**Good Friday: Passion of Our Lord**

Cycle B 4.6.12

**STANDING RIGHT IN FRONT OF US**

“Truth,” said Pilate, “what does that mean?” And Jesus doesn’t answer. Or is Pilate doesn’t give Jesus a chance to answer. Is Pilate asking a serious question? Or is Pilate simply exasperated at the whole question of “truth?” It would be understandable if he were. As governor of a remote end of the vast Roman empire, he was accosted with so many systems and images of truth – from the ancient religious traditions of the Jews to the political demands of his imperial bosses. Now, here is this poor, pathetic figure in front of him proclaiming yet another version of the truth – this time about a kingdom somewhere out there beyond the world. Pilate has had his fill of the “truth.”

I think we can often echo his frustration. We are assailed with so many perspectives and opinions all claiming to be the “truth – the truth about medical ethics, about sexual morality, about environmental issues like global warming, economic issues, like the escalating cost of housing, military decisions which harm the innocent and the guilty. It’s getting harder to see exactly what is the “truth” – even when it’s standing right in front of you. Perhaps the concept of “truth” is too big for us to wrap our minds around. However, we can take hold of the many “truths” that we have learned from Jesus. When we’re anxious and overworked, concerned about money problems or work issues, Jesus gave us a truth to guide us: *Look at the birds of the sky. They don’t sow seed or harvest grain…yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Aren’t you worth much more than they are?* When we’re critical of others, judgemental in our attitude, the truth that Jesus gave us tempers our judgment: *Let those of you without sin throw the first stone. Take the log out of your own eye, before you try to take the splinter out of another’s eye.* And when we grieve over the loss of a loved one, the truth of eternal life brings us comfort: *I am the Bread of Life; whoever lives and believes in me will never die.* These are the truths on which we can stake our lives.

Today, truth does stand in front of us in the figure of the humiliated Jesus, the suffering Jesus, the ridiculed Jesus, the crucified Jesus. Right in front of us is the truth about a God who loves us to a degree we can hardly imagine; a God who refuses to give up on or reject his beloved creation – a creation that has hardly lived up to its promise; a God who humbles himself to become one of us in order to make us divine, to make us realize that we have been created in the divine image, created by God’s very breath blown into our hearts.
I once gave a cross to someone whose illness had debilitated her so much that she had to remain in bed all the time. Someone too young to suffer so much, someone still with a little child to raise, someone whose time was running out. Someone who had to face the hard truth of her life and her illness every moment of the day ... and night, when she couldn’t sleep. I had no words to offer, no beautiful prayer that would ease her pain, so I gave her a small crucifix. One that could fit in the palm of her hand, made out of smooth wood.

I asked her to hold on to it in her most difficult moments, when she had nowhere else to turn. I hoped that in the face of the brutal truth she had to confront, she would somehow find a sense of relief and companionship with Our Lord who had only the love of God to cling to in his moment of despair and abandonment.

For us who gather here, our truth begins at the cross of Jesus. It isn’t simple, isn’t black or white. It is every shade of gray and every color of the spectrum. The truth of our Christian commitment is profound and complex. It isn’t easy or always comforting. It is certainly challenging and demands every ounce of our faith and determination. Yet for us, in light of Good Friday, truth begins to become a little clearer. Ours is a God who knows our weakness; ours is a God who gives us strength; ours is a God who will not allow death to have the final word. For Jesus and for us, the cross and the love it reveals is a sign of victory. In light of Good Friday, truth becomes a little clearer.

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