

Once a missionary had the opportunity to ask this question to Mahatma Gandhi, "What is the biggest obstacle to Christianity in India?" His answer was quick and firm: "Christians." The Christians are the obstacles to Christianity, not the real and committed ones, but those who bear only the name "Christian", but the way they talk and act shows that have nothing to do with Christ and Christianity. St. John Chrysostom said "There would be no need for sermons if our lives were shining; there would be no need for words if we bore witness with our deeds; there would be no more pagans if we were true Christians". Today's readings calls us to be deeply aware of our dignity and Christian responsibility as "the salt of the earth" and "light of the world". In the first reading the prophet Isaiah tells us to be fair and compassionate towards the weak, needy and vulnerable. He urges us to do good deeds that is to share our bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless and clothe the naked. If we do so, the light of God shines in us and there is no more darkness in us. In fact, through them God reveals His goodness to us. In the second reading we see St. Paul says "reaching the people in all humility means to proclaim Jesus Christ the 'Crucified' and intensify the Christian character of our vocation as "the light of the world." The light which we should carry is the central object of our faith, that is, "Christ Crucified".

In today's gospel Jesus says: "You are the salt of the earth" and "light of the world" What does it mean to be salt and light? Salt is an essential and important thing in our food and the greatest quality of salt is that it adds taste to the food. Without salt, the food would be tasteless. Then, the salt also symbolizes the purity. Moreover, the salt is also the most common of all preservatives to preserve the things from being spoiled or rotten. So when Jesus says- "You are the salt of the earth", simply means that we, as followers of Jesus, have to give taste, meaning to life, bringing joy and peace, justice and love, care and concern, hope and consolation to others. The salt when added in the food, it dissolves and cannot find it anymore but we feel the taste of it. So also the Christian life is to carry within it, Jesus himself by losing ourselves and our identity to give taste, meaning in the lives of others and to build a world of love, peace and justice. We must also be an example of absolute purity in speech, in conduct and even in thought, living a life of love, faith, honesty and diligence. We must preserve the good and prevent evil in society. Through our good life, others have to know the source of all goodness - God himself. That is to say that our good deeds should not be self-glorification, but God - glorification. St. Anthony of Padua wrote in one of his sermons: " Actions speak louder than words; let your words teach and your actions speak". We need to proclaim Jesus Christ through our lives - in word and deed and through our every single virtue of faith, hope, love, patience, humility and simplicity.

The "light" is an expression of the inner beauty, truth, and goodness of God. Jesus is the light who comes to illumine us and give meaning to our lives. He calls us to be the bearers of his light to others. Just as lamp illumines the darkness around us, the darkness of deception and ignorance and enables us to see clearly and to avoid stumbling and losing our way, so the light of Christ shines in our hearts to hear and believe his word. In fact, our mission and calling is to be light-bearers of Jesus Christ so that many others may see and understand the truth of the Gospel and be free from the blindness of sin, ignorance, and deception. There is great freedom and joy for those who live in God's light and who seek his truth and goodness. Those who listen to God and heed his voice will receive more from him. And they will lack nothing to live as Christ's disciples. And they will shine as light that shows the wisdom and truth of God's word. Let us ask our Lord Jesus to guide us by the light of His saving truth and fill our hearts and minds with His light and free us from the blindness of sin, ignorance, and deception that we may see His ways clearly and understand His will for our lives that we may radiate His light and truth to others in word and deed."