

ORDINARY SUNDAY V "A"

FEBRUARY 8/9, 2020

COMMUNAL SACRAMENT OF ANOINTING OF THE SICK & CATHOLIC CHARITIES
APPEAL

In 1945, Father James Keller, a Maryknoll priest from New York, founded the organization known as *The Christophers*. Catholic in its founding, the Christophers has become an ecumenical organization embracing Christian, Jewish, and other faith traditions. The organization traditionally has advocated for honesty in government, and issues of social justice. Their motto is: **It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.**

Last weekend we celebrated the Feast of the Presentation, the feast of light, in which Jesus was presented in the Temple and hailed by Simeon as the *"light of revelation to the Gentiles, and glory for your people Israel"* (Lk.2:32). In today's Gospel Jesus tells us that as his disciples we are "the salt of the earth" (Mt.5:13) and "the light of the world" (Mt.5:14). The prophet Isaiah spells out how we will be recognized as "salt and light": *"If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; if you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; then light shall rise for you in the darkness"* (Isa.58:8-10).

This weekend we give expression to Jesus and Isaiah's vision in two ways.

First, we gather with those among us who present themselves for healing through the Sacrament of the Sick. In addition to its physical manifestations, illness, especially prolonged illness or therapy, may be accompanied by feelings of isolation and despondency, types of spiritual darkness. Through the celebration of this sacrament those anointed are reassured through the laying on of hands and anointing with blessed oil by the priest, of Christ's closeness and concern for them. In the context of a communal gathering at Mass those anointed also experience their bond with us in the body of Christ that is the Church. Both the ritual acts and the presence of the Church community are actions of light and hope.

Second, this weekend is our annual opportunity to be salt and light to our brothers and sisters who experience special needs through our financial gift to Catholic Charities of the

Archdiocese. Fifty percent of Catholic Charities funds needed to provide its services are dependent on this annual appeal. Catholic Charities has been, and continues to be, “salt and light” in our name for all who come and receive its various services: individual and couple counseling; immigration assistance; jail and prison ministry just to mention three examples. Catholic Charities helps to restore the “flavor” of hope to lives that have lost their savor; brings light to those living in the darkness of emotional distress not knowing where to turn to find help for a myriad of other issues. Catholic Charities and its services are my “first call” as pastor, when our local parish pastoral resources or our Social Justice Committee’s many services are unable to meet a need. I encourage and thank you for your continued generous support of Catholic Charities in its mission in the archdiocese.

As we celebrate our loving concern for our brothers and sisters anointed today and our support for Catholic Charities each of us becomes a “Christopher”—a Christ bearer, light which drives away the curse of the darkness.

9 February, 2020
Father Jim Seena