

**First Reading – Isaiah 58:7-10:** By sharing with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed, and clothing the naked, one finds healing and God's presence. Helping others brings light in darkness.

**Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 112:** A good person is kind, honest, and generous. He trusts in God and is steady, not fearing bad news. He helps the poor and is honored forever.

**Second Reading – 1 Corinthians 2:1-5:** I came to you with fear and weakness, focusing only on Jesus Christ. My message showed the Spirit's power, so your faith would be in God's power, not human wisdom.

**Gospel – Matthew 5:13-16:** Jesus told his disciples to be the salt and light of the world, showing their good works to others to glorify God in heaven.

My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The role of all of us Christians today is to prevent society from degenerating and to help it progress. Today's Word of God is a call for Christians to bear witness to the Gospel in their lives, as a light shining on the world and as salt seasoning life.

### **1. You are the salt of the earth.**

Salt is considered an indispensable product in human life. Salt fertilizes the soil, seasons food to make it more delicious, and preserves food from spoilage.

When Jesus said, "*You are the salt of the earth,*" He wanted us Christians to be connected to life and to mingle with everyone, like salt that permeates food and keeps it from spoiling and adds flavor. This means preventing society from degenerating and making life more flavorful and meaningful through a moral life.

When salt is used to preserve food, it must dissolve; similarly, Christians, when committed to bearing witness to God, must accept to dissolve themselves, to lose themselves in the salty taste of selflessness, to offer to the world the delicious and savory flavor of generosity and altruism.

However, Jesus also warned: "If the salt loses its saltiness, it is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot." Indeed, saltiness is the important element and the essence of salt, so if salt loses its saltiness, it is no longer worthy of being called salt, because it can no longer preserve anything. Similarly, when we lose our Christian essence, our religious life is useless and becomes a counter-witness, causing people to offend God's name and His holy religion.

### **2. You are the light of the world.**

"*God is light*" (1 John 1:5) and only Jesus dared to claim to be the Light (John 8:12). But today, Jesus also wants His disciples, us Christians, to become a light for the world. To become a light like Jesus, we must

stay close to Him and be united with Him, because “*being near the light makes us shine.*” We become a light for the world when we reflect God's glory through our lives of witness.

**“It is better to light a candle than to sit and curse the darkness.”** We complain that today's world, despite its scientific and technological advancements, is a bland, meaningless world, a dark and polluted world full of evil and sin, but we don't dare to get involved, which is truly useless. We often complain about the decline and decay of morality, but Christians rarely acknowledge their own responsibility in this situation. The world, immersed in the darkness of sin, desperately needs rays of light to lessen and dispel it. Light is more powerful than darkness – a small candle lit is enough to fill a large room with light.

When spreading light to the world, Christians also accept the cost of hardship and sacrifice, just as a burning candle must be consumed so that the whole room can be illuminated. Indeed, Christians must lose themselves, must disappear, so that the Light of Christ may spread everywhere, to every home and every soul.

### **3. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel.**

No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, but on a stand so that everyone can see the light... This means that our faith is not a hidden "faith in the heart," but needs to shine brightly, so that everyone can see it and recognize God.

Light is impartial and does not discriminate against anyone, like the sunlight that spreads everywhere, illuminating everyone and every home. Similarly, our light must be "placed on a stand" – it must be high, above all fame, wealth, and pleasure.

There are still many Christians, capable but timid, who hide the light of their lives under a bushel. This means they dare not engage in life, for fear of danger, lack of self-confidence, or a misunderstanding of what true humility is.

Faith needs to be expressed through concrete actions of a person of faith. When doing something, a person with faith in God will act in the presence of God and with the ideal of the afterlife in mind. Those without faith, however, will do everything, even resorting to dishonest means, to achieve only immediate goals.

*Lord, grant us the awareness that our lives must shine through the good deeds we do for You, so that everyone may recognize You as the Source of Light and follow You to escape the darkness of sin. Grant us the courage to dedicate ourselves to Your Gospel, accepting to be consumed and disappear, so that like leaven and salt, we may season the world with Your love, and Your name may be glorified for all generations. Amen.*