

Authentic Child of God Fifth Week of Lent Wednesday, April 5, 2017 8:15 AM
Dn 3:14-20, 91-92, 95; **Jn 8:31-42** (St. Vincent Ferrer, priest) (This all comes down to action, behavior, and really affection and feeling and commitment. That's authentic being a child of God.)

“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.”

This dialogue is a little bit confusing because it starts out Jesus is talking to the Jews who believe in him and then he is fighting with them. Well, this represents actually **the turmoil that Jesus created in the Jewish community**. There are those who did support him because they believed he was the Messiah, but then they weren't too happy with the way things were working out, because they had their **preconceived notions of what the Messiah was supposed to be; and Jesus didn't meet those criteria**. And it was not just the people in the community, the leaders were confused. Some of the Pharisees supported Jesus; many did not. Some of the priests supported Jesus; many did not. Maybe people in the government were supporting Jesus, and others were not. So **this is a very confusing moment**.

But here Jesus is clarifying something, and it comes down to this: **you are what you do**. Regardless what you think and regardless what you say, you are what you do. If you really are a son of God, then you will love me, because I am from God. You can't get away from the needed necessary deduction. **If you are the son of God, if you are children of God, if God is your Father, then you will love me, because I'm from him**. But if you're going dispute, if you're going to reject, **if you're going to fight me, then you are not from God. You are a child of someone else**.

That brings up a sore point because Jesus had a reputation of being the son of someone else. The fact that Mary was pregnant before the marriage took place was well-known. So they retort, “Well, we are no illegitimate breed,” because he was implying they were illegitimate in a spiritual sense, being more children of the devil than of God, for example.

And this is a theme that's played out throughout Scripture. **Who is the true God? The true God is the God who created everything**. What about all these other gods? Well first of all, the **Jews were special**. They are a particular people. They were chosen by God to be particularly his

own; it says so in Deuteronomy. And **they alone were to worship the true God.** The other nations were not expected to worship the true God. They worshiped lesser gods. And here we have to **distinguish between lesser gods**, legitimate beings but not God, i.e. powers, principalities and so on, **versus false gods.** False gods are either evil demons or simply the fabrications of human life and therefore actually of the powers that be in society, represented by idols. **So idolatry is the lowest level you can get to**, where you are actually worshiping either your own image, something somebody else has created, or something actually that is beholden to evil forces, the evil one, the legions of fallen angels and so on.

Now most of the nations such as Nebuchadnezzar—**Nebuchadnezzar** incidentally is never seen as an evil person particularly, not very good either; but he is **simply ignorant of the true God.** Now in the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego he gets a clue, but that's just a clue that the God of Israel is really stronger and better than any other god. But stronger and better is not the same thing as only. **So the nations worship lesser gods and that was legitimate for them; it was never legitimate for Jews.**

So Jesus now is calling on this exclusivity that the Jews owed the true God. And he is calling them on their great claim to fame: "Abraham is our father." Earlier he said, "Don't call anybody on earth father, only God is." Well they picked that up here. They said, "Oh, no, God is our Father." He said, "Well, then act like it." **This all comes down to action, behavior, and really affection and feeling and commitment. That's authentic being a child of God.**