

*Fr. Perozich comments —*

*Some wordsmiths are masters of truth.*

*Others are masters of manipulation.*

*Anthony Esolen warns us of justifications for sin, particularly from us clergy to you lay faithful, even from higher ranking clergy who by their rank have a larger audience, an authority, and mandate to teach the truth of Jesus rather than their own ideas.*

*Esolen uncovers the manipulation by the “stories” of those who do not observe God’s laws, and the use of a story as the justification for sin as well as the manipulation of the listener/reader so that he will accept the novelty rather than God’s truth.*

- ***these justifications come dressed up as stories. The story ushers you into a world before you can get your bearings, and you can easily participate in your own manipulation, whether you are weaving the story as gauze around yourself to hide the truth from your own eyes, or someone else is weaving the story to involve you in it.***
- ***do those stories give the lie to the stories he wants us to hear?***
- ***we must draw a distinction between persons and actions. God alone sees into the heart. We judge deeds and categories of deeds; the eternal disposition of the person is another matter.***
- ***At the heart of every sin, after all, is the lie.***
- ***Why should I bow down in honor to somebody telling me about how his sin isn’t a sin at all?***
- ***we are willfully blind to the bad example we set for others. Every sinner who celebrates his sin in public lays a snare in the path of his fellows. Again, this is true regardless of the sin in question.***

# Telling Us a Story

Anthony Esolen

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A high-ranking prelate of the American Church says that **we need to listen to the stories of people** who, as I will put it and he will not, have centered their lives upon sodomy. This we need to do, he says, **before we pass judgment upon them.**

Of course, as anyone familiar with moral theology or philosophy could tell him, **we must draw a distinction between persons and actions. God alone sees into the heart. We judge deeds and categories of deeds; the eternal disposition of the person is another matter.**

As for the heart, who among us will say confidently that he knows his own? **The heart of man is evil from his youth.** I do not say so. God says so, in Genesis. **Sinful man is more often sentimental than severe, comfortable in condoning the sins that other people commit, so long as they will condone his in turn.**

But as for stories, we all have them in store, we sinners do. **Nor does the prelate explain why we should honor the stories that sodomites tell, but not the stories of adulterers, pornographers, voyeurs, seducers, bigamists, rapists, pederasts, and good old ordinary fornicators after the immemorial way of nature, these whether they believe they are in love, or they are just a college boy and girl seeking a night's solace from loneliness, to wake up lonelier than ever.**

**Don't they have stories?** And why should we limit ourselves to one subgroup of one subgroup of sinners? What about liars, robbers, blasphemers, traitors, embezzlers, slanderers, bunko artists, arsonists, brawlers, wastrels, detractors,



*“Pinocchio” by Enrico Mazzanti (from the first edition of Carlo Collodi’s The Adventures of Pinocchio: Story of a Puppet), 1883 [source: Wikipedia]*

gluttons, hypocrites, grafters, loan sharks, murderers in a fit of passion, warmongers, abortionists, and assassins? I’m sure they have stories.

**Why should I credit the story the sodomite tells about himself, any more or any less than I credit the adulterer, the pornographer, the voyeur, the seducer, the bigamist, the rapist, the pederast, or the unmarried man and woman down the street, who may have snuffed one child in the womb, and brought another into the world outside of the haven of marriage which they could easily have provided him, as they owed him by rights?**

**Why should I bow down in honor to somebody telling me about how his sin isn’t a sin at all?** If I am honest with myself, I know how magnificently creative I can be when I must come up with justifications for the wrong I have done.

**And mostly these justifications come dressed up as stories. The story ushers you into a world before you can get your bearings, and you can easily participate in your own manipulation, whether you are weaving the story as gauze around yourself to hide the truth from your own eyes, or someone else is weaving the story to involve you in it.**

**At the heart of every sin, after all, is the lie.** It sits like a seed of poison. It does its work regardless of what anybody thinks about it, and if you tend it and water it with your sentimental tears, it can grow into quite a lush and flourishing tree.

Let us think about it. The man who murders his wife and her lover tells himself the lie, that they deserved it, and that he was caught up in a rage – when actually a part of him was pleased to discover them, so he could indulge his revenge.

The embezzler says that what belonged to someone else really belonged to him, because he was not paid enough, or because he needed the money more and nobody would miss it anyway.

Benedict Arnold no doubt enjoyed many a pipe with the gentlemen in London, telling everyone that it was Congress's fault, it was Washington's fault, or that upstart Greene, or that madman Wayne, and so on up and down a veritable Hudson River of everyone else from generals down to drummer boys. America was not really his country, after all.

The **blasphemer** says there is no God. **He is lying.** The **fornicator** says with his body, "I give myself wholly to you, and to the child we may beget." **He is lying.** The **bunko artist** says that fools are made to be fooled. He is lying. The warmonger says he is defending his country. **He is lying.** The **sodomite** says that man is not made for woman, and woman is not made for man. He, like the others, knows better, but will not admit it. **He is lying.**

**But do we not at least know what our own feelings are? No, we don't.** We are never reliable judges in our own case. They imagined they were in love, when they were only idle – that is what Johnson's Nekayah, in *Rasselas*, says about the girls in the family she visits to find the secret of a truly happy life.

Meanwhile, **we are willfully blind to the bad example we set for others. Every sinner who celebrates his sin in**

**public lays a snare in the path of his fellows. Again, this is true regardless of the sin in question.**

Yet in our time, where are most of the snares laid, if not in the area of sexual relations? Why will the prelate not learn from the ruins around us?

What about young people confused in their feelings, or lonely? What about those who are trying to live the moral law in a world that derides them as prudish or insane? What about young Catholics who want to marry but find no one about them uncorrupted? What about children deprived of a mother or a father, by design?

Have they no stories? Or are those stories of no interest? **Or do those stories give the lie to the stories he wants us to hear?**

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Anthony Esolen is a lecturer, translator, and writer. Among his books are *Out of the Ashes: Rebuilding American Culture*, and *Nostalgia: Going Home in a Homeless World*, and most recently *The Hundredfold: Songs for the Lord*. He is Distinguished Professor at Thales College. Be sure to visit his new website, *Word and Song*.