

St Pius & St Anthony 5th Sunday Ordinary Time Homily 2026 Year A

Salt and Light, is what Jesus calls us to be in the gospel today. Salt and Light are like Wonder Twins! That wasn't a cartoon that I grew up watching, but my younger brother did. Maybe it was on the Saturday morning Cartoon Super Friends power hour, and two of the SuperFriends featured, were the Wonder Twins (Zan & Jayna) Their superpower was that they could shapeshift and transform into whatever might be needed to solve a crisis (of course superheroes always save the day!) When needed, they'd touch hands and announce, "*Wonder Twin powers, activate!*" For example, Zan might assume the form of water, and Jayna would become a bucket to throw the water on the fire to extinguish it, saving the day. They go together for good!

So, Jesus says we should be Salt and Light (a wonder-twin combo!) I think Jesus is simply drawing a picture here of how He expects His disciples to function. I see this similar to how He teaches often in parables to help us visualize His lessons. He is drafting a picture here of how Christians should act. These pictures of salt and light, flesh out His command a few verses later when He says in Mt 5:20, "I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven." He is saying we should draw out and shine on the good around us- like salt and light, we should make things better! That is what both salt and light do! Salt preserves good and light shines on it. And isn't there a universal appeal to both elements? Salt and light – we all, like and are drawn to them both, and we have to have both of them!

We have to have salt because sodium is needed to regulate our body's fluid /blood volume, for nerve signal conduction and heart rhythm – and we have to have light, as I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, about our need for light, especially at this time of year, as we see many people suffer from SAD-Seasonal Affective Disorder. Light helps keep our positive spirits up on such short days and often cloudy days this time of year. So, as we need salt and light, so also the world needs Christians to function optimally and keeping good positive spirit flowing!

Jesus intentionally put these two together, Salt and Light, so what do they have in common? I suggest that they both are *selfless* elements: servants that don't draw attention to themselves, but always direct focus upon others around them. We don't ever find/use them or enjoy them alone. Well, let me adjust that statement: once we get out of childhood, we don't enjoy them alone. I mean, no one enjoys salt for salt's sake (turning up a salt shaker into one's mouth) except for in childhood – yes, ask my parents, we kids would enjoy a couple fries with our salt or we loved to sit on our homemade ice cream maker and enjoy an appetizer

handful of rock salt mixed on ice before the ice cream got finished. Or even light for light's own sake, I confess that not once did my dad come home and have to announce to us kids, "Why is every light in the house on – turn them off when you leave the room." But really, again, after getting out of childhood, we don't find & enjoy salt and light by themselves – they are always focused on what they mix with. They both are selfless, and enhance/spotlight more the others they are with, rather than emphasizing their selves. We add salt to dishes to preserve the good in them, or to accentuate their good – we salt dishes to bring out the best, to flavor or season them. And Christians should do that too -what we mix with, we should bring out and accent the best in it. Like Salt enhancing food's good flavor, Christians should amp up the good in everyone around. And light doesn't shine on itself – it can't turn back on itself. No, it spotlights outwardly or focuses attention on something else (outside itself): Highlighting the good in what is around it. Light and salt don't sell themselves, they showcase the best around them. Think of them both as, catalysts added, to help bring things together for good or to move processes along successfully. Or think of them as an additive binder ingredient put in a recipe, that facilitates the stability of the mix -or as preservative to keep it fresh – not added for their own sake, and likely not even noticed (for example, whoever says, "Oh the corn starch in that velvet cake puts it over the top!-who knows it is in there, but it is what makes the fluff even softer.) So, Salt and light are never the center of attention. No, they are supports - unmentioned like wingmen for another. Necessary, but unnoticed!

So, Jesus wants us disciples to be like salt and light that add to, contribute positively and bring about better outcomes when brought in to things. Christians ought to be that person, that when we are in a jam, we are glad to see show up. That is a disciple of Jesus (not, "Oh no here he comes again", but 'Oh good, here he comes – this is going to work!)

There was an early church document written about mid to late 100's called the 'Letter of Mathetes to Diognetus', and it states this same sentiment of Jesus: it describes Christians' relationship to the world by saying, that "what the soul is in the body, Christians are in the world—as the soul is imprisoned in the body, yet holds the body together, so Christians often are jailed out of sight, but they are what hold it together." ***The Christian makes the difference.*** As salt enhances flavor and draws out the best in the food, and light showcases what is good for others, so Christians should be agents of such bettering action upon others- bringing out the best and always shining, showcasing the good to be done!