

This past Friday was Owen's baptismal anniversary.

In our family, we celebrate this day almost like a birthday—
And really, I think we should all celebrate it just as much if
not more than a birthday.

The kids get a special breakfast treat,

And we open their baptism faith chests that our former
congregation made for them,

Chests that hold important pieces of their faith journey that
we'll continue to collect over the years.

Right now, the chests hold mainly their baptismal items—

A shell,

The baptismal candle,

The bulletin with Scriptures from that day,

Their certificate of baptism.

We talked with Owen about the symbols of baptism—

The dove coming down as the Holy Spirit,

The water flowing over us and washing us clean,

And the candle burning bright.

“Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good
works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

We hear these words from Jesus in our Gospel this morning.

These are also the words spoken to the newly baptized as they are
handed that burning candle.

With water still trickling down their faces,

We remind the newly baptized of the holy work to which they are
now called.

Work that comes after the gracious gift of salvation.

Work that flows from the new life and redemption.

“Let your light so shine. . .”

Notice that we don't say, "Turn your light on"
Or "Ignite the flame" —

For we don't do that part.

The flame has been lit,

The light switch has been flipped.

God in Christ has ignited us for good works,

For holy living,

For sharing the Gospel.

And we are called to, simply, shine.

"You are the light of the world," Jesus says.

"You are the salt of the earth."

I think we often hear these words as calls to action—

That we need to shake the salt,

Shine the light.

But hear the words again-

"You are the salt of the earth."

Not the salt shaker.

The actual salt that is shaken, sprinkled, and seasoning
the world.

God is the salt shaker—

God is the one who shakes and sprinkles us
in the bland, season-less places.

"You are the light of the world."

Not the one who carries the flashlight,

Not the one who turns it on,

Not the one who points its beam.

We are the beam itself.

God is pointing us,

Carrying us,

Shining us into the dark, desperate places.

We are salt—

God sprinkles us out,
Not the other way around.

We are light—

God shines us,
Not the other way around.

Because God knows if it were left up to us,

If we were the salt shaker sprinkling God into the world,
We would all too often choose to hide that shaker,
To keep the salt for only our own food,
Ignoring the requests and even the pleas around
the table for us to “Pass the salt.”

If we were carrying the flashlight,

We would all too often forget to turn the switch on,
Or fumble around with it,
Or think that saving the batteries is more
important than leaving it on long enough for
everyone to be able to see.

No, if it were up to us,

The salt wouldn't always get where it needs to go.
The light wouldn't always get where it needs to go.

Thanks be to God that it's not up to us.

We are the salt of the earth.

We are the light of the world.

God gets us where we need to go.

God gets us where God needs us to go.

And sometimes we go kicking and screaming,
Because it's not where we would sprinkle the salt.
Salt can hurt, after all—
There's a reason for the phrase "pouring salt on a
wound."
It can be uncomfortable,
Even painful,
To carry the Gospel,
To live the Gospel,
To proclaim the Gospel
in the face of fear,
injustice,
sinfulness that is so
rampant in this world.
It can hurt us,
And it can stir up trouble with others.
But God shakes us out, anyway,
And we do not go alone.

Sometimes we balk and hesitate,
Because it's not where we would choose to point the flashlight.
Bright light in a dark place can be blinding at first,
Shedding light on painful things that were previously
hidden can be really uncomfortable.
But God points our beam, anyway,
And we do not go alone.

In our baptism, we are handed a light,
And we become light.
The fire is lit within us,
And our light so shines in the world.
The waters of baptism set us free and send us out,
And we can't just dry off and forget it,
For we are dripping wet in God's promises.
And we can't just shut off our light,
For we are shining bright with God's promises for a world in
desperate need of them.

In Holy Communion, we become what we receive—
The body of Christ,
Bread made with a little salt,
Broken and shared in the world.
The body and blood of Christ nourish us and send us out,
And we can't just swallow it and forget it,
For we are what we eat—
We hold,
We bear,
We carry Christ and Christ's mercy and
forgiveness to a world in desperate need.

Salt the earth.
Light the world.
God gathers us here to taste and see.
And God makes sure that,
through us,
others can do the same.