



# What is truth?

SECULARISM VS. CATHOLICISM

*"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."* John 14:6

- ▶ *"Wherever men and women discover a call to the absolute and transcendent, the.....dimension of reality opens up before them: in truth, in beauty, in moral values, in other persons, in being itself, in God."*(83) St John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, 1998
- ▶ Pope Francis, Apostolic constitution, 2018 *Veritatis Gaudium* ('The joy of Truth):
- ▶ *'1. The joy of truth (Veritatis Gaudium) expresses the restlessness of the human heart until it encounters and dwells within God's Light, and shares that Light with all people.[1] For truth is not an abstract idea, but is Jesus himself, the Word of God in whom is the Life that is the Light of man (cf. Jn 1:4),..'*
- ▶ We see this point already emphasised and expanded by St John Paul II: *'In Jesus Christ, who is the Truth, faith recognizes the ultimate appeal to humanity, an appeal made in order that what we experience as desire and nostalgia may come to its fulfilment.'*(FR 31) 34. *'This truth, which God reveals to us in Jesus Christ, is not opposed to the truths which philosophy perceives. On the contrary, the two modes of knowledge lead to truth in all its fullness.'* (FR 32)
- ▶ Sometimes people create confusion over an apparent contrast between 'personal encounter with Christ' as opposed to 'propositional truth' – truth expressed in a list of sentences such as we see in the Creed - but think of a young lady who goes home to tell her mother all about the man she proposes to marry!!



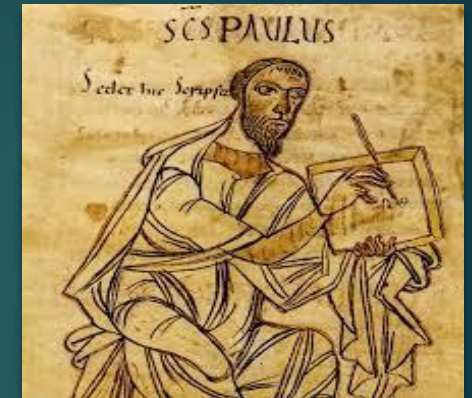
# Pilate's question

- ▶ <sup>37</sup> “You are a king, then!” said Pilate.
- ▶ Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.”
- ▶ <sup>38</sup> “What is truth?” retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.
- ▶ <sup>39</sup> But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release ‘the king of the Jews?’” <sup>40</sup> They shouted back, “No, not him! Give us Barabbas!” Now Barabbas had taken part in an uprising.
- ▶ **Thinking about this passage:** We can see age-old ‘pragmatic resignation’ as at the root of the ‘flight from truth’ – ‘but if I do acknowledge the truth how will it mess up my life?!’ Perhaps also that ‘glimpse of truth and beauty’ in encountering the ‘Truth of Christ’ ... he went out to say to them I find Him guilty of nothing.....
- ▶ **The search for, acceptance of, living up to, Truth is a personal, interpersonal reality: that is why human beings, fallen as we are, need grace to follow through on what is in fact part of our very nature, called to truth**
- ▶ **We can also see in this story hints of the cynical resignation of all times and places – it is an existential drama where the grace of the incarnation, life, death and Resurrection of Christ is our only hope to be made authentic human beings open to and living by the truth**



# Our own times have their place within a longer history of sin and redemption

- ▶ The 'paradox' of the 'two calls' of Pope St John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio*
- ▶ This mystery of flight from truth as part of human sin is true of all ages, perhaps taking different cultural forms.
- ▶ St Paul in *Romans 1-2* highlights this for us: flight from the truth of God, is a once flight from the truth about how we should live, form ourselves as persons and society. In doing so he certainly describes problems as true of our own day as they were in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.
- ▶ *18 'The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness,*
- ▶ *19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. 26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. 27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done...'*



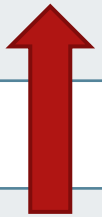
# Cognitive structure : THE PROCESS OF COMING TO KNOW TRUTH, REALITY



## LEVEL OF JUDGMENT - like the verdict in court

We gather the evidence; weigh the evidence; judge 'yes', 'no'; 'probably yes', 'probably no'; perhaps say we have not enough evidence

Is it so, true?  
Question



## LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING

We have insights into the data; we form concepts; ideas; theories; hypotheses

What is it?  
Question



## LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE

The data: what we see, hear, smell, taste, touch – inner feelings of balance etc

# Reason and the nature of truth

- ▶ But we are not satisfied with mere concepts, ideas however clever or interesting. As human beings we want to know Being; we want to know whether our ideas truly correspond with reality.
- ▶ According to Thomas Aquinas, "*veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus*" = "Truth is agreement of thing and intellect" (Summa theol. Ques. xvi, Art. 1, 3).
- ▶ Truth is known in judgement in which the intellect reflects and knows the similitude of its idea with reality (ST I q. 16, a. 2 c.)
- ▶ In a true correct judgement, then, there is known the correspondence between my idea, concept, theory and being, reality, the way things actually are
- ▶ Again to deny that is to actually use it!!!
- ▶ 'Naturally known' principles are involved: we are conscious of the need for sufficient reason, evidence for a judgment and are aware when we get there – and non-contradiction.
- ▶ And in knowing truth we reach Being: *verum est medio in quo ens cognoscitur, id quod est*

