

Lying

A simple definition of “lying” is to tell what is not true. The Lord said in the Gospels about Satan that he is “a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). This is why Saint John, in the book of Revelation, describes the Christ as “the faithful and true witness” (Revelation 3:14), which reiterates the saying from the book of Proverbs, “A truthful witness does not deceive” (Proverbs 14:5). So, if lying is characteristic of Satan, then the liar comes from Satan as well and not from God, because God is Truth and there is no lying in Him whatsoever.

Lying is a vice that can be easily committed, as it is perceived to be easily done. The problem with the vice of lying is that it has different types and therefore can be easily justified. Lying is given or characterized with different names or adjectives such as “white lie”, “harmless lie”, “joking”, “entertaining”, or “lying for the sake of good”. But the truth of the matter is that the faithful believer gets lost and becomes confused, not knowing whether it would be better to lie or seek the truth instead.

The Fathers of the Church teach that hypocrisy is the “mother of lying”, as lying is embellished and harmonized by hypocrisy. Over-flattering a person, with the intention to benefit through him in a certain way, is one type of lying. Being supportive of our friends in enumerating the virtues of a certain person only to be in agreement with them (when we don’t actually believe what we are saying is true) is another form of lying. Gaining favor with a certain person to achieve some type of profit by claiming that he has certain good qualities which never existed in him is also lying. As a matter of fact, this is not only lying, but rather is lie-smithing.

Practically, the ways of lying are three and pertain to the mind, the speech, and the way of life. A person who entertains suspicious thoughts is a liar. As an example, if a person sees two individuals conversing with each other and becomes suspicious that they might be “gossiping” about him, or becomes suspicious of people’s words, thinking that they are intended to hurt him, those are types of lying by or in the mind. The liar by the mind becomes suspicious with others, saying to himself, “What is said or what is done is happening because of me or intended against me”. This suspicious person is not basing his suspicious thought on any factual truth; rather, all of the suspicious thoughts are the production of mere speculation. Lying in the mind produces many other bad vices, such as curiosity, gossip, tapping into other people’s conversations, and condemnation of others.

As to lying by the mouth, it can be defined as knowing the truth and deliberately hiding it and/or stating something different. A person may lie to avoid criticism or punishment, with the intention to gain a certain profit. A liar keeps on seeking excuses through his imagination, with the intention to reach his desired goal.

As to lying through the way of life, that can be defined as claiming to have something or some attribute that is not there. A person may claim to do acts of mercy while he knows no mercy, claim to be loving but there is not even the least trace of love in him. A person might talk about humility while he is arrogant to the degree of narcissism. He praises the good but loves the wickedness, considering himself as a virtuous person so that he does not see his vices. This type of person has a double personality and his life is full of hypocrisy and lying. When people discover this type of person and become aware of his deception, they cease to believe him. In the face of that and in order to remove his ugly image from their minds, he pursues that by increasing the

percentage of lying.

In conclusion, lying is a direct result of a weak character and fear to face life, therefore, man lies even to himself, resembling the ostrich that hides its head in the sand thinking that nobody sees it. Christ the Lord has given us the golden rule, "Let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'" (Matthew 5:37) so that we can always walk in the truth as we believe in Him, and we believe that life is not gained through insincere sweet talking, hypocrisy and/or lying, rather through the "Truth" and the "Light".