

From the Chapel – May 5: What is truth?



[“From the Chapel”](#) is a series of short, daily reflections on life and faith in a time of uncertainty. As people across the world cope with the effects of the coronavirus – including the social isolation necessary to combat its spread – these reflections remind us of the hope that lies at the heart of the Gospel.

The Catholic Church has never taught that only Christians are capable of ascertaining the truth. That may seem like something that hardly needs to be said, but it’s important to remind ourselves of this truth when we also note that the Church believes that the fullness of truth is found in Christ himself.

All truth, [as I’ve recently discussed](#), is of God, which means that the true lover of wisdom, the seeker after truth, is pursuing God, whether or not he knows that is what he is doing. Whenever we uncover truth in the structure of nature – whether the natural world or our human nature – we draw a little closer to God himself.

For the nonbeliever or the agnostic, understanding what the Church teaches about the nature of truth may have no effect on how he approaches his own pursuit of truth. But “unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required: and to whom they have committed much, of him they will demand the more” (Lk 12:48, Douay Rheims American version). As Christians, knowing that the fullness of truth is found in Christ himself, we must take the pursuit of truth seriously. To be cavalier about the truth, to regard it as merely instrumental, a means to an end, rather than partaking in the very nature of the one who is both Alpha and Omega, the

beginning and the end, is essentially a blasphemous act.

There is room in Christianity, of course, for honest error, for disagreements, for lack of understanding, for failure to comprehend the truth. But there is no room in Christianity for sophistry, deception, the twisting of truth to win arguments. There is no room for declaring that something we suspect is untrue is "just my opinion." When we suspect that we are in error, or we learn that something we have believed (or wished to believe) is untrue, pursuing the truth becomes, for the Christian, a form of piety, a duty that we owe to God.

And that has consequences for how we live our life, and how we approach our discussions and disagreements with others.

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