



IMMACULATE HEART^{OF}MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

A LETTER FROM THE PASTOR APRIL 15, 2018

Dear friends in the Risen Lord,

I've been following the news about Facebook and its most recent data breach with detached bemusement. As I've shared with you in the past, I cancelled my Facebook account back in 2016, not because I was prescient about its security weaknesses, but because I was heartbroken, during the election season, to read so many posts—from people I otherwise love and respect—that were nothing short of calumny and detraction.

Those are sins we don't talk about very often these days. To tell an untruth about another person is calumny. To reveal the hidden fault or sin of another without sufficient cause, so that the person's reputation or good name is seriously damaged, is the sin of detraction.

As you remember from your catechism, sins against justice require restitution. A person who has lied about another can sometimes right the wrong by retracting the lie and stating the truth. With detraction the situation is more difficult, since it is not a matter of lying but of revealing the hidden sins or faults of another that should not be revealed in these circumstances.

There is the famous story of a priest (often said to be St. Philip Neri) who, for a penance, told the town gossip to go to the bell tower and scatter to the wind the feathers from a pillow. When she returned he told her to then gather up all the feathers and put them back into the pillow. That object lesson about the impossibility of complete restitution in the case of calumny and detraction seems downright quaint in this age of digital media. A calumnious or detracting tweet or post can be viewed by thousands or even millions of followers.

It goes without saying that awful examples of calumny and detraction are in the news every day. Let's all rededicate ourselves to setting a better example—a Christ-like example—for one another in the Body of Christ—and especially for our young, who are learning from everything we say and do.

Your brother in Christ's word and work,