

Sometimes it seems easier to tell a lie. Kids know this better than adults. When you do something wrong, you get in trouble, unless nobody finds out. That's where a lie comes in handy. The truth causes trouble and a lie avoids trouble – unless, of course, somebody finds out that you lied. Then you're in big trouble – not just for doing something wrong but for lying about it.

The scandal rocking the Catholic Church is not just about sex. It's also about truth. Church leaders have known the truth and covered it up, like Watergate. It can be hard to hear the truth, but once we hear it we can deal with it. It is harder to find out somebody we trusted kept the truth from us. Catholics are disappointed in our leaders.

The media have not been completely truthful either. When the American cardinals returned from Rome last week they were surprised at reports saying they had backed away from zero tolerance policies. The confusion came from a statement that the cardinals would take steps against child abusers who were notorious, serial and predatory. It sounded like they were not going after everybody. But they were; the cardinals strengthened the punishment for those extreme cases.

In the priesthood, there is a difference between resignation and laicization. If a priest resigns, he can enter a different profession, but he remains a priest unless he goes through a process called laicization. He usually starts it. A bishop may fire a priest who is not doing his job, but it is difficult in church law for a bishop to force the laicization of a priest. The cardinals agreed on zero tolerance – any priest who abuses any minor would be out of a job. That part was fairly easy. In addition to that, they will now be able to force the laicization of offenders who are notorious, serial and predatory. The media didn't get that distinction and they are tainting unfairly the work of the cardinals. Sometimes the media do not tell the truth.

At the Last Supper, Jesus promised his disciples that he would send the Advocate, or the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, to be with them always. He said the world cannot accept the Spirit of truth because it neither sees nor knows the Advocate.

Kids aren't the only ones who lie. Adults do it too. When we get into trouble, we are tempted to think the only way out is around the truth. There is another way, through the truth. At our confirmation we were anointed with the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of right judgment and courage, the Spirit of knowledge and reverence, and the Spirit of wonder and awe in God's presence. Lies cannot help us, but the Spirit of truth will.