



Where Justice and Truth Meet

February 2017

“As Dominican women we claim our power to nurture mutual relationships that offer healing and courage to a broken world.”

Together Birthing Anew, Chapter 2014

Living *Veritas* in a “Post-Truth” Era



How does the Dominican motto *Veritas* call us to respond in this era? In a forward-looking essay written in 2004, Timothy Radcliffe, OP explored [The Crisis of Truth in our Society](#). He cites a documentary by Adam Curtis, called *Hypernormalisation*, that argues that politics all over the world in the last few decades is in retreat from complexity. “Our global world has become so complex that it is almost impossible to predict the consequences of our actions, and so most of politics is not about attempting to achieve anything,” but rather has turned to “managing perceptions. What matters is not truth but what people think is true. Rather than face the complexity of issues, politicians turn to popular feeling,” an oversimplification that “feeds jihadists everywhere.”

“We are drowning in information, but we do not know whom to believe,” leading to a crisis of suspicion. A lack of evidence to support what we feel or believe “only proves that our enemies are fiendishly cunning and so untrustworthy.”

All too often “slogans are substituted for hard thought.” Polarization, evident even in the Church, “is born of a reluctance to grapple with complexity.” In this climate, one of the most frequently used words in Pope Francis’ [Amoris Laetitia](#) is indeed *complexity*.

Radcliffe’s analysis returns to the Dominican value of study, calling for a “particular understanding of truthfulness, which carries us beyond the suspicion and mistrust of our society.... an older understanding of truth, which heals and builds communion.”

“Seeing things as they are is more than just a matter of opening one’s eyes and observing. It requires of us a way of life, which one might call contemplative. We need to be able to open ourselves to what is before us...a calm presence to what is other than ourselves... to let the other person be.” A spirituality of truth invites us “to slow down, be quiet, and let our hearts and minds be stretched open.”

In this perilous moment in human history, with our world threatened with violence, there is no possibility of peace unless we can speak the truth to strangers and so build up humanity as the “community of truth.” This means learning to speak truthfully to those with whom we disagree and to listen humbly to what they have to say.

Seeking the truth is for us inseparable from seeking holiness.

Timothy Radcliffe, OP

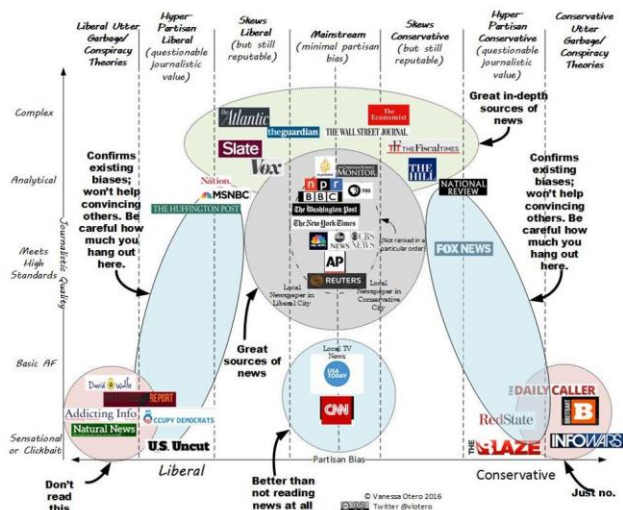
A similar invitation lies at the heart of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR)’s practice of “[contemplative dialogue](#)”, calling us to pay attention to the field of relationship (the *WE* space) among us, in a slow-moving manner of dialogue that deepens our sense of union. The intention is to move beyond the personal and probe significant ideas together while

listening deeply for truth in another’s point of view. Contemplative dialogue is a means of readying the ground for collective transformation, for helping shift from *I* to *WE*, from individualism to communion.

For Radcliffe, the great lie for Christians “is to see other people unmercifully, to shut our eyes to the goodness of their humanity and to weigh them down with the burden of their sins... The pursuit of truth is rooted in the life of charity, in breaking the hold of egoism, which stamps ‘me’ and ‘mine’ on everything that it sees.” And the necessary context for a life devoted to *Veritas* must be a mutual mercy.

News or “Alternative Facts”?

Which news sources should we believe, when there are so many to choose from, and each one is telling us not to believe another one? You may or may not agree with the classification of these news sources in this diagram, but the categories offer a more complex analysis than the typical dualistic “fake” and “real” we so often hear about in our polarized media environment.



The author of the chart, [Vanessa Otero](#), acknowledges: These are my subjective opinions based on having read many news stories from each of the listed sites.

Read more about the [author's reasoning](#) in creating the chart or find a [blank version](#) to do your own analysis. Of the blank version, the author cautions: “I respectfully submit that if you make your own, you should be able to place at least one source in each of the vertical columns, because they exist, and at least one in each of the horizontal rows, because they also exist. If you have just a couple sources that you think are in the middle but none exist either to the right or left of them, or up or down from them, you may be on the wrong track.”

Matthew 25 Pledge

In Matthew 25, Jesus says, "... I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ... Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

In response to the many people who are feeling vulnerable and many others don't know what to do, a new pledge is emerging across the country promoted by many Christian congregations. It was fruit of a December 2016 retreat gathering a broad spectrum of pastors, heads of churches, grassroots activists, and leaders of national faith-based organizations and networks who prayed and discerned together about the concerns of our times in the light of the Gospel. Their consensus to act in solidarity with those most at risk at this time is called the [Matthew 25 Pledge](#). It's just one sentence and simply says:

I pledge to protect and defend vulnerable people in the name of Jesus.

Three areas of focus have been suggested initially:

1. Support undocumented immigrants threatened with mass deportation.
2. Stand with African Americans and other people of color threatened by racial policing.
3. Defend the lives and religious liberty of Muslims, threatened with “banning,” monitoring, and even registration.

But those who have signed the Matthew 25 Pledge will also seek to surround and protect other groups of people targeted by hateful cultural responses in our country and world.

May the works of mercy also include care for our common home. Pope Francis



Mercy2Earth Weekend

Given the coincidence of Earth Day, April 22nd and Divine Mercy Sunday, April 23rd, [#Mercy2Earth Weekend](#) is a global campaign to encourage Catholics to reflect on Pope Francis' important "[Show Mercy to Our Common Home](#)" message and put it into action.

"**Know the Creator Through Creation**" is the [Catholic Climate Covenant's Earth Day theme](#) for 2017, inviting us to better recognize God's presence reflected in all of creation and to learn how we are responsible for safeguarding the Creator's handiwork.