

THE PASTOR'S POST

SALT

Dear Parish Family:

I remember in my dad's final months of life on earth he would struggle from "TIA"s or mini-strokes. Probably once a month or every other month, something would happen. He would struggle to speak, sometimes speak with words that did not make too much sense, lose his balance, and a few times, pass out. We would go to the emergency room which would lead to tests, etc., usually an admission, and a discharge with a similar direction. His sodium is low. He needs more salt!

It seemed to be odd medical advice, especially from the cardiologist (heart doctor). You need more salt. Then you will be able to speak well, keep balance, and keep our bodies moving.

So perhaps, this week, a spiritual health question? Do you have enough salt?

It's probably not as popular an image as light takes hold in the first reading and the Gospel today. But Jesus uses this image in the Gospel before light. He is calling us to use salt to bring a certain flavor, a certain sense, a certain presence to the world in which we live. If we do not do this, we are not responding to the building of the Kingdom of God (see Gospel last week). If we do not do this, we are flat. Stumbling words, off balance, nothing to say or do. This is not the Gospel we preach or the Gospel we are called to live.

The Church links this reading of Matthew 5 to one of the most powerful passages in the book of the prophet Isaiah. Here salt comes in again. For centuries, salt has been used to treat wounds. It is even part of the saline solution, used so often in hospitals. Listen to the prophet, "Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed" (58:8) What is the condition for this light in darkness, for this wound healing? Simple: "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" (58:7).

There can be a risk in the work of the Gospel, particularly in the moments when we feel powerless or overwhelmed or insignificant, that we lose our flavor. We become flat. There is not too much to what we are doing or saying. I can battle this, at times. Maybe you too?

The world we find ourselves in these days, the risks in our own country, the anger and fury of this time do not give us the opportunity to be flat, to not bring the flavor of the Gospel to poverty, racism, injustice, hunger, lack of dignity, hate, violence, and so much of what we are facing in this time and moment. (Don't be fooled - it is not just a situation in Minnesota.) There is no time to become unbalanced in the light of the Gospel, to lose our step, to stumble. Listen to the prophet, "If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech, if you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted;

then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday" (58:9-10).

So for the light to shine, we need the flavor of the Gospel. Where does this come from? Mining. No, we do not need to go to a salt mine, but we do need to do some of our own mining. We need to pray and to ask the Holy Spirit to help us to discern. This past Tuesday, during our staff day of

prayer, our presenter pushed us to be people of deeper reflection and consideration, of the necessity for contemplation, for returning to the deeper places. This can take time -even years - but as we do this work, we find our voice, we move our feet, we bring the zest of the Gospel to a world in need. How do we do this? Well, that's the work of discernment. That we do this? Not optional for any disciple. We have lights to shine, bushel baskets to put away, a message of love to bring.

So, let's pray this week that our spiritual salt levels will increase so that our light can shine even brighter.

Please pray for me. I promise the same.

Featherman

