

February 8, 2026—Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

There is a hymn titled “We Are the Light of the World” that is taken from Jesus’ words in the Gospel this Sunday and from the Beatitudes, which we read last Sunday. I’m a little uncomfortable in boldly proclaiming that “I” or “We” are the light of the world because I’m not sure that it is very true! I think it should be renamed to something like: “We Are Called to Be the Light of the World”.

In almost every way, Catholics mirror the secular culture around us rather than the way that Jesus calls us to live as His disciples. We waste as much time on cell phones and other media as everyone else; we have the same consumer mentality that constantly seeks pleasure and an easy life like every other American; we jump to anger and cursing and belittling those who disagree with us like the rest in our society. While Catholics do many good things like other people of good will, are we really bringing the light of Christ to our marriages and family and workplace in ways that only Christians can?

Many years ago, I asked a young man who was taking instructions, what made him want to convert to the Catholic faith. He said that it was the example of his father-in-law that led him to the Catholic faith. He saw that he was a good, sincere man who always treated others well; he was not afraid to live his Catholic faith in a very natural way. His faith was integrated into everything that he did at work, in the family and with his neighbors. A good example is one of the best ways to evangelize, to spread the faith to others.

In order to be the light to the world, we must realize that we are not the source of that light. We are like the moon which receives all its light from the sun; it has no light of its own. The source of light for us is Jesus who called Himself “**the light of the world**”. He shares His own divine life with us through the sacraments; through the gifts of grace that He offers us repeatedly.

A little girl and her family were taking a tour of one of the great cathedrals of France. As the guide explained the historic significance of a tomb nearby, the girl was looking up at a magnificent stained-glass window. She suddenly asked the guide, “Who are the people in the pretty window?” “Those are the saints,” the man replied. Later that night as she was getting ready for bed, she told her mother, “I know who the saints are.” “Do you dear,” the mother replied. “Who are they?” “They are the people who let the light shine through.”

As Jesus told us, **“Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”** At the same time, we must be careful of the sin of pride. If we do deeds of love for others because we want to win their love or esteem or expect them to do something in return, then we have the wrong motive. If you receive a compliment, say thank you, but in your heart give God the glory.

The Season of Lent begins in a week and a half; Ash Wednesday is on February 18. We need the Season of Lent to help us focus our lives more intensely upon Jesus Christ and let His light shine through us. There is a three-fold plan for Lent: prayer, penance and deeds of charity. We should try and pick something that will make our lives more virtuous. It shouldn't be just a matter of coming to the end of Lent and saying that I didn't fail once to keep my Lenten promises. Rather, even if I failed occasionally, I can say that I have conquered a fault or least made headway against it through prayer and self-denial. Or, I can say that this Lent I grew in virtue by doing deeds of charity and became less selfish or self-centered.

We all need to limit our time on social media and YouTube and other sites that in the end hurt our soul and make us sad and lonely. Every study shows that that happens. Even though it is good to keep up with the news, limiting the amount of news you watch would be beneficial and bring greater peace of soul. Maybe it means staying off the internet, except for work purposes until noon each day. There are so many good podcasts, like The Bible in a Year or The Catechism in a Year that will help your spiritual life or anything on Formed by the Augustine Institute or Scott Hahn's St. Paul Center.

Each Saturday morning, we have faith sharing groups with excellent videos for men and for women. Friday evenings in Lent will provide an evening Mass, Stations of the Cross and confessions. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is available throughout the week.

We all have the penances of abstaining from meat on Ash Wednesday, the Fridays of Lent and Good Friday, as well as fasting on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Maybe our deeds of penance could include not eating between meals or not snacking after dinner or giving up some favorite food that we like. We need to build self-control and self-discipline back into our lives.

You are called to be the light of the world. **“Your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”**

