

Paul's hymn to love includes the statement that 'Love rejoices in the truth'(1Corinthians 13:6).

In the light of this, perhaps the best advice Paul ever gave was that we 'do the truth in love' (Ephesians 4:15).

Sometimes we think we are insisting on the truth, but fail in love. You cannot have truth without love, for the ultimate truth is that God is love.

Sometimes we think we are being loving, but we bend the truth. Love is not real when it is not truthful. The truth must always be the foundation. We are to do what is true, and we are to do it with all the love we can muster.

The faith-community can help us in this, for, as Saint Paul reminded Timothy: ‘The church of the living God is the column and pedestal of the truth’(1 Timothy 3:15).

I. The importance of truth – being in touch with what is real

‘All are bound to seek the truth, to embrace it, and to hold on to it as they come to know it. The sacred Council proclaims that these obligations bind the human conscience. Truth can impose itself on the human mind only in virtue of itself as truth, which wins over the mind with gentleness and power’(Vatican II Declaration on Religious liberty n.1).

Concern for the truth demands decisions of us - decisions based, not on habit or unreflecting instinct, but on insight enlightened by faith.

As Jesus said: 'The truth will set you free'(John 8:32).

The cult of spontaneity can leave us trapped within the confines of merely bodily gratification, or gratification of the ego, ignoring the more profound and personal longings of the human spirit.

‘One’s moral judgment is not true merely by the fact that it has its origin in the conscience. To hold this would mean that the inescapable claims of truth disappear, yielding their place to a criterion of sincerity, authenticity and being at peace within oneself’

(John-Paul II The Splendour of Truth n. 31)

‘The Church puts itself always and only at the service of conscience, helping it to avoid being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine proposed by human deceit and helping it not to swerve from the truth about the good of the human person, but rather to attain the truth with certainty and abide in it’(John-Paul II The Splendour of Truth, 1993 n.64).

Conscience needs to be . . .

Actively formed

by practice

Accurately informed

by relevant facts

Adequately conformed

to God's truth

Vatican II On Religious Freedom n.3

‘It is by personal assent that people must adhere to the truth which they have discovered. Furthermore, it is through their conscience that people see and recognise the demands of the divine law. They are bound to follow this conscience faithfully in all their activity so that they may come to God, who is their last end. Therefore they must not be forced to act contrary to their conscience. Nor must they be prevented from acting according to their conscience, especially in religious matters.’

Joseph Ratzinger Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II

Ed Vorgrimler 1967, V, 134

‘Over the Pope who is the expression of the binding claim of ecclesiastical authority, there stands one’s own conscience which must be obeyed before all else, even if necessary against the requirements of ecclesiastical authority. The conscience of the individual confronts him with a supreme and ultimate tribunal, and one which in the last resort is beyond the claim of social groups, even the official church.’

TRUTH



TROTH / TRUST

= Something I can RELY ON

Greek - A-LETHEIA

Lethe = the mythical river of
forgetfulness in Hades

|
NOT

|
FORGOTTEN

[not beneath deceptive appearances]

[what seems to be = what is in reality]

To say that a judgment is true is to claim that it is in accordance with the way things really are, not just with the way we would like things to be. The ultimately reality is God. Everything is an expression of God. So truth is always an aspect of God.

The Beloved Disciple came to recognize Jesus as the human expression of the real God, that is to say, as 'full of the gift of truth'. As he says in his Prologue: 'The Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of the gift of truth.'

He portrays Jesus as declaring: 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life'(John 14:6), and promising: 'When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth'(John 16:13).

We might ask ourselves the following questions:

Do I always seek the truth?

Even when it is embarrassing?

Even when it means that I have to admit that I have been wrong?

Even when it means financial loss, or loss of reputation?

Am I willing to change my mind when evidence shows that I am wrong?

Do I want the truth whatever the cost?

In relation to religion, John Henry Newman had to make huge sacrifices to be at home with the truth.

Newman: An essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine

‘Some claim
that truth and falsehood in religion are but matter of opinion;
that one doctrine is as good as another;
that the Governor of the world does not intend
that we should gain the truth;
that there is no truth;
that we are not more acceptable to God by believing this
than by believing that;
that no one is answerable for his opinions;
that it is enough if we sincerely hold what we profess;
that we may take up and lay down opinions at pleasure;
that we may safely trust to ourselves in matters of faith
and need no other guide.’

‘There is a truth;

there is one truth;

religious error is of itself of an immoral nature;

those who maintain it, unless they do so involuntarily,
are guilty in maintaining it;

religious error is to be dreaded;

the search for truth is not the gratification of curiosity;

the mind is below truth, not above it,
and is bound, not to descant upon it, but to venerate it;

truth and falsehood are set before us for the trial of our hearts.’

‘Liberalism in religion is the doctrine that there is no positive truth in religion,

but that one creed is as good as another,

and this is the teaching which is gaining substance and force daily.

It is inconsistent with the recognition of any religion, as true.

It teaches that all are to be tolerated, for all are matters of opinion.

Revealed religion is not a truth, but a sentiment and a taste;

not an objective fact, not miraculous;

and it is the right of each individual to make it say just what strikes his fancy.’

- Truth must not be imposed

‘Truth can impose itself on the human mind only in virtue of its own truth, which wins over the mind with both gentleness and power.’

(Vat II Declaration on Religious Freedom n.1)

- We must seek the truth

‘We are impelled by our nature to seek the truth, to adhere to it once discovered, and to direct our whole lives in accordance with its demands’(Vat II Declaration on Religious Freedom n.2).

As disciples of Jesus we are graced to love with Jesus' love.

To be-lieve.

God offers his grace unconditionally. To receive/welcome grace and so to come to know THE TRUTH, it is for us to commit ourselves to the following imperatives.

- be attentive to reality and to our response to it
- be intelligent - look for meaning in our experiences
- be reasonable - check our insights so as to know what is real
(how things are, and not just how things seem to me to be).
- be responsible - respond to what we know to be true
in a creative, personal way.

W.B. Yeats (1910, aged 45)

‘Though leaves are many, the root is one.
Through all the lying days of my youth
I swayed my leaves and flowers in the sun.
Now I may wither into the truth.’