



Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary presents  
the **JOHN CARDINAL FOLEY SYMPOSIUM**  
*in celebration of*  
**World Communications Day**  
[www.scs.edu/cardinal-foley-symposium](http://www.scs.edu/cardinal-foley-symposium)

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on Thursday, **May 24, 2018**

## **HOMILY during the Memorial Mass for Tim Russert**

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*longtime friend of Cardinal John Foley and privileged acquaintance of Tim Russert*

On one occasion, when I had the privilege of joining the then Archbishop Foley and Tim Russert for lunch in Rome, John went off to the restroom and Tim told me that he really admired Archbishop Foley. He elaborated why he admired him, explaining that the Archbishop was a man of such great integrity, honesty and fairness. I smiled and replied, “That’s funny; last night, as we were talking about having lunch with you, he said the same thing about you.” It’s easy to see how Cardinal Foley and Tim Russert could be so drawn to each other. Both were exceptionally talented men, doing extraordinarily well in their given jobs. And, both were remarkable in their pursuit of the truth and in how their faith was so evident in everything that they did. But, the Cardinal had it easy. As a priest, bishop and Cardinal, he was supposed to be faithful and live in the truth. For Tim, it was, perhaps a greater challenge. Living and working in the secular world that is often at odds with the truth and increasingly isn’t even interested in the truth, Tim remained strong in his faith and a stalwart defender of the truth.

As a lawyer, television journalist and moderator of NBC’s *Meet the Press*, Tim was well known for his extensive research into any situation he was called to address and the champion of the truth. Those of us who watched him on *Meet the Press* remember him finding old quotes or video clips that were inconsistent with his guests’ more recent statements, presenting them on-air to his guests and then asking them to clarify their positions, thus chasing out the truth and often making his guest very uncomfortable.

Today’s readings challenge us to face some very stark truths. As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to live the truth every day. And, an important aspect of that truth is that when we get caught up in a web of lies, we often drag others into that web. When we do this, we not only keep ourselves from living the truth, we lead others from it as well. Using strong, hyperbolic imagery, Jesus says it is better to cut off our hand or our foot, or pluck out our eye than to sin – to live in a

lie. And, if we were tempted to lead others to sin, it would be better for us to have a great millstone put around our neck and be thrown into the sea (cf. *Mk* 9:41ff.). That's how wrong it is to live lives of lies and lead others to do so.

Of course, to get to the truth, one has to learn the facts. And, Tim was known for his pursuit of the facts. He once said: "We don't make up the facts. We cover the facts as they were." Today, as we struggle with fake news, this is a very refreshing approach, isn't it?

Of course, every age struggles with fake news. It has been called different things at different times – propaganda or cover-up or distortion of the truth – but it has plagued humanity ever since the serpent lied to Eve about the forbidden fruit. Just google "fake news" and you'll find some very interesting examples of it going back through the ages. One of my favorite examples is one that was pointed out to me in the hieroglyphs carved into one of the magnificent temples in Karnack, Egypt. The hieroglyphs recount the great pharaoh, Ramses II, chasing after the Israelite slaves and wiping them out. Of course, we know the real story – we speak of it as the Exodus when God wiped out the Egyptian army as it pursued the Israelites after they escaped from slavery in Egypt.

In today's first reading, we hear from the Letter of James (5:1-6). In this short passage, we hear the author of this letter report some real news – not fake news – about those who put their hope in worldly goods rather than heavenly treasure and those who have been dishonest – either withholding wages from workers in their fields or falsely condemning the innocent. Living these lies will lead them to be fattened for the day of slaughter.

And so, every age needs people who are champions of the truth, people like Cardinal Foley and Tim Russert. As we gather in the name of Cardinal Foley in celebration of World Communications Day and honor Tim Russert for his indefatigable search for the truth, let us strive to always seek the truth ourselves and live it every day of our lives.

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