Living Witnesses of God's Bountiful Love

A young professional, who was having difficulty in many areas of his life, was feeling angry and frustrated. When he could no longer stand it, he went to an adoration chapel and raged at God. “Everywhere I look, I see hurting and lonely people,” he said. “Don’t you care that so many are suffering from hunger, corruption, abuse, and neglect?”

The young man continued in the same vein for a long time. Finally, exhausted by his tirade, he said, “God, I hope you will do something about this soon!” And then deep in his heart the young man heard a voice saying, “I already have... I made you!”

How often do we find ourselves pointing an accusing finger at others when something goes wrong in our midst? We readily criticize or blame our civil and religious leaders—our parish priest, government officials, teachers, and others. And yet, when we are called upon to contribute our time, skills or resources, how many of us willingly do so? It would seem that we find it easier to come up with reasons not to get involved than to take on a responsibility. When pressed to do something, we are quick to say, “It’s not my job.”

In today’s Gospel, Jesus calls his disciples “the salt of the earth... the light of the world” and tells them that their “light must shine before others, that they see the good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.” This is a clear reminder that we have each received gifts from God. Some of the gifts are readily discernible. But others are but potentials that must be discovered, explored, and honed. These gifts—talents, skills, opportunities—must be used not only for our own good or that of those who are near and dear to us but in the service of all who are in need.

With our own unique gifts and characteristics each of us is in a position to contribute to the mission of the Church. We are encouraged not only to find out what our talents and skills are but also to put these to good use in ways that could serve the common good. It is when we share what we have that we truly give thanks and glorify the Father who is truly generous with his gifts.

Like the young man in our story, we may sometimes feel overwhelmed by the amount of suffering we see around us. But there is no need for this. God has given us the talents and the skills and continues to pour out grace and blessings. As we begin to do our share in solving the problems that we face we serve as encouragement and inspiration to others. We truly become living witnesses of the Gospel and of God’s bountiful love.

Someone once said that there are two kinds of persons in the world—the Pessimist and the Optimist. The Pessimist is limited by doubts, confined by fear, and restricted by uncertainties. The Optimist, on the other hand, is freed by faith, stimulated by hope, and encouraged by confidence. While the Optimist may not have much to share, the Pessimist cannot give himself at all.

— Fr. Albert L. Bernal, SSP

Unitatis Redintegratio, Vatican II’s document on Ecumenism, admits the reality of a divided Christianity (UR 2). Then it makes a remarkable admission regarding the source of this division. It bluntly states: “people on both sides were to blame” (UR 3). In short, both Catholics and Protestants have caused the historical divisions that have fractured Christianity. Also, no one living today should be blamed for these past divisions.

Following the language of Lumen Gentium, the Council’s document on the Church (LG 8, 15), Unitatis Redintegratio drops the language of “church membership” with its distracting question of who is and who is not “in” the Church. Instead, UR speaks about degrees of unity and communion among Catholics and other Christians.

The decree goes on to affirm the value and legitimacy of other Christian churches and ecclesial communities. However, in all of this, UR does not abandon the Catholic belief that the Catholic Church contains “the fullness of the means of salvation” (UR 3). This vision captures the goal of ecumenism: it is restoration, not return. It is not the obligation of some Christians to return to the Catholic Church; all Christians must work for the restoration of unity.

Avoid All “Accusations” in Ecumenism
— Fr. James H. Kroeger, MM

Pastoral Catechesis for the Year of Ecumenism, Interreligious Dialogue, and Indigenous People
THE INTRODUCTORY RITES

Entrance Antiphon
[Ps 95 (94):6-7]
(Recited when there is no opening song)

O come, let us worship God and bow low before the Lord who made us, for he is the Lord our God.

Greeting
(The sign of the cross is made here)

P — Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
All — And with your spirit.

Introduction
(These [or similar] words may be used to address the assembly.)

P — In today’s Gospel, Jesus calls his disciples “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world.” By these images, Jesus points to our dignity as well as our mission.
Let us pray that we may be strengthened in our mission to be witnesses of Jesus who is the light of the world.

Penitential Act

P — Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries. (Pause)
P — You were sent to heal the contrite of heart: Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.
P — You came to call sinners: Christ, have mercy.
All — Christ, have mercy.
P — You are seated at the right hand of the Father to intercede for us: Lord, have mercy.
All — Lord, have mercy.
P — May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.
All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

First Reading [Is 58:7-10](Sit)

By practicing works of justice and helping the oppressed and the afflicted, God’s people can be the light that breaks forth like the dawn.

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

THUS SAYS the LORD: Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am! If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation, and malicious speech; if you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday.
—The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 112)

R — The just man is a light in darkness to the upright.

1. Light shines through the darkness for the upright; he is gracious and merciful and just./ Well for the man who is gracious and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice. (R)
2. He shall never be moved;/ the just one shall be in everlasting remembrance./ An evil report he shall not fear;/ his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. (R)
3. His heart is steadfast; he shall not fear. Lavishly he gives to the poor;/ his justice shall endure forever;/ his horn shall be exalted in glory. (R)

Second Reading (1 Cor 2:1-5)

Paul reminds us that the cross of Jesus is the power of God. The cross may be foolishness to the wise of this world, but to those who believe, it stands for salvation made possible by Christ’s suffering and death.

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

WHEN I CAME to you, brothers and sisters, proclaiming the mystery of God, I did not come with sublimity of words or of wisdom. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation...
were not with persuasive words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of Spirit and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

—The word of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.

Alleluia [Jn 8:12] (Stand)

All — Alleluia, alleluia. I am the light of the world, says the Lord; whoever follows me will have the light of life. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel (Mt 5:13-16)
P — A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
All — Glory to you, O Lord.

JESUS SAID to his disciples: “You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”

—The Gospel of the Lord.
All — Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily (Sit)

Profession of Faith (Stand)

All — I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible.

I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven,

(At the words that follow, up to and including and became man, all bow.)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

P — Let us raise our hearts to our heavenly Father who listens to the humble petitions of his children. May his love empower us to live as salt of the earth and as light of the world. We will pray:

R — Lord, hear our prayer.
C — That the Church may become the light of Christ to the world and remain faithful to the Gospel, we pray. (R)
C — That our government leaders may continue to fight corruption, oppression, and discrimination particularly against the least, the lost, and the last, we pray. (R)
C — That we may continue to bear the light of Christ to the lonely, the downtrodden, and those who are suffering in soul and in body and become the salt that satisfies their longing for healing, we pray. (R)
C — That all of us gathered together here may continue to do good to others constantly so as to glorify our heavenly Father, we pray. (R)
C — That our beloved dead may receive the light, happiness, and peace in the Lord, and rejoice in his glory forever, we pray. (R)
C — Let us pray for the urgent concerns of our community and our personal intentions (pause). We pray: (R)
P — Heavenly Father, let the light of your salvation shine upon us. Help us to become your true light of love in our service to others.

We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
All — Amen.

THE LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

Presentation of the Gifts (Stand)
P — Pray, brethren...
All — May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

Prayer over the Offerings

P — O Lord our God, who once established these created things to sustain us in our frailty, grant, we pray, that they may become for us now the Sacrament of eternal life. Through Christ our Lord.
All — Amen.

Preface I of the Sundays in Ordinary Time

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.
P — Lift up your hearts.
All — We lift them up to the Lord.
P — Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All — It is right and just.
P — It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord.

For through his Paschal Mystery, he accomplished the marvelous deed, by which he has freed us from the yoke of sin and death, summoning us to the glory of being now called a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for your
own possession, to proclaim everywhere your mighty works, for you have called us out of darkness into your own wonderful light.

And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the host and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:
All — Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest. (Kneel)

Acclamation (Stand)
All — When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

THE COMMUNION RITE

The Lord’s Prayer

All — Our Father...
P — Deliver us, Lord...
All — For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever.

Invitation to Peace

Invitation to Communion (Kneel)

P — Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.
All — Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

Communion Antiphon

Ps 107 (106):8-9

Let them thank the Lord for his mercy, his wonders for the children of men, for he satisfies this thirsty soul, and the hungry he fills with good things.

Prayer after Communion (Stand)

P — Let us pray. (Pause)
O God, who have willed that we be partakers in the one Bread and the one Chalice, grant us, we pray, so to live that, made one in Christ, we may joyfully bear fruit for the salvation of the world. Through Christ our Lord. All — Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITES

P — The Lord be with you.
All — And with your spirit.

Prayer over the People

P — Bow down for the blessing. (Pause)
Look, O Lord, on the prayers of your family, and grant them the assistance they humbly implore, so that, strengthened by the help they need, they may persevere in confessing your name. All — Amen.

P — And may the blessing of almighty God, the Father, and the Son, (†) and the Holy Spirit, come down on you and remain with you for ever. All — Amen.

Dismissal

P — Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord.
All — Thanks be to God.