

ABIDING IN TRUTH

(These are tumultuous times and the divides in our country are very real.
How can we know the truth?)

Recently I had a conversation with a parishioner about so much of what has been transpiring in our nation and our world recently. I mentioned that for me what we are experiencing as a country is reminiscent of what I went through in my early twenties as the 1960's exploded into the 1970's. There was this sense then that everything was up for grabs. Even the presidency itself was up for grabs then. The impression was very real that there was little that was reliable. Everywhere there were accusations about truth and falsehood. Who was being lied to and who was being hoodwinked? It depended on which side you were on. Each side felt that truth was on their side and the others were just plain wrong. People didn't speak with each other. They shouted past each other. Does it sound familiar?

There were foundational issues of morality in the issue of racial justice. There were profound questions of war and peace in the conduct of the War in Viet Nam. There were fundamental questions about what was moral behavior in the area of our human sexuality. There were issues in the area of our freedom—where we could live or go to school or what we could eat or drink or smoke. I was in the midst of my Seminary studies back then and the Seminary was as affected as society was. The disagreements were as intense then as they are now. They were as destabilizing then as they are right now.

There was violence then too. There was anger. There were accusations. There were demonstrations. People were taking to the streets to protest. Police killed people. People killed police. The National Guard was called out then too. All of that was in the midst of a presidential campaign with Presidential Conventions planned. Fifty-two years ago. I remember thinking that if I could live through all that then I could live through anything. But I know that I paid a price for all of that. Our culture paid a price for all that. I know this--that I have lived the next fifty years trying to make sure that the person of Jesus Christ and the message of Jesus Christ was my one main reality. Why? Because in a world where nothing else seemed to be reliable the person of Jesus was reliable. His message of truth and fidelity and selflessness and non-violence resonated in my soul. Very reliable.

He spoke the truth, lived the truth and died for the truth. His message was a message of hope. Not a message of fear. Even in today's gospel Jesus tells his disciples: Fear no one. Fear nothing. No thing. Nothing. Certainly no destructive virus. Do not live in fear. Be wise. Make good decisions but do not live in fear. And I am sensing the fear begin to well up in people. Do not fear those who can kill the body but cannot touch the soul, Jesus says.

Jesus said so succinctly that the truth will come out. It will emerge. Wee to trust what he says even when it seems difficult to do so. We may not be able to tell right away but the truth will emerge. And the way we have been made is that we are oriented to the truth,

hard-wired to the truth. We will be able to recognize it when we hear it. Do not accept everything you hear at face value. Ask the deeper questions. Ask if what you hear is true. Ask about what you witness. Is it good—or is it evil trying to present itself as a good thing? We can tell.

My friends, this is not new. These things happen in human life at various times. Listen to the prophet Jeremiah as he speaks about the political intrigues of his own time and how his own nation lost its bearings and fell into captivity. He remained true. He paid a price for that. Some of his own turned on him. But the word of the Lord continued to come to him and abide with him. He was able to hear. That same word is coming to us. We can live in the truth that Jesus has revealed.

You know the gospel. Better than you think. You surely know how to evaluate what you hear and what you see in the light of the truth of the gospel. Then we must do that. And not be afraid of the truth thus revealed. There will be resistance to the truth. Many will not want to hear it. They will want to fashion a truth of their own making. It will be as false as the golden calf that was fashioned in the wilderness of Sinai by the Jewish people while Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments. The Lord knows all of this. The Lord experienced it himself—first hand. He showed us the Way. He revealed to us the Way. He cared so much he not only came to us but he left himself to us as just the right spiritual food for the journey through life in this world.

My friends we must place our faith in Him and in the Eucharist. We must ask the Lord to help us live in his Truth and abide in His Truth and to resist. We must pray for the grace that while other are destroying we must be the ones to remain steadfast. And acknowledge the Lord Jesus before others.