

Love and truth have to go together. We get into trouble if we have one without the other.

Some people try to have love without truth. When we are getting to know someone new, and we feel the spark of attraction to that person, we are tempted to hide some of ourselves. We may hide our faults because we don't want this person to know the worst about us. But we may also hide some of our good qualities if we are afraid the person would not approve. Teenagers face a lot of peer pressure. Some good teens make bad choices because they want to go along with their friends, rather than stick up for what they know is right. Adults face the same temptations. We listen to offensive jokes without complaint. We steal, lie or cheat because someone else has tempted us. We know better, but we cover up the truth of how good we are because we think that doing something else shows love to our friends or family. But we cannot really love if we are hiding the truth.

At other times we try to honor the truth, but without love in our hearts. Speaking the truth requires tact. Sometimes we are not diplomatic. We speak the truth in order to make people mad, or to embarrass someone. Now, it is important to tell the truth about what we have done, and to tell other people the truth about their actions and how they affect others. But speaking the truth does not give a person a license to be uncharitable. We strive to speak the truth with love. Speaking the truth without love creates enemies, stirs up anger, and builds resentment. The truth works best when it is coupled with love.

Today's responsorial psalm is, "Your ways, O Lord, are love and truth to those who keep your covenant." God's ways include both – love and truth. When we keep God's covenant, we will speak the truth with love and we will love others in truth.

We use this psalm today because one of the themes of Lent is the covenant. Early in history, God established a covenant with the chosen people. God promised them salvation, and they promised to walk in God's ways. In the covenant God would lift them from drudgery, sin and death, and bring them to freedom and life. God fulfilled that covenant in the resurrection of Christ, and we celebrate that covenant each Sunday with the eucharist.

Today's first reading tells how God established a covenant with Noah and the ark. Just as Noah overcame death across the waters of the flood, so we overcome death across the waters of baptism. God is faithful to the covenant, and asks us to be faithful as well.

Sometimes we are not. Sometimes we sin. That is one of the reasons we have Lent. We spend this season mindful of our sin, and we try to correct our course with divine help. If we keep the covenant, we will stay to God's ways, where we will have love and truth. If your life is short on love, or short on truth, then this Lent is for you. Put aside falsehood and hatred, and embrace the covenant of God.