

5th Sunday Ordinary A 2-6-11

(Well, we all know what weekend this is: soon, 200 million eyes will turn to Dallas to enjoy...the 5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A!)

So, instead of something boring like the Super Bowl, let's talk about what's actually exciting: salt! Yes, versatile salt! It melts snow in Green Bay, raises blood pressure in Pittsburgh, livens up nachos in Dallas Stadium, and preserves the foods on grocery shelves.

After all these years, I have finally learned what Jesus meant when he said, "You are the salt of the earth!" Are you ready? It's gross. At the time of Jesus, women cooked in clay ovens outside their homes. Many Israelis still use them. But, there wasn't much wood to burn for heat. But, there was lots of camel and donkey dung. Little girls would be taught to collect the dung, mix salt into it, shape the dung into patties, and then let it dry in the sun. (Gross, huh?) Then, the mothers would put a slab of salt on the floor of the oven, and in a chemical reaction, the salt would help the dung to burn. Moms would bake lots of bread, some vegetables, and a little meat. (Don't ask about the flavor! Don't go there!) Eventually, the slab of salt would lose its chemical properties and need to be thrown out.

So, when Jesus called his disciples "the salt of the earth," he was telling them to set the world on fire! To build lots of little fires in their world, to transform a little of the world's dung and dirt into something bright and good.

[pause] They just stared at Jesus. What could they do? What influence did they have? 95% of Jesus' listeners were illiterate; almost all were very poor. Many would be sick or in pain: only 5% lived to be even 30 years old. And THEY were the salt of the earth? Nobodies like them were to "start fires" to transform the world?

In Isaiah chapter 58, the Lord tells us to "share bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed, do not turn your back on your own." Is it possible to make a difference in the world? Because we're not going to buy a Super Bowl

ad for \$100,000.00 a second....or fly to Cairo and carry a freedom banner in the Square.

Pope Benedict XVI—83 years old—has one suggestion: Facebook! He has asked Christians to join online social networks to help spread the Gospel. I don't know if the Pope has a Facebook page or not. (We could network with the Pope during coaches' challenges.)

[pause] The fact is, every day you and I change the world, a little bit—for better or worse. Every night when we lay our head on the pillow, the world is a little better....or less good. The fact is, most days, some camel comes down our driveway and leaves a pile of "stuff," and we have to choose how to respond. We can be the salt of the earth, and try to transform life's dung to fire and light, or we can add our own dirt and make the dung pile bigger and the earth darker and smellier.

"But I am only person! How can I make any difference?" Have you ever seen—in National Geographic-- a satellite photo of the earth at night? Russia, Australia, Brazil are very dark. But Europe, Japan, eastern US are very bright, even from space. And all that brightness is created one bulb at a time. You, member of St. Bernadette Amelia, start a fire for good, shine your light. Even the heavens will see it!