



**Sunday, 9 February 2020 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday Before Lent**  
**Sermon for 10.00am Eucharist at St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey**  
**Readings: 1 Corinthians 2: 1-16 & Matthew 5: 13-20**  
**Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

Putting salt on food is a fine balance isn't it? Too little and food tastes bland: too much and food tastes horrible. It's rather like the Goldilocks Test - when Goldilocks tasted Baby Bear's porridge - we know when things are just right. In the Gospel Jesus tells us that we are to be the salt of the earth. He develops his illustration by saying we are also to be the light of the world. Just as to savour the flavour of food we need that hint of salt, so too if we want to see more clearly, we need to flick on the light switch.

The gist of what Jesus is driving at is that spiritual life is similar. We need to judge how much difference our faith can make for the people around us. If we are sparing with our contact not getting alongside people to understand them and see their needs, we are effectively under-salty. If, however, we are always the first one to initiate a conversation seldom drawing breath to allow others to speak and so do not listen to what they might have to say, we have become overbearingly salty.

Similarly, there are many ways of lighting up peoples' lives. Crowds will flock to celebrities hoping to be showered in star-dust but as soon as the celebrity moves on, the glitter fades. In matters of faith, as we know, it's not about us being the centre of attention but rather the God we worship. He seeks to transform our lives for long-term benefit calling us to do the same for others ensuring that the light of Christ is the glow that remains. If we fail to learn this balance, we can cast a shadow darkening those small sparks of faith that have been gleaming in peoples' souls. Jesus puts it so well in the Gospel saying 'Let your light so shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven.' What, however, is the litmus test that we are doing just that?

During Advent I came across an inspirational book with the most uninspiring title: "*An English translation of The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*". I'm glad I had the perseverance to read beyond the title. What was so inspiring about the book was the simplicity of the spiritual exercises. It urged that if we are serious about our faith and want to know how strong it is try reflecting on the Ten Commandments to discern which is our weakest link. If, after reflection, we flatter ourselves we meet those, then consider the seven deadly sins: which is our Achilles Heel? If we still think that we're faultless, the acid test is to consider which of the five senses most leads us astray? In other words, a dose of honest reflection to consider whether, in the purest sense, we 'see no evil, speak no evil and hear no evil' is a good way of bringing a little humility into our lives and to pray for forgiveness when we find ourselves wanting.

Forgiveness is God's gift to us, to wipe the slate clean but and there is a big BUT, after being forgiven the onus is on us is to aim for transformation away from our baser instincts. If after the service has ended, we ignore someone who seems troubled or start spreading stories about others that lack truthful foundation then where is our Christian love? How does that match Christ's example whose body and blood we had just shared: would we not be in danger of crucifying him all over again? Sadly, we all commit wilful, selfish deeds yet God's patience with us is so infinite.

The paradox of daily living is that, whereas we may be adding too much salt to our diets too often our faith is under-salty. Our weaknesses are not so much sins of commission, but rather sins of omission. Are we afraid to switch on our personal light bulbs of faith when we are with people for fear of being noticed? Jesus' incarnation was not an exercise in faith-privatisation but rather a way to help us to be different to worldly standards and so, stand out from the crowd. We need the tenacity which the Holy Spirit provides, so that we can use his gifts to their full potential. The opposite is that through inertia our faith will lose its active ingredient and become fit for nothing like salt that has lost its flavour and so is cast aside.

What is the tonic that gives courage to sagging spirits? Today's Epistle has the answer "Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit. Those who are spiritual discern all things and are themselves subject to the scrutiny of no one else. For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.' If we have the mind of Christ, then all that is necessary is to pray for the courage to keep using it, for we know in our hearts when our relationship with God is just right.

Amen