

Who am I to Judge? Politics and the Problem of Moral Relativism¹

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“Who am I to judge?”

FROM THE MOMENT POPE FRANCIS uttered this line in a press conference during the return flight from a visit to Brazil in 2013, the media—and, in consequence, many people—have taken it as a kind of summary of Francis’s whole approach to Christianity. As *The New Yorker* recently put it, it has become a “totemic question,” the “mythic line” of his pontificate. That description is quite apt, for there are a lot of myths floating around about what the Pope was saying.

Pope Francis and Thomas Aquinas on Judging Others

In fact, the words that most people have read or heard from the Pope’s statement are incomplete and taken out of context: the Pope was expressly addressing the case of a person honestly trying to live according to the teachings of the Church; he was not calling into question that teaching. Nor has it mattered for the media or most people that the Vatican, and even Pope Francis himself, have repeatedly explained that he was only attempting to articulate what is found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Indeed, generations of Catholics have long taught the same lesson about judging persons, although formulated in different words: “Love the sinner, and condemn the sin.” Here’s how the Holy Father

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explained this in his new book, *The Name of God Is Mercy*: “The Church *condemns* sin because it has to relay the *truth*, ‘This is a sin.’ But at the same time it embraces the sinner who *recognizes* himself as such, it welcomes him, it speaks to him of the infinite mercy of God” (50). These two elements are intrinsically connected: the Church must speak the truth about sin precisely *out of love for sinners*: Christ does not want them to remain trapped in their sins, since sin leads to death. Rather, Christ loves sinners and offers them the grace of repentance and forgiveness, so that, by grace, they can escape the slavery of sin and enter into life in the truth.

St. Thomas Aquinas is a good guide when it comes to the dynamic of speaking the truth without rash judgment. Aquinas teaches that, as human beings, we can only judge what we see—an exterior action, which may be a sin—but we should not presume to judge what we cannot see, the “interior movements of the heart” of our neighbor.² “Man sees what appears, but the Lord beholds the heart” (1 Kgs 16:7). “For to God alone is reserved the judgment of hidden things, among which especially are counted the thoughts of the heart. . . . And hence, if anyone would presume to judge of these things, it is a rash judgment.”³ Aquinas cautions us that, instead of judging our neighbor’s intentions harshly, we should presume the best of him; we should love him, and we should desire his good and, ultimately, his repentance and salvation.

Indeed, Aquinas goes even further than this when he speaks about judging persons, because there is a danger of dishonoring our neighbor if, absent clear indications of his intentions, we jump to a rash conclusion about his motives.

It must be said that it is one thing to judge about things, and another to judge about persons. For in making a judgment about things, we can do neither good nor evil to the thing about which we judge. . . . But when we make a judgment about persons, we can indeed do good or evil to the person we judge, because we will honor a person we judge to be good, and will consider a person we judge to be evil to be worthy of

² *Super Rom* 2, lec. 1 (Marietti nos. 174–75); *Super Rom* 5, lec. 6 (Marietti no. 456); *Super 1 Cor* 4, lec. 1 (Marietti nos. 193–96); *Super Matt* 7, lec. 1 (Marietti no. 632).

³ *Super Rom* 14, lec. 1 (Marietti no. 1093): “Deus autem soli sibi reservavit iudicare occulta, quae praecipue sunt cogitationes cordium. . . . Et ideo si quis de his iudicare praesumpserit, est temerarium iudicium.”

contempt. For this reason, we ought to aim at judging a person to be good, unless there is evident proof to the contrary.⁴

He continues: “It may happen that one who interprets doubtful matters for the best is more frequently deceived, but it is better to err frequently by having a good opinion of a bad person, than to err occasionally by having a bad opinion of a good person, because in the latter case an injury is inflicted, but not in the former.”⁵

From these texts, we can draw two important Thomistic distinctions about making judgments. These distinctions are very helpful for explaining the traditional Catholic view about moral truths to our contemporaries, who are often very nervous about saying anything that might seem to be making a judgment about another person and, thus, appearing judgmental. First, when we speak the truth about sinful actions, we are primarily judging *actions*, which we can observe and assess, and not *persons*. To judge a person implies making a judgment about the interior movements of the heart. This is God’s domain, not ours (at least insofar as we are private persons—judges in a criminal case, for example, are a separate matter). The second distinction is closely related to the first, and it is between, on the one hand, the objective goodness or evil of an action or its objective rightness or wrongness and, on the other hand, the subjective moral

⁴ *Summa Theologiae* (ST) II-II, q. 60, a. 4, ad 2: “Ad secundum dicendum quod aliud est iudicare de rebus, et aliud de hominibus. In iudicio enim quo de rebus iudicamus non attenditur bonum vel malum ex parte ipsius rei de qua iudicamus, cui nihil nocet qualitercumque iudicemus de ipsa, sed attenditur ibi solum bonum iudicantis si vere iudicet, vel malum si falso; quia verum est bonum intellectus, falsum autem est malum ipsius, ut dicitur in VI Ethic. Et ideo unusquisque debet niti ad hoc quod de rebus iudicet secundum quod sunt. Sed in iudicio quo iudicamus de hominibus praecipue attenditur bonum et malum ex parte eius de quo iudicatur, qui in hoc ipso honorabilis habetur quod bonus iudicatur, et contemptibilis si iudicetur malus. Et ideo ad hoc potius tendere debemus in tali iudicio quod hominem iudicemus bonum, nisi manifesta ratio in contrarium appareat. Ipsi autem homini iudicanti, falsum iudicium quo bene iudicat de alio non pertinet ad malum intellectus ipsius, sicut nec ad eius perfectionem pertinet secundum se cognoscere veritatem singularium contingentium, sed magis pertinet ad bonum affectum.”

⁵ *Ibid.*, ad 1: “Ad primum ergo dicendum quod potest contingere quod ille qui in meliorem partem interpretatur, frequentius fallitur. Sed melius est quod aliquis frequenter fallatur habens bonam opinionem de aliquo malo homine, quam quod rarius fallatur habens malam opinionem de aliquo bono, quia ex hoc fit iniuria alicui, non autem ex primo.” See also *ibid.*, corp.: “Unless we have evident indications of a person’s wickedness, we ought to deem him good, by interpreting for the best whatever is doubtful about him.”

culpability of the actor. We must maintain that an action is objectively right or wrong, and that it produces something either good or evil, but that sometimes, there may be little or no moral fault on the part of the actor.

The novelist Douglas Adams recounts a rather amusing (and true) anecdote that illustrates this latter distinction very well. He made a mistake about the time that his train was departing, and so he found himself at the train station with time to kill. To pass the time, he bought a newspaper, a cup of coffee, and a packet of cookies and sat down at a table. He writes:

I want you to picture the scene. . . . Here's the table, newspaper, cup of coffee, packet of cookies. There's a guy sitting opposite me, perfectly ordinary-looking guy wearing a business suit, carrying a briefcase. It didn't look like he was going to do anything weird. What he did was this: he suddenly leaned across, picked up the packet of cookies, tore it open, took one out, and ate it. . . .

I did what any red-blooded Englishman would do: I ignored it. And I stared at the newspaper, took a sip of coffee, . . . and thought, *What am I going to do?*

In the end I thought *Nothing for it, I'll just have to go for it*, and I tried very hard not to notice the fact that the packet was already mysteriously opened. I took out a cookie for myself. I thought, *That settled him*. But it hadn't because a moment or two later he did it again. He took another cookie. . . .

We went through the whole packet like this. . . . He took one, I took one, he took one, I took one. Finally, when we got to the end, he stood up and walked away. Well, we exchanged meaningful looks, then he walked away, and I breathed a sigh of relief and sat back.

A moment or two later the train was coming in, so I tossed back the rest of my coffee, stood up, picked up the newspaper, and underneath the newspaper were my cookies.⁶

Objectively, Adams stole the cookies. And I bet that the other man thought that what Adams was doing was especially outrageous: it looked to him for all the world like a brazen, open, intentional act

⁶ Douglas Adams, *The Salmon of Doubt: Hitchhiking the Galaxy One Last Time* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), 150–51.

of theft. But Adams was not guilty of theft, because he did not realize that he was taking the other man's cookies. Of course, in justice, Adams still owes this anonymous man half a packet of cookies—the objective evil is not erased by his subjective error—but we would not say that Adams deserves to be punished for his action, even though it was objectively wrong to do it. In general, when someone is ignorant, through no fault of his own, of the wrong he is committing, his action, while objectively wrong in itself, may not be morally culpable.⁷

The Truth about Moral Relativism

The Appeal of Relativism

These Thomistic reflections about judging have aimed at understanding what Pope Francis said as an expression of a perennial Catholic theme. But now it brings us to another question: Why has this statement, “who am I to judge?” become so totemic, the “mythic line” of the Francis pontificate in the eyes of the world? Why has it had such a resonance in our culture? I think it is in large measure because being judgmental is, for our age, the ultimate unforgivable sin.

Younger generations feel this in a particularly acute way. They have been pickled in a pervasive, public moral relativism for most of their lives: it is preached in the media, inculcated in schools, and above all, enforced on college campuses. It is likely that most teachers in the humanities at the university level have encountered students who pose the objection, “What you're saying is true for you, but not for me.”

For a college teacher, especially in philosophy or theology, this is a serious challenge in teaching undergraduates. It is a challenge on a theoretical level because students assume that all moral claims are relative and that to assert the existence of unchanging and timeless truths is to be bigoted and judgmental. If you do not address this objection, you cannot make any progress on the other important questions you want to talk about. It also presents a serious challenge on the more personal level of the psychology of the students them-

⁷ The Catholic moral tradition would further distinguish between ignorance or error about a fact (I make a mistake about whether these cookies are mine) and about the law itself (I don't know that stealing is wrong). And because they are so basic, the Catholic tradition holds that no one can plead ignorance of the fundamental precepts of the moral law: that acts of murder, adultery, theft, lying, etc., are wrong.

selves because the ethic of being non-judgmental is so close to the hearts of so many of them. One must find a way to articulate a theory of moral truth that they can accept without feeling like they have been put in a vice, forced either to abandon basic principles of reason or to judge and condemn people whom they want to embrace and affirm. Even when they see the logic behind the argument that there really are objective moral truths, it is hard for them, psychologically, to accept its conclusion.

Why are claims to an objective morality so intimidating? Most people have no problem accepting that there are scientific truths that we can know as valid in all places and at all times. We are not speaking of a theoretical or universal philosophical skepticism about the capacity of our minds to know any truth (although one does sometimes encounter arguments about this). Indeed, I have found that, even among those who express reservations about making judgments, at least some privately admit that moral truths exist—but they fear to say so openly. I think there are three reasons why this is often the case, and I have already alluded to two of them: first, they do not want to appear judgmental or intolerant; second, and related, they may not know how to affirm moral standards without judging or condemning others. A third reason, however, should not be discounted, for it is often operating powerfully but below the surface of discussions about objective moral truth: if there are objective moral truths “out there,” I may intuit—perhaps only vaguely—that they *will demand something of me*. I might have to confront the truth about what I have done or am doing: I might have to admit that I was wrong or give up something to which I am attached. At the deepest level, I might have to acknowledge that there is a standard above me to which I will someday be accountable.

Psychologically, I suspect that this third reason is even more powerful than the first two. Indeed, it may explain, at least in part, why students adopt the language of moral relativism after they have gone off to college. They may not have been theoretically convinced of the arguments for relativism. Might it not sometimes happen that a student who, while living (more or less) virtuously under his parents’ roof, under the influence of family, friends, neighborhood, and community, after departing for campus with the best of intentions, finds himself doing things he would never have done at home? Might it then happen that, unable to confront the reality that “I have done something wrong,” he instead accepts a theory that will justify or excuse his actions?

Diagnosing the Disease

Relativism comes in several different varieties, all of which can be found on contemporary college campuses. For example, one might think of cultural relativism, historical relativism, linguistic relativism, or legal positivism, which, in an extreme form, can be a kind of legal relativism. What do these “relativisms” teach? How do they formulate their position?

According to a standard form of cultural relativism, “right and wrong depends on what the dominant culture says” or “on what you were conditioned to believe by social, religious, and cultural forces.” It contends that there is no standard of right and wrong that transcends your culture.

For its part, historical relativism argues that right and wrong depends on what the mores of a certain historical period are. What people thought was right in the eighteenth century we now see is wrong, or vice versa. Just over 150 years ago, slavery was legal in the United States and was even praised by some as a positive good, while today one can hardly find a soul who would deny that it is gravely wrong (thank God). This is posited as evidence that there are no claims to moral rightness or wrongness that transcend a given historical period. Moral truth, on this account, would be merely a product of a cultural system or of a historical period.

Radical forms of legal positivism hold that right and wrong depend on what the positive law says, and that is all. (Of course, not all forms of legal positivism are like this, but some strong forms of it tend toward this view.) The law determines what is right and to-be-done and what is wrong and to-be-avoided. If the positive law gives me permission to do something, then it is morally permitted for me to do it. If the Supreme Court declares a new right to do X, then doing X must be morally acceptable. There is no standard of right and wrong beyond what the positive law has enacted.⁸ This is a strong form of legal positivism.

⁸ Other prominent legal theories also lead to a morally relativistic position. One might think of, for example, the legal realism of Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., which cautions us against believing that, in the law, there are any fixed and knowable principles of justice at work. It would “be a gain if every word of moral significance could be banished from the law altogether, and other words adopted which should convey legal ideas uncolored by anything outside the law. We should lose the fossil records of a good deal of history and the majesty got from ethical associations, but by ridding ourselves of an unnecessary confusion we should gain very much in the clearness of our thought”;

All of these forms of relativism share in common the claim that there is no unchanging, non-arbitrary standard of right and wrong and that all moral claims are relative to culture, to historical context, to language, to legal regime, and so forth. What is right and true in one culture or historical epoch is not necessarily right and true in another, they would contend.

So what kind of answer can we make to relativism? The fatal flaw of all forms of relativism is that they contain an internal contradiction: they assert that the proposition that “there are no truths that hold always and everywhere” is a truth that holds always and everywhere. Moreover, while there might be some superficial evidence that seems to support cultural and historical relativism (for example, that there have been disagreements across cultures and historical periods about some particular moral questions, like polygamy or slavery), the relativist argument ignores the much broader and deeper agreements about moral principles. What is more, why should the fact that some people, and even some cultures, have made excuses for grave moral wrongs lead us to conclude that there are no such things? Nor should we conflate the moral status of social or cultural conventions (e.g., belching at table is the height of rudeness in some cultures and a necessity of etiquette in others) with deeper moral principles (e.g., that direct and intentional killing of the innocent is wrong). In fact, the relativist argument deliberately obscures these distinctions, claiming that, because some moral censures are merely conventional and because we can find some examples of socially-sanctioned wrongdoing, *there are therefore no enduring moral principles*.

Notice also that the relativist must claim not only that one is *sometimes* determined by one’s historical period or culture, but that one is *always* so determined, because (on the relativist account) *all* moral claims are historically or culturally conditioned. Yet, this seems plainly to be false. Do we not see people challenging moral wrongs in their culture all the time? Indeed, they often do so by appealing to universal moral principles—that is, not merely by claiming that we should apply a different rule from some other time or culture, but by asserting simply, “this is unjust!” How would this be possible

see “The Path of the Law,” *Harvard Law Review* 10 (1897): 457, 464. Though Holmes perhaps would not go so far as to claim that all moral claims are relative, many who have followed him down the path of legal realism and into critical legal studies would make such a claim.

if moral principles are always conditioned by the historical period or the cultural framework in which one is raised or formed?

These are theoretical arguments against moral relativism, but we can go further: I would argue that, in practice, there are no true moral relativists. Even moral relativism itself makes a moral judgment (which it tries hard to camouflage as something else) about all the judgmental people who believe in absolute moral truths. This is unsurprising to a Thomist because, according to St. Thomas, moral judgments are judgments about what is good and there is an unbreakable metaphysical link between being and goodness.⁹ Insofar as something exists, it is good. For Aquinas, the very structure of our desiring and our action necessarily implies that we desire and try to obtain what we judge to be good for us and that, ultimately, these desires are anchored in the sort of being that we are (although, to be sure, we can make mistakes in these judgments, often compounded by disordered desires that are the fruits of original sin and our own personal sins and vices). This is what a moral judgment is: a judgment that X is good (for me, for my neighbor, or for my community) and, hence, is to be sought and that Y is bad and is to be avoided. Likewise, the fundamental orientation of my will is necessarily toward what I regard as good and desirable, and hence, the fundamental structure of moral action is that every person is always aiming at some good, either real or apparent.

At this point, a common objection pops up: some people do seem to aim at doing evil. Think of the cold-blooded serial murderer. From Aquinas's perspective, however, even this case follows the general rule that one desires and wills something only insofar as one perceives it as good in some respect. Even a murderer does not aim at an evil precisely as apprehended as bad for him, but only insofar as he (wrongly or even perversely) finds some good or pleasure in the act or its effects. By definition, one regards what one desires as good in some respect. It may be a disordered good, and it may not be fitting or noble or morally right, but I must at least perceive it as good in some respect or I could not aim at it at all.

We should add that pursuing the wrong goods (goods that are out of order and that are therefore "disordered") or pursuing goods in the wrong way can produce real evil. Think about Michael Corleone in the first two *Godfather* films. They portray, quite persuasively,

⁹ See, e.g., *ST* I, q. 5, a. 1.

the descent of a man into evil. At each decisive moment, Michael chooses something that he regards as a good under the circumstances: to defend his father, to protect his family, to avenge an evil, to make money, or to win the esteem and respect of others. We, the audience, see the good that he is seeking, and we are inclined to root for him. But because he is using the wrong means to those ends, because he is seeking goods outside of the wider order of goods (what is due to his neighbor, what the common good of society requires, and what natural law and God's commands requires), his actions are wrong, and they lead him deeper into a web of evil. The drama of the films is that we watch a good man become, by his own choices, a man perverted by evil, so that, in the end, he destroys his family, the very thing he first set out to protect.

For Aquinas, this kind of reflection leads to a metaphysical claim about evil: evil is not a positive thing, but rather the absence of what should be there, disorder in place of order. Strictly speaking, evil is not a thing or a being but a privation. It is not possible to desire evil as such because it is not possible to desire a "nothing," but only something.

This brings us to the deepest and most metaphysical explanation of the problem with moral relativism: all persons always will orient themselves to something they think is good. And we find that, in actual practice, they will inevitably make claims on others—and even demands—with respect to that good. Notwithstanding our own culture's profession of non-judgmental relativism, we find in fact all kinds of judgments being made about what is good, and these judgments are not only factual or scientific or pragmatic, but moral.

Consider the law: it is of the essence of law that it makes judgments. It is very hard to come up with an example of a law that does not make judgments. The criminal law, for example, says that you must not kill another person. If you do, you will be punished, and quite severely. Why? This is not only to prevent you from hurting people in the future but also because it is considered wrong to murder and just to punish a murderer. This is why we bring even elderly murderers to justice, to stand trial for their crimes. While their sentence may be mitigated because of old age and infirmity, we still think it is right for the law to pass judgment on them, although we are certain that they will not—or cannot—murder again. Even environmental regulations, which we might be tempted to think are justified by purely factual or scientific statements like "high carbon

emissions decrease air quality,” bear within them a judgment that one should not do these things. Do we not make moral judgments about polluters?

When I moved to the East Coast for law school in the mid-1990s after having attended college in environmentally forward-thinking California, I was shocked to discover that my law school dormitory did not have any recycling bins. I felt terribly guilty throwing my aluminum cans in the trash, as if I were a bad citizen of the earth. In fact, it makes sense that one would feel this way if one thinks that recycling is good and that not recycling is bad. Those are judgments, and not merely about scientific facts. They include a moral component: an assessment of what is good.

Our history is full of other examples. Consider the American civil rights movement and the great achievements of Martin Luther King, Jr. Segregation and racial discrimination were real injustices, and at least in certain regions of the country, they were both favored by the dominant cultural and political majority (including many Southern pastors)¹⁰ and were enshrined in state and local law. Think of Birmingham in 1963, where it was legal to segregate based on race. (At that time, the US Constitution had not been interpreted to forbid segregation except in the case of public schools.) Dr. King said, in effect, “I do not care what the state’s positive law says or what the Constitution says; segregation is unjust. I do not care that the majority of the people of this state say that this is good. It is wrong, and I am going to fight against it.”

This furnishes a very nice example of relativism’s failure, for we think it is good to critique a culture that has bad moral norms and to do so on the basis of an appeal to a principle that transcends a given historical or cultural context. The very fact that someone is able to lodge a critique of his or her own culture shows that our moral principles are not *purely* conditioned by our culture and our historical period. In order to make such a critique, one must be able to stand outside of one’s culture. Is this not, in a certain sense, the story of America? Dr. King is rightly celebrated as having won a great triumph for justice, challenging the conscience of the nation by his forceful appeals to universal moral principles. We could add to his name a whole list of other figures who have done something

¹⁰ King’s famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” was addressed to his fellow (largely Protestant) clergy who criticized King for his civil rights crusade and his use of civil disobedience.

similar throughout American history, beginning with the signers of the Declaration of Independence. They are our history's heroes.

These arguments and examples show that there are no practical relativists. Whether we admit it or not, we inevitably make moral judgments based on principles that transcend culture and history. The only question is whether we will camouflage those judgments in the language of relativism or bring them out into the open where they can be assessed and debated.

Politics and the Problem of Moral Relativism

Moral relativism is disastrous for politics. In the classical sense of the word, politics concerns the common good of the political community, the *polis*. The classic exercise of politics is thus the search for and deliberation over the common good: citizens come together to reason as a community about what is good for the community. Of course, there will often be disagreements about how to achieve that good, and even about in what it consists. Yet, a healthy political system aims at *reasoned* deliberation, which presupposes that there really are some things that are, in an objective sense, good—good for the human person, good for our local community, good for our country and our society—that we can talk about, making arguments about what they are and how to obtain them.

If, however, we accept the theoretical discourse of moral relativism, if we allow the language of relativism to become the normative language for our public political discourse (which we largely have done), then the unavoidable judgments about what is good that underlie every political position become hidden from view. We lose the ability to reason and argue together about what is good or bad. Politics becomes an exercise of will and of power, not of public reason, as one private interest struggles to gain the upper hand over another. Indeed, it is no longer even clear that there is a common good that concerns all of us. Attempts to make appeals to moral principles yield only fundamental disagreements because they are understood to be founded on irreconcilably-diverse perspectives.

John Paul II recognized this clearly. In his encyclical *Veritatis Splendor* on the crisis of truth in the modern world, you can hear St. John Paul drawing on his personal experience of totalitarianism, having lived in Poland under two totalitarian regimes (Nazism and Communism). That experience taught him that relativism comes with a monstrous human cost:

Totalitarianism arises out of a denial of truth in the objective sense. If there is no transcendent truth, in obedience to which man achieves his full identity, then there is no sure principle for guaranteeing just relations between people. Their self-interest as a class, group or nation would inevitably set them in opposition to one another. If one does not acknowledge transcendent truth, then the force of power takes over, and each person tends to make full use of the means at his disposal in order to impose his own interests or his own opinion, with no regard for the rights of others.¹¹

St. John Paul's insight is both prophetic and deeply worrying, especially when we acknowledge to what degree our political culture has accepted moral relativism as the coin of the realm for our public life. Does our political life look more like a deliberation about the common good or a search for power—for a party interest, or for a corporate interest, or for my personal interest—at the expense of others?

St. John Paul warns us that a crisis of truth will lead to a crisis of freedom because, in the absence of truth, there can be no appeal to reason or argument, but only to power. Of course, Christ himself linked truth and freedom: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31–32). Commenting on this line, St. Thomas Aquinas explains that, if one would be a disciple of Christ, one must keep Christ's commandments. Yet, the proper goal of a disciple is not simply to be called such, but rather to know the truth and, thus, to receive true freedom. That freedom consists not in a release from physical confinement or chains, but in a spiritual liberty from the error of falsity, from slavery to sin, and from corruption and death. We obtain this "full and perfect freedom" in the glory of heaven, where we enjoy the most perfect good, God himself, the common good of the whole universe. We will no longer be threatened by error, sin, or death there because we will know and love God perfectly unto eternal life.¹²

No political process will ever succeed in bringing us to the perfect freedom of the kingdom of God. Only Christ can give us that freedom. For our part, in whatever imperfect earthly kingdom we

¹¹ Pope John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, §99.

¹² St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Ioan* 8, lec. 4 (Marietti nos. 1199 and 1209).

inhabit, let us at least do our part in bearing witness to the unchanging truths that ground authentic freedom and human flourishing. Witnessing to the truth does not require us to make judgments about the hearts of our neighbors, but we are right to judge what is good for the human person and for our community. N-V