

**O.T. V (A) (FEB 6, 2011): IS 58: 7-10; ICOR 2: 1-5; MT 5: 13-16**

The story of EWTN is the story of a brave woman who had the courage of her conviction that she should be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. She is Mother Angelica who in 1981 started broadcasting Catholic TV for just a few hours a day from the garage of her Poor Clare Monastery in the US. The project grew and grew, and now, after more than twenty years, the Eternal Word Television Network is available twenty-four hours a day all over the world by cable and satellite. Mother Angelica is an example of a true Christian living out her faith as salt to preserve Christian values, to provide the modern world with a purifying mass medium and putting her lamp on the lamp-stand so that Christ's Light will shine for everyone in the modern global village.

In today's gospel, Jesus outlines the role of Christians in this world. The Christian's task is to be the salt of society, preserving, reconciling, adding flavor, giving meaning where there is no meaning and giving hope where there is no hope. Every Christian needs to reflect the light borrowed from Christ and radiate that light in the form of love, kindness, mercy, forgiveness and humble service.

Salt lends flavor to food items. Job declares that "food without salt is a sadly insipid and even a sickening thing" (Job 6: 6-7). One of the main functions of salt is to season food, to give it taste and flavor. This image reminds us that, through Baptism, our whole being has been profoundly changed, because it has been "seasoned" with the new life which comes from Christ (cf. *Rom 6:4*). "The salt which keeps our Christian identity intact even in a very secularized world is the grace of Baptism" (Youth Day- 2002 Message by Pope John Paul II). Christianity lends flavor to life, although people think the opposite about us. In a worried and depressed world, the Christian should be the one man who remains full of the joy of life, conveying it to others. It is our duty to make the world palatable (bearable), not just to others but also to God so that He can, so to speak, continue to bear with it, in spite of its "distasteful" wickedness. To be the salt of society also means that we are deeply concerned with its well-being. We have to preserve the cultural values and moral principles Jesus has given us, and in this way to make a contribution to the development of cultural and social life. Thus, we will be adding flavor to the common life. As salt seasoned and preserved food, and as it kept a fire burning uniformly in an oven for a longer time, the disciples were to improve the tone of society ("season" it), preserve the faith, and extend the fire of the Spirit through their evangelization efforts.

The light of the world: The metaphor of light is often used in the Bible. The Jews spoke of Jerusalem as "a light to the Gentiles." But Jerusalem does not produce its own light. It is God who lights the lamp of Israel. Moreover, Jerusalem cannot hide its light. When Jesus commanded his followers to be the light of the world, he demanded nothing less than that they should be like him, the one who claimed to be the light of

the world. "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (Jn.9:5). Christ is the "true" or "original" light (Jn 8:12). Citizens of the kingdom are simply "luminaries" reflecting the One True Light, just as the moon reflects the light of the sun (2 Co 4:6). The radiance which shines from the Christian comes from the presence of Christ within the Christian's heart as the radiance of a 'radiant bride' comes from the love in her heart. Christians are to be torch-bearers in a dark world. We should not try to hide the light which God has lit in our lives. Rather we should let it shine so that others may see our good deeds and praise God.

Christians must be visible like a "city" on a hilltop and a lamp on a "lamp stand." Jesus therefore expects His followers to be seen by the world (Jn 13:35; 17:21). In addition, they must radiate and give light. "Let your light shine before men" (Matthew 5: 16). By this metaphor Jesus means that our Christianity should be visible in the ordinary activities of the world, for example, in the way we treat a shop assistant across the counter, in the way we order a meal in a restaurant, in the way we treat our employees or serve our employer, in the way we play a game or drive or park a motor car, in the daily language we use, in the daily literature we read.

(Adopted from the Scriptural Homilies)