



The Armor of Faith

Topic Summary: By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them *Part VII: Labels and Emotionalism*



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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. That 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:

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

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. Amen.

Discussion:

Last time, we discussed how history is often used as a club of sorts against Catholics and the Holy Catholic Church. It goes without saying there are many scandals in church history, but we must place those scandals in the proper context. Such scandals are not the product of our faith, but the failure of individuals to live according to what God asks of us. We should not allow the actions of a few to be interpreted as a justification to diminish the doctrines of our faith or our personal relationship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

As members of the body of Christ, we have a responsibility to discern and evangelize truth. If we are to fulfill this responsibility, we must not only study the scriptures and the teachings of the church, but we must also study history from which to understand the context of the times.

For members of the laity, we might ask, how are we to do this, for most of us are not theologians or historians? As I mentioned, the task can be quite daunting. The effort starts with prayer and study, but it also requires that we understand our limitations and where we need the help of God.

We should admit when we do not know something, but at the same time, we should take notes so that we might research questions some might have and look to provide answers at a later date. We also want to learn from the resources of the Church such that we do not become the source of unintentional heresy. Our objective is not to win arguments, but to dispel unjust perceptions of our faith. Through love, patience, and truth; we accomplish the objectives of Christ when we preserve the opportunity for another conversation, because small, loving, and truthful taps may cause the door of the heart to open when hard and threatening pounding may only serve to drive defensiveness or fear which may lead to a decision to bar and lock the door.

As we engage the information flow of the day, we must learn to vet what we read and what we hear. Especially when something peaks our emotions, we must look to apply a process by which we may enhance our likelihood to discern and find truth.

Of course, our most effective evangelization is not necessarily accomplished through our words, but our actions. If we are to evangelize through our actions, then, we must endeavor to learn and live the fullness of our faith. As we engage those who surround us, let us remember these words found in 1 Peter 3:13-17:

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13 Now who is going to harm you if you are enthusiastic for what is good? 14 But even if you should suffer because of righteousness, blessed are you. Do not be afraid or terrified with fear of them, 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts. Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, 16 but do it with gentleness and reverence, keeping your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who defame your good conduct in Christ may themselves be put to shame. 17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that be the will of God, than for doing evil.

Today, we are going to address the tactics of labeling and emotionalism. Simply put, labeling is a means to categorize. When a product is labeled, we look at the label to surmise the contents. The label allows us to know whether we want to take the product off the shelf and place it in our basket of goods or leave it where it sits. We don't have to open the product to examine its contents, we simply trust the label to tell us what we need to know for the purposes of our decision to take or leave.

(Question 1: So, labeling is a means to categorize. **What happens when we label a person or organization? Is that good or bad?)**

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. Because such labels are unpleasant to the American people. We will take the United States under labels which we have made very lovable. We'll take it under Liberalism, under Progressivism, and under Democracy. But take it we will.

– Alexander Trachtenberg, 1944; quoted by Bella Dodd (St. John Neumann Men's Ministry, 7)

(Question 2: In this example, we observe a tactic which I call “loveable labels.” What is Trachtenberg telling the crowd? How might labeling assist the wolf?)

In an early chapter of LTG Pacepa's book, he relates:

Realizing that his strong-arm methods would no longer work, Stalin turned his thoughts to an old Russian weapon of the emotions that had so successfully been wielded by him and all the tsars before him: anti-Semitism. He was convinced that the hatred for Jews had deep roots in Europe, and he wanted to turn that hatred against his new enemy. (Pacepa, 94)

(Question 3: A label by itself is just a label. How might emotionalism influence the use of a label?)

In his book, Rules for Radicals, Saul Alinsky lays out 13 power tactics. The thirteenth rule states: “Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.” (Alinsky, 134)

(Question 4: Picking the target and freezing it basically a means of identifying and isolating an opponent. What do we think “personalize it and polarize it,” means? How might this relate to labels?)

According to the Wikipedia article concerning Labeling theory, “Labeling Theory is the theory of how the self-identity and behavior of individuals may be determined or influenced by the terms used to describe or classify them.” (Wikipedia, Labeling Theory)

By labeling, we can quickly demonize, villainize, and scandalize a person or group. Conversely, we can use labels to glorify and canonize a person or group.

(Question 5: When someone attaches a label to us, we react. What are our reactions to being labeled and how does it affect our behavior? How might this fit the objectives of the wolf?)

In LTG Pacepa's book, Disinformation, he writes,

“The last chapter of Hitler's Pope was entitled, “Pius XII Redivivus.” In it, Cornwell argued that John Paul II represented a return to a highly centralized, autocratic papacy, as opposed to a more diversified Church. Cornwell wrote that there were early signs of a titanic struggle between the progressives and the traditionalists, with the potential for a cataclysmic schism, especially in North America. (Pacepa, 200)

The early church was simply known as “the Church.” It was not until heretical rivals began to form by which a label was used to define the church with apostolic succession to those who walked with Christ and were sent forth by Him to make disciples of all nations and to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. (cf Matthew 28:19) The term, “catholic” which means, “universal,” first appears in writing in a letter written by Saint Ignatius of Antioch. It was used in a fashion which expected that the reader understood its meaning, so we may assume the term was already in use within the oral tradition. (Whitehead)

The term is in reference to the church established by Christ for the salvation of everyone. It is a term which separates the church which Christ established from the various groups which formed in heresy. It provided a means to define the church which held the fullness of faith as the path to salvation open to all the children of God's creation. (Whitehead) It is the one church which carries the promise of Jesus Christ that “...the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

(Question 6: We define ourselves as Catholics to clearly identify those who follow the teachings of the Church Christ built upon Peter and, subsequently, Christ Himself. (Matthew 16:18-19) What happens when we add additional labels such as “Progressive Catholic,” “Liberal Catholic,” “Traditionalist Catholic,” “Conservative Catholic,” or “Roman Catholic?” What do those labels mean? Which one should we aspire to? ”)

Quotes:

As that very clever master of deception Yuri Andropov once told me, if a good piece of disinformation is repeated over and over, after a while it will take on a life of its own and will – all by itself, – generate a horde of unwitting but passionate advocates.
– *LTG Pacepa (Pacepa, 235)*

Final Thoughts:

As we have discussed today, labeling is a means of categorizing. It can be quite useful, but it can also be quite damaging as we attach emotions to labels. The wolf uses lovable labels to cause us to let our guard down and to accept deceptions. The wolf also uses hateful labels as a means to quickly villainize, demonize, and scandalize to distract us away from what God asks of us.

We use labels to describe ourselves. For example, as members of the church which Christ built upon Peter, we call ourselves Catholic. This is appropriate in that the label defines us among those who seek the fullness of faith as it guides us in our relationship with our Lord and Savior. As we attach additional labels, though, we must be careful for they may limit or change the definition of our Catholicism. As we subscribe to them, we define the conditions by which we seek our relationship with God rather than signifying our full obedience to what He asks of us.

As I mentioned last time, as our emotions escalate, the quality of communication, coordination, collaboration, problem solving, decision making and evangelization suffers. While emotions elevate our passion, it can also blind our reason and logic.

God calls us to be passionate in our faith, (cf. Revelation 3:15-16) for our passion moves us to action. Still, we want our action to be right and just; therefore, we must also seek to engage wisdom and truth within our efforts.

It is impossible to avoid the use of labels, but we must be wary as to the emotion which is attached to them, both in the labels we use to define others as well as those which may be attached to us. The wolf endeavors to use our emotions against us. The evil one desires our heart to be filled with the darkness of hate, but if we turn our heart to the light of the Holy Spirit, we turn our heart to the blessings of love.

We must be careful in our engagements with others, for we must not enable evil, but we must also remember Jesus calls us to love. (cf John 13:34-35) Our enemy is the evil one. His favorite tactic is to sow hate and division among us. If we are to have passion of emotion, let us endeavor for it to be the passion of love. Hate is powerful, but the more we are able to reach out with the blessings of love, the less room we allow for the destructive passions of hate.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we shift our discussion to the use of “front organizations” as a means to deceive.

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 VIII: The Tactics of the Wolves – Front Organizations

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