

Truth in the Lives of the Saints: Jacob son of Isaac and St. Mary of Egypt

Objective

To learn from the examples of Jacob and St. Mary of Egypt and to reflect on the turning points in their lives and to apply it to our own relationship with God.

References

- ❖ orthodoxsermons.org – Seeking His Face pt. 2
- ❖ <http://www.copticchurch.net/topics/synexarion/maryofegypt.htm>

Scripture Verse

“Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden *part* You will make me to know wisdom” (Psalm 51:6)

Lesson Guidelines

- ❖ *Read the story in the above mentioned Synexarium reading.*
- ❖ True honesty is not just telling the truth, it is living the truth and living a life of transparency.
- ❖ This means being honest about my true spiritual condition.
- ❖ This is a daunting task because our natural instinct is to cover up the truth and to hide from our true selves (Genesis 3:7-8).
- ❖ It is essential that we are willing to be honest and call things as they are; just like St. Mary.
- ❖ Until I call it what it is, there can be no healing!
- ❖ Honesty is so important because God cannot revive the heart that refuses to acknowledge the truth!
- ❖ In Psalm 15:1-2, the psalmist describes the person who speaks truth in his heart and not from his mouth as the person who abides in God’s tabernacle.
- ❖ He is not talking about saying the truth, he is talking about living the truth.
- ❖ It is easy to confess things, but it is another thing altogether to believe the thing that is being confessed.
- ❖ Let’s consider the story of Jacob. In Genesis 27:18-19, we read about his sin of deceiving his father Isaac. ***very wrong. It means the one who follows, the one who supplants, or the one who is held by the heel”
- ❖ There is a solution for sin—but there can be NO solution without honesty
- ❖ In Genesis 32:24, we read about Jacob wrestling with God until the beaking of day.
- ❖ God hates excuses and Jacob was unwilling to acknowledge his responsibility in relationship to Esau.
- ❖ There is an expression that people don’t usually change when they see the light, they change when they feel the heat!
- ❖ If God is wrestling with you right now, know that He will not stop until you recognize your name—He needs me to know my name, to accept it and to take responsibility for it before He will bless me (Gen 32:26). So, the question is: is my name love, gentleness, mercy, justice, truth, etc., or could it be hatred, harshness, cruelty, injustice, deception, etc.?
- ❖ Honesty is the requirement for Grace! (James 4:6). Until I admit the truth about myself, there is no grace from God.

- ❖ The healthiest people spiritually are those who take time and reflect honestly on who they are (NOT believing their own press).
- ❖ The most unhealthy are those who make excuses.
- ❖ In Genesis 32:28-30, we read about the blessings Jacob received when he spoke the truth “...And He blessed him there. So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel “For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”
- ❖ Same with St. Mary of Egypt – as soon as she recognized that it was her sinfulness that kept her from going in, God allowed her entry to Him
- ❖ Two Important things to remember as we are being honest:
 - No sin is too big for God to forgive (Isaiah 1:18).
There is a saying that on judgment day, God will not ask us why we sinned but He will ask us why we didn't repent.
 - No sin is too small to be ignored or to be left inside -- big ships can be sunk by little leaks—small foxes spoil the vine Song of Songs 2:15 and Psalm 32:3-5
Don't wait for a little sin to become a big sin!!!

Running from the truth doesn't fix it, it just stops us from finding the healing and grace that we all need!!

Conclusion

At the doors of the church, Mary had hesitated - the first time in her life she had ever hesitated before doing exactly what she desired. At that moment, her honesty enabled her to see beyond herself. And there, beyond herself, she found God. Her conversion was immediate; but so, too, was the grace that answers genuine repentance. For in that single moment on the steps of the church, Mary was both changed in herself, and found worthy in the eyes of the Lord. This is exactly how God will deal with us when we have the courage to be honest!

Activities/Discussion Points

1. What are ways that I can be honest with myself?
2. What are the rewards of being honest with myself?