

THE ROSARY

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LIGHT & LIFE

FATHER REGINALD E. MARTIN, O.P., *DIRECTOR*

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A few words from Fr. Reginald Martin, O.P.

LOOKING BACK

I am not certain whether an issue of *Light and Life* has ever – ever! – featured a photograph, but this issue is an exception, and if our friends look to the right, they will see a picture of a very handsome Fr. Paul Aquinas Duffner, taken on April 14, just before the Mass to celebrate his milestone hundredth birthday.

For more than two decades Fr. Duffner was the presiding genius at the Rosary Center, carefully preparing the *Light and Life* reflections, and leading our staff in daily recitation of the Rosary and celebration of the Holy Eucharist. The collections of his writings continue to inspire the Rosary Center's friends, and you may order them at any time.

Fr. Duffner may be growing weaker, but he has grown no less interested in the ministry of the Rosary Center, or you, who support our work. Each day he comes to the Center, and each day he makes an invaluable contribution to our lives. Thank you for your prayers for Fr. Duffner, and your continued prayers for Our Lady's saving ministry!

LOOKING AHEAD

Some time ago my Dominican brothers began turning to me to edit their books and academic theses. Now, as I approach my seventieth year, I seem to have discovered another – somewhat related – vocation: writing forewords to texts, and providing comments for the backs of books that will, the author hopes, improve the books' sales.

I have recently had the opportunity to do this twice. Fr. Brian Mullady, whose work is well-known to friends of the Rosary Center, asked me to serve as "censor" for his newest effort, *Christian Social Order*. In the Catholic Church, a censor's task is to testify that a book contains no moral or doctrinal error, so our friends may imagine the trepidation with which I undertook this assignment. Fr. Mullady, after all, is vastly more intelligent than I. He is a renowned theologian, a seminary professor, and a preacher of some note. My academic credentials, by contrast, include degrees in English literature and Business Administration.



Fr. Paul A. Duffner, 2015 (photo by Liz Wade)

However, a superior's request is a superior's request, so I began reading the book, looking for errors I was certain I would not find. Nor did I. Along the way, however, I was altogether captivated by Fr. Brian's concise summary of the Church's history of social teaching, as well as the consequences of our Fall from grace, and the Salvation Christ won on the Cross.

The text considers the immense gift of our Human Freedom, and the corresponding responsibility to use it for the Common Good. It probes the duties of the State, and observes, "For the end of a society to be proper, the ultimate end of human life, God and his laws must be respected."

What is perfectly breath-taking in the work is Fr. Mullady's deep and insightful consideration of marriage and the family, and the second part of the book, which deals with practical applications of the truths outlined in the initial chapters, gives the reader a beautiful, yet unsentimental view of the value of the family and the threats it faces at this time.

ST. IGNATIUS & THE ROSARY

One day, a few weeks ago, when I was minding my own business, I opened my email and found a note from a cloistered Dominican nun who asked whether I might be willing to provide some comments for the back cover of a book for which she had just completed some

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THEOLOGY FOR THE LAITY

The Ten Commandments: Part Nine

The Eighth Commandment

"Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness Against Your Neighbor"

By Father Reginald Martin, O.P.

BEYOND THE NEGATIVE PRECEPT

As we have seen in our reflections on the fifth, sixth and seventh commandments, these precepts are presented as negative rules, but they urge us to embrace positive attitudes and actions in our relations toward one another. Our Baptism is a Baptism into Christ's Body, the Church. This sacrament gives us to one another, and we must respect the gift we have received, and reflect the one who has given it. When it considers the link between these essential truths and the eighth commandment, Our *Catechism* observes,

The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others. This moral prescription flows from the vocation of the holy people to bear witness to their God who is the truth and wills the truth. Offenses against the truth express by word or deed a refusal to commit oneself to moral uprightness; they are fundamental infidelities to God and, in this sense, they undermine the foundations of the covenant. (CCC, 2464)

JESUS & US: REFLECTIONS OF TRUTH

Throughout the gospel, the evangelists portray Jesus as the embodiment of God's truth. He, himself, says, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," (Jn. 14:6) and this truth sheds God's light upon the world and provides the example for all our actions. If we consider the matter, this is no more than we should expect of beings created in God's image: if we look like God, we ought to act like God. Mark Twain, somewhat cynically observed, "If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything." In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus expresses the notion somewhat more nobly when he teaches, "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more comes from evil." (Mt. 5:34)

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Before we continue, we might do well to ask what truth is. The dictionary defines truth as "Conformity to fact or actuality." St. Thomas Aquinas teaches, "...truth resides primarily in the intellect, and secondarily in things as they are related to the intellect as their principle." (ST, 1, 16.1)

This is somewhat abstract, so let us consider the example St. Thomas uses, which is that of a house. The house is "true" to the extent it corresponds to the image in its architect's mind. Likewise, in the natural and moral sphere, God knows what things ought to be – whether they are rocks or moral principles. Individual things are true to the extent they correspond to the ideal

vision of the object in God's mind. We have little difficulty identifying "true" rocks; moral truths, however, which are fundamental to our relations with one another, may, at least occasionally, be somewhat more difficult to determine.

A UNIVERSAL RIGHT

And yet, this is the challenge and goal of our humanity. Our *Catechism* teaches, "Man tends by nature toward the truth. He is obliged to honor and bear witness to it." The text turns to *Dignitatis Humanae*, one of the documents of the Second Vatican Council, which states,

It is in accordance with their dignity that all men, because they are persons...are both impelled by their nature and bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth once they come to know it and direct their whole lives in accordance with the demands of truth. (CCC, 2467)

The *Catechism* then provides synonyms for truth, "truthfulness, sincerity, or candor. Truth or truthfulness is the virtue which consists in showing oneself true in deeds and truthful in words, and in guarding against duplicity, dissimulation and hypocrisy."

We may take these notions for granted, but if we consider hypocrisy, which the dictionary defines as "maintaining or pretending to maintain attitudes or beliefs we do not actually hold," we quickly realize that truth is an absolutely essential element in the foundation of our social relations. Written contracts may bind individuals to perform certain actions, but the simplest daily interactions would be impossible if we could not rely on one another to tell the truth.

We see the immense value of truth when we consider the part it plays in every decision we make. Before we perform any act, we judge the act and its consequences against the truth of the action as we perceive it. If we have been misled, we cannot – ever – make an informed decision. This is a fate dreadful to consider in our natural, social and commercial transactions. Its spiritual consequences can be fatal.

OFFENSES AGAINST TRUTH: LIES

Our *Catechism* turns to St. Augustine when it teaches, "A lie consists in speaking a falsehood with the intention of deceiving." (CCC, 2482) The text adds,

Lying is the most direct offense against the truth. To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order

to lead someone into error. By injuring a man's relation to truth and to his neighbor, a lie offends against the fundamental relation of a man and of his word to the Lord. (CCC, 2483)

St. Thomas Aquinas distinguishes among three types of lies. The first is the officious lie, told for convenience, in which no one is harmed. Here we might think of the excuses we invent for turning down an invitation we do not wish to accept, or (in past times, when a simpler world relied on more primitive telecommunications) a parent's instructing a child to tell a telephone solicitor, "I'm sorry, my parents aren't home." The second sort of lie is the jocose, told for amusement, or in which one exaggerates: "The fish was this big."

The third sort of lie, the meretricious, is a true lie. Such a lie generally provides the teller no benefit, but does harm to the person to or about whom it is told. The serpent's lie to Eve is a perfect illustration of this sort of lie. No one will be surprised to learn we judge the gravity of a lie by the quality of the truth it distorts, the intentions of the individual who tells the lie, and the ills suffered by those against whom the lie is told.

SPECIFIC LIES: PERJURY

The Book of Proverbs warns, "*A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who utters lies will perish.*" (Prov. 19:9) To lie in public is no small matter; to lie under oath, in a courtroom, is perjury, a particularly serious offense against the eighth commandment. One who commits perjury is probably not considering what a misuse of God's gift the act represents, but we must not forget we were given the ability to speak to maintain order and harmony. To do otherwise "*...contribute[s] to the condemnation of the innocent, exoneration of the guilty, or the increased punishment of the accused....*" (CCC, 2476)

OTHER LIES

We need not enter a courtroom, nor even speak aloud, to see the damaging effects of lying. Any act that destroys another's reputation violates the eighth commandment. Such actions include

- rash judgment, which assumes – without proof – someone has done wrong
- detraction, which is telling the faults of another to those who have no reason to know the information
- calumny, which is lying about another, and causing others to form false negative opinions of the individual.

JUSTICE AND CHARITY

"Honor is the social witness given to human dignity, and everyone enjoys a natural right to the honor of his name and reputation and to respect." (CCC, 2479) The *Catechism* here repeats a theme we have frequently seen in our discussion of the commandments: God's law is given to protect the social bonds that unite us. Truth is no more than we deserve; it is also an expression of Justice and Charity. Justice is the virtue by which we give each person what she or he has a right to. The virtue of Charity is our wish for another's good. Rash judgment, detraction and

calumny deprive another person of justice, and certainly manifest no charity toward the individual.

ADDITIONAL FAULTS

The *Catechism* identifies other, subtler forms of lying, which include flattery, adulation and complaisance. All three are acts by which we strive to make ourselves agreeable to another person by distorting the truth about that individual. If we seek nothing more than a favor another person can grant, none of these acts is particularly harmful. However, each of these actions has the potential to become gravely sinful if it approves another person's immoral behavior, or if our effort to gain another's favor incites us to take part in someone else's immoral activity.

THE REMEDY FOR LYING

Regard for truth means we must take practical steps to repair any damage we may have done by lying. If the lie was public, the reparation ought to be public. And if the individual suffered harm as a result of a lie, she or he should be compensated for it in some way. An apology is a good place to begin the process of amendment, and is the very smallest step we can take to restore the Justice and Charity that ought to characterize our relations with one another.

THE VALUE OF SILENCE

While we may never lie about another person, or about a particular situation or event, we may not always be obliged to share whatever truth we may know. Priests, for example, may never reveal what they have heard in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Doctors, lawyers and other professionals are bound, to some extent, by similar codes. The *Catechism* expresses what ought to be no more than common sense when it states,

Charity and respect for the truth should dictate the response to every request for information or communication. The good and safety of others, respect for privacy, and the common good are sufficient reasons for being silent about what ought not be known or for making use of a discreet language. The duty to avoid scandal often commands strict discretion. No one is bound to reveal the truth to someone who does not have the right to know it. (CCC, 2489)

Modern technology provides nearly endless possibilities for the transmission of information, but with this promise comes a corresponding responsibility. Those who employ social media must embrace the challenge to use it carefully and respectfully, handing on information that is true – and complete. Here, too, however, the value of Justice and Charity must be taken into account and weighed against the apparent good of shared knowledge. We must ask whether the prize of being first to announce news is worth the possible cost of another's reputation.

CHRISTIAN WITNESS TO TRUTH

We have said that Justice is the virtue by which we give to each person her or his due. This begins in our

relations with God, to whom we turn in the prayer that is nothing more than He deserves. Our embrace of Justice continues in our witnessing our faith, which is acting to establish the truth or to make it known. We accomplish this in diverse ways, beginning with public worship and taking an active role in our civil society.

THE ULTIMATE WITNESS: MARTYRDOM

The highest witness to the faith, of course, is martyrdom, and a martyr's death is the highest tribute one can pay to Christ. Jesus gave His life for us, so Justice obliges us to offer our lives in return. Whether we are called to make the heroic sacrifice of martyrdom is God's decision, but our Baptism calls us to recall that death is the price of our resurrection. The martyrs are the noblest of our companions on our spiritual quest, and the *Catechism* pays them immense tribute when it says, "[Their lives] form the archives of truth written in letters of blood."

AN UNEXPECTED LINK: TRUTH & ART

The poet John Keats ended his "Ode on a Grecian Urn" by observing, "*Beauty is truth, truth beauty, – that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.*" Our *Catechism* observes this connection between truth and beauty when it observes

...truth carries with it the joy and splendor of spiritual beauty. Truth is beautiful in itself. Truth in words, the rational expression of knowledge of created and uncreated reality, is necessary to man, who is endowed with intellect. But truth can also find other complementary forms of human expression, above all when it is a matter of evoking what is beyond words: the depths of the human heart, the exaltations of the soul, the mystery of God. (CCC, 2500)

God expressed His infinite imagination when He created the universe. We, who have been created in God's image, share in His creativity when we use our artistic talents to reveal and reproduce God's truth in the sights and sounds we perceive. We may not immediately connect art to the virtues of Charity and Justice, but consider what we have said about these virtues. Justice consists in rendering each person what is due. If our art reveals some truth about God's creation, we have performed a just act. Likewise, if a work of art draws someone closer to God, we have achieved the goal of Charity, which is to will the good of another.

The eighth commandment demonstrates a truth we have often observed in these reflections: once we begin to study, we may discover an unexpected world. Who would have imagined God's commandment to avoid lying could lead us to a consideration of art? And yet, both are rooted in a regard for truth, which, in turn, reveals our commitment to Justice and Charity.

A WORD ABOUT MARY

We should hardly be surprised to find Mary our example of truth. In the Litany of Loreto, we honor her as "Mirror of Justice" and "Virgin Most Merciful." Her life

on earth, from Cana to Calvary, was devoted to seeing that those she encountered received what she could provide them – even if this were no more than her tears. And our faith assures us she devotes her eternity in heaven to seeking our good. Her Rosary is a powerful tool for uniting our will to hers; let us embrace this gift and allow her devotion to truth to become our own. ■

ST. IGNATIUS & THE ROSARY *Continued from page 1*
illustrations. The book, she wrote, was by a Jesuit, and applied the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius to praying the Rosary.

"This looks interesting," thought I, so I sent an affirmative reply, and received a remarkable volume in return. Most of us, I suspect, have heard of the Spiritual Exercises, but I have a feeling few of us, and I count myself among the ignorant, despite graduating from a Jesuit university, have any idea what they consist of.

I am happy to say that is no longer the case. Fr. William Watson, S.J., has just completed a book that explains the Exercises, and demonstrates how embracing them can lead us into a more intimate relation with Christ and His Blessed Mother.

The Exercises, I learned, are traditionally undertaken with the guidance of a spiritual director. This is the role Fr. Watson assumes for us, leading us through each Mystery of the Rosary, directing us to ponder its truth and, especially, its value to us. With this issue of *Light and Life* we promise to offer two novenas of Masses to the Sacred Heart for our friends' intentions. Consider what Fr. Watson writes about the last of the Sorrowful Mysteries, the Crucifixion and Death of Jesus. He asks us to "*ponder what God has accomplished in Christ Jesus on my behalf in light of this particular mystery,*" and observes

Original Sin unleashed upon the world an evolution of rage in the overwhelming grief of divorcing one's self from the ecstasy of intimacy with God and each other. This is Satan's rage which by choice we have made our own. In this rage, human relationships are violated at every level, making sin's greatest trauma that of abandonment and loneliness...In freely absorbing our sins in His Sacred Heart, He is cut-off from experiencing the Father's love, and from those depths forgives us, mending permanently the communion of love that was our birthright with the Trinity and each other.

Both these books will be available when we mail the next issue of *Light and Life*. I am certain you will find them as rewarding as I. ■

A NOTE TO OUR CANADIAN FRIENDS

If you send your gift to the Rosary Center in Canadian funds, your generosity is considerably reduced by the time the bank makes adjustments for differences in exchange rates and – especially – levies a transaction fee to convert your gift into American funds. To protect the value of your gift, please use a credit card or International Money Order.