

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA Eighth Commandment: You Shall Not Bear False Witness Against Your Neighbor

“Then Jesus said . . . ‘If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’” (John 8:31–32)

Insight

Have you ever been the target of malicious gossip or falsehoods? What was the effect on you?

Kate discovered the e-mails to her daughter, Amanda, from an old boyfriend who had been disrespectful, dishonest, and hurtful in the past.

Amanda was only sixteen. While unusually intelligent for her age, apparently Amanda didn't have much common sense when it came to this guy. She also was, apparently, overlooking the rules established by her parents. Everyone, including Amanda, had agreed that she should not communicate with Thomas anymore.

When approached about the e-mails, Amanda told her mother that she had to be in contact with Thomas because they were forced to work on a school project together. Kate knew instantly that her daughter was not being honest. After a few more questions, Amanda revealed that she was, in fact, speaking regularly to Thomas again. He had said he was a changed person and would never lie to Amanda again.

Kate was hurt by the dishonesty from her daughter and concerned about the potential lies and manipulation from Thomas.

For Reflection . . .

Lying, which directly offends against the truth, means that one speaks or acts falsely in order to lead someone into error.

When you realize that someone has lied to you repeatedly, how does that affect the relationship?

Do you believe it is always necessary to speak the complete truth? Why or why not?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 2464–2513

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 431–438

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 521–526

Church Teaching

God at the Source

God is the source of all truth. His Word and Law are trustworthy. Moreover, in Christ, we are recipients of God's complete truth, full of such grace and enlightenment. It leads us into freedom and holiness.

The Eighth Commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth. When we engage in falsehood, we warp our relationships with others and act against our calling to bear witness to God who is the truth. Truth consists of upright human action and speech, described also as sincerity or candor. Truthfulness shuns duplicity, dissimulation, and hypocrisy.

Trust and Confidentiality

It would be terribly uncomfortable to live together with others if we had no confidence in their truthfulness. Suspicion and second-guessing would be constant. This does not mean, however, that one must always divulge complete information in every situation. For reasons of appropriate confidentiality, such as professional secrecy, respecting privacy, or avoiding scandal, discretion and silence may be needed. A person does not have to reveal the truth to one who does not have the right to know it.

Public Dimensions

Society has a right to information. In the modern world, communications media have a unique and powerful role in serving the truth. They should thus act respectfully toward the facts they report and the individuals involved.

Users of communications media should exercise moderation and vigilance as consumers so that their consciences are correctly and wholesomely informed.