

Last Thursday, I went to dinner at the New York Athletic Club in Manhattan with six friends from high school. I sent last week's bulletin article to each of them beforehand. We attempt to get together regularly to catch up and talk about a religious topic, but unfortunately, the religious conversation usually only lasts until the first round of beers is served!



One of my friends at dinner, when pressed by another friend, told me he did not like my article. He explained he didn't like the "rah rah Catholicism" and that he grew up in a household where his parents didn't wear their faith on their sleeve. I responded by saying that there is a time to be bold and a time to be reserved about faith. In that article I was highlighting the reasons to be bold. However, more than anything, I wanted people to think about Jesus before Pilate. Jesus told Pilate that He came into the world to give testimony to the truth – and everyone who hears the truth hears His voice. My point was that once you know the truth you should be bold in proclaiming it, because the truth comes from God Himself.

While the conversation morphed into talk about high school football and lacrosse, it became clear to me that these guys basically view the world through the lenses of either MSNBC, CNN or FOX News. Like most people, they have a very respectable faith. Their jobs in corporate America are not at risk because of their views on anything. Their country club friends are not offended by their "reasonable" opinions. None of them are going to be forced to drink hemlock or be hung from a cross because of their testimony to the truth.

On one hand, I'm happy that none of my friends is in that kind of danger. On the other hand, I think it's a bad sign. I know that the truth about almost any serious political, social or moral issue is offensive to polite society. It is not found on any of the big news channels, and frankly it is often not found even on EWTN, the Catholic channel. In all those cases, we are presented with a politically correct narrative. If we agree with it, it's comfortable. If we don't, it angers us. However, in neither case is it the unmitigated truth. The truth in a fallen, corrupted, propaganda-driven society is offensive. If some of our beliefs aren't offending anyone, if they aren't out of the ordinary range of opinions, something's amiss.

The truth can't be bracketed into a political or religious ideology. The truth is found only in Jesus Christ, the Logos, the mind of the Eternal Father. In this world, truth is found in its fullness within the Catholic Church. When we talk principles regarding faith and morals we can never be wrong; however, when we descend into concrete and murky reality in an attempt to apply those principles, we can get things wrong. I believe that all arguments in the end are theological arguments. We all base our arguments on what we believe to be right or wrong. We base what is right or wrong on our religious beliefs. If our theology is incorrect, all our arguments and opinions, from that point forward, will be riddled with errors. Therefore, if I know that somebody isn't on board with Catholic teachings, I don't, generally speaking, take their opinions about serious matters too seriously. It is only the truth that speaks with authority.

My advice to you is to do the same thing. Evaluate all opinions on the basis of the authentic Catholic faith. Remember Jesus' words to Pilate, that everyone who hears the truth, hears His voice. Develop a sensitivity to the truth by knowing our Catholic teaching.

As a priest, I have met many people who I admire for the way they try to live their lives. I have only met a few people, though, who I view as subtle thinkers. Too many Catholics, both on the left and the right, are too close-minded. It's not a matter of intelligence. It has more to do with their being too ideological and/or too brainwashed by the media and secular culture. Perhaps, it might be more accurate to write "appear to be brainwashed." There are various degrees of deception, of course. My guess is that most of you know in the depth of your hearts that what you are being told as "truth" by the secular world is in fact not true at all. My prayer is that you may have the hunger, courage and perseverance to both prayerfully seek the truth and prayerfully live it.