

16th October 2020

Salt

“Addito salis grano.”

“With the addition of a grain of salt”

most commonly quoted as ‘With a grain of salt’.

Pliny the Elder, Historia Naturalis Book 23

The Roman statesman, Pliny the Elder, lived in the 1st century. So the expression “with a grain of salt” would be readily understood by people for whom salt was a crucial commodity. It’s not surprising, therefore, that Jesus also made reference to salt in the “Sermon on the Mount”.

*You are the salt of the earth:
but if the salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored?*

It’s a powerful image, an accessible metaphor we can all understand and one which, justifiably, has been used by many writers to help people focus on their service for just and right communities.

My former colleague Jacki Thomas, a hospice chaplain and spiritual director for many years, has recently published a book entitled *Salt in a Secular Society*. Drawing on her wealth of experience and her deep insights into the human condition, Jacki offers us stories, reflections and exercises to help us explore this “salt” metaphor. Beginning with a chapter on “Just how salty have we been?” and concluding with “Being salty today”, with stories which shock, amuse or move us to tears, she asks us how we can improve our saltiness in today’s world. It’s fundamentally Jesus’ question, if salt has lost its taste, how can we get it back again?

Jacki Thomas asks us this question:

We, ‘the salt of the earth’ ... are an essential nutrient for all creation ... We cannot become salt by ourselves, nor can we be made salt by any other aspect of creation. We play a vital part in the regulation of activities which are society’s bodily functions. Our presence is essential for organisations to work properly and fairly ... To ensure that societies’ attitudes to all people ... are influenced by justice and mercy expressed in loving care and concern ... To ensure ... attitudes to our environment ... are not dulled by greed, expediency or apathy ...

A prayer for today

Lord, let the little grain of salt that I am bring savour to a waiting world. Amen.

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