



Way Truth LIFE

To Tell the Truth

by Joan Steele, Mission Administrator

Each and every morning, as I begin my daily journey to the Mission, and every single evening as I return home, I find myself looking for my friend. I feel a sense of comfort in knowing that he is seated upon his chosen perch, just above the high voltage sign on the electric pole in my neighbor's house. Seeing him, regal and magnificent, quietly surveying his kingdom elicits a sense of *all is well with the world* in my soul. *After all, if there was something really amiss, he would not be sitting so calmly, right?* My friend is a bald eagle. I'm not sure he shows I consider him a friend, and I'm not really 100% sure he views me that way, but seeing him daily reminds me of God. My Heavenly Father, also sees everything and surveys my life, ever alert to problems, dangers, and areas where I might need protection or assistance in my struggles.

One day, as I was contemplating that analogy, it came to me – that's probably a small fraction of the relational story of God. Yes, our Creator God does see all, *know* all and does watch over all; but He does not stop there! Our God loves us so much that He isn't content with simply *watching over us*. He knew, after our fall from grace in the Garden of Eden, that we would never be able to work our way back to the fullness of communion with Him on our own. Our ever-loving God chose to provide the solution to our sin dilemma Himself.

And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." – John 1:14

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Like with my friend, the bald eagle, I look up to see my God, my Savior. Unlike the eagle perched upon an electrical pole, my Savior Jesus Christ, was nailed to a cross. The sight of him there does not elicit a sense of nobility and beauty, but rather, it brings me to tears to witness the excruciating pain that my sins have caused him. It pierces my heart with the knowledge that my Lord, my Savior, my Creator, loves me so much that he would have gone to the cross to save *just me*, had I been the *only* person in the world. He would have died for *you*, even if you had been the *only* person needing to be saved. The depth of his love for us knows no bounds!

So why do I say "To tell the truth?" The truth is really what the Season of Lent is all about. It is a time of preparation, leading up to the Easter Season; it's a time when we are encouraged by the Church to "tell the truth" about ourselves, our thoughts, our hearts and our actions. We are invited to step back, be still, and to review our lives and our relationship with our Savior. It might even mean taking a look at the motivation behind *why we are Catholic*, as Georgia Cordle will address in her article further into this issue of our Pastoral Newsletter. Being *Catholic* isn't something that is inherited by birth. We need to actively choose to be *Catholic*, although for many of us "cradle Catholics" who were baptized as infants, the choice may seem to have become less deliberate over the years. Lent is a wonderful time to review our baptismal promises and see if we are actively living the life of *priest, prophet and king* that we were called to through our baptism.

Truth be told, *we all need a Savior*. Jesus didn't die for just one of us. He died for *each and every one of us*. As the lyrics of the song, **Image of God by We Are Messengers**, say,

**"We all need the same medicine.
We all need another second chance.**

There's no first in line at the foot of the cross."

We all need to fast from food, from drink, from drugs or addictions of many kinds, from swearing, from comparing, from gossiping, from unkindness, from overindulgences, from relegating God into a small portion of our day, our week, our lives, or even worse, no portion at all! The list goes on and on. Truth be told – we will NEVER get to heaven on our own!

Unlike my beautiful bald eagle friend, our God does not stay on his lofty perch and simply survey his creation. He came down to earth and became a man, just like us. He lived, loved and then died as an example for us, as a Sacrifice for us. God is so GOOD . . . that he didn't let the story end with his sacrifice on the cross! Come Easter morning, God, the Son, broke the power of the grave and rose to eternal life so that we, too, through our belief in and acceptance of Him as our Savior, will be able to enjoy eternal life with our Creator God! Our God was on the cross, but do not look for him there . . . our God lives! He lives within our hearts and souls, within our lives, our families, our communities. He lives within his body on earth – the Church! We are now his hands and feet. *How have we been doing with that task this past year?*

To tell the truth – Lent and Easter are Seasons that belong to each and every one of us. Lent can be painful; it requires something from us . . . honesty. We might as well get honest with our *real selves*. Trust me, even if we think we have everyone fooled (and we don't) into believing we're perfect just the way we are, we know better . . . and so does God. Telling the truth, beginning with the conversations we have with ourselves, is the first step towards healing ourselves, our relationships with others and our relationship with our God. God won't be surprised. He not only already knows everything we've thought and done, he's already paid the price for each and every one of our sins. There are no secrets with God. *Are we willing to accept the pruning and the healing from our Savior?*

"Jesus then said to those Jews who believed in him, 'if you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'" – John 8:31-32

Let's embrace this Lenten Season in a spirit of honesty. *What do we know about God? What have we experienced of God? Where do we need to let God in to heal us this Lent? What are we angry at God about? Will we say "yes" to God when he wants to hold us and make us feel safe and loved? Will we give more than a passing thought to our Creator? Will we carve out time to have a relationship with our Savior?*

We have all had a difficult time since March of 2020. *Where have we struggled? Have we stopped to acknowledge the loving hand of our God, reaching out to help us in our difficulties?*

The Season of Lent asks of us to engage in *fasting, almsgiving, and prayer.*

Fasting is important because it is a discipline of the denial of immediate gratification and pleasure that we derive from eating, ultimately enabling us to turn, instead, to God for our pleasure and receive nourishment from His Holy Word.

"One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God" – Matthew 4:4b

Almsgiving is important because sharing our talents and possessions helps reinforce within our own hearts that we live, not as solitary units, but as part of the whole Mystical Body of Christ on earth. *We are our brother's keeper.* The blessings and gifts we have received from God, were given to us to share with others. *Almsgiving* and practicing *charity* help us to become and stay connected to our *brothers and sisters in Christ.*

"Let love be sincere; hate what is evil, hold on to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; anticipate one another in showing honor. Do not grow slack in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, endure in affliction, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the holy ones, exercise hospitality. Bless those who persecute you, bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same regard for one another; do not

be haughty but associate with the lowly; do not be wise in your own estimation." – Romans 12:9-16

Prayer is important because it keeps us connected to God. Just ask any second-grader preparing for First Eucharist and they'll tell you that prayer is *talking to God.* How can we possibly have a relationship with a God that we never talk to, and also, never listen to? God often speaks to us in the quiet of our heart. We can't hear him if we never step away from the hustle and bustle of our busy lives.

Lent is a perfect time to heed the reminder to *PRAY.* Talk to the God who loves you, the God who wants to hear from you. Carve out a portion of each day that the Lord gives to you to give back to Him. Acknowledge the blessings that God continually pours out . . . our very breath, our lives, our families, our friends, our homes, our employment, our parish, our communities, our freedom, our Country, the list goes on and on. Rather than focusing on what *we want, or don't want,* let's use our prayer time to express gratitude for all that we *have.*

Yes, we are once again experiencing the Seasons of Lent and Easter. It is time to tell the truth. A time to be honest with ourselves, about ourselves. Let's evaluate *where we are,* not where *we used to be.* Let's consider *who we are,* not necessarily *who we think we should be,* but rather, *who we want to be; most importantly, who God wants us to be!*

Let us work on our relationships this Lenten Season. Let us extend forgiveness and mercy . . . just as it has been, and continues to be, offered to us by our Savior. Let's become part of the healing of this world.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." Matthew 5:7

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." Matthew 5:9

When life gets hard, and the struggles seem overwhelming, take a moment to sit and be still with our God. Look around your life. We are NEVER in the situation alone! There is **Another in the Fire (by United)** with us. Jesus stands beside us in the battle and He carries us when we can't make it on our own. God isn't surprised by any circumstances we find ourselves in. He knew we would need saving (even before the Garden of Eden) and He moved first. How do we know? Look at our friend, our Savior, on the cross. God knew we couldn't fix our monumental sin problem so God, **Love, Moved First (by Casting Crowns)**.

Let's tell the truth . . . and let the truth set us free! We are a *new creation* . . . not *the Creator*. We are sometimes angry, sometimes hurting, sometimes broken, sometimes sad. **Most of all, we are forgiven, we are redeemed, we are loved! We are the beloved bride of Jesus, the very children of our God!**

May God grant each and every one of you a healing Lenten Season and a Blessed Easter!

WHY AM I A CATHOLIC?

Not long ago a sweet sister in Christ asked me why I was a Catholic and not a different Christian faith. She asked me because she said I was Holy. First, that humbled me and surprised me. Was I holy? Not to my thinking. Definitely the 'me' I am now is much better than the many different versions of the 'me' I have been over my 70+ years. Like everyone, I have had my valleys and mountain tops and in each instance I have responded differently. At times throwing my 'holy' and faithfulness far away from my situation and making the journey on my own - I didn't need God or my Catholic doctrine-or so I thought. Thankfully I also had times when clinging to God and His promises was the only thing that got me through. So holy, no. I'd be more comfortable with saying I was a work in progress further down the road than I was before. Secondly, her question really struck me and I have spent hours wondering what answer or help I could provide when I didn't even have a ready reply at my disposal. Why am I a Catholic? Is it only

because I was born one? Or because I spent third through 12th grade in parochial schools with Catholicism drilled into my head? Or because my whole family - Grandparents, parents, siblings, aunts and uncles were Catholic? Was it simply because it's easier to stick with what you know?

Times have truly changed. Most of my family has passed on. My four siblings have left the church. My son when he turned 18 left the church and joined a 'non-denominational biblical based church'. He is an active member with his wife and my grandchildren and when we visit, we join them at their services. When I am in Missouri with Jim's sister, we attend a Southern Baptist church. Years ago, when traveling with my uncle to my dad's birthplace, we attended the Lutheran church my dad had belonged to before he met my mother and converted to Catholicism. I have a dear friend who is Mormon and I have gone to her church services. I have been to a Jewish synagogue for a funeral service. I even went to a Greek Orthodox church service to see what it is all about. It's not that I haven't been exposed to other faith beliefs. It's not that I haven't studied and learned about other religious doctrines. So, why **am** I still a Catholic?

All the churches above believe in one true God. All believe in a Savior (even if one is still waiting for Him to come). All but one of the above have a reverence for Mary - some stronger than others. Most believe in the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They all are prayer based. They have doctrine and rules and a hierarchy structure. All follow the Bible - Old Testament -Torah or their preferred translation of both the New and the Old Testaments. Catholics do have more books in their bible (Baruch, Tobit, Judith, 1st & 2nd Maccabees, Wisdom and Sirach/Ecclesiasticus are not in Protestant bibles).

There are some differences. Mary isn't always believed to be 'ever virgin'. Jesus is believed to have had siblings (James is thought to be one). The Pope is a big stumbling block for most but every church has some 'high' counsel of sorts. Married priests or female ministers differ from one to another. Obviously more things are at odds than I am listing but all my comparing led me to my answer as to why I remain in the Catholic church:

EUCCHARIST. I have always had a heart and belief in the changing of the bread and wine into the Sacred Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. Again, He is offered up. Again, He makes a sacrifice for my sins and transgressions.

This was probably pushed forefront in my mind when our church was closed and we 'attended' Mass virtually and only had a prayer for a spiritual communion. It brought tears to my eyes that we didn't get to receive the Eucharist, tears of loss. And months later when we returned to our first outdoor mass and I received communion in person, it again brought tears to my eyes, tears of joy. I am a Catholic because I believe we are the true church founded on a Rock and passed down through Jesus' apostles and disciples. I believe the words Jesus spoke:

"While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'" Matthew 26: 26-28

And again,

"The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' So Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood is true drink. John 6:52-55

It's the Eucharist. It's the Body of Jesus Christ that covers my sins. It's the Blood that washes me 'new' again and lets me keep walking my journey toward holiness. **It's the Eucharist.**
Georgia

Truth Be Told by Matthew West

Lie number one you're supposed to have it all together
And when they ask how you're doing
Just smile and tell them, "Never better"

Lie number 2 everybody's life is perfect except yours
So keep your messes and your wounds
And your secrets safe with you behind closed doors

Truth be told, - The truth is rarely told, now

I say I'm fine, yeah I'm fine oh I'm fine, hey I'm fine but I'm not
I'm broken
And when it's out of control I say it's under control but it's not
And you know it

I don't know why it's so hard to admit it
When being honest is the only way to fix it
There's no failure, no fall
There's no sin you don't already know
So let the truth be told

There's a sign on the door, says, "Come as you are" but I doubt it
'Cause if we lived like it was true, every Sunday morning pew would be crowded
But didn't you say the church should look more like a hospital
A safe place for the sick, the sinner and the scarred and the prodigals
Like me

Well truth be told
The truth is rarely told
Oh am I the only one who says

I'm fine, yeah I'm fine oh I'm fine, hey I'm fine but I'm not
I'm broken
And when it's out of control I say it's under control but it's not
And you know it

I don't know why it's so hard to admit it
When being honest is the only way to fix it
There's no failure, no fall
There's no sin you don't already know
So let the truth be told

Can I really stand here unashamed
Knowin' that you love for me won't change?
Oh God if that's really true
Then let the truth be told

I say I'm fine, yeah I'm fine oh I'm fine, hey I'm fine but I'm not
I'm broken
And when it's out of control I say it's under control but it's not
And you know it

I don't know why it's so hard to admit it
When being honest is the only way to fix it
There's no failure, no fall
There's no sin you don't already know
Yeah I know

There's no failure, no fall
There's no sin you don't already know
So let the truth be told

Songwriters: Matthew West / Andrew Pruis

Love Moved First by Casting Crowns from the album Only Jesus

This is the story of a runaway
With no way home and no way out
I threw the best of me away
I had my chance, it's too late now
Too far gone and too ashamed
To think that You'd still know my name

But love refused to let my story end that way
You didn't wait for me to find my way to You
I couldn't cross that distance even if I wanted to
You came running after me
When anybody else would've turned and left me at my worst
Love moved first
Oh-oh-ohh, oh-oh-ohh, oh-oh-ohh

What kind of grace, relentless grace
Would chase this rebel down
Crawl into this prisoner's cage
Take my hand and pull me out
You knew I couldn't make the change
So You became the change in me
And now I live to tell the story
Of the God who rescues

You didn't wait for me to find my way to You
I couldn't cross that distance even if I wanted to
You came running after me
When anybody else would've turned and left me at my worst

Love moved first
From the throne to the manger
From a manger to the grave
Your cross is the proof
Love made the first move
From a grave meant to keep You
To a stone rolled away
Your cross is the proof
Love made the first move
I remember where You found me
I'm amazed by where I stand
Your cross is the proof
That love made the first move

You didn't wait for me to find my way to You
I couldn't cross that distance even if I wanted to
You came running after me
When anybody else would've turned and left me at my worst
Love moved first
Oh-oh-ohh, oh-oh-ohh
Love moved first

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Writers: Mark Hall, Matthew West, Bernie Herms

Another In The Fire by UNITED

There's a grace when the heart is under fire
Another way when the walls are closing in
And when I look at the space between
Where I used to be and this reckoning
I know I will never be alone

There was another in the fire
Standing next to me
There was another in the waters
Holding back the seas
And should I ever need reminding
Of how I've been set free
There is a cross that bears the burden
Where another died for me
There is another in the fire

All my debt left for dead beneath the waters
I'm no longer a slave to my sin anymore
And should I fall in the space between
What remains of me and this reckoning
Either way I won't bow to the things of this world
And I know I will never be alone

There is another in the fire
Standing next to me
There is another in the waters
Holding back the seas
And should I ever need reminding
What power set me free
There is a grave that holds no body
And now that power lives in me
There is another in the fire, oh
There is another in the fire, whoa
There is another in the fire, whoa
There is another in the fire, oh
I can see

And I can see the light in the darkness
As the darkness bows to Him
I can hear the roar in the heavens
As the space between wears thin
I can feel the ground shake beneath us
As the prison walls cave in
Nothing stands between us
Nothing stands between us

There is no other name but the name that is Jesus
He who was and still is, and will be through it all
So come what may in the space between
All the things unseen and this reckoning
And I know I will never be alone
And I know I will never be alone

There'll be another in the fire
Standing next to me
There'll be another in the waters
Holding back the seas
And should I ever need reminding
How good You've been to me
I'll count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be
I can see the light

And I can see the light in the darkness
As the darkness bows to Him
I can hear the roar in the heavens
As the space between wears thin
I can feel the ground shake beneath us
As the prison walls cave in
Nothing stands between us
Nothing stands between

There'll be another in the fire
Standing next to me
There'll be another in the waters
Holding back the seas
And should I ever need reminding
How good You've been to me
I'll count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be

Count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be
I'll count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be, sing it again
I'll count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be
I'll count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be
I'll count the joy come every battle
'Cause I know that's where You'll be