



The Armor of Faith

Topic Summary: By Their Fruits You Shall Know Them *Part IX: Media Bias and Gaining Echos*



*Town Crier
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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, which today, only consists of my lovely wife Sharon as Dan and Helen are off closing on a new home.

Sharon is our token cradle Catholic, and, as everyone by now knows, I am simply here to ask questions and mangle names. Correcting my pronunciation and answering questions is why we have our panel, so welcome to Sharon 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 examined how front organizations essentially wear the clothing of sheep to hide the real agendas of those who fund and influence them. We mentioned that organizations and publications with “Catholic” in their name do not always represent the truths of our faith. Of course, Catholics represent a rather large voting block, therefore, it should not surprise us that

various political entities endeavor to influence us to support their political positions. They make every effort to use our emotions to influence us and to distract us from opposing political agendas which are inconsistent with our faith, such as the culture of death.

When we see “Catholic” in the name, we are tempted to think in terms of someone who shares our faith. Unfortunately, we must do our research. When we encounter an organization or publication which professes to be Catholic, we should ask several questions, for example:

- What is the focus of their content, political talking points or faith?
- Is the content they promote consistent with Scripture and Catholic Teaching?
- Are hidden (political) agendas evident? (Remember, the push may not be overt, it may be in small baby steps or simply planting seeds for purposes of values grooming)
- Do they promote what God asks of us or the demands of political ideologies?
- When they present positions with scriptural justification, do they represent the full context of what scripture teaches?
- When they present positions with quotes from the Catechism as justification, is it consistent with the full context of Catholic teaching?
- How much time do they spend name calling or assigning negative labels? (sometimes this is unavoidable to make a point, but is it constant and emotional versus analytical?)
- How much time do they spend political shaming – not about what God asks of us, but pressing the ways of the world or political correctness?
- To what extreme are issues analyzed (true analysis or propaganda?)

As we engage various groups, we must remember that we do not subscribe to our faith because of our politics. Instead, our faith guides us in how we should engage politics. What God asks of us should shape how we engage the world and what we support or oppose. As we engage the world, we should remember, when God has not spoken, then, God has left it for the children of His creation to decide. When God has spoken, it is not for the children of His creation to contradict, for that is the very definition of sin.

Today, we are going to discuss how the wolf hides within the media and uses the media to manipulate our choices. One very prevalent topic in the news today is something called, “Fake News.” As its name implies, it is part of the art of deception and manipulation. It is characterized by the use of misleading information, information taken out of context, outright fabrications, or a mixture thereof. Often times, it is camouflaged within a kernel of truth as a means to give credibility to the disinformation.

In an article for the National Catholic Register, entitled, “Fake News Has Been Used Against Catholics for 2,000 Years,” John Clark writes, “As the world grows weary of months and years of 'fake news,' it's worth pondering that Catholics have been suffering because of fake news for twenty centuries.” (Clark)

Clark presents the following as an example: “Later in the first century, Tacitus records that Nero—to deflect the rumor he had started the great fire in Rome—decided to blame the Christians instead. Acting as judge, jury, press agent, and prosecutor, Nero inflicted suffering, torture and death upon Christians *en masse*. For good measure, Nero trumped up the charges; as Tacitus

writes: 'a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of "hating the human race."'"

(Question 1: As I mentioned, fake news is characterized by misleading information, information taken out of context, outright fabrications or a mixture thereof. It also contains elements of truth. What might we think the objective of fake news might be? Who is the target and how is it spread? Why is fake news sometimes difficult to detect?)

As we mentioned in previous episodes, this series was inspired by Our Lady's warning at Fatima that Russia would spread her errors to the world. In his book, *Disinformation*, LTG Ion Pacepa, a former Romanian spy chief, outlines how the Soviet KGB used the news media in support of its disinformation campaigns. LTG Pacepa wrote:

“The truth is, the Western media are quite easily manipulated, for they often craft their stories from press releases and tend, on the whole, to be indiscriminate about the nature and reliability of their sources.” (Pacepa, 17)

(Question 2: In the United States, we often view a free press as a crucial line of defense to keep government in check. What does LTG Pacepa's observation reveal to us about the media?)

LTG Pacepa also wrote:

Kalugin [a former KGB general] spent years spying in the United States for the KGB under the cover as a journalist. One of his tasks was to recruit agents in American left-leaning magazines and newspapers. Kalugin would even, on occasion, finance these magazines and newspapers and then plant stories reflecting the Soviet line, hoping that other news outlets would repeat them. (Pacepa, *Disinformation*, 145)

(Question 3: Here, LTG Pacepa outlines that the KGB used undercover agents and sympathizers as a means to get their narrative into the Western media. He also stated that the KGB hoped the narrative would be repeated by other news outlets. This is what I call, “gaining echos.” What does this accomplish?)

(Question 4: As we consider the role of the media in relation to information we use from which to make our daily decisions, we should take a moment and assess what the term, “media,” encompasses. What are the various forms of media which provide us with information?)

A good portion of LTG Pacepa's book was devoted to the framing of Pope Pius XII as “Hitler's Pope.” The process was initially attempted by Stalin through Radio Moscow. Reporting via Radio Moscow insinuated that Pope Pius XII was an ally of the Nazi's during World War II. LTG Pacepa related that this effort fell flat because factual history was too fresh in the minds of the people and information readily available to the Western media. (Pacepa, 59-61)

Though Stalin had failed in the framing of Pope Pius XII, a generation later, Khrushchev picked up the charge. LTG Pacepa's book outlines how the KGB, in coordination with East-block intelligence agencies, collected information, much of it mundane and innocent, by which a

narrative was generated to reinforce the notion Stalin initiated, through Radio Moscow, which was to frame Pope Pius XII as Hitler's Pope. This time, the spearhead of the KGB campaign was not Radio Moscow, but a play entitled, *The Deputy*, which portrayed Pope Pius XII as a pope who failed to act or speak against Hitler's Holocaust and who was a man who lacked Christian charity. (Pacepa, 115-151)

The play was released in European theaters and eventually on Broadway. This opened the door for theatrical reviews. Reviews gave way to opinion columns and eventually led to books which amplified the narrative. Such books can still be purchased in book stores and through online retailers, even now. Additionally, the KGB recruited “prominent Protestants” through which to promote the play and its narrative via their publications. (Pacepa, 148) I still find Protestants presenting this issue on today's social media as if it is fact.

(Question 5: As we review this history of the integrated use of the entertainment and news media, we see a definite pattern of gaining echos. What does this reveal to us about how we may be manipulated through media sources? Is there any way to defend ourselves?)

Let's take a moment to review a *Washington Post* column, entitled, “How Pope Francis Can Cleanse the **Far-right Rot** from the Catholic Church,” published 9 Feb 2017. The columnist opens by writing:

Pope Francis needs to take tougher action against the United States’ most influential Catholic in Rome, Cardinal Raymond “**Breitbart**” Burke. The **renegade cleric** is not only **undermining** Francis’s **reformist, compassionate papacy, and gospel teaching** as it applies to **refugees and Muslims**, but the **rebel prince** of the church is also using his position within the walls of the Vatican to **legitimize extremist forces** that want to **bring down Western liberal democracy**, **Stephen K. Bannon-style**. Simply put, the Vatican is facing a **political war** between the **modernizing Pope** Francis and **a conservative wing that wants to reassert white Christian dominance**. (Symons)

The author continues:

The lesson of history has not been lost on Francis. After President Trump’s inauguration, he **warned that rising populism could produce a new Hitler**. But now, as Europe faces historic elections that **could bring extreme-right nationalists back into power** across the continent for the first time since World War II, he must act. The **bellicose anti-Islam invective** being marshaled by figures such as Burke shares much in common with the vicious **anti-Semitism** many **Catholic clerics adhered to in the 1930s, when they saw Jews as a danger to the Christian West whose rights must be restricted**. (Symons)

(Question 6: In this example, we see a few adjectives. How might we characterize the adjectives used in these two excerpts? Why might the author be so prolific with such adjectives?)

Let's look at another column concerning Cardinal Burke, this time, from a publication we might consider to be on the right. The writer begins with some statements of Cardinal Burke's with which the author agrees, then, he launches into his criticism. The author writes:

What Cardinal Burke clearly fails to realize is that the **apostasy** of which Our Lady forewarned [at Fatima] is precisely that which entered the Church “in a **diabolical** way” **at Vatican II.**

He even went so far as to suggest to his audience that “our response to the exceedingly difficult times in which we are living” must include entering more deeply into the teachings of the Council via the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* – **a work that is masterfully laced with modernist poison.**

Specifically, Cardinal Burke said:

We know what Christ teaches us in the Church. It is contained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, in the official teaching of the Church. His teaching does not change. In the midst of the present confusion and division, we must study more attentively the teachings of the faith contained in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and be prepared to defend those teachings against any falsehood which would erode the faith and thus the unity of the Church. (Verrecchio)

The author later continues:

In reality, **the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) is the last place anyone who is serious about their faith needs to put their nose!**

Make no mistake: The CCC exists for the sole purpose of **propagating the conciliar faith** – not the Catholic faith – it is, in fact, a major contributor to the “confusion and division” bemoaned by Cardinal Burke. (Verrecchio)

(Question 7: As we look at the second example, we might observe some comparisons. How might we compare and contrast what we find in these two criticisms of Cardinal Burke?)

Quotes:

I ask the Lord that he give me the grace of not taking any measure for the sake of image alone. Honesty and service, those are the criteria. You may make mistakes sometimes, your image will suffer, but it doesn't matter if there was goodwill.

– *Pope Francis*

I don't watch television. I simply felt that God was asking that of me. On July 16, 1990 I made that promise, and I have not broken it.

– *Pope Francis*

Communication comes from God. God communicates. God has communicated with us throughout history. God doesn't exist in isolation. God communicates, and has spoken, and has accompanied us, and has challenged us, and has made us change course, and He is still with us. You cannot understand Catholic theology without God's communication.

– *Pope Francis*

Final Thoughts:

During our discussion, we noted how we are influenced by various media forms. With the growth of the Internet and Social Media, we might say we exist in a time of information overload. The challenge for us, is how to discern truth in a world of misinformation, disinformation, and lies.

Media itself is not good or bad, it is simply a tool. Like any tool, it can be used for good or evil. The objective of the wolf is for his deceptions to wind their way through our communications so we may be influenced away from what God asks of us. As Catholics, our faith is not about whether those on the right or left are right or wrong, it is about what God asks of us. We must remember, the evil one does not care how we miss the mark in our understanding of what God asks of us, whether it is to the left or right; only that we do.

As we engage the media, we must evaluate the message. We must consider the source, but we cannot always discount a message because of the source. We must sometimes trace the trail of sources such that we can learn the relevant context. If possible, we want to get to source documents or original transcripts which do not filter the context.

This is not always an easy task. Search engines can help, but my recommendation is to use multiple search engines, especially those which do not track you, so we do not get boxed in by algorithms which assume what we want to see. Just as we evaluate organizations, we must also evaluate our media sources. During our travels of information, we should look for sources we trust from which to balance what is reported through sources which may have a political agenda.

Still, in matters of faith, our best line of defense is to know our faith. The more we learn about what God asks of us, the more difficult we make the job of the evil one who seeks to deceive us so he might separate us from our Creator.

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we take a look at the battle with the wolf across the generations.

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 X: The Generational Fight](#)

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