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“You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world” Matt 5:13-14).

[1 Kgs 17:7-16; Mt 5:13-16](#)

Jesus uses the imagery of salt and light to suggest the pervasive and subtle nature of Christian influence on culture. Salt gives flavor to food and is a preservative. Light is the ubiquitous quality that enables sight and clarity.

Without these graces, life is bland, and we become blind to its beauty and potential. The presence of a believer in a group makes everything that much more enjoyable and livelier. The Gospel is, after all, about abundant life. The layers of the world become transparent as we see, taste and touch the Giver in his gifts.

A disciple is salt and light, not just a bringer of these elements. Disciples possess them as interior gifts that are reflected in their words, values, attitudes and actions. We can imagine the impact Jesus must have had on people as he spoke to them. He was attractive and his stories were engaging, filled with everyday examples. A woman bakes and the house is filled with the fragrance of fresh bread. A laborer finds a treasure in a field, hides it, sells everything to possess that field. A shepherd comes home carrying a lost sheep and calls to his neighbors to share his joy.

The Spirit of Pentecost is in the wind and fills us with daily chances to bring a smile or an insight to others, the salt and light of God’s presence within us. How differently an encounter is directed by a friendly approach, a kind word? Joy is the unmistakable sign of God. How simple and ordinary are the tangy flavor and light touch of a happy person in a family or a group of workers?

The story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath was remembered for generations because it showed a woman in the midst of a terrible drought risking her last bit of flour and oil to prepare a small cake for a wandering prophet. He tells her not to be afraid and promises abundance for her generosity. Jesus captures both the risk and the promise in his stories of yeast and sheep and hidden treasures. The crowds who listened came away lifted up by his message of hope.

What do we expect from Pentecost except this attitude of confidence in a loving and generous God who permeates our lives like salt and light? It was this same Elijah who found God at Horeb during a storm of wind, earthquake and lightning, all terrifying signs of divine power. But he did not find God in any of these, but in the near silence as he sheltered in a cleft in the rock. God came to him in the gentle tiny whispering voice of pure loving presence. He was not alone, for God was with him in the still point at the center of his existence.

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful, and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.

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