

I just want to begin with silence... if I have learned anything, it's to invoke the Holy Spirit into every single thing that I do ... If you don't mind, if we could simply just take a moment of silence... would you mind saying a prayer for me? And I'll pray for all of you, that maybe I can share something that helps spark something in you today...

Lord, we offer up all our prayers, and consecrate this talk our lady, come holy spirit...

Okay, first, Your Excellency Bishop Burbidge, thank you for having me...

Thank you to the Assembly of Catholic Professionals and everyone who helps make these gatherings and events possible...

I have to thank my family, who travel with me pretty much everywhere across the country when they can. They are here today — my wife, Kayla, our children Gianna, Jude, Luca, Leo, and our newest addition, Siena (who is 5 months old), as well as our two children in heaven. It's also Jude's 8th birthday tomorrow

Lastly, and to any Truthly users in the room, any Truthly users?

Thank you...

You are helping support our mission. You are helping us build something so meaningful for the Church that we all love so dear, for families, for people seeking, and for Catholics who desire to know their faith more deeply, live it more intentionally, and share it more confidently... at the end, I'll share a short testimonial with you all...

I know we already began in prayer, but I want to share a prayer that has become very important to everyone at Truthly.

In many ways, it is the prayer behind what we are building.

It is from Thomas Merton... it goes like this

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think that I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you. And I **hope** I have that desire in all that I am doing. I **hope** that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore will I trust you always, though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone." In the name of the...

And I “**hope**” have that desire in all that I am doing...

I “**hope**” have that desire in all that I am doing...

Truthly is a story about hope and complete surrender.

I know the theme this year is about abiding in hope and unity... so I want to focus in on a few key things in my short time today...

1. Hope is the “Engine”:
I’ve learned that hope is the engine to complete surrender - I’ll give some context around hope and I’ll share my personal testimony
2. Hope in the age of AI:
Why in the age of AI, we should hope, and not despair...
3. Hope unites:
Despair isolates. Hope ultimately unites.
You can forget Truthly (as passionate as I am about our mission)
I’m convinced a surrendered life IS the most powerful evangelization tool the world has ever seen

Okay to kick off number one, pun intended, any soccer fans in the room? World cup?
How about Ted Lasso fans?

Does anyone remember the famous phrase about hope from that show? (show of hands)

“It’s the hope that kills you...”

Yeah, so in *Ted Lasso*, the phrase “**It’s the hope that kills you**” reflects a pretty cynical worldview: essentially if you stop hoping, you can’t be disappointed.

The fans and team have been hurt so many times that they see hope as **dangerous...**

But Ted offers the *opposite* vision:

Hope isn’t what kills you. Despair does.

In the now famous exchange, Ted says:

"I disagree, you know? I think it's the lack of hope that comes and gets you. See, I **believe** in hope. I believe in belief..."

Let's talk about what Hope actually is. I'm sure you're all well acquainted with it at this point, but a refresher never hurt anyone...

Hope is frequently misunderstood. It is not:

- Optimism
- A feeling
- Wishful thinking
- Positive mental attitude

Here's what Truthly, I mean, the catechism says:

"Hope is the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ's promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit." — CCC 1817

Hope is a virtue directed at God **Himself** as the **source** and **fulfillment** of all **good**.

It anchors the soul in what is certain but not yet seen.

It anchors the soul in what is certain but not yet seen.

Something that came to me in prayer... I believe Hope Is the **Engine** of Surrender

Let me explain...

Complete surrender requires letting go of control.

And letting go of control is only possible if you trust that something — or **Someone** — greater holds what you've released.

Without hope, surrender becomes:

- Despair — *letting go because nothing matters*
- Stoicism — *detachment through willpower alone*
- Fatalism — *passive resignation without love*

But **WITH** hope, surrender becomes:

- An act of love — releasing control into the hands of a Father who is good

- An act of faith — trusting what you cannot see
- An act of worship — acknowledging God's sovereignty over your life

This is exactly what Merton's prayer captures. He doesn't know where he's going — but he hopes in the One who does. That hope is what makes his surrender an act of virtue rather than defeat.

I mean, notice the structure of the Merton prayer:

1. He has an admission of helplessness — "I have no idea where I am going"
2. An act of Hope — "I believe that the desire to please you does indeed please you"
3. Complete Surrender — "I will trust you always though I may seem lost"

Hope is the hinge of that vulnerable and honest prayer. Without it, step one leads to despair. With it, step one leads to freedom.

I know that's true.

Not because I read it somewhere.

Because I lived it...

Truthly did not begin in a boardroom.

It began with friendship.

And it began with the Church.

And, strangely enough, it began in a Chick-fil-A drive-through...

Years ago, my co-founder Zac was working at a Chick-fil-A in Charlotte.

He had moved there instead of going to college because he wanted to be in a Christian band. And not just any type of band - it was a Christian-screamo band.

The plan for him was simple.

What he had hoped to do was preach the Gospel from the stage from a stage for the rest of his life until he lost his voice...

But like many great Christian band stories, there was a little more Chick-fil-A than touring.

And one day, I pulled through the drive-through.

I was in my first job out of college.

I was sleeping on a friend's couch to be honest... trying to figure out life.

And on my passenger seat, I had this little red prayer book.

Zac saw it.

He asked me if I went to church in the area.

I told him I was Catholic.

He told me he was Catholic.

I told him I was dating a Protestant girl who was learning about the Catholic faith and was **hoping** she might one day come into the Church.

He told me he was dating a Protestant girl in the exact same situation.

And we looked at each other like, "Okay. I think we are supposed to be best friends."

That is how it started.

Just two young Catholic guys trying to explain the faith to the women they were falling in love with..

We started going to Mass together at St. Ann in Charlotte.

And then the Holy Spirit got to work.

Over the course of many months, we spent hours with our girlfriends walking through their questions about the Catholic faith.

Why confession?

Why Mary?

Why the Eucharist?

Why the Pope?

Why do Catholics believe this?

Where is that in Scripture?

Why does the Church teach what she teaches about marriage, suffering, morality, salvation, grace, and prayer?

And like many Catholics, we didn't always know or have the answer.

So we researched.

We read.

We stayed up late.

We listened to CDs...telling my age a bit here but does anyone remember the lighthouse Catholic media kiosks?

I like to think I solely funded that apostolate from how many dollars I put in there...

We tried to find faithful sources online.

We tried to make complicated things clear.

We tried to answer with both charity and truth.

And by the grace of God, both Kayla and Emily came into the Church...

Both of us were married at St. Ann...

And we were fired up...

We were so excited by what we had learned and what we saw God had done in our lives, so we grabbed our rosaries (and convinced our wives to join) and we started doing street evangelization.

We were literally going out on sidewalks to talk to strangers about Jesus and His Church...

Then real life came...

Careers.

Marriage.

Children.

Bills.

Responsibilities.

I built a career in tech and 3 successful startups (all the glory to God)

Zac went to Notre Dame Law School, clerked for federal judges, and became a corporate litigator.

And for years, we were both trying to be faithful Catholic men in the middle of professional life.

And, this won't be the last time I say this, but that's why rooms like this matter so much...

Because everyone here knows that faith and professional life cannot be separated.

You cannot be Catholic on Sunday and secular from Monday to Friday.

You cannot say, "Jesus, you can have my prayer life, my parish life, and my family life, but my work life belongs to me..."

And that became very real to me after I went on a Cursillo retreat in January of 2024.

3 months prior, I was at the height of my career, we had bought a new car only a year before and our first home the year before that...

For the first time ever, I was furloughed...

At the age of 33, with my initials being JC, my wife knew exactly the words to console me - get to Mass. So I started to go to daily Mass...

It all led up to this retreat.

I came out of that retreat with the divinely inspired idea to build something to help Catholics evangelize... I didn't know one day we would be building something so much more than that...

I did not have a full plan.

I did not have all the details.

I did not see the road ahead.

But I had hope...

AI was going to change how people search for answers.

And not small answers.

People were not just going to use AI like Google and ask things like, "What is the capital of North Carolina?"

They were going to ask:

Does God exist?

Why am I suffering?

Why does God allow suffering?

What does the Church teach?

Should I go to confession?

How do I talk to my child about the Eucharist?

How do I deal with x?

How do I come back to God?

And I kept thinking back to those late nights with Kayla...

We would have given anything to have had a faithful Catholic tool that could help us find clear answers quickly... especially in some of those sit down conversations with father-in-law who was staunchly opposed to Catholicism...

So I texted Zac.

I said, "Let's get coffee."

And I shared my experience with him and the idea that was forming...

What if we built a tool that could help Catholics better know, live, and share their Catholic faith?

Zac said yes almost before I finished the sentence...

Now, that might sound inspiring.

At the time, it was terrifying.

Because saying yes to God **sounds romantic until obedience sends the invoice.**

So I turned down a job offer I had.

We had four kids at the time.

And went on an incredibly humbling journey of complete surrender.

Exhausting every bit of finances we had, eventually even selling our house to help fund the first stretch of Truthly.

Zac worked nights and weekends for longer than his wife should have had to tolerate, until he could finally leave the law firm and come into Truthly full-time.

There were many moments when I prayed, "Lord, I hope this is You, because if this is just me, this is going to be a very expensive mistake..."

But God kept giving enough light for the next step.

Not the whole road.

Just the next step.

The signal graces starting pouring in...

And here is one thing I have learned.

God rarely gives you a blueprint.

But he will give you challenges to overcome...

And when those challenges are from God, eventually it requires a yes.

Not a perfect yes.

Just a surrendered yes.

But a **hope-filled** yes

And here's what I didn't fully understand when I said that yes.

The wall that needed to be built was much bigger than I knew.

Because we weren't just building an app.

We were stepping onto a construction site that the Pope himself would call the most important of our generation...

Which takes us to part 2...

I'm going to go a little deeper for a few minutes.. So stay with me as I try to connect the dots between hope and AI...

Let me ask you something...

When you hear the words "Artificial Intelligence" — what's the first thing you feel?

For a lot of people, it's anxiety. Or confusion.

And honestly? That reaction isn't irrational. The dangers are real.

We are living through a transformation as significant as the Industrial Revolution. I know not everyone loves that comparison — but that's what Pope Leo the 14th said when he signed *Magnifica Humanitas* on May 15th of this year, exactly 135 years to the day after Leo the 13th signed *Rerum Novarum*.

And just like Leo the 13th looked at the factories and saw what was happening to workers and families, Leo the 14th looks at AI and names what he sees without even flinching...

The concentration of world-shaping power in the hands of a tiny number of private companies. The erosion of human work and the dignity of workers. The simulation of human relationship — systems designed to feel like friendship, to feel like intimacy — that slowly replace the real thing.

And perhaps most importantly for us, as Catholics — the imposition of a moral vision.

Here's something Pope Leo said that I haven't been able to stop thinking about...

"Those who control AI will impose their own moral vision, which will become the **invisible infrastructure** of these systems."

The invisible infrastructure.

You don't see it. It's just kinda there..

When your kids (or anyone for that matter) ask a secular AI a question about faith, about sexuality, about what it means to be human — they are not getting a neutral answer. They are getting an answer shaped by a particular vision of the world. Let me be clear - it's a **post-Christian one**. A **relativistic** one that treats the teachings of the Church as one opinion among many, equally valid or invalid as any other.

And that's not neutral. That's actually formation. Just formation toward something *other* than the truth.

So yes — the dangers are real. And a Catholic who feels uneasy about all of this is paying attention.

But here's what I want you to hear...

Despair is not the Catholic response to a dangerous moment. It never has been.

Pope Leo doesn't call us to panic. He calls us to something harder and I think way more beautiful. He uses this image of a construction site. He quotes Nehemiah — the man who looked at the rubble of Jerusalem and didn't give up. Who gathered the people, assigned each one their section of the wall, and said: we **build**.

To quote him, he said -

"I see in Nehemiah a striking parable of our own **vocation** — which is not to be **passive** spectators of social and cultural fractures, nor mere commentators on what is crumbling, but men and women prepared to enter the construction sites of history...."

He names technology companies among those builders.

The choice, he says, is not between **yes** and **no** to technology. It's between building Babel or rebuilding Jerusalem. Pride and self-sufficiency — or shared responsibility with God at the center.

That's a choice we get to make. Right now.... Today.

Here's the thing about the Catholic tradition that I keep coming back to.

The Church has never retreated from a new technology. Not the printing press. Not the radio. Not the internet. Every time something new arrived that could be misused — and was being misused — the Catholic response wasn't to run. It was to enter. To consecrate. To make it serve the truth.

That pattern is the reason for hope.

Because if the danger in the age of AI is that the most powerful information technology in human history is being built by people with the wrong vision of what it means to be human — then the response is not despair. The response is: **get in there with the right vision.**

That's what we're trying to do at Truthly. Not because we have it all figured out. But because we believe — we **hope** — that a tool built on the truth of the Catholic faith, built to point people toward Christ rather than away from Him, built to help people encounter the Truth in everything, built to be a door rather than a destination... can bear **real** fruit.

And more broadly: because we believe what Pope Leo says is true.

That what saves humanity is not better technology. It is the divine love that descends into the most fragile point of our history and renews it from within.

AI cannot save anyone. Only Christ can.

But in His hands — in the hands of surrendered people who build with the right vision — it can be one more way the world hears His voice.

That is the reason for hope...

Which leads me to my 3rd point...

Here's what hope does when it takes root in a person...

It doesn't stay private.

It simply can't.

Hope surrendered privately becomes witness.

Witness shared in community becomes mission.

Mission lived together becomes the Church.

This isn't a **metaphor**.

This is Acts 2.

"They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers... and they had the goodwill of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved."

What drew people to the early Church?

Hope made **visible** in a **community** that actually **loved** each other.

That's it. That was the whole strategy honestly...

And it worked.

The fruit of evangelization — real conversions, real transformation — has always grown in community, not in isolation. Because a soul surrendered in hope doesn't turn inward. It turns outward. Toward others. Toward the Church. Toward mission.

Despair... it isolates.

But hope unites.

That's why this room is so important... I'll say it all again

The Assembly of Catholic Professionals exists because someone understood that the most powerful thing a Catholic can bring into a boardroom, or a courtroom, or the hospital, or classroom, whatever the room may be — is not just competence.

It's a **surrendered** life. A **hope-filled** one.

You cannot be Catholic on Sunday and secular Monday through Friday.

You cannot hand Jesus your prayer life and your parish life and keep your work life for yourself. It doesn't work that way. And everyone in this room knows it.

You are not just professionals who happen to be Catholic.

We have to be a community that **hope builds**.

And that is exactly what Truthly is trying to build toward. A movement of Catholics who know what they believe, can articulate why, and are on fire to share it — in their neighborhoods, their families, their workplaces.

Catholics who are so convinced of the truth that they can't help but talk about it.

Catholics who aren't afraid to take holy risks.

Catholics who say yes before they see the whole road.

My hope is that Truthly is a tool that leads people to complete surrender in the ultimate Truth. Not a person. THE person.

And based on the fruit we've already seen — by the grace of God — we will help millions find Him.

And as promised, I want to close with telling you about one of those stories...

A woman named Miriam reached out and wrote to us all the way from Norway.

She is a single mother.

She has two young children.

She was on sick leave because of cancer.

And when she first came to Truthly, she was carrying a question that every human heart has to face eventually.

"Does God exist?"

Here's exactly what she wrote to us...

"When I first came to Truthly, I was asking whether God truly exists. I was lonely in my faith, facing opposition from my parents, dealing with a difficult custody situation, and carrying the weight of illness and exhaustion.

Through my conversations with Truthly, something beautiful has happened:

I attended my first Sunday Mass. I purchased my first rosary — made of hematite — and had it blessed by a priest. I discovered Saint Michael the Archangel, whom I have felt close to since childhood, and learned that this devotion is deeply and beautifully Catholic. I learned about Saint Benedict and now wear both medallions around my neck. I brought holy water home and blessed every room in my apartment — including the room where my children and I sleep together. I bought my first Catholic Bible — brand new, in brown leather. And I have begun to understand the Church, the sacraments, Mary, the saints, and the love of God in ways I never did before.

This app has not just taught me about the Catholic faith. It has led me home.

I am currently in the process of converting to Catholicism through OCIA, and I carry Truthly with me as a helpful tool on this journey."

That is why we build.

So here's what I know to be true.

It's definitely not the hope that kills you.

Hope is the engine.

And a surrendered life is the most powerful evangelization tool the world has ever seen.

Go be that.

Thank you...