**What is Truth?**Pilate, John 18:38

**Veritas est adaequatio rei ad intellectum.** (cf. Ia Q. 16)*Truth is the conformity of reality and the mind, the equation of thought and thing.*

Things must be known by the mind of God in order to exist and are thereby ontologically true. They must be known by the mind of creatures in order to be logically true.

*Truth is in the mind as health is in the body.* – St. Thomas Aquinas, *De Veritate*

**Veritas est virtus qua aliquis verum dicit et fit verax.***Truth (truthfulness, veracity) is the virtue by which someone tells the known truth and becomes trustworthy.*

**Summa Theologiae IIa IIae   
Q. 109 Truth as Virtue**

1. Truthfulness is the conforming of speech with fact as known by the mind. It is a moral virtue, because to say what is true in the appropriate circumstances (governed by prudence) is a good act, and virtue is that which makes its possessor good and renders his action good.
2. Truthfulness is a special virtue distinct from others. All virtues have goodness as their object, and truthfulness seeks the specific goodness of agreement between thought and speech.
3. Truthfulness is a part of the virtue of justice. Justice requires balance and due equality, which is achieved when what is said is what is known.
4. Truthfulness inclines a person to moderate expression and avoid exaggeration. It does not necessarily demand that a person tell all that he knows (which often would go against prudence); it demands only that was he does prudently say be the truth and contain no lies.

**Q. 110 Lying**

1. Lying is defined simply as *locutio contra mentem –* “speaking against one’s mind”, that is, saying what one knows to be untrue. It is speaking against the truth as one knows it, regardless of whether one’s knowledge contains error, and regardless of whether one intends to deceive anyone by one’s speech. The intention to deceive naturally complements lying but is not essential to it.
2. There are three types of lies: *jocose* (pranks), which are told for pleasure or entertainment; *officious* (“white lies”), which are told to help oneself or others; and *pernicious*, which are told to hurt others.
3. A lie is always sinful, regardless of the hearer’s right to know what is said or whether any other virtues are violated by the lie. It is not wrong to evade a question or conceal the truth from someone who does not have a right to it, but this must be done without lying.
4. A pernicious lie may be a mortal sin, for it may sin gravely against charity and justice. Jokes are often not lies at all, though some may rise to the moral level of venial sins against truthfulness and other virtues. Officious lies are usually venial sins but can be mortal if they have the effect (though not the intention) of going gravely against charity or justice.