



# Salt of the Earth and Light of the world

Jesus, the Saviour of humanity is the universal teacher of the world also. He has clarified and explained the divine laws to his followers with a difference. We could see Jesus teaching on the sea shores, on the mountains, on the streets and in the synagogues. The secret of the kingdom of God was revealed to his disciples. "Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him" (Mt 5, 1). Here is the back ground of the world famous 'Sermon on the Mountain'. This is the scene where Jesus discloses the will of God with authority to the people. The quintessence of the sermon is known as 'Beatitudes'. The main teaching of Jesus and its essentiality is found in the gospel according to St. Mathew, on chapters 5-7. Jesus tells his disciples to be like Salt of the Earth and light of the world. He says, "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the world. A City built set on a hill can't be hid. No one after lighting lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven" (Mt 5, 13-16).

Jesus has revealed to the world of the duty and place of his disciples while comparing them with salt and light. Here, Jesus uses ordinary images such as, salt and light to convey eternal truths. Our Christianity is not something to be kept hidden or thrown out or wasted away on meaningless activities but it should be spent on adding taste, happiness and meaning by throwing light in the lives of many, who may be living in darkness of ignorance and sins.

### **Salt of the Earth**

Salt was the most primitive of all offerings. This imagery of salt is used both in the Old and New Testaments. In the book of Leviticus we read: "You shall not omit from your grain offerings the salt of the covenant with your God; with all your offerings you shall offer salt" (Lev 2, 13). Salt is considered to be a thing that purifies other things while adding tastes to food or edible things and sustaining life itself. These qualities of salt can be applicable to our Christian lives also.

The Three Distinctive Qualities:

### **1. Life that adds Taste**

As the salt gives flavour to food the disciples should live in this world adding flavour to human life, by making others' lives happy and meaningful. Their words and deeds should point out to a new lease of life adding earnestness. When the salt loses its quality of saltiness, it becomes useless, so too life that loses its qualities, care, encouragement and sense of purpose. Jesus said to his disciples: "you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn 13, 34-35). The love and unity existed among the early Christians attracted many to Jesus and his teachings. Their very presence and example of lives were so forceful to attract others. Just like those of them we too shall try to lead a life that flavours, favours growth of a culture of love, with a difference, encouraging unity, love, mutual help and tolerance etc.

### **2. A life that Preserves**

Another important quality of salt is to preserve food and meat from being decayed. Anything that is preserved in salt remains to be fresh and useful for long time. A Christian, as a true follower of Christ, should also behave himself or herself so that others may be encouraged to lead a purposeful and successful life, after the heart of Jesus. True Christians shall stand high as powerful catalyst in the world for human values and moral strength. A sincere follower of Christ must be a protector and promoter of justice, peace, unity, moral and Spiritual values. He must be prudent enough not to fall into the trap of misleading and erroneous philosophies, organizations, etc., which are totally against Christian values and ideals.

### **3. A life that Purifies**

Salt has got the quality of purifying things. There is sin and impurity in human nature and in the whole of created things around. A Christian has got moral responsibility to purify the world. The apostles and the followers are commissioned by Jesus with the mission to purify the world with their virtues lives and lives with sense of sacrifice. The Christians are sent not to ignore or reject the sinful environments and individuals but to set free and force them from the clutches of such situations and temptations. When we are willing and prepared to do so we will be able to lead and work in the society just like salt functions. Our duty is to create a peaceful, happy and value added and contended lives for others. When we lead a grace-filled life, a life according to the Spirit of the kingdom of God, we will be able to act enthusiastically. Salt is useful, tasty and keep the world pure and it helps to keep the world free of abuses of any.

### **Light of the World**

Light is a powerful imagery used by Jesus Christ to qualify his disciples. Light, fire, etc., were the symbols used in the Old Testament to signify the Divine presence. In Exodus we read that God Appeared to Moses in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush (Ex. 3, 2). The Lord preceded the Israelites into the Land of Canaanites at night by means of a column of fire to give

them light (Ex 13, 21). To prophet Ezekiel, God gave vision in the form of burning coals of fire (Ezek 1, 4-13). Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles in the form of fire, in the New Testament accounts (Acts 2, 30). Jesus solemnly declares, "I am the light of the world. Who ever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Jn 8, 12). The Evangelist Mathew gives detailed account about Jesus who incarnated as the light of the world. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned (Mt 4, 16). St. John the evangelist has also presented Jesus as the real light of the world. "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it" (Jn 1, 5). Certain distinctive qualities of light are: 1. Light shows the way 2. Light expels (dispels) darkness 3. Light recharges things just like light. A follower of Christ shall be:

### **1. One who shows the way**

When Jesus told his followers that they were the light of the world he meant they would be light bearers, charged with the grace of God, showing right way, guiding others. Lamp does not shine for itself but for others. The purpose of lamp is to throw light for others. When there is light, our target will be very clear and it will be easy to reach at our destination. A follower of Christ must be one who shines for others, leading them by right path through good deeds. The inspiring and ever new prayer of Cardinal Newman, 'Lead kindly Light', shall be ours too in our sojourn on this Earth. Let us try to be like lamps shining, inspiring and showing light for others, encourage leading a worthy and meaningful life. We shall remain helpful agents for others to avoid stumbling. In fact, our mission is to become torch bearers of Christ, is divine calling.

### **2. One who Dispels Darkness**

Lamps are symbols of light which dispels darkness around us and thus helps us from stumbling. Just like light, a follower of Christ must shine for others. One who follows Christ can't but shine for others, with life witnesses. It is the duty of every Christian to fill the world with light of virtues, values and good deeds. Living a worthy life by saving others from serious sins is a life blessed by God, a life of abundance.

To be a true Christian and a torch bearer is very relevant today, at a time, exploitation, threats to lives terrorism, wars, crimes etc. are on the rise. Let us allow the light of Christ, his universal love, tolerance, sense of sacrifice, etc. shine forth brightly in our homes, society, and nation in the world at large. We too shall play our role in an effort to remove darkness of ignorance, injustice, inequality, poverty, etc. from our society by our exemplified lives.

### **3. One who Empowers and Energizes Others**

Light has the quality to energize and recharge anything and anyone that comes into its contact. Just like light, a Christian must shine and throw light for the benefit of others. A lamp remains a lamp when it shines for others and salt remains as salt when the children of God keeps its quality of saltiness. When we became children of God with a sacrament of Baptism, we received grace of God abundantly. This is the divine light ever to be kept shining. The light of Christianity is not to be kept under cover. Wherever we go, whatever we do it is our duty to remain

like light and salt for others, whether we are at home, in the office, in the school or elsewhere, we shall be known for our sincerity and upright behaviour with our charitable activities. Jesus blesses his disciples and said “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Mt 5, 16). Disciples of Jesus are called to be the light of truth by loving fellow human beings. Let us try to be the light – bearers of Christ so that others may see the truth of the gospel and be freed from blindness of sin and deception.

### **I. Let us Discuss**

1. Just like salt of the earth, what are the different ways we can function in the world in our daily lives?
2. As true Christians, how can we live out our lives by being the light of the world?

### **II. Let us find out the Answers**

1. Quote the words of Jesus, bringing out the true nature and qualities of a true Christian with reference to the imageries of Salt and Light.
2. What do you mean by saying that a Christian is like salt of the world?
3. Explain, how Christians are like light of the world?
4. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Mt 5, 16). Write what all things could be done to lead a true Christian life according to the words of Jesus, as quoted above?
5. We are called to be witness to Jesus. Explain different ways one can lead a life after the heart of Jesus?

### **III. Activity**

Prepare a speech on the life of a saintly person who lived a worthy life, like the light of the world and salt of the Earth.

### **IV. Let us Read and Reflect**

I Corinthians 13: 1-13.