

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This week, we'll look at the eighth commandment:

8. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

This is a commandment about *truth*.

For those of you who are taking the Monday night classes on "Happiness," you will remember that there are five transcendental desires, five things we want and want to perfection. While we can find some satisfaction in this world, because we desire their perfection, we will always be found wanting this world. These five transcendental desires are truth, goodness or justice, love, beauty, and home (which is really the comfort and peace we find in the familiar surroundings of love and joy). So, for instance, we desire to be loved perfectly. Aren't we so aware when someone's love for us is imperfect? Don't we feel the lack? We desire perfect goodness or justice. When someone is unfair to us, even a young child knows to cry out, "That's not fair!" That first transcendental desire I mentioned is *truth*. Our intellects were made to know the truth, to know perfect truth, and we long for that. This is what is behind every question that asks, "Why am I here?" It is behind every scientific quest searching to find the answer as to why things do what they do. It is behind every person struggling with suffering who asks, "Why?!" We want to know truth, and something inside of us is convinced that there must be order, a reason for everything. We seek it.

As Christians, we know that the deepest truth *is* Jesus. He is the creator of the stars of night. He is the one who made us for a purpose. In the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "**I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**" (John 14:6) Jesus says He is *the truth*. This is significant that He is not *a truth* – as if one among many. It is also significant that because *truth* is essential to who God is, we need to enter truth to get to God ("No one comes to the Father except through me [truth]."). Being Christian, then, means that we are people of the Truth. Speaking truth, acting truth is important in our walk toward God. Offenses against the truth, then offend the very Heart of who God is.

So what are some of the offenses against the truth?

False witness and perjury are some of the gravest sins against truth, for these lies "contribute to the condemnation of the innocent, exoneration of the guilty, or the increased punishment of the accused" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 2476). We are to respect the reputation of others, not causing unjust injury to someone's reputation – *even* if what we say is true. This commandment also forbid us to encourage and confirm another person's malicious acts or twisted conduct, through flattery, adulation or even complaisance (CCC 2480).

Have you thought about this: boasting or bragging is an offense against truth. Remember the basic truth that Jesus teaches us: without Him, we can do nothing (see John 15:5). Boasting and bragging takes the gifts and graces that God has *lent* to us to use for His glory, and makes it seem as if we did it on our own without Him. It turns the direction of praise from God to *me*.

Of course, the most direct offense against the truth is the lie. The *Catechism* says, "To lie is to speak or act against the truth in order to lead someone into error" (2483). Did you catch that? It is not just to speak lies, but our *actions can also be lies!* We can lie with our bodies. Something to think about and ponder. Lying is condemnable because the purpose of speech is to communicate truth. While all lying is wrong, lies have different gravity. For instance, if someone's intentional lie leads to the risk of deadly consequences for the person led astray, this is a very grave sin. Because lying violates truth, it does real violence against other people, for it affects a person's ability to know, which is required for making good judgments and decisions.

Here's a litmus test that should be a gateway before we use words: **Is it true? Is it loving? Is it necessary?** This should be what governs how we speak to each other, how we text and use social media (especially how we use social media, in this age of cyberbullying, shaming, and destruction of reputations!), how we act toward one another. Let us ask our Lord, who is Truth, to help us be people of the truth.