

## C'est une jungle là-bas!

The late Deacon Claude LeBlanc, with whom I served at my earlier assignment, used to teach me phrases in French and I specifically requested the one which I have used as the title for this column: *"It's a jungle out there!"* The particular jungle I have in mind is thick with propaganda; commercial, political and social. Some propaganda is pleasing to the ears because, by our personal philosophy, we are predisposed to agree with it and accept it. Some propaganda is the other guys propaganda and it is loathsome to us. Some propaganda catalyzes wishful thinking in us. And still other propaganda is so transparently propaganda that it's just annoying.

I'd suggest that the "machete" we used to hack through this "jungle" is the two-edged sword composed of our Faith and the gift of Right Reason. The latter gift is seeing and recognizing the truth of things as they accord with the Natural Law. Christ provides us the wisdom to be *"wise as serpents and gentle as doves."* Surely he knew that we would be confronted with this jungle of trickery, smoke-and-mirrors, half-truths, sleights-of-hand, and subterfuge. In our modern world, deep into the "Age of Information," the tools to peddle in misinformation are legion. What was supposed to enrich our lives by access to vast swaths of human knowledge, discovery and creativity has turned into a jungle with deadly serpents in every tree.

This is the world of Pontus Pilate, the one who cynically asked Christ, *"Truth? What is truth?"* Indeed! On so many fronts we are asking, (with no little sense of desperation), *"Who is telling us the truth?"* And, perhaps we should ask, *"Who's telling me what I already want to hear?"* In other words, is there a difference between what I want to be true and what is really true? Just consider the massive confusion being peddled within the pandemic: Some confusion is understandable in an unprecedented situation such as this. But, it seems, confusion is being purposely propagated: There are those who seem to delight in confusion, and we must wonder their motivations.

Now, more than ever, critical thinking must be brought to bear. Now, more than ever, thinking guided by the Beatitudes of the Gospel is imperative. Catholic Philosopher, Peter Kreeft

provides us some important insights into the power of the "machete" available to us to get through this jungle:

*Another word for "critical thinking" is "logical thinking." This is a high and holy thing, in fact a very Christian thing because the ultimate foundation of logic is the Logos, the eternal Mind or Reason or Inner Word of God, which John's Gospel identifies as the pre-incarnate Christ. The human art and science of logic is the instrument that teaches us to rightly order and structure our thoughts, as a means to the end of thought, which is truth.*

*One of the most useful aspects of that ordering and structuring is the realization that all the things that can ever go wrong with any thoughts come under just these three headings: **ambiguous terms, false premises, or logical fallacies.*** ( art.Envoy Magazine)

This is a very difficult task. The "anti-Christ's" operating in this world are very clever and extremely smart. The "wise as serpents" aspect of Christian Wisdom is to suspect biases, agendas, and ideologies in almost everyone and everywhere. I, for one, will take my medical advice from a medical professional, not from a used car salesman. But, even the medical professional can have his/her biases and agendas which must be taken into account. Who has the time to do all the research and "hacking" required to clear away the overgrowth covering the truth?



We may never get to the bottom of most matters in this world, but this doesn't relieve us of the hard work of applying Right Reason to the best of our capabilities and, with the good intuitions that come from Faith and Divine Wisdom, we ought to be able to discern the truth-tellers from the liars. Lord, make haste to help us in our time of great need!