

*Readings*

Is 58:7-10

Ps 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9

1 Cor 2:1-5

Mt 5:13-16

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“Live good lives and you will change the times by living good lives” - Saint Augustine  
(*Sermon 311, 8*)

As I reflect on these Scripture passages and prayerfully write these words, there is certainly a lot going on in the world. Tensions rising at home and abroad can leave us feeling powerless. Yet our readings for this Sunday remind us we are not as powerless as we are often tempted to think or feel.

Today’s Gospel is taken from the Sermon on the Mount. Following the teaching on the Beatitudes, Jesus uses the images of light and salt to assure us of the effect we can have on others and the world if we live as Jesus teaches. Just as Israel was called to be a light to the nations as it waited for the coming Messiah (Isaiah 60:1-3), so God’s people are called to be a light in the darkness that surrounds us as we wait for the fulfillment of the hope we have in Christ.

What does this look like? By being “salty.” Salt in the time of Jesus would have been as important to preserving food as refrigeration is to us today. In the same way, when we live as Jesus calls us, we “preserve” the goodness of God in our corner of the world even when evil seems to have a stronghold.

Where do we begin? Our first two readings offer us some perspective.

In the second reading Paul is addressing misunderstandings and divisions that occurred as the early Christians were baptized by different disciples. He urges them to reunite around Jesus as the primary source of wisdom in the times they were living in. In our world we have lots of different influencers with thoughts on how to address the challenges of our society. Does Jesus remain the primary influence in our thoughts, words, and actions?

Our first reading from the prophet Isaiah gives us a common action to unite around: when we begin by simply taking care of each other and live justly in our treatment of others (as Jesus modeled for us), our “light shall break forth like the dawn.”

Feeling powerless against the times and events of the world? We can begin with taking care of those closest to us. These readings invite us not to underestimate the power of small everyday acts of kindness. If we begin with taking care of those closest to us, we can trust that our light will break forth like the dawn. When we do this we will “live rightly and change the times” as Saint Augustine prophetically taught in his sermon 311.

Imagine the impact we could have if all 1.4 billion Catholics around the world did something good for someone else after Mass this Sunday?