*Praise the Lord! Happy are those who fear the LORD, who greatly delight in His commandments. Their descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed. Wealth and riches are in their houses, and their righteousness endures forever. They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright; they are gracious, merciful, and righteous. It is well with those who deal generously and lend, who conduct their affairs with justice. For the righteous will never be moved; they will be remembered forever. They are not afraid of evil tidings; their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord. Their hearts are steady; they will not be afraid; in the end they will look in triumph on their foes. They have distributed freely; they have given to the poor; their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honor. The wicked see it and are angry; they gnash their teeth and melt away; the desire of the wicked comes to nothing. Psalm 112*

*“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under feet.**“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.**In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven.**“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.**For truly I tell you, until Heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.**For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven.* Matthew 5:13-20

*A little girl went up to her mother one day while holding her stomach saying, "Mommy, my stomach hurts." Her mother replied, "That's because it's empty, you have to put something into it!"*

*Later that day when the pastor and his wife came over for dinner and the pastor began to feel bad. Holding his head he said: "I have such a terrible headache!"*

*The little girl looked up at him while giving him the sweetest smile that any little child could give. Then she said: "That's because it's empty, you have to put something into it!"*

The Light of the World is Jesus.

1. I would not call myself a true *“world traveler,”* but I visited a number of the world cities and a number of them were located either in the valleys in the mountains or on the mountains slopes. As I recall all of them, these places radiated with a very unique and special beauty and majesty. In 1974 I visited San Francisco for the first time in my life, and I was in awe with a beaty of the city’s location. Coming down from the airport we drove through the mist which, resembling *“the clouds,”* covered the part of the road we travelled, and this was an unforgettable moment. Then, from the grounds of the Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary where we stayed, I was able to see the beauty of the Bay, the Golden Gate Bridge and of the mountains in the background, as well as the ocean surrounding the seminary’s grounds. This incredible view made an extraordinary impression on me. I was just 19 years old then, but I will never forget that view.

2. Later on in my travels I visited Rome and witnessed the wonderful view of its seven hills. I travelled to the Hungary’s capitol Budapest and marveled over its Buda Hills. Eventually, I also went to Naples in Italy where I also enjoyed the view of the Vesuvius at the background of the city panorama. All these places left me with the memories of the impressive, majestic beauty of these cities. Unfortunately I was not able to see Jerusalem yet, but from watching a documentary on Jerusalem in an Imax theatre, I know that the view of this city also set on the hill is stunning, especially when being entered in the late afternoon with the sun brilliantly shining on it. I hear that the view of the Dead Sea about 4000 feet below and the Jordan Valley is incredible. This must have been the view Jesus have had in mind when He said: *“The city set on the hill cannot be hid.”* There is only one word to properly describe all these: *“Magnificent!”*

3. Yet, there is something characteristic to some of the cities I visited that must also be indicated here. Many of them are surrounded by the protective walls, the defense system which remains as a relic of the past. In some instances these walls not only protected the city but at the same time made it almost invisible to the outsiders, because of the fortified walls obscure the view. To enter the walled cities, the travelers had to enter through the gates to be in the city. Seeing these defensive city walls clearly indicated that although the city seems open, the fortifications indicate that not everyone may have been welcomed or allowed to enter. The reason for the fortified city walls was simple. This city *“armor”* served not only for the purpose of hiding the city, but to protect it like a shield, from the outside influence and possible attack. After all the world was and still is, a very dangerous place to live in, so such precaution as the city walls was the least the city could do to protect itself. Chinese emperors went even further, surrounding the entire country with the now famous *“Chinese Wall,”* today a major tourist attraction. But for the centuries this wall protected the empire from any and all outside interference and influence. For centuries China was perfectly isolated from the rest of the world because of the wall.

4. The “Great Wall of China” also proved that the fortified walls served several purposes. Not to allow the inhabitants to venture into the outside world in search for something new, as well as to keep the interior of the country hidden from the outside world’s influence. The wall also protected the people from the outside attack and plunder, but also kept internally, within the walls, all the achievements of the Chinese culture. At the same time the “Wall” kept China from any form of obligation of helping others, those on the outside, to succeed or flourish in spite of considerable number of inventions made within the empire itself over the centuries. Jesus saw the walls of Jerusalem as the way the Hebrews, although chosen by God to teach others about God and His love, surrounded themselves with the walls of the Law, just as Chinese did, and made it very difficult if not almost impossible for the outsiders to enter their world. The Hebrews went further, for they made any contact with the outsiders unwelcome and disallowed and at the same time did not allow their own enter the outside world. The faithful Jew would never enter the house of the Gentile and even if the reality of life would force them to do so they would never enter the house of the Gentile on the Sabbath. (Read John 18:28): *“Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover.”*

5. Jesus was known to use the metaphors, the parables, and the illustrations in His teaching, and this is what He does in our text. *“You”* – he tells us – *“are the light of the world.”* You are the ones to share this light with others. You are to be seen and not hidden behind the walls of your comfort and safety. *“You are the city on the hill.”* In direct reference to the Church today these words are to be read and understood precisely in the same way as then, almost 2000 years ago: *“Let your light shine before the others so they may see and understand God’s work and how it does apply to everyone. Let them (the world) to see all this through and in your life.”*The world around us is covered in darkness, but it does not recognize it, because the world willingly and with premeditation turned the light of God’s enlightenment off, replacing it with a humanistic, woke ideology pretending to be “enlightened.” We, the Church of Jesus Christ not only have an access to the true light but we also have means of turning this light on. People see us and they know who we are, and although we may often think that we do not really make any difference in other people’s lives, we actually do.

6.This is a great and marvelous news for us. After all, Jesus calls us to shine, *“to be the light that shines over the city.”* His words are a metaphor to teach us that in the darkness of the world, we are to show those around us who He is and how important He is. He is the source of the light and the energy in the world, while we are the vessels carrying this light. Just as the old hymn that says: *“The light of the world is Jesus.”* A Christian life is to be lived outside, not shrouded in the shadow of the walls. It is the vibrant life filled with love. When I was a child one of the great toys, we made at school was a *“kaleidoscope”* where the different pieces of colored glass inside a round or a triangular tube continually changed patterns of shapes and colors while turning the tube in hands. To see all these shapes and colors seemed almost magical. Life with Jesus Christ is such a beautiful and magical experience, but to see it one must look at it.

7. We might not be the source of the light, but we know Jesus who is. Modern society needs that light, and we are able to introduce that *“light”* to the world. Today, we are all familiar with the phrase: “*renewable energy,”* but not many people realize that we have used that *“renewable energy”* in our lives for over 2000 years. That *“renewable energy”* in our lives is the Holy Spirit who strengthens us through the Word of God. This energy, however, cannot be used solely as the source of the internal light only to satisfy our needs, but as much as we need to be energized, we need to use that energy to shine God’s light into the world. After all, as the Church, we must be open and radiant, shining with the love of God. This is who we are as Christians, this is what we are called to do as the Church. To radiate the light of love, wisdom, and most of all the salvation through Jesus Christ. We are the Church, but what is more important, the Church is who we are.

8. Apostle John said this magnificently in his gospel: How wonderful are his words: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not understood it.”* Jesus was always reaching out to others to help them and to transform them. We have His light and are charged with shining it on the world. We are able to make changes in people’s lives because we have the eternal source of power and energy – Jesus Christ. What we need is the vision. What we need is to look into the future. What we need is to be awaken. After all, Jesus Christ has promised to be with us forever, even to the end of ages. All other projects we might have must be taken a back. Our responsibility is to project the light of freedom of Christian conscience to the modern world covered with darkness and despair.