**Armour of God**

**Presentation**

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Saint Patrick’s Basilica

Catholics in a Media Hurricane!

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Speech notes – check against delivery

Good evening and welcome! Thank you for coming to share some thoughts – mine and yours – on the secular worldly attack on christian values…. And hopefully... A few insights into how to make your way around it. How to see through it. How to find truth in the media hurricane.

Some of you know me. Others may not. My name is Steve Winogron; I’m a parishioner here at St. Patrick’s. I’m also a semi-retired journalist who has worked in television, newspaper and magazine. But most of my career has been centred around radio news…as a reporter, interviewer, then in management as a news director and program director at CFRA radio here in Ottawa. I now teach third year journalism students at Carleton University, and happily spend most of my work hours with my wife Pauline.. Restoring ecclesiatical statues – Christian statues from churches, the basilica, for the Papal Nuncio, and for many individuals and groups. It’s the latest and most satisfying part of my work life to date.

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First off… there will be some fine dessert treats and coffee or tea, so thank you to those who prepared them! So.. How many of you noticed the announcement of beer and wine coming up after our discussion tonight? That’s *fake news!*

But it’s not the first bit of fake news you’ve seen or heard or read today, I suspect. Because the best definition I can think of for fake news – is simply a lie. Doesn’t have to be “news” per se. Its just a lie disguised as a message, or a promotion, or a sale, or a protest or a message that’s meant to impact your views on something. Car dealers: come in now for the best deal of the year. Michael’s art supplies: save up to 40 per cent with this coupon on your receipt. Politicians: we’re the best party to represent your interests and your future. They can’t all be, right? Coke..it’s the real thing. Be young, drink Pepsi. Smoke our vapes..they’ll help you stop smoking. Dozens already dead from vaping.

So if you accept that fake news is really just another form of lying, we can move on to the fact that it’s nothing new. The Toronto Star has slanted news to the left since I entered journalism school. The Sun chain used to be more right wing. CBC is left. Conrad Black’s newspapers used to be right of centre. Now their remnants are clinging to life… but they will not survive. *None* of them will. In a decade, you’ll have to find a new source to line your bird cage cuz newspapers ain’t gonna be around. Print is already dead, but no one has had the heart to tell the publishers. They’re like the crew on board the titanic and the rest of the trip at sea is … well.. Not looking good. A blogger named Steven Bartlett wrote a brilliant online piece that I hide around Carleton’s School of Journalism. It’s titled “print is dead. Radio is dying. TV is very, very sick.” You feel like telling him to lighten up a little! But he is right.

I’m focussing on this because it’s very directly relevant to our topic tonight. Bartlett points to the reality that the media world is changing and once-reliable mediums are becoming extinct, especially amongst younger generations. In recent years I’ve learned that most of my journalism students don’t read a daily newspaper. Hardly watch a TV newscast and maybe hear a radio news update while waiting for a traffic or entertainment report. These are journalism students! So how much less important have the mainstream media become for mainstream people… particularly the younger generations?

As they shift to sources like Twitter and Facebook and Reddit and Google as their primary sources of information, there is less and less credibility and less and less accountability. Less and less reason to be accurate, balanced, fair or precise. Poor Gordon Lightfoot was dead three different times on Twitter. He had to tweet out his own denial! That was just a *rumour*, but fake news is usually much more nefarious. More frequently it aims to distort truths, change minds for the worse, or to interfere with power, or elections, or government, or reputations by manipulating public opinion.

But the shifting landscape of huge advertising dollars is tossing traditional information sources onto their ears. Newspapers which used to be a licence to print money…are going broke. Not all. A few have seen some modest growth to 2015, but you know most are in decline and we don’t see up to date figures. But they’re not good. The Citizen bought the Sun so they could share shrinking ad revenues and avoid both going bankrupt. Although both will,I fear.

In my industry, I saw annual renevues in one operation drop from about 12.5 million dollars a year to 8 million in just two or three years. They’ve certainly kept falling since that time at all broadcasting stations. I can only guess how much further revenue has fallen because I’m not there anymore. They gave me early re-*fire-*ment, then over the course of a year or two wiped out the news team and started running TV newscasts on the radio. But the money is drying up and they’re doing anything they can to preserve their ever-shrinking profits. It’s the new reality.

I heard an analogy once to hard working credible journalists being much like the makers of the world’s best horse-and-buggy whips in the early 1900s. Yes they may have been of the finest quality, but people started buying cars – Opels and Daimlers and Fords. No matter how well you tried to build your buggy whip, nobody wanted them anymore! No matter how nice your newspaper is… no one wants it anymore..at least among the younger generation.

That’s the bad news for the young journalists I teach at Carleton. But the good news is that there will always be room for good journalists – the medium through which they deliver their product is changing, and the competition is surely changing. But there’s still a future for honesty and integrity in information gathering. It’s just never going to be the same as it was a decade or two ago.

So the way information is circulated – both truth and lies – has been changing for a generations. But it’s never been changing as quickly as it has been over the past ten years or so. That’s scary, but it’s also a tremendous opportunity for those who want the truth. For those who see the truth from a Christian set of values… there’s amazing opportunity brewing. I’ll talk a little bit about credible sources and how to find them in a few minutes.

But I really want you to grasp the fact that attacking what we know as judeo-christian values is not new. And it’s not just recent.

Some of you may be familiar with Nancy Pearcey..an American writer with an apologist’s style of writing and a leading defender of Christian faith. She wrote a book called “Saving Leonardo: a call to resist the secular assault on mind, morals, & meaning.”

She deeply examines how the effects of secularism are not only destructive to our society, but to individuals as well. Secularism splits facts from values. It treats them as separate, and justifies keeping them separate…as a strategy to gain power.. And ultimately political control. Separate fact from feelings or morals.. And you’re connecting to all kinds of controversial issues: abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering, fetal tissue for vaccines or even cosmetics. It’s a debatable fact that some things might work better or be manufactured more easily if we just set aside our “feelings” on the issue. And then we just belittle those who don’t join us in our crusade. Call them denyers, or dinosaurs, or out of touch, or say they have irrational phobias.. Then blur the lines to connect those derogatory terms to words like conservative, or “so-con” or alt-right, or extremist. Pearcey says secular ideologies preach liberty but practise tyranny.

So where do we go to see, read or hear the truth? And forget this idea that there are “many truths.” No there aren’t. There are many opinions, there are many preferences, there are many interpretations but there is only one truth. Abortion, for example, cannot be both right and wrong. The true presence of Christ in the most holy sacrament cannot be true and untrue. Many opinions. But one truth. Trust your conscience, your faith, your catechism and your soul ..and you will know what truth is.

So where do we go? The good news in all of this is that we have greater individual access to information now than we’ve ever had in human history. Look at the powerpoint screen. You don’t have to be Guttenburg .. You can print your own paper on your home printer. We don’t rely on scribes to decide what they’ll read and write for us. We have access to a billion and a half web pages on the internet. We can read the ones we choose, filter out the ones we despise or don’t trust. We can easily write our own web diaries.. Or logs… known as “blogs,” and some of those attract millions of readers. A whole lot more than many of the big newspapers in the world combined.

There are cable sites and hundreds of online TV and radio stations that talk about the gospel, interpret the news, talk about what’s been going on in the world. How much coverage did the Amazon Summit and the Pachamama idol at the Vatican get on CTV news? Or in the newspapers? But there are countless sources that you can click online to find out all the details you care to read or see.

Scout them out. A former Fox News journalist named Michael Voris runs a huge TV-style operation called “The Church Militant.” He’s not gentle, but he’s certainly well researched and very passionate when he applauds or chastizes what he sees going on in the Catholic church…and the world.. Things like Planned Parenthood selling body parts. Doctor Taylor Marshall, a converted Presbyterian minister is even more blunt – turns off a lot of delicate ears – but is incredibly well read and well versed and well researched. Father Mark Goring, a Companions of the Cross priest who came back to Ottawa from Detroit does an online video monologue on Catholic issues of the day. He has 41,000 subsribers to his youtube channel. He’s a lot more gentle. As are Dennis and Angelina Girard… converts to our faith..who air a weekly online show called D-N-A Live. They organized the first ‘Rosary Bowl’ at Lansdowne Park this summer that attracted a thousand people who prayed the rosary on the sidelines of Lansdowne Park! And they’ve just held two more in the Toronto area.

These people are out there! If you find you can’t trust the mainstream media which ignore Christian-type stories like the March For Life, go to Lifesitenews online and read what really happened. That’s produced by John-Henry Weston whom many of you know to be credible. There are literally thousands of Twitter accounts, web pages, broadcasters, bloggers and believe it or not..even a handful of Facebook pages which tell the truth. I wouldn’t presume for a moment to list them for you. You can scout them out to see the various approaches: bold, harsh, gentle, optimistic, pessimistic, frank or somewhere in between.

Look at the “about us” listing to see who owns the publication. If it’s obscure and you’ve never heard of them.. Look a little deeper. There could be a reason. It could be the 50 year old left winger in his parents’ basement designing a very impressive looking fake news site. If there’s no reporting of who put the material together, there’s no accountability, and probably little or no credibility.

You also have the ability to post comments, or feedback where great numbers of the public can hear or read what you’ve got to say. Good luck getting printed in the newspaper letters column. But that matters less and less. Just do it!

Comment. Support, like or dislike what you read online. Speak up because I assure you those who oppose you will. So should you.

One very quick example I’d like to share. I went into a Macs Milk store a few years ago now. They had a big poster.. Of a woman on her knees… adoring the appearance at the top corner of the poster. There were rays of light emanating from the apparition… not our Lady Of Lourdes. No! It was the super size soft drink. And it was miraculous that you could buy that super size soft drink for only $1.99 or whatever it was. I sometimes don’t speak up like I should. I just let it go. But instead I told the sales clerk..who knew me by sight.. That I support his little store even though it’s right next door to the giant Metro store. I chose to support his small business. But I also said my shadow would never fall on his doorstep again if that poster wasn’t removed by my next visit the following day. He hummed and hawed and called his manager. The manager called me back later that same day… and I was ready to have it out. Instead, he asked why it was offensive and I told him.. Calmly. His reponse was that he was ordering all of those posters removed from all the stores he supervised in Eastern Ontario… from Ottawa, Kingston, Brockville and along the valley. And it was indeed gone the following day from my little location.

Pauline and I cancelled our Citizen subscription and told them why: their editorial content despises Christians. We cancelled Bell and told them why… they could carry twenty porn channels but dropped the catholic channel, EWTN? Really? And we returned only when they brought back EWTN to their lineup. We cancelled Netflix because of the poison they produce.. Especially targeting children.. In between their okay movie selections.

We were just a small voice. Nothing special. But speaking up makes a huge difference. If you’re ever asked by Numeris to take part in TV or radio listening surveys, please say yes. That makes a huge difference in ratings, and ad revenue and programming for these stations. Every ratings participant reflects hundreds of TV viewers or radio listeners. It makes a big impact! Trust me!

We now have -- you now have -- more choice and a stronger voice than you’ve ever had…to counter the assault by the secular media. Because the secular media don’t control the world like they used to. They can influence elections, but they don’t control them like they used to. After all, Donald Trump won! The media sure didn’t want him to. At home, Andrew Scheer has the biggest opposition bench strength in Canadian history. It’s a changing world and I urge you not to fear it but to play it..by the new rules where everyone can have at least some say. And truth can be found as easily as the sources that relentlessly aim to strengthen one big lie, one big happy façade, one fake news story at a time.