

A small, weathered yellow boat with a blue stripe along its gunwale is floating on calm, deep blue water. The boat is angled towards the left, and its reflection is clearly visible in the still water below. A rope is attached to the bow, extending towards the left edge of the frame. In the far distance, another small boat can be seen on the horizon under a clear sky.

IMPRINT

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WHAT ANCHORS YOU?

Only when we meet the living God in Christ do we know what life is. We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.

- Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI

“They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through.”

BEYOND *the Storm*

Life is full of storms.

We arrive at this summer somewhat storm-battered. Having faced, in the past months, a sense of powerlessness in the face of sickness, suffering, death, and our nation’s unrest, we find relief in the promise of calm.

Storms make it difficult to see what is real and true — the path long traveled, the road near home, or the harbor lights so familiar. We need an unfailing light, a compass that never loses ‘true North’, a heart’s capacity to be at rest while sailing life’s stormy sea. And we need to live true to who we are — pilgrims on journey to our Father’s house. It was remarked of the early Christians: “They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through.” (from a letter to Diognetus)

The first disciples who journeyed with Jesus had learned to approach life in this way. They had witnessed the greatest of miracles: the coming of the Messiah in human flesh, the radical turn of events which led to Jesus’ suffering and seemingly untimely death, and His promised yet still surprising rising from the dead — robbing every human sorrow and tragedy, even sin and death, of its absolute power forever.

They had discovered that Truth is not a formula or rational conclusion, but a person: Jesus Christ. Truth has a human face. As St. John Paul II wrote, “Jesus Christ ... is the center of the universe and of history. He is the answer to every question of our hearts.”

JESUS CHRIST

The answer to every question of our hearts.

In this time of uncertainty, we are called to anchor ourselves in the truth of who we are and who God is ... to know that, no matter how heavy the burden of sorrow, how unsure we may be of the future, how dark life may get, we are held by a Love greater and more real than ourselves. We were created in the image of this eternal Love, and destined for glory — and nothing can take this away from us.

Let us root ourselves in the reality of God’s promise and designs. Life is a gift given to last forever; and this world only a temporary home. The best is yet to come.

Know of our prayers for you and your families in these days. May the joy of the Risen Jesus be yours.

In Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life,
Mother Agnes Mary, SV
Mother Agnes Mary, SV



TRUTH HAS A HUMAN FACE



THE TRUTH Prayer

Jesus, I believe that You are good, and that You are Truth itself. I believe in Your love for me, and I ask You to help me believe more and more. Save me from the lies that besiege me; teach me to listen to Your voice alone. Help me to see You looking on me with tender love and delight, and to stand firm in this truth always. Jesus, I trust in You! Amen.

MY ESSENTIAL SELF

By Sr. Lucia Christi, SV and Sr. Marie Veritas, SV

Face-to-face with the real me

In times of crisis, life boils down to the essentials: meeting our basic needs, family, and the big questions — like the meaning of life and death, heaven and hell, God and me. We come face-to-face with what we are — and what we aren’t. We have time to look at our lives, into our hearts, and to ponder what it’s all about. What am I made for? What happens after I die? Who am I, really?

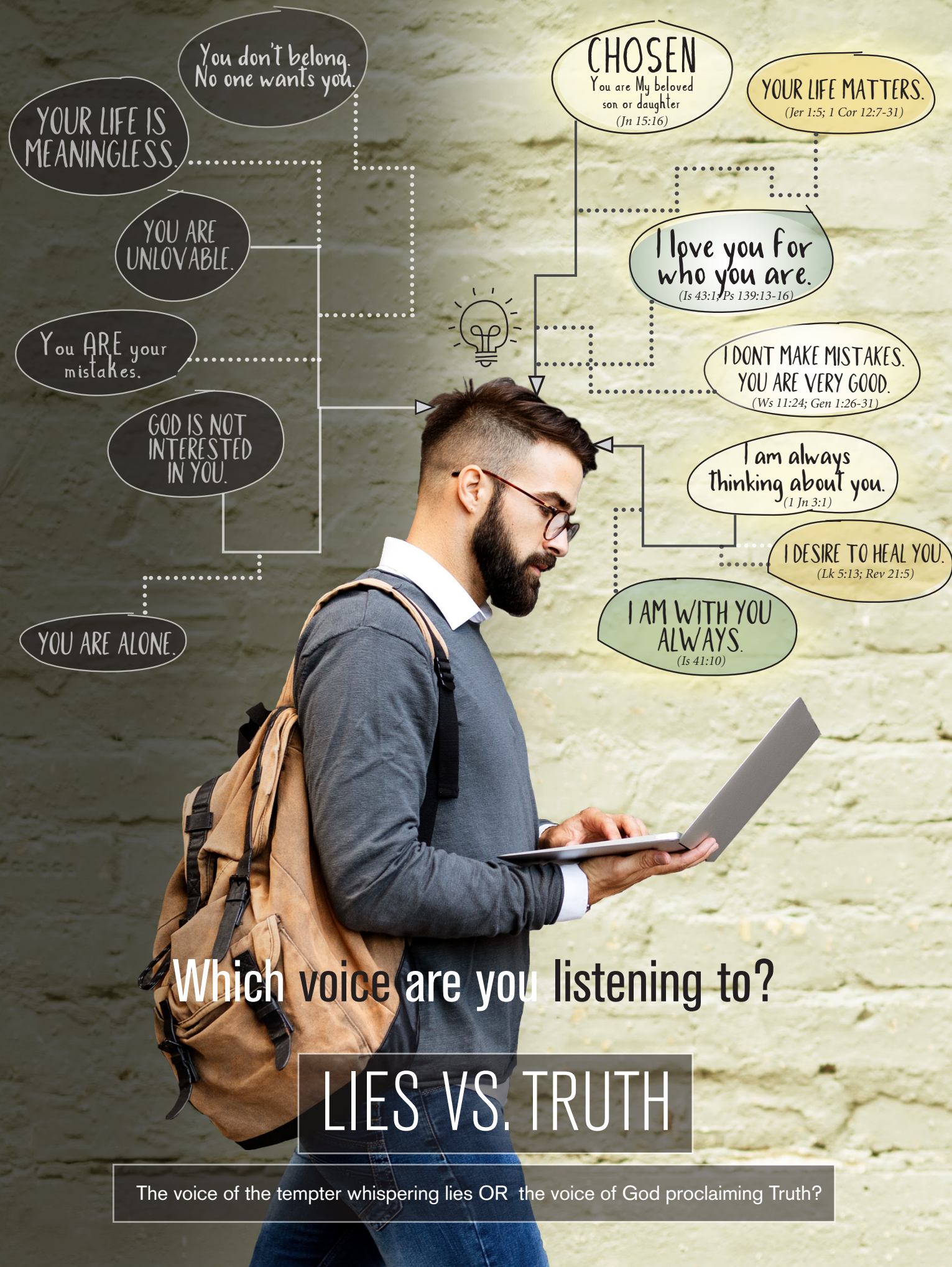
God Answers

The truth of my identity and the meaning of my life can only be found in the light of the God, who created me and declared me “very good” (cf *Gen* 1:31). God sees me in all of my inglorious reality — all of my littleness, weakness, and yes, even my sin. And yet, this same God is the One who is undeniably and unconditionally in love with me, exactly as I am. The truth of who I am is beautiful, because Beauty Himself created me and holds me in being. And even in my sins and failures, His tenderness and mercy make all things new and draw me ever closer to His heart. He constantly seeks to fill me with His love.

The Choice

I can let myself be loved by God, or I can draw back. Each day, as I am bombarded by the lies of the enemy — “the accuser of our brothers” (*Rev* 12:10) and “the father of lies” (*Jn* 8:44) — the lies of the culture, and even the lies of my own negative thought patterns, I have a choice to make. I can choose to let myself be persuaded by the lies and defined by my own failures. Or I can choose to claim the truth of who I am in God’s eyes and the beautiful reality of His love for me. This choice is held out to me at every moment.

How will I respond?



Which voice are you listening to?

LIES VS. TRUTH

The voice of the tempter whispering lies OR the voice of God proclaiming Truth?

WHAT'S LIFE ALL ABOUT ANYWAY?

An interview with Dr. Edward Sri

Dr. Edward Sri is an author, theologian, vice president of FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students), and a husband and father of eight.

What would you say life is all about?

Our modern world tells us it doesn't matter *what* you choose – all that matters is *that* you choose. Whether you choose to be faithful to your spouse and children, or you run off with someone else, it doesn't matter. We applaud both options because you chose. What a boring way of looking at life! Deep down, I want my choices to matter. Every life matters. Every choice matters.

Charles Dickens opens his novel *David Copperfield* with the line, "Will I be the hero of my own life?" That's the real question. It means my life is an adventure that has a purpose and my choices matter. We're actually participating in a larger story that's not just about me.

What difference does truth make?

If I don't get truth right, I'm not going to get my life right. If I live life as if there is no purpose, this leads to anxiety, depression, and distraction. Relativism takes the most beautiful treasures of our faith – Who is God? What is love? What is marriage? What is sex? What is man and woman? – and turns all these profound gems into elephants in the room. The modern world tells us, "You are just here by chance, and you define your own reality. You get to determine what is true for you." This is ultimately a rejection of God's great gift to us. The moral law comes from God's love. He made us; He knows how we work. He loves us so much. He gives us the law to show the way that will lead to our happiness. These aren't just random rules. It's the instruction manual for our lives.



By Sr. Maris Stella, SV

How have you seen this?

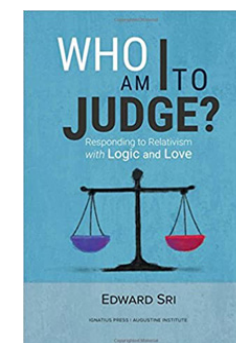
I work with thousands of college students and young adults. They've experienced casual sex, the hookup culture, etc., and it's not working for them. It has left them empty and wounded. They describe the fears and insecurities they have ... the pain and heartache in their lives ... how they have felt used ... how they have felt let down ... how they have become disillusioned. Many of them doubt they will ever find lasting love.

If we just tell everyone, "It's your life. Do whatever you want, whether it's drugs or alcohol or sexual addiction. You have freedom to define yourself," we're actually doing them a great disservice. Pope Francis says that, "relativism wounds people." With no moral compass guiding our lives, many have been injured by the culture, by people around them, and by their own misguided choices. When you say that there is no truth, it actually ruins people's lives.

What does it mean to stay anchored in reality?

God created reality out of nothing and brought it into existence. God didn't have to create the universe: the sun, moon, stars, the beautiful mountains ... He didn't have to create my wife and my children. He gave me my mind to think, and my senses so I can apprehend this reality outside of myself. These are incredible gifts. I want to conform my life to this reality He has given to me. Truth isn't an abstract concept. Truth is a person, Jesus Christ, who said "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (Jn 14:6). He's the fullness of Truth. The truth isn't simply that abortion and pornography are wrong. That is true, but it's not the whole gospel message. The whole truth is that God loves you.

To learn more, check out Edward Sri's book: edwardsri.com



What do I believe about my life?

The truth is, what we believe about who we are, where we came from, and where we're going actually has a huge impact on how we live. The world often tells us that nothing really matters. But Jesus invites us into a very different reality, one that gives meaning to even the smallest of things. Now, this can lead us to ask: **Do my choices in life truly reflect what I believe? Or am I living between two worldviews? How do I want to live?**

Nothing really matters

Random

Core beliefs

No one created me. I am here by accident. I have no defined identity. And I have no destiny. Freedom is the ability to choose anything.

What's my road manual?

- There's nothing after this life, so I'm going to make choices that satisfy my desires here.
- I define myself — who I am and what I'm about. It's up to me to prove I'm worthy of existence.
- What I do with my body doesn't really matter. It's incidental.
- Love is whatever makes me feel good, and satisfies my needs.
- Suffering is meaningless.
- It's up to me to figure out the plan for my life. I'm in charge. I decide the meaning of my life.
- My mistakes are mine. No one can fix them.
- I'm on my own.

I came into existence by chance.



I was in the mind and heart of God from all eternity.
I AM CHOSEN.



I need to be in control. I'm going to do what feels right for me.



Who AM I?
I have to prove I'm Someone.



He loves me for me and not for what I can do.



I see life as a gift. I choose to live for more than myself.



I'm totally on my own.



WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!



How am I living?

Everything matters

Intentional

Core beliefs

God intentionally loved me into being, creating me in His image and likeness. Nothing about me was a mistake. I am irreplaceable. And He gave me a destiny — to be fully alive with Him and others in heaven. Freedom is the choice to say 'yes' to my destiny.

What's my road manual?

- I'm made for eternal life and love; I can choose to live for a reality greater than myself and the here and now.
- God holds me in being at every moment. He never stops choosing me. I'm His son or daughter.
- What I do with my body matters, because I'm not **something** to be used — but **someone** to be loved.
- Love is a choice, not just a feeling. It's choosing the good of the other.
- Jesus enters into my suffering with me and for me, and can transform it if I let Him.
- God has given me a unique mission of love, filled with meaning. I can choose to live this adventure of life with Him.
- My sins do affect others. But Jesus' mercy is bigger than my sins. He can restore, transform, and heal if I let Him.
- I belong to God's family. I'm made to be in relationship with Him and others.



Be still and know that I am God.

(Ps 46:10)

THE TRUTH OF HIS LOVE FOR ME

An interview with Thomas*
By Sr. Mary Margaret Hope, SV and Sr. Marie Veritas, SV

After he was rescued from alcohol and drug addiction, Thomas gained a unique capacity to see the truth of God’s presence in the world, especially in those who suffer. He radiates joy and gratitude, and is now one of our most faithful Co-Workers of Life, giving his time and skills to assist in our mission to pregnant women in New York.

**Name changed for anonymity.*

Would you share your story with us?

As far back as I can remember, I was irritable and restless; I felt like I didn’t belong. We were an immigrant family, Italian and Portuguese. Everyone, including my uncles, shared one house in Mount Vernon. There was a lot of bargaining and secrecy. Even though my mother did everything she could for us, when I was growing up, I didn’t see the pure, true love I was seeking.

As I got older, I was diagnosed with dyslexia. I felt stupid, and I looked for a “superpower” that could make me feel important. Wine was always on the table at home. Wine seemed to bring a joy, but not a real joy —

just an escape from reality. Drinking gave me that power I was looking for, that false strength.

I desperately wanted to fit in. I got connected with a crowd that was angry at the world. We drank heavy and drove our cars fast. It made us feel powerful. But I was still discontent and restless. Hate was brewing in me.

How did you cope with that hate?

I was an altar boy, but church didn’t make sense to me as a kid. My mom loved Mary, but I interpreted her faith as a weakness. I didn’t understand her strength and peace because I was looking for power. But in high school, I realized my dyslexia was sort of a gift. Because I see things backwards, I am really good at fixing stuff — sort of reverse engineering. And I started to find hope after I went to trade school. Science — the concrete laws I was learning — was a kind of truth, and it made me feel confident and powerful.

I felt like I finally fit in. I was moving up the ladder at work; I was volunteering as a firefighter. I was in demand, getting awards, but I still felt restless. I was seeking something outside of myself. I started to fill my life with shiny things — fast cars, vacations, travel. That gave me power. I got married; I got a house — all these things I wanted, like checkmarks. But the truth was, I was living a lie. I was still so lonely and empty. I was not being real or honest with myself, and the drinking progressed.

How did the lie fall apart?

Ultimately the alcohol stopped working, and I turned to drugs. I got sicker and sicker.

I had a wonderful wife and kids. I would be there with them, but not really present. I would ask myself, “What’s wrong with me?” I had all these things, but I was dead inside. I was still seeking something. Eventually I lost my wife and kids; I lost my house. I went for rehab, counseling, 12-step programs, but I didn’t know how to be honest with the people who were trying to help me. Self-knowledge was good, but I needed to get to the real truth of what I was seeking. I did not find it until I got desperate enough, until I got quiet enough.

What did you find in the desperation?

Grace! There was nothing else. I was beyond human aid. If life was fair, I should be dead or in jail. But there’s a Love out there - there’s Other. And that Other has chosen to give me grace.

I didn’t have a white light experience; it was more a seeking and being fulfilled. Being still and knowing God. I always believed in God, but I didn’t feel that I was worthy of love. The devil — he’s a liar. He said, “Tom, you’re beyond forgiveness,” and I couldn’t get any further. But it came to me, “Tom, you’re playing God.” And then I went to Confession. I was eye-ball to eye-ball with the priest, and he showed me that I was loved, that Jesus had been with me at every moment. And then I didn’t want to do those things anymore. It started to weigh on my conscience to think I was bringing Jesus into those places. Now I had to ask Holy Spirit to help me. Sometimes I would talk to my sponsor; sometimes I would get on my knees and beg mercy. And where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more (cf Rom 4:20).

Would you say that truth set you free?

It’s beyond human understanding to think that I went from hanging around crack houses to hanging around convents. All that suffering transformed me. Before, I had judged other people. But now I know the pain of drug addicts. I knew I was loved when I was them ... but I still am “them”. In those rehabs I met incredible people. In our suffering, we had a fellowship, but it wasn’t enough to keep us sober. Freedom comes from not having to figure it all out, from finding the truth that I’m loved where I’m at, that I don’t need all the shiny things.

I remember spending time on Ender’s Island where this one priest runs a rehab. I was sitting on this island, all these flowers in bloom, the birds singing. I was experiencing such freedom, and yet I knew the sickness was in me still. I knew that if I didn’t surrender and give it all to God, “Tom’s faulty thinking apparatus” would kick back in: the irritableness, the discontent, the restlessness. I’m either seeking God or I’m seeking something else. I need to keep my eyes on Jesus in order to stay grounded in the truth. “Be still and know that I am God” (Ps 46:10).

I was beyond human aid. If life was fair, I should be dead or in jail. But there’s a Love out there — there’s Other. And that Other has chosen to give me grace.

How did the Blessed Mother find you?

My relationship with the Blessed Mother came out of nowhere. It was like jumper cables on a dead battery. I thought by having a relationship with Mary I was “cheating” on my earthly mother. But one day I was at the convent carrying an air conditioner, and a Sister whom I had never met before gave me a pamphlet — *33 Days to Morning Glory*, by Fr. Michael Gaitley, MIC.

At first I thought, “I’m not interested in reading this.” But I was in a bad place then, and it was a lifeline. I read a little, and then I wanted it. I figured I could read one page a day; that’s not much. God opened my receptors so I could take in those beautiful truths at that time. Grace poured in. And my relationship with Mary just changed.

I consecrate myself to her every day. It recharges my battery. I’m a tough guy in my 50’s but I need a mom. I need that mother’s love that changes me. I need her heart. I need her eyes to see things. I need to know that I’m going to be ok. When I don’t have it, I just go to her. She has it. She shows me my purpose. Not to be popular, not to fit it, but to be an instrument. God knew me before the foundation of the earth. As I see Christ thirst today, and I see woundedness today, I have the grace to help another person, to have that love flow through me. I get to see miracles in the moms I meet through the Sisters!

What would you say to people who are really going through a difficult time, when everything seems really dark?

Invite God in. Invite God into your fear. You’ll be surprised. Love will show up. It is frustrating to see someone suffer. But now I look at our Mother at the foot of the cross, and I see it through her eyes. I see beauty in the suffering. It’s not necessarily all bad.

I woke up today — that’s grace right there. I went to bring the Blessed Mother some beautiful daffodils. The doors are locked at the Church, but there is a statue outside. She’s got her arms out, and she’s squashing the devil’s head. There’s a weathered crucifix carved in wood, and you can see Him thirsting. And then I saw a rock in the grass, broken like a cornerstone, and I picked it up. Jesus is the rock. God is everywhere. He’s everywhere. That precious Presence! A rock — to some people that’s stupid, but it’s the simple joys that get us through.

Hope lives! Christ has freed me. I’m not trying to get drunk today. Do you know what a miracle that is? That’s the truth. The truth that sets me free is the love that came from the Cross, that still speaks to me 2000 years later — to me. There’s no more shame and guilt. It’s all glory.



What does it mean to say, “Mary, be with me?”

*As Mary carried Jesus close to her heart
and protected Him when He was young ...
Mary wants to carry and protect me, too.*

*As Mary asked Jesus to turn water into
wine at the wedding of Cana ...
Mary asks Jesus to hear my prayers, too.*

*As Mary stood at the foot of the cross
and shared in His suffering ...
Mary stays close to me and helps
me carry my crosses, too.*

Mary be with me.

MAGNIFICAT WITH MARY PRAYER

By Sr. Elizabeth Ann, SV

*Mary, with your consent to become the Mother of God, torrents of grace
poured forth upon the earth, opening up for me a path to follow.*

*In times of loneliness,
Mary, be with me.
In times of turmoil and uncertainty,
Mary, be with me.
In times of grief, loss, or illness,
Mary, be with me.
In times of sadness or depression,
Mary, be with me.
In times of lost plans
and broken promises,
Mary, be with me.
When I am anxious about
the welfare of my family,
Mary, be with me.
When a job or financial stress
weighs heavily on my heart,
Mary, be with me.
When I am discouraged
by the weight of my sins,
Mary, be with me.
When I am tempted,
Mary, be with me.
When I am afraid,
Mary, be with me.
When the Lord calls me to
greater kindness and love,
Mary, be with me.
When the Lord calls me
to greater forgiveness,
Mary, be with me.
When the Lord calls me
to greater purity,
Mary, be with me.*

*On the wings of your Fiat, Mary,
I proclaim mine. Together we
sing a Magnificat of praise:*

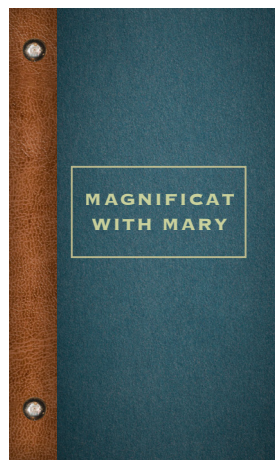
*For all the blessings in my life,
I praise You, Jesus.
For the gift of today,
I praise You, Jesus.
For the gift of loved ones,
I praise You, Jesus.
For the gift of my life,
I praise You, Jesus.
For creating me with a
special purpose and plan,
I praise You, Jesus.
For never giving up on me,
I praise You, Jesus.
For Your infinite love,
I praise You, Jesus.*

*For never leaving me,
I praise You, Jesus.
For your inexhaustible mercy,
I praise You, Jesus.
For laying down Your life for me,
I praise You, Jesus.
For Your presence in the Eucharist,
I praise You, Jesus.*

*For the greater good You will bring
out of everything, especially–*

*In moments when I feel helpless
and vulnerable,
I praise You, Jesus.
In the midst of uncertainty,
I praise You, Jesus.
In the midst of humiliation,
I praise You, Jesus.
In the midst of difficulty,
I praise You, Jesus.
In the midst of what
appears as failure,
I praise You, Jesus.
For sending Your Mother
to me in both joyful and
sorrowful moments,
I praise You, Jesus.*

*With Mary I sing:
**The Almighty has done
great things for me, and
holy is His Name. Amen.***



Magnificat with Mary
orders.sistersoflife.org

STAYING ANCHORED DURING DIFFICULT TIMES

By Sr. Fidelity Grace, SV

*We asked our Sisters what they cling to in times of
trouble and uncertainty. Here are their thoughts:*

1 I try to have no expectations,
other than that the Lord is faithful and
at work. I echo Charles de Foucauld’s
prayer: “Father, I abandon myself into
Your hands; do with me what You will.
Whatever You may do, I thank You ...
Let only Your will be done in me.”

- Sr. John Mary, SV



2 Immersing
myself in beauty – in
nature, art, or music
– unleashes peace,
unveils wonder, and
anchors me in truth,
goodness, and love.

- Sr. Josephine Rose, SV



3 Praying my daily examen (reflecting over your day
with Jesus) is like a scavenger hunt for God’s love and
makes me more attentive to the reality of His presence
and promptings throughout my day. And having Scrip-
ture verses like 1 Peter 5:7 and Psalm 62:8 at my finger-
tips helps redirect my heart and thoughts amidst chaos
and confusion. *- Sr. Cecilia Rose, SV*



5 Especially in
moments of being
overwhelmed and not
knowing how to pray,
it is a great comfort
simply to be with
the Blessed Mother.
I allow her to hold me,
to comfort me, and I
take refuge in her love,
ultimately knowing
that she will take me
to her Son.

- Sr. Talitha Guadalupe, SV



4 When I feel overwhelmed, sad,
afraid, or alone, it may not be the real-
ity, but it is my real experience. I find
strength when I name what is happen-
ing in me and bring it to Jesus in the
Eucharist. There I am immersed in the
unchanging truth that I am seen, held,
known, and loved by God.

- Sr. Claudia Marie, SV



THE TRUTH OF HIS MERCY

By Sr. Mary Margaret Hope, SV

*An interview with Veronica**

Can you share a little of your story?

Although I was raised Catholic, as a young woman I abandoned my relationship with Jesus and the Church. If I had ever known how precious I was to God, I replaced that truth with the lie that I was unlovable, a failure, and not worth anyone's respect. I became so comfortable with and committed to this lie that it damaged all my relationships.

My first pregnancy occurred when I was eighteen, and rather than choose abortion, I chose to place my daughter for adoption, which was a very positive experience. But despite never having regretted that decision for a moment, my first pregnancy did not change how I saw myself — as being unworthy of love.

What was your experience of discerning adoption?

Other people supported my adoption decision, but no one suggested that I could actually be a mother. I briefly and secretly flirted with the idea of raising my daughter myself, but those deep-down lies prevailed: I would fail at being a mother, and keeping my child would only bring burden and sorrow to my family. So I settled on a further lie: that the baby wasn't really mine. I essentially treated myself as a surrogate.

**Name changed for anonymity.*

The truth is that from the moment I conceived, I was a mother, and the choice to continue the pregnancy and to place my daughter with a loving Catholic family were the decisions of a good and loving mother. I know God guided me in what was ultimately the right decision for my child, but I only learned the truth about myself much later, the hard way, after I had also suffered an abortion.

What led you to that decision?

When another, empty, somewhat abusive relationship resulted in my second pregnancy, I was very vulnerable to the father's pressure to abort. I was flooded with the shame of having "failed" again by becoming pregnant a second time. Unlike many women, I was fully aware that the "norms" of the culture — sex without consequence, that the unborn are not persons, etc. — were in fact lies. But I was ten years further down the road away from God and the Church, and so, encouraged by people at my graduate school, I simply turned a blind eye to the truth.

How did this affect you?

For the next twelve years, I would periodically confess my abortion, but I could never accept or feel forgiveness. There was no getting away from the fact that I had taken the life of my child. I couldn't blame someone else for pulling the wool over my eyes; I knew what I was doing.

To say it was a difficult truth to live with is a severe understatement. All I could do was try not to dwell on it. But the abortion made any inkling of self-worth, of believing that I was a good person worthy of marriage or motherhood, seem permanently out of reach. But little did I know what God had in store for me!

How did you come to healing after your abortion?

A few years after my abortion, I met the man who would become my husband, and at the same time I started to hear the Lord calling me back to the Church. I again went to confession and began to live my faith in earnest. We married a few years later, but I still clung to the lies about myself. My struggles with self-worth, especially as a mother, began to affect the other children who came along. I decided to go on a Day of Prayer and Healing with the Sisters of Life, and I was strengthened in the belief that God forgets our sins. Yet, I would still occasionally feel an overwhelming urge to re-confess my abortion.

What helped you to accept the reality that you were forgiven?

During one examination of conscience, I began to feel very guilty for not accepting the truth that God had forgiven me. So, this time I didn't confess my abortion — I confessed

the "sin" of not accepting forgiveness. The priest shook his head at me. He explained that in repeatedly confessing my abortion, I was essentially picking at the wound left by my sin, instead of letting Jesus heal it. He told me that after His Resurrection, Jesus identified Himself to the disciples through His wounds, and it was through my wounds that I came to know Jesus. He assured me that Jesus knew by my tears that I loved Him, and He wanted to help me heal. My wounds, like Jesus', will always be there, but once healed they can become a sign of His love and mercy. So, I was finally able to accept the truth that I had been forgiven and set free!

What helps you to live in the truth of God's infinite mercy?

I remind myself every day of His love for me. When I see the Eucharist raised at Mass, I am reminded that He gave His flesh for my soul; when the chalice is raised, I remember that it holds the Blood that washed away my sins. When I see my other kids, my husband, my home, and even the frustrations of everyday life, I try to remember that all these things are manifestations of His incredible mercy toward me.

And if that is not enough, I recently discovered the simple prayer of a French nun, Mother Yvonne-Aimee de Jesus: "Jesus, King of love, I place all my trust in Your merciful goodness." I pray that prayer now many times throughout the day. It reminds me that God loves me, and I am forgiven.

What would you say to those who are struggling to embrace God's truth and mercy in their lives?

T.S. Eliot once wrote, "Humankind cannot bear very much reality." This is true, however, only when we lose our connection to the ultimate reality that is Jesus Christ. The lies about abortion are particularly grievous, but at bottom they are not unlike the unreality we so often embrace in other areas of our lives. We all live with lies about ourselves, about others, or about our relationships. Those lies are indications that we need to be strengthened by the truth of God's deep, unending love for each of us. We all need God's love and mercy to find the truth.

God's mercy can bring good out of everything, even abortion. None of us is defined by what we do. When we accept how God sees us, we really do have to stop seeing ourselves in a narrow way. Accepting mercy means accepting that I am worthy of that mercy in God's eyes. While I cannot give my life to bring my child back, He can. He gave His life, He has my child with Him in heaven, and He wants me to be with Him there, too ... because He loves me.

To contact us: sistersoflife.org/healing-after-abortion/

This year marks the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of two men who knew and followed the truth in freedom: St. John Paul II and our founder, John Cardinal O’Connor. These two great men truly lived what St. Paul describes as “the glorious freedom of the children of God” (Rom 8:21).

John Cardinal O’Connor
(1920-2000)

Seeing the Image of God in You

In 1984, John O’Connor, a man who had dreamed of opening a home for children with disabilities and living as a simple parish priest, found himself suddenly thrust onto the most prominent pulpit in America as the Archbishop of New York. With courage and humor, this faithful priest of Jesus took up the task and quickly became known for his no-holds-barred proclamation of the truth. Cardinal O’Connor was especially strong in his preaching on the dignity of the human person and the suffering of abortion. He saw in every person the truth of the image of God, and that truth set him free to love without limits. He would tell people, “I see you as sacred persons to be loved, persons of priceless dignity and worth.” When the AIDS crisis hit New York City in the 1980’s, Cardinal O’Connor was responsible for opening up a unit in St. Clare’s hospital for the care of AIDS patients. He also personally visited more than 1,000 persons with AIDS. Not only would he talk with the patients, he washed their bedsores and emptied their bedpans. At a time when many were afraid, he reached out in compassion and love. Yet, he also had the courage to continue to emphasize the Church’s teachings on human life and love, even when this met with controversy and opposition. He loved both with hard words and with the most tender of gestures. He knew and desired the true good of others, and he fought for that good with everything he had.

“He could have arranged it that He wouldn’t have needed the likes of me to go to the bedside of persons with AIDS and wash their sores and empty their bedpans. But He didn’t do that. In His great love and mercy, He designed the world so that He would need us. We would have to be His arms, His legs, His eyes in this world. We would have to be His beating heart in this world, beating with love, compassion, tenderness, gentleness, and mercy for others. We would have to be His tongue, His lips, speaking His truth. What a magnificent concept.” - John Cardinal O’Connor



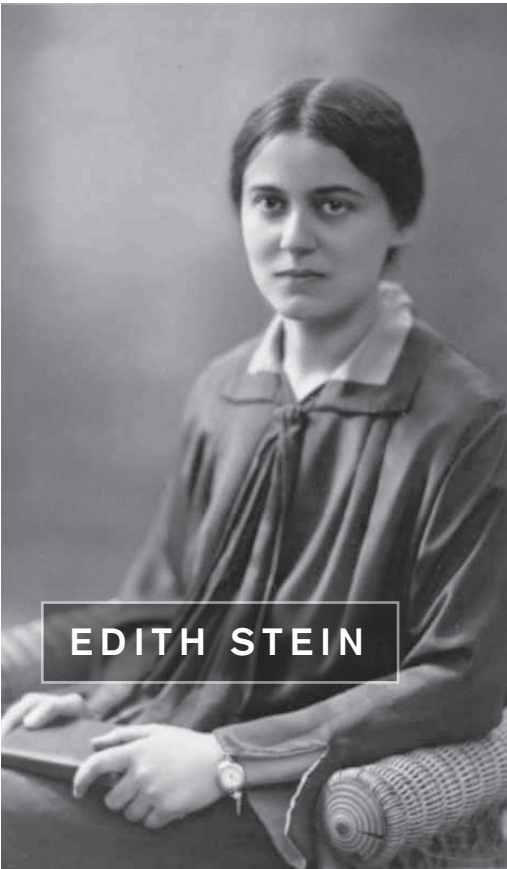
“Remember that you are never alone, Christ is with you on your journey every day of your lives! He has called you and chosen you to live in the freedom of the children of God. Turn to Him in prayer and in love. Ask Him to grant you the courage and strength to live in this freedom always. Walk with Him who is ‘the Way, the Truth, and the Life.’”

-St. John Paul II

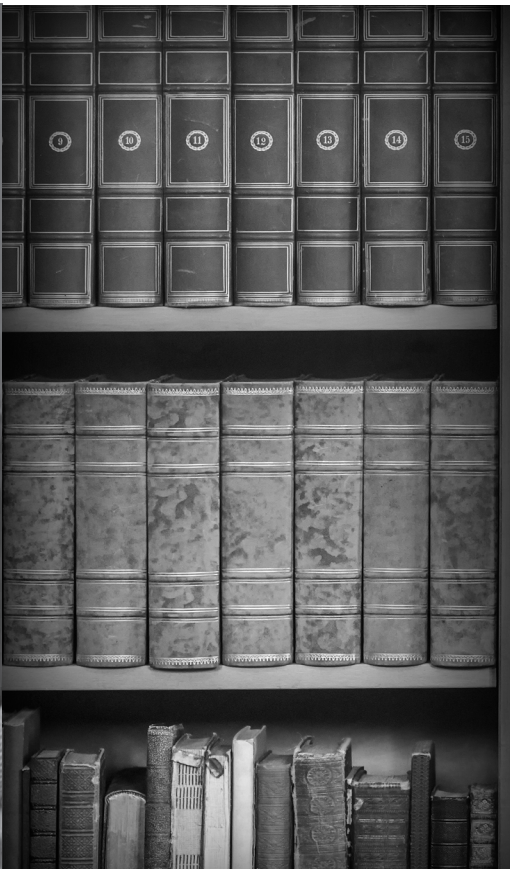
St. John Paul II (1920-2005)
Christ Reveals Man to Himself

St. John Paul II was once asked if he could only keep one verse from the entire Bible, what it would be. Without hesitation he responded, “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (Jn 8:32). This verse permeated his life. Growing up in Poland, he experienced the horrors of Nazism as a young man. Throughout those dark years, he came to know who he was by clinging to Christ as the Truth. His heart deeply formed through prayer, study, and a powerful immersion in culture [through his participation in an underground theater company], he became a bright light for the world. As pope, he would preach about the human person with incredible clarity. He would emphasize again and again, “Christ reveals man to himself.” In 1979, on the vigil of Pentecost, Pope John Paul II preached in Victory Square in Warsaw, Poland under the

watchful and hostile surveillance of the Communist Party. He spoke boldly to his people of their need for God, their need to reclaim Christ in their land. He prayed, “I cry on the vigil of Pentecost: Let Your Spirit descend. Let Your Spirit descend and renew the face of the earth, the face of this land.” The crowd then spontaneously erupted in a cry of the heart: “We want God! We want God!” The chant continued for 14 minutes. Many historians credit this moment as the beginning of the end of the Soviet Union. John Paul II had spoken the truth to the Polish people and, in the midst of their oppression, he had unleashed a freedom in them, the freedom of knowing Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life they so desired.



EDITH STEIN



ST. TERESA BENEDICTA OF THE CROSS / Edith Stein
The Discovery: Truth is a Person

By Sr. Charity, SV

“Help yourself to the library.” For any young woman possessing curiosity and intellect, these words would be attractive, but for Edith Stein they proved to be life-changing. Born in Germany in 1891, Edith was raised in a wealthy Jewish family. Despite her religious upbringing, by the age of 14 she said she “had consciously and deliberately stopped praying.” Later, she pursued a university degree in philosophy and declared herself an atheist. Yet, she was restless, and the search for truth dominated her life. This search reached its height one pivotal day when, vacationing at her friends’ farmhouse, she was invited to peruse their shelves and picked up *The Life of St. Teresa of Avila*. The autobiographical text details the work of Jesus in the life of St. Teresa. Edith stayed up all night, reading it cover-to-cover. When she finished, she closed the book and simply said, “This is the truth.” That very morning, she bought a Catholic catechism and a missal and began to study them. A few days later she went to a Catholic Church and asked to be baptized. She used her intellect to lecture and write on the Catholic faith, particularly on the vocation of women and the philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas. In 1933, she became a Carmelite nun and eventually gave her life as a martyr in Auschwitz, for her people and for God. St. John Paul II canonized her in 1998, saying of her, “For a long time Edith Stein was a seeker. Her mind never tired of searching, and her heart always yearned for hope. She traveled the arduous path of philosophy with passionate enthusiasm. Eventually she was rewarded: she seized the truth. Or better, she was seized by it. Then she discovered that truth had a name: Jesus Christ.” Edith herself later reflected on her life saying, “My search for truth was a constant prayer.” She discovered that she had not been seeking something but Someone. She found in Jesus the answer to all of her deepest questions and the meaning of her life.

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