

Pastoral Assistant of Faith Formation Mass June 2025

“Called To Be Salt”

Bishop Frank Schuster

Jesus says that we are called to be salt of the earth. In recent decades, salt has gotten a bad reputation because of the health concerns associated with too much salt in our diet. Every time I visit a nutritionist, I am encouraged to limit the amount of salt in my diet. It is depressing. However, salt is one of the basic tastes we have and a certain amount of it is important for health and even survival. Our culture just gets too much of it and so salt has become another four-letter word. That being said: if we take a moment and look historically at the importance of salt, Jesus’ invitation to be the salt of the earth will make more sense.

In ancient times, salt was considered an important preservative. They didn’t have refrigerators other than what they could manage with underground pantries so when we discovered how salt could extend the shelf life of food, creating edible salt became a very important and lucrative business. Over time, salt therefore became an important item for trade between countries and was even traded as a kind of currency. As a result, it is interesting how often you find the word salt in many of the common words we use. For instance, the word “salary”, believe it or not, comes from word for salt. Your pay would be reflected by how much salt you earned for the day. The word “salad” comes from the word for salt in reference to the old practice of salting leafy vegetables. Take that nutritionists! Even the name given for the city of “Salzburg” literally means “salt city” because of the importance of the salt industry throughout their history.

When Jesus says, you are the salt of the earth, what he is inviting us to consider is, by becoming disciples that proclaim the Kingdom of God in word and deed, we become the preservative that keeps the world from spoiling. Get it? That is our ministry. Think about the right of welcome in OCIA. What do you ask of God’s Church?

The answer is Faith. What does faith offer you? The answer is “Eternal Life”. If faith offers eternal life, that makes “faith” the ultimate preservative, wouldn’t you say?

It must be said though, in addition to being a preservative, salt also simply just tastes good. What this means is: if we proclaim the Good News of the Gospel by the example of our lives, what we are doing is giving the world in which we live in better taste. Just as food tastes better with salt, the world tastes better when people live the Gospel. We know that life is a whole lot more beautiful with faith than without it. Amen?

How to we pass on the faith? Jesus has an answer for that too in our Gospel today. He says, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. People shouldn’t light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket. The lamp should be placed on a lamp stand to give light to the whole house.” Jesus continues, “Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.” What this fundamentally means is, we cannot effectively pass on the faith unless our lives shine before others. What this means in practice is, if we want to be effective evangelists, people should be able to look at us and say to themselves, “I want to be like them”, “I want to have what they have.” On the other hand, if people look at us and see someone who is grumpy, frustrated, disillusioned, or hypocritical, we are in the wrong business because no one looks at someone who doesn’t practice what they preach, and say, “I want to be like them’. Follow?

Brass tacks: What Jesus is trying to tell us this morning is that it is not enough to simply say we are disciples. Discipleship must look like something. Discipleship looks like a city shining on a hill. Discipleship looks like a lamp giving light to a household. Discipleship looks a preservative that keeps the world from spoiling. My friends, our ministry is to be that spice for others that helps life taste better.