Cycle A
Fifth Sunday of Easter

Lectionary # 52

Reading I: Acts 6:1-7

Reality sets in when there is advancement and growth in any movement and this is true for the fledgling church. The church is growing and with that growth comes problems and challenges that accompany success. It is crucial to look at all situations truthfully. The truth, as illustrated in this reading, is that some in the community are being neglected and by recognizing this fact an opportunity is realized and a new ministry emerges. Recognition of truth paves the way for the selection of persons to perform a duty that will free the apostles to focus on preaching the word of God. The church is an organization and there will be need for various roles and responsibilities to ensure that the organization can grow and evolve to provide for a diversity of needs.

Reading 2: 1 Peter 2: 4-9

Saint Peter borrows the concept of persons as “living stones” from the Psalms. This reading continues the theme of a community coming together to be built into a “spiritual house.” Clearly any healthy growth and development is rooted in truthfulness. Time and again in the scriptures there will be an emphasis placed on the deep and abiding need for truth as the basis for the Christian life. If we use the same image as Saint Peter, then we are to be “living stones” that construct the spiritual house in which truth must be a part of the mortar holding the house together!

Gospel: John 14: 1-12

The ultimate truth is Jesus Christ himself. This passage is filled with many great truths. Jesus is absolutely honest in his invitation to follow him. He provides no “small print” but rather presents each with an invitation that truthfully reveals what the cost would be for following him. He says expect pain and glory. Yet another truth is that Jesus goes before us, preparing the way and being the way. Jesus as the truth is the most explicit self-expression we can have of God.
The Empty Pot

This ancient Chinese folktale follows a young boy named Ping in his journey to do his absolute best in being truthful. Ping happens to love growing flowers as did the mighty Emperor in the story. The Emperor was seeking to choose an heir and he decided that the flowers should have a role in choosing who his heir would be. He provided flower seeds to all the children of his realm and said whoever can provide for the most beautiful bloom in a year’s time shall succeed me to the throne. Ping tried everything to make his seed grow but it simply would not grow. Eventually the year passed and Ping, along with the other children brought their pots to the Emperor. Everyone had beautiful blossoms but not Ping, his pot was empty. The Emperor chooses Ping because he knew that Ping was the one who was being truthful. The seeds the Emperor had provided had been cooked and therefore were not capable of growing. All the children, but Ping, had replaced the original seed that was given to them when they saw that it was not growing. Ping remained honest and truthful. It was Ping’s being true to himself that was the true prize.

Activity

Step One: After the students have had the opportunity to hear the story of The Empty Pot, ask the students to think about a time when they told the truth and something good occurred because of their honesty. Pair the students and instruct them to tell their partner their story.

Step Two: Ask the students to recall a story of when they did not tell the truth and the consequences for not being truthful. Using the same partners have them tell their story to one another.
What could you do today?

Interview your parents or another adult regarding a time when they were honest and the good that resulted from being truthful. Ask them if they would be willing to share a story with you of when they did not tell the truth and what consequence resulted from not telling the truth.

After hearing these stories and some of your own, make a commitment to yourself to strive to be a person of truth. Ask the Holy Spirit that dwells within you to help you be truthful in all situations.

Look Feel Know Act

Not telling the truth is like having a ghost following you all the time. Any untruth we have involved ourselves in can haunt us and threaten each moment of our lives and sap us of the joyfully life God wants us to live. The truth will always surface eventually and all we need do is look around us and see that fact in the news. Dishonesty, no matter how long ago it occurred will be revealed in the light of the truth. Jesus says that the truth will set us free. Truth is the only healthy way to approach life and most especially in all of our relationships. Healthy and solid relationships are founded on truth. Commit yourself to being a person of truth.
Ping, in the story of *The Empty Pot*, revealed truth and honesty even when faced with failure and the embarrassment that often accompanies failure. Ping, with the direction and encouragement of his mother comes to understand that the real value and success in life is be **truthful**, a person of integrity. Jesus, throughout the gospels, encourages everyone to be of the **truth**, to always seek the **truth** about themselves and in doing so will know true freedom.

Pray that you will give thanks to God for striving to be a person of truth and that you will always seek truth in your daily life. Amen.

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