

**02/05/17 ..... 5 A**

-- This weekend Super Bowl 51 is being held at NRG Stadium in Houston. The stadium holds over 72,000 people and has a fully retractable roof.

-- Imagine what would happen if, with the roof fully in place, all of the power went out in the stadium. It would be dark and nothing could go on. Now, imagine that one person would get out his cell phone and turn on its flashlight.

-- It would be a tiny light, but it would be seen throughout the stadium. Now, imagine again that everyone would get out their cell phones and do the same, or light a match if they didn't have a flashlight cell phone.

-- That would produce a lot more light: perhaps not enough to resume the game, but enough for people to move around safely.

-- Jesus tells us in our gospel that we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Remember, he said this at a time when salt was not a thing people avoided in their diets. It was essential to preserve meat and other food in a time when there was no refrigeration.

-- Getting back to the image of the darkened stadium, we can say that we are the people who have those cell phone flashlights. We ARE the light. The only question is what we are going to do with that light.

-- Perhaps we are afraid to be the first one to put on our light and call attention to ourselves. But, what if everyone thought the same thing? Nothing would happen, and everyone would remain in darkness.

-- Perhaps we may think we cannot make a real difference. Things will still be dark, we believe. But we have to start somewhere. And, as the light grows, it makes more of a positive impact. We will notice the difference.

-- Many of us may think the world looks pretty dark these days. And there is plenty of evidence of darkness: war, terrorism, hatred, intolerance, religious and ethnic prejudice....and we could cite many more examples.

-- Nevertheless, as Jesus says, we ARE the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We have those cell phone flashlights in our hands. Will we turn them on and hold them high?

-- How do we let our light shine forth? How do we become the salt of the earth? Thousands of people did 9/10 days ago as they marched for life in Washington, D.C. and in local events across the country.

-- Many people will do so this Friday afternoon when we gather at the Masjid Shaad Foundation on Alexis Road in Sylvania to express solidarity with our Muslim brothers and sisters and those who are seeking refuge in our country.

-- The light shines forth whenever a parish or Church community welcomes a refugee family. It shines when people serve food at a soup kitchen or come together to build a Habitat for Humanity house.

-- Few of these are earth-shattering gestures. But each of them makes a difference. They add light to the sum of light. They answer the call of the prophet in our first reading to do those things which let the light break forth like the dawn.

-- We don't have to search all over the place. The flashlight is in our hands. We hold it up when we speak up for justice, when we feed the hungry and shelter the homeless, when we speak words of love rather than words of accusation and hatred.

-- May our light shine forth. May we be salt for our world. What we do may seem insignificant. But it will make a difference.