

***“Are we the Real Deal?”***

1. What is **the “real deal”** when it comes to our Catholic Faith? It’s one thing to say we are Catholic; it’s another thing all together to live it well in daily life. Only with God’s grace can we do that. We live in a world today that increasingly needs our witness or testimony to the light of Christ and the Gospel, as Pope Francis reminds us repeatedly: the Gospel message which brings light and life to human souls. In a world that grows increasingly cold and callous both in terms of lack of respect for human life, made in the image of God from the moment of conception, and in being selfish rather than truly loving other people, we Catholic Christians are called to be salt and light to the world. **In order to share our Faith with others we need to know it well.** Not necessarily like a professor or a theologian, but to know the basic tenets of our Faith in order to live it ourselves and to “*give a reason for our hope in the Lord*” (see **1 Peter 3:13-17**) to others. I urge everyone here to continue to daily study and to reflect daily on the gift of our Faith in a disciplined way – it is truly the pearl of great price and its depths are beyond measure. Take advantage over time of the resources God has given us to learn more: *our Parish lending library, the excellent Catholic television shows on E.W.T.N., listening to good Catholic programming on Cd’s/ podcasts/ satellite radio in the car/computer/ or phone; reading books and pamphlets/ taking little prayer cards and devotional items in the Church, going to adult education when it is offered, and daily studying the Sacred Scriptures, the Lives of the Saint, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church.*
2. **Are we doing our part to season the world for the better and be a light pointing others to Christ and the gift of the Catholic faith which He started on the rock of St. Peter?** Well only God knows for sure if we are, but we get a good sense of what we need to be and do from the readings today. It always holds true that if we love the Lord, we will show it in deeds of kindness toward our neighbor. As Isaiah the prophet puts it, “*share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless, clothe the naked when you see them, and do not*

*turn your back on your own. Remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech and help all those who are afflicted in any way.”*

This points us to the need to be a person of practical and generous charity daily, by actions of love to the people around us, but also supporting good charitable works near and far away, with our money, our time, and most of all our prayers. Sometimes the best charity we can do for others is to pray and offer our daily duties and sufferings for them in love, esp. if we are up in age and/or have frail health. All conversion to the Lord ultimately begins with prayer and self-sacrifice as St. Mother Teresa put it so beautifully years ago. And remember the example of St. Monica daily praying and offering penance for the conversion of her husband and son Augustine – it took many years! Growth in prayer will lead to growth in every day charity. Don't be discouraged by human weaknesses & selfishness; keep at your good efforts – the Holy Spirit will change ppl over time.

3. A famous quote, falsely attributed to St. Francis, is *preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words* = If we live the way we are called to live by God and the Church, people will notice that we are the “real deal” and will want to know more about Jesus and the Catholic faith. The last few popes have said **the BIGGEST challenge** for us as Catholics in the modern world is not to divorce the Faith, that we profess every Sunday with the daily life we lead in the world. It is so easy to *“go along to get along.”* But if we fall into that trap, what we are doing then is losing our power to witness; or as Jesus puts it, **as salt** we are losing our ability to flavor things for the better, and **as the light** of the world in Christ we are then hidden away. This is powerful imagery: salt in the ancient world was THE preservative to keep things from spoiling, and light was so valued, both daylight and fire, since at night it was pitch black - way before the age of electricity. Jesus is saying His followers are **the key** to keeping the world from going to pot, and He is counting on us to be good witnesses to and for Him. Are we doing this? Hopefully in God's mercy and grace we are trying, but let's ask the Lord to help us to daily be even more generous and effective Catholic witnesses in helping the Lord to save souls, our own and other ppl, the ultimate Divine gift. God bless you.