

The Candle *and* The Mirror



FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Year A

Isaiah 58:7-10
Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9
1 Corinthians 2:1-5
Matthew 5:13-16

Gathering

(An unlit candle in a metal candle holder, a Bible open to this week's gospel, a mirror, a polishing rag, and a crucifix rest on a table covered in a green cloth.)

This week's scriptures call on us to reflect the light of God in the world. They call us to share in the mission of Jesus. Last week, we considered what it truly means to be *blessed*. How were you a *blessing* to others this past week?

Prayer

(The candle is lit. Members are invited to be attentive to the presence of God in their midst in a time of silence. After a time of quiet, several members lead the community in prayer as follows.)

I: Lord Jesus,
bring your love to our lives
in a new way today
so that any fear that we might have

is driven away,
knowing that
“perfect love casts out fear.”

- II: Then your light
will shine more brightly in us
and others will be able to see
the good things that are done
in your name.
- III: Helps us to grow more aware
of the love and respect and dignity
that you give us
in calling us your “friends.”
- IV: We ask that your Spirit acts in us
so that we discover
and take pride
in who we really are.
- V: Make us credible witnesses
of your love
so that others
may more readily share
in your love and your light,
you who are the light of the world.
- All: Amen.

*From Praying Each Day of the Year, Volume 2:
May – August, Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC, 1998,
p. 104.*

HEARING THE LORD'S GOSPEL

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the proclamation of the gospel, the leader invites members to name a word or phrase from the gospel that stays with them, but without any additional comment. Some may repeat what another has already said.)

When this naming is complete, the leader passes out copies of the scriptures of the week as needed. Pausing between them, the leader then poses these

two questions: “What draws you to this gospel?” “Where do you resist this gospel?” The community pauses for a time of silent reflection. After about a minute, the leader invites members to consider the Reflection and Questions for the week. After a time for silent reflection, the leader invites members to re-arrange themselves in groups of three or four for sharing. The small groups move off so as not to intrude on one another.)

Reflection

Whenever I hear this passage from Matthew I am drawn to the images of the lamp and the lampstand? Even as a child, I was drawn to these images. Perhaps it was because my grandparents had an antique brass candle holder with a round reflector placed by my bed in their house. In the midst of a Midwest winter, I was always keenly aware of the power of light, not only to illuminate, but also to provide hope and security.

However one may relate to the image of light, this passage is typically understood to point the importance of Christians sharing their gifts and talents with the world. Jesus speaks of us as light, but underneath it all, we know that what needs to shine is not the light of our greatness, but rather the greatness of God.

The novelist, Edith Wharton says this: “There are two ways of spreading light; to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.” When linked to this gospel, these words also remind us that Christ is the light, and we are the mirror meant to reflect Christ into the world. Our God-given gifts and talents are a reflection of God’s graciousness, which is so freely offered to the world through our Creator God, the life, death, and resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of their Spirit.

Like all brass, my grandparents’ candleholder became dull over time, but when polished the reflector would multiply the intensity of light ten times or more. Isaiah’s words this week also summon us to polish our mirrors in response to God’s call. Isaiah calls us to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, and clothe the naked; not so that we can be praised for our actions, but so we may be able to better reflect the glory of God.

May the light of Christ be reflected by us as we reach out to our hungry and needy world.

Questions for Reflection and Conversation

- ◆ How do you reflect the light of Christ to the world through the use of your God-given gifts and talents?
- ◆ When might you have hidden your light under a bushel basket? Why?
- ◆ How have your good deeds shone before others to “glorify your heavenly Father”?
- ◆ How might you encourage and support others around you in the sharing of their light of faith?

HEARING THE GOSPEL’S LORD

(After about fifteen minutes of sharing in threes/fours, the leader re-gathers the community. Once back together, members pause for a moment. The leader then poses these questions: “What do you want to hold on to for yourself from this session?” “How are you/we being called to live in response to God’s word?” After a pause, the leader invites the community to a time of conversation. When this sharing is complete, the community moves to a time of prayer.)

Response in Action Suggestions

- ◆ Visit www.WeAreSaltandLight.org for resources intended as a catalyst for both the new evangelization and the development of vibrant communities living the gospel.
- ◆ Animal Agriculture is the leading cause of pollution and climate change with devastating effects on countries like Malawi that experience drought and floods. Learn to make simple, delicious meatless meals here: www.TryVeg.com.
- ◆ Support organizations that train people to sew. Help Catholic Relief Services purchase sewing machines through gifts.crs.org.

Prayer

(After a brief pause, the gospel or a portion of it, either of the other readings as appropriate or the responsorial psalm are proclaimed. The idea is to select a text that lends itself to inviting members to the time of silent prayer that follows. Following the proclamation, the leader poses these questions to the members: “What does Christ in his Spirit say to you now?” “What

do you say to him in response?" The community pauses for a full five minutes of prayerful attention to God. A brief instrumental selection may be played during part of this time. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two, or a brief expression that captures what they hear Christ saying to them personally. The community receives this without additional comment.

Following this sharing, the community joins in singing, "We Are the Light of the World." The song may be found on the Internet, When the song is complete, the community prays as follows.)

Leader: Lord,
May the light that we see around us
Remind us
of your presence with us now,
You who are the light of the world.

All: Amen.

*From Praying Each Day of the Year, Volume 3:
September - December by Nicholas Hutchinson,
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(Members exchange a sign of peace.)