

## Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Our retired bishop, Raymond Boland, has been diagnosed with squamous cell lung cancer, stage 3-4. Today is his 82nd birthday. This week Bishop Robert Finn asked us to pray for Bishop Boland at every mass. He also told us that Bishop Boland was weak and it was best not to call or visit him right now. When Bishop Boland picked up his phone, I told him I was disobeying the request not to call him. He said it was OK. He did sound weak. He said to me, "I'm sure this will be my final illness." I said, "I want to thank you for the service you've given our diocese and the support you've given me personally. You've been a very good bishop."

Jesus told his disciples that we had to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. I imagine in some ways they already were. The gospels tell us they argued with one another, they misunderstood some of what Jesus said, and they said inappropriate things. But I think Jesus chose them because he saw some goodness in them, and they showed goodness to others in obedience to his teachings. After all, Jesus didn't say, "You ought to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world;" he said, "You are." This part of the sermon on the mount probably admonished the disciples to keep it up. "Don't lose your flavor and become worthless; don't try to conceal your light. Keep doing good things."

The same lesson applies to us. We Christians already make a mark in the world. When our neighbors see us come to church each weekend, they know we are doing our best to praise God. When we observe feasts like Christmas and seasons like Lent we shine the light of our faith into the community. When parents share their faith with their children, when kids choose good friends at school, when we bring patience and charity into the workplace, we let our light shine. We are the salt of the earth.

Still, we face temptations. Some days we don't feel like praying. Or it's easier to get into an argument than listen to what someone else has to say. Or we set the wrong example when children are watching. We say we're too busy to help. Or we act too shy to impress. At times we are not salty, and we try to hide our light. But Christ is our light, and that light cannot be hidden. We may try to conceal it, but because of our baptism Christ is always with us. We can always draw on his power to make the right choice and to do the right thing.

When we face our final illness or whatever it is that ends our life, we hope people will be able to say this about our life: that we were salt, and we were light, that our good deeds brought glory to our Father in heaven.