

“You are the salt of the earth”

“You are the light of the world”

It was a while before the penny dropped with me that those two sentences of Jesus are simple statements of fact.

Jesus doesn't command us to be salt; he says that we ARE salt and cautions us against losing our flavour.

He doesn't command us to be light; he says that we ARE light and forbids us to hide under a bushel.

The world is blessed and influenced for good by the presence of the Church when believers allow their saltiness and luminosity to do its work.

Our forebears knew much better than us the very useful properties of salt. Perhaps the most important is that salt acts as a **preservative**

Salt is one of the oldest methods of preserving food – and in a world without refrigerators, that was unbelievably important. The main staple in the trenches of the first world war was salt-cured brisket of beef, or bully beef, and even today salt-cured meats of all kinds: bacon, prosciutto, corned beef, cured ham, salted dried fish, line the shelves of our posh delis.

Through their faithful living of the Gospel and their evident holiness in the midst of society, Christians have a similar effect.

A bland Church is a worthless Church, and will simply be trampled under foot – and deserves to be.

But a Church retaining the saltiness of the truth of the Gospel has something to offer society. It can apply the salt of the Gospel to a world prone to deterioration and disintegration. It can preserve cultural values and moral principles and contribute to the development of cultural and social life.

Salt is also an **antiseptic**. It can aid the healing process of wounds.

There may be an element of that idea in Jesus' metaphor as well - that a salty Church is a cleansing Church, which can heal the deep wounds of human souls and societies.

Perhaps also a suggestion of the sensation of burning felt when salt touches a wound.

A Church proclaiming God's truth will sting and irritate as it heals and makes whole.

Salt also **seasons** food and makes it palatable. It enhances, draws out, and intensifies the inherent flavours of a dish. I'm not talking fast food fries here, where salt as an afterthought leaves you tasting nothing but salt, but a well-seasoned dish like spaghetti Bolognese that excites your taste buds with an extra kick.

The Christian's life ought to have savour. There ought to be a zest or a kick to the Church's life, a flavour about the children of God, which gives a distinctive taste to the communities and societies in which they live, an aftertaste that draws out the inherent goodness and essence present in them.

A watery, insipid Church adds nothing to the dish, and only leaves people feeling disappointed and certainly not asking for seconds.

Salt also causes **thirst**.

As salty Christians, we can create a thirst for Christ, who said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

By living the faith we profess, we can make others thirsty for what we have, thirsty for our God, thirsty for the peace, and the joy and the blessings he gives us. As Christians we're also called to give **light** to everybody in the house and raise the eyes of others to the hilltop.

Jesus is the true light of the world, and he asks us simply to reflect his light.

His light will expose from the shadows, and transfigure what is wrong when we speak the truth in love.

His light will bring comfort and joy when we practice genuine deeds of Christian love.

His light will guide others to the truth and to life, like lights on an airport runway during fog

when we are not ashamed to live our faith publicly, and let our love for Christ be seen. We're called again today to be more fully what we already are - a salty and a shining church.

You ARE the salt of the earth.

You ARE the light of the world.

Fr Paul

