

TRUTH MATTERS: 6TH SUNDAY EASTER A

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It's often said: '*Honesty is the best policy!*' I tend to agree. Some time ago, I saw a very touching movie, one of the best I've ever seen, called *Secrets and Lies*. It's about a white woman who gave birth to a black daughter, and who was kept from seeing and sharing with her daughter all through her growing-up years. The story unfolds and undoes the secrets and lies that had kept mother and daughter strangers to each other during that long time.

The movie illustrates just how much the truth matters. So, e.g. we call for truth in politics and truth in advertising, and in a court of law, we are expected to swear to the truth of what we say - '*the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth!*'. For facts are very important. It's equally important to us that we be known as honest, sincere, genuine, trust-worthy people, who don't deceive, mislead, or cover-up. We know from experience that to sustain and develop our relationships, openness, honesty, and transparency are not optional but absolutely necessary.

It's also a fact of life that we human beings cannot cope with too much reality. So we don't take kindly to anyone who blurts out our faults and failings to our face, who attack and abuse us, even though they may be telling the unvarnished truth. For the sake of our self-esteem and self-respect, something more than telling the truth to one another is needed. That something more is courtesy and politeness, patience and gentleness, understanding and tact. While deep down we want to face the truth for the sake of our integrity, we will take it much more readily from those who show they are on our side - people who care about us, people who support us.

What's all this got to do with the teaching of Jesus today? A great deal, I suggest. Jesus, who has just called himself '*the truth!*', as well as '*the way!*' and '*the life!*', tells his friends, ourselves among them, that he has to go away. This is the truth. But some day he will come back to earth, and we will see him again. That's the second truth. And there is a third truth he tells. For the time in-between, he is sending us the Holy Spirit, his second self, to be our adviser, advocate, and support.

We rejoice, then, that the same Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who was the source of Jesus' own honesty, truthfulness and integrity, is given to us and stays with and among us. Unless, of course, we deliberately decide to be '*people of the lie!*' (F. Scott Peck), living lives of spin, hypocrisy and deception. That same Spirit of Jesus is available to us 24/7 to empower us to be as truthful as Jesus. He also assures us that the Spirit of truth given to us is also the Spirit of love, enabling us to be like Jesus too in the way he communicated the truth. This was with courtesy, politeness and gentleness, and with patience, understanding and tact.

For that promised gift of Jesus to us of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth and the Spirit of love, given for our dealings with our fellow-human beings, let us give thanks in the rest of our prayer together today! And let us pray that when we need to speak the truth to others that supported and guided by the Holy Spirit, we will always also speak the truth with respect, care, concern, and love!