

Good Friday: 2024

“Suffering and Truth: The Solution?”

1. Pilate in the Passion narrative today from St. John’s Gospel asks Jesus the biting, yet maybe slightly inquiring, question: *What is truth?* Pilate would fit right in the modern world with its inherent skepticism about any objective truth claims on anything, esp. in the religious realm. Even the former sacred modern cow of “science” with its truth claims has been left in shambles after all the contention during the Covid years with contesting claims on many issues of medicine, public policy, and scientific research. The internet and innumerable conspiracy theories just adds to the mix. The bottom line is most ppl in the world think everything is made up as we go, and each person can “decide the truth” for themselves. **That is not exactly the Catholic view of reality!** We believe the human soul is made in God’s image, so like God we can understand and embrace the objective reality that God made. It is a beautiful and liberating thing when you discover that. Yes, the scientific method of examining things and drawing conclusions can be a good thing. The gift of medicine and scientific exploration through the science of e.g. astronomy is fascinating and not just made up or someone’s opinion. Mars is so many many objective miles from earth, as are the other planets and stars. Things like the upcoming total eclipse of the sun on Monday April 8th is the real deal, not just a figment of someone’s imagination or some internet conspiracy. I bring this up because on the natural level if we understand our reason can put us in touch with actual reality, then it is not so difficult to see the same dynamic at work in the spiritual or supernatural realm of reality.
2. Pilate by asking Jesus: **what is truth**, does not get an answer from Jesus right then and there. But if he at all paid attention to what happened after he unjustly condemned Jesus to placate the whipped-up mob of ppl there in Jerusalem at the time, from 9 am to 3 pm that Friday, **he would have discovered the ultimate truth that this person named Jesus is God’s eternal Son** - even the Heavens witness to that, by the darkness that enveloped the land there from Noon to 3 pm when Jesus was dying on the Cross: an eerie and frightening darkness reminding people of the evil they had committed in murdering God’s eternal Son. Some of the mystics of recent centuries say a similar 3 days of darkness are coming to echo the 3 hours on Calvary reminding the human race that each one of us needs to seriously repent of our sins, *particularly serious ones of hatred and*

*sexual impurity and perversity; substituting false gods for the true God in greed and ambition; the murder of innocent pre-born babies and the elderly when they become too much of a burden for us in our selfish estimation; putting sports and gambling and recreation ahead of our proper worship of God on Sundays, just like the Romans were more interested in circuses and gladiator games and other distractions instead of seeking virtue and truth and the ultimate gift of the Catholic Faith, **but some did respond** – legend has it that Pontius Pilate’s wife was one of those people. Interesting. The mystery of human freedom and the choice of evil and falsehood or goodness and truth. As Jesus says, at the end of time, one person will be taken to God and another left behind. No one is predestined to that, but freely chosen. Very mysterious the interplay of human freedom and God’s grace and Providential guidance of each human soul who has ever lived, and our Lady helping in that process like no one human being who ever lived in her kindness.*

3. **The mystery of pain and suffering is what either leads us to ultimate truth or destruction.** So many great artists, be it painters, writers, singers, comedians, sports stars - if you study their lives, and you see when they ran into the reality of pain and suffering from their own life, or in relationships/family, or in the art/sport they pursued, and had to come to grips with how to cope with the pain/imperfection and sin/weakness of their being by either surrendering to God and embracing the Christian way and ultimately the fullness of that in the Catholic faith; or by fighting it, or numbing it with drugs & drink, disordered sex & multiple relationships, while sometimes still creating beautiful art. **How to explain that seeming contradiction:** *well humans often can create great art from pain because the mystery of suffering puts you in touch with deeper reality whether you fully realize it or not – but all the profound works of art created in often great suffering, although impressive to us humans here on earth, don’t mean much in light of eternity if the person does not finally submit and unite one’s sufferings with Jesus, so they become redemptive. **The problem of the pain** of our existence on earth is only resolved in embracing the Truth which is actually a person: Jesus, who then leads us more fully into the embrace of the eternal Father in the power of the Holy Spirit. *The surrender of one’s freedom into the freedom of Jesus is what sets us free from the enslavement of living in the false freedom the devil promotes; let’s pray all embrace Jesus who is the Truth we all seek whether one realizes it or not. **What is truth?** Jesus will show you. God bless you.**