

Donald G. Brown
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"I am the way, and the truth, and the life." These words of Jesus have been central to the Christian understanding of who Jesus is and, how those of us who identify ourselves with the Christian community, are in continuity with what has been essential to this community for 2000 years. We are people of "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

"I am the way," declares Jesus. Most of us, sooner or later, come to the point in life where we want to know that we are headed in the right direction.

I'm reminded of the two clergy who went fishing one evening after a particularly busy day at church. Soon after reaching their favorite fishing spot they put up a sign by the side of the road that read "Turn back before it is too late." After several drivers ignored the sign and sped on down the road toward the river, one priest turned to the other and said, "Do you think we should change the wording to "Bridge out?"

To understand that Jesus is "the Way" is to understand that there is more to life than just eating, drinking, getting stuff, and getting by. To follow Jesus as "the Way" is to hear his voice calling you into living as a participant in a community that is joyfully dedicated to living and loving the world as Jesus lived and loved.

In a world where we like to draw lines and figure out who is "in" and who is "out," Jesus reminds us that God's life giving love "rains on the just and the unjust alike." Jesus "way" is open to all people. Those of us who are followers of Jesus are to live in such a way that others, who are searching can see and be drawn to Jesus' "way."

To follow Jesus as **"the Truth"** is to understand that there is much more to truth than just "information." It is to know that at the heart of the universe, that which is seen as well as the unseen, behind all the chaos, there is the steadfast presence and love of God.

One of the reasons I am an Episcopalian is precisely because ours is a church that is not afraid to seek the truth, to ask questions, and to disagree with on another. We have room in our amazing church for the likes of the newly appointed and conservative Supreme Court Justice, Neil Gorsuch and the often controversial and unabashedly liberal bishop, John Spong. There is room for both of them under the broad tent of the Episcopal Church. They, no less than each of us, are called to be seekers after the truth in all aspects of life.

There is no area of life that is beyond God's care and concern and that means there is no facet of the world in which we live and move and have our being that is beyond our search for truth.

Our diocese is taking on the challenge of helping all our congregations look at the issues around being and living as a sanctuary community. This is a topic that quickly slips into partisan political discussions but this is not about being Republicans, Democrats, or Independents. For us it is about being people who are called to walk each day with Christ who is the way, the truth and the life.

How can we be faithful to Jesus' call to follow him and love our neighbors, be they citizens or not? This is a matter that rises above political ideology and calls us to answer the question, "What would Jesus do for and with these people who are now being removed from our community, our state, our nation?"

A recent publication from our diocese carried this admonition from our former Presiding Bishop, Frank Griswold, regarding controversial issues. He reminds us, "To open the door of one's heart is to relinquish certitude in favor of living the questions and to see Christ in all who knock on the right or the left...it means to embrace and take into the inner chamber of one's own being seemingly irreconcilable and passionately held points of view, submitting them to the truth who is Christ and then remaining steadfast, even in the very midst of hell, without despair." (Page 4, Dio of Cal publication "Home, Exile, Community, Sanctuary")

I know this whole concept of being a sanctuary church, or city, or state is one of those matters that stirs strongly felt emotions in people and there are undoubtedly some of you whose pulses are racing because I have even raised this topic. As I said a few moments ago, ours is a church that is not afraid to take risks, to disagree so that we might be led to the truth. To be a disciple of Jesus is not so much always agreeing with one another, as it is to be on a journey of following, of asking hard questions, and trusting that God will lead us in such a way that we can love others as Jesus would love them.

To understand that Jesus is "**the Life**" is to understand what counts most as we move from day to day in what is called "life," what counts most is nourishing our relationship with the Lord and with each other. It is coming to know Jesus, how he lived, what he taught, how he loved, why he forgave, how he held onto hope, how his very presence brought healing and meaning to the lives of those who were open to his friendship. It is in such discoveries that we find "the Life" Jesus spoke of to his disciples.

Life is complicated. For some it is very difficult, excruciatingly so. For others, the challenges seem to be less daunting. But the reality is that all of us have our struggles, our questions, our burdens. In this church we have the opportunity to lay those struggles and concerns before God who is always more ready to hear and respond than we are to share or speak.

Jesus, is the face and heart and spirit of God revealed to us. Jesus constantly opens himself to us. He is as close to us as our next breath, and he bids us to come to him for he is "the **way**, the **truth**, and the **life**." AMEN