

## HOMILY 5<sup>TH</sup> SUN OT YRA 2020

There is something called implicit bias. It refers to the attitudes and stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner. This can be both favorable and unfavorable. These actions are activated involuntarily without an individual's awareness or intentional control. These implicit biases are not assessable through introspection because they are unconscious. We all have certain biases and prejudices that we are aware of and it is not these. They do not necessarily align with our conscious beliefs. They involve things such as race, ethnicity, age, appearance. We tend to favor our own groups, but not necessarily. The way to overcome these implicit biases is to examine how we are acting toward certain people to make sure that the way we are acting is based upon a rational assessment of the situation. I see this in myself when I have a strong reaction to someone, particularly if it is negative, that seems out of line with the situation. I wonder why I am reacting this way to this person.

In the Gospel reading today we hear that we are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Salt and light are of no particular use by themselves. Salt is only good when you mix it with food and it enhances the flavor and when you throw it on the roads to melt the ice. Light is only useful when it enables us to see other things better. In the same way, our faith is of no particular use by itself, it needs to affect the way we interact with other people.

In the first reading we hear about the 7 corporal works of mercy, feed the hungry, cloth the naked, give drink to the thirsty, visit prisoners, visit the sick, give shelter to travelers, and bury the dead. We also have the 7 spiritual works of mercy, to instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful, admonish the sinner, bear wrongs patiently, forgive offenses willingly, comfort the

afflicted and to pray for the living and the dead. I needed a little help listing them, but they are familiar. We know what we are called to do to help others, but we do not always do it.

I have come to believe that God brings certain people into our lives that we need to help us. Sometimes we are reluctant to accept that help for no rational reason. I think we sometimes reject that help because of unconscious implicit bias so I think we need to be conscious of this possibility and examine the situation. I think God brings us into other people's lives because we are called to help them. Sometimes we are reluctant for no rational reason, which could also be about implicit bias. So we need to be careful and examine the situations.

We are called to be salt of the earth and light for the world. We are each salt and light in unique ways based upon our abilities, our gifts or our charisms. These are gifts of the Holy Spirit that we are to use to help other people. We cannot be everything to everybody, so an awareness of what your abilities, gifts or charisms can help you to discern what God is calling you to do. If you are reluctant to help someone that you have the ability to help, look at the situation and see if an implicit bias is preventing you from doing so. If someone comes into your life with the ability to help you and you are reluctant to receive their help, look at the situation and see if an implicit bias is preventing you from accepting the help. We are all called to be salt of the earth and light for the world. Your faith does not have great value in itself. To be salt and light you must share your faith with other people and love and serve the people we come in contact with.