

OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR FIFTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (A)

6th FEBRUARY 2011

Jesus said: “You are the salt of the earth.”

He is speaking to us directly and saying: “**You** are the salt of the earth.”

This might need some explaining.

A student was very upset when a teacher called her “the salt of the earth.” This was not an insult. Jesus chooses his images carefully.

Salt can teach us a lot about our Christian lives.

Let’s think of the salt that we use on our food. Salt improves the quality of food; we are to improve the quality of life of all the people we meet and live with. If salt remains in the salt pot it is no use to anyone.

If we confine our religion to Mass on Sundays our religion is no good to anyone. We are like salt when we take our faith, hope and love out of church and into the lives of other people. We are to be the salt of the earth, not of the Church.

Just as salt has to be mixed with food if it is to be any good, so we have to mix with other people to give them the taste of God’s love. As a parish and as individuals we do this well. When representatives of the parish met Bishop Christopher during his recent visitation and gave him an account of their activities it was our generous outreach to others that pleased him the most.

Without this salt our society will as dull as food without taste.

Blessed John Henry Newman was convinced that religion will only survive if Christians live as the salt of the earth. He said that religion is upheld in the world not by books or power but by the personal influence of faithful and loving people.

He went on to say that this does not depend on numbers. “Such high Christians are enough to carry on God’s noiseless work.”

Catholics are sometimes discouraged because the Church in Western Europe seems to be getting smaller. The old die and the young do not take their place. We are a minority. Newman said not to worry. If we are faithful there will always be enough of us.

One particle of salt will make no difference. Many particles together will. We must work together to be the salt of the earth.

Too much salt can be harmful. Only a very little is needed. Just as we need the right amount of salt in our food and our bodies so we need to keep the right balance in our lives between the time we spend at home, at work and in Church.

Jesus wants us to be like salt at work and especially at home.

This is the idea of Home is a Holy Place. Our Christian love improves the quality of family life. Each week in the newsletter you will find a bit of information or a thought to help you make home a holy place.

Jesus said that if salt becomes tasteless, it is good for nothing

It is true that if salt were to lose its saltiness it is just useless particles of rock. There would be no other use for it. This means that if we cease to function as salt in the world we are as useless as tasteless salt.

We lose our saltiness when we lose our faith, hope and love. This does not mean that God rejects us. By God's grace, through prayer and the sacraments, we can recover them.

Jesus means that while we are not living in faith, hope and love we are useless as Christians. We are contributing nothing to the quality of life in the world.

Let's remember, too, that it is God's love that makes us the salt of the earth.

This is not to make us popular but to enable people to give praise to our Father in heaven. When this happens we can be sure that we really are the salt of the earth and thank God for it.

Rev Geoff Carey