

Salt has become one of those ingredients they remove from foods to make them more marketable. Salt can raise your blood pressure, which is not good if you have stress. Marketers could encourage us to minimize our stress, but they usually suggest we just eat less salt; that way we can have all the stress we want while we increase the sales of their products.

A few years ago when I worked for the Center for Pastoral Life and Ministry we started an Advent custom. Each day we gave away an award for the person on our staff who had the most pre-Christmas stress. You can imagine the competition got pretty fierce. I was trying to lose a few pounds that month, so I was jogging more. When I jog a lot I can get real mellow. Well, I was so relaxed, they could never give me the award, and that caused everybody else more stress. My blood pressure got so low that when I went to donate blood that month they almost didn't take it; they thought my readings resembled laboratory rats. Finally my doctor told me to change my diet and add more salt. First time that prescription was ever given in medical history.

Jesus says Christians should be salt. A good strong Christian should raise your blood pressure. But Jesus does not stop with salt. We must also be light. We may create stress for others, as long as we give them hope. We may correct children, as long as we show them a better way. We may complain to congress, as long as we give them solutions. Being salt works wonders, as long as we're also light.

Isaiah says, "Share your bread with the hungry; shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked--Then your light shall break forth like the dawn." If salt raises the blood pressure of those content with what they have, light comforts those who have less.

At Christmas this year somebody gave us a special \$2000 gift. Sue asked me how to spend it, and I gave her several ideas, including a fax machine which I thought we could use in the office, but I suggested she let the Stewardship Council decide what to do. You know what they said? The Stewardship Council said, "Put the money in our emergency assistance fund, so we can provide for people in our community who can't pay their heat bills this winter." That's light. That's leadership. And that's St. Regis.