

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time – Commentary

This set of readings for the Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time centers on the theme of **authentic witness**. It moves from the Old Testament call to social justice to the New Testament call to be "salt and light" through a life centered on Christ.

Reading Summaries

Reading 1: Isaiah 58:7-10

Isaiah defines true worship not as empty ritual, but as active charity. The passage lists specific corporal works of mercy: feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, and clothing the naked. God promises that when we remove oppression and malicious speech, our "light shall rise in the darkness." It is a conditional promise: when we pour ourselves out for others, God's presence and healing become manifest in our own lives.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 112

The Psalm echoes Isaiah, describing the "just man" as a light in the darkness. This person is characterized by mercy, justice, and lavish generosity to the poor. Their stability doesn't come from their own strength, but from a heart that is "firm, trusting in the Lord."

Reading 2: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

St. Paul provides a humble contrast to the "sublimity of words." He reminds the Corinthians that he didn't rely on human eloquence or philosophy. Instead, he came in "weakness and fear," focusing solely on "Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Paul's point is that the power of the Gospel is demonstrated through the Holy Spirit, not through intellectual persuasion.

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-16

In this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives the disciples their identity: they *are* the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt must retain its "sting" or flavor to be useful, and light must be placed on a lampstand to be effective. The purpose of this visibility is not self-glorification, but so that others may see their "good deeds" and give glory to the Father.

Connections: Isaiah and Matthew

The link between the first reading and the Gospel is the **nature of the "Light."**

- **The Source vs. The Reflection:** In Isaiah, the light "breaks forth" as a consequence of righteous action and justice. In Matthew, Jesus declares that the disciples *are* the light. The "good deeds" Isaiah lists (feeding the hungry, sheltering the oppressed) are the exact "good deeds" Jesus refers to that cause others to glorify God.
- **Visibility for a Purpose:** Both readings argue against private or "hidden" holiness. Isaiah speaks of light rising in the gloom to guide a nation; Matthew speaks of a city on a hill and a lamp on a stand. In both cases, the light is only useful if it is visible to those in the "house" or the "darkness."
- **The Shift from 'If' to 'Am':** Isaiah presents a conditional "If you do this, then your light shall rise." Jesus, fulfilling the law, presents an ontological reality: "You are the light." For the OCIA candidate, this shows that Christian identity (Gospel) empowers the Christian action (Isaiah).

Thought Questions for OCIA

1. **Salt and Potency:** Salt was used in the ancient world for preservation and flavor. If a Christian community "loses its taste," what specific things might cause that to happen in a modern parish or in your own life?
2. **Weakness as Strength:** St. Paul says he came in "weakness and fear" so that faith would rest on God's power. Do we often feel we need to have "all the answers" before we can share our faith? How does Paul's approach change your perspective on being a witness?

Looking Toward Next Week

Next week (the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time) typically continues the Sermon on the Mount, moving from our *identity* (Salt and Light) to the *integrity* of our hearts. While this week focuses on outward actions and visibility, next week often dives deeper into the "Law of the Heart"—challenging us to look not just at our external "good deeds," but at the anger, lust, or honesty residing within. We are "Light" this week; next week shows us how to keep that light pure from the inside out.