

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)  
February 8, 2026  
“You are the light of the world”

The opening ceremony of the 2026 Winter Olympics was rich in symbol and pageantry. Part of the ceremony involved carrying the Olympic Torch and lighting a cauldron, which will burn through the game (actually, there are two cauldrons this year). The torch has made its way from Olympia, Greece to Milan, Italy. This ceremony, dating back to 776 BC, originally honored the gods Zeus and Prometheus. Today it symbolizes secular values of hope, harmony, unity, peace, and friendship. The lighting of the Olympic torch precedes alpine skiing, ice hockey, ski jumping, figure skating, and other winter sports played by athletes around the world. The torch will be extinguished at the end of the games later this month.

*“You are the light of the world,”* Our Lord tells his disciples. Light is necessary for us to see and navigate the world around us. Light is bright, shiny, and attractive. Jesus, the light of the world, calls his followers to share in his light. That light saves.

A cruise ship was sailing at night. The captain was on the bridge, commanding the ship. All of a sudden, the alarm rang out. A man had fallen overboard. The passenger was struggling to survive in the frigid waters. The captain ran down to the edge of the deck and looked at the man. Life rafts were thrown overboard, but the man couldn't see them. The deck hands shone a light on the man, who kept struggling. The captain then ordered them, “Quit shining the light on the man. Shine the light on the life raft!” Jesus is the life raft. Sometimes we shine our lights on the wrong targets, forgetting that Jesus should be the motivator and the One

we see in the poor and needy. Each of us shines only to the degree that we are close to Jesus. Only when he lives in us can he shine through us.

The Catholic Charities Annual Appeal will be next weekend, but I would like to share some facts about this wonderful organization because it is a concrete means of assisting needy people and being lights of hope for a dark world.

In Iowa, 1 in 11 people live in poverty; nearly 1 in 5 single-parent households live in poverty; 37 percent of Iowa households are ALICE (meaning Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed,") living on the margins of poverty; in response, Catholic Charities distributed 400,526 dollars last year to 601 households across 30 counties of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, and helping 2,059 individuals avoid homelessness. In addition, nearly 112-thousand dollars in charity legal services were provided to 2,182 immigrant clients. Catholic Charities provided 209 affordable housing units and enabled 442 families, seniors 65 and older, and those living with disabilities to live in proper homes. The organization also provided 5,735 counseling sessions and 1,345 telehealth sessions across 30 counties. In all, 26,125 lives were impacted by Catholic Charities in 2025, and even more can be impacted with your help this year.

The money you donate provides affordable housing, counseling services, immigration legal services, poverty reduction outreach, jail and prison ministry, and other services. It is a wise investment of your hard-earned money.

[Another way you can be light in our community is by donating to the Souper Bowl of Caring, our annual fundraising appeal for the Oelwein Kitchen Cupboard.]

By donating money, you are making the world better and brighter. Someone said: "The good works of Christians are the beams of light that manifest the

goodness of their Father to all. The Father cannot be seen . . . but the presence of holy Christians *represents* his presence to all.”

May the Blessed Mother, spouse of the Spirit, pray that the Spirit shines in and through us this day and forever. God bless you.