saints in part because their lives and deaths testified to Christ's victory over sin and death. Sometimes, even before final resurrection, God allows a sign of that victory to be seen in a saint's physical remains.

An incorruptible relic is a body or body part that, after death, has not undergone the normal process of decomposition expected in human remains, absent preservation methods. The Church does not take this as proof of sainthood on its own but as a possible sign of God's grace at work in an individual whom the Church is already examining or honoring.

The phenomenon is not uniform. Some bodies remain supple, others desiccate in a way unlike typical decay. In each case, the Church investigates carefully. Her approach is neither credulous nor dismissive. She respects scientifically observable reality and simultaneously holds that God's ways are not limited to natural explanation when He chooses to manifest grace.

One early example comes from the fourth century with Saint Cecilia, martyred under Roman persecution. When her tomb was opened centuries later, her body was found in a condition that astonished those present. For believers, her state testified to her fidelity to Christ even unto death.

In more recent history, saints such as Saint Bernadette Soubirous and Saint John Vianney exhibited similar signs when their remains were examined decades after death. In each case, the Church studied the condition of the body in light of historical testimony, virtuous life, and spiritual fruits associated with the person's cause for canonization.

Why does this matter? For one thing, it points to the unity of body and soul in salvation. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that the Christian hope of resurrection extends to the whole person. The body is not merely an object to be discarded; it is part of what God created good (CCC 364, 1004). When a body remains in a preserved state after death without artificial means, some see it as a sign — not a proof — of the body's dignity and the soul's holiness.

The witness of an incorruptible relic invites the faithful to reflect on holiness in embodied life. Saints like Cecilia, Bernadette, and John Vianney did not live apart from the world. They walked, breathed, suffered, and loved in the flesh (just like the rest of us). That their bodies show signs of preservation after death becomes, for many believers, a way of pointing beyond the natural toward the eternal.

The saints teach us that holiness is not abstract. It is lived in daily obedience to Christ's command to love God and neighbor. The state of a relic is never an end in itself but a sign directing us back to a life of faith, hope, and charity.

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hope of resurrection extends to the saints. We call these relics, and number of relics that are described incorruptible, and why does the

belief. At the end of time, Scripture life (Romans 8:11). The early

The Sunday Gospel in Everyday English

"Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven" (from Matthew 5).



You are the light
of the world
MT. 5:14

Questions Catholics Ask

What do Catholics believe about demons?

Jesus gives a teaching about demons, suggesting they take up residence not in folks who are particularly bad, but in those who don't take care to fill themselves with the spirit of goodness.

Evil is real. Demons are a trickier subject. So start with evil, defined as that which opposes the will of God. Free beings can choose against God's will with a single act (a mean word) or habitually (a selfish lifestyle). We can socialize evil, as when acquisitiveness becomes a cultural value that's accepted and perhaps celebrated. We may even institutionalize evil, passing laws that counter the common good.

But is there a way in which evil can "take over" the will of a person surrendered to its thrall? Ancient peoples certainly viewed evil as a spirit that might inhabit a person. Often that person isn't responsible for the possession, like the unhappy bride Sarah in the Book of Tobit, whose interior demon kills seven prospective husbands on the wedding night.

In the New Testament, Luke shows great concern for the authority of demons. The first recorded miracle of Jesus is the cure of a demoniac in Capernaum who disrupts a synagogue teaching. Later, a Gerasene demoniac contains so many demons, they fill a herd of swine. A boy suffers from seizures, which his father attributes to a demon. Luke also describes Mary Magdalene as a woman from whom Jesus banishes seven demons—without suggesting she'd drawn this situation upon herself.

The ability to cast out demons is a signal to the seventy-two disciples sent on mission that the name of Jesus has power over dark forces. It vexes John when someone not of their association has success utilizing Jesus' name in the presence of demons. Eventually, some in the crowds are perplexed that demons are answerable to Jesus. Is he in league with the prince of evil, that he commands demons so effortlessly? Jesus gives a teaching about demons, suggesting they take up residence not in folks who are particularly bad, but in those who don't take care to fill themselves with the spirit of goodness.

Clearly demons find a stronger foothold in those who actively make an overture toward evil. Luke tells us Satan enters Judas and propels him to betray Jesus. Judas cultivated the spirit of greed from the start, which opened the door to admit greater evil. Our modern perspective would describe many of these phenomena in terms of biological or mental illness. But the choice for evil remains open and real to all of us. The more we choose it, the larger the territory it governs in our lives.

Scripture: Tobit 7:9—8:18; Luke 4:31-37; 8:26-39; 8:1-3; 9:38-43; 10:17-20; 9:49-50; 11:14-25; 4:13 and 22:3-6; Matthew 8:28-34; 9:32-34; 10:8; 12:22-32, 43-45; 17:14-20; Mark 1:21-27; 3:23-30; 5:1-20; 6:7, 13; 9:14-29, 38-41

Spiritual Ministry Programming of the Servants of the Holy Heart of Mary.

Here are the programs on our calendar for February and Lent 2026:

FEBRUARY:

- **Martin Scorsese Presents: The Saints** will be led by facilitators, Sr. Evelyn Varboncoeur and Sr. Kathleen Mulchay, for 7 sessions starting February 4th from 9-10:30am at Nazareth Spirituality Center in Batavia and online via ZOOM
- **Sunday Gospel Faith Sharing Groups**, New groups will be forming beginning the week of February 22nd with meetings in person and online. Facilitators, days of the week and times vary from group to group.

LENT

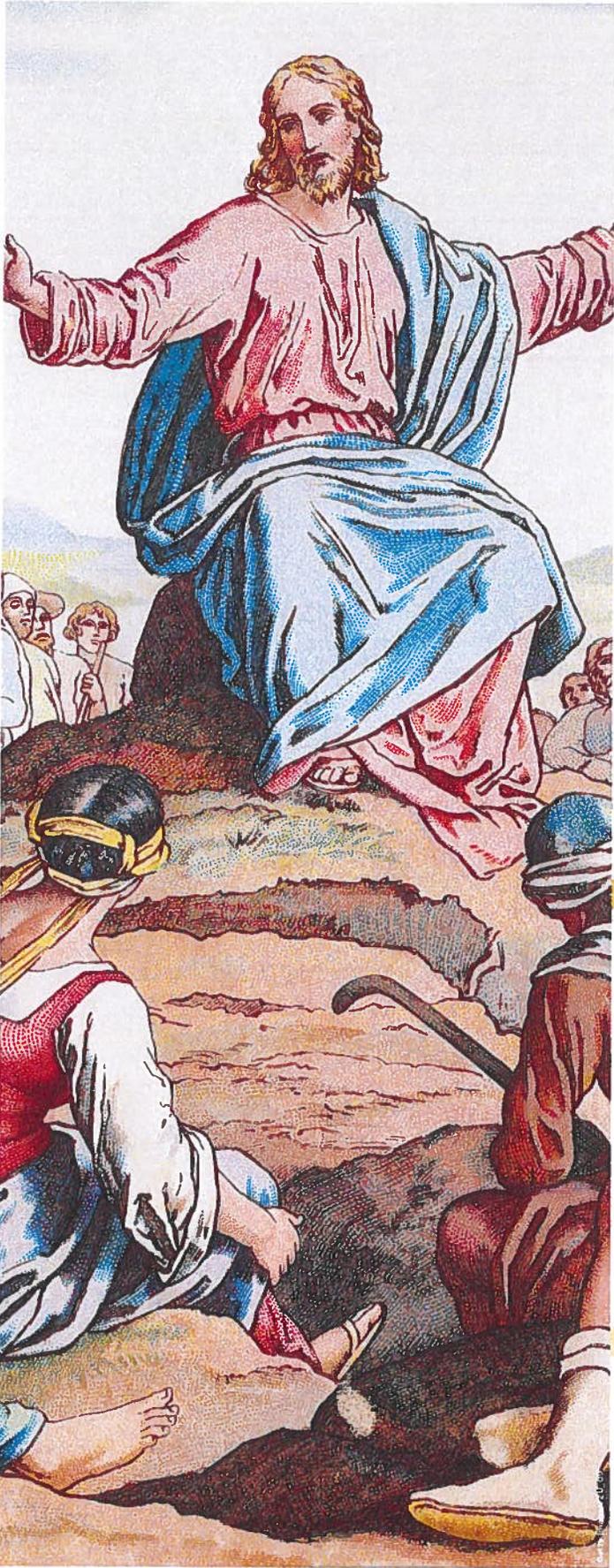
- **Pondering the Heart and Mind of Jesus**, our in-person Lent retreat, has 3 presentations:
 - Weekend retreat at Nazareth Spirituality Center in Batavia, March 6-8, 2026
 - 1-day retreat at One Heart, One Soul Spirituality Center in Kankakee, IL, Saturday, February 21, 2026
 - A 1-day retreat at St. Patrick's Church in Urbana, IL, Saturday, February 28, 2026
 - Our **Lent Busy Person's Retreat** can be done at home accompanied by the Spiritual Director of your choice,
 - **Lent Gospel Film Series** facilitated by Sr. Myra Lambert and Kathy Brady-Murffin, Sundays, February 22, & March 1, 8, 15, 22, 3:00-6:00pm, online via ZOOM

More information and registration for these programs can be found on our website at: <https://www.sscm-usa.org/Workshops-Retreats.html>

February 8, 2026

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Is 58:7-10 | 1 Cor 2:1-5 | Mt 5:13-16



GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

My understanding of prayer changed when I read St. Teresa of Calcutta's statement that says, "I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things." Prayer is not an incantation that can change the will of God. It is the act of raising our hearts and minds to God, and of opening ourselves — our will, our understanding, our joys, and our sorrows — to be sanctified. The prophet Isaiah seems to be saying something similar in the first reading. He lists off the commands of the Lord to clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and shelter the homeless, and then tells the faithful that if they do these things, "then your light shall break forth like the dawn." We certainly serve those who are vulnerable because each person has immeasurable dignity and deserves to be cared for as a child of God. But the act of caring for another also changes us. We are made more fully into who we were created to be — not an individual living in isolation, but one who is deeply connected in community to the rest of humankind.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT
An act of service, then, is much bigger than simply donating money or giving of our time. In caring for our neighbor, we proclaim God's goodness to a world in darkness, bearing witness to the love of God which is the source of all our actions. In the Gospel, Christ calls his followers to be "the light of the world," reminding us that he wants to shine his light through us. But we are not the source of the light. Even when we are the ones serving, we still remain only the vessel the true light shines through. When we love others, we are changed because we allow ourselves to be conformed more closely to Christ, allowing others to encounter his love in our actions.

SERVE

The corporal works of mercy are to feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick, visit the imprisoned, and bury the dead. This is not a list meant to overwhelm, but rather to provide opportunities to care for God's children. What act of service can you and your family engage in this week to allow the light of Christ to shine through you?

SPIRITUALITY

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

John 8:12

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

I am the light of the world, says the Lord;
whoever follows me will have the light of life.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.



Gospel

Matt 5:13-16; L73A

Jesus said to his disciples:

“You are the salt of the earth.

But if salt loses its taste, with what can
it be seasoned?

It is no longer good for anything
but to be thrown out and trampled
underfoot.

You are the light of the world.

A city set on a mountain cannot be
hidden.

Nor do they light a lamp and then put it
under a bushel basket;

it is set on a lampstand,
where it gives light to all in the
house.

Just so, your light must shine before
others,

that they may see your good deeds
and glorify your heavenly Father.”

Reflecting on the Gospel

Today if we say someone is “the salt of the earth,” we understand that person to be solid and dependable, someone who can be counted on through thick and thin. We might also say that someone’s speech is salty to mean that their language is coarse, like that of a sailor who has been out to sea for a long time and who has not had to be concerned about using polite expressions in refined company. But when Jesus said to his disciples that they were the salt of the earth, they might have understood the metaphor in light of several biblical connotations.

First, salt was a critical necessity for human life, along with water, fire, and iron, as Sirach 39:26 states. Salt was important for seasoning and preserving food. Job questions, “Can anything insipid be eaten without salt?” (Job 6:6). A second way salt was important was for liturgical functions. It was included with cereal offerings (Lev 2:13) and burnt offerings (Ezek 43:24). Blending salt with incense kept the fragrant powder pure and sacred (Exod 30:35). Salt was what Elisha used to purify a polluted spring of water (2 Kgs 2:19-22). In Catholic liturgical tradition, the baptismal ritual included putting salt on the infant’s tongue, as a symbol of incorruptibility. Another way in which salt was used was to ratify covenants (Num 18:19; 2 Chr 13:5). As a preservative, salt symbolized the lasting nature of the agreement.

Jesus then queries, “But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned?” (Matt 5:13). It seems like a trick question. Salt can be diluted, but could it ever lose its taste entirely? It is possible that Jesus was quoting an ancient proverb to which his disciples would respond, “Impossible!” In the Talmud there is an account of Rabbi Joshua ben Hananya (ca. 80–120 CE) who was asked by philosophers in the Atheneum at Rome, “If salt becomes savorless, with what can it be salted?” He responded, “With an after-birth of a mule” (*b. Bek. 8b*). The point is that just as it is impossible for a mule to give birth, or for salt to become insipid, so disciples cannot cease to be who they are and to season the world with the good news.

The accompanying image of disciples as light reinforces the message. As impossible as it is for a city set on a mountain to be hidden, and as unthinkable as wasting fuel by lighting a lamp only to extinguish it immediately, so inconceivable is it that disciples would cease to let their light shine before others. Although trials and tribulations may threaten to dilute disciples’ “saltiness” or dim their light, nothing is ever able to take away their capacity to illumine God’s love for others.

Finally, salt and light are most effective when they do not call attention to themselves. Just as in well-seasoned food the salt is not noticeable and in a properly lit room the lamps are not the focus of attention, so disciples’ good deeds do not redound to themselves but lead others to glorify God.