

Church of the Good Shepherd and St. John the Evangelist

24 Pentecost
October 30, 2005
Fr Bill McGinty

“The Indwelling God”

Today’s readings are about falsehood, deceit and corruption. In the Old Testament reading the Prophet Micah preaches against prophets, who lead God’s people astray. Paul, in his Epistle to Thessalonica, tells them that in bringing them the Gospel he was always honest with them. Jesus in the Gospel confronts the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and denounces them for placing their own self-importance ahead of God’s word or his work.

This love of truth is strong with Jesus and we see it when he chooses his Apostles. He says of Nathaniel: “that he is a true Israelite, one who has no guile.” By that, Jesus meant “what you see is what you get.” He has no spin, but is honest in his dealings with others. In a similar way, Jesus chose men who were simple workers, honest and with little education. Did he recognize that in choosing them that he himself could teach them and they in turn would faithfully relate his truth? More than once he instructs them, that if they are to lead his people, then they must become the servants of all.

It is a much more difficult teaching than it first appears. All you who work in the business world, know this to be the case.

You can think about all the managers and bosses that you have had down the years. You know which ones you liked, but you also know which ones were effective. You remember who was fair, those who played the favorites game, and those who were impossible to work for.

But in placing these readings together today, the church is clearly attempting to make each of us pause and examine our own lives and the place of truth in them.

Halloween and that holiday season is fond of using masks and costumes to disguise who we are and give us another ‘persona.’ But in real life we also use masks sometimes to hide behind. Psychologists tell us that we do it for a variety of reasons. We do it to hide pain, disappointment, failure, hurt. We do it because our job demands it, we have to sell, we need to be in control, we need to pretend to care, we need to pretend not to care. We want to make a point to our child so we exaggerate and act out a role. All of these are understandable. Spend any time at all among High School students and you will see many masks from very ‘cool’ to very funny, and often much different from the person you know at home.

The Journey to Adulthood program that our teenagers follow, spends much time on personal identity and knowing who we are. It is very important. Important to know the real ‘you’ as an individual and to know who you are, where you come from, to whom and how you belong. These things are important the program teaches, because if you have really found yourself and know yourself, you have found your truth. You know deep within

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yourself, what you must be true to. When you close the door on your day, if you know yourself, you can judge yourself fairly.

There is something of this in Jesus' teachings. He seems to say: "You can fool everyone, even yourself, but you cannot fool God, for God knows the real you." And least that sounds negative, let me try to put it another way.

"It is okay to be honest with God because God loves you, cares for you because he knows the real you."

Isn't that what you look for in a true friend, someone who does not judge you or criticize you, but accepts you for who you are? At the same time they are honest with you in things that really matter.

Can you count on one hand, people who truly know you? You never have to wear a mask for them, because they see right through it. They know when you are deep down sad, mad, or just plain hurt. No Oscar winning acting performance of yours will convince them otherwise. They know you too well. With them you have to be yourself.

This is the heart of Jesus' teaching about truth. You find the real you, and you will find God. Our God is an indwelling God. He does not live in space, in the stars or even in an empty church building. Our God dwells in souls. We carry him with us in our spirit. He is there at our deep heart's core.

When we are true to ourselves and who we are, we find that he is there ahead of us. It gives us a feeling of wonder, joy and great happiness. It's a feeling we associate with "Falling in love"; "Christmas morning"; "running thro' Poppy fields"; "standing on the seashore"; "catching a trout"; "Pavarotti"; "a homerun grand slam in the bottom of the ninth"; "coming home after along time away".

Believing in the God within you, transforms you in many ways. You want to be true to yourself, because you want to be true to God. Being true to God, God shines forth from you and transforms you into the person you always wanted to be. Isn't it a simple truth that you can't love God, or other people till you learn to love yourself? Learn to love yourself and the one thing that you have wanted all your life happens to you. Other people love you for who you are. It's paradoxical.

This is why we come to church on a Sunday morning to share ourselves and our God with one another. God is not here, till we get here. Why else do we ring the great bell? That bell reminds us: "we are here, God is here." Even if we are having a bad day or a bad year. There are enough people who know the real you to prop you up, bring you love, till you find yourself again. That's what church is: "coming together and bringing God to each other."

Find the God within you and you will never be lonely again. Find the God within you and you will begin a dialogue that finds its expression in many different languages: prayer becomes your thought, your words, and your feelings. You just become aware that in

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contemplating them yourself, you are sharing them with God. Whatever you do, be it art, writing, music or dance, it is a form of prayer, because our spirit has become one with God's spirit.

Jesus goes to such great lengths to teach his Apostles the importance of truth and being true to yourself. His whole concept of the leader being the servant of all is based on this idea that to find love, you must give it away. To follow Jesus' teaching and become the servant of all is to walk in risk. And that is what Christians are asked to do. We are asked to reject the teaching of this world, where we are at the center, for the teaching of Jesus, where we make other people the focus.

Today in this service we pause to install Fran Hlavacek, into the Daughters of the King. In doing so we are asking her to do precisely what Jesus' teaches in today's Gospel. We are asking her to be a disciple and teach the Gospel to others by example. Together with her sisters, to pray to the God who gathers with them. Today we are asking her to be a servant to others with her service in Jesus name. In good times and bad, sickness and health, the Daughters will be there for her, as she will each of them.

Let us pray in this service today, that God will bless her and always keep each of us true to ourselves that we may always find the God of love dwelling within us.

Amen+

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