

ORDINARY SUNDAY V “A”
FEBRUARY 8/9, 2014
(Catholic Charities Appeal & Communal Anointing)

Whenever we pick up a newspaper or turn on the news, we run the risk of becoming overwhelmed by the suffering we see reported, and discouraged by how small our individual efforts seem in comparison. Knowing well the discouragement people face whenever they confront suffering directly, Jesus assures his disciples and us that *we can make a difference*. Through our faith in him and our sharing in his life in baptism, we received the gift of the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that filled Jesus at his baptism, the same Spirit that is the bond of love between Jesus and the Father, the same Spirit that was revealed in Jesus’ own works of healing. Jesus used two simple, yet strong images, to describe us and our sharing in his mission: **“You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.”**

Salt is multi-potent: it preserves, breaks down, purifies, heals, melts, cleanses, brings out latent qualities. Light is multi-effective: it reveals, clarifies, heightens, focuses, helps things grow, warms, signals. Faithful discipleship must embrace all these potencies and effects to preserve and carry forward Jesus’ saving mission. This weekend we publicly celebrate our being called and carrying out our mission as salt and light especially as agents of divine healing through the work of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese and sacramentally through the celebration of the Sacrament of the Sick with our brothers and sisters.

Each year Catholic Charities conducts an Annual Appeal in all of our parishes to raise funds necessary to support the programs and services it provides in the name of each of us. One of the regional offices of Catholic Charities is here in Ames at St. Thomas. As a pastor I regularly refer individuals and families to Catholic Charities for assistance with a variety of issues they are confronting. This past year Catholic Charities provided services to over 15,000 people in our Archdiocese, wonderful, deserving people who have fallen on hard times, most of whom fall beneath the federal poverty level of income for a family of four which is \$23,000.00. With the exception of Charities

affordable housing program, Catholic Charities receives no government funding. One third of its operating budget is dependent on this annual appeal. This is why each of our gifts, no matter how big or small, is so important.

If you have contributed to Catholic Charities in the past you have, or will, receive a mailing at home. Otherwise, you will find a flyer in this weekend's bulletin to make your donation. **Catholic Charities requests that you send your contribution directly to them rather than placing it in the collection basket here at Mass.** This allows Catholic Charities to directly acknowledge your gift. Donations can also be made securely online at the address given on the flyer.

Also this weekend we join prayer to God for healing in the lives of our brothers and sisters who present themselves for the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. In the Sacrament of Anointing we see Jesus acting now through us, his Church, his body, bringing the healing salt and light of his redeeming love still today into situations of suffering, offering the gift of his peace, and if it is the will of God, the lessening or even a full remission of the effects of sickness and suffering.

Whenever we do what we can to lift others from their suffering, it brings out the very best that God created within us. Any light we bring to others is set on a lampstand to shine brilliantly, illuminating all in the house, including ourselves, the world is less dark. The Prophet Isaiah 800 years before Jesus today promises that whenever we act compassionately toward those in need, the Lord will answer our own prayers, heal our wounds, comfort us in our suffering, and bring light to our own places of darkness.

Today through our response to the annual Catholic Charities Appeal and in our prayers and support for our brothers and sisters who are anointed for healing we again embrace Jesus' commission to all of us as disciples through baptism to be the "salt of the earth and the light of the world."