

Have you heard the saying, “Loose lips sink ships?” It was a phrase that originated as part of propaganda posters during World War II. It was a reminder to servicemen and citizens to guard what information they would share with others. The concern was secure information would find its way into enemy hands as conversations were overheard and this would ultimately cost the lives of those in battle.

Author Ralph Keyes, in his book on lying, concludes that “some form of deception occurs in nearly two-thirds of all conversations.” It is a means-ends justification. The means (lying) may not in itself be morally right, but the ends (what we gain or what punishment we avoid) justifies the means.

Lying is “a false statement made knowingly, with the intent to deceive.” Lying is not about the correctness of what a person says but about the intent of the heart.

The radical nature of Jesus’ words was not that we should never take an oath but that all of our speech should be honest, genuine, true and trustworthy— a yes that means yes and a no that means no.

Those who live a monastic life (monks and nuns) regularly practice the discipline of silence. They do so for many reasons, but one is to counter the sins of the tongue, such as lying or gossip. Practicing this discipline teaches them the power of words and gives them greater control over their tongues.

This week there are two spiritual practices that you can choose from.

- **The first exercise is to go an entire day without words. For some this will be an impossibility.**
- **If that is the case, then choose one day this week to be a lie free day.**

The first is more challenging and will require some preparation in order for it to happen. You will need to choose a day that going without words will be less of a problem: this may be a weekend or a day off of work. Be sure to let others know what you are doing so they will not be concerned when you are not speaking to them. You may need to write notes to communicate, but work to keep those to a minimum. For the second it will require a conscious commitment and attention to the words that you are speaking. If you do catch yourself having spoken a lie, try your best to correct it on the spot. Continue to ask the Holy Spirit to bring conviction and correction so that your yes would be yes.

Adapted from James Bryan Smith, *The Good and Beautiful Life*

