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March 11, 2012

Dear Parishioners,

Here is one useful question for your Lenten examination of conscience each night: ♦Have I spoken the truth in love today?♦ So much of our sinfulness becomes manifest in speech. Speech ought always to serve the Word, Who became for us Love Incarnate.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church addresses many sins of the tongue in paragraphs 2475-2487. Two of the sins mentioned there are ♦detraction♦ and ♦calumny♦.

Detraction means disclosing to people for no valid reason the faults of another person. You are telling the truth, but it is information nobody else should be hearing from you. Suppose you learn that somebody's son committed some crime, and you spread the news among all of your acquaintances. Or you know of a particular weakness in an individual, and you mention it to others who otherwise would not know. This is a serious sin against the reputation of another human being. The **Catechism** (2477) teaches, ♦Respect for the reputation of persons forbids every attitude and word likely to cause them unjust injury.♦ We are bound to respect the reputation of others. Sharing the faults of others ought only to be done for a good reason, such as seeking help for somebody for whom we are responsible.

Calumny means harming the reputation of another by spreading something about him or her which is false in order to harm their reputation. It is a type of lying. There is never a reason to calumniate somebody.

So does your speech need a checkup this Lent? Are there other sins buried beneath the two sins of speech mentioned above? For example, somebody might calumniate another person out of **envy**: the other person seems to be doing so much better in one way or another, and calumny is a way of bringing him down in the sight of others.

Or perhaps the underlying sin is a strange **pride**, being the first to bring to light the faults of another, feeling important as the source of scandalous news. Pride can be nourished by this type of anti-Gospel.

So how is your speech? Remember the Letter of James 3:6: ♦See how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.♦

Have a blessed week!

In cordibus Iesu et Mariae,
Father Joseph Poggemeyer