

Liturgy of the Word with Children
5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A
8 February, 2026
Matthew 5:13-16

Catechist Background

Although the price of salt doesn't feature in the news today, in the ancient world it was an essential commodity. Also, nutritionists today have learned that our bodies need a little salt in order to work properly. Moreover, salt then and now was used in food preparation, not only for flavour but, more crucially, to preserve fish and meat. A still more important use for salt was in oven fuel. Girls would be sent to collect dung which would be used as fuel, which was then mixed with salt to act as a catalyst. Likewise mixing salt with dung made the dung a more effective manure for growing plants. The Hebrew and Aramaic words for 'earth/ground' and 'earthen oven' are the same, so in calling us the salt of the earth, Jesus was clearly calling us to be catalysts in our world.

Jesus was speaking in Galilee while standing on a mountain. Hill cities and the inability to hide them would have been very familiar to his audience, as would using lamps to light one-room houses. Lastly, his audience would have known how absurd and how dangerous it would be to light a lamp (an open flame!) only to cover it up with a basket.

Setting the Scene

For the activity described below, each child will need a paper or card representation of a candle. The dextrous leader will be able to make a cylinder 'candle' out of an A4 piece of paper (or use an empty toilet or kitchen roll – ask you parish cleaners to store the ones from the previous week for you to use). If you then cut a paper 'flame' out of orange paper with a long piece at the bottom to stick into the cylinder with glue or tape, the 'candle' can later be 'lit.'

We Say Sorry

Leader: You came to teach us how to live, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Leader: You show us how to be generous, Christ have mercy.

All: Christ, have mercy.

Leader: You are always ready to show forgiveness, Lord have mercy.

All: Lord, have mercy.

Gloria

We Pray (1)

Lord, watch over us and keep us safe every day. Amen.

Gospel Acclamation

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-16

Reflecting on the Gospel Reading with Children

Ask the children:

- What do people use salt for today? [making food tastier, some may say preserving it];
- What was salt used for in ancient times? [make food tastier, mixing it with dung to make a fuel for fires or a better type of manure to help crops grow.]
 - *The children may giggle if they realise that dung is 'poo', but that is okay.*
- Some of those things sound yucky and smelly, don't it? Not really very nice jobs, are they?
 - But the salt made the poo into really useful things and so it was worth doing.

- Jesus didn't REALLY mean that we are actually salt. What did he mean?
- Just as the salt makes the poo useful, we can transform the not-so-nice things in our world.
- What did Jesus mean when he said that we are the light of the world?
- In what ways can we light our world?

Response

Give each child a paper/card candle and pens/pencils so they can write their name/draw a face on it.

- Ask them to imagine being in a really dark bedroom at night. Would it make sense for them to light a candle but then cover it up so that no one could see its light? [No – it's pointless]
- We are like candles: we shine God's light to the world, and so God doesn't want us to hide.
 - You might sing the song "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine" with them

Point out to the children the last twelve words of today's Gospel reading: 'So that they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.'

- Today, many 'celebrities' are praised just for being famous, even if they don't do anything.
- The point of our good works and of our shining light is to glorify **God**, not to show everyone how fabulous **we** are.

We Believe

Relating the Creed to what you have shared with the children, ask these questions and invite them to reply: 'I do.'

- Do you believe in God, the Creator of the universe?
- Do you believe in Jesus, the Saviour of all?
- Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who inspires us today?

We Pray (2)

Again, relate the Prayer of the Faithful to the Gospel reading by saying: 'God asks us to try to change our world and so we now pray...'

Leader: We pray for Pope Leo, that he may shine Christ's love to the world. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for world leaders that their decisions help people praise God. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for people who live without heating and light. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: We pray for people we know who are feeling tired or sad for any reason. Lord in your mercy,
All: **Hear our prayer.**

Leader: Lord, help us to shine the light you give us to brighten up the world. We make all our prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: **Amen.**

