

SHOCKING SPEECH

In a shocking speech that reverberated across the world, Pope Francis made this declaration in the third Vatican council.

“Through humility, soul searching, and prayerful contemplation we have gained a new understanding of certain dogmas. The church no longer believes in a literal hell where people suffer.

“This doctrine, the Pope said “is incompatible with the infinite love of God. God is not a judge but a friend and a lover of humanity. God seeks not to condemn but only to embrace. Like the fable of Adam and Eve, we see hell as a literary device. Hell is merely a metaphor for the isolated soul, which like all souls ultimately will be united in love with God.”

“All religions are true, because they are true in the hearts of all those who believe in them. What other kind of truth is there? In the past, the church has been harsh on those it deemed morally wrong or sinful. Today, we no longer judge. Like a loving father, we never condemn our children. Our church is big enough for heterosexuals and homosexuals, for the pro-life and the pro-choice! For conservatives and liberals, even communists are welcome and have joined us. We all love and worship the same God.”

Can you believe the Pope really said that? Well don't. Because He didn't!

This is an internet hoax written by Erik Thorson on his blog The Diversity Chronicle. He said it was satirical. And written for his own amusement! However, many well-meaning folks have forwarded this story, posted it on facebook, and plastered it all over social media.

While the Pope may be intent on reforming the Catholic church, hold positions with which I disagree, or embrace a Theology contrary to my understanding of the Bible, I need to be fair. Honest. And accurate.

The same is true for President Obama. I've had many emails attributing positions, practices and quotations to Mr. Obama that are simply false.

Why are folks so quick to forward such information? Especially when it seems on the surface to be unbelievable? Usually, because it reinforces their dislike of the person or their disagreement with their policies, practices, politics or religion.

In an age of instant communication where ideas and articles can be posted, forwarded or tweeted in a nano-second, Christians would do well to follow these Biblical admonitions.

“Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil... Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.... speak evil of no one... be gentle, and show perfect courtesy toward all people...Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor...” (I Thess 5:21-22; Rom 12:17; Titus 3:2 Eph 4:25)

Spreading false information, either knowing or innocently, undermines our credibility, decreases our godly influence and diminishes our Christian testimony. We are called to a higher standard than those in the world who peddle gossip, utter innuendoes, and denigrate their opponents.

By the way, I understand that we've all been fooled at some time by a hoax, internet scam or urban legend. It happens. I'm simply encouraging us all to do a better job at checking out the facts and the reliability of our sources before we hit the send or share button.

So, the next time you're tempted to share the latest unbelievable scandal or incredible story, you might ask, "Is it true?" "Is it fair?" "Is it factual?"

–Ken Weliever, The Preacherman Blog

If you look for truth, you may find comfort in the end; if you look for comfort you will not get either comfort or truth only soft soap and wishful thinking to begin, and in the end, despair.

C. S. Lewis