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FIFTH SUNDAY OF ORDINARY TIME - FEBRUARY 5, 2023

In 2004, in the Maryknoll Magazine had article on a group called "Couples for Christ" in the Philippines had an idea to transform the slums in their community by building 50 townhouses for the people to live in. However, they would need money, so they reached out to the Vatican office that deals with charitable works called, "Cor Unum". One of the directors of the office, James Cavnar, was excited by their proposal.

Couples for Christ, they spent between 12 and 15 months with the people who would live in the townhouses beforehand, creating small communities among themselves, and teaching them Christian values.

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They said that they could build another 200 townhouses in a few months, but if they didn't change the hearts, the relationships, and the values of the people living in them, they would go back to being slums again.

About four years later, James Cavnar traveled to the Philippines to see for himself the great work that Couples for Christ was able to accomplish. Even though the development was now over four years old, it still looked brand new. hey needed to do to survive. Now, they had a sense of community. They looked out for each

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other and helped each other. And that had made all the difference.

In today's gospel, Jesus tells us that we are the "salt of the earth." In Jesus' day, salt served an important purpose as a preservative for foods. Without refrigeration, the only way they could keep meat and fish from spoiling was by salting it.One of the ways that salt can lose its flavor, then, is by being contaminated with impurities that ruin both the salt and the food that it was meant to preserve.

We see an example of this in the work that Couples for Christ did in the Philippine slums. They had to purify themselves and the people in the community of all the attitudes, values, and sins that were undermining their community.

The same is true for us. If we are to be salt for the earth, we must allow ourselves to be purified by God of our sinfulness and selfishness. So many good works too often fall short because of pride. We look down on other rather than lending a hand to help them up. Most often, our efforts to help others fail because of pride.

It is important that we help others, but we must never lose sight of Jesus. He is the reason that we help others. And the best thing we can do for people is introduce them to Jesus and His love

for them. The people we feed bread to will be hungry again within hours. But the people we introduce Jesus to will be nourished by faith, hope, and love for the rest of their lives. Along with giving the homeless a place to sleep, we must give them the shelter that only comes from faith

Jesus tells us that we are the salt of the earth. He is counting on us to continue His work on earth of spreading the good news and serving the poor. To do that, we must be purified of our sinfulness so that we do not lose our saltiness. Then we will be able to do great things for the glory of God the Father.

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