

RM - 5 Truth 3.2.23

If I believe you – whoever, whatever you may be – it is because I believe you are telling the truth: your words are an honest statement of your perception of reality.. I believe in truth.

“What is truth?” asked Pontius Pilate (Jn 18,38) and did not wait for an answer.

My answer would have been, “My truth is my perception - through my eyes, ears, nose hands and even tongue - of reality, of the facts that are there.”

The eyes include what I see and read. That includes Revelation, what God has told us about reality. Not mere hearsay.

How do I arrive at my truth? How do I arrive at proof, the cogency of evidence that compels my mind to accept a truth or a fact?

Let's take a look across the PIES of life: The physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions of my life.

P Research. Open a door to see what there is in the room. I spent a post-graduate year at Imperial College finding out the truth about steel tubes filled with concrete that might have been used to hold up the road at Spaghetti Junction on the M6.

Medical check-ups enable you to discover the truth about your health – you hope!

Martyrs offered cogent evidence of their faith – their conviction that there is life after death.

For me, as an engineer, there is compelling evidence of a magnificent intellect and imagination directing evolution from planet earth's almost entirely molten magma 4.5 billion years ago. Over the course of a few hundred million years, the planet began to cool and oceans of liquid water formed. But how was our ear, our eye, our brain – our female ova and male sperm - take shape from that?

There must be a cause behind the effects. The cause is the creator God constantly creating as the Word restructures molecules to their new vital forms in human life and indeed the whole of our earth's life.

I Reading, studying. Revelation: Scripture and Tradition.

Getting to know the truth about – the reality of God – took millennia. A bit like our knowledge of planet Mars.

In the OT The Chosen People gradually realised there was one creator God. But knew little about that Divinity.

Then Jesus arrived and, eventually after his resurrection, his followers realised that he was God translated into our human vernacular.

However, it is impossible to arrive at the certainty of the details of his life. For example, his contact with the Samaritans.

In Matthew 10:5, we read that Jesus sent out the twelve apostles with these instructions: 'Don't go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans' yet in John's gospel we have the story of the Samaritan woman at the well, one of the most iconic encounters in the Bible. Told in John 4:1-42.

I suspect this was, in fact, Christ present in his disciples, reaching out to the Samaritans, rather than rejecting them as they did during their life with Christ as he walked the land of Palestine.

Whatever the details of his life, the truth is that he taught, he was tortured to and he rose to new resurrected life.

Then, thanks to Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit, along came The Church and gradually – step by step – we discovered the fuller truth - the deeper reality of God. God does not change. God was always a Trinity but it was only after Pentecost – and prayer and discussion - that we realised this eternal fact.

The first seven ecumenical councils clarified the contents of the New Testament. The original creed used at baptism was “I believe in the Father, Son and holy Spirit” gradually morphed to what we call the Nicæan creed at mass.

the First Council of Nicaea in 325,
the First Council of Constantinople in 381,
the Council of Ephesus in 431,
the Council of Chalcedon in 451,
the Second Council of Constantinople in 553, t
the Third Council of Constantinople from 680–681
the Second Council of Nicaea in 787.

All of the seven councils were convened in modern-day Turkey.

1014 filioque - that 'The Holy Spirit comes from the Father **and the Son**' - was added to the liturgical Creed in West.

Gradually - thanks to the Holy Spirit's presence in these councils - the fuller truth was crystallised into words and thus thought.

Under communism, I have learnt, that to study theology small groups of men would enter a pub with in a large crowd and while the others stayed on the ground floor drinking, make their way upstairs and there study theology. This I discovered because Mgr. Vladimir Boublik, who moderated by Doctoral These at The Lateran, introduced me to Dr. Vladimir Svoboda – now one of my best friends in the UK. They had studied together while both were still in what in what is not Czechia. For them – and many people like them – the quest for theological truths was important enough to risk imprisonment.

What information can we trust on the media? About the Ukraine, the Police, our politicians and much else? It's good to get 'the facts' from at least two sources. Ideally when these are enemies. The source of the information is key. Jesus Christ and the teaching of his church I trust.

Sport is a metaphor for life and so, like the great footballers, Pele, Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo and George Best have learn how to trick their opponents into the way they are going to move forward, the Allies tricked The Nazi's into the D Day landing beaches. The deception worked. Thank God.

I was in Wexford preaching a retreat in its Seminary where the Irish army officers acting in the film were billeted while Steven Spielberg was filming the "Saving Private Ryan" D Day landing on the nearby beaches. He used just six landing craft which, thanks to the magic of photographic technology, appeared as hundreds on our screens. The truth of films – and so much of art, like artificial stone and even marble – is fascinating.

E talking with experts, thinking about what is said. Meditation. Imagine the Gospel scenes. Get to know the reality of Jesus. Use your Intuition. It can be as honest as years of talk.# A great fiend of mine, Robert, sent by his commanding officer to invite some women soldiers to a dance. Robert told me years later how, the moment he saw Rita he said to himself "She shall be my wife." And, for over 60years until Rita died, they were a hugely happily married couple. The truth – the reality - of their love was palpable. I was honoured to be called their friend until in 2018 I took Robert's funeral. I had experienced the reality – the truth – of their love at first sight.

Emotions have a profound influence on the perception of the truth – the positive and negative values – of our morality. How many folk, as they pass through their puberty, change their attitude to sex and the church's teach on sex? What had been bad, is now – clearly to them – good.

S Prayer God is everywhere like radio waves. But these need you to switch on your phone to pick them up. We need prayer – silent prayer – to pick up God's presence – if we want to be enriched by that divine life.

"My lord and my God, I firmly believe you are here, that you see me and hear me. May I be generous enough and courageous enough to do your will."

"Domine, ut videam. Lord, that I may see" request of Bartimaeus (Mk 10, 51)

I promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth – as I saw things. And, unless I am under oath, I often do not tell the whole truth. Would you? If someone asked you "How do I look?" "What do you think of my boy/girl friend?" "What do you think of my dress?"

The police know that when questioning the spectators of an accident they will get a variety of 'truths' If all are identical, the police are pretty certain, they had been told what to say.

I read this story somewhere and I think this story tells us about the different perceptions - the different truths - of different people.

A couple bought a donkey from the market. On the way home, a boy commented, "Very stupid. Why neither of them rides on the donkey?" Upon hearing that, the husband let the wife ride on the donkey. He walked besides them. Later, an old man saw it and commented,

"The husband is the head of family. How can the wife ride on the donkey while the husband is on foot?" Hearing this, the wife quickly got down and let the husband ride on the donkey. Further on the way home, they met an old Lady. She commented, "How can the man ride on the donkey but let the wife walk. He is no gentleman." The husband thus quickly asked the wife to join him on the donkey. Then, they met a young man. He commented, "Poor donkey, how can you hold up the weight of two persons. They are cruel to you." Hearing that, the husband and wife immediately climbed down from the donkey and carried it on their shoulders.

It seems to be the only choice left. Later, on a narrow bridge, the donkey was frightened and struggled. They lost their balance and fell into the river.

Thus, do not be too bothered by what others see and say. If your conscience is clear, move on. Different people have different perception. C'est la vie.

A teacher asks a boy, "Now if I give you one apple and one apple and one more apple how many will you have?"

Promptly Brian answered, "Four!"

The teacher was aghast.

"How Brian, How?" she demanded in a little stern and irritated voice.

In a voice that was low and hesitating young Brian replied, "Because I already have one apple in my bag."

Lesson? When someone gives you an answer that is different from what you are expecting, it is not necessarily they are wrong.

A couple, over Sunday lunch decide they need to move. Their current home is unsatisfactory. "While I do the washing up, you go and write what our new home should be like." Half an hour later, "But darling, you have just described our home." Familiarity had generated contempt.

To seek the truth in S.O.N, in our self, others and nature is on-going work in hand. Many of our truths are provisional, waiting to be improved.

I know I do not know myself very well.

I know that it is impossible to get to know anyone else - including, above all, God - fully.

We shall see why when we get to my Land of the Heart talk on 17th February.

When I was at school in the 50s, we were taught - and in examinations had to state - that due to its geology, while we had plenty of coal there was no oil or gas in or around the UK. In all innocence we were taught a lie.

Nothing new. It was only in 1628 that William Harvey discovered the Circulation of the Blood in our bodies. It had always been there but that fact – that truth – lay dormant.

Then there is Dark matter and Dark Energy. The first real evidence for dark matter (DM) came in 1933, when Caltech's Fritz Zwicky used the Mount Wilson Observatory to measure

the visible mass of a cluster of galaxies and found that it was much too small to prevent the galaxies from escaping the gravitational pull of the cluster.

Dark energy(DE) was discovered in 1998. They had always been there but we did not know the truth. Who knows what is still in the universe that we do not know about?

Morality has evolved. Usury -m lending money with interest – was deemed evil. For years slavery and torture – including the Inquisition – was deemed a good thing. No longer. Thank God.

In 1940 Spain, Adolf Hitler was deemed a good thing. He was the saviour of The Catholic Church. Thanks to his armaments the communists lost the Civil War.

By 1945, as the reality of the holocaust became evident, attitudes had begun – among some - to change. The truth had changed.

Archaeology changes our perception of the past. It is wise to admit that what we know - the truth of our history - is provisional.

Truths taught by Jesus Christ are permanent. Some the most important facts of life are summarised in the beatitudes.

The 'Eight' Beatitudes

Last Sunday, the orders of service started each beatitude with “Happy”. I never use that. It smells of a pub’s “happy hour”.

Translators are traitors!

The Greek word is makarios, more than even Blessed. It’s more like “Oh the bliss...”

1. “Oh the bliss of those who are the poor in spirit, **people who recognise their own spiritual poverty, their need for God** for theirs is the Kingdom of **Heaven as they open their hearts through prayer to God.**
2. “Oh the bliss of those who mourn, **people who repent and mourn for their sins** for they will be comforted **as they enjoy forgiveness.**
3. “Oh the bliss of those who are the meek, **who want to own nothing, inherit everything there in art galleries and nature.**
4. “Oh the bliss of those who are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness - **to be united with God** for they will be satisfied.
5. “Oh the bliss of those who are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. **Action-reaction. Give and gifts will be yours.**
6. “Oh the bliss of those who are the pure in heart, **free from evil in words, thoughts and deeds,** for they will see God.
7. “Oh the bliss of those who are the peacemakers, **the bringers of shalom, a joyful peace** for they will be called the children of God.
8. “Oh the bliss of those who are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, **as Jesus himself,** for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.
9. “Oh the bliss you have when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of

evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Dare to be different. Easier as you get older.

Living the beatitudes helps you avoid depression which is caused not by a shortage of serotonin in the brain (that is a symptom rather than cause) but grief, often sub-conscious grief, caused by childhood trauma, loss of nature's beauty, love, status, control, finance, fitness, looks and hope.

Junk values of materialism, self-centeredness and hedonism are like junk food. Unhealthy.

Talking of food, I have discovered that spaghetti bolognese does not come from Bologna. Tagliatelle, tortellini and lasagne, yes. NOT spaghetti.

Perceptions are provisional. What people believe depends on their standpoint, education, mood and assumptions.

Standpoint. In the 50s congregations in Seville Cathedral would, two or three times at high mass, see the clergy gather round the Cardinal. They assumed it was for silent prayer. In fact, it was so the Cardinal - who had prostate problems - could pass his pee into a bottle before continuing the celebration of mass.

Education. In 1939, Roman Catholics in Spain saw Hitler as their saviour. Thanks to his weapons the communists lost the Civil war (1936-39) and Christianity was saved. It was only in 1944, when the Shoah became evident, that most of them started to change their view of Adolf Hitler.

Only in 1895 did Rome agree that Catholics could attend Oxford and Cambridge universities. The following year, both launched their Catholic chaplaincies.

Mood. Our emotions affect various areas of our lives, including our perception. When we have positive emotions, we are more likely to view the world around us in a positive light. On the other hand, when we have negative emotions, our outlook on life is more likely to be pessimistic. When people ask me why I am always cheerful, I have to say I blame my prayer. Realising God is with me, makes it hard for me to be pessimistic.

When you're in a good mood, the world seems to be a better place in general. Even though you may get a tear in your pants leg, spill your coffee all over the kitchen table, or have to deal with a noisy neighbour, when you're happy these minor daily problems don't really bother you.

Conversely, when you're feeling dejected or disappointed after some type of loss or breakup, each of life's minor annoyances only adds to your pain. You find it difficult to look beyond what's right in front of you and may even find yourself staring at the computer screen, watching the blinking cursor. New research shows how happiness isn't just an emotional experience, but an emotion that can shape the way you perceive the world.

According to Ghent University's Naomi Vanlessen and colleagues (2016), what's called the "broaden and build" theory proposed by University of North Carolina's Barbara Frederickson (2001) predicts that when you're happy, your attention zooms out, "paying attention to the globality of concepts, situations, or objects". When you've just received good news, for example, you'll be able to look at things around you in a positive light but, more importantly, you'll also be able to think more creatively. New ideas might pop into your head as you reconsider how to approach a familiar task. At the same time, not willing to let that good feeling go, you'll stay away from stimuli (people, experiences, events) that would threaten your positive mood.

Assumptions. Hitler assumed he could trust Hermann Goering's promises that his Luftwaffe could supply the German troops in Stalingrad. Back in Germany, the population assumed they could trust the optimistic broadcast of Christmas, 1942 which claimed to be coming from Stalingrad. In fact, it was coming from a Berlin studio. By the 2nd of February 1943, the German forces in Stalingrad had surrendered.

As a boy I remember hearing – and believing - that 'photos do not lie'. Now, thanks to technologies, that statement is itself a lie. Faces can be superimposed, characters evaporated and, I remember commenting - many years ago - to a wedding photographer that the bridesmaids looked rather chubby and hearing his reply "No problem, Father. I can reduce them by two sizes." And he did.

Knowing the truth is one thing. Telling the truth is something else. Today, I have done my best.

Next week I will - if I am still alive - tackle the topic of "Faith and Science". That is my truth.