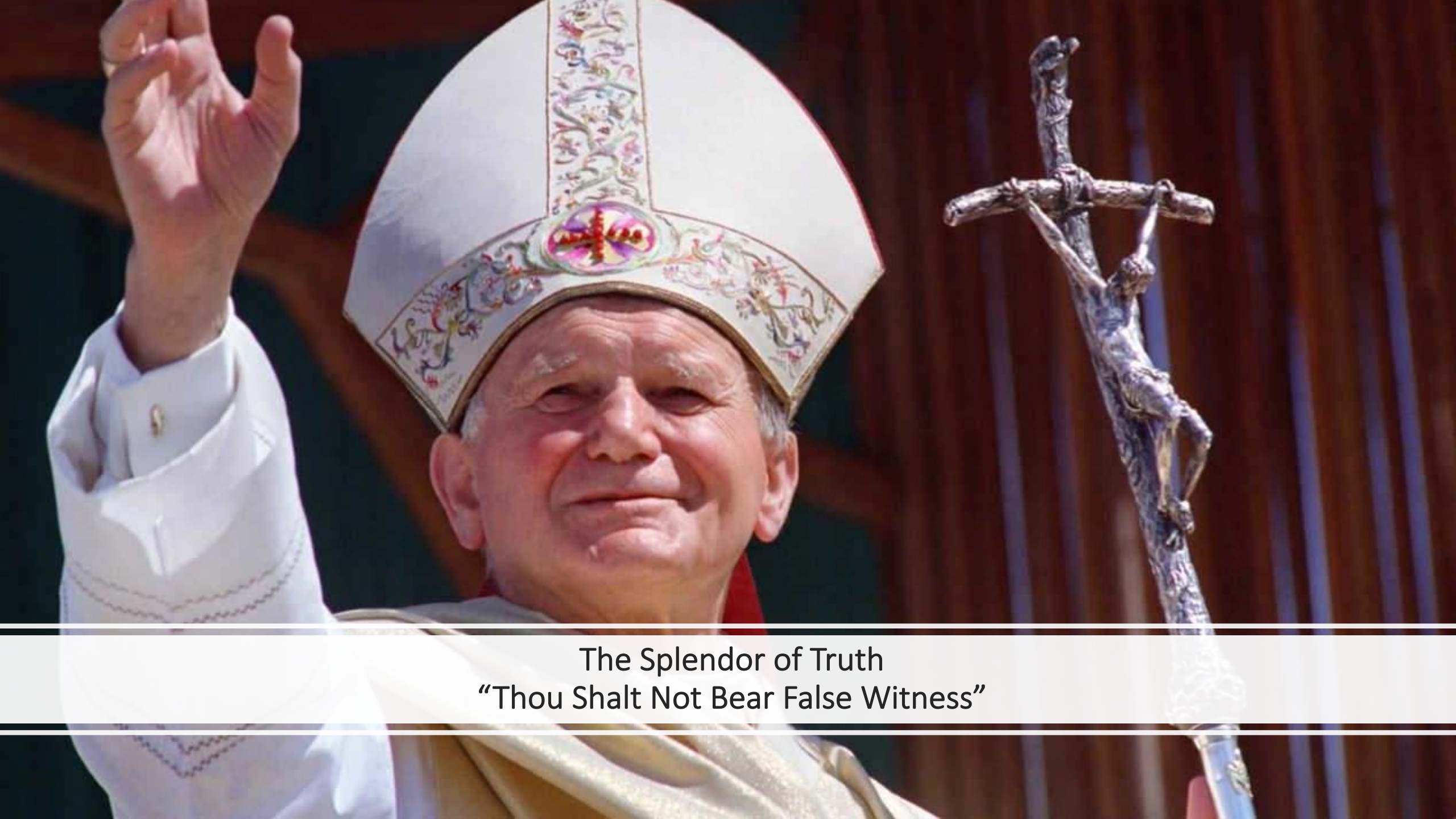


THE SPLENDOR OF TRUTH

“THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS”

Catholic Faith Formation
St. Ignatius Church, Tokyo
Sunday, September 4, 2022



The Splendor of Truth
"Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness"

THE SPLENDOR OF TRUTH

“THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS”

- “The commandments ... are the *first necessary step on the journey towards freedom*, its starting point.” But learning to follow the commandments “is only the beginning of freedom, not perfect freedom.”
- (VS 13)
- <https://tobinstitute.org/five-favorite-quotes-from-veritatis-splendor-the-splendor-of-truth/>

The Splendor of Truth – Pope Saint John Paul II

https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_06081993_veritatis-splendor.html



The Reality of the Moral Law by C.S. Lewis

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On Veritatis Splendor

Fr. Joseph Koterski, S.J.

Lesson 4

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Newman
Theological
College

Truth & Evangelization:

25 years after Veritatis Splendor

Fr. Raymond de Souza

Dr. Mousseau Lecture Series

A Tour of the CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

PART THREE *LIFE IN CHRIST*
2464 - 2513

CCC 2464 - 8th Commandment
- Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness -



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“THOU SHALT NOT BEAR
FALSE WITNESS”

THE SPLENDOR OF TRUTH IN 2017

BY CHARLES J. CHAPUT - FIRST THINGS

OCTOBER 2017

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“THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS”

- First, the text reminds us forcefully that truth, including moral truth (what we owe our neighbor; what leads us to or away from God), has an objective dimension. It's not purely a function of cultural and personal circumstances. Of course, throughout history, and throughout our individual lives, many things do change. But some truths do not change. Murder, genocide, adultery—these are wrong in every case. There are no exceptions, no circumstances that make such actions morally permissible. They can never be directly chosen, even as a means to a good end.

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- Certain moral truths—the Ten Commandments, the basic precepts of the natural law—remain always valid. As John Paul writes:
 - The *negative precepts* of the natural law are universally valid. They oblige each and every individual, always and in every circumstance. It is a matter of prohibitions which forbid a given action *semper et pro semper* [always and everywhere], without exception, because the choice of this kind of behavior is in no case compatible with the goodness of the will of the acting person, with his vocation to life with God and to communion with his neighbor. It is prohibited—to everyone and in every case—to violate these precepts.
- Such actions always and everywhere stand in opposition to friendship with God and to justice toward our neighbor. They’re always directly opposed to virtue and to our ultimate happiness.

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- A person might not be fully culpable for doing wicked things when faced with violent threats or intense pressure. But the acts themselves—acts like rape, euthanasia, and abortion—are always gravely wrong. They produce terrible evil in the life of the person who does them and suffering in the lives of others. This is why the Catholic tradition calls such actions intrinsically evil. The evil is found in the very nature of the kind of act that it is, no matter what the circumstances or reasons that motivate it.

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- In practice, this means that, even when we have a good reason and the noblest intention in the world, if an action itself is not rightly ordered to God, it's still wrong. Its “wrongness” is not merely the result of violating some commandment or duty. It's not the law or the commandment that “makes” the action wrong. Rather, even under the best circumstances, an intrinsically evil act leads us away from God, who is the supreme good. It wounds us, injures others, blocks our path to true happiness, and produces real evil.
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“THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS”

- This central teaching does more than protect human dignity; it promotes it as well. As Václav Havel recognized, the objectivity of moral truth provides us with a place to stand in a fallen world that too often conscripts us into its evil doings. When the Church teaches that some things should never be done, she is issuing a wake-up call. Our freedom is not aimless. It does not serve itself. We were created with the capacity for freedom so that we could unite ourselves with the truth—in action as well as thought.

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- To be fully human, as the lessons of the last century taught both Havel and Wojtyła, is to live in the truth. And we can do this even in dire circumstances because we are always able to refrain from doing that which is intrinsically evil. To resist the temptation of adultery, to refuse to procure or perform an abortion, to refrain from mouthing falsehoods—even the most ordinary person who struggles with his own sinfulness (as we all do) is capable of living in the truth. This is why John Paul thought the classical notion of intrinsically evil acts to be so vital. It's the dimension of moral theology that frames truth in the clearest of terms. And it is the clarity of the truth (and its rejection of that dull gray cult of moral ambiguity that numbs the soul before killing it) that speaks most directly to our desire for fullness of life.

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“THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS”

- Thus, a pastor is *not* acting mercifully if he says, out of a misguided desire to help someone struggling with a difficult choice, “Don’t worry, as long as your heart is in the right place, God will understand.” Or even worse: “I dispense you from the law in this case.” The pastor has no power to launder a sinful choice into a morally acceptable one. In trying to do so, he commits a serious injustice. He also sins against charity, because he makes the problem worse by stealing the truth from the person he seeks to help.

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- To put it another way: Accompaniment, properly understood, is always a wise pastoral strategy. But the destination of a journey—a journey shared by pastor and penitent—does matter, especially if the route takes them over a cliff. Intrinsically evil actions always involve a turning away from God. This is the teaching of Jesus himself:
“Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:19).

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- The spiritual problems that arise in morally difficult cases do not stem from the “cruel” nature of a seemingly merciless law. The problems come from the fact that we fallen creatures have a hard time choosing the good when it costs us something. The right path to happiness isn’t to relax the law, but to give ourselves over to God’s power and the promise of his grace.

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- This leads to a second reason for *Veritatis Splendor*'s enduring value. Catholic moral teachings are salvific. They're central to the proclamation of the Gospel, and are, in reality, good news. Yet this good news, Christ's new law of love, in no way diminishes God's commandments.
- John Paul puts it this way:
 - When the Apostle Paul sums up the fulfilment of the law in the precept of love of neighbor as oneself (cf. Rom 13:8–10), he is not weakening the commandments but reinforcing them, since he is revealing their requirements and their gravity. *Love of God and of one's neighbor cannot be separated from the observance of the commandments of the Covenant* renewed in the blood of Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Spirit. It is an honor characteristic of Christians to obey God rather than men (cf. Acts 4:19; 5:29) and accept even martyrdom as a consequence, like the holy men and women of the Old and New Testaments who are considered such because they gave their lives rather than perform this or that particular act contrary to faith or virtue.

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- Catholic fidelity to moral truths—despite opposition, and especially when other Christian communities have fallen silent—has made the Church a vital witness of truth in a time of confusion. Many who come to the faith today do so not in spite of the “hard” Catholic teachings, but precisely because of them—and this, often in circumstances when they are not sure that they can even live up to those demands. They recognize in those teachings the voice of Jesus Christ and the confidence of the Church in the authority of moral truth.

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- Again, the solution to hard moral choices isn't to rewrite or neuter the law. Instead, we need to acknowledge that, by ourselves, we can do nothing. Then we need to ask the help of God's grace to live in the truth. When we choose to live in the truth—or at least to keep trying when we fail—we're joined more closely to Jesus. We learn to depend more deeply on his grace. We start, even in this life, to have a foretaste of God's friendship that we'll experience fully in heaven.

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“THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS”

- The third reason for the encyclical's extraordinary power is John Paul's approach to the nature of authentic freedom. He writes: "God's law does not reduce, much less do away with human freedom; rather, it protects and promotes that freedom. In contrast, however, some present-day cultural tendencies have given rise to several currents of thought in ethics which center upon *an alleged conflict between freedom and law*." This "alleged conflict" lies at the heart of moral theories of obligation. Such theories assume that, in order to give freedom of conscience to individuals, the moral law must be softened, or exceptions found.

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- The opposite is true. We find true freedom only as we're liberated from our vices so that we not only desire what is truly good, but also act to attain it. In other words, as we grow in moral virtue, we also grow in authentic freedom.
- Freedom was not given to us by God so we could redefine, on our own, what is good or evil, but rather so we could respond in liberty to his offer of friendship.
 - Man's free obedience to God's law effectively implies that human reason and human will participate in God's wisdom and providence. . . . Law must therefore be considered an expression of divine wisdom: by submitting to the law, freedom submits to the truth of creation. Consequently, one must acknowledge in the freedom of the human person the image and the nearness of God, who is present in all (cf. Eph 4:6).

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- As John Paul writes:
- “Totalitarianism arises out of a denial of truth in the objective sense. If there is no transcendent truth, in obedience to which man achieves his full identity, then there is no sure principle for guaranteeing just relations between people. Their self-interest as a class, group or nation would inevitably set them in opposition to one another. If one does not acknowledge transcendent truth, then the force of power takes over, and each person tends to make full use of the means at his disposal in order to impose his own interests or his own opinion, with no regard for the rights of others.”

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- Not only Catholics proclaim moral truth, of course. Many other believers and people of good will do as well. But it's vital for the sake of her mission and the world that the Church be a beacon of truth when so few such beacons remain.

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- The fourth and final reason for the encyclical's power is this. In *Veritatis Splendor*, John Paul reaffirmed the classic Catholic understanding of the relationship between objective truth about right and wrong, and how the individual person applies that truth in his or her own life. He underscores what has always been Catholic teaching: The conscience of the individual can never be set against objective moral truth, as if conscience and truth were two competing, autonomous principles for moral decision-making.

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- Such a mistaken view would “pose a challenge to the *very identity of the moral conscience* in relation to human freedom and God’s law. . . . Conscience is not an independent and exclusive capacity to decide what is good and what is evil.” Rather, “conscience is the application of the law to a particular case.” Conscience stands under the objective moral law and should be formed by it, so that “the truth about moral good, as that truth is declared in the law of reason, is practically and concretely recognized by the judgment of conscience.”

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- When John Paul issued *Veritatis Splendor* nearly a quarter century ago, it very soon drew criticism from a range of “forward-thinking” theologians. They (rightly) saw that their efforts—to bend Catholic moral teachings toward more “humane” and “compassionate” standards, whereby moral truths could evolve over time, relative to historical and cultural circumstances—would be derailed by it.

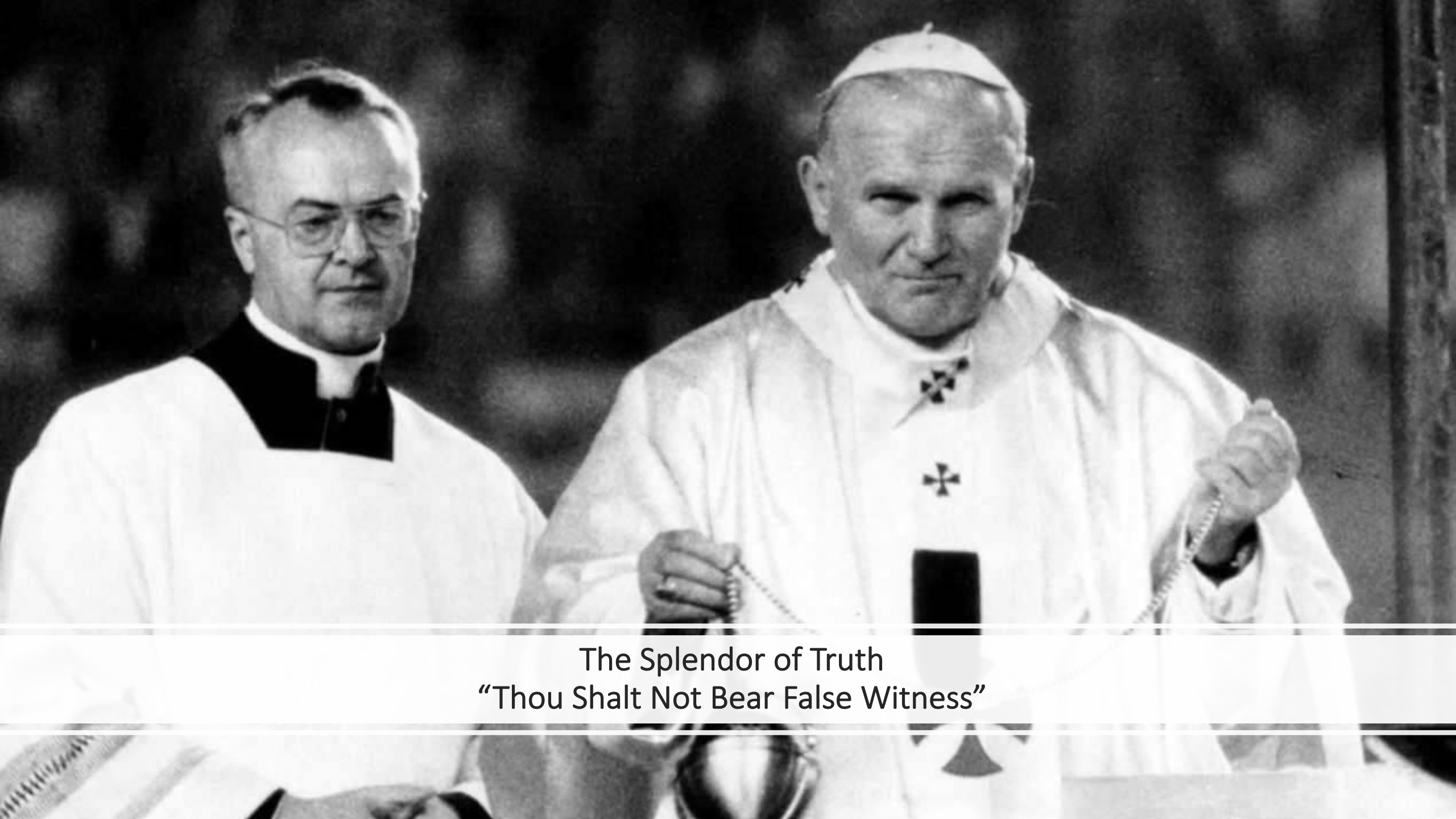
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- Those of them who remain among church scholars and pastors still search for ways to evade the encyclical’s teaching, to say it was useful in the past, but history has moved on. To a great extent, today’s debates within the Church—on issues of sexual identity, sexual behavior, Communion for the divorced and civilly remarried, the nature of the family—simply exhume and reanimate the convenient ambiguities and flexible approaches to truth that *Veritatis Splendor* forcefully buried.

Catechism 675

“Before Christ’s second coming the Church must pass through a final trial that will shake the faith of many believers. The persecution that accompanies her pilgrimage on earth will unveil the ‘mystery of iniquity’ in the form of a religious deception offering men an apparent solution to their problems at the price of apostasy from the truth. The supreme religious deception is that of the Antichrist, a pseudo-messianism by which man glorifies himself in place of God and of his Messiah come in the flesh.”



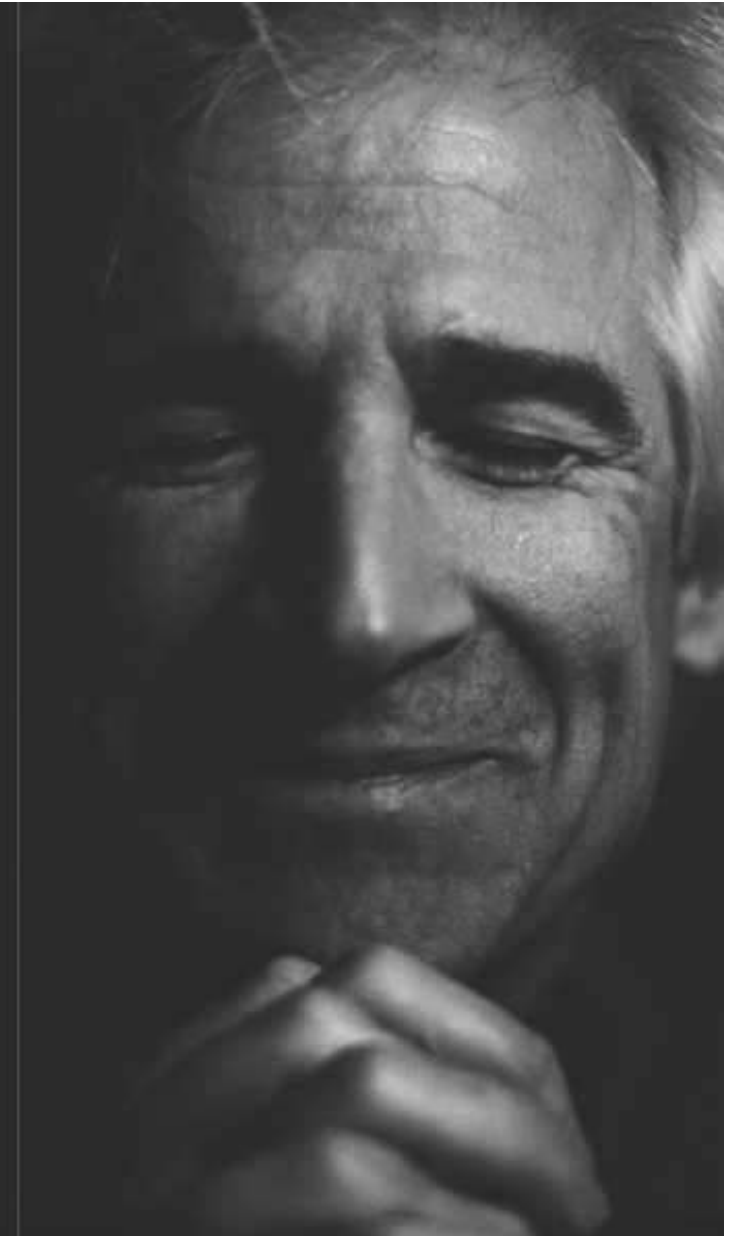
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“Thou Shalt
Not Bear
False
Witness”

**whatever is true,
whatever is
noble, whatever
is right, whatever
is pure, whatever
is lovely, whatever
is admirable--if
anything is
excellent or
praiseworthy-
think about such
things" Philippians
4:8 What you
think is what
you feel - think
of Jesus and His
love and know
peace.**

Fr. Larry Richards



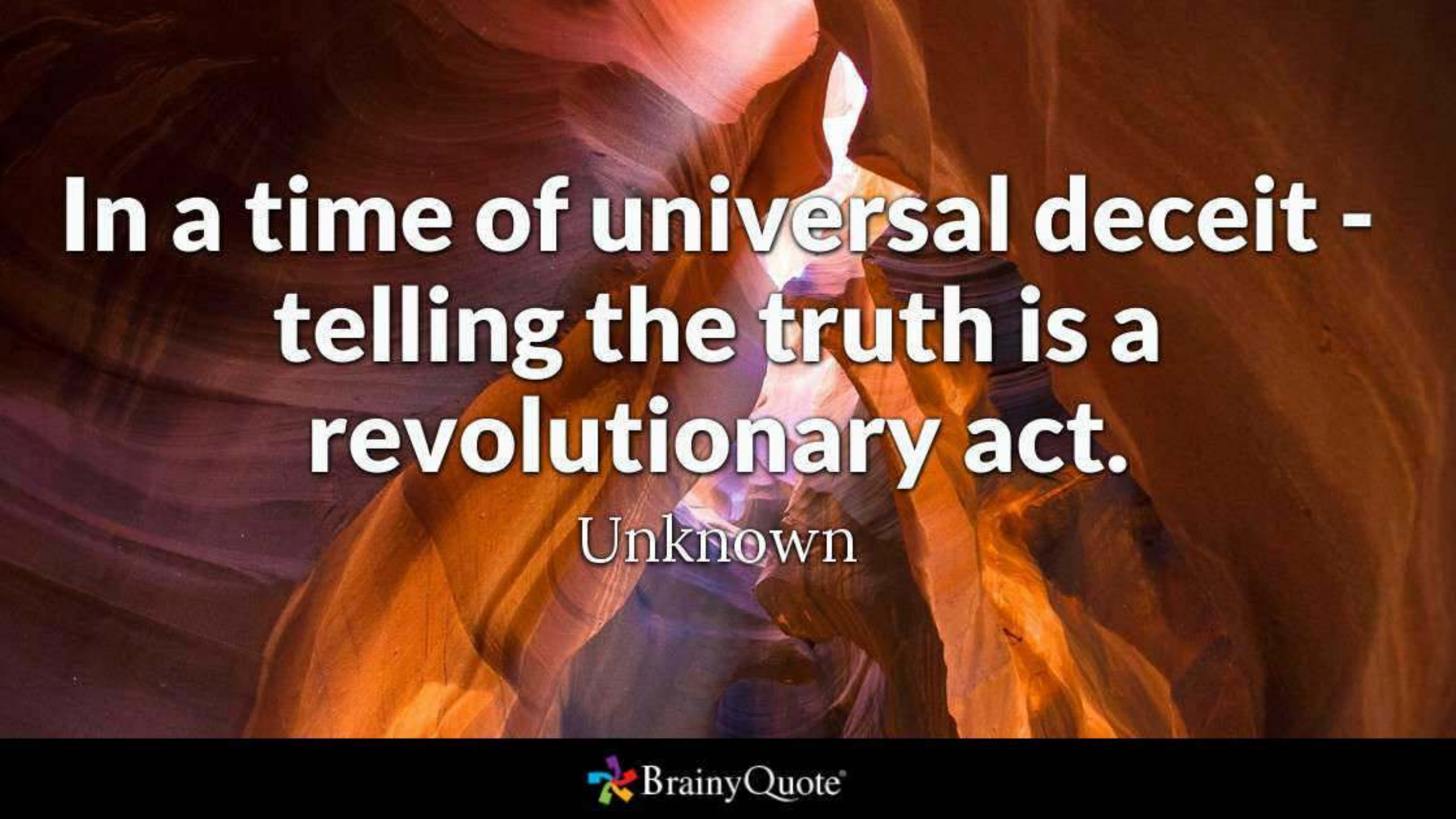


**THE TRUTH IS
LIKE A LION;
YOU DON'T
HAVE TO
DEFEND IT.
LET IT LOOSE;
IT WILL DEFEND
ITSELF.**

— ST. AUGUSTINE

**THE SPLENDOR OF
TRUTH**

**“THOU SHALT NOT
BEAR FALSE WITNESS”**



**In a time of universal deceit -
telling the truth is a
revolutionary act.**

Unknown

**Dear children, let us not love with words
or tongue but with actions and in truth.**

- 1 John 3:18 -



Pope explains eighth commandment “You shall not bear false witness”

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“THOU
SHALT NOT
BEAR FALSE
WITNESS”

O Mary,

Mother of Mercy, watch over all people,

that the Cross of Christ may not be emptied of its power,

that man may not stray from the path of the good or become blind to sin,

but may put his hope ever more fully in God who is "rich in mercy" (Eph 2:4).

May he carry out the good works prepared by God beforehand (cf. Eph 2:10)

and so live completely "for the praise of his glory" (Eph 1:12).

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 6 August, Feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord, in the year, 1993, the fifteenth of the Pontificate of JOHN PAUL II