

Maronite Monks of Adoration

Most Holy Trinity Monastery ❖ Petersham MA 01366-9725

Epiphany: An Encounter with the Truth.

During the Passion, in a moment of supreme irony, Pontius Pilate cynically asked our Lord “What is truth?” Was he even looking at Him when he asked this? They were standing in the same room. So close and yet, as they say, so far. We know that Jesus, as God and Eternal Word of God, was Creator of all. God knew Pilate from all eternity. Everything Pilate ever sensed or apprehended, everything he saw, felt, heard or understood only existed, and was knowable, by the awesome, creative power of God’s Truth. “What is truth?” Pilate asked, while the Person behind every truth Pilate had ever experienced or known was standing before him, allowing Himself to be judged. This close to Jesus, how far was Pilate from recasting his question:

“*Who* is truth” or
“Who is *Truth*?”

This question, “Who is Truth?” is one that has huge importance for our lives. In fact, the Holy Catholic Church considers it so vitally important that she devotes a day each year, January 6th, to helping us come to terms with it. We

ourselves will have a chance to ask that question, and have the answer revealed to us at Divine Liturgy on the Epiphany of Our Lord.

But why ask “Who is Truth?” instead of “What is truth?” as Pilate did?

Well, if we think about it, isn’t reality (and the Truth behind it), more

like a person than a thing, more a *who*

than a *what*? Many

people have understood a book,

or known how to repair an

engine or bake a cake —

even operate on a brain!

But who can say they completely

know or understand a

person, even one close to them? Isn’t

this like reality? To the Truth, and to the

human person, there are decided elements of mystery,

and dimensions we never finish exploring. This is true even of those

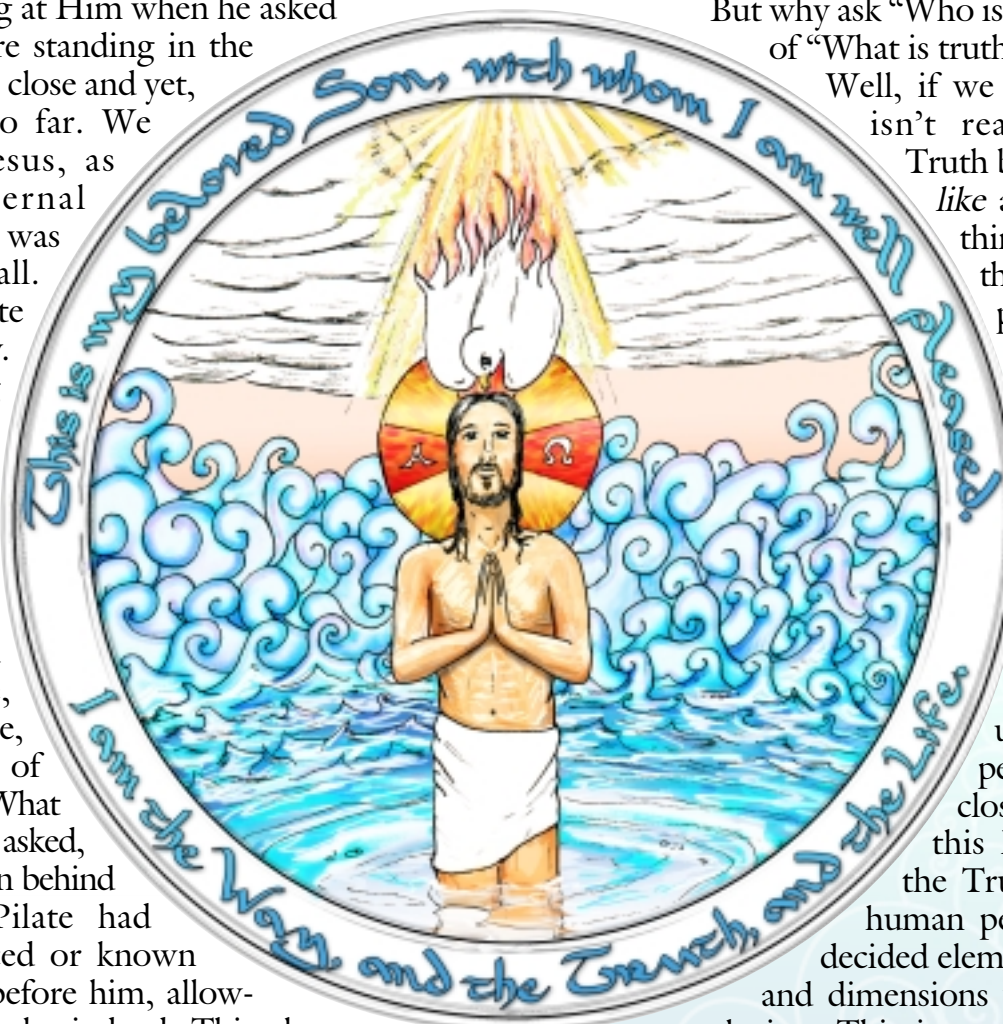
persons we know best and most closely over the longest period of

time. If that is the case with a human person, how much

more so will a divine person never cease to amaze us!

Speaking of the delights of knowing the Truth in heaven, St. Augustine wrote to the effect that the ultimate


reality is not seen by the human eye for it is not



May your Holy Spirit now hover over us, fill us with the brightness of your knowledge, and remove the darkness of ignorance that overshadows us. We will glorify you, O Christ, your Father and your Holy Spirit, now and forever.

(From the Opening Prayer, Orobono of the Epiphany)

Illustration: Maronite Monks



color, nor heard by the human ear for it is not sound, nor has it so much as entered the human heart because, rather, the human heart must enter it! Truth is so vast, so mysterious that we cannot possess it, as we can a pen, for example. Because Truth is infinite and not a *what*, but a *who*—not an object, but a person—we must allow Him to reveal Himself to us, somewhat as human persons do.

We live, however, in an age of suspicion. We barely trust each other enough to share information. Even truth is suspect, not to mention *the* Truth. Our society applauds those who are on a *search* or a *journey*, but looks with a jaundiced eye, to say the least, on those who claim to have *found*... the Truth! Isn't it all just opinions anyway, all "historically conditioned," just the way we were raised? To each one claiming to know something the rejoinder is "Who are you to say?" What could be more telling of our indifference to the truth than "Whatever!"—the standard reply to every answer—so popular among the young! We seem to have the fear that even the most seemingly solid facts will break up, under the brunt of enough examination, into unverifiable fragments. Media manipulation and infamous lies issuing from high places only deepen the mistrust. The skepticism is everywhere.

One of the most famous modern skeptics was the 19th century German, Friederich Nietzsche whom our Holy Father, John Paul II has called one of the Masters of Suspicion. Nietzsche looked with deep distrust at any attempt to understand Truth systematically, and on any claims to have found it. He asked "What if truth was a woman?" What if unchanging Truth (God) was an illusion, behind which the reality was something more like a fickle, human person—limited, subjective and changeable? Many people today seem to think so. Don't we all live in our little worlds, creating our own realities? If that is so then, as Nietzsche also said, "God is dead." This line of thinking has tragic consequences for, "without the Creator, the creature disappears." Without access to the Truth, many today live their lives in an agonizing, frustrated search for meaning.

But what if Truth was not a woman but *born* of a woman? What if the Truth has come so close to humanity that we can touch Him? We can grant

Nietzsche that the Truth cannot be completely comprehended by the human mind, any more than the Atlantic could be contained in a dixie cup! Likewise, Truth is more like a person than a thing, and cannot be reduced entirely to a system, or set of propositions. But what if Truth is a mysterious, divine Person—Christ—who chooses to reveal Himself to us? Then we could know Him *truly*, if not completely. Then "Christ...in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and his love, [would make] man fully manifest to himself and [bring] to light his exalted vocation (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1701). God, as Truth, gives intelligibility to all things with their being. That is, He both makes them to *be*, and to be *understandable*. This is especially true of beings created in His image and likeness, beings with an intellect, us—human beings. Jesus, the God-man, as Truth and as son of Mary, can enlighten us both about Himself and the mysteries of our own selves. Praise be to God always!

How eager, therefore, we should be to learn of Jesus in His self-revelation to us: The Epiphany of Our Lord. The Sedro for the Qorbono of the Epiphany says:

We intercede with you, Lord Jesus Christ, for you are the great abyss filled with unspeakable mysteries, and you have enlightened all creation with the bright and blessed rays of your divinity. You are God who was seen in the flesh, and we of the flesh were transformed by the gifts of the Spirit.

Let us not make the mistake of Pilate, asking "What is truth?" Let us ask "Who is Truth?"

Let us ask the Magi—to whom they brought gifts? John the Baptist—of whom did he feel unworthy to baptize? Holy Moses and Elijah—who summoned them to Tabor and illuminated them? Peter, James, and John—before whom did they prostrate themselves in amazement at that Transfiguration? The Jewish soldiers at Gethsemane—before whom did they fall on their faces senseless at the words "I am?" Let us ask God the Father who thundered out "This is my beloved Son!" Let us ask God the Word, Jesus Our Lord, who said:

"I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."

