

"The Three Sieves"

(Often attributed to Socrates but that is highly debated by scholars)



There was a Teacher who had a great reputation of wisdom. One day, someone came to find the great philosopher and said to him: "Do you know what I just heard about your friend?"

"Hold on a moment," replied the Teacher. "Let me first look closely at what you are about to tell me. Have you passed your words through the three sieves?"

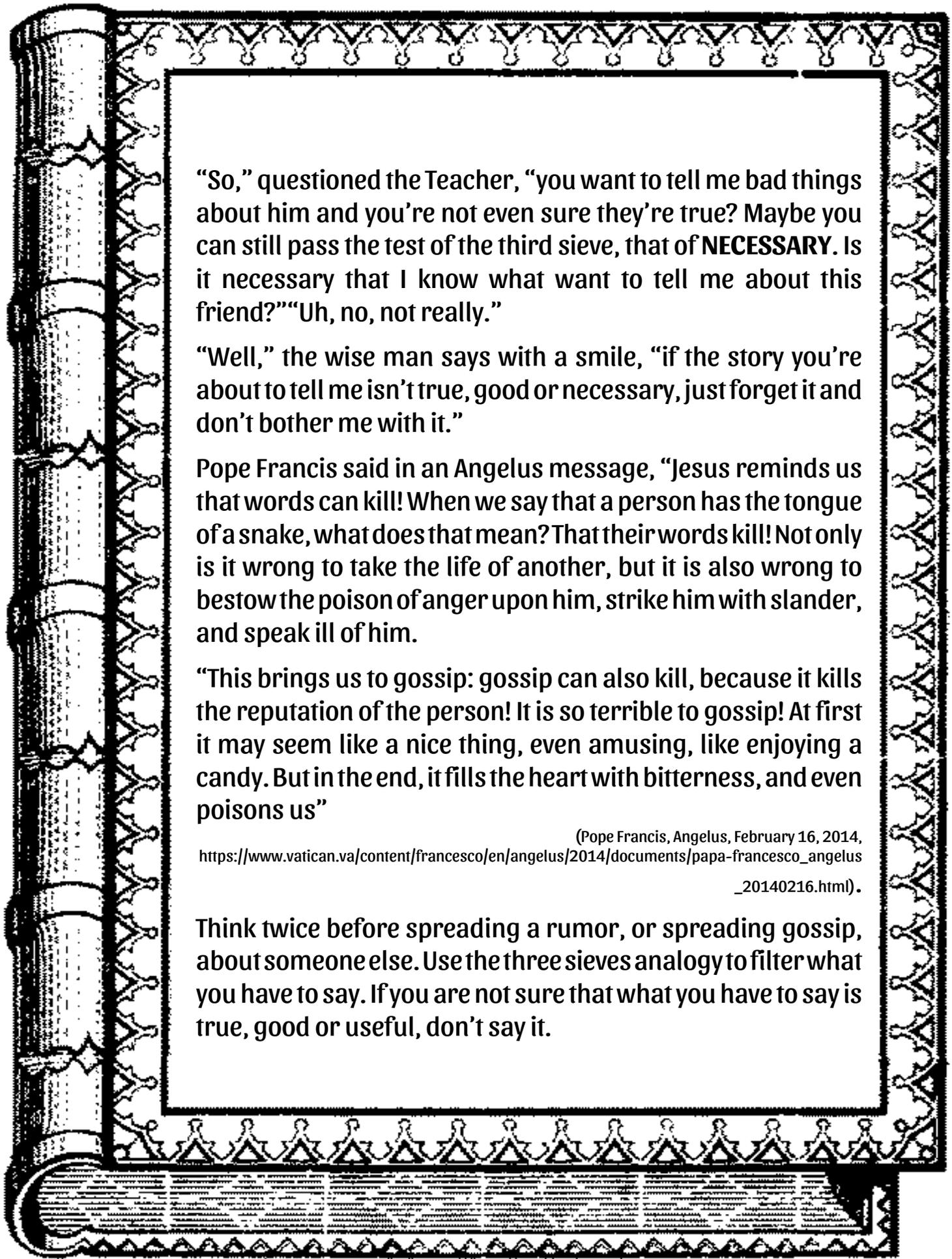
"The three sieves," questioned the man, "what is it?"

"Yes," continued the wise man. Before telling anything about the others, it's good to take the time to filter what you mean. I call it the test of the three sieves. The first sieve is the **TRUTH**. Have you heard it yourself or watched with your own eyes?"

"No, to tell the truth," said the man, after a moment of hesitation, "I just overheard it."

"Very good! So, you don't know if it's true. Let's continue with the second sieve, that of **GOODNESS**. What you want to tell me about my friend, is it something positive or good?"

"Oh, no! To the contrary, actually."



“So,” questioned the Teacher, “you want to tell me bad things about him and you’re not even sure they’re true? Maybe you can still pass the test of the third sieve, that of **NECESSARY**. Is it necessary that I know what want to tell me about this friend?” “Uh, no, not really.”

“Well,” the wise man says with a smile, “if the story you’re about to tell me isn’t true, good or necessary, just forget it and don’t bother me with it.”

Pope Francis said in an Angelus message, “Jesus reminds us that words can kill! When we say that a person has the tongue of a snake, what does that mean? That their words kill! Not only is it wrong to take the life of another, but it is also wrong to bestow the poison of anger upon him, strike him with slander, and speak ill of him.

“This brings us to gossip: gossip can also kill, because it kills the reputation of the person! It is so terrible to gossip! At first it may seem like a nice thing, even amusing, like enjoying a candy. But in the end, it fills the heart with bitterness, and even poisons us”

(Pope Francis, Angelus, February 16, 2014, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2014/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20140216.html).

Think twice before spreading a rumor, or spreading gossip, about someone else. Use the three sieves analogy to filter what you have to say. If you are not sure that what you have to say is true, good or useful, don’t say it.