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Salt of the Earth - Light of the World

[by Marcellino D'Ambrosio, Ph.D.](#)



As a teen growing up in a Catholic family, living in one of the most Catholic area of the US, I never would have considered abandoning my faith. But I also never would have considered getting excited about my faith either. Why should I? Nobody else in my parish seemed to be excited. The teens in the parish went wild at the rock concerts we attended, and the adults got excited about New Years Eve and Super Bowl parties.

But when I looked around at these same people during Sunday Mass, I saw more blank faces than passionate ones. So I assumed being Catholic was about denying yourself a bit of fun now so that something really bad wouldn't happen to you later (namely, hell). But I did not want a dull life either, so I paid my weekly dues at church and tried to avoid real serious sin as I grabbed for as much gusto as I could.

You'd think that one of the beatitudes was "blessed be the bland." But instead, Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount "you are the salt of the earth" (Mat 5:13). Salt is spicy, not dull and boring. It actually has the power to make insipid food tasty and to preserve food that would otherwise spoil. Salt was so valuable in antiquity that it was often used to pay soldiers their wages. The Latin term for salt is actually the origin of our English word "salary." Hence the expression "he's worth his salt."



Jesus is very clear that he is not paying for salt that has no flavor. It is good for nothing but the trash heap. This reminds me of what he says elsewhere to a group of less than impressive Christians: because they were neither hot nor cold but rather lukewarm, he intended to spew them out of his mouth (Rev 3:15-16). In other words, lukewarm Christians make God sick.

This is not to say that one must be an extrovert, entertainer, or brilliant lecturer to be a successful Christian. It's not about personality. It's about heart. It's about approaching your Christian life with passion rather than with a yawn. After all, on the day of

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Pentecost Jesus did not rain down Prozac from heaven, but fire. In the presence of fire, people don't meander and mope. They move, and move quickly.



We can't be the light of the world unless we're on fire. The Christian life cannot be lived on autopilot, in robotic fashion. That sort of existence is not living, but surviving. And it will attract absolutely no one to Christ and the Catholic Church.

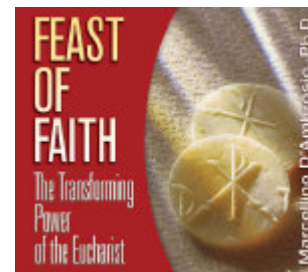
So how did I move from being a lukewarm Catholic teen to a salty, fiery one? Simple. A friend of mine went through a change. She had been troubled and had gotten into trouble. But I saw a change in her lifestyle and her countenance. As she told me what Jesus meant to her, there was joy and peace on her face and a quiet passion in her words. Her shining countenance got my attention. Her "tasty" words intrigued me. They led me to a Catholic renewal group in a nearby parish where I saw lots of changed lives and lots of radiant faces. And so I joined them as they pursued a life of prayer, evangelization, and service to the poor in the inner city (Is 58:7-10). They did their job of being salt and light.

Are you doing your job? Are you hot or lukewarm, spiritual alive, or comatose? Here's a test for you. Answer honestly. Are you excited about prayer, or is it a chore? When you have extra time and money, how much of it do you ever invest it in spiritual growth or apostolic service? Are you "too busy" to get to confession regularly, attend a parish mission, or get involved in serving the needy? And finally, if it were a crime to be a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?



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