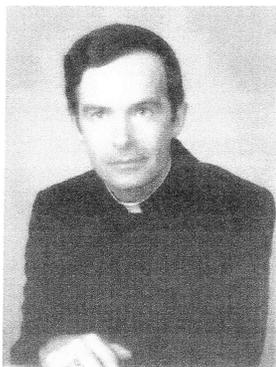




## Chaplain's Corner, Hughes Camp Chaplain Richard W Rudd



A story is told about a painting of a woman displayed for many years in a gallery in the Tuscan town of Lucignano. It was believed to be a *copia conforme* (original work of art) until the true original was discovered fifty-four years ago at Herculaneum near Naples. An archeologist from Tuscany had found the image in an ancient Roman fresco, commissioned an art

forger in Naples to paint a copy, then passed off the copy as an original to increase the prestige of his hometown. Considering the copy to be a valuable work of art in its own right, the gallery continued to display it.

The demarcation separating reality from illusion can be difficult to discern. Artists, authors of historical and literary works, publishers, news reporters, corporate and political advertisers routinely blend facts and fiction and incorporate gaps and elisions into their creations, leaving us with the sometimes perilous task of struggling to determine the meaning and value of their works. If one becomes too infatuated as a result of either being deceived or seeing only what one wishes to see, a creation's meaning and value can be inflated so that the admirer risks suffering a loss. Or, as in the story of the Tuscan painting, it was asked what difference it made if the presumed original was discovered to be only a copy. Even the original is a mere copy of the woman it portrays. She is the only real original. The same could be said of DaVinci's *Mona Lisa* in the Louvre. All that really matters is not the artist's or author's actual creation, but how we perceive it. Its meaning and value become personal, subjective, and relative. Thus, we are asked to ignore the obvious-- the boundaries between originals and copies, dreams and reality, facts and fiction. If there are no absolutes or truths and all is relative and subjective, facts become mere data to be manipulated to suit one's agenda.

Just one of numerous current practical examples of this is the new health care law sometimes call BO Care. Jonathan Gruber of MIT and architect of the law, admitted in a recent interview that the law was intentionally written to confuse both Congress and the public so that potential supporters would read into it what they wanted to see. He said, "Lack of transparency (honesty) is a huge political advantage. Call it the stupidity of the

American voter...but that was really critical to getting it passed." A critical element was the bill's obfuscation of the fact that it was a tax. First, BO denied it, then it was argued before the Supreme Court that it was a tax and the court agreed. The law enacting BO Care originated in the Senate. The *Constitution* requires that all tax laws originate in the House. Why is this law not unconstitutional on the obvious face value of the facts? Of our world today, increasingly we find ourselves seriously posing the question Pilate mocking asked, "What is truth?" (Jn. 18:38)

Several years ago, researchers made a discovery regarding the effects of a placebo. Doctors had long thought a placebo's only effect was psychological. Now, scientists have amassed evidence that a placebo also has a physical effect. Expecting a benefit can influence the same neurological means of healing as the real medication. Conversely, Alzheimers can prevent one from expecting a positive result from a medication and it will not be as effective.

The power of ideas is a real force with which to be reckoned. Like the wind, ideas are unseen, yet the evidence of their existence is seen in the actions they motivate and the effects of those actions in the material world. Beliefs are even more real, for they are the products of the seeds of ideas we select by free will that are planted to become rooted in our mind as the arbiters of how we form our convictions on a given subject and determine what we think is true. Where we think we have found truth is where we ground our faith (trust). Faith enables the eye of the mind to visualize what the eye of the body cannot determine. All men live by faith, even atheists. The only difference is where one chooses to place their faith. To ideas, beliefs, and faith add imagination and the situation becomes more volatile. Imagination also deals with those mental images that are not physically present or experienced. It is the creative power of the mind to decompose ideas and recombine or rearrange them at will.

The concept of an idea being more than an immaterial abstract form is as old as Plato. He taught that the material world is an imperfect imitation of ideas, the most fundamental and highest forms of perfection and reality. Compare this with St. Paul, who wrote, "For now we see in a mirror (glass) dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully..." (I Cor. 13:12) In this life and world, alone we mortals can only

strive to discern reality and truth from a distance, amid obscurity, and without freedom from error. The reality of perfection and truth does exist in another dimension; it is knowable and can be found in Christ Who said, "I am the... truth..." (Jn. 14:6) Plato believed it was man's responsibility to implement the ideals of ideas into this world. In his *Republic*, he delineated his plan for purging society and establishing a utopia. The Founding Fathers sought to build a better society in America. Our Confederate ancestors endeavored to do likewise. Each successive generation, not just different people but people motivated by different ideas, seeks to do the same. Although we always fall short of attaining perfection and the ideal, we have the responsibility to try, while knowing that only when Christ returns will there finally be Heaven on earth. For this reason Christ taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, On earth as it is in Heaven." (Matt. 6:10) We are living in a unique era of history. The signs of our time are Christ assuring us that this prayer is soon to be answered. He promises, "Surely I am coming soon." (Rev. 22:20) To His promise every vigilant Christian responds, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

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