

Deceit and Ignorance January 2 to the Epiphany Saturday, January 2, 2016 8:15 AM
1 Jn 2:22-26; Jn 1:19-28 St. Basil the Great and St. Gregory of Nazianzen, bishops,
doctors of the Church (People can be deprived of truth through the work of the Evil One,
through distortions and deceit, but also through simply a lack of knowledge.)

“Who is the liar?”

This is from the **First Letter of St. John**, the beloved disciple or at least related to the beloved disciple. People have looked at this letter for years. It is on one level very beautiful, very poetic. **It has insights that have been culled from holy wisdom. But, on the other hand, there is something about it that is a little too black-and-white.**

He talks about this antichrist. Well, we have to be aware that there is a spirit of antichrist in the world, and **the spirit of antichrist is the liar**, as he calls him. **Deceit is at the core of what’s wrong with human civilization.** We are fallible, and fallible doesn’t mean we are prone to error; it means **we are prone to be deceived.** *Fallo* in Latin means “I deceive.” Infallibility means the inability to be deceived. So when we say the Church is infallible, we mean that God will preserve it from being deceived, where the very goal of the Devil is deception. Jesus called the Evil One the “father of lies”; we should never forget this. **Nothing perverts more than a lie, and a half truth is already a lie.** So lying and deceit undermines the human life and human civilization.

This is what the letter is trying to say, but **it’s not the only thing that undermines human civilization.** According to this letter, it’s about it, but there is really more. What else? Well, also ignorance. If you talk about the truth, the truth that will make you free, this is really from God. In fact, it’s embodied in Christ: “I am the way the truth and the life,” he says. **But the ignorant do not have the truth any more than those who are deceived.** So not only do those who are deceived not have the truth, the ignorant do not have the truth **and the very stupid do not have**

the truth. So there are different levels in which people are being deprived of the truth; it's not just one thing. It's not just this evil spirit; it's other things too.

So we have a lot of work on our hands. **If we are sent by God to bring the truth to the world, we have a lot of work to do.** And that is why **the Church has always been involved in education,** running school, developing universities. This is all part of it because ignorance is the enemy of the truth. It isn't simply the Evil One. So we are not born into a state of wisdom. We are not born into **a state of knowledge. All this has to be gained and with great effort.**

Today a lot of people are not putting much effort into what really matters, the knowledge that matters, knowledge for life, knowledge for living, wisdom. Today our educational institutions are, for the most part, putting all their eggs into the basket of science and technology, mathematics—all good, but not the saving truth. We will not be saved by some mathematical theorem. We will not be saved by any kind of scientific fact. We will not be saved by any kind of technology. **We will only be saved by the truth that comes from God embodied in Christ. People can be deprived of this through the work of the Evil One, through distortions and deceit, but also through simply a lack of knowledge.**

So we need to work on two fronts. **Spiritually we have to be attuned to God and to the Holy Spirit to discerning the work of the Spirit, but physically and in terms of our whole cultural development we have to work to bring about solid education in the full spectrum of human need and knowledge,** not just science and technology, however good they are, not just math, however good that is, but the actual human knowledge **about who we are and why we are here, and what we are supposed to do.**