

## 5A

*At the time of the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century one of the things which Luther levelled against the Church was that it was concentrating far too much on good works to get to Heaven and overlooking St Paul's words: "it is only by faith alone that one is saved". Well, actually the Scriptures themselves never mention the word 'alone'. Catholics are bible Christians but in order to interpret them correctly we need the guidance of the Church.*

In the gospel today, St Matthew tells us that there must be a blend of faith and action when he says: *"let the light of your faith shine among men and women so that seeing your good works they may give praise to your Father in Heaven"*.

If God is afforded the glory, then the salt of our faith won't become tasteless or the light grow dim. We won't be craving the limelight. St Therese of Lisieux said 'If we go through life without anyone noticing our good deeds, so much the better. God loves little souls who offer Him the hidden sacrifices of day to day living.' The light of many people's good works shine out all the time but they're scarcely aware of it.

On the other hand if we say we have faith and our good deeds are few and far between then we are putting the lamp of our faith 'under the proverbial tub'. St James says that "faith without good works is dead" – and so it is. At the Last Judgement we will be judged on good works not on pious thoughts or sentiments or knowing the bible inside out.

There are other ways that the salt of our faith become tasteless. We are supposed to love Christ and his church but sometimes we can be overcritical of the Church, forgetting it's the Body of Christ we are demeaning. Incidentally it was the Church, founded by Christ, which brought the light of civilization to the barbarians. Without the church the light of our faith would be somewhat reduced and could even go out altogether.

Another way the metaphorical salt becomes tasteless is when we're not earthed into the parish community but operating as a freelance catholic. We go church-hopping on a Sunday with little or no involvement with our local parish community. I call that service station religion which leaves a lot to be desired. When Jesus was sending out his disciples to preach and heal he instructed them not to move from house to house. Your

involvement in the parish, howsoever small, is invaluable. Even Jesus needed the company and friendship of the apostles to fulfil His mission. He didn't 'plough a lonely furrow'.

Another way the salt of our faith can become insipid is when we pick and choose certain teachings of Our Lord and His church and disregard others. St Paul's letter to Timothy puts it like this: '*For the time will come when men will not tolerate sound doctrine, but with itching ears they will gather around themselves teachers to suit their own desires*'.

*Jesus says: "let the light of your faith shine out". Keeping it hidden is not an option.*