

My Truth, Your Truth?

by Sebastian R Fama

Living your own truth entails living by your own values. Depending on the individual, this can range from the benign to the extreme. After all, if they are your values, they can pretty much be anything. The dictionary defines the word truth as, "Conformity to fact or actuality." Saying there is a lion in my garage is either true or false. If there is one in there, the statement is true. If there is not, the statement is false. There is no room here for the concept of "my truth, your truth." And that is because truth is about what is, not what you prefer.

Calling something true that is false will not change the negative consequences that may ensue. Truth is objective and it has nothing to do with your preferences or feelings. A thief feels justified in stealing someone else's possessions. The victims of his crime do not usually proclaim that the thief was just living his truth. As Anthony Esolen points out: "Men discover truth, they do not invent it."

I believe that in some cases, raising one's preferences to the level of truth is an attempt to legitimize questionable acts or opinions. It is another way of saying: "I will do as I please" or "I will not be accountable for my actions." This way of thinking has its roots in moral relativism. The idea that there are no moral absolutes. As many have noted, that statement is itself a moral absolute and thus cancels itself out. And of course, the question must be asked, what moral relativist would tell his small children to forget the rules and live your own truth?

Ignoring the actual truth and being guided by our personal preferences, causes us to become self-absorbed. As pope Leo XIII points out, for no one will "be inclined to do right who has been accustomed to make self-love the sole rule of what he should do or avoid doing" (*On the Right Ordering of Christian Life* 171 [1888]).

Living "your truth" does not always end well. As the Scriptures tell us: "There is a way which seems right to a man, but the end is death" (Proverbs 14:12). Jesus said: "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32). Once again, as Anthony Esolen notes: "True liberty comes from Christ and his Church, because liberty is the unimpeded capacity to attain to that perfection for which we were made, union with God" (*Reclaiming Catholic Social teaching*, page 129).

Jesus is the truth. And thus, all things that are true flow from the mind of God and are consistent with Christian principles but not necessarily with what is popular in society. As we are warned by the apostle Paul: "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:25).