



## *Thoughts on the Journey...*

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A number of years ago, my sister-in-law was converting to Catholicism and she asked me to be her sponsor. I was happy to go through the RCIA process with her. Her enthusiasm for the Church re-energized my faith, which I needed at the time.

The final phase of her preparation to receive the sacraments of initiation, included the Rite of Initiation. It was there where she affirmed her intention to join the Catholic Church before the bishop. Bishop Campbell was the presider that evening and he gave a memorable homily. What stood out in my mind at the time, (and has stayed with me to this day), were three questions he posed to the congregation. With each question, the Bishop asked for a show of hands:

1. *“How many of you are here tonight because you were inspired by a book?”* Maybe three people raised their hands.
2. *“How many of you are here because you were inspired by a movie?”* Again, very few people raised their hands.
3. *“How many people are here this evening because you were inspired by a Catholic?”* Nearly every hand was raised.

The visual representation of those three simple questions spoke volumes to me. When I went home that evening, I laid in bed and thought of all the people who made a lasting impact on my life of faith up until that time. The obvious stand-outs were my parents and grandparents, but as I laid quietly looking up at the ceiling, faces from my past began to come into view: the teachers from the Catholic schools I attended who not only taught me religion, but also lived their faith; the missionary priests and sisters I worked with in rural Kentucky and Georgia; Allison, the little child I used to visit at the St. Joseph's home in Cincinnati. She had hydrocephalus and couldn't talk or move, but the peace that puddled in her eyes and the sweet smile that was always waiting for me when I visited, gave me the sense that God dwelled within her like no other; there are also the countless encounters with people who showed exceptional kindness and mercy to me: They were all the light-bearers in my world-

faith-filled people who gave me a greater taste for God.

In this week's gospel from Matthew, Jesus was speaking to his disciples of the importance of their impact on the world. Using the metaphors of salt and light, Jesus impressed upon them the significance of keeping their gifts and talents relevant and fresh as disciples. He said to them:

**“You are the salt of the earth... If salt loses its taste... it is no longer good for anything... You are the light of the world... your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.”**

We are Jesus' disciples: ambassadors assigned to influence and impact the world around us by pointing others to God. Let's face it, simply put, the Church is losing its influence. The primary reason for our diminished impact is because Christians have neglected their responsibility to be salt and light in the world. Whether from discouragement over various issues that have plagued the church, or apathy and laziness, busyness, sinfulness, whatever it is that is keeping us from keeping Christ as the nucleus of our lives, perhaps we need to examine our individual contribution to building the Kingdom of God.

It's time! The world is dark! It's time to take the bushel basket off our faith and re-charge our light. Together as a community we are called to be that bright city on a hill. We are not irrelevant and God is not a secret to be kept. Every baptized person has been given the grace to be a disciple. It's up to each one of us to cooperate with the grace that we have been given and be salt and light to the world. We can be that light wherever we are and whatever we are doing. We can give people a good taste of who God is by sharing the Christ within us. We can smile more, step out of our box and reach out to those in need, frequent the sacraments, extend an invitation for someone to join you at church. Most importantly, make Christ our center.