



The Armor of Faith

Topic Summary: By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them

Part I: Wolf in Sheep's Clothing



*Wolf in Sheep's Clothing - Barlow
Public Domain*

Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Helen is a lay-Dominican, which is also known as the Order of Preachers, and she, along with her husband Dan, are engaged in youth catechesis and music ministry at Saint Philip Benizi Catholic Mission in Cedaredge, Colorado. Sharon is our token cradle Catholic, and, as everyone by now knows, I am simply here to ask questions because that is the super power I developed at the age of two. Of course, the realm of answers is why we have our panelists, because someone has to carry the burden of providing the answers, so welcome to our panelists as well as to our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

Discussion:

We hope you enjoyed our last series concerning Miracles and Faith. As we discussed, a variety of miracles from Biblical Times to the 20th Century, we noted some common threads in the roles and responses. Those who must discern include witnesses or recipients of the miracle, faithful observers, the family of witnesses, the community, the clergy, and public authorities. All these

roles may view the miracle from different perspectives and through the lens of their values and views of the world. We also mentioned, it is one thing to discern, “what just happened,” when we might be witness to a miracle, but another to determine what to believe when we hear or read about an event.

We also discussed that discerning miracles through historical accounts is somewhat problematic in our assessment in that evidence may be lacking, we may be unaware of critical information, those who report may leave out critical context, and of course the most difficult part of historical analysis, which is the pollution of the historical record with falsehoods, sometimes well intentioned, but falsehoods none-the-less. These falsehoods may embellish or obscure. In so doing, they detract from what God desires we observe and comprehend. We must be careful, then, so we may discern what is true.

It may be a challenge for us to accept a miracle without evidence, but as we look at such events as Fatima, a miracle of relatively recent times, we might wonder how it is the world has not paid more attention? How is it that the world today is largely ignorant of what was witnessed by an estimated 70,000 people, especially in light of reports from those who initially believed the apparitions of Fatima to be merely the fabrication of children, but reflected a different tone after they witnessed the Miracle of the Sun?

As we examine the events and endeavor to connect the dots, the most important question to answer is what is God communicating to us through His interventions? The messages of Fatima were clear. Our Lady spoke of penance, prayer, devotion to her Immaculate Heart, and stopping that which we do which offends God. She gave warning of the chastisements which God would allow if we do not heed her instructions.

The events of Fatima are certainly not the beginning of time, but it is a significant event in spiritual history. It is for this reason we note another critical milestone which occurred 33 years prior to the miracle at Fatima. This was the vision of Pope Leo XIII which caused him to compose the Saint Michael prayer. As accounts explain, Pope Leo XIII had just concluded Mass when he overheard a conversation between our Lord and the devil. The boast of Satan was that given 100 years, he could destroy the church Christ built upon Peter. (cf Matthew 16:18-19)

As we look at the accounts surrounding the composition of the Saint Michael Prayer, we might wonder when the 100 years began of which Satan was allowed in response to his boast. Some place the date in 1914 with the beginning of WWI. Others speculate that it began with the Miracle of Sun on 13 October 1917. In either of those cases, 100 years has come and gone, but the spiritual battle around us continues to rage.

Perhaps it was with the beginning of WWII on 1 September 1939. If that is the case, there are many years left to the fight. While we know the end, [spoiler alert] The Immaculate Heart of Mary will Triumph and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against the church Christ built upon Peter (cf. Matthew 16:17-19), we must not be complacent, for during battles and wars, there are casualties. We do not want to become a casualty of Satan's deceptions. We must heed the warnings given to us and the signs before us.

As I mentioned last time, Jesus told us in Luke 12:54-56:

(Luke 12:54-56)

54 *“When you see cloud rising in the west you say immediately that it is going to rain—and so it does; 55 and when you notice that the wind is blowing from the south you say that it is going to be hot—and so it is. 56 You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”*

As we look to the prophecies of chastisement, we must also remember, a warning does not mean that what will happen is inevitable, it means we may have the opportunity to influence the outcome. Consider Jonah 3:3-10.

(Jonah 3:3-10)

3 *So Jonah set out for Nineveh, in accord with the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an awesomely great city; it took three days to walk through it. 4 Jonah began his journey through the city, and when he had gone only a single day’s walk announcing, “Forty days more and Nineveh shall be overthrown,” 5 the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.*

6 *When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, laid aside his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. 7 Then he had this proclaimed throughout Nineveh: “By decree of the king and his nobles, no man or beast, no cattle or sheep, shall taste anything; they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water. 8 Man and beast alike must be covered with sackcloth and call loudly to God; they all must turn from their evil way and from the violence of their hands. 9 Who knows? God may again repent and turn from his blazing wrath, so that we will not perish.” 10 *When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, he repented of the evil he had threatened to do to them; he did not carry it out.**

Let us, then, look to the signs of the times. Let us in prayer ask God what He desires of us. Let us consider the purpose for which God created us and how we may help accomplish His will. If we look at the news, there is much over which we must be concerned. We might wonder how it is that so much evil surrounds us?

At times, it all seems hopeless. We are tempted to feel powerless; that there is nothing we can do to turn the tide to what is right and just. We might wonder when the patience of God will come to an end and His final hand of justice will sweep away all the evil which infects the earth? Still, we must not forget times past where God relented in His plans of chastisement because of the faithful few. Consider the conversation between Abraham and God as recounted in Genesis 18:22-26.

(Genesis 18:22-26)

22 *As the men turned and walked on toward Sodom, Abraham remained standing before the LORD. 23 Then Abraham drew near and said: “Will you really sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there were fifty righteous people in the city; would you really sweep away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous*

people within it? 25 Far be it from you to do such a thing, to kill the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike! Far be it from you! Should not the judge of all the world do what is just?" 26 The LORD replied: If I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.

Abraham continues in his humble questions to the Lord and eventually asks, what if there are but ten righteous people in the city and the Lord replied He would not destroy the city for the sake of the ten.

Through out the Bible, we see how generations have strayed from God, but also how He has worked through the "remnant few" to restore and build communities and nations of faith. Let us consider Isaiah 1:4-5 where the prophet laments:

(Isaiah 1:4-5)

*4 Ah! Sinful nation, people laden with wickedness,
evil offspring, corrupt children!
They have forsaken the LORD,
spurned the Holy One of Israel,
apostatized,
5 Why would you yet be struck,
that you continue to rebel?
The whole head is sick,
the whole heart faint.*

But the prophet later reveals how God works through the remnant.

(Isaiah 1:9)

*If the LORD of hosts had not
left us a small remnant,
We would have become as Sodom,
would have resembled Gomorrah.*

We see a similar sentiment in Ben Sira [Sirach] 47:22

(Ben Sira 47:22)

*But God does not withdraw his mercy,
nor permit even one of his promises to fail.
He does not uproot the posterity of the chosen,
nor destroy the offspring of his friends.
So he gave to Jacob a remnant,
to David a root from his own family.*

In the New Testament, Saint Paul reflects:

(Romans 11:1-5)

1 I ask, then, has God rejected his people? Of course not! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. 2 God has not rejected his people

whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel? 3 "Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have torn down your altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life." 4 But what is God's response to him? "I have left for myself seven thousand men who have not knelt to Baal." 5 So also at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace.

(Question 1: We see throughout the history of our relationship with God an ebb and flow of faithfulness. We see how God builds, over and over, from the "remnant few." As we look to our day and age, who are the remnant few and how might God work through them?)

As we begin this new series of discussion, "By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them," I should point out that it was inspired by a documentary produced by Richard and Stephen Payne entitled, "A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing." I went to both an afternoon and evening showing of the documentary on 13 October 2016.

The documentary opened with a reference to the story of the wolf in sheep's clothing and the scripture we know as Matthew 7:15-20:

(Matthew 7:15-20)

15 "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but underneath are ravenous wolves. 16 By their fruits you will know them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Just so, every good tree bears good fruit, and a rotten tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a rotten tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 So by their fruits you will know them.

The documentary addressed the history and political turmoil driven by such figures as community organizer Saul Alinsky. It recounted how Alinsky was influenced by the tactics of Marxist, Socialist, and Communist ideologies and how Alinsky's ideas further influenced Liberalist and Progressive political organizations in the United States. It also followed Alinsky's relationships with several Catholic priests and his influence over Catholic organizations such as the Campaign for Human Development, and Call to Action.

On the surface, the efforts by Alinsky to address issues of the poor appear to be a noble enterprise in line with what God asks of us. When looking under the surface, though, we can see the concern is not for results or workable solutions, but for power.

Alinsky was quoted as saying, "I knew plenty of communist in those days and I worked with them on a number of projects. Back in the 30s the communist did a hell of lot of good work. Anybody who tells you he was active in progressive causes in those days and never worked with the reds is a g** d*** liar. Their platform stood for all the right things and unlike many liberals they were willing to put their bodies on the line." (Judge)

The documentary made the case as to how organizations were formed to undermine the social structures of free societies such that they might be replaced with Socialist and Communist ideologies. Institutions were formed to influence the value systems of generations, not only to attack the political structures, but spiritual as well.

The documentary quoted Dr. Bella Dodd as she testified concerning the content of a 1944 speech presented at the National Convention of Communist Parties in Madison Square Garden by Alexander Tractenburg who was a long time activist of the Socialist Party of America. Dr. Dodd quoted Tractenburg as saying,

“When we get ready to take the United States, we will not take it under the label of communism; We will not take it under the label of socialism. These labels are unpleasant to the American people, and have been speared too much. **We will take the United States under labels we have made very lovable; We'll take it under Liberalism, under Progressivism, under Democracy! But take it we will!**”

As I watched the documentary, I was reminded of the tactics I had experienced during the course of the Cold War. Among my assignments within the Army, I was a subject matter expert on Civil Disturbance Operations and Terrorism Counteraction. I also held a variety of Force Protection planning and policy positions which required continued threat analysis to ensure the protection of our forces, families, civilian workers, and resources; therefore, I was routinely exposed to the tactics of Soviet Disinformation Operations.

As the documentary concluded and the assembled group began to discuss the contents of what they had just seen, I remember standing up and commenting that when one watches a documentary such as this, one has to ask, could this possibly be true or is it just some form of a conspiracy theory? I stated that I recognized these tactics as those faced as we endeavored to protect military installations from a variety of political protests and terrorist attacks. While we may hear in the news about terrorists events, what we do not hear as much of are reports about the groups behind them which endeavor to change societal values and public opinion in favor of communism or socialism and against the institutions of the West, in particular, those of the United States.

Soviet “Active Measures” employed a variety of political front organizations, such as the World Peace Council and the World Council of Churches to enable disinformation and framing operations designed to turn public opinion in favor of Marxism-Leninism and against those who stood in opposition to such ideals. The tactics were all rooted in deceptions and made broad use of forgeries, planted media reports, and political organizations designed to appear to be of the West, but who were bankrolled and heavily manipulated by the KGB.

During the first half of my military service, I was not Catholic. I did not receive my confirmation until January of 1990, shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall which occurred on 9 November 1989. I did not see the world at time through the lens of a Catholic, therefore, I did not recognize that the same forces were also actively working against the Catholic Church.

(Question 2: Of course, the issues of socialism and communism are typically ones of political concern and national defense. **Why should we as Catholics be concerned with such things and the political goals and tactics which they may use to influence the values of society?)**

One of the quotes in the documentary which I took down as a note was the reference to Fatima where our Blessed Mother explained that if Russia was not consecrated to her Immaculate

Heart, the errors of Russia would be spread to the world. Naturally, this caught my attention, given that the primary threat we faced during the Cold War was the Soviet Union. I knew well their tactics of propaganda as well as the use of KGB front organizations to spread disinformation designed to deceptively manipulate public opinion for the purposes of furthering Soviet goals, in particular, the spread of communism, which is an atheistic ideology.

While I had heard of Fatima, at the time of my watching of this documentary, I did not know the details of Fatima or the messages of Our Lady associated with Fatima. Hearing those words, “[Russia] shall spread her errors throughout the world,” was simply a confirmation of what I had faced the majority of my military career.

There was another part to the quote, though, and that was, “...promoting wars and persecutions of the Church. The Soviet Union dissolved itself on 26 December 1991. The Cold War was over; therefore, during the latter part of my military career I was engaged in activities designed to normalize relations with Russia and the former East-Block countries.

(Question 3: The Soviet objective of spreading Marxism-Leninism to the world was no more, at least from the perspective of the national interests of the United States. So, as we reflect upon history, have the consequences Our Lady's warning come and gone?)

On 24 November 1915, I bought a book at our local Salvation Army Thrift Store. I purchased it because of the association of my military career with the subject matter. It was not until almost a year later that I got around to start reading the book and it just happened to be about the time I was to view the documentary. According to notes I kept, I started reading the book on 4 September 2016, just a little more than a month before I would see the, “A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing,” documentary.

The book is entitled, Disinformation. It was written by LTG Ion Pacepa, who was a former Romanian Director of Intelligence under President Nicolae Ceausescu. In the book, he outlines the strategies of the former Soviet block intelligence services to undermine freedom, promote Marxism-Leninism, and promote terrorism to disrupt the West. The book also outlined Soviet block intelligence efforts to disrupt the Catholic Church, “drive a wedge between Jews and Christians,” and “shape the new Western peace movements into 'fifth columns' for the 'socialist camp.’” (Pacepa, 41)

I had not finished reading the book by the time I saw the documentary, but I had gotten to the chapter entitled, “Stalin's Encounter with Catholicism.” LTG Pacepa wrote, “Stalin could not dethrone the pope, who was highly praised and out of his reach. But he could wipe the Catholic churches off the face of the map in the new Baltic countries, just as he had done with the Russian Orthodox churches.” (Pacepa, 50)

Part II of the book was devoted to the framing operations conducted against Pope Pius XII which were designed to redefine the pope as “Hitler's Pope,” and to turn world opinion against Catholics. LTG Pacepa began this segment of the book by writing, “The war between Communism and the Catholic Church is almost as old as communism itself.” (Pacepa, 59) What really surprised me as I continued reading was that it appeared at least half of Pacepa's book

was devoted to disinformation and framing operations directed against Catholic Church officials.

(Question 4: Of course, these framing and disinformation operations are largely related to the events of WWII, a good number of years ago, so it is kinda like water under the bridge, isn't it? Why should we be concerned about such history?)

Prior to reading LTG Pacea's book, I regularly encountered a number of social media posts containing misinformation and allegations demonizing the Catholic Church. Some of these included references to "Hitler's Pope." As I read LTG Pacea's accounts of the disinformation the KGB had spread about the Catholic Church, I noted how a number of these items continue on in social media and our modern times. Indeed, the book entitled, Hitler's Pope can be purchased on Amazon today. In other words, those who created the lies may be gone or out of power, but the lies live on. LTG Pacea commented in his book, "The Cold War is over, but the Kremlin's framing operations seem to be still en vogue—and even to be infecting the United States." (Pacea, 48)

(Question 5: Of course, the former Soviet Block are no longer driving this narrative. How is it that such disinformation against the Catholic Church continues to circulate and who continues to spread it?)

Remember the quote I mentioned earlier that was attributed to Alexander Tractenburg? He said, "We will take the United States under labels we have made very lovable; We'll take it under Liberalism, under Progressivism, under Democracy! But take it we will!" Of course, that was 1944, but the day before I saw the documentary, reports began to circulate about an email exchange between John Podesta and Sandy Newman concerning the Catholic Church.

Podesta, is most common known as the former Chief of Staff to Bill Clinton and former Chairman of the 2016 Hillary Clinton Presidential Campaign, but he is also the founder and director of the Center for American Progress (CAP). According to their web site, "The **Center for American Progress** is an independent nonpartisan policy institute that is dedicated to improving the lives of all Americans, through bold, progressive ideas, as well as strong leadership and concerted action." The mission statement continues, "Our aim is not just to change the conversation, but to change the country."

Sandy Newman is a non-profit executive. One of the non-profits for which he was the founder and served as president is "Voices for Progress." According to the Wikipedia page providing Newman's biography, Voices for Progress, "... combines the strategy of grassroots organizing with the influence of leaders. Newman developed this organization to advocate for climate change regulation, education funding and economic opportunity, immigration reform, campaign finance reform, and other issues."

On the surface, this just sounds like standard political fare, but the email revealed other objectives. While I was commenting to the group about what I had observed in the documentary, I mentioned that most of what we watched seemed like distant history, but suddenly, I was awakened to the term "progressive" and the statement by Alexander

Tractenburg. I mentioned that history is important to our understanding, but the question for our attention now is, "What is happening in our day?"

I, then, using my cell phone, pulled up the email I had heard about earlier that day in the news. The email reads:

Subject: Re: opening for a Catholic Spring? just musing . . .

On 2/10/12, Sandy Newman <sandynewman@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi, John,

This whole controversy with the bishops opposing contraceptive coverage even though 98% of Catholic women (and their conjugal partners) have used contraception has me thinking . . . There needs to be a Catholic Spring, in which Catholics themselves demand the end of a middle ages dictatorship and the beginning of a little democracy and respect for gender equality in the Catholic church. Is contraceptive coverage an issue around which that could happen. The Bishops will undoubtedly continue the fight. Does the Catholic Hospital Association support of the Administration's new policy, together with "the 98%" create an opportunity?

Of course, this idea may just reveal my total lack of understanding of the Catholic church, the economic power it can bring to bear against nuns and priests who count on it for their maintenance, etc. Even if the idea isn't crazy, I don't qualify to be involved and I have not thought at all about how one would "plant the seeds of the revolution," or who would plant them. Just wondering . . .

Hoping you're well, and getting to focus your time in the ways you want.

Sandy

Sandy Newman, President
Voices for Progress
202.669.8754
voicesforprogress.org
From: John Podesta <john.podesta@gmail.com>
To: Sandy Newman <sandynewman@gmail.com>
CC: Tara McGuinness <tara.mcguinness@gmail.com>
Content-Type: text/plain; charset=ISO-8859-1

We created Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good to organize for a moment like this. But I think it lacks the leadership to do so now. Likewise Catholics United. Like most Spring movements, I think this one will have to be bottom up. I'll discuss with Tara. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend is the other person to consult.

(Question 6: While Neman indicated he was just musing, Podesta's response is what concerned me. What was revealed in this short statement, "We created Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good to organize for such a moment like this?")

Kathleen Kennedy Townsend: Former Lieutenant Governor of Maryland from 1995 to 2003, member of the Center for American Progress Trustee Advisory Board, member of the independent Advisory Council of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), member of the Board of the National Catholic Reporter; member of the board of directors for Catholic Democrats (Wikipedia)

Tara McGuinness: Executive Director, Center for American Progress Action Fund, the group that manages the website ThinkProgress (a progressive public policy research and advocacy organization); Senior Vice President for Communications, Center for American Progress (Activist Facts, Wikipedia)

Quotes:

“When we get ready to take the United States, we will not take it under the label of communism; We will not take it under the label of socialism. These labels are unpleasant to the American people, and have been speared too much. We will take the United States under labels we have made very lovable; We'll take it under Liberalism, under Progressivism, under Democracy! But take it we will!”

– *Alexander Tractenburg*

“When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that it is the great sign that God gives you, that He is going to punish the world for its crimes by means of war, hunger, persecution of the Church and of the Holy Father. To forestall this, I shall come to ask for the Consecration of Russia to My Immaculate Heart and the Communion of Reparation on the First Saturdays. If they heed My requests, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace. If not, she shall spread her errors throughout the world, promoting wars and persecutions of the Church; the good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated; in the end, My Immaculate Heart shall triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to Me, which will be converted, and some time of peace will be given to the world.”

– *Our Lady to the children of Fatima*

Final Thoughts:

One of my mantras is that those who do not know their faith leave themselves vulnerable to the one who would take it from them. The emissaries of the evil one are not always easy to recognize, because they do not always approach us with a menacing posture. They often use deception to gain our trust, to put us off guard, and to encourage us to values and virtues contrary to what God asks of us. As we endeavor to be vigilant, we must recognize that the successful lie is often wrapped in a kernel of truth.

As we continue in our discussion of the forces working to sabotage our values and our church, it is difficult to avoid political topics as there is no such thing as complete separation of church and state. Both are called to care for the needs of the children of God's creation.

The issue is not whether liberals or conservatives are correct in their political ideologies, rather, the most important point for our consideration is whether we understand what God asks of us as

we tend to His creation. It is not just a matter of identifying a problem, but what is right and just must also be considered as we navigate the complete problem solving process and manage the consequences of solutions and actions. We must also recognize that the prowling wolves are not contained in just one political candidate, organization, party, or institution. The wolf roams wherever they may find their prey.

If we are to do the work of God, we must do so within the structures of our society to include our political structures. If we are to do the work of God, we must also endeavor to understand what God asks of us. If we are to do the work of God, we must ask Him for the wisdom, courage, and strength to know what is right and just and how we may accomplish that which is right and just. To do the work of God, we must be vigilant so we may recognize the wolves and expose them so we may defend against them before they are able to do their damage.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we continue our discussion concerning, “By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them.”

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may put on the armor of **truth, righteousness, peace, faith, salvation**, and the **Word** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: [By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them – Part II](#)

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