

# TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 06.  
February 05, 2023

**L**ast Sunday we covered the Beatitudes. If you remember I suggested they were not so much a set of proscriptions as they were “descriptors” of the type of persons we were on the way to becoming – the “graduation criteria” of the school of Christian formation.

Today’s gospel reading comes right after the Beatitudes and can, in many ways, be considered a commentary on it. “You are the salt of the earth,” Jesus says, “You are the light of the world...” In other words, as you grow into the personhood God has intended for you, by that very process the world is ‘seasoned’ and lit up. It isn’t a question then of our setting out to intentionally being “salt” and “light” to the world: those will be the by-products of our ever-deepening relationship with God.

It’s instructive, I think, to take a closer look at what these metaphors imply. “Salt”, for example, is not simply something that gives flavor to our food: it is also something that is indispensable to our continued existence. We need it to live! As one commentator reminds us: “Consider the importance of salt in our lives. Like seawater, our bodies contain salt: a tear, a drop of blood, a bead of sweat. Without salt our hearts would not beat, blood would not flow, and muscles would not work properly. Before birth a baby develops in a saline solution. Accident victims may receive a salt solution intravenously. In Roman times salt was so precious that it was used, at least in part, to pay workers. The word “salary” comes from the Latin *salarium*, a word for salt. A person not worth his or her salt is one not worthy of wages. Every year Americans use eighty-five million tons of salt for their food and chemical industries.” And so, too, with light: without light, life, as we know it would be impossible: photosynthesis, the process by which plants use sunlight, water, and carbon dioxide to create oxygen and energy in the form of sugar, is the basis of the whole food chain.

In other words, what is being said here is more that the fact that our presence as disciples will make the world a more pleasant and attractive place to inhabit: our presence is essential to its health, to its continued existence.

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Now this all would be and incredible source of stress – that the world’s health should depend on us and the quality of our lives as Christians – were it not for the fact, as I have already mentioned, that it is not something that we do but that God does for us. In fact I suspect that the less we think about it the better because when we think about it our focus turns from God to ourselves, and that interrupts the process. Our job is to strive to put God at the center of our lives: the rest of it, He will take care of.

Jesus ends this particular portion with His remarks on the Law. “Do not think,” He says that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter..... will pass from the law until all is accomplished.” Many commentators have taken them to be an endorsement of Jewish Law, of Torah which is taken to be proof of Matthew’s Jewish origins, and that may, to some extent, be the case. However, I don’t think we can understand just what Jesus is saying here if we take these words out of context – in other words, if we forget that they are appended to the Beatitudes – and that in what immediately follows, Jesus sets about radically reinterpreting the Law. I think that it’s more likely that what Jesus is saying here is that the person described by the Beatitudes IS the law accomplished – is the whole point of the law, and that now, a new and better Way has been given us to reach that goal, to accomplish those ends.

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### **SAINTS:**

**The Martyrs of Japan, 6 February.** Almost fifty years after Francis Xavier had arrived in Japan as its first Christian apostle, the presence of several thousand baptised Christians in the land became a subject of suspicion to the ruler Hideyoshi, who soon began a period of persecution. Twenty-six men and women, Religious and lay, were first mutilated then crucified near Nagasaki in 1597. After their martyrdom, their blooded- clothes were kept and held in reverence by their fellow Christians. The period of persecution continued for another thirty-five years, many new witness-martyrs being added to their number.

**Scholastica, Abbess of Plombariola, 10 February.** Scholastica is a more shadowy figure than her famous brother, St Benedict. She too was born at Nursia, central Italy, around the year 480. At an early age she chose to consecrate herself to God, but probably continued to live at home. Only after Benedict moved to Monte Cassino did she settle at Plombariola nearby, joining or maybe founding a nunnery under his direction. As abbess she sought to follow his Rule, and met him each year at a house near his monastery where they would praise God together and discuss spiritual matters. She died in about the year 543. Benedict had a vision of her soul rising up to heaven and, collecting her body, he had her buried in the tomb prepared for himself. Scholastica soon became a figure for veneration by all nuns who followed Benedict's Rule.