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Let your light shine" (Matthew 5:16).

*2 Cor 1:18-22; Matt 5:13-16*

When we were children, we knew the best time to ask my father for something was when he was distracted, usually reading the evening paper in his chair after supper or watching a baseball game on TV. We came prepared with my mother's half-distracted approval, which was "Go ask your father," then laid siege to his weakened defenses. Our requests were for future things, being taken somewhere or permission to do something, since no immediate action was involved. A direct yes or no was rare, but the actual goal was to get a "maybe," since that kept the door open and could be used later as a "yes" when we reminded him he had already vaguely conceded earlier. "But you said" was a good closing argument by then.

These exercises in the art of persuasion worked within a loving relationship with my parents, who wanted us to express our needs. St. Paul encouraged the Corinthians to approach God with the assumption that their lives now existed within a big, loving "Yes." They had been saved by the love of God in Jesus, and they were to rest secure because God had already "put his seal upon us and given the Spirit in our hearts as the first installment" (2 Cor 1:18). That seal of approval sounds a lot like Paul's words to the Romans, "I am convinced that nothing can separate us from the love of God" (8:31). We are beyond maybe. God's seal is unbreakable.

The life of a baptized disciple rests on this blessed assurance. God's love permeates us like the salt and light Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount. Salt, if applied in just the right amount, disappears in food as a catalyst that improves the flavor of

everything without attracting attention to itself. It produces quality, another hard to define but unmistakable ingredient that is more essence than addition. A quality person preserves and flavors the moment for everyone.

Light is an enabler, enhancing sight and insight, brightening or moderating the mood, helping us to see not just objects but their meaning, how they relate to one another. It brings clarity, transparency, dispels doubt and exposes deceit. Jesus is the light of the world, and we share in this light as an inner quality that is meant to shine forth in our humanity. When you see the face of someone in love, you are witnessing beauty capable of saving the world. It is permanent beatitude, pure evangelization, the glory of God made visible, what children have naturally and holiness preserves in the saints.

Even in trial, sorrow and loss, the light and salt are still there, permanent resources we can draw on to remind ourselves that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

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