

Imagine for a moment you are Pontius Pilate and Jesus is standing before you. It is before the scourging but even so, Jesus would not have been treated gently and stands before you bruised and bleeding. Would you recognize the King of Kings?

Surely you think you would. There must have been something about Him, the way He talks, His personal charisma, or His eyes lit up with a divine light, that would let you know you are in the presence of He who is the Way, the Life, and the Truth. Of course, you say to yourself, of course I would recognize Him.

But would you?

Every time we come to Mass, every time we receive Holy Communion, every time the priest or deacon holds up the Eucharist and says “Corpus Christi,” “the Body of Christ,” we stand in the presence of the Truth. Do we recognize Him then? If we do then we respond to the priest or deacon by saying “Amen.”

The word “amen” is an old Hebrew word. It means “Truth.” When the minister of communion holds up the Eucharist and declares “this is the Body of Christ, Corpus Christi,” we respond by saying “Amen.” By this we

recognize that what the minister says is true, we are in the presence of Jesus, the King of Kings, He who is the Way, the Life, and the Truth.

But Pontius Pilate did not recognize Him. Jesus longs to draw this Roman governor closer to His own heart, but Pilate remains unmoved.

Why is this?

Jesus Himself tells us why. “Everyone who belongs to the Truth, listens to my voice.” This is the secret to an intimate relationship with God.

When we accept that there is an objective Truth, common to all people, then we can be led by that Truth to a closer communion with God.

But this requires humility.

We often read in the Bible about the hard heartedness of the people. We have a general idea of what that means given the context. But what does it truly mean?

If I recognize no higher moral authority than myself, if I see the world as subjective shades of gray, without certainty, if I believe the truth is whatever I say it is, that is pride, that is hard heartedness.

But if I am humble, if I recognize that there is a moral authority higher than my own belief, if I feel a drive to discover, accept, and conform to what is objectively true, morally, physically, and historically, then I realize I am not self-governing, I am not the master of my universe, I am not God.

And that realization frees me. It frees me from the bonds of selfishness. It frees me from the tendencies of our fallen human nature, pride, self-sufficiency, control, and dominance. To resist those tendencies, to follow the Truth, to expose myself to the burning love of God, that takes courage.

We must be brave. We must be brave enough to resist the call of the profane world which is the call of the demonic. It is the call that tells us we do not need God, we can make our way without Him. We must be courageous enough and humble enough to admit that God is Truth, and God is love. That is the way we follow our eternal king and become true subjects of His kingdom.

To admit that God is Truth means we must accept the moral authority of His Church. If we accept Jesus as faithful, innocent, trustworthy and good on one hand, but then on the other hand we reject His claim to be the

Lord, the King of the Universe, and not recognize his authority over us, then we act just as Pilate did.

The connection between Jesus and the Truth explains why the Church has such stringent rules about receiving Holy Communion. Jesus, body, blood, soul, and divinity, is truly present in the Eucharist. To receive Him into our hearts in a worthy manner we must be in a state of grace by going to confession and repenting of mortal sin. If we have publicly supported immoral laws then we are required to publicly repent before receiving Holy Communion.

To act as Pilate did, to look upon Jesus but not truly see Him, to dismiss the moral authority of His Church, is to cut ourselves off from God's grace. There have been many high-profile converts to the Catholic faith who have understood this better than cradle Catholics.

Cardinal Newman, for example, gave up a prestigious and wealthy professorship at Oxford University in order to embrace the Catholic faith. When his friends tried to dissuade him at the last minute, they reminded him that he would be giving up an income of nearly \$100,000 in today's money. To that Newman answered: "What is \$100,000 when compared to one Holy Communion?"

Cardinal Newman belonged to the Truth, and so he was able to hear God's voice.

The Jews of 1st century Jerusalem looked for an earthly king who would establish an earthly kingdom. But the Kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom. It is a kingdom that brings us an interior peace and a strength of soul that only His grace can give us. If we have not experienced this, then we need to know God better.

In past generations, it was a Christian worldview that drove the values of popular culture. Entertainment, education, and the general patterns of societal behavior, were more or less in harmony with the moral and spiritual messages that people would hear at Sunday Mass. That Sunday homily was then supported and reinforced through the week as people experienced a world that, for the most part, shared a common moral underpinning.

But that has all changed.

We now live in a post Christian world. It is a world that has become so secularized that what passes for normal these days is often profoundly anti-Christian.

And so faith formation and the Sunday homily are no longer enough. Much of the kingdom is in open rebellion against the king, and those of us who remain faithful to Him, must take a more active role.

If we spend the week filling our hearts and minds with secular imagery and information, then we will begin to think like secularists, even if we continue to come to Sunday Mass. That is how we lose the sense of peace and interior freedom that Christ promises us.

Make no mistake, the secular world wants to separate us from God. That is also the goal of the devil, the voice of one clearly echoes in the voice of the other.

I am not suggesting we completely isolate ourselves from the secular world, that would be impractical. But we can balance the voice of the world with the word of God. To do this we must seek Him out every day.

Fr. Stanley has given our parish a great gift by giving us access to Formed.org. Formed.org is sometimes referred to as the Catholic Netflix. Through its website we can access a great variety of information about our faith. Movies, books, audio programs, all are available to us to learn about our faith. There is material for every age group and every level of

learning. Regardless of your knowledge of the faith and how much time you have, you can find something on [Formed.org](https://www.formed.org) that will help you better understand the Christian, Catholic worldview.

And then, armed with that knowledge you can engage with the secular world with a more discerning eye. You can better recognize and reject the sacrilegious, the blasphemous, and the heretical, and embrace the Good, the Beautiful, and the True. This is the way we remain faithful subjects of the king.

We should all want to hear those words when we stand before Our Lord, “well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the master's house.”

To Jesus Christ be glory and power for ever and ever! His are majesty and splendor, and His kingdom is everlasting. Amen.