


# Evangelizing with Truth and Charity



Fr. Roger J. Landry • Seton Teaching Fellows Formation Night • March 18, 2024



A painting of Jesus sitting on a stone wall, looking out over a landscape. He is wearing a white robe and sandals. The background shows a hazy, sunlit landscape with trees and a body of water.

# Sharing the Gospel with Truth and Charity

- Throughout Church history, a talk entitled, “Evangelizing with truth and charity,” would have been anodyne and almost tautologous.
- But now many see a tension between, and even dichotomize, “truth” and “charity.”
- The problem is seldom with charity, but “truth.”
- We’re living in an age that prioritizes *autonomy* and *freedom of indifference* and objects to anything, like truth, that limits one’s will. Truth can be considered “divisive,” arrogant and equated to totalitarianism.
- We’re also living in a *relativist* age, both epistemological and moral, that makes people doubt that the truth can be known not to mention lived.




# Sharing the Gospel with Truth and Charity



- Because of relativism, we are now experiencing emotivism, in which feelings have become paramount. The capital sin of our era is to hurt or offend someone's feelings. Moral greatness means to be “nice” and “non-judgmental;” moral failure is to be classified a “hater.”
- Because of emotivism, many are now conflict averse, hypersensitive, and incapable of receiving or giving correction.
- Instead of truth, our time prioritizes “tolerance” as the solution for peace and good will.



A painting of Jesus Christ sitting on a stone wall, looking out over a landscape. He is wearing a white robe and sandals. The background shows a hazy, sunlit landscape with trees and a body of water.

# Sharing the Gospel with Truth and Charity

- Screwtape sought to persuade Wormwood in C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* that “truth” should be eliminated altogether.
- “The great thing is to make him value an opinion for some quality other than truth, thus introducing an element of dishonesty and make-believe into the heart of what otherwise threatens to become a virtue.”
- He argues “truth” should be replaced by “interesting,” “new,” “challenging,” “modern” and “up to date.”
- Particularly odious to modern sensibilities is “truth” understood religiously, which, it is asserted, is the cause of war and conflict.





# The Lord's Synthesis

- Jesus is both the “Truth” and the incarnation of divine “Agape.” There’s a distinction but no separation between truth and charity.
- He said he had come to “give witness to the truth.” He similarly came to teach us how to love God with all we’ve got and love our neighbor as he loves them.
- In the scene with the Samaritan woman, we see his charity and truthfulness both on display.
- He calls us to “follow” and imitate him in this synthesis.





## St. Paul on Charity and Truth

- St. Paul taught in 1 Cor 13 both that love “rejoices in the truth” as well as that if we do anything without love — including proclaim the truth — we are just a noisy gong and will gain nothing.
- Among the fruit of the Holy Spirit he distinguishes between *chrestotes* and *agathosune*, normally translated as “kind” and “good” respectively. *Chrestotes* means always trying to help positively; *agathosune* means a goodness that includes rebuke and discipline. Christ showed *chrestotes* with the woman caught in adultery; *agathosune* when he cleansed the temple.

# St. John Paul II in *Veritatis Splendor* (1993)



- “Truth enlightens man's intelligence and shapes his freedom, leading him to know and love the Lord” (1).
- People “are made holy by ‘obedience to the truth.’ (1 Pet 1:22). This obedience is not always easy. As a result of original sin, committed at the prompting of Satan, the one who is ‘a liar and the father of lies,’ man is constantly tempted to turn his gaze away from the living and true God in order to direct it towards idols exchanging ‘the truth about God for a lie’ (Rom 1:25). Man's capacity to know the truth is also darkened, and his will to submit to it is weakened. Thus, giving himself over to relativism and skepticism, he goes off in search of an illusory freedom apart from truth itself” (1).
- “But no darkness of error or of sin can totally take away from man the light of God the Creator. *In the depths of his heart there always remains a yearning for absolute truth and a thirst to attain full knowledge of it.* This is eloquently proved by man's tireless search for knowledge in all fields. It is proved even more by his search for the meaning of life” (1).



# St. John Paul II in *Veritatis Splendor* (1993)



- “No one can escape from the fundamental questions: What must I do? How do I distinguish good from evil? *The answer is only possible thanks to the splendor of the truth which shines forth deep within the human spirit. ... Christ is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). Consequently, the decisive answer to every one of man's questions, his religious and moral questions in particular, is given by Jesus Christ, or rather is Jesus Christ himself, as the Second Vatican Council recalls: "In fact, it is only in the mystery of the Word incarnate that light is shed on the mystery of man" (2).*
- “Certain currents of modern thought have gone so far as to *exalt freedom* to such an extent that it becomes an absolute, which would then be the source of values. ... In this way *the inescapable claims of truth disappear*, yielding their place to a criterion of sincerity, authenticity and ‘being at peace with oneself,’ so much so that some have come to adopt a radically subjectivistic conception of moral judgment” (32).
- “As is immediately evident, *the crisis of truth is not unconnected* with this development. *Once the idea of a universal truth about the good, knowable by human reason, is lost, inevitably the notion of conscience also changes. ...* There is a tendency to grant to the individual conscience the prerogative of independently determining the criteria of good and evil and then acting accordingly. Such an outlook is quite congenial to an *individualist ethic*, wherein each individual is faced with his own truth, different from the truth of others. Taken to its extreme consequences, this individualism leads to *a denial of the very idea of human nature*” (32).



# St. John Paul II in *Veritatis Splendor* (1993)



- “Pilate's question: “What is truth” reflects the distressing perplexity of a man who often no longer knows who he is, whence he comes and where he is going. Hence we not infrequently witness the fearful plunging of the human person into situations of gradual self-destruction. ... Man is no longer convinced that only in the truth can he find salvation. The saving power of the truth is contested, and freedom alone, uprooted from any objectivity, is left to decide by itself what is good and what is evil. This relativism becomes, in the field of theology, a lack of trust in the wisdom of God, who guides man with the moral law. Concrete situations are unfavorably contrasted with the precepts of the moral law, nor is it any longer maintained that, when all is said and done, the law of God is always the one true good of man.” (84).
- “Christ reveals, first and foremost, that the frank and open acceptance of truth is the condition for authentic freedom: ‘You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free’ (Jn 8:32). ... Jesus reveals by his whole life, and not only by his words, that freedom is acquired in love, that is, in the gift of self” (87).



# Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009)



- “Charity in truth, to which Jesus Christ bore witness by his earthly life and especially by his death and resurrection, is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity. Love — *caritas* — is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace. It is a force that has its origin in God, Eternal Love and Absolute Truth. Each person finds his good by adherence to God's plan for him: ... in this plan, he finds his truth, and through adherence to this truth he becomes free (cf. Jn 8:32). To defend the truth, to articulate it with humility and conviction, and to bear witness to it in life are therefore exacting and indispensable forms of charity. Charity, in fact, “rejoices in the truth” (1).
- “All people feel the interior impulse to love authentically: love and truth never abandon them completely, because these are the vocation planted by God in the heart and mind of every human person. The search for love and truth is purified and liberated by Jesus Christ from the impoverishment that our humanity brings to it, and he reveals to us in all its fullness the initiative of love and the plan for true life that God has prepared for us. In Christ, charity in truth becomes the Face of his Person, a vocation for us to love our brothers and sisters in the truth of his plan. Indeed, he himself is the Truth (cf. Jn 14:6)” (1).





## Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009)

- “I am aware of the ways in which *charity has been and continues to be misconstrued and emptied of meaning*, with the consequent risk of being misinterpreted, *detached from ethical living* and, in any event, undervalued. In the social, juridical, cultural, political and economic fields, ... it is easily dismissed as irrelevant for interpreting and giving direction to moral responsibility” (2).
- “Hence the need to link charity with truth not only in the sequence, pointed out by Saint Paul, of *veritas in caritate* (Eph 4:15), but also in the inverse and complementary sequence of *caritas in veritate*. Truth needs to be sought, found and expressed within the “economy” of charity, but charity in its turn needs to be understood, confirmed and practised in the light of truth. In this way, not only do we do a service to charity enlightened by truth, but we also help give credibility to truth, demonstrating its persuasive and authenticating power in the practical setting of social living. This is a matter of no small account today, in a social and cultural context which relativizes truth, often paying little heed to it and showing increasing reluctance to acknowledge its existence” (2).





## Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009)

- “Only in truth does charity shine forth, only in truth can charity be authentically lived. Truth is the light that gives meaning and value to charity. That light is both the light of reason and the light of faith, through which the intellect attains to the natural and supernatural truth of charity: it grasps its meaning as gift, acceptance, and communion. Without truth, charity degenerates into sentimentality. Love becomes an empty shell, to be filled in an arbitrary way. In a culture without truth, this is the fatal risk facing love. It falls prey to contingent subjective emotions and opinions, the word ‘love’ is abused and distorted, to the point where it comes to mean the opposite” (3).
- “Truth frees charity from the constraints of an emotionalism that deprives it of relational and social content, and of a fideism that deprives it of human and universal breathing-space. In the truth, charity reflects the personal yet public dimension of faith in the God of the Bible, who is both *Agape* and *Logos*: Charity and Truth, Love and Word” (3).





## Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009)

- “Because it is filled with truth, charity can be understood in the abundance of its values, it can be shared and communicated. Truth, in fact, is *logos* which creates *dia-logos*, and hence communication and communion. Truth, by enabling men and women to let go of their subjective opinions and impressions, allows them to move beyond cultural and historical limitations and to come together in the assessment of the value and substance of things. Truth opens and unites our minds in the *logos* of love: this is the Christian proclamation and testimony of charity” (4).
- “In the present social and cultural context, where there is a *widespread tendency to relativize truth*, practising charity in truth helps people to understand that adhering to the values of Christianity is not merely useful but essential for building a good society and for true integral human development. A Christianity of charity without truth would be more or less interchangeable with a pool of good sentiments, helpful for social cohesion, but of little relevance. In other words, there would no longer be any real place for God in the world. Without truth, charity is confined to a narrow field devoid of relations. It is excluded from the plans and processes of promoting human development of universal range, in dialogue between knowledge and praxis (4).





## Pope Benedict XVI in *Caritas in Veritate* (2009)

- “Without truth, without trust and love for what is true, there is no social conscience and responsibility, and social action ends up serving private interests and the logic of power, resulting in social fragmentation, especially in a globalized society at difficult times like the present” (5).
- “*Caritas in veritate*” is the principle around which the Church's social doctrine turns, a principle that takes on practical form in the criteria that govern moral action. (6)





## Pope Francis in Fratelli Tutti (2020)

- “Relativism always brings the risk that some or other alleged truth will be imposed by the powerful or the clever” (209).
- “In a pluralistic society, *dialogue* is the best way to realize what ought always to be affirmed and respected apart from any ephemeral consensus. Such dialogue needs to be enriched and illumined by clear thinking, rational arguments, a variety of perspectives and the contribution of different fields of knowledge and points of view. *Nor can it exclude the conviction that it is possible to arrive at certain fundamental truths always to be upheld. ...* Once those fundamental values are acknowledged and adopted through dialogue and consensus, we realize that they rise above consensus; they transcend our concrete situations and remain non-negotiable” (211).





## Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* (2020)

- “Charity is at the heart of every healthy and open society, yet today it is easily dismissed as irrelevant for interpreting and giving direction to moral responsibility. *Without truth, emotion lacks relational and social content.* Charity’s openness to truth thus protects it from “a fideism that deprives it of its human and universal breadth” (184).
- “The solution is not relativism. *Under the guise of tolerance, relativism ultimately leaves the interpretation of moral values to those in power, to be defined as they see fit.* In the absence of objective truths or sound principles other than the satisfaction of our own desires and immediate needs... we should not think that political efforts or the force of law will be sufficient... When the culture itself is corrupt, and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided” (206).
- “If society is to have a future, it must respect the truth of our human dignity and submit to that truth” (207).





## Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti* (2020)

- “Truth, in fact, is an inseparable companion of justice and mercy. All three together are essential to building peace; each, moreover, prevents the other from being altered” (227).
- “If there is no transcendent truth, in obedience to which man achieves his full identity, then there is no sure principle for guaranteeing just relations between people. Their self-interest as a class, group or nation would inevitably set them in opposition to one another. If one does not acknowledge transcendent truth, then the force of power takes over, and each person tends to make full use of the means at his disposal in order to impose his own interests or his own opinion, with no regard for the rights of others... The root of modern totalitarianism is to be found in the denial of the transcendent dignity of the human person who, as the visible image of the invisible God, is therefore by his very nature the subject of rights that no one may violate – no individual, group, class, nation or state. Not even the majority of the social body may violate these rights, by going against the minority” (CA 44).





# Principles of Living the Truth

- **John 3:21** But whoever **lives the truth** comes to **the light**, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.
- **Wis. 3:9** Those who trust **in** him shall understand **truth**, and the faithful shall abide with him **in love**: Because grace and mercy are with his holy ones, and his care is with the elect.
- **Eph. 4:15** Rather, living the **truth in love**, we should grow **in** every way into him who is the head, Christ.
- **1John 3:18** Children, let us **love** not **in** word or speech but **in deed and truth**.
- **2John 1** The Presbyter to the chosen Lady and to her children whom I **love in truth** – and not only I but also all who know the **truth**
- **2John 3** Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son **in truth and love**
- **3John 1** The Presbyter to the beloved Gaius whom I **love in truth**





# Principles of Living the Truth

- The Holy Spirit seeks to guide us to all the truth.
- *Veritas est adequatio rei et intellectus*—Truth is faithful correspondence between a thing and what is in the mind. Truth is necessary to live in the real, real world.
- Truth liberates us from the enslavement of ignorance and the unreal world — “If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32).
- In order to help others come to the truth, we need to examine ourselves first to ensure we act in charity — Image of the plank and the speck.





# Principles of Living the Truth

- We need to witness to the truth before proclaiming it — Most need to “see” it before they “hear” it.
- Truth is meant to be a service of charity — a medicine, a light, rather than a weapon. Need to communicate it as a gift rather than a burden, an affirmation instead of a condemnation.
- We need to love people enough to share the truth as a gift — We have to be courageous enough to challenge people when necessary. To overcome aversion to conflict.





# Principles of Living the Truth

- To communicate the truth, we must show our love for them is greater than those who enable them — Those who love them without the truth love them less.
- Jesus gives us principles for giving fraternal correction that we should follow
- We need to be willing to suffer in testimony to the truth — The ultimate testimony to the truth is martyrdom, but sometimes that martyrdom can be “dry.”





## Suffering for the Truth

- “Martyrdom ... *bears splendid witness both to the holiness of God's law and to the inviolability of the personal dignity of man, created in God's image and likeness. ... Martyrdom rejects as false and illusory whatever ‘human meaning’ one might claim to attribute, even in ‘exceptional’ conditions, to an act morally evil in itself. Indeed, it even more clearly unmasks the true face of such an act: it is a violation of man's ‘humanity,’ in the one perpetrating it even before the one enduring it. Hence martyrdom is also the exaltation of a person's perfect ‘humanity’ and of true ‘life’*” (VS 87).





# Suffering for the Truth

- “Fidelity to God's holy law, witnessed to by death, is a solemn proclamation and missionary commitment *usque ad sanguinem*, so that the splendor of moral truth may be undimmed in the behaviour and thinking of individuals and society. This witness makes an extraordinarily valuable contribution to warding off, in civil society and within the ecclesial communities themselves, a headlong plunge *into the most dangerous crisis which can afflict man: the confusion between good and evil*, which makes it impossible to build up and to preserve the moral order of individuals and communities. By their eloquent and attractive example of a life completely transfigured by the splendor of moral truth, the martyrs and, in general, all the Church's Saints, *light up every period of history by reawakening its moral sense*” (VS 83)





## Suffering for the Truth

- “Although martyrdom represents the high point of the witness to moral truth, and one to which relatively few people are called, there is nonetheless a consistent witness which all Christians must daily be ready to make, even at the cost of suffering and grave sacrifice. Indeed, faced with the many difficulties that fidelity to the moral order can demand, even in the most ordinary circumstances, the Christian is called, with the grace of God invoked in prayer, to a sometimes heroic commitment. In this he or she is sustained by the virtue of fortitude” (VS 93).





# Subjects of Tension between Truth and Charity

- Human anthropology
  - Who we are as human persons
  - What we're made for.
  - When human life begins.
  - Original differentiation between male and female.
  - Reason, will and emotions.
  - Social nature and call to communion.
  - Transcendent Dimension





# Subjects of Tension between Truth and Charity

- Human sexuality
  - Two-fold purpose of human sexuality
  - Love versus lust
  - Chastity
  - Various sins against chastity
  - IVF
  - Surrogacy





# Subjects of Tension between Truth and Charity

- Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue
  - Relativizing religious doctrine lest there be disagreement, conflict or war.
    - Monotheism Trinity, Divinity of Christ, Importance of baptism, Real Presence, St. Peter and the Church, Judgment, Immortality, are all important.
  - Soteriology and moral behavior.





# Evangelization

- Cardinal Ratzinger: To show the art of living. Involves the proclamation of the kingdom and what is fit for it and not.
- Pope Francis: To share the difference Christ makes.
- Christ: “Go and announce the Gospel to all nations, baptizing..., teaching them to carry out everything I have commanded you, knowing that I am always with you until the end of the age.” We teach everything he has commanded: both truth and love, which are not opposed, but complementary and mutually reinforcing.





## Welcome!

I warmly welcome you to this website, put together at the insistence and with the assistance of friends.

During my diaconal ordination, Cardinal Edmund Szoka gave me the following instruction from the Ordination Rite as together we gripped the Book of the Gospels:

*"Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are.  
Believe what you read.  
Teach what you believe.  
Practice what you teach."*

Those words have never lost their resonance.

Since that day -- October 8, 1998 -- I have tried to live up to that commission to be a "herald of the Gospel," by striving to teach what the Church believes, to practice what I preach to others, and to spread with joy and enthusiasm the truth Christ has entrusted to His church -- in and out of season, in and out of the pulpit.

This website is a chronicle of those attempts. You may also follow postings of articles, homilies and teachings on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube.

You can also subscribe to the podcast of daily homilies, lectures and talks through Apple Podcasts and Google Podcasts.

It constitutes the "five loaves and two fish" (or even less!) that I have placed into the hands of the Lord as an attempt to feed a hungry crowd, confident that, if He wishes, He can multiply and supplement that meager offering to nourish many more (Jn 6:1-14).

In Christ,  
Fr. Roger J. Landry



### Most Recent Homilies

God's Comfort and the Conversion  
Required to Receive It, Second Sunday of  
Advent (B), December 6, 2020

Accepting, Following and Announcing  
Jesus without Offense, Second Sunday of  
Advent (EF), December 6, 2020

Walking the Way of the Kingdom Jesus  
Indicates, First Saturday of Advent,  
December 5, 2020

Running to Meet Our Light, Strength and  
Salvation, First Friday of Advent, December  
4, 2020

Listening to and Acting on the Long  
Awaited One's Words, First Thursday of  
Advent, December 3, 2020

Going Hungry to Meet Christ in a Three-  
Fold Banquet, First Wednesday of Advent,  
December 2, 2020

Childlike Eyes to See, First Tuesday of  
Advent, December 1, 2020

Singing the Song of the Lamb, 34th  
Wednesday (II), November 25, 2020

Turning to the Lord Who Comes to Judge  
the Earth, 34th Tuesday (II), November 24,  
2020

Following the King and Lamb Wherever He  
Goes, 34th Monday (II), November 23,  
2020

### Most Recent Articles

Our Duty and Salvation, The Anchor,  
November 27, 2020

Living the Reality of the Kingdom of Christ,  
National Catholic Register, November 19,  
2020

The Knights Our Age Needs, The Anchor,  
November 13, 2020

Remembering Andrew Walther, November  
7, 2020

Just a Parish Priest, The Anchor, October  
30, 2020

Coming to Know the Original Three-  
Dimensional Carlo Acutis, The Anchor,  
October 16, 2020

A Good Shepherd Full of Christian and  
Priestly Virtues, The Pilot, October 5, 2020

Returning to the Sacrament of Divine Love,  
The Anchor, September 18, 2020

The Pastoral Malpractice of Liturgical  
Abuse, The Anchor, September 4, 2020

The Chosen, The Anchor, August 21, 2020

### Most Recent Talks

Receiving the Lord Jesus as Mary and  
Joseph, Advent Day of Recollection for the  
Leonine Forum, December 5, 2020

Novena in Preparation for the Immaculate  
Conception, Leonine Forum, November 28  
to December 8, 2020

Blessed Michael McGivney and the Call to  
Holiness, McGivney Festival Young Adult  
Prayer Vigil, October 31, 2020

Apprenticeship in the Art of Living, Duc in  
Altum Virtual Schools Summit, October 28-  
30, 2020

Preaching on Marital Love and  
Accompanying Couples toward the Full  
Embrace of the Church's Teaching, Diocese  
of Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20,  
2020

The Divorced and Remarried, Challenges  
and Triumphs in Pastoral Care, Diocese of  
Gary Clergy Convocation, October 20,  
2020

The Heart of the New Evangelization:  
Meeting, Knowing and Loving Jesus Back,  
New Zealand Evangelion's in his Name  
Virtual Conference, October 10-11, 2020

Christian Anthropology: The Human  
Person in the Modern World, Leonine  
Forum Opening Lecture, October 8, 2020

Introduction to Catholic Social Teaching,  
UNSRC Catholic Club, August 27, 2020

Making Better Confessions, Catholic  
Information Conference, July 24, 2020

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## *Discussion*

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