



REFLECTIONS ON POPE FRANCIS' 2018 MESSAGE
FOR WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY

“The truth will set you free” ~ Fake news and journalism for peace.

I’ve been so inspired by Paragraph #3 of this message that I’d like to share a few of my reflections about how the Pope invites us to live in relationship with the Truth, above all in the person of Jesus Christ, who *is* our Way, Truth and Life! ~ Sr. Marie Paul Curley, FSP

The entire text of the Message can be found [here](#); for more about Media Spirituality, visit: www.BeMediaMindful.org

Pope Francis' 2018 WCD MESSAGE, #3	My Reflections & Helpful Links
<p>Constant contamination by deceptive language can end up darkening our interior life.</p> <p>...So how do we defend ourselves? The most radical antidote to the virus of falsehood is purification by the truth.</p>	<p>The relationship between truth, lies, and interior freedom highlighted here shows how important it is for us to “sanctify our minds” by immersing ourselves in the truth. Saint Paul talks about this in his letters (see 1 Cor. 2:16, Romans 12:2, Phil. 2:5)), as well as Blessed James Alberione, who offers us a modern “take” on Saint Paul’s spirituality.</p> <p>“Purification by the truth” recalls Pope Francis’ earlier encouragement in the Message: to educate for truth, which means teaching people how to evaluate not just what they are hearing/watching/reading, but “<i>how to discern, evaluate and understand our deepest desires and inclinations, lest we lose sight of what is good and yield to every temptation.</i>”</p> <p>Media mindfulness is a strategy for personal formation that gives us a way to ask questions of the media and decide what to do with (and what to believe about) a media message in light of our faith. See Sr. Hosea Rupprecht’s practical blog series on media mindfulness and other resources at www.bemediamindful.org)</p>

<p>In Christianity, truth is not just a conceptual reality that regards how we judge things, defining them as true or false. The truth is not just bringing to light things that are concealed, "revealing reality", as the ancient Greek term aletheia (from a-lethè, "not hidden") might lead us to believe.</p>	<p>Truth is not just about facts, nor just about unmasking corruption, an obsession with our current society, which unfortunately due to the colossal failures of so many trusted institutions, no longer trusts any authority, even when that authority has more complete information.</p>
<p>Truth involves our whole life. In the Bible, it carries with it the sense of support, solidity, and trust, as implied by the root 'aman, the source of our liturgical expression Amen. Truth is something you can lean on, so as not to fall. In this relational sense, the only truly reliable and trustworthy One – the One on whom we can count – is the living God. Hence, Jesus can say: "I am the truth" (Jn 14:6). We discover and rediscover the truth when we experience it within ourselves in the loyalty and trustworthiness of the One who loves us. This alone can liberate us: "The truth will set you free" (Jn 8:32).</p>	<p>This paragraph prompted a series of questions that we can reflect on:</p> <p>What does "Amen" mean to me? (It is not just prayer's "period." Rather, it is an affirmation of the entire prayer.)</p> <p>How can I "lean on" the Truth that God, ever faithful, comes to save us and will never abandon us. Do I have a favorite prayer or act of faith in which my "Amen" is especially meaningful to me?</p> <p>How is Jesus <i>my</i> Truth?</p> <p>How do I experience Jesus as Truth within my relationship with him?</p> <p>How do I experience truth within myself?</p> <p>Do I express that truth in my choices, in my words, in my actions?</p> <p>What "facet" of Jesus Truth do I radiate to the world?</p> <p>How does the Truth of Christ set me free?</p>

Freedom from falsehood and the search for relationship: these two ingredients cannot be lacking if our words and gestures are to be true, authentic, and trustworthy.

To discern the truth, we need to discern everything that encourages communion and promotes goodness from whatever instead tends to isolate, divide, and oppose.

Pope Francis gives us these two criteria that can make our communication truly authentic: freedom from falsehood and the search for relationship.

Most of us deceive ourselves about certain aspects of ourselves, of our lives, of our loved ones, and our society. We can choose to deliberately turn away from the truth, or simply not make the effort to not see past the illusions we have created to avoid pain or discomfort.

What are some ways that I can grow in **freedom from falsehood**? What lie might I still be living out of? (Clue: If I have a niggling sense of uneasiness about something, can I bring that to prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to shine brightly on it?)

Communication is always an act between two or more entities—even if those entities are my mind and my heart. If we forget either of those entities, the communication is impoverished—perhaps even to the point of not being communication at all.

Our Pauline Book & Media Centers are often in the heart of the city, which can be quite challenging. When a person who is homeless comes in to the center, I used to be tempted to see that person as smelly, rude, a likely thief or troublemaker. My fear would push me towards ending the meeting, rather than engaging in a true encounter. My communication would then more likely be short and abrupt—not genuinely communicating an authentic response from one human being to another.

Truth, therefore, is not really grasped when it is imposed from without as something impersonal, but only when it flows from free relationships between persons, from listening to one another.

Nor can we ever stop seeking the truth, because falsehood can always creep in, even when we state things that are true. An impeccable argument can indeed rest on undeniable facts, but if it is used to hurt another and to discredit that person in the eyes of others, however correct it may appear, it is not truthful.

We can recognize the truth of statements from their fruits: whether they provoke quarrels, foment division, encourage resignation; or, on the other hand, they promote informed and mature reflection leading to constructive dialogue and fruitful results.

Recently, one of our sisters was so welcoming to a man in the neighborhood who was homeless that, in great part through her encouragement and kindness, he stopped drinking and went into rehab. Sister's openness to a genuine encounter with this man resulted in a powerful transformation in his life, simply through her compassion, gentleness, and kindness. Her goodness overcame the barriers that isolated him from himself and society.

When I am not seeking a relationship — with myself, with others, or with God, what does that do to my words, prayers, attitudes? When have I communicated without the context of relationship (or seeking a relationship) and, how did that harm my communication?

Sometimes we excuse our gossip by saying "But it's the truth!" or, "I am just saying what really happened!" Truth is more than fact. (For us as believers, ultimately the Truth is a Person — Christ. All of our lives — including our communication — is to be Christ-filled.)

Pope Francis gives us an insightful way to evaluate statements — our own and others' — by their fruit. (See Matthew 7:16, where Jesus talks about recognizing false prophets by the fruit of what they say.) As Vatican II points out, the purpose of communication is a growth in or towards unity. Not a superficial unity or conformity, but a true unity based on truth (See *Communio et Progressio*, #1).

The truth really will set us free, thus the urgency that all of us contribute to making our world a more truthful place.