

Let's consider the two images that Jesus uses today: salt and light. First, He tells us that we are the salt of the earth. **"Salt preserves food from corruption; it also brings out its flavor and makes it more pleasant... we are meant to do the same thing for the people around us"** (St. Jose Maria). Our holiness of life can be an example for others that helps keep them from evil and brings out the best in them. One of the greatest things someone could say of us is: "You make me want to be a better person, a better disciple of Christ!"

The second image that Jesus uses is light. He tells us: **"You are the light of the world."** A lamp is meant to give light. Here's an image for you. There's an old Jimmy Stewart movie called "Mr. Hobbes Takes a Vacation." In that movie Jimmy Stewart takes his family on a vacation to an old beach house for the summer. When they enter the old house there's a single light bulb hanging with a chain in a large foyer. He pulled the chain, and the smallest of all possible glows came from the bulb and he exclaimed: **"You call that a light. That's not a light they ought to call that a dark, you turn that thing on and the whole room goes black."**

Sometimes our own light that is our lives becomes something of a dark. There are times when we might rightly hide some act of prayer or a good deed because we're not doing it to win other people's praise. But then there are times when we hide the light of Christ, the light of our Catholic faith for the wrong reasons, perhaps out of fear, laziness or cowardice.

I remember in the job I worked before I entered the seminary; the company was growing and there were a lot of people in the office and warehouse. The beginning of Lent would pose an interesting dilemma for me because I would have to decide whether to get my ashes for Ash Wednesday in the morning or after work. If I got them in the morning, then everybody at work would see them all day long. They'd ask me questions; maybe think I was too religious and so on. I knew that if I didn't get my ashes in the morning it would be because of fear so the year I entered the seminary, to give a good witness I got my ashes in the morning.

I was a little nervous going into the office that day. My ashes weren't obviously in the shape of a cross so several people said: "Hey, you've got some dirt on your forehead" and then I would explain that it's the beginning of Lent, Ash Wednesday and I was Catholic and so forth. If people wanted to learn more, we would talk. Some Catholics saw me and would say: **"You know, I should go to Church and get my ashes too."**

The ashes on my head became an opportunity for me to talk about the faith with people, it became an invitation. But I had to move through the awkwardness, fear, and cowardice. I had to be ready, like St. Peter says, to give an account of the hope that is in me when people would ask me questions. Jesus can use us, frail vessels that we are, to help others to come to know Him.

"Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

**"You are the light of the world."
- Mt 5:14a**