

In China, where you came from is VERY important. You can ask a person that question, and they'll give you an answer of a province, prefecture, and town. But what's really peculiar is that if you ask them what their hometown is like, they may NEVER have been there.

When you ask someone from China where they're from, what they tell you is where their family came from.

I suppose there's something to that. People will say "I'm Irish," or "I'm German," or "I'm Polish," and have never really been to Ireland, Germany, or Poland.

In the Gospel, Jesus challenges his listeners who take exception to being told, "the truth will set you free."

They say that they are children of Abraham. Yet, Abraham lived roughly two-thousand years before the time of Christ. That's four-thousand years before us.

So, after two-thousand years, to claim Abraham as your 'father' is a bit vague.

But what is Jesus getting at?

While it was VERY important for his listeners to claim to be descended from Abraham, many of these people had NEVER really tried to live their lives according to the faith of Abraham.

So while these people TECHNICALLY called themselves "children of Abraham," they had very little in common SPIRITUALLY with Abraham.

What does this mean for us?

We're here in Church today ... we call ourselves Catholic ... and I would guess that our Catholic identity is VERY important to us.

But how much do we have in common with the Apostles? How much do we have in common with the first and second century Church Doctors?

Are we ready and willing to give it all up to follow Christ?

Christians in China or North Korea or in many Middle Eastern countries don't even need to speculate on those questions.

So, here as we near the end of Lent, let's do a reality check. How deeply does our identity and our spirituality as a Christian ... as a Catholic ... penetrate into who we are?

Let's pray during the next few days that God will shed a ray of light onto any places in our lives or our hearts or our minds where we may not have allowed Him in ... and pray for the grace to allow a truly Catholic Christian spirituality penetrate our identity ... to the glory and praise of God the Father, through his Son Jesus Christ, in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.