

You know those Arctic/Antarctic adventure movies? Almost invariably they'll have a scene or two in which one of the characters falls into a snowed-over crevasse. So, the surface upon which he thought to be securely standing turned out to be deceptive. Not secure at all.

It was interesting watching last week the Kyle Rittenhouse case. Mr. Rittenhouse shot a man in what he—and his supporters—claim was self-defense, and in what his detractors claim was premeditated murder.

As is so common these days, two sides were aligned against one another very vocally and often violently, but one can't help but wonder how many really investigated facts of the case except those selectively emphasized in media and on social media sites. Inconvenient facts harmful to respective positions are often omitted to advance agendas, and so the truth is "snowed over." The thing is: a fall into the crevasse of half-truths is deep, and often deadly.

Both "sides" likely made judgments on very limited facts, and perhaps sans facts at all if the stance was purely political. A good mental exercise in determining one's own bias is to imagine if the persons were reversed; would you still be on the same side? If not, maybe it's time for a little self-examination. How much do you really understand, or are you just standing in one of the readily available echo chambers of our day?

Is it really so odious to simply state of some subject: "I am not able to make an informed judgment on that issue right now?" We like to elevate ourselves in the eyes of others by demonstrating our "brilliance" and "savvy," especially in politically charged issues, not unlike that TV commercial of the person lending "aid" to the fallen waitress: "I got this; I watch lots of medical dramas on TV!" But often we are simply regurgitating some spoon-fed facts ... and fictions, often from conspiracy theorists (one of my favorite recent ones sent to me recently: (there are microscopic microchips in COVID vaccines so that the government can track all our movements). Or, many are blindly loyal; for example, those who vote for certain parties because "Our family has always voted for them" rather than examining histories and positions of candidates.

This came to mind with the reading of the Catholic Mass Gospel this weekend, in which Pontius Pilate asks Jesus "Are you the King of the Jews?," to which Jesus responds: "Do you say this on your own, or have others told you about me?" (John 18:33-34). In other words, did you come to this conclusion on your own by investigating facts, or did you just listen to others' (biased) opinions? The religious leaders who handed Him over railroaded Him to be an insurrectionist. His disciples, on the other hand, expected Him to be a king to bring back the earthly golden age and reign of kings David and Solomon.

Both were wrong; something infinitely greater was (is) in the works. Both had rested on their presuppositions without listening to Christ fully ("Do you still not understand?," Jesus said to them).

Now, this Sunday (Nov. 21) Catholics celebrated the feast of Christ the King—a celebration of an event yet to occur but anticipated with much hope and eagerness: the second coming of Jesus Christ and its attendant fulfillment of all promises of God to humanity, most especially the eternal—and eternally blissful—existence for those who have followed the will of God to the best of their understanding and ability. And, as one would expect from the Creator of all, Jesus states that those attaining that eternal life "...will come from east and west, and from north and south, and sit at the table in the kingdom of God," (Luke 13:29)—inclusive from ALL peoples—echoed in the book of Revelation: "... behold, a great multitude...from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne [of God] and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches [the sign of victory] in their hands..." (Revelation 7:9). And of Jesus: "...thou wast slain and by thy blood didst ransom men for God from every tribe and tongue and people and nation..." (Revelation 5:9).

So, if one claims to be Christian, how would he dare despise anyone whom Jesus loved so much that He suffered and died for that person's salvation and eternal life, hmmm? We Christians believe these words to be part of the Word of God, and thus be as true as true can get. And while the mechanics of this Second Coming are not clear, we believe the end result a foregone conclusion. A joyous, inevitable event.

One thing about making informed decisions: we cannot fear truth ... cannot pick and choose facts we want to accept and come to correct judgments and decisions. As Jesus tells us in another place: "The truth will set you free" (John 8:32)—a phrase emblazoned on innumerable university buildings, legislatures and courthouses, and thus without truth we descend to mental slavery to controlling masters. To fear facts is to fear truth. We do well to remember: "... it was we who strayed from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness did not shine on us...We took our fill of the paths of lawlessness and destruction...but the way of the Lord we have not known." (Wisdom 5:6-7), and: "...the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth." (Romans 1:18)

Let us avoid the snow-covered crevasses of ignorance and prejudice. We never grasp all of the facts, or always make correct judgments; this is simply our human fallibility. But that does not excuse us from making sincere efforts to do so. And Christian confidence is founded in the facts of history manifested even in the present, and testimony of reliable witnesses; these data should not be lightly disregarded by anyone, just as scientists do not lightly disregard any experimental result at the risk of disregarding truth. And the reality and truth of Jesus—and thus His promises to humanity—is reflected in His retort to Pilate: "For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth." (John 18:36)

*Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Corinthians 5:8)*