

# TRUTH

## OR CONSEQUENCES WITH THE HEART OF JESUS

DEAR FRIENDS OF THE SACRED HEART,

Recently I've gotten into the habit, before beginning to write a Sacred Heart talk, of glancing through our many back copies of talks that we've given down through the years. Fortunately, we've saved most of these and sometimes a certain topic becomes relevant again, and worth repeating. As I began to prepare for this month's talk, my attention was drawn to one of these past talks (entitled SACRED HEART OF JESUS: FOCUS OF TRUTH (given on Feb. 2, 1997). I would like to 're-share' some of this talk (for today's presentation), as it seems so pertinent for our times...

*Something happened to me a few days ago that I would like to share with you. Several weeks ago I placed an order for an icon of Saint Michael the Archangel which is now in the front of our monastery. The icon was selected from a brochure put out by an Orthodox monastery which supports itself by doing this kind of work. Since it was a special order, that is, the size of the icon was larger than they had in stock, I expected to wait, but as the weeks passed and there was no sign of delivery, I decided to place a call to check on my order. The brochure gave an 800 number which spelled out i-c-o-n-s as its final digits. I dialed the number. The ringing phone was answered by a voice that caught me off guard. It wasn't the initial words which alerted me that something was wrong but the tone of the voice. It was devious, not like anything, you would expect from a monastery. My first thought was that I had been conned. But as my mind tried to make sense of what was happening, I began to realize that I had indeed reached an evil number. The female tones were now decidedly lascivious, and the message was getting clearer and clearer. I had reached a telephone pornographic station. A sickening sense of perversion made me drop the phone into its cradle. I could hardly believe what my innocent dialing had reached. I tried again, replacing the letters of the telephone code with numbers and dialing carefully. This time a beautifully sweet voice answered with the words, "Praised be Jesus Christ." I felt relieved to have gotten the right place and within seconds I had my order confirmed and business taken care of. But I was left dumbfounded by the striking difference in the quality of voices I had just heard and the messages they related!*

*This experience which occurred so unexpectedly has alerted me even more to the all-pervasive presence of evil around us. I am sure the good Lord allowed it to happen to me as a means of spurring on my prayer.*

*What I encountered in this telephone episode was so obviously evil. In fact, the contrast between the two phone calls highlighted that more intensely. I think that most people who try to live good lives would have picked that up. However, the degrading message of the first call was not immediately evident as an element of deception prevailed to allure the caller deeper and deeper into the game.*

*Reflecting on this has reminded me of an important point we all need to consider: deception is one of the most effective tools of the evil one. Deception means that we perceive what is true to be false and what is false to be true.*

*The interchange can be so subtle and so rational and so ego-satisfying that the individual is oblivious to the switch. Our susceptible human natures which gravitate toward self-affirmation can be so easily taken in. Half-truths with a very respectable face can appear so plausible. In this state the traps of Satan can ensnare us to forget or minimize his power to sow seeds of confusion to blemish the truth.*

We know from the gospel stories that Jesus called himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life. If Jesus is the Truth, then His Heart must be the focal point of all truth, the radiant center where all our confusion is turned into light, hope and life. Today more than ever each one of us needs to cling to the Sacred Heart as our sole source of truth and clarity in the midst of so much misleading information and misdirected desires. Every one of us is prey to the Father of Lies who seeks to distort the truths which challenge us to grow in the spiritual life.

For all of us who love the Sacred Heart, it is imperative that we discern the truth. Scripture tells us, "The Spirit will lead you to the complete truth..." (Jn 16:13). Therefore unity in truth can only be sustained by keeping a vital and continually renewed contact with the source of life and truth, i.e., the Spirit speaking within each of us. But how do we know if the thoughts we think of, the feelings we have, are really putting us in touch with God's truth? Here are some signs that can help us answer that question (see THE WAY "True and False, by Justin Kelly, SJ, July 1981):

1) **HUMILITY** / As with many gospel teachings, there is a paradox between true knowledge and the sense of one's own ignorance. As we acquire a deeper understanding of God's truth there is a growth in humility. We become more aware of our littleness and insignificance compared to God's greatness. In contrast, untruth or a lack of reality in one's conceptions often manifests itself in a defensive haughtiness. We disdain being shown up and proven wrong and sometimes bitterness invades our hearts.

2) **OPENNESS** / To know the truth it is necessary to be open to development in our thinking. This may mean that we need to set aside our own likes and dislikes. Openness implies a suppleness that says, "I want only what God wants." This type of attitude, if it is sincere, enables us to accept correction in our ways of thinking and acting and fosters the courage to change our minds even when others around us are going in totally different directions. To be open does not imply being wishy-washy and swayed by prevailing currents. It is to allow God's Spirit to move us, perhaps in surprising and unexpected ways.

3) **CONFIRMATION** / The Lord always confirms the truth. I have experienced this in my own spiritual discernment. God gives us reassurances through concrete signs, scriptural or spiritual readings or other people that what He is asking of us or what He is trying to relate to us is really from Him.

4) **ILLUMINATION** / Truth that is from God brings light, clarity, order to our minds. Formerly puzzling and painful experiences fall into place, making a crazy kind of sense. We may wonder why we had not perceived a truth beforehand which now seems so obvious to us. Grace obtained by prayer, fasting, sacrifices removes the scales from our eyes and we begin to see things in a new light.

5) **HARMONY, JOY, PEACE** / These are important signs of God's truth but may not be evident to begin with. Frequently, truth can come in forms that are initially challenging, upsetting or even violent. A familiar poster aptly sums this up with its pithy saying, "The truth will set you free, but first it will make you miserable." But when all is said and done, "Honesty is the best policy."

It has been noted that the greatest obstacle to truth is fear. Perhaps we do not want to know the honest truth about ourselves. Perhaps knowing God's truth will call for a significant change in our lives. There is without a doubt a cost factor involved in telling the truth. For those who face life with the honesty of Jesus, truth may exact a price of personal suffering, rejection, persecution, deprivation. For those who straddle the issue of truth, who manipulate its expression or muffle God's voice, they too will have a price to pay sooner or later.

The Gospels portray a Jesus who always told the truth no matter what the consequences were. He spoke the truth, not in a malicious or fault-finding way, but in love. In pointing out to the woman at the well that she had five husbands, Jesus speaks the truth calmly, inviting her to believe in Him and to begin anew. In pointing out to the Pharisees that many of their doctrines had degenerated to mere human traditions, Jesus speaks the truth that gives them the tough love needed to shake them into the conscious recognition of their mistakes.

In both instances, Jesus always speaks the truth from His Heart, a blazing furnace of love. With love and with truth, the Sacred Heart beckons each of us to dispel the confusion of Satan so prevalent around us and to re-establish his kingdom, of light, peace and joy in every heart and in the whole world. +

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*This talk on Sacred Heart spirituality was given in our Gathering Room on February 7th, 2021. If you would like to attend similar presentations by the Sisters, our next talks will be held on Sunday, March 7th, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.*