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MEDIA Report



Where are you?

Spring 2011

PROTECTING THE INTERESTS OF FAMILIES WITH RESPECT TO THE MEDIA

FAMILY AND MEDIA ASSOCIATION MEDIA REPORT

‘Where are you?’ Is there anybody there? (Light of the World)

Genesis 3:9b

Peter Seewald’s latest interview with Pope Benedict XVI was published at the end of last year under the title, *Light of the World*.

But, in the confusion surrounding the Pope’s comments about condoms, many of the Pontiff’s other ideas—some of them very important—failed to receive the media attention they deserve.

One of these ideas is, implicitly, a question, a question which the Pope, today, directs at the some 1.2 billion individual Catholics living in the world. “Where are you?...”. Where are you? The ‘original question’ was posed by God to Adam following the original sin and our parents’ subsequent attempt to hide from God.

The present context for this question comes close to the beginning of the *Light of the World* **To Back Page >>**

Membership Drive—Call to Action!

Ivo O’Sullivan,
Chairman

And...ACTION! If you have read the covering letter which went out with this, the Spring Edition of *Media Report*, you will, by now, be aware that as our country approaches two Eucharistic Congresses, the *Family and Media Association* is itself facing a ‘Kairos’ time of its own—**action is required now!**

The Organization, which was founded in response to Pope John Paul II’s call to parents to “join with others in



associations to represent their interests in relation to the media”, needs *you* to continue its vital work



into the years ahead.

To put it bluntly, FMA **needs new members.**

Would you be willing to recruit for us? Do you know others who might be ready to support our work?

The first casualty of war is the truth and this is particularly the case when the war that is being waged (sometimes unwittingly) is against The Truth Himself.

So, this is a very different ‘call to action’ than those associated with the stereotypical recruitment posters of old (see inset).

And, as Pope Benedict pointed out in his World Day of Peace address for 2008, every attack on the family based on the marriage between a man and a woman “constitutes an objective obstacle on the road to peace”.

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LAUNCH of *SPIRIT RADIO*—answer to Prayer

The long overdue arrival of Christian radio to Ireland’s national airways finally became a reality on Thursday 25th January, 2011.

Undoubtedly, one of the most significant media events for Christians in this country, the launch of *Spirit Radio* from the old FM104 studios in Ballsbridge was

generally greeted with enthusiasm and the hope that *Spirit Radio* would, as David Quinn put it, “find its market.”

The quest for Christian radio has had to contend with many obstacles over the years, not least among them, the sometimes paranoid hostility of Michael D Higgins’ Independent Radio and Television

Commission, IRTC, later renamed the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland, BCI—following the enactment of the Broadcasting Act, 2009, the BCI’s functions, along with those of the BCC, have been subsumed by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, BAI.

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The last acceptable prejudice—Ray D'Arcy, David McSavage, Today FM and the BAI

"In the treatment of current affairs, including matters which are either of public controversy, or the subject of current public debate, broadcasters must ensure that they are fair to all interests concerned and that the broadcast material is presented in an objective and impartial manner and without any expression of the broadcaster's own views." – Source: BAI website – cf Section 48 (1) (a) and Section 39

The following is the text of a complaint mad by the Family and Media Association about a broadcast of the Ray D'Arcy Show, on Today FM 2 Feb 2011

In the broadcast in question, which involved an interview by Today FM's Ray D'Arcy of David McSavage, Mr D'Arcy clearly expressed his own view about a "public controversy". David McSavage had said in response to a question about his attitude to the Angelus (which had become a matter of public controversy following a *Sunday Times* article in which Mr McSavage had been quoted), "When you hear about all the disgusting things that happened within these institutions (i.e. those of the Catholic Church), it is surprising that they're still around and that the Angelus is still rung out." Ray D'Arcy responded to this by saying, "Well it shouldn't surprise you at all because when you hear, then, the people who ring in to Liveline. You see, I think we think that we're a sort of modern European nation that we've come out of the dark ages of the 20th century and now we're a sort of a forward thinking modern state. No we're not. You know A lot of us aren't. A lot of people aren't. A lot of people are holding on to the, you know, old fashioned values and ideas and the great thing about what you're doing is you are trying to smash those". Had the broadcaster said nothing about David McSavage's comments, the broadcast would already have lacked impartiality. By saying he believed that it was a

"great thing" to try to "smash" the "old fashioned values" of "the people", Ray D'Arcy not only offended "a lot of people" who hold these values but showed complete contempt for the most basic notion of impartiality.

The broadcaster should also have challenged Mr McSavage's original comment, which was, "it is surprising these institutions are still around", on the grounds that it was offensive to all Catholic people in general. Instead Mr D'Arcy confirmed it.

The Code of Programme Standards says in its introduction, "The avoidance of offence and harm is central to a code that addresses issues of taste and decency in programme material and, therefore, is a key objective of this Code." In its Content Principles (Section 2.2), it says, "A broadcaster shall exercise due care by taking all reasonable measures to ensure that viewers and listeners of programme material on its channel/service are protected from undue offence and from harm." In this case, no measures were taken to ensure that viewers and listeners were protected from undue offence. Section 3.4.5 states that "Broadcasters shall take measures to prevent undue offence in the treatment of religious views, beliefs or images during programme material. This is not intended to prevent the critical scrutiny

“A lot of people are holding on to the, you know, old fashioned values and ideas and the great thing about what you're doing is you are trying to smash those!” - Ray D’Arcy

The following are extracts from a Press Release issued by the Family and Media Association and about another problem broadcast involving David McSavage. Both The Metro and Newstalk Radio covered FMA’s response at the time and, when it was independently posted on the Politics.ie website, it attracted some 15 pages of replies (over 200 comments). *The Irish Times*, however, declined to publish a letter which was sent to them on the subject...

In an interview during yesterday's The Saturday Night Show broadcast on RTÉ One television, David McSavage, brother of the Minister for Children, Barry Andrews made light of the issue of child abuse and was highly offensive to the vast majority of Catholics who abhor abuse.

In response to the following question/statement by the Show's Presenter, Brendan O'Connor, "Your brother is Barry Andrews, the Minister for Children?", Mr McSavage replied, "Yes he is and I used to kick the sh** out of him when he was a child!"

Later on, after bringing up the topic of the Catholic Church, Mr McSavage said, "I mean, but if it was a choice between a heroine addict and a priest to baby sit my child...", at which point Mr O'Connor intervened to cut short the topic.

Mr McSavage's comments take on added significance when one considers the role of his brother, the Minister, in overseeing both the Murphy Report and the Ryan Report which had, as part of its brief, the whole area of non sexual physical abuse in the context of religious institutions...

...At a time when alcohol abuse is becoming ever more widely recognised as an extremely

serious problem for our young people, FMA is also concerned about the apparently ambivalent attitude to his own alcohol problem which Mr McSavage displayed on the same broadcast.

...While we are concerned for the welfare of Mr McSavage, we are also concerned about the irresponsibility of RTÉ in allowing him (and others) to be seen as a role model.

...RTÉ does this when it uses public money to fund programmes like The Savage Eye and give Mr McSavage and others a platform.

... FMA believes that the 60 million euro of public money that the Government gives annually to RTÉ could be better spent!

...On the plus side for RTÉ, Mr O'Connor is to be congratulated for his decisive intervention after Mr McSavage's heroine addict comment...However the whole episode shows the drastic need for standards in RTÉ’s broadcasts. The Minister for Communications...must now intervene to ensure taxpayers and license payers money is not used for gratuitously offensive and insensitive broadcasts that belong in the gutter.

- ENDS -

of religion.” This broadcast was, in no sense, “the critical scrutiny of religion” but an unbridled one-sided rant masquerading as an interview, a rant against those who hold religious beliefs. This also brings up the issue of harm and even incitement to crime. To put it in perspective, if David McSavage had been talking about abuse perpetrated by Jewish

people and then expressed surprise that their “institutions were still around”, there would, of course have been no difficulty in decrying such an incitement to hatred. Here, in the actions of both Mr McSavage and Mr D’Arcy, there is evidence for the contention that anti-Catholicism is the “last acceptable prejudice”.

Reading the ~~sins~~ signs of the *Times*—a Warning shot fired across the bows of *The Irish Times*

As newspaper sales are squeezed and advertising revenue is cut, Dailies like the Irish Times can ill afford to alienate their Catholic readers

When the eleventh Cleraun Media Conference took place on 21-22 October 2006 in Mount Merrion, Dublin, the theme chosen for the gathering was ‘Professional Integrity’. Significant contributions were made by several high profile speakers from both the national and international media. But the event that stood out in a Conference which had been opened by then ‘Communications Minister’ Noel Dempsey was the address of Kenneth Woodward, the former Religion Editor and at that time Contributing Editor of Newsweek Magazine.

Mr Woodward’s paper, entitled: *After objectivity: what moral norms should govern news reporting?* dealt with the issue of ‘Newsroom Culture’ and, somewhat surprisingly, given the author’s credentials, took issue with the failure of *The New York Times* to use one particular term, ‘*partial birth abortion*’.

The speaker was at pains to emphasise that this criticism of *The New York Times* was not based on his own attitude to abortion (an attitude which was difficult to infer from the talk) but was, instead, to do with the ethics of news reporting.

To fail to use a particular term, on, merely, the ideological grounds that it would favour ‘the other side’, was simply not, as he pointed out, a tenable position for any newspaper.

Some related and, one imagines, highly uncomfortable issues were then raised for the members of the Irish media there present. Those members included the Chair for the talk, Peter Murtagh, the then Managing Editor of *The Irish Times* and a last minute replacement for Geraldine Kennedy.

Fox News, Mr Woodward pointed out, had at that time just overtaken CNN in viewing statistics as the number one news station in the United States!

This, could be partly explained by the fact that there were many people who by then believed, to quote Mr Woodward that

“if *The New York Times* say it, it’s definitely not true”.

Wow! The failure of *The New York Times* to take Protestant Evangelicals seriously, he said, and by extension those with conservative values in general, led to that paper, the flagship for liberal values, which also prides itself as being the leading ‘serious newspaper’ (sound familiar?) in the United States, losing its influence over large sections of American society.

The comparison with Ireland is obvious. Mr Woodward’s remarks were a warning shot, fired almost four years ago, across the bows of the Irish liberal media establishment and of *The Irish Times* in particular.

This warning shot was, at it were, ‘hand delivered’ by someone who was, in many ways, a fellow traveller.

Most would agree that the warning was not heeded and *The Irish Times* is now, along with other beleaguered dailies reaping the consequences, in the form of reduced sales and waning influence (remember that Paper’s ill-fated Lisbon I campaign after which the then Deputy Chris Andrews said, in the Dáil, “*The Irish Times is talking to itself*”).

Geraldine Kennedy is leaving and we wish her well. The question is, will her successor and *The Irish Times Trust* finally learn to read the ‘signs of the Times’

“*The Irish Times is talking to itself*”
- Chris Andrews, Dáil Éireann, 2008

“TODAY I am very thankful to the media for its part in bringing atten
Playboy prostitute who is incredibly working as a teacher in a Dublin s
96% of potential victims who are not being abused by clerics and who

RTÉ—growing the trust of the people?

“RTÉ’s Vision is to grow the trust of the people of Ireland as it informs, inspires, reflects and enriches their lives”- RTÉ



RTÉ produces many excellent programmes, among them its *The Meaning of Life with Gay Byrne* series and *Nationwide*, as well as documentaries, programmes on current affairs, the arts, sports, history etc. Many otherwise good programmes, however are sullied by a persistent bias against Christian values. Over the years, this bias has been observed empirically, measured quantitatively by the Family and Media Association and analysed, all of which begs the question, ‘Can RTÉ truthfully claim to be living up to its vision of “growing the trust of the people”?’ Some programmes are clearly

a betrayal of this trust. The above, headline, from an article in the *Daily Mail* was inspired by comments made by FMA about a proposed new RTÉ TV series. But, very often, it is more mainstream series such as the *Late Late Show* which not only offend but also harm.

Primum Non Nocere

On 4th March, this year, the *Late Late Show* decided to give a platform to, a promoter of Euthanasia which is illegal in this country. It is not the first time that the National Broadcaster used taxpayer funds to promote something which was illegal; but, this time, its actions were particularly irresponsible. (please see email, below). The spectacle of a doctor (whose motto

is supposed to be ‘primum non nocere’: first, do no harm) advocating self harm, late at night, on a high profile programme, should have legal as well as moral implications, particularly in view of the requirements of the Broadcasting Act 2003 and the Code of Programme Standards’ prohibition on harmful content, a measure introduced to the Code following interventions by the Family and Media Association at a preparatory phase. This seemingly callous indifference to the lives of depressed viewers was perhaps best demonstrated by a tweet from the *Late Late Show* team, minutes after FMA had highlighted to them the harmful content: “Thanks to all the twitterati for watching the *Late Late* every Friday and giving us the best ratings for Jan/Feb in over 10 Years”!

An email to Today!

From: Dónal O'Sullivan-Latchford [mailto:info@fma.ie]
Sent: 10 March 2011 11:22
To: 'todaypk@rte.ie'
Subject: Suicide prevention - Thank you and some consistency needed

Re suicide prevention,

Thank you, Pat,

For doing this important piece. But it does seem to show up something of a 'Dissociative Identity

Disorder' problem going on there with RTÉ.

Just a few days ago, the *Late Late Show* gave a platform to a promoter of Euthanasia which, as implicitly acknowledged by Ryan Tubridy's directing of viewers to the Samaritans, at the end of that broadcast, was always going to undermine his most vulnerable of viewers in their struggle against suicidal ideation.

Now, you, Pat, seem inadvertently to be playing 'good cop' to Ryan Tubridy's 'bad'.

Some 'joined up', responsible, thinking from RTÉ on this very serious issue would be very welcome.

'Get Real!'—Pope tells Christian 'Facebookers'—World Communications Day Message 2011

Seeing the Person behind the 'face'

The neuropsychological disorder prosopagnosia or 'face blindness' is an impairment in the recognition of faces -- an inability to see clearly, who the person is (Greek: prosopon, Latin: persona) behind the face (interestingly, translated by the same word 'prosopon/persona').

In his new book, *The Mind's Eye*, the Neurologist Oliver Sacks spends some time talking about conditions like prosopagnosia, relating the rarer and more dramatic examples (e.g. one where a man infamously "mistook his wife for a hat") to other more universally experienced 'everyday life' difficulties (everyone sometimes has trouble recognizing faces, for example).

Surprisingly, perhaps, Oliver Sacks' recent observations have much in common with those made, at about the same time, by the Pope. In his message for the 45th World Communications Day, released on Monday 24th January, the Feast of St Francis de Sales (Patron Saint of Journalists), Pope Benedict XVI draws attention to what might be considered a new kind of 'prosopagnosic' phenomenon, a form of the disorder particular to our digital age and, in the Pope's judgement, of special relevance for Christians and their ability to evangelize using the internet. The problem? People can't see the real Christian behind the face which he or she wears on social networking sites such as Facebook. This type of 'prosopagnosia' is not in the eye of the beholder. It is brought about by the Christian choosing to hide behind their prosopon/persona (originally meaning a mask worn by actors) and failing to reveal to the world their true 'face'.

The usefulness or otherwise of social networking sites to the Christian Faith as a means of evangelization has been the source of much debate and The Pope and the Congregation for Social Communications have, in recent years, been wading right into this debate, coming down, a little more than marginally, on the social networking 'side of the fence'. In previous World Communications Day Messages, for example, the Pope has exhorted

the faithful, particularly the young, to evangelize the "digital continent" and, last year, he effectively encouraged priests to 'get tweeting'. In the latest message, the Pope again "invites Christians, confidently...to join the network of relationships which the digital era has made possible".

But, there are also words of caution. For the Pope, the use of social networks is not only an "opportunity" for the Christian but also a "risk" and one such risk is this construction of "a false image of oneself", a "parallel existence". The problem of not revealing the person is of even more significance for Christians and Christianity than one might at first think because Christianity is not, first and foremost, a religion of rules and dogmas but a Person. So when Christians (the word means 'other Christs') fail to reveal themselves, whether it be on social network sites or 'somewhere' else, they fail to reveal Christ to the world.

"When people exchange information", explains the Pope, "they are already sharing themselves, their view of the world, their hopes, their ideals, it follows that there exists a Christian way of being present in the digital world: this takes the form of a communication which is honest and open, responsible and respectful of others" (emphasis added).

That concern for depth, truth and authenticity, for what is real betrays, perhaps, Pope Benedict's Augustinian orientation. He speaks of the danger of living in a virtual world, "the danger that we may be less present to those whom we encounter in our everyday life". Man's tendency not to be present, expressed biblically in God's question to Adam: "Where are you?" (Gen 3:9b) is a theme taken up by the Pope again in his recent *Light of the World* interview with Peter Seewald. Among the 1.2

LAUNCH of *Spirit Radio*—answer to Prayer

(Continued from Front Page)

‘Duc in altum’

“Duc in altum” (“put out into the deep”—Luke 5:4). One can imagine those words, as spoken by Pope John Paul II in his *Abba Pater* album, booming out across the airways.

But Jesus’ challenge to His Apostles sheds light on some of the real obstacles to Christian broadcasting that still exist in Ireland, just months after the launch of *Spirit Radio*.

The most obvious of these, for many, is the continued absence of truly Catholic broadcasting on AM or FM. When the original applications were made for Christian Radio, it was made clear that a Catholic Station would not have a chance simply because it *was* Catholic. However, that being acknowledged, as an ecumenical station which is doing its best to embrace an ‘inclusive’ rather than an ‘exclusive’ brand of ecumenism, *Spirit Radio* has been giving an airing to some of those aspects of the Faith which are uniquely Catholic. One thinks, in particular, of the Station’s ongoing coverage of preparations for the 2012 Eucharistic Congress.

But, while little rows break

out, every now and again, about the ringing of the Angelus on RTÉ (see an FMA complaint to the BAI on Page 2, concerning this issue), there are no such public rows about the Angelus with regard to *Spirit*. This is for the simple reason that the Angelus bells are not rung on *Spirit*. With issues like Marian devotion, it remains to be seen, then, if *Spirit* will boldly ‘go there’. Except ‘in spirit’, perhaps, the new Station may not be willing to get into that *particular* ‘deep’ water.

The second obstacle is to do with what constitutes the status quo regarding news reporting. Because what generally passes for news in the Irish media is so consistently biased against the Faith and Natural Law, the presentation of truly unbiased news—should it ever occur—would, ironically, appear to some, and to the BAI in particular, to be biased, itself. It seems, sometimes, that ‘the media’ suffers from its own particular type of cognitive bias—cognitive biases being mental phenomena which distort one’s view of reality. Because “the lie has become the truth”—to quote that great post-conciliar theologian, Michael Jackson(!)—the Truth would be taken for a lie.

The third obstacle for *Spirit*

involves funding and the blind spot that seems to prevent Catholics (in sharp contrast with their evangelical brothers and sisters) from seeing radio as a genuine means of evangelization. One is sometimes left with the impression that while many Catholics, pay lip service to the idea of Christian broadcasting, few actually ‘own it’ so that while hundreds of thousands are spent repairing our physical churches, it is difficult to get a tiny fraction of that to rebuild *His Church* “which, as you can see, has fallen into ruin,” in the words of Jesus to St Francis.

So, with Christian broadcasting, we have launched the barque but not quite arrived at the promised Land, not just yet anyway.

But, one should not be despondent, the launch of *Spirit Radio* is *much* more than just a first step. The positive music and *Spirit*’s “*Passion for Life*”, as its slogan goes, really are a vital breath of fresh air in the Irish media scene. And, as a final thought, one must not forget the other great work being done, in Ireland, by *EWTN* and, indeed, *Radio Maria* and *UCB*. This may not be the ‘beginning of the end’ but at least it is the ‘end of the beginning’.

billion Catholics in the world there are, says the Pope “many who inwardly are not there”.

It is appropriate that a Pope should have returned to this subject (of the nature of the person), at this time, in order to challenge us about what it means to be a person living in the digital continent. After

all, it was Christianity and the early Catholic Church who gave us the concept of the ‘prosopon’, making use of the Greek word for mask. When the concept of the person is under attack -- as is the case in so many different ways in 2011 -- expect the Church to defend it.

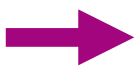
Membership Drive - call to Action!

(continued from front page)

But, be in no doubt, your country really *does* need you, needs ‘kitcheners’ and ‘officers’—people who in their homes and their offices are willing to inform themselves and act!

The Family and Media Association will inform you, not only through publications such as the one you are reading but also, and very importantly, through texts, emails and social media. The sort of immediate information that these ‘new media’ services offer can empower members to act quickly, responding to Faith related issues *as they arise* in the media.

Just as we enable you, please enable us. For what you can do to help us to continue this vital work into the years ahead, please see centre article.



What YOU can do! to help FMA



1. **PRAY** for our mission and for ALL those in the media.
2. **BECOME A MEMBER and/or DONATE** (Just send €30 annual subscription — greater or lesser amounts accepted).
3. **RECRUIT** (Could you get 3 new members?)
4. **START AN FMA BRANCH** in your area.
5. **GET INFORMED —SIGN UP FOR our FREE EMAILS** (info@fma.ie) and/or **FREE TEXTS** (0868593676) (we’re also on Twitter, YouTube and Facebook).
6. **USE THE INFORMATION YOU RECEIVE FROM US** to contact media producers, regulatory bodies, politicians, advertisers and others.
7. **PASS ON THIS INFORMATION** to family and friends.
- 8 Ask for permission to **LEAVE COPIES** of Media Report **IN YOUR LOCAL CHURCH.**

Thank you

Cheques to the Family and Media Association,
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‘Where are you?’ Is anybody there? (Pope Benedict’s Light of the World)

(continued from front page)

interview when Seewald suggests that the present Pope is "the most powerful of all time" given the Church's worldwide “army of believers”. In his response, the Pope points out that “among those 1.2 billion Catholics are many *who inwardly are not there*” (emphasis added). Where are you?

Since the Fall, man has often ‘accused’ God of hiding. Even, in the spirituality of St John of the Cross, God is experienced as darkness. But particularly, in this present age there are many who question whether God is really there. It may be worth remembering, therefore, that



After the ‘Dark Night’ in Of God’s and Men.

the first time the question “where are you?” arose between God and man, it was not man but God who did the asking! This was the ‘original question’. Whereas today many people, agnostics and even believers may feel justified in hiding behind it as a question *they* ask God, Pope Benedict has turned the question back on man and reminded us who it is, in the end, who will really do the asking (cf Gen 3.9b & Job 38).