

## Readings and Reflection

## 5th Sunday of Ordinary Time

## 8th February

### First reading Isaiah 58:6-10

**'Your light shall break forth like the dawn.'**

Thus says the Lord:

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'

If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.

### Responsorial Psalm 112(111): 4-9 R4a

**A light rises in the darkness for the upright.**

A light rises in the darkness for the upright; he is generous, merciful, and righteous.

It goes well for the man who deals generously and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice.

He will never be moved; for ever shall the upright be remembered.

He has no fear of evil news; with a firm heart, he trusts in the Lord.

With a steadfast heart he will not fear.

Open-handed, he gives to the poor; his justice stands firm for ever.

His might shall be exalted in glory.

### Second reading 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5

**'I proclaimed to you the mystery of Christ crucified.'**

I, when I came to you, brothers and sisters, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

### Gospel Acclamation John 8:12

**Alleluia, alleluia.**

I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will have the light of life.

**Alleluia.**

### Gospel Matthew 5:13-16

**'You are the light of the world.'**

At that time: Jesus said to his disciples, 'You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

'You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a 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 who is in heaven.'

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### Feast Days this week

**Monday 9th February:** St Teilo

**Tuesday 10th February:** St Scholastica

**Wednesday 11th February:** Our Lady of Lourdes

**Saturday 14th February:** Sts Cyril and Methodius

## The Cycle of Prayer Migrants and Refugees

### Background

Asylum seekers and refugees — I wish to underline how the tendency is to stop at the question of their arrival while disregarding the reasons for which they left their native land. [Benedict XVI - Message for World Migration day 2005]

### Prayer

*Lord, no one is a stranger to you  
and no one is ever  
far from your loving care.  
In your kindness watch over  
refugees and exiles,  
those separated from their loved ones,  
young people who are lost,  
and those who have left  
or run away from home.  
Bring them back safely  
to the place where they long to be  
and help us always  
to show your kindness  
to strangers and those in need.*

**Let your love show**

Around the same time that Isaiah was reviving a living faith among the people in Jerusalem, his contemporary up in northern Israel, the prophet Amos, was expressing his fierce indignation about the plight of the poor and needy, who were being denied justice in the courts (Amos 5:7, 10, 12, 15) and whose goods were confiscated (5:11). In his turn, Isaiah also makes an impassioned cry for social justice. His sense of fairness and sharing comes from his deep sense that God's creativity and glory fills the whole earth (Isa 6:3). The divine presence fills not only the temple but the whole of creation. Yahweh desires human beings to make justice flourish on the earth. To buttress his appeal, Isaiah warns of a coming day of judgment, because of the inhumanity of the great and the powerful towards the weak, poor and helpless. His people, unfortunately, seemed to prefer formal religion to honesty and justice. Just as Isaiah felt personally cleansed through the burning coal scorching his lips, his people needs cleansing too. They need to change their behaviour, to practice a more honest kind of religion (Isa 1:16-17). Only if they sincerely try to practice justice can their worship mean anything. Isaiah ends with the promise: "if you feed the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, your light shall rise in the darkness.." (58:10.) Sharing and justice are essential, if we are to please our God.

In calling his people to conversion, John the Baptist echoed the teaching of Isaiah when he said, "Whoever has two coats must share with whoever has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Jesus, too, chose words from Isaiah about mercy and compassion, as his own manifesto. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor: He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4: 17-19; Isaiah 61:1)

In today's Gospel he says "let your light shine before others.." But how can we reconcile "letting our light shine" with the fact that Jesus spent most of his own life quietly in Nazareth, as the son of the carpenter. What Jesus practised at Nazareth was fidelity to the ordinary, the daily routine, which requires its own kind of courage. What sets him apart was anchoring his whole life in God, to let the Father be the guiding force in his life.

The quiet practice of virtue was the hallmark of the saints, who never published their holiness, but just tried to remain close to God, in a spirit of "loving attentive expectancy," as St John of the Cross put it. This spirit marked the life of saint Thérèse of Lisieux, who died at the age of 24, after living as an enclosed nun from her teenage years. Some of the other nuns thought that Therese had achieved nothing at all in her short life. Yet within a generation, this young nun who had never left her convent was proclaimed Patroness of the Foreign Missions. Even from her cloister she let her light shone out. Reflecting on the three virtues that last, faith, hope and love, Therese saw prayerful love as her special mission in life. "In the heart of the Church," she said, "I shall be love." And from that loving spirit the grace of God was richly channeled out to the missionary world.

**Going to the margins**

With the images of salt and light, Jesus says what he expects from his followers. They don't need to be always thinking about their own interests, their own prestige, their own power. Even though they are a small group in the huge Roman Empire, they are the «salt» and the «light» that the world needs. "You are the salt of the world." The simple people of Galilee spontaneously knew what he meant. They knew what salt is good for: giving food flavour and conserving it from spoiling. Just so, we need to contribute to helping people find the savour in life. "You are the light of the world." Without sunlight, our world would stay dark and gloomy. Jesus' disciples can shine a light to probe the meaning of life, to walk with hope.

These metaphors have something vital in common. If the salt stays in the shaker, it doesn't do its proper work. Only when it dissolves in the food can it give flavour to what we eat. The same thing happens with light. If it stays closed up and hidden away, it can't enlighten anyone. Only when it shines out in the dark can it illuminate and guide. A church isolated from the world can be neither salt nor light.

Pope Francis called on catholics today to "go out to the margins." He preferred a church that is "bruised and dirty because it has been out on the streets" to one that is "clinging to its own security, caught up in a web of procedures." We can't hunker down in our structures with passive hope. The Gospel invites us to run the risk of meeting face to face with others. It wants to promote culture of encounter, because what our church needs today is to heal wounds and to warm hearts. (José Antonio Pagola)