# Institutionalized untruthfulness

**By Chaplain Norbert Karava**

Yes, it is one thing to succumb to the innumerable pressures to lie in trying and desperate moments of life and entirely another to accept in principle that in certain circumstances, broadly or narrowly defined, lying is morally admissible. When employees or members of institutions and agencies, implicitly or explicitly, accept lying as a necessary and acceptable part of doing their jobs and discharging their duties, it is then that institutionalized mendacity, at the heart of which is a culture of falsehood, raises its ugly, venomous head. The moral death that individual human beings experience when they accept lying as a morally acceptable means to an end is immeasurably amplified in a culture of falsehood; as the spirit of spectators seems to take on a life of its own at the stadium, quasi-independent of the individuals collectively generating it, so the culture of falsehood becomes a sort of independently existing hypostasis of evil, a veritable transcendent poison that paralyzes and deadens the most defining capability of the human heart, to wit, the ability to register and respond to good and evil. If you breathe your air and drink your water long enough in a culture of falsehood, in spite of your mightiest efforts to resist, you will almost certainly find your moral sensibilities dulled, if not compromised. There are certain institutions that are tempted to succumb to the expedient falsehood more than others. Leaving bastions of veracity such as Wall Street and Madison Avenue aside for the moment, where truth, alas, usually is not a condition in which profit thrives, we find that institutions that are associated with moral excellence, devotion to the social good and that serve urgent social needs are especially subject to this temptation. Such institutions include the Church, law enforcement, covert operations, diplomacy, and yes, the armed forces. Thus, in the Church, we can be sorely tempted to spare the faithful the excruciating pains and spiritually devastating effects of true scandal with a lie. Could it not be argued that of all the possible urgent reasons that would justify a lie, the preservation of a cherished and life-preserving faith would be truly compelling?

It hardly happens that the acceptance of lying as a morally licit means in pursuit of an agency's ends is a clear and distinct decision or worse, even policy. Yet there it is: By policy, it is admissible for Federal Agents to lie to their suspects under interrogation with a view to procuring information, evidence or a confession. Thus, mendacity is institutionalized and thus begins the culture of falsehood: If uttering a lie is not intrinsically evil and therefore under no circumstances morally acceptable, it is made acceptable only by mere mortal arbitration: Who is competent to arbitrate the acceptable circumstances of lying? You can lie to your suspect but you can't lie to your boss – or at least so say your bosses, especially the ones high enough to frame policy. Hmm, a boss that can tell me when I can lie and when I cannot? Do I really want to work for such bosses? But usually, the acceptance of lying as part of our jobs or as a licit means in pursuing our employers' ends is a gradual process: We can begin to succumb to the expedient lie here and there to come up with the results expected of us that can be realistically attained only at the cost of… the expedient lie. The plight of many recruiters in the 90s was an example of this twilight of moral clarity. Finally, there is the case of misguided patriotism/loyalty: Not to lie to save your corps or to protect your buddies is simply betrayal: The traditional morality might do for mere 8 to 5 civilian softies, but not really for us, this band of brother-warriors with a daily diet of death and hardship and the muscles and scars to prove it.

Why is it that accepting the moral legitimacy of lying, or lying as a necessary and acceptable part of our life, our work, our duties and even our loyalty truly does constitute a crossing over to the dark side in which the human heart dies? The answer to this question, I think, lies in the unique and inescapable relationship of truth to all values. Truth is the "meta-value" or the value that validates all other values.

For example: Seaman Seymore is being presented with the Medal of Honor for actions conspicuously demonstrating honor, courage and commitment to a heroic degree. First, it must be true that Seaman Seymore actually did these heroic deeds thus cited, and second, it must be true that choices and behaviors associated with courage in the face of fear and fidelity at the cost of great personal loss –property, limb and even life- are inherently and categorically morally preferable to choices and behaviors associated with cowardice and opportunism. It simply will not suffice that courage and fidelity are preferable to cowardice and opportunism simply because this year our bosses happen to think so or because we find them "personally inspiring." Without the meta-value of truth, not only are deeds of courage and fidelity not morally different than deeds of cowardice and opportunism, but nothing else can have intrinsic value. Here it is: When we are in principle prepared to accept the legitimacy of lying to do our jobs, we cut ourselves off from the very validator of all value and we enter the universe of no intrinsic value but merely arbitrary and imputed value. In other words, our values are valuable merely because we and our bosses and have decided that they are. At first, we can clearly sense the difference between the plastic flowers of our arbitrary, make-believe values from the truth-roses of intrinsic values. But in time, two very bad things happen to us: First, gradually, as we sojourn in this void of make-believe value, we actually come to forget what true value "tastes" like and get lost in our virtual reality. We don't really believe in honor, courage and commitment because belief is the posture of the mind assenting to truth, which is precisely what we give away when we accept lying as morally legitimate. Second, because we no longer really believe in honor, courage and commitment (even though we might say we do), we can no longer really experience these values. For human beings, belief, as a conviction and act of the mind will always be the necessary vessel of experience. The tragedy is that we can find ourselves going about the motions of honor, courage and commitment, even at great inconvenience and sacrifice to ourselves, without, however experiencing the life-transforming wonder of these values. Mark it well, dear reader: In the relativistic virtual universe of arbitrary and make-believe value, the most telling disability is this: the inability of joy. When we examine ourselves in a moment of candor and perhaps see, through the passing of years, an ever diminishing, instead of an ever-increasing joy, could it be that our lies have begun to catch up with us?

# Kinnick Faculty, Students reminded of school bus safety

**By Vicki Boehler, Kinnick High School Public Affairs**

School is in session and motorists on the roads need to be prepared to safely share the road with school buses over the school year. In the same regard students need to be prepared for an accident should it occur.

**During a bus evacuation drill, Nile C. Kinnick students practice evacuating from a school bus.**
**Photo courtesy of Vikki Boehler**

Typically, a school bus driver transports 53 students within a large bus. With the excitement of school and classmates, children can be distracted. Parents and students need to talk about being safe while traveling to and from school. Distractions to the driver are a big safety risk.

With schools back in session, the DoDEA Pacific, Yokosuka Complex Transportation Office ensured that all faculty and students were aware of the Bus Standards and Safety Protocols. On Sept. 29, DoDEA's Yokosuka complex Transportation Officer Mike Frechette visited Nile C. Kinnick High School to review the rules with a brief video. The students were then able to demonstrate their knowledge by evacuating out of of the rear emergency doors of of the school buses at Berkey field.

"It is important to know the emergency procedures should an accident or other emergency occur" noted Kinnick Principal Lorenzo Brown." It is better not to have accidents but to be ready if they do occur."