

JOURNALISTIC NORMS, ETHICS, AND PRACTICES AT EWTN

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A Project  
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at the University of Missouri-Columbia

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Master of Arts

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by  
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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Over the course of my journalism education, there are two facts in particular for which I have gained a special appreciation. The first is the fact that doing good journalism, the kind that actually makes a difference in people's lives, is hard. It is really hard. If nothing else, my journalism education has taught me what good journalism looks like, and has inspired me to work harder and be more diligent in my reporting, fact checking, and personal reflection on what the purpose of my reporting is. The second is that people want to be able to trust journalists, and in today's political and cultural moment, many do not. It was a privilege to work at Catholic News Agency for my final semester of graduate school because of their commitment to truth—not just truth in general, but religious truth— and building trust with their readers.

My faith is very important to me, and I have a desire not just to “talk the talk,” but also to “walk the walk,” and put my faith into action, making it an integral part of my career. An effort to do that in a practical way led me to my internship at CNA, which, although it was a great experience, gave me even more to think about in terms of what kind of a career I would like to have, rather than simply answering the question outright. Naïve though it may sound, I still strongly maintain that I want to use my journalism skills to make the world a better place. I have learned that “Catholic journalism” would be a fantastic place for me to do that, but it is by no means the only place where I can do it. The question before me now is whether I want to cast my lot in with Catholic journalism, and do my very best to use the skills I have learned at the Missouri School of Journalism to help to improve help to add value to that genre; or, will I pursue a job at a more established, innovative “secular” outlet, such as National Public Radio,

and do my best to stay true to my values there? Both options are great, so I plan to continue to reflect on the possibilities. Mizzou's Washington Program has been extremely valuable for me, because it has given me a chance to learn about all the options available to me as a graduate of the Missouri School of Journalism.

## CHAPTER TWO: ACTIVITY LOG

### **Week of 1-16 to 1-19:**

This was my first week at EWTN's offices on Capitol Hill; I started the day after Martin Luther King Jr. day. Starting work at the office was not too much an adjustment in terms of understanding the company itself, mainly because I had already worked for Catholic News Agency (the news subsidiary of the Eternal Word Television Network) at their headquarters in Denver, so I knew the entire Denver team including the editor from that office who flew into town for the first week I was there to cover the pro-life march on Jan. 19. However, the adjustment came with moving into a new office space and meeting many new people who mainly work for the television production side of the company. Everyone was really friendly and accommodating, and I don't feel I'm being treated as an intern at all; I even have my own desk. The two reporters that work for the news division have both been there less than two weeks, so they're kind of still in the adjustment process as well. This first week was both fun and challenging, mainly because I got along great with the people in the office and they already knew what I was capable of, so they put me to work right away doing research and preparing to take photos and videos at the pro-life rally, which I attended on Friday. The coverage for that event was really successful and I got a lot of positive feedback- both from my editors and from readers- on my photos and videos that I took during the event.

My editor also sat me down and laid out what they are hoping for me to accomplish during the semester, and to ask me what my goals for my time in DC. We came to an agreement

that I would do a lot of videography and photography of daily events going on in Washington, and would generally tag along with the other reporters to help them gather visuals to accompany their print stories. In addition to that I would also get to pitch stories and go on my own assignments, and I would be able to pitch at least one long-term project to work on throughout the semester. More than likely I will spend a lot of time in this coming week researching topics that would make a good long term project.

In terms of the seminar class, I really enjoyed seeing all my classmates from the program and hearing about their first week of work. Barbara Cochran also gave us a great introduction to DC and to the seminar classes, and Wally Dean's advice on how to succeed at an internship reassured me that as long as I continue to have a good attitude and maintain professionalism in my internship, it's likely to continue to go well. I also really enjoyed seeing the National Press Building and seeing the resources that are available to us there.

It being my first week of work, I haven't set up any interviews for my research project yet, but I am fairly confident that as long as I give my coworkers ample notice, I'm sure they'd be willing to be interviewed. Hopefully in this coming week I will get closer to being able to schedule an interview.

I couldn't be happier with how my first week went, and I couldn't be happier to be in DC!

**Week of January 22nd:**

This past Monday I edited the video footage that I filmed at the pro-life march into a social video to share on Facebook. For that project I used video footage from my own DSLR, which I brought to the march, and images from a second DSLR that CNA provided me to take pictures. I created a first draft of the video that I sent to my editors in Denver, as well as the woman who is in charge of their video operations there. They suggested one or two very minor tweaks, but overall gave me a lot of creative freedom for that project. The final video ended up being about two minutes long and was published on Monday. In addition to the video, my photographs from the march appeared atop several CNA articles — five links at the bottom of this page. I got a lot of positive feedback on the photos, especially since I was able to send them to my editors so quickly, since I sent them during the march itself. They told me that they would hopefully be able to use many of my pictures as “stock images” for pro-life related stories until next year’s march.

Apart from that busy Monday, the rest of the week up until Thursday was certainly a lot slower than last week in terms of work. The full-time CNA reporters in Washington were assigned 1-2 print stories per day to cover per day, and I offered to write some print stories if they needed me to, since there wasn’t a lot of “filmable” events going on that particular week. Although my editors were enthusiastic about me writing for them, this week it simply wasn’t necessary. Honestly, I probably could have been a lot more aggressive in pitching stories and offering to write them up, but I chose to work harder on research and working to make contacts for a couple of longer-term video projects. If I have similar amounts of relative “down time” in the coming weeks, I will definitely continue to offer to write just to keep my skills sharp and keep getting bylines. I certainly wasn’t idle during work, but I feel I could have done more.



When I'm in the office I spend a lot of time trawling through news sites and social media researching and looking for story ideas, and I've been able to pitch several stories to my editors in Denver that they've subsequently had other writers do short write ups on — [This story](#) and [this story](#) were both pitched by me. The pitching process at our organization is very straightforward and informal, as we use a Facebook-esque intranet system — Convo — to all communicate and chat with each other. If I ever have a pitch to share, I just message my editors directly and they almost always get back to me promptly. In addition to pitching I occasionally asked to help the two Washington reporters with research for their stories.

Beyond just my work duties, on Tuesday I got the opportunity to sit in on the live taping of *EWTN News Nightly*, the flagship news program for the network, which was an awesome experience and the crew were happy to show me the whole operation. On Wednesday, the lead anchor for *EWTN News Nightly*, Lauren Ashburn, invited me and the two other CNA reporters to meet with her to give us a chance to introduce ourselves, introduce the whole staff to us, and so that she could offer us any resources we needed, which was a huge help, and she was incredibly kind and gracious to work with. Thanks to her meeting with us, I was able to get access to several news video databases — very useful for my video production — get on several mailing lists for updates from EWTN's news team, and begin to attend a morning meeting with the entire staff to talk about daily story assignments.

The two highlights of the week were definitely Thursday and Friday. On Thursday, the lead engineer for EWTN took me and the other CNA reporters to the Capitol and showed us basically every possible place where the press can operate, including the areas specifically reserved for EWTN. He filled us in on all the rules we need to know about how the press is

allowed to work, where we can film, where we can't, etc. and also showed us many "touristy" attractions in the Capitol that made for a really fun tour. It was incredibly interesting and enlightening and I'll soon be getting a press pass as well to allow me to come back this Tuesday to cover the State of the Union address.

Friday was our class trip to the Newseum, which was absolutely spectacular. I think it was definitely one of the most engaging museums I've even been to, and getting a pre-tour talk from the director of the Newseum Institute beforehand was fantastic, especially since he seemed to be such a knowledgeable and personable individual. Going around the exhibits with my classmates with Barbara as an excellent guide was a great experience, and after the group disbanded around 11:30 am, I browsed the museum until it closed at 5 pm and still could have seen more. I would absolutely recommend the museum to anyone, but especially anyone working in this field.

This coming week, as I mentioned before, I will likely spend Monday preparing to cover the State of the Union address at the Capitol Tuesday. I also have an appointment this coming week to visit the photo archives at the Newseum to obtain historical photos of a parish that I'm planning to profile in a short documentary, interviewing the pastor and parishioners, on the occasion of the parish's 150th anniversary of its establishment on Capitol Hill. I'll also be starting to make contacts for a video profile of a famous historically black Catholic congregation elsewhere in DC.

I already have one interview set up for two Fridays from now for my professional project, and at least 5 other people from my office have expressed interest in being interviewed. The

impressions that I'm getting are very positive, and I'm starting to get more confident in asking people. Hopefully this week I'll be able to schedule several more interviews.

**Video from above:**

<https://www.facebook.com/CatholicNewsAgencyVideo/videos/506736093053362/>

**Links to articles:**

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/which-catholics-oppose-abortion-a-closer-look-at-the-data-18105>

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/roe-anniversary-observed-as-national-sanctity-of-human-life-day-89637>

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/warm-weather-greets-marchers-at-the-45th-annual-march-for-life-93627>

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pro-life-strength-lies-in-love-speakers-tell-march-for-life-95603>

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/my-mother-was-told-to-abort-me-priest-says-to-march-for-life-youth-62880>

**Week of January 29th:**

This week started out a little crazy with preparations for the State of the Union address on Tuesday, which I attended with the rest of the *EWTN News Nightly* team as the sole representative for CNA (the print/online arm). It was an awesome and very informative experience, but a bit overwhelming, I have to admit. I was able to take pictures and live-tweet before and after the speech in the main rotunda with the rest of the press, alongside Fox, CNN and the like. One thing I realized when the senators and representatives started flooding into the press gallery was that although there were many figures that I recognized and would have been comfortable interviewing, there were also a huge number of people that I either didn't recognize at all, or their face was familiar and I couldn't remember their name well enough to feel comfortable asking them for an interview. That being said, it was gratifying to me how many of the people I saw and photographed that I did recognize, and I was able to record some audio as well. Working with the *EWTN News Nightly* team was great, as they were all extremely helpful seemed really happy to have me there. Despite rushing around and being busy conducting interviews, my colleagues took the time to point opportunities out to me and include me.

It was interesting to see the interviewees that the *ENN* team was able to get, because although there are many Catholic members of the Democratic party, it seems to be overwhelmingly GOP senators and representatives that are willing to grant them interviews. Though I wouldn't necessarily describe their coverage as conservative, the fact that more conservative lawmakers end up being the primary interview subjects does, I think, have an influence on how they are able to cover events like this.

On Wednesday, I went to Arlington to interview the president of the National Catholic Educational Association, a group that oversees Catholic education in the U.S, and a short Q&A

that I wrote was published Thursday and received a lot of positive feedback. In addition, one of my coworkers got sick halfway through the day and I was asked to write the story she had been working on based on notes she sent me. The piece was an analysis of Trump's immigration plan taking into account the reactions and concerns of the U.S. bishops. That too was eventually published, on Wednesday night.

Thursday I went to a branch of the DC Public Library, which is housed at the Newseum, to collect newspaper articles and archival photos of a Capitol Hill church that's celebrating its sesquicentennial this year. I found many useful historical images that I plan to incorporate into a short historical-documentary style video for social media, which I plan on being a longer-term project. Thursday night I met with a former CNA reporter who provided me with many useful contacts in the city as well as several story ideas, most of them dealing with race relations and the Catholic Church's efforts to help underserved majority-black communities in DC and Baltimore. I'll be reaching out to the contacts she provided me next week. Many of them are prominent members of the black Catholic community in Washington and Baltimore.

I had been feeling a little bit down last week because I felt a little overwhelmed with the hustle and bustle of the "big city" of Washington. This week, though, I feel as though I was able to make more concrete plans for stories I want to pursue. I'm also making good progress on the aforementioned short documentary about the sesquicentennial church.

Class this week was interesting as we got to meet the communications director for Missouri senator Roy Blunt. It was good to hear from the perspective of the "other side," in a way, since her job is to work with journalists and keep the senator's message consistent so he can effectively communicate with the press and, more importantly, with his constituents. She was

very gracious and open about giving us a frank look into how her office operates. I found it helpful to learn exactly what a communications director does in politics, because going in I think I had some preconceived notions that didn't turn out to be entirely accurate.

Next week should be back to business as usual after the State of the Union, with lots of research to and hopefully many more interviews to conduct. I'm conducting my first interview for my professional project this Friday, but I plan to schedule more this week. At least 12 people have verbally expressed interest to me in participating in the study.

### **Week of February 5:**

On Monday morning, Christian, Muslim, and Jewish faith leaders from all over the world converged at a convention center in Washington to sign the Washington Declaration, a symbolic peace treaty in which the Abrahamic faiths pledged cooperation and mutual respect. Though the event itself was planned well in advance, of course, I and another reporter made a split-second decision to attend and cover the event because Sam Brownback, the newly appointed Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, announced late that he would be speaking at the conference. Beyond being a fascinating conference to attend, I was able to catch the Foreign Minister of Finland after he delivered a talk to the conference attendees and interview him about his faith. Not only was he Catholic (which obviously made for relevant subject matter), but I was able to be confident in approaching him because I lived for 5 months in Finland during my undergraduate degree, so I was familiar with the Minister and with his

country. He made a great interview and quotes that I gathered from him were published in a story my colleague wrote recapping the event (I also took the picture that went with the story).

Apart from the conference, this week was, relatively speaking, a bit of a slower news week with less daily news to cover and fewer stories to write. This gave me the opportunity to research, send emails, make contacts, and prepare for next week, during which I will be making several trips around Washington to conduct interviews and arrange for future ones. I have a couple of longer-term, more evergreen video projects to work on, one of which focuses on the various Catholic ministries engaged in efforts to help the homeless in DC. I've arranged a call with the director of one of the homeless shelters near my office to discuss the best way to tell a video story at their establishment. I want to create a short documentary-style video that helps viewers understand what it's like to stay in a homeless shelter and what more these kinds of establishments could be doing to help the homeless. In addition to this project, I'm in the process of arranging a visit to Gallaudet University, which is a local university that is entirely devoted to the education of deaf students. They have a deaf Catholic campus ministry that I would like to profile, perhaps by creating a "day in the life" style video about one of its members. Again, it's been nice to have the flexibility of being able to plan these kinds of projects and cover evergreen topics without the pressure of too many deadlines.

Barbara visited EWTN's offices on Wednesday and I was able to give her the full tour. She also got to meet the lead anchor of *EWTN News Nightly*, Lauren Ashburn, and both of them realized that they had worked together in some capacity in an earlier job when Lauren worked for *The Daily Beast*, so that was a fun and unexpected reunion. Lauren also told me that EWTN

was interested in having me apply for a position as assistant producer for *EWTN News Nightly*; I told her I would absolutely consider applying.

One of the biggest successes this week was that I was able to conduct my first interview for my professional project this Friday. I interviewed Christian Swezey, a 20-year veteran of *NPR* and *The Washington Post* who now works as a newswriter for *EWTN News Nightly*. Christian was very gracious and happy to talk to me about his personal philosophies and what led him to choose to leave his job at the Post to work in Catholic journalism. In a nutshell, Christian felt that his fellow journalists at the Post didn't share his values, and that he could make more of a difference working in Catholic journalism. He was also captivated by EWTN, specifically, and experienced a reversion to the faith (after being raised Catholic) thanks to their programming. I'm currently in the process of transcribing his interview, and now that I have a better idea of how the interviews will likely go, I feel more confident arranging specific times with my other colleagues, many of whom, as I've mentioned before, have expressed their willingness to participate in the project.

### **Week of February 12-15:**

This week was an important one in the Catholic Church, as Wednesday marked the beginning of the season of Lent. As part of a video project that I am working on about the history of a parish church on Capitol Hill, I attended one of the Ash Wednesday masses and filmed the entire mass, giving me lots of b-roll footage to work with. I combed through some of the many historical documents and newspaper clippings that I obtained a few weeks ago to learn more



about the history of the parish, and started to write the script for the video. I was also connected with a parishioner who is apparently a keen historian and will hopefully be willing to be interviewed to provide an interesting voice for the project; I'm still trying to convince the pastor of the parish to be interviewed as well.

On Thursday, I attended a talk at Georgetown University by the Catholic Archbishop of Erbil, Iraq, who spoke about the immense challenges faced by Christians in the Middle East; before the 2003 invasion of Iraq, there were approximately 1.8 million Christians in the country, and today there are around 150,000 as they have been displaced or killed. The Christians are, in many Middle Eastern countries, designated by law as second-class citizens. His talk was interesting and enlightening and I mainly took pictures at the event which were used on the nightly newscast, as well as on the analysis piece my colleague wrote about the issues the archbishop raised during his talk (which hasn't yet been posted).

Next week will be a fun one, as the two other CNA reporters will be in Alabama for a company retreat, leaving me as the sole Washington correspondent for CNA. I plan to monitor the news releases and schedules for Capitol Hill events next week so I can hopefully attend and event, hearing, or news briefing and write a couple of stories. I don't mind attending news events with the other reporters, but I definitely feel as though I am up to the challenge of reporting on my own.

My biggest challenge at the moment is definitely staying focused on the tasks I have and not feeling overwhelmed and distracted by other tasks or ideas that flit into my mind throughout the day. Distraction and multitasking have always been things I've had to deal with as a journalist, and I sometimes get discouraged feeling as though my multitasking is hurting my

productivity and degrading the quality of my projects. To try and mitigate these effects, I want to try harder to focus only on one task at a time and not try to spread myself too thin, realizing that I can only produce so much in a single day. I also want to do better about taking time off to rest and not feel as though I have to spend every possible hour of my day producing something. I kind of alternate between feeling as though I don't have enough to do, and feeling as though I have given *myself* too much to do. Of course, I don't want to lean too far in the other direction and end up not trying as hard as I could on my projects. Overall, I just want to get to a point where I have enough to keep me busy and I am able to do my very best on the tasks that I have been given and that I have planned for myself.

In terms of my project, I was able to get the entire interview I conducted last week transcribed and ready to be written up; I got a lot of good information and resources from the interview. I have an interview scheduled for this Monday with *EWTN News Nightly's* Capitol Hill correspondent, and I'm in the process of scheduling interviews with the lead anchor of ENN, Lauren Ashburn, and also with the ENN's Executive Producer, so hopefully I will have all three of those interviews completed by the end of this week, leaving me with lots of transcribing to do over the weekend as well as plenty of material to begin my outline for my project. I've also been reading up more on the background research surrounding my project. When I was in Missouri doing the background research for my proposal, I found it difficult to immerse myself in the research because I felt somewhat disconnected from the topic; even though I had worked at a Catholic journalism outlet before, it's easier to research the topic when I am immersed in the world of Catholic journalism every day. I feel as though I understand the ideological underpinnings of EWTN better now, and I am already planning how I will write this up in my

research. Debra Mason's insights on the "conservative" side of EWTN's ideology was also helpful, as she pointed out that EWTN is generally viewed as a much more conservative news source than some other Catholic news sources, such as the *National Catholic Reporter*.

### **Week of Feb. 19-22:**

This week was a unique one in many ways, since my two CNA colleagues were down at EWTN headquarters in Alabama all week for a retreat, leaving me as the one remaining CNA reporter for DC. I took it as an opportunity, though, because it meant that I got to sit in the EWTN newsroom with the TV reporters and producers rather than in the other area of the building where I usually work. As a result of being right there in the newsroom, I got several opportunities to shadow reporters as they performed their various duties at EWTN. The Capitol Hill correspondent, Jason Calvi, let me shadow him as he conducted a short in-house interview and introduced me to several potential sources for my project who work in the office, including the host of a morning radio program on Wednesday. In addition to him introducing me to additional sources, I also interviewed Jason for my project, and he was very gracious and generous with his answers and providing me with information. I also got the privilege of interviewing the lead anchor and managing editor of EWTN, Lauren Ashburn, who seemed a bit more reticent to be interviewed on the record at first, but helped me to understand her view on my research topic: to her, there isn't really a distinction between "Catholic journalism" and "journalism," because they both ought to be grounded in fact-based, fair, and accurate reporting. I thought it was an interesting perspective that I will definitely include in my project.

Congress was in recess this week, so there wasn't a whole lot going on on Capitol Hill to cover. However, I did get to go to the panel discussion with Press Secretary Sarah Sanders on Tuesday that Barbara invited us to. It was a really interesting discussion, especially from a historical and comparative standpoint, since Bill Clinton's Press Secretary was also there to offer his perspective on how the job of press secretary for the White House has changed over time with advances in technology, societal changes, etc. The conversation got a bit uncomfortable at times, as Sanders was (quite rightly) challenged by the former press secretary for defending Trump's accusations against the press. But all in all, it was a fascinating discussion and gave me an insight into what it takes to cover the White House effectively.

On Thursday, I conducted an interview with the parish secretary at St. Joseph's on Capitol Hill, which went well because the interviewee was not only able to give me a sit-down interview to talk about the history of the parish, but also give me a tour of the church and the grounds that I was able to film, which gave me plenty of footage to work with for my video.

Next week I have already have two interviews set up for CNA-related stories. One is with the director of a local homeless shelter, and the other is with several people from the Archdiocese's office for special needs, who are going to talk to me about how concessions are made throughout the Archdiocese for people with disabilities. The stories next week that I will primarily be working on are a story about Catholic ministries helping the homeless in DC, and a feature video about the deaf Catholic ministry at Gallaudet University. As these two sources are connected with two of my major projects that I'm working on for CNA, I am hoping that they can connect me to additional people that I can talk to.

There was no seminar class scheduled for this week, which gave me a chance to catch up on some sleep (might as well be honest!) and also to work on scheduling another interview for my project. This brings me to a total of 3 interviews completed. This weekend, I am planning to spend a good deal of time working to synthesize my interviews into an outline, which I will send as soon as possible. I'm feeling good about the status of my project and it's been really encouraging to get so much enthusiastic support from my colleagues and interviewees.

### **Week of Feb. 26-March 1:**

This was a very productive week for me, thanks to my efforts last week scheduling interviews. As a result, I was able to really get the ball rolling on several of my video projects. On Monday, I went to a local day center for homeless men that also functions as a hypothermia shelter in the winter. I am working on a feature story about various Catholic approaches to helping the homeless, and I will be producing a human-interest documentary short about this shelter in particular. It is housed in the basement of a former church and is connected with a college prep high school in a relatively poor area of town, not far from the Capitol building. Students from the high school are among the shelter's most dedicated volunteers. The president of the organization was gracious in giving me a full tour, which I filmed, as well as a lengthy interview which I have been parsing down into usable portions throughout this week. In addition to my visit on Monday, I also came back Wednesday to spend the morning at the shelter and film their operations, which they were happy to let me take part in and document. I met and interviewed several homeless guests of the shelter, as well as several of the staff. I was there

from approximately 7am to 12:30 pm, and shot 27 gigabytes worth of footage! Needless to say, I will be spending quite a bit of time next week just combing through the footage and editing it. That's also what I spend most of Thursday doing in the office.

Between my activities on Monday and Wednesday, I also had a busy day Tuesday as I had a scheduled interview for noon, but a breaking news event in the morning meant we all sprang into action to cover it. Around 40 people were arrested in one of the senate office building rotundas for protesting against Congress' inaction regarding the plight of DACA recipients. I took pictures at the event, which ran with a story that my colleague wrote. I would have stayed at the rotunda longer, but I rushed off to meet my noon appointment so I wouldn't have to reschedule. I met with the executive director of the Archdiocese of Washington's Office of Special Needs, to learn more about how churches in the area accommodate deaf parishioners. We met at Gallaudet University, the only deaf university in the United States, and I had a fascinating discussion with her and several others from her department about this topic, and I learned a lot about how to approach the topic with sensitivity and in a way that is respectful to the subjects. It's my plan to create a feature video about deaf Catholics in Washington, and I was invited to come to a mass and film at the local deaf Catholic Church, so I feel good about that project too.

Finally, an article that I helped to write over the past couple of weeks was published on Friday. It's a goofy article just for fun, really, but one that's proving to be quite popular with our audience!

In this week's seminar class, we discussed Sunday shows, which I found to be a really interesting discussion, especially the insight from one of the members of the class who said (and I'm paraphrasing) that the people who watch Sunday shows often see themselves almost as

“ambassadors” of the news to the rest of their family, because they are often the one person in the family that really pays attention to the news, and so they watch almost out of a sense of obligation. While that makes sense to me, in a way, I think it speaks to the fact that we as a society are so used to being bombarded with the sensational, the loud, and the flashy when it comes to TV, that it really is difficult to sit down for an hour with minimal distractions and watch a restrained, thoughtful, and respectful discussion on TV. We also visited a law firm that specializes in media law, which was a great refresher from last semester’s communication law seminar. It was fascinating to hear the concepts we learned about last semester actually put into practice for these lawyers, who are made or broken by the torts and decisions that we learned about in class. The packet of information we got during the presentation will also be very helpful, I think.

I have two interviews for my project scheduled for next week, both with my two CNA colleagues, which I think should be interesting since both of them are relatively new at this job. I want to ask them whether or not their experience so far of working for a Catholic media organization has been what they expected, and how it’s different so far from their previous jobs. I’ll work this next week on scheduling more interviews, and it’s my goal by the end of this week to have a full outline of my project sent in.

### **Week of March 5-9:**

I’ll start off this week with a recap of our tour of CBS and the taping of Face the Nation, which was really interesting and a great look into the inner workings of a large television

operation. Media companies such as CBS, ABC and NBC can often feel somewhat large, abstract, and intimidating, but on a more individual level, being in the control room reminded me that the producers and reporters are humans, just like everyone else, and can and do make mistakes. I remember at one point during the broadcast, one of the graphics engineers for the show accidentally cued up the wrong picture for a brief moment. Although the producer caught the mistake, she laughed it off and merely pointed out the error so the graphics person could improve next time. I found that encouraging, that even at such a high level of operation in media, there was still an opportunity to learn from mistakes and not be treated harshly.

This week at work I was primarily focused on my long-term project— my documentary. I spent most of Monday combing through the video footage I took last week (it's going to be a long process to get it all edited). On Tuesday, I interviewed the CEO of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Washington, Father John Enzler, for my documentary on Catholic approaches to helping the poor in Washington. On Wednesday, I went back to the homeless shelter where I filmed last week, partly to get more shots for my documentary but mostly because they asked if I would be willing to take photos for them as a freelance job. To avoid any conflict of interest, I agreed to do it for them pro bono. On Thursday morning, I attended a march in downtown DC organized by an advocacy group loosely affiliated with the Presbyterian church which aimed to advocate for housing for the homeless, and I filmed at that event and conducted several interviews. Considering everything I've gathered, I think hopefully I'll be able to spend a lot of time next week working on getting the documentary put together and I'm also planning to ask some of the producers and reporters if I can shadow them at some point throughout the week. Thursday also brought a fun surprise in the form of CNA's editor-in-chief, JD Flynn, who was



traveling to Baltimore for business and decided to pay our office a surprise visit. Although he had interviewed me for the job over Skype and I interact with him almost daily over email, this was my first time actually meeting him in person, and he seems like a great guy who really cares about his employees. We also got a chance to talk one-on-one about the possibility of me continuing to work for CNA after graduation, and he said they were very interested in hiring me if they could in any way make it work on their end to hire another reporter. He said they'd be open to negotiations and further discussion about the matter once I graduate. I felt really encouraged by the discussion and it made me excited for future opportunities for a job at CNA.

The visit to Politico for class was really eye-opening to see what a large and fast-growing media organization in Washington looks like. Politico has only existed for about 11 years or so, and has expanded from a little startup to a multi-floor high rise operation. I thought it was interesting that the presenter described the environment as one where the reporters really compete with each other for "scoops," because that's the kind of environment that I think could be tough to work in, even though I know even from my limited journalism experience that that kind of environment is pretty common in newsrooms.

For my professional project, I interviewed another colleague at CNA and I was able to schedule another interview for next week. I'm planning on spending Tuesday evening of this week (as well as the weekend) transcribing interviews and working on my analysis.

**Week of March 13-16:**

This was a very self-guided week for me, which had its upsides and its downsides. On the positive side, I got a lot of progress made editing my documentary, and I was able to send the first ten minutes off to my editors so they can see what I've done so far. They've been really supportive of me in allowing me to create the project for myself so far, and I'll be interested to hear their feedback.

I didn't have any events to cover to get me out of the office, which meant that I stayed in and worked almost entirely on the one project the whole week. I felt as though I was lacking in some direction from my editors, which was entirely my fault, because I hadn't been seeking out their advice as much as I could have been. It's difficult sometimes when the editors are not physically in the same office, because I can't as easily just "pop my head into their office" to ask them for advice or direction. In light of all this, I've scheduled a conference call with my editors for Monday to talk to them about my thoughts on the project and what they think I should do with my material going forward. To go along with that, one very important point that I am going to work on this coming week is taking stock of everything I've gathered so far for my project and work out what the angle of my final project will be, what I want to accomplish with this project, and what images and voices I still need to get in order to make it as good as it can be. That goes not only for my longer documentary project, but also for the smaller projects that I'm working on.

I felt a little bit burned out at work this past week, and I'm not entirely sure why. I think honestly I've been setting really high standards for myself, and expecting myself to live up to a certain level of productivity, that has made it challenging for me to just enjoy myself, relax after work, and feel as though I am "doing enough" to justify me being here in Washington. It sounds

kind of silly to articulate it in this way, but I often get anxious feeling as though I'm somehow not doing enough to stay competitive in the journalism field, and I also get anxious if I feel as though I'm not taking advantage of every possible opportunity that's presented to me. Thankfully I was able to relax and spend time with friends this weekend, and I feel refreshed and ready to take on this next week.

I loved our visit to USA Today for class. I felt as though Donna Lienwander's presentation was the most candid and interesting one that we've had so far, because she really spoke about the human element of being a reporter. The questions I was most interested in had to do with when a reporter is faced with a tragic situation, and speaking to those who are truly suffering, 1) how do you go about it in a sensitive way, 2) when is it appropriate (if ever) to drop the reporter's mantle and help those affected, and 3) and how do you, as a reporter, deal with your own emotions after witnessing tragedy or extreme poverty? These are questions that I've grappled with myself, as I'm interested in covering poverty primarily as a way to help those affected by it. Donna emphasized the fact that a reporter's job in a tragedy or war zone is to tell the stories that no one else could get back home, and as a result it's an incredibly important job, and you should do everything you can to take care of yourself after witnessing tragedy or being a part of a traumatic situation. I thought Donna's insights were helpful to me as I continue my career, as I think it is likely I'll end up covering situations or people that could be very upsetting.

In terms of my professional project, I have several interviews scheduled for early next week, and I'm going to work this weekend on synthesizing the interviews I have now into a cohesive analysis. That'll give me some direction for the interviews I'll be doing as the semester

goes forward. Hopefully by the end of this weekend I'll have an analysis to share so you can see my progress so far.

### **Week of March 19-22:**

This was a very enjoyable and productive week for me, because was able to make substantial progress both on my professional project and on my long-term project for work.

On Monday, I conference-called with my editors in Denver to talk to them about the progress I've made on my documentary, after sending them the first ten minutes of edited footage. They were very complimentary and said they were happy with my progress, but also had a lot of constructive criticism to offer. One of the main critiques that they offered was the fact that because this documentary would primarily be released on social media, it didn't make much sense for it to be structured in a purely traditional, 30-minute documentary style— an observation that I had been expecting them to make, after reflecting on the project for some time myself. As a result, we came to the conclusion together that it would be better to break the footage up into smaller videos that would do better on social media and could point the audience back not only to a written piece, which would contain more context and factual information to accompany the video. In addition, there could also be a longer-form video, posted on YouTube, that users could access if the smaller social videos pique their interest. I like this idea a lot, mainly because it makes my job a bit easier, because I don't have to worry about making sure the half-hour documentary is flashy and engaging enough for social media. Moreover, I had worried that the documentary was lacking in factual context; for example, I hadn't included any statistics

on homelessness, and no discussion yet of political solutions on the table to solve the problem. Because I will be able to include a lot more of this information in the written piece, I am hoping this will free me somewhat to make the social videos more creative and character driven, rather than being bogged down by statistics.

On Tuesday, I went to the Supreme Court to cover a protest and counter-protest surrounding *NIFLA v Becerra*, a case to decide whether crisis pregnancy centers in California should be compelled to offer information on abortion to their clients. I took pictures and video and conducted interviews at the protest, many of which were used in a written piece penned by my colleague.

Also on Tuesday, anchor Lauren Ashburn asked me to help her with a new initiative she's starting on her social media. She wants to post short promotional videos every day to engage her social media audience and speak to them more directly and encourage them to watch the nightly newscast. The first day, I recorded a simple video of her speaking to the camera in the studio, and posted it to her Twitter account, where it performed decently well. I plan to research the best ways to engage audiences on social media with these kinds of videos.

I had been looking forward to the visit to NPR ever since it was and it did not disappoint. It was awesome to see a company that began with a strong focus on one medium (obviously the "R" of NPR), and has evolved throughout the years while remaining true to its mission. I've enjoyed NPR for as long as I can remember, and I can tell the company has worked to perfect its audio storytelling- through traditional radio and now podcasting- while also staying on the cutting edge of how audiences consume the news today (i.e. The NPR One App). I loved seeing the studios, and it was interesting to hear about the way that the anchors prepare their hourly

newscasts is very similar, in fact, to the way that we prepare the newscasts at KBIA in Columbia. The discussion with Keith Woods about diversity and NPR's efforts to make its coverage more representative was interesting and informative on several fronts. Firstly, he made no pretenses that NPR didn't know that their listeners skew older, whiter, more liberal, and much more educated than the average American- in fact, he brought along statistics to back that up. He also acknowledged that the sources for NPR stories skew toward professors and those designated as "experts." As much as I like NPR, it frustrates me personally when NPR covers my church/religion incorrectly, and also I can tell that there is a strong suspicion in NPR's coverage for pro-life views (which is true for many "mainstream" media outlets). In terms of what Woods and NPR want to do about it, he emphasized the need for more stories from places other than the more elite coasts, and seeking out experts that are not as often heard as the typical experts NPR calls up time after time. The question that I wanted to raise to him, but didn't quite get the chance to, had to do with the ways that NPR is tackling ideological diversity. I think it's difficult to put together a "representative" group of reporters that covers the vast range of religious and philosophical ideologies that exist in the U.S., especially when controlling for factors like race and gender are a much higher priority. It's no secret that most reporters who work at an organization like NPR are not very religiously faithful, which can make fair and accurate representations of religious people that they report on difficult. I think that if NPR and any other news organization are truly committed to seeking and reporting the truth in all its forms, then I would think that they would want to make religious diversity as much of a priority as any other kind.

For my professional project, I conducted four interviews with several contacts provided to me for interviews next week. I've made a good start on my analysis at the time of this writing, and I plan to spend much more time this weekend working on it. I'm feeling good at the moment about the analysis, but I hope I can find some journalists working at EWTN/CNA to interview who either a) are not Catholic or b) converted to the faith (I do have one such person interviewed so far). I'd also be interested to find someone who started out in Catholic media and switched to secular, because so far everyone has taken the opposite approach to that.

### **Week of March 26-28:**

This week I only worked three days because I flew home for Easter on Wednesday night.

Last weekend, I attended a Catholic Church that celebrates Mass entirely in sign language for the benefit of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. I also attended Mass there last weekend to meet the parishioners and prepare for this week, where I filmed at Mass and edited the footage into a social video for CNA. If I had had more time, I would have liked to conduct interviews with parishioners and make the video longer, but unfortunately the sign language interpreter that I had been working with up to that point had to leave right after Mass, so I will have to come back to get interviews with parishioners another time. I worked on creating a rough draft of the video on Sunday, and finished up the video with the help of my editors' input on Monday morning. The video was posted soon after and drew a large positive response on social media.

On Tuesday, I worked primarily on my long-term project. I'm taking a pause on editing video footage, and instead focusing on the written piece because I not only want to make sure I gather all the facts I want to include in the documentary into one coherent piece, but because I also believe that writing the written piece now will help me to plan what video footage I need to edit going forward.

Also on Tuesday I attended the "50 years of 60 Minutes" panel discussion by the producer and a correspondent for the show, who reflected on the ways that the show has developed over the years, and what journalists can learn from the show's success. It was a fascinating discussion, and I was able to ask the guests a question that is very relevant for my long-term project: when approaching a large and complex topic such as the opioid crisis or the war in Syria (or in my case, homelessness), how do you organize facts, parse down information, and craft a coherent narrative? The producer, Jeff Feger, said in response that the important thing is to tell stories, not "cover topics." Once you have the voices and stories that are relevant to the telling of the overall story, you'll be able to better craft a piece that is interesting and informative for the audience.

On Wednesday, I attended a protest outside the White House in support of refugees and decrying the low number of refugees resettled in the U.S. so far this year. It was a fairly simple event to cover and I conducted a few interviews, but mainly just took pictures because another colleague was writing a story that took into account the broader issue and wasn't just about the protest itself.



I worked on my analysis this weekend, and I am happy with my progress on it. I plan to do my last couple of interviews this week and finish up my first draft of the analysis this coming weekend.

### **Week of April 2-6:**

So far this week I have worked almost exclusively on my long-term homelessness project. I arrived back in Washington from Missouri on Monday morning and went straight into work, working on the text portion of my project basically all day. For my project, as I've mentioned previously, I'm producing a magazine-length written article accompanied by small social videos that direct the reader back to the written piece. It was my goal to have a finished draft of the written piece done by Tuesday, which I accomplished. I hope to send the draft to my editors soon so they can see the progress I have made on it (which I was able to do by Thursday).

Going into Wednesday, my goal was to work primarily on the video part of the project. This will involve planning what videos I am going to be able to create with the footage available, as well as making a list of shots and/or interviews I still need to get before this part of the project is done. I hope to create at least 5 social videos, each with a different angle/focus. I also still need to decide how I will convey the facts and context that these social videos need; whether that be through voiceover, text on screen, or simply through enough editing of the interviews that the interviewees actually act as natural narrators for the pieces.

Wednesday's tour of the White House press briefing room with Mizzou grad Major Garrett was a really enjoyable experience. I particularly appreciated Major's answer to the

question of what concerns him most in the world of journalism; his answer was that the decline of local journalism was the most concerning thing he sees. He tied it back to the decline of local journalism in Columbia, where the Daily Tribune has been outsourced and the local readers are noticing a difference in the coverage. It really made me think about the fact that national coverage is, in many ways, a lot easier than good local coverage these days. Local journalism should serve the public, and the move to outsource journalism or simply to cut staff at local outlets only makes that mission harder.

On Thursday I worked on my project, and I was able to send the first draft off to my editors. I created the multimedia article on an online platform called Atavist, and I am hoping that my editors can find a way to incorporate the article into their website or simply link to it when it finally goes live. I am hoping by next week I can send a draft to my committee as well.

The Hurley Symposium on Friday was a great experience, with interesting panel discussions and the chance to meet a lot of influential people that deal with media law every day. I got to ask a question to the law panel about the Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act (FOSTA) which our outlet has been covering for a while. I also got a chance to speak to Floyd Abrams afterwards to ask him about the Citizens United case, which he worked on. I thought the most helpful part of the symposium was simply the chance to mingle and network with the panelists and attendees.

**Week of April 9-12:**

This week I got the chance to work on a story about the new law that passed on Tuesday that allows the government and victims to prosecute websites that knowingly facilitate the advertising of prostitution and human trafficking. This was a story that involved a lot of research and reading up on the legal background of the bill and I was able to conduct several interviews and get the piece written, which will hopefully run as soon as Trump actually signs the bill. On Wednesday I continued to work on the piece and got in touch with sources to get additional interviews. It was a somewhat challenging piece to write because there were a lot of conflicting opinions on the internet about the sex trafficking bill, many of them very loud and fervent, and so I took a lot of care to separate fact from opinion in writing a factual and balanced piece. The story was published on Thursday.

In terms of my professional project, I'm on the home stretch. I conducted two interviews early in the week, and on Thursday I was able to interview the founder of EWTN news, Raymond Arroyo, who was very open and candid and gave me a lot of information that was very useful for the project. I finished the first draft of my analysis portion on Thursday night and sent the first draft off to my chair, Brett Johnson. I'll be revising the draft this weekend based on his comments and suggestions, and I'll be ready to submit the analysis to the entire committee on Tuesday.

**Week of April 16-20:**

I really feel as though my time at CNA is winding down, and I'm working to push myself to finish the projects I have for myself before I have to leave Washington. On Monday, I worked

almost exclusively on my homelessness project, mainly working on editing the video portions of the piece. I spoke with my managing editor last week about when and where they would like to run the piece, and she told me that CNA would like to use it to launch “CNA Longform,” a new section of their website, later this year, which is exciting! By the end of the week I had basically completely finished the project, so when I get back to DC from Missouri I plan to focus on other tasks until the end of my internship. I have a couple of other video projects in the works, and I would really love to work on at least one more write story before I leave, too.

Meeting with Barbara on Thursday was definitely helpful, as we discussed my job prospects and reflected on my time at CNA. Whether or not I find another, better offer than the one CNA has given me, it’s great to know that I have that offer in my back pocket as a great potential option.

For seminar, we only had the final exam, and then Taco Night! I’m looking forward to being back in Missouri and defending my project on Tuesday.

## CHAPTER THREE: EVALUATION

My time at Catholic News Agency was enjoyable and educational, and beyond just the work I enjoyed getting to know and bonding with my coworkers. Needless to say, I learned a lot about the Catholic Church and about the Catholic landscape of the United States, especially everything going on with the Church in Washington. I also got a glimpse into CNA's editorial process, which is different from many other secular, commercial outlets; the editor-in-chief actively discourages his reporters from looking at how many "clicks" their stories got, because he wants them to write about "less sexy," but important topics that the audience needs to know as Catholics. Although the editors and reporters did occasionally discuss and produce pieces that were more lighthearted and likely to get "clicks"(such as food reviews), for the most part it struck me as a rare and commendable way of thinking when it came to running an online journalism outlet. It is really CNA's business model allows them to approach their stories this way.

One thing that I personally appreciated was the freedom I was given to write about almost any subject that I was able to successfully pitch to the editors, and the ability to go along with the other reporters and use my multimedia reporting skills to add value to their stories. Taking a wider view, I genuinely think that my pictures and videos were able to add value to CNA's reportage, because having a reporter who could not only write, but also produce high-quality multimedia, was not something they had had before, at least in Washington. I thought my job was a good balance between writing and videography and photography, as this

allowed me to really put my interviewing and reporting skills to use rather than just capturing images passively.

On the other hand, there were some challenges. Being so far away from my editors, and having to communicate remotely, meant I sometimes felt a little bit disconnected and in need of direction, but I found it difficult to articulate that need over email and online chats rather than being able to communicate in person. Moreover—and this isn't necessarily to do with CNA, but more Washington in general—as I have related ad nauseum in my weekly reports, I often find myself having to really take a step back sometimes from the hustle and bustle of the city and the daily news cycle to make sure I'm not getting overwhelmed and burned out. While working in Washington has been a fantastic learning experience, I want to continue to learn and ensure that I don't burn myself out by working too hard.

One thing that I feel must be said is that I have to in some ways agree with what some of my interviewees said about “Catholic journalism:” the need to find a Catholic angle on a particular story can sometimes feel a bit limiting. I recall many times when my colleagues and I would be discussing this-or-that topic, and talk about how we would like to know more about it, and possibly write a story about it; but then oftentimes one of us would say, “Yeah, but could we find a Catholic angle on that?” and if we couldn't think of one, that would often prevent the story idea from really progressing beyond the idea stage. That being said, I recognize and appreciate the fact that CNA is not trying to be the New York Times. They have a mission, and they fulfil that mission well, even if it means that there are stories that are not as relevant for them to cover that may still be important. Also, to be fair, CNA is not a large operation; there were only three of us working as correspondents for the whole of Washington, which sometimes could add to the

feeling that there might sometimes be stories that we missed, simply because we didn't have the manpower to cover every relevant topic or event.

Tangential to my work at CNA, it has been fantastic to get a closer look at our nation's government and learn more about how it works. Spending time learning about, and even in, the buildings where the "magic happens" in terms of policy and governance has really demystified a lot of the processes for me.

All in all, my colleagues and editors were great to work with, I enjoyed my work, and I counted myself extremely privileged to work for CNA again. I am looking forward to discussing possible employment options with them once I graduate.

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**From:** Michelle Bauman La Rosa  
**Sent:** Friday, April 20, 2018 19:39  
**To:** Cochran, Barbara; McKeown, Jonah M (MU-Student)  
**Subject:** Jonah McKeown internship evaluation

To Whom it May Concern:

This memo is to evaluate Jonah McKeown's internship with Catholic News Agency in Washington, D.C., during the Spring 2018 semester.

As the managing editor of Catholic News Agency, I can say on behalf of myself and the other news and video editors that Jonah did an excellent job, and we were extremely pleased with his work.

This is the first time that Catholic News Agency has had an intern in our DC office. Our headquarters is in Denver, Colorado, and we have always been cautious about having interns in other locations, particularly those without a full-time editor present. However, when Jonah applied for the internship, we decided to make an exception, as Jonah had previously interned for us at our Denver location, and we were very happy with his work.

We were not disappointed. Jonah showed himself to be a hardworking employee, bringing with him skills in reporting, editing and producing. He required very little instruction and training. We were confident when we sent him on an assignment that it would be done well, and in a timely manner.

Throughout his internship, Jonah has provided us with timely photographs of major events, videos that tell compelling visual stories, and written articles that capture the complexity of serious political and social issues.

Working in Washington, D.C. but reporting to editors in Colorado has required Jonah to show initiative and self-motivation. He has done an excellent job with this, identifying newsworthy stories and finding the best means of covering them, seeking feedback from editors when necessary.

Jonah has been easy to work with, both for his coworkers sharing an office and his editors communicating from a distance. He has been flexible, willing to change his plans and his hours according to the demands of the job. Whenever we had a special request of Jonah – even last minute – he would accommodate our requests, and do so cheerfully. He has exhibited patience, professionalism, and strong communication skills – important traits in both the field of journalism and the fast-paced world of Washington, D.C.

This combination of talent, hard work, and a positive attitude is a valuable find, and we are grateful that we have been able to work with Jonah over the last several months.

If you have any further questions about Jonah's internship, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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Michelle Bauman La Rosa  
Managing Editor



Catholic News Agency  
EWTN News  
303-997-8563

## New US law aims to prosecute websites that facilitate sex trafficking

 catholicnewsagency.com/news/new-us-law-aims-to-prosecute-websites-that-facilitate-sex-trafficking-39967

By Jonah McKeown

Washington D.C., Apr 12, 2018 / 01:02 pm ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- A new law aims to make it easier to prosecute websites that knowingly facilitate sex trafficking, such as Backpage.com.

President Donald Trump signed the “Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017” into law April 11.

Under the new law, the government will be able to prosecute the owners or operators of websites which knowingly assist, support, or facilitate “the prostitution of another person,” or who act with reckless disregard for the fact that their conduct contributed to sex trafficking. Users and victims will be able to sue those sites.

The new law clarifies that Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996, which previously protected the operators of websites from legal liability for content posted by third parties, cannot be used as a defense to shield sites that knowingly promote sex trafficking and prostitution.

“[Section 230] was never intended to provide legal protection to websites that unlawfully promote and facilitate prostitution and websites that facilitate traffickers in advertising the sale of unlawful sex acts with sex trafficking victims,” the law reads.

Before the bill became law, federal authorities on April 6 seized Backpage, a massive classified ad site used largely for selling sex, which hosted ads depicting the prostitution of children. Ads posted on the site, which took in an **estimated** \$135 million in annual revenue in 2014, were reportedly responsible for nearly three quarters of all cases submitted to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. The site was the subject of an extensive Senate report into its practices of promoting prostitution and the trafficking of minors, which was released in January 2017.

The Department of Justice on April 9 announced the charging of seven individuals, including Backpage’s founder Michael Lacey, in a 93-count **federal indictment** which detailed the site’s reported practices of facilitating prostitution and money laundering. The indictment alleges that the defendants knew that the majority of the website’s “adult” ads involved prostitution, and that the site would “sanitize” the ads by removing “terms and pictures that were particularly indicative of prostitution” but continuing to run the ads.

Backpage also allegedly had a policy for several years that involved deleting words in an ad denoting a child’s age, and publish the revised version, which created a “veneer of deniability” for those trafficking the children.

“This website will no longer serve as a platform for human traffickers to thrive, and those who were complicit in its use to exploit human beings for monetary gain will be held accountable for their heinous actions,” said FBI Director Christopher Wray in a release from the DOJ. “Whether on the street or on the Internet, sex trafficking will not be tolerated.”

Rep. Ann Wagner (R-MO) introduced the bill, and House Judiciary Chairman Bob Goodlatte (R-VA) added language to expand the scope of the bill to include advertisements for all forms of prostitution. In areas of the country where prostitution is legal, that fact can be taken into account in court as an affirmative defense.

Prostitution is currently illegal in all of the United States except in a few rural Nevada counties, but some **estimates** suggest there are over half a million people in the country in prostitution.

After the bill passed the Senate 97-2 with bipartisan support on March 21, a number of websites began to take down explicit content and online communities that promote pornography or prostitution. Craigslist **shut down** their Personals page on March 23, and Reddit removed several fora that users previously used to seek and advertise escort services and casual sexual encounters.

Critics of the law, including deputy Attorney General Stephen A. Boyd, **voiced concern** that some of its language - which would allow punishment for conduct that occurred before it was enacted - may be unconstitutional. Others have argued that it could have a chilling effect on free speech on the internet.

Santa Clara University Law Professor Eric Goldman said, in testimony to Congress in November 2017, that an amendment to Section 230 could lead to sites self-censoring any and all content that could be construed as sex trafficking, or, alternatively, dial down moderation so that they could less reasonably be accused of “knowing” that sex trafficking content existed on their site.

“If failing to moderate content perfectly leads to liability, some online services will abandon their efforts to moderate user content or even shut down,” Goldman said during the hearing.

“I really do fear the chilling effects,” said Mary-Rose Papandrea, a University of North Carolina Law Professor, during a symposium on April 6. “Because imagine you run a platform, and imagine now you are exposed to liability for everything a third-party posts on your website as soon as you’re told about it. What are you going to do? You’re going to take it down.”

“I worry this isn’t the end,” she continued. “We can carve out sex trafficking, and we can debate that...but my concern is what’s next.”

However, Mary G. Leary, law professor at The Catholic University of America, rejected this idea. She told CNA in an interview that the amendment to Section 230 is narrow enough that it only removes a website’s immunity if they knowingly enter into a venture with human traffickers, or if they intentionally promote prostitution.

“That is a very narrowly tailored, common sense bill. I think that any argument it will impair speech is just alarmist and misplaced,” she said.

Leary emphasized that criminal acts, such as prostitution and human trafficking, are not considered speech and have “never been protected by the First Amendment.”

“The Supreme Court has been quite clear that offers to engage in illegal activities are not protected speech,” she said.

Leary said testimony given to the Senate during the creation of the law singled out sites that are clearly “bad actors,” like Backpage, as opposed to the majority of websites that are “law abiding, good corporate citizens who want to end sex trafficking.” She said it is unlikely that most companies will simply look away and choose not to moderate content that promotes sex trafficking.

“That argument has not been proven by history,” she says. “There are many industries that, sadly, are places where sex trafficking takes place...hotels, travel and tourism, shopping areas, foster care facilities...these are places that have never had immunity. We have not seen them as an industry look the other way or pretend it doesn't happen.”

In fact, she said, groups like the hotel industry have put together best practices to deal with illegal activities that take place on their premises. The new law does not require websites to police all content, but rather clarifies the purpose of Section 230, she said. There will be little effect for law abiding companies, because the law sets a high bar for prosecutors to prove that the company was knowingly and intentionally facilitating sex trafficking.

“What we will see are no longer companies out in the open, allowing and partnering with sex traffickers to sell women and children, with not only impunity but with absolute protection,” Leary said.

Some online groups, such as the **Women's March**, claim that the shuttering of sites that are used by people who are not being trafficked will drive the already shady business of prostitution even further underground, and make conditions worse for people who choose to sell sex for a living. Advocates in favor of prostitution have already created several new websites that are hosted overseas, in countries like Austria, to avoid the alleged self-censorship of American-hosted sites.

Critics, however, challenged the idea that prostitution is a profession of choice for women.

“Nobody says when they're a little girl, ‘I want to grow up to be a prostitute,’” said Dr. Grazie Christie, Policy Advisor for The Catholic Association, speaking on EWTN's Morning Glory.

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation, a Washington D.C.-based group that supports the new legislation, has compiled a site detailing **resources** available to current workers in the sex industry to provide “housing, food, referrals, and other short-term emergency assistance.”

“We are also concerned for those who turned to prostitution out of despair, lacking any other financial resources, and who now do not know where to turn,” said Dawn Hawkins, executive director of NCOSE, in a statement. “We encourage the public to share these resources widely so that survivors of commercial sexual exploitation can seek healing and support.”

# Immigration takes center stage in State of the Union address

 [catholicnewsagency.com/news/immigration-takes-center-stage-in-state-of-the-union-address-43142](http://catholicnewsagency.com/news/immigration-takes-center-stage-in-state-of-the-union-address-43142)

Washington D.C., Jan 31, 2018 / 05:53 pm ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- United States President Donald Trump made immigration reform a major topic of his first State of the Union address, touting an immigration reform package that has been met with concern from the U.S. bishops.

Among the guests who were recognized during the Jan. 30 speech were the parents of two girls who were killed by MS-13 gang members in 2016, as well as a Homeland Security Investigations Special Agent who has spent 15 years fighting criminal organizations.

“The United States is a compassionate nation,” Trump said. “We are proud that we do more than any other country to help the needy, the struggling, and the underprivileged all over the world. But as President of the United States, my highest loyalty, my greatest compassion, and my constant concern is for America's children, America's struggling workers, and America's forgotten communities.”

Trump laid out the four-pillar immigration reform plan that he said the House and Senate would be voting on in the next few weeks. The proposed reform package includes a “10-12 year path to citizenship, with requirements for work, education and good moral character” for 1.8 million immigrants brought to the U.S. illegally as children, known as Dreamers.

The Dreamers had been protected under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals implemented by the Obama Administration. However, the Trump Administration has announced that the policy will be rescinded in March. Without a legislative solution, hundreds of thousands could face the threat of deportation.

The immigration proposal also provides for the building of a wall on the border with Mexico, and the ending of the Diversity Immigrant Visa Program, also known as the visa lottery, which allows up to 50,000 immigrants from countries with historically low rates of immigration to enter the United States after being randomly selected and vetted.

In addition, the plan would clamp down on the practice of “chain migration,” also known as “family reunification,” a policy under which American citizens or green-card holders can petition for close family members to join them in the U.S.

In response to the President's proposed reforms, Bishop Joe S. Vásquez of Austin, chairman of the U.S. bishops' Committee on Migration, called the cuts to family immigration and elimination of protections for Dreamers “deeply troubling.”

“Upholding and protecting the family unit, regardless of its national origins, is vital to our faith,” Bishop Vásquez said. “Additionally, in searching for a solution for Dreamers, we must not turn our backs on the vulnerable. We should not, for example, barter the well-being of unaccompanied children for the well-being of the Dreamers. We know them all to be children of God who need our compassion and mercy.”

In 2003, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops released a pastoral letter on migration in which they stressed that economically powerful nations have “a stronger obligation to accommodate migration flows” when “persons cannot find employment in their country of origin to support themselves and their families.”

In 2013, the U.S. bishops reaffirmed their stance on immigration based on the Catechism of the Catholic Church, citing two equally important duties: welcoming the foreigner out of charity and respect for the human person, while also securing national borders and enforcing the law for the sake of the common good.

The bishops have called for an earned legalization program that would “allow foreign nationals of good moral character who are living in the United States to apply to adjust their status to obtain lawful permanent residence;” a future worker program “to permit foreignborn workers to enter the country safely and legally;” family-based immigration reform; restoration of due process rights for illegal immigrants; long-term solutions to the “the root causes of migration, such as underdevelopment and poverty in sending countries;” and the promotion of “targeted, proportional, and humane” enforcement of immigration laws.

Bishop Vásquez called for a bipartisan, narrowly-tailored solution that respects families.

“As pastors and leaders of the Church, we see this fear and sadness in our parishes and as such, continue to call for immediate action,” he said.

# Fast-Food Fish Sandwiches: The Definitive Ranking for Lent 2018

 catholicnewsagency.com/blog/the-definitive-ranking-of-fast-food-fish-sandwiches/

March 2, 2018

Lent is here, and in addition to the traditional observances of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, there's also the relatively new "tradition" of fast-food restaurants pandering to Catholic customers with new fish products. CNA's own Jonah McKeown, Mary Rezac and Christine Rousselle decided to investigate which fast-food fish sandwiches are worth your money on Lenten Fridays.

*Note: For the purpose of this review, we are sticking solely to fish sandwiches, which we are defining as a piece of fried fish and other accouterments in between bread. All items were ordered as on the menu with no modifications. All ratings will be out of a five "★" scale. A "pandering" bonus will be awarded to limited-time offerings just for Lent.*

## McDonald's: Filet-o-Fish

Ahh, the Filet-o-Fish. The tried-and-true Lenten Friday standard is a piece of fried Alaskan pollock on a plain bun, topped with a piece of American cheese and tartar sauce.

**Price:** \$2, using a coupon in the McDonald's app.

**Pros:** Fish was fine, bun was very soft. Sandwich tastes the same virtually everywhere. The Filet-o-Fish was invented in 1962 because of meatless Fridays, so eating one is basically a tradition at this point.

**Cons:** The Filet-o-Fish in desperate need of something like lettuce or hot sauce to jazz it up. Mine came a bit overloaded with tartar sauce. It's just very...meh. There's nothing inherently wrong with it, but it's just so boring.

**Pandering?:** Nope, the Filet-o-Fish is available year round, but the timely coupons are nice.

**Rating:** ★★☆☆☆



## Chick-Fil-A: Fish Sandwich



Two pieces of fried cod on white bun, served with pickles. Like all Chick-fil-A sandwiches, it comes sauceless, but this sandwich comes with a side of tartar sauce by default. I put tartar sauce and a drizzle of hot sauce on half and Chick-fil-A sauce on half. This sandwich also comes in “deluxe,” topped with lettuce, tomato, and cheese.

**Price:** \$7.25 for a combo with waffle fries and a drink. (The item wasn’t listed on any menu in the store and it’s not showing up on the mobile app either.)

**Pros:** Fish was *delightful* and had a nice crisp breading. Ability to control the amount of tartar sauce was a definite plus. Bun was great. Pickles were standard Chick-Fil-A pickles, and added a nice zing to the sandwich.

**Cons:** Available only in select locations. Not listed on the menu, so each one is made to order and you’ll have to wait a bit. Eating at the restaurant means having to watch people eat Chick-fil-A’s amazing chicken while you’re abstaining from meat.

**Pandering?:** Yup, this one’s a Lenten exclusive and a limited-time offering.

**Rating:** ★★★★★

### **Wendy’s: Premium North Pacific Cod Fillet Sandwich**

Wendy’s “Premium North Pacific Cod Fillet Sandwich” is a mouthful, in both name and in sandwich quality. It comes with a piece of “North Pacific” cod that has been breaded and fried, topped with two dill pickles, lettuce, and a dill tartar sauce. When I ordered, I was asked if I wanted it with cheese, but the picture of the sandwich online and in-store didn’t have cheese on it, so I declined.

**Price:** \$4.19



**Pros:** Fish was properly fried with a nice crunch, and was very flaky. The addition of lettuce was a solid touch and added some texture.

**Cons:** The dill pickles and dill tartar sauce was just a dill overload, and the tartar sauce wasn't nearly as chunky as the ones used by McDonald's and Chick-fil-A, and seemed like more of an aioli. The bun was really tough and overpowered the fish fillet. I went in to this with high hopes for Wendy's, but I was a bit let down.

**Pandering?:** Yes, this is a limited-time offering.

**Rating:** 🍌🍌🍌🍌🍌

### **Burger King: BK Big Fish**

The Burger King "Big Fish Sandwich" is 100% breaded white Alaskan pollock, topped with sweet tartar sauce and pickles on a bun. It comes with the option of cheese, which I opted for, in order to most closely compare it to the McDonald's Filet-o-Fish, which is the Gold Standard of fast food fish sandwiches, IMHO.

**Price:** \$3.99

**Pros:** The sandwich overall had better structural integrity than the standard McD's fish sandwich. The bun held its shape, the breaded fish had a nice crunch to it. The amount of tartar sauce and pickles was proportionate to the rest of the sandwich.

**Cons:** While the bun had more structural integrity, its mass was also kind of overwhelming. The bun-fish ratio was very much bun-heavy, and I also didn't like how sweet the tartar sauce and pickles were. I definitely prefer a much more salty/dill flavor to both.



**Pandering?:** The Big Fish is on the permanent menu. There were no special deals or coupons.

**Rating:** 🌟 and a half

**Popeyes: Seafood Po'boy**

Popeyes catchy jingle might be “love that chicken from Popeyes,” but don’t sleep on its cajun fish. The Seafood Po’Boy consists of a piece of fried whitefish, spiced “Cajun style,” topped with lettuce and pickles, served on French bread. Tartar sauce comes on the side. This sandwich also comes in popcorn shrimp and chicken varieties.

**Price:** \$5.49

**Pros:** The use of French bread was a great choice and complemented the fish well without overpowering it. The fish had a slight kick to it, which made the sandwich interesting. The piece of fish was fried well, and had a nice crunch breading.

**Cons:** The lettuce was kind of slimy (and boy was there a lot of it), and the tartar sauce was unremarkable. Most of their side options—even the ones that sound vegetarian, like green beans or mashed potatoes—contain meat, so be careful if you decide to head to Popeyes on a Friday.

**Pandering?:** No, you can get this year-round. Popeyes also serves other shrimp and fish dishes, including a limited-time shrimp special.

**Rating:** 🌟🌟🌟🌟 and a half.

**Bojangles’: Bojangler**







The Bojangler is a piece of spiced, fried Alaskan pollock on a toasted bun, topped with a slice of American cheese and tartar sauce.

**Price:** \$4.99

**Pros:** The fish was pleasantly crispy on the outside and was spicy and peppery. The Cajun flavors were evident, and it was definitely a more flavorful piece of fish than other fast-food options. The tartar sauce complemented the fish well without being overpowering.

**Cons:** Each sandwich is made to order, so be prepared to wait. (On the plus side, each sandwich is fresh.) I would have liked to have some lettuce and/or tomato on the sandwich to enhance both the nutritional value and taste. Considering nearly all of the chicken sandwiches on the menu have lettuce and tomato, it seems like a weird omission on this sandwich. The bun was only average.

**Pandering?:** Yes, this is just for Lent.

**Rating:** ~~★★★★~~ and a half.

**Final ranking:**

1. Chick-fil-A
2. Popeyes
3. Wendy's
4. Bojangles
5. McDonald's
6. Burger King

**Overall:** We were big fans of both Chick-Fil-A and Popeyes' fish offerings. Popeyes is more widely available nationwide, and the seafood options are available at most locations. Comparably, I had to call several Chick-Fil-A restaurants before I found one that even had the fish sandwich, and even then there was zero indication in the store that the sandwich was even available. We were also impressed with Bojangles' "Bojangler," which by far has the best name of any option. Popeyes certainly was pricier, but I think the price was worth it compared to some of the cheaper options. And while the Filet-o-Fish certainly isn't *bad*, there are many better options out there. (But we suggest asking nicely to add lettuce and pickles if you're stuck at a McDonald's on a Friday.) Have a blessed Lenten season!

# Catholic schools are 'instruments of the new evangelization,' NCEA president says

 catholicnewsagency.com/news/catholic-schools-are-instruments-of-the-new-evangelization-ncea-president-says-76968

by Jonah McKeown

Washington D.C., Feb 2, 2018 / 05:00 am ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- *Dr. Tom Burnford, president and CEO of the National Catholic Educational Association, spoke to CNA's Jonah McKeown during Catholic Schools Week 2018 about his Catholic education and the evangelizing mission of Catholic schools in the United States.*

## **How did your own Catholic education lead you to work in this field?**

I was blessed to attend Catholic primary school in England, where I grew up: St. Joseph's in Storrington, in Sussex. And then I also went to Catholic high school: Ampleforth College in Yorkshire. My experience was a rigorous academic curriculum, and a study of the Catholic faith with a particular focus on scripture, and also living at the high school, a boarding school, in a community permeated by the gospel spirit. For me, the witness of the teachers, some of whom were Benedictine monks, others were lay people...they witnessed a Catholic faith that made me believe what they said when they talked about their Catholicism and their faith. Secondly, there were rigorous academic expectations, which led me to work hard and grow. And now I love Catholic schools because they integrate faith and knowledge in the life of the student and the adult.

## **How has the shift toward more lay teachers, rather than teachers who are members of a religious order, changed Catholic education in the U.S.?**

Catholic schools in the United States were founded on the work of religious brothers and sisters, and today the staffing of schools, as we know, is predominantly lay teachers, lay faculty, and lay principals. However, it is the same faith that moves teachers today to teach in a Catholic school, and to do this work of integrating knowledge in the life of the student. What can be difficult is that in the past, the sisters were in a religious community setting 24 hours a day, focused on the school. And therefore we seek new and fresh formation opportunities for teachers, particularly as the society around us changes and becomes less faith-filled. So many diocese are doing great work in faith-formation programs, many colleges and universities do great work in helping to form teachers and leaders who can do this critical work of integrating faith and knowledge in education.

## **Along with an increasingly secular society, what are some of the other challenges that Catholic schools are facing today?**

TB: Catholic schools face challenges today in terms of the financing ... in the United States, the parental choice legislation is growing, and yet there is still huge need for fixing the injustice of the public school monopoly on tax funds that come from everybody. I think another

challenge is helping the general population understand that Catholic schools don't just teach religion. They form the whole person, with excellent academics and with values that come from and are rooted in a deep Catholic faith. Our research shows that the vast majority of all parents want a values-based education for their children...that's what Catholic schools do, and so much more. They form young people with solid values as well as providing a great academic education.

**It sounds as though you're really trying to make evangelization an integral part of this. Would you say the whole mission of Catholic schools is one of evangelization?**

Absolutely. Catholic schools are instruments of the new evangelization. They are evangelistic communities of faith, that serve as a witness not only to the parents who come to the school, but to the entire parish geography and surrounding neighborhoods.

**For someone reading who may not be aware of how Catholic schools benefit the United States, what would you say to that person?**

Catholic schools form great citizens. For example, Catholic school graduates vote more than the general population. Our academics are, overall, better than public education. We have higher graduation rates, by far, and higher college success rates. The graduates of Catholic schools are contributing citizens who are formed for success in life and contribution and service to society.

**In what ways are the NCEA and Catholic schools in general reaching out to the changing demographics of the Catholic Church in the United States?**

A critical opportunity is to collaborate within the Hispanic and Latino community to fully welcome Hispanic and Latino Catholics to Catholic schools, because this is the future of the Church. So, the NCEA is working hard to reach out to Latino organizations around the country to ensure that Catholic schools are available and accessible to the greatest extent possible to all Catholics...particularly to minority students in urban areas. This week we just completed the Many Gifts, One Nation program, and through social media invited all alumni of Catholic schools to contribute, in a 24-hour period, to Catholic schools. We raised \$750,000 in 24 hours, our first year. This is a significant initiative of NCEA to help, in a small way, with funding issues at Catholic schools.

**Is there anything you'd like to say about this year's Catholic Schools Week?**

I started Catholic Schools Week on Monday morning at the Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and I was blessed to be able to pray for Catholic school educators and families in the room where Mother Ann Seton died. This was a great blessing to me, and how appropriate to start this celebration of Catholic schools nationally at the place where, in one sense, it all began with Elizabeth Ann Seton, who was so influential in founding this gift of Catholic schools in the United States.

**Are you hopeful for the future of Catholic schools in the U.S.?**



Absolutely. Catholic schools have a bright future in the U.S. We have challenges, and we have great successes. These schools work, Catholic schools work, in the formation of the whole person, and they're such a gift to the country because of the quality of graduates, who then contribute to society and to the Church.

# Ambassador Brownback: 'Religious freedom is the most important foreign relations topic today'



catholicnewsagency.com/news/ambassador-brownback-religious-freedom-is-the-most-important-foreign-relations-topic-

today-76831

Follow by Courtney Grogan

Washington D.C., Feb 6, 2018 / 03:46 pm ([ACI Prensa](#)).- In his first public appearance as US Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom, Sam Brownback spoke to Muslim, Jewish, and Christians leaders gathered to discuss their shared commitment to promoting peace and protecting religious minorities in the Muslim world.

“I think religious freedom is the most important foreign relations topic today,” Brownback told the delegates at the Alliance of Virtue for the Common Good Conference in Washington, DC.

“The world needs reconciliation. It needs it between the Abrahamic faiths,” the ambassador said.

The three-day event is hosted by the Middle East-based Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, and will culminate in the signing of a declaration on religious freedom the morning of Feb. 7.

Cardinal Theodore McCarrick of the Archdiocese of Washington is on the steering committee for the interfaith conference, along with Rabbi David Saperstein and other Muslim and Evangelical leaders.

The Washington Declaration will build upon the 2016 Marrakesh Declaration, which affirmed the rights of religious minorities in Muslim majority countries, by adding an additional call to respect Muslims living in the U.S.

The Marrakesh Declaration was signed by hundreds of Muslim scholars and leaders from more than 60 countries, according to the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies.

“Forty years after the Helsinki Accords, the Muslim community developed an agreement on the freedom of religion and equal citizenship that was true to Islam’s history and teachings,” reflected the founder and president of the forum, Shaykh Abdallah Bin Bayyah, in his keynote address.

The Shaykh is a scholar of all four major Sunni schools of jurisprudence, and is known as an outspoken critic of terrorism.

Finland’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Timo Soini, spoke of his experience as a Catholic minority in a Lutheran-majority country during remarks immediately following Brownback.

Soini, who has worked with Iraqi Christian refugees in Finland, told CNA “the Christian minorities are the most persecuted people at the moment. And that must be said aloud...this is something for us western and European people to be outspoken [about].”

Sister Agatha O. Chikelue of Nigeria was invited to speak at the conference about her peacebuilding work among Christians and Muslims. “I want to hear the experiences of others from different parts of the world on how they managed their conflict, how they improved their interreligious dialogue, so that I can bring this back home to Africa,” Sr. Agatha told CNA.

The Executive Director of the Cardinal Onaiyekan Foundation for Peace (COFP) works with refugees displaced by the Boko Haram. She has also created a network for Christian and Muslim women to work together to stand up against violence.

In her presentation to Muslim, Jewish, and Christian faith leaders, Chikelue said that the Marrakesh Declaration reminds her of the Second Vatican Council document *Nostra Aetate*, “which gave us the room to embrace people, to extend our hands in fellowship to other people from other religious communities, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists.”

Sister Agatha continued, “If we, the Catholics, have seen this 50 years ago, and the Muslims have seen it now, and understood the need for us to work together, then what stops us from doing that? So, it is only left to us to use this Marrakesh Declaration, use the Second Vatican Council, to build a platform for us to discover our commonalities.”

# Pro-life pregnancy centers hopeful after arguing before Supreme Court

 catholicnewsagency.com/news/pro-life-pregnancy-centers-hopeful-after-arguing-before-supreme-court-93695

Follow By Christine Rousselle

Washington D.C., Mar 20, 2018 / 02:38 pm ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- Attorneys for a pro-life pregnancy center resource group are optimistic following Tuesday's oral arguments in front of the Supreme Court, in the case *National Institute of Family and Life Advocates (NIFLA) v. Becerra*.

In the pouring rain, the attorneys spoke to a crowd of supporters outside of the court, and said that they were pleased with the day's events and remained hopeful that a California law requiring pro-life pregnancy centers to provide information about free or low-cost abortions would be struck down.

"We hit a home run today in the court," said NIFLA President Thomas Glessner. "In fact, [Alliance Defending Freedom CEO] Michael Farris hit a grand slam home run."

Glessner added that he was "very optimistic" that the court would rule against California.

According to Farris, the Supreme Court justices were especially concerned about the provision in the law that mandated unlicensed, non-medical pregnancy centers to post a lengthy disclaimer in 13 languages on its advertisements.

"If you have just an ad that says 'life counts' with the name of your facility and a phone number, then you have to – in the same size as the ad itself, the main words – put a 29-word disclaimer in multiple languages. That crowds out the message," said Farris.

"They're not trying to inform anyone about anything, they're trying to delude a message so that nobody ever comes to one of these facilities."

According to Farris, multiple justices – including members of the court's more liberal wing – were concerned that that this law was too far-reaching.

Kristen Waggoner, senior vice president of ADF, agreed with Farris, and added that the government's "last resort" should be to compel speech. Waggoner said she was hopeful that the court would agree that no one should be forced to promote something that violates their beliefs.

"We are hopeful, based on the comments of the court today, that they recognize that important principle. And we are hopeful that they will rule on the behalf of life."

The attorneys told the crowd that they presented their argument to the court as one primarily based on free speech, not necessarily about abortion.

The First Amendment applies to all, NIFLA Vice President of Legal Affairs Anne O'Connor said, and the specific targeting of pro-life pregnancy centers by the Reproductive FACT Act should be troubling for everyone, regardless of political beliefs or feelings about abortion.

"Whether you're pro-life or pro-choice or whatever on the line, we should all be concerned about when a government can compel anybody to say something that violates what they believe," said O'Connor.

Her sentiment was echoed by Josh McClure, the executive director of a California pregnancy clinic.

"No American should be forced to preach a message or speak a message that they don't agree with. That's the basis of why we're here," said McClure.

O'Connor also said that while the justices posed "challenging" questions, she believed that at least eight would rule in favor of NIFLA.

"But 9-0 is what we're praying for."

Pro-life advocates braved the freezing temperatures and rain to show their support for pregnancy centers.

Kelly Picardi, a non-denominational Christian, told CNA that she and her husband are in the process of adopting a child conceived in rape, due to be born next month.

"The conception of our daughter's life came about through a difficult and unfortunate situation, but the decision of the birth mom not only choose life but to choose adoption is the most respectable thing I can think of," Picardi says.

"That kind of decision is our inspiration, and an example to [my family] of what love looks like. Even though she's had a really hard life, [the birth mother] is still making the kind of decision that will benefit someone else. That example of love is what we'll live by every day."

Picardi says she hopes that her family's decision to adopt can serve as an example for others, ultimately helping to normalize the practice of adoption in society. "As hard as the adoption journey is, it's really been affirmed by the people in our community," she said. "Good can always come from broken situations."

Rosemary Geraghty, a new media coordinator for Rehumanize International, said her beliefs as a self-identified feminist put her at odds with the pro-choice side of the argument.

"It's hard for me to understand why someone who would call themselves pro-choice would be against the groups that give women more options than just abortion," she told CNA. "To attack these pregnancy centers that are giving direct aid and resources to low-income women and pregnant people...it's just anti-'pro-life people.' It's viewpoint discrimination."

Jeanne Mancini, president of March for Life, stressed the important work that pregnancy care centers offer to serve women in need.

“The bottom line is that abortion hurts women; it doesn’t do a service for women, and these centers can provide women what they need in a very stressful moment,” she said. “Things like diapers, but also more complex things like housing, education...these things are critically important.”

*Jonah McKeown contributed to this report.*

## CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

### Background on Interviewees

- Raymond Arroyo is the founder and managing editor of EWTN News and anchors the weekly EWTN News program “The World Over.” A graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, he previously worked at the Associated Press, The New York Observer and on the political columnist team of Evans and Novak.
- Christian Swezey is a newswriter for EWTN News Nightly in Washington, D.C. He previously worked at National Public Radio and then at the Washington Post for nearly 20 years. He was born and raised in Washington, D.C., and attended Ithaca College.
- Lauren Ashburn is the lead anchor and managing editor of EWTN News Nightly in Washington, D.C. She previously served as EWTN News Nightly’s White House correspondent, and before that worked as an analyst for Fox News and The Daily Beast. She attended Columbia University in New York.
- Jason Calvi is EWTN News Nightly’s Capitol Hill Correspondent. He hails from the Chicago suburbs and has previously worked at a Chicago-area PBS station.
- Christine Rousselle is a staff writer for Catholic News Agency/EWTN News. She previously wrote for TownHall.com, a conservative news site. She is from Scarborough, Maine and attended Providence College in Rhode Island.
- Courtney Grogan is a staff writer for Catholic News Agency/EWTN News. A native of Portland, Oregon and a Harvard graduate, she previously did a fellowship in South Korea and worked for a humanitarian NGO in China on the North Korean border working with North

Korean refugees.

- Rodney Harris is the producer for EWTN News Nightly. He previously worked at WXYZ in Detroit, and attended Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Michigan.
- Kate Veik is Catholic News Agency's video producer, based in Denver. She grew up in Omaha, Nebraska and studied journalism at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Though she interned with two local newspapers in college, CNA is her first journalism job.
- Michelle La Rosa is managing editor for Catholic News Agency, based in Denver, her home town. She attended the University of Dallas.
- JD Flynn is Catholic News Agency's editor-in-chief. A canon lawyer by training, he previously worked in communications for the Archdiocese of Denver and Lincoln, Nebraska.
- Tom Wehner has been the National Catholic Register's managing editor since 2009, coming to the Register in 2005 after spending 25 years with the Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican.
- Jeanette De Melo is the editor in chief of the National Catholic Register. She served as the Archdiocese of Denver's communications director until 2012.

## **Introduction**

The Eternal Word Television Network is, by almost any count, the largest independent religious media network in the world. In addition to EWTN News, founded in 1996 by veteran journalist Raymond Arroyo, the network owns Catholic News Agency, an online news source that covers news from the Vatican as well as topics of interest to Catholics; and the National Catholic Register, a Catholic newspaper.

EWTN has historically created a product that, while consumed by a massive audience around



the world, is undeniably niche. The network's original purpose was to use mass media to strengthen the faith of Catholics. This was originally done by way of devotional and education television and programming. Since the 1990s, EWTN has made great strides into the world of journalism, and now owns a newspaper, a nightly newscast, and an online new source. Even among the 70 million or so Catholics in the United States, it is safe to say that it is unlikely that the majority of them get their news from expressly Catholic sources. This begs the question of the present research: what is the nature and purpose of journalism that is expressly Catholic, and what are its norms, ethics, and principles? What is EWTN's purpose in wading into the world of news?

The "Catholic press" in the United States has never been a monolithic entity, but much of the journalism produced by and for Catholics since the 18th century is characterized by a somewhat defensive attitude, and a desire to protect Catholic identity and culture in a largely Protestant Christian—and today, increasingly secular—environment. The Church's by-and-large embrace of mass media technology as a way to spread Christianity and communicate with the faithful also helped the Catholic press to grow during the 20th century. Today, some major publications are officially owned by the Church, such as Catholic News Service, but most are independent of the Church hierarchy.

My original research questions sought to understand why EWTN is moving toward more journalistic professionalism, how those ideals of journalistic professionalism have changed over time, and the reasons why journalists are choosing to work for EWTN. Within just a few weeks of working at Catholic News Agency, it was clear to me that my colleagues were good journalists by almost any standard, and adhered to many of the same standards and practices that I had learned about in journalism school and had observed in the world of secular journalism. I wondered what inspired these journalists to leave the world of secular journalism—and to possibly accept a lower paycheck—to work for EWTN; how do these professionals view their work in relation to journalism in general; and what,

if anything, sets these journalists apart from those working in secular media?

Therefore my research ended up focusing in part on the institution itself, but more specifically on the individuals who work there.

## **Introduction to EWTN**

In my literature review, I examined the history of EWTN and the journalistic and cultural context in which the network was created. Because that information is germane to my analysis, and can provide helpful context to those unfamiliar with EWTN, I will quote from my literature review here at length. The full literature review can be found in the appendix.

EWTN is funded almost entirely by private donations, with television content reaching over 250 million homes (EWTN, no date), and in addition to television the company also produces content for radio stations and numerous online platforms. EWTN is not directly owned or operated by the Catholic Church, but the network's goal, as stated on its website, is to "provide the means by which the various organizations within the [Roman Catholic] Church will have a nation-wide vehicle of expression," with a mission to "serve the orthodox belief and teaching of the Church as proclaimed by the Supreme Pontiff and his predecessors."

As previously mentioned, the factor that makes EWTN so compelling for a study about journalistic practices is the fact that the organization was not always focused on producing news— for much of its history, it is fair to say that the majority of its content was devotional material produced by and for Catholics.

EWTN grew from almost nothing into the world's largest religious media organization, while largely espousing unwaveringly orthodox Catholicism. It was founded by a cloistered Franciscan nun,

Mother Angelica, who saw the potential for using television broadcasting to preach Christianity to the world after visiting a Baptist-run television studio in Chicago in 1978 (Wallace, 2016). She began to produce her own half-hour television program, and despite modest success broadcasting to local commercial stations as well as nationally on the Christian Broadcasting Network, Mother Angelica wanted to reach a nationwide audience on a television network of her own. Thanks in large part to private donations, EWTN acquired the necessary equipment and Federal Communications Commission license to begin operation by 1981, transmitting four hours a day and reaching 60,000 homes. The network was founded and still has its headquarters in Alabama, which meant, interestingly, that “most of the original employees were Baptists who disagreed with key tenets of the Catholic faith” (Arroyo, 2007, p. 165).

At the same time, the United States Catholic Bishops were conceiving of their own broadcast network, and in 1982 launched the Catholic Telecommunications Network of America (CTNA), also with the expressed purpose of evangelizing.

By 1987, EWTN was broadcasting—24 hours a day—a variety of programming including a daily rosary, daily Mass and the popular “Mother Angelica Live,” which featured the titular nun speaking on relevant spiritual topics (Wallace, 2016). CTNA shut down in 1995, two years after covering the 1993 papal visit to the United States alongside EWTN (Phelps, 2000, p. 1). Today, the television facet of EWTN alone broadcasts in 147 countries and territories (Wallace, 2016).

Mother Angelica, who passed away in 2016, was not trained as a journalist, but the organization she founded—beginning primarily as a vehicle for devotional programming—is becoming more and more journalistic. After former Associated Press journalist Raymond Arroyo established EWTN News in 1996, EWTN acquired the National Catholic Register, a leading independent Catholic newspaper, in 2011, and “EWTN News Nightly” launched in 2013 as a daily news program covering, according to its

website, “major news events from a Catholic perspective.” EWTN also produces “The World Over,” a weekly in-depth interview program that often hosts current newsmakers both Catholic and non-Catholic. Finally, in 2014, EWTN announced that it would absorb Catholic News Agency and its Spanish-language sister organization, ACI Prensa—the world’s largest Spanish-language Catholic news organization. As mentioned above, Catholic News Agency’s news content is provided to parish newspapers across the country, free of charge (EWTN, 2014).

### **The institution’s goals haven’t changed, but there is a desire for better journalistic standards**

The main goals of EWTN’s shift toward more journalistic production, as well as more journalistic professionalism, seems to me, after working there and conducting interviews, to be threefold: be a source of education and faith formation; to counter perceived bias in the secular media; and to act as a trusted outlet for Catholics seeking clarity of information about current events.

Lauren Ashburn spoke in her interview about the efforts that EWTN News Nightly has made to build up its legitimacy on Capitol Hill as an outlet that is taken seriously, respected, and given a place alongside other Washington journalists. She mentioned that at White House press briefings, for example, EWTN journalists not only attend but also receive answers to their questions during the briefings regularly. Michelle La Rosa of Catholic News Agency expressed similar sentiments, saying CNA journalists have worked very hard to build their credibility.

Raymond Arroyo and Ashburn, both managing editors of their respective outlets within EWTN (EWTN News and EWTN News Nightly) both emphasized that they want their news product to be engaging for a secular audience as well as a Catholic one, and also appropriate for a wide range of ages. They both seemed to be of the mind that a high-quality news product, even one coming from a faith-based perspective, would in some ways speak for itself, and would attract an audience that was

not explicitly looking for a faith-based product. Arroyo, in particular, expressed concern that much of the overtly Catholic journalism he has seen and continues to see is simply not good enough, nor entertaining enough, to break out of its niche corner of the media world. He spoke about his time working in performing arts, and how he recognized that the product that EWTN puts out must have some level of entertainment value in order to attract an audience.

“We have an obligation to truth and to clarity,” Arroyo said. “And you have to entertain and make it exciting around the edges, just like any other product or business.”

ChurchPOP, a website owned by EWTN that is not a news site per se, but rather presents trending topics and stories that are accessible to a younger audience, a la BuzzFeed, is one example of an outlet owned by EWTN that is making an effort to appeal to a younger audience.

EWTN’s foundress, Mother Angelica, was well-known for being a strong and vocal advocate for orthodox and traditional Catholic belief, which led many to label her— and her network— as conservative. She very publically butted heads with members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops that she perceived to be liberal when it came to Church teaching, and she regularly described them as such. Coming into CNA/EWTN, I was well aware that there is often a perceived conservative/liberal dichotomy in Catholic journalism. I noticed that the guests on EWTN News Nightly tended to be openly politically conservative; for example, Alfonso Aguilar, President of the Latino Partnership for Conservative Principles, is a frequent guest to discuss immigration. Commentators from such publications as Newsmax and the Daily Caller, both politically conservative publications, are also regular guests.

Regarding this point, Jason Calvi said the ideals of EWTN—the ideals on which it was founded—call for an approach to the news that is focused not on a “liberal” or “conservative” political ideology, as is the norm on most cable news networks. Rather, their approach involves presenting the

Church's teachings as the ideological starting point and letting legitimate debates flow from there. For example, part of the "Catholic perspective" includes the assumption that poverty ought to be addressed in society; the Church has always advocated that the poor should be cared for. *How* exactly to do that in the most effective and politically expedient way possible can and should be debated, but the underlying assumption is taken as Truth.

Calvi said the liberal vs. conservative divide in Washington can make it hard to bring up some topics, such as abortion, especially with sources or guests who may not hold views in line with those of the Catholic Church.

### **Journalistic standards: both typical and unique**

For the most part, the journalistic standards I observed at EWTN were no different than what might be found at other secular outlets. I observed journalists vetting sources, checking facts, investigating claims, and engaging and discussing with each other regarding angles and pitches to make sure that their reporting was accurate and fair. In the time I was there, and in interactions with editors, it was clear that the journalism outlets of EWTN did not overtly include the personal opinions of its journalists, and when commentary was offered, it was clearly marked as such and delineated from a more typical "just-the-facts" story. The respondents almost all emphasized that claiming the label of "Catholic" does not mean jettisoning regular standards of journalism.

Interestingly, while speaking about the journalistic practices that characterize their work, several interviewees strongly pushed back against the label of "Catholic journalists," preferring not to be "pigeonholed," as CNA writer Christine Roussele put it. They also emphasized that they did not have the same role as those engaged in public relations for the Church.

“I want to be viewed as trusted,” Rousselle said. “I want to be 'Christine the good journalist,' not 'Christine the Catholic journalist' who is also good.”

For ENN managing editor Lauren Ashburn, she said never thought of journalism as “anything but just journalism.”

“Our journalists are good journalists. One of the reasons I'm here is because I have 25 years [of] experience and a reputation as a fair and accurate journalist. I don't expect my team to give their opinions either. I expect them to cover the news, from a certain perspective. I don't think there's a difference in the way it's done, but the focus is different.

“When I came [to EWTN], I said, ‘I don't want to be a lobbying arm of the Catholic Church. I want to come and tell stories that aren't being told in mainstream media’...stories that Catholics are interested in, but stories that anyone would be interested in who are curious about the world outside of secular media,” she said.

Ashburn says it's not that there isn't a need for "Catholic journalism;" rather there's a need for journalism that's fair, objective, and shines a light on issues that are not covered anywhere else.

“And I would encourage people to watch [EWTN News Nightly] and see whether or not they come away from the program saying, 'Oh, I didn't know that,' 'Oh, that was a really fascinating discussion about an issue I really didn't know much about.' I didn't know much about Christian persecution in Iraq, and then I testified on Capitol Hill about it. And I'm able to help educate viewers about that.”

Emphasizing stories from abroad is also an important mission for a Catholic journalist, she says, since the Church itself exists all over the world.

“To be a member of the Catholic Church, it's important not just to understand the Church here in the U.S., but also around the world,” Ashburn said. “And I think, frankly, that's what news

organizations should be doing: covering what's happening around the world, and you can't get that on mainstream channels.”

Along with covering under-covered issues, Ashburn says she sees part of her role as a journalist as an educator. Ashburn is a mother herself, and it was clear that she viewed a parent’s role as very important in the education of children, not only in learning about the world but also in education about religion. She emphasized that she wanted to make her program as family-friendly as possible so that parents, particularly Catholic parents, could feel comfortable watching the news with their children.

“I want my 10-year-old to be able to watch, to see the difficulties that people are going through in places like Syria, but I don't want parents to have to feel like they have to turn the channel because it's information that's salacious, or is inappropriate for a young audience. I want Catholic families to be able to sit down with a news program that they know is going to be safe to watch with their kids,” she said.

Perhaps the strongest rebuke against the label of “Catholic journalist” came from EWTN News founder and managing editor Raymond Arroyo.

“I don't consider myself a Catholic journalist, I'm a journalist who's Catholic,” he said. "I'm still bound by all the requirements of journalism ... if anything distinguishes my work, it's because I did that and do that well outside of 'Catholic journalism.'"

Arroyo's background is in theater, and he worked as an actor and a producer before getting into political journalism in Washington, working for CNN for a number of years. When Mother Angelica, EWTN's foundress, asked him to create EWTN News and his weekly news program, “The World Over,” he drew from his personal Catholic faith and his extensive experience in secular journalism.

“The show [is] exciting and deeply accessible to those who are Catholic, but equally as inviting, because of the [guests on the program], to people who had no concept of the Church. That is still, in my



mind, what our show does," he said. "When you put too fine a point on it, it gets parochial and uninteresting, and then you have to be in the club to figure it out...When you've got [only] 39% of people going to church, they don't know what an 'exhortation' is. They don't understand what a 'synod' is. So you've got to re-educate as you're reporting, and that's a challenge."

Arroyo is an author of biographies and children's novels in addition to being a journalist.

"I don't consider myself an evangelist. I don't. I do feel an obligation to bring truth to people, but I'm not an evangelist," he said. "We laymen, I think, are called to evangelize with our lives, and [through] the quality and substance of our work."

Arroyo, without naming any specific names, said he thinks the label of "Catholic journalist" is sometimes used to absolve sub-standard journalistic practices.

"I would argue that many in the Catholic media have no [journalistic] standard; because they're Catholic, they think this makes them somehow have the 'amulet of immunity' and they can be schlock, second-rate, not live up to any journalistic standards...and think they somehow get a pass because, well, 'We're Catholic.' No, you don't! Because you know what you get? No audience.

"I would argue that most 'Catholic journalists' don't have the stomach for the truth. It can be staring them in the face, and they come up with some pious lie because it's easier to tell. I've never done that, I can truly say that I've never done that," Arroyo said. "I think people construe the label as being limiting, which is why I won't wear it. Because I do think it's limiting...I think it's a title without meaning. I'm just a novelist, I'm just an actor, I'm just a director, I'm just a journalist. You want to put other titles on it, have at it. But I'm no more a 'Catholic journalist' than George Will is an 'Atheist Columnist.'"

Arroyo cites the fact that he estimates that the audience for "The World Over" is only about half Catholic—with the other half consisting of Protestants, people of other faiths, and people of no

faith—as evidence that the quality and diversity of the people his program brings on allows him to reach out beyond a homogeneous Catholic audience.

“My air is Catholic. I don't know any other world, and I seek to invite others there. Whether I do something in the secular world or in the Catholic world, it's all the same to me. ... The core is authentic, and that will always resonate if you're true to it.”

Michelle La Rosa noted that CNA reporters have had to work very hard to earn respect as reputable journalists while dealing in their niche topic. “We’ve really tried really hard to be accurate and not biased,” she said. Since Catholic News Agency is a relative newcomer to Washington, D.C., La Rosa said she still remembers how it was a “big deal” when secular outlets first recognized CNA as a “legitimate source” by quoting their reporting.

Several respondents spoke about their desire to cover stories and people that are “overlooked by secular media,” which is similar to the common journalistic standard of “giving voice to the voiceless.” There was also a clear desire to create news that provides useful information—“news you can use,” if you will—for Catholics, which mainly involved information on methods of prayer and analysis of controversies within the Church itself.

In terms of distinct ethical principles at EWTN, a term that I heard from a couple of sources that I thought was somewhat notable within the world of journalism was the desire to be “charitable” in their reporting. “Charity” is defined by the Catechism of the Catholic Church as “the theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.” Though it was difficult to elicit a clear definition of what exactly this meant in the context of journalism, the best way I can describe this ethical principle is a resistance to the practice of using the journalistic platform to personally attack or discredit certain individuals or groups. This ethic also involves emphasizing the positive aspects of a story, perhaps more than the negative. Tom Wehner of

the National Catholic Register said one thing he did learn after starting in Catholic media is to be charitable. He said there has to be an additional “facet of charity in our reporting,” because using the platform that a journalist has to advance a selfish agenda is contrary to the Catholic virtue of charity. He also pointed out that Catholics believe souls are at stake if they get their faith wrong. Therefore, Catholic journalists have to be very careful about wording in their stories. “What if the way we report causes someone to lose their faith?” he said.

“Bias” is often seen as a dirty word in the world of journalism, and generally is associated with a lack of credibility. EWTN is an interesting case of an outlet that is, by design, inherently “biased” toward a certain worldview. However, I learned that this point of view does not substantially affect the way that EWTN journalists go about their reporting, nor does it lessen their credibility when it comes to reporting the facts. I would say the two main areas that this worldview does affect are story selection and sourcing. Although it is quite obvious to say that EWTN journalists cover a lot of news that is about the Vatican and the Church hierarchy, many of their stories are about a variety of topics dealing with issues such as religious liberty, humanitarian crises, and other topics of interest to a religious audience. In terms of sourcing, sources that are faithful Catholics, or at least have a religious perspective, are often given precedence over others.

Many of the journalists I interviewed emphasize that as journalists who work in Catholic media, they are in a position where they are nearly always approaching their stories with the same, or very similar, worldview as their audience, and thus, ideally, they hold the same presuppositions and moral principles as the audience. Thus, they are able—again ideally—to write in a manner that a Catholic audience can trust. Several of the editors explicitly cited “commitment to the truth” as the reason they do journalism.

“Journalism always has presuppositions. There’s always going to be a guiding set of

assumptions, because it's epistemologically impossible not to," JD Flynn said. "Being Catholic doesn't change our commitment to the truth." Ideally, he said, it should enhance it, and allow CNA to pursue the truth in a way that speaks to the moral assumptions that its audience holds to.

The most prevalent response to the question of journalistic norms and principles at EWTN was a "commitment to the truth," which I quickly learned meant something a bit different to journalists working in Catholic media vs. journalists working in a purely secular outlet. It is clear that a Catholic journalist's faith informs the work that he or she does, and a faithful Catholic believes that the teaching of the Church itself is where truth ultimately resides. While nearly all the respondents spoke about truth as a high ideal in their profession, most qualified what they meant by the concept.

For JD Flynn, Catholic journalism is different than simply "journalism about the Church." This is because, firstly, Catholic journalism has a different set of ends in mind. Yes, he said, of course we want to serve the common good, we want to inform and educate; any journalist would want to achieve those ends. The difference, he said, is that the Catholic perception of the common good is, ultimately, the salvation of souls, and more generally the Church's ideas, developed over the centuries, about what constitutes human flourishing in this life. Flynn said a Catholic journalist should strive to be "Catholic first," which he defines as holding the presuppositions of the Church as true. This is something that any committed Catholic would do anyway. This notion of approaching the world with a set of moral presuppositions, Flynn stressed, is not unique to Catholic journalism.

"The concept of totally unbiased and objective journalism is a myth," Flynn said. "The presuppositions that a journalist holds as true and not true will always impact what they do."

Flynn stressed, though, that this doesn't mean that everything that every Catholic says is automatically true; any journalist should be skeptical of institutions and power. For him, the label "Catholic" is not a license for naïveté regarding the members of the Church hierarchy. Nor is Catholic

journalism merely the practice of reporting on what those in the Church are doing or saying. Rather, the moral assumptions of the Church are the basis for the journalism itself, no matter what the subject of the reporting is.

“Ultimately, we want to do journalism in a way that is consistent with our understanding of what is good for the human person,” Flynn said. “In that sense, the way that we’re telling stories is not just *about* Catholicism, but also done in a Catholic way.”

Flynn said Catholic journalists should hold those in power accountable, as any good journalist should; in the case of the Church, this is to “make sure the Church is who she says she is.” The Church makes claims of moral authority, and it is partly the job of the Catholic journalist to hold the Church accountable to those claims. For Flynn, approaching the Church as a faithful Catholic doesn’t mean giving people in the Church—whether clergy or laity—a pass. Catholics believe that the Church has moral authority, but because the Church is also made up of fallible human beings, they ought to be held accountable for their actions if they go against the moral foundations of the Church itself.

Raymond Arroyo cautioned that journalists working in Catholic media are susceptible to getting too close to their sources, just like any other kind of journalist.

"That is a line that is endlessly crossed, in entertainment journalism, political journalism, and Catholic journalism every day. It's not one that I cross," he said.

Michelle La Rosa shared a similar sentiment, saying that you have to be careful in Catholic journalism to be committed to the truth, and not be blinded by friendships. Catholic journalists can be susceptible to that, she said, just like journalists in secular media can be.

On the subject of the role of a Catholic journalist, Tom Wehner points out that Catholic Bishops and Bishop Conferences have public relations specialists whose job it is to protect the image of the Church; that’s not the role of a Catholic journalist. He echoes Flynn's point that Catholic journalists are

not just reporting Catholic news, but ideally reporting in a manner informed by Catholic ethics.

Courtney Grogan emphasized how specific aspects of Catholic theology can inform those ethics.

"As Catholics, we worship...Christ, who is the way, the Truth, and the life, and I really do see that as the vocation and goal to communicate that truth and share it with others," Grogan said. She said when she is approaching a story or topic, she always reads and researches thoroughly on the topic she is covering, reading all available background information, and then asks herself: "After having read what's already out there on this issue, what are my remaining questions as a Catholic?"

"[The Catholic Church has] been reflecting on human nature and the dignity of the human person and how to live best together in community for centuries," Grogan said. "And so I think that's definitely something we can go back to... what different Popes or saints have said about certain things."

The way Jason Calvi sees it, the mission of Catholic journalism should be one of solidarity with fellow believers, and to cut through the noise of partisan journalism in a way that unites those who may be otherwise ideologically divided; a mission of compassion, and of listening, in order to make sense of the endless political debates. Covering issues such as the Department of Health and Human Services' contraception mandate as a Catholic really brought home the fact for Calvi that by giving members of the Church hierarchy a platform by interviewing them, he is "able to connect the bishop directly to the flock" using the media, and help to bring clarity to Catholics who may be confused about the political issues of the day. He said he's been able to interview people with particular stories of interest to Catholics, such as a woman who, when she was in her mother's womb, survived an attempted abortion and was born. Beyond that, he sees working at EWTN as an opportunity to provide Catechesis for people who may have had a very weak upbringing in the faith, as he did early on, and make that a part of the apostolate mission; one of teaching for people who need answers. Finally, Calvi emphasized that

EWTN journalists try to bring up stories of interest to faithful Catholics that are largely ignored or forgotten by the secular media, such as the devastating persecution of Christians in the Middle East. Also, in some way, he sees it as a challenging but necessary mission to be present on Capitol Hill and show secular journalists what a Catholic journalist looks like—how they act, how they treat their peers, their sources, etc.—because that may be some people’s only encounter with a faithful Catholic.

There is a sense of collective mission and purpose that I observed and which many of the individuals cited, and which is similar to and different from a collective sense of purpose at a secular institution. I believe that this is partly due to the massive scope and worldwide reach of EWTN. The best comparison I think I can make is the sense of duty that a large institution such as the The New York Times might feel to “serve the public;” EWTN is similar, but their goal is to specifically serve Catholics.

### **Choosing EWTN**

Who are the journalists that work to advance this mission? Obviously there are many faithful Catholics who do not work in expressly “Catholic journalism,” but even the ones that do work for EWTN are not as unusual or mystical as a secular observer may assume. Most of them are, unsurprisingly, Catholics who wanted to use their skills to specifically serve other Catholics; people who believe in EWTN’s mission specifically; and overwhelmingly they are people who grew disillusioned with secular newsrooms and their colleagues there. I was particularly interested in investigating the claim that the culture of “secular” newsrooms in the United States is often not conducive to a journalist who is strongly convicted in their religious beliefs.

Notably, no one that I talked to set out to specifically work in Catholic journalism, or ever

dreamed of working in Catholic journalism growing up. Many of the interviewees were trained in journalism at school, and decided to do Catholic journalism only after working in secular media for a while; for most of them, their faith didn't seem to strongly influence their choice of career until after they had begun to work in journalism. It is worth mentioning that I did not get a chance to interview any EWTN journalists who are not Catholic. This is not necessarily because they don't exist—although I didn't hear of any working in the Washington, D.C. office.

I found that people with particular knowledge and connections about and within the Church will often be drawn to work in Catholic journalism in order to cover the Church's activities with an insider's perspective. The fact that they are “Catholic journalists” means they are able to devote the time and resources to covering the Church with a level of scrutiny and insight that secular outlets either cannot or will not.

CNA's editor-in-chief JD Flynn, for example, is a canon lawyer by training, a very niche field within the Catholic Church. He echoes the Second Vatican Council's teaching that Catholic journalists should serve the common good, and said he believes it makes sense for people with particular experience and expertise regarding Catholicism to work in the field of Catholic journalism and share that knowledge.

“From a purely craft perspective, we [Catholic journalists] have subject area knowledge that others don't have,” he said. Religion reporting, on the whole, is “kind of dying,” he said, because there's a myth that religion is not that important in people's lives. He says it is the job of the Catholic journalist to counter that bias.

Jeanette De Melo, editor-in-chief of the National Catholic Register newspaper, worked in Church communications doing public relations for the Church for a while, but found she preferred to be the one asking the questions. She said she sees the value of “Catholic journalism” in the expertise that



dedicated religion reporters are able to offer, especially in an increasingly secularized media landscape.

“A religion writer, a Catholic writer, should be the same [as a business writer writing about business], but many times the way our journalism works today, how secularized society has become, that there aren't really many dedicated religion writers who have a deep knowledge of their subject matter,” De Melo said. “That's one of the roles that a Catholic press—a Catholic journal like ours—can play. You know that the people are writing each story are Catholics who understand the Church and understand the subject rather well, and thus can report on it in a deeper and more in-depth way than secular journalists can. And so I think that's a huge part of what we can do as Catholic journalists.”

Nearly all the interviewees were raised Catholic, with a few notable exceptions. JD Flynn and Rodney Harris are both converts to the Catholic faith, after being raised in other Christian traditions. Newswriter Christian Swezey was born and raised in the Eastern Orthodox tradition by devout parents, but went to Catholic grade school, a Jesuit all-boys high school, and eventually transferred to a Jesuit undergraduate college after starting out at Ithaca College in New York. Swezey interned for a magazine that covered lacrosse while in college, which set him up for a job at National Public Radio soon after graduating. He started at the Washington Post while writing freelance sports pieces on the side for Inside Lacrosse magazine, a publication he still writes for today. He says despite his Catholic education—and he was quick to praise the education he received in high school in particular—he wandered away from his faith for a while after starting work as a journalist. “The [Washington] Post was not at all faith driven; quite the opposite,” he said. “To be fair, part of me went the same way they did.”

Nearly all of the interviewees studied journalism in college in some capacity, with a couple of exceptions. Raymond Arroyo studied theater at art school; JD Flynn attended The Catholic University of America to become licensed in canon law.

Capitol Hill correspondent Jason Calvi says his love for making home movies as a kid with his family's video camera, and his desire to share his Catholic faith through media, led him to choose Loras College, a small Catholic college in Dubuque, Iowa, because of its reputable journalism program. EWTN was on his radar as an institution that he knew of, but at the time he didn't really have an idea that he wanted to work there. He learned how to do journalism by starting "at the bottom" of his college TV station, running the teleprompter and reporting, and eventually becoming the anchor and lead reporter. Between his junior and senior years, he interned at a Chicago TV station, which was really helpful for teaching him the practical side of getting shots and telling stories. He was also a political science double major, but said that he was always better at asking the questions than being a great and charismatic orator like some of his classmates. His first job out of college in journalism was at a Chicago-area station in northwest Indiana, Lakeshore Public TV, covering Indiana for a Chicago audience.

In terms of inspiration to enter the journalistic profession, respondents' answers were more eclectic. Christian Swezey's parents were English majors and had worked as writers and editors, so he drew inspiration from their example. Swezey, as previously mentioned, studied English but interned in journalism while an undergrad. He says although he got a lot of writing experience in college as an English major, his first journalism job came with a steep learning curve. He remembers making a factual mistake in an early story he wrote for Inside Lacrosse magazine and being reprimanded by the coach of the team he was writing about. His takeaway: "Go somewhere [first] where you can get your mistakes out of the way," where a young journalist can "learn and not feel shell-shocked."

Christine Rousselle has a similar love for the practice of writing, which pushed her toward a career as a journalist. She proudly stated that she was "that weird ten-year-old with an actual attainable job goal. I had no interest in being a movie star or a singer; I wanted to be a journalist."

Rousselle attended “a school without a journalism program” and wrote for her college newspaper, eventually working for TownHall.com, a conservative news site, for four-and-a-half years before joining EWTN.

CNA editor-in-chief JD Flynn says his work as an acting diocesan communication director gave him an insight into the power of the media to shape people’s perceptions of the world around them. “Journalism shapes conversations; conversations shape culture,” he says. “What people consume in the media affects the way they think.”

Michelle La Rosa pointed out that mass media, and the news media specifically, are what people today turn to for information. She said that while there’s a lot of conservative and liberal journalism out there, she really saw a need for more Catholic journalists who are knowledgeable about and well formed in their faith, and are willing and able to bring that to others. The way she sees it, the Catholic Church was the original form of mass media: When the Pope sent out a message, it got sent to bishops, and then to all congregations. She said for this reason, Catholics shouldn’t shy away from mass media; their journalism is not just about the Church, but it’s also able to speak into all aspects of humanity.

Kate Viek said she thinks part of her job as a journalist is to help people to understand the beauty of the faith, but also in a very practical way bring information to Catholics that they will find useful.

“The people who follow us on social media, they might see this video of Pope Francis suggesting this very practical act of prayer,” she said. “And maybe a mom with kids, for example, might adopt that for their family. So working at CNA involves sharing the beauty of the Catholic faith, helping people live their faith in a deeper way...[not] just reporting what the Pope did, but also in a formative way, helping people [learn] how to pray.”

Courtney Grogan, who primarily covers international affairs for CNA, echoed Vieck's sentiments.

"Covering international affairs: Boko Haram, North Korea, the persecution of Christians in the Middle East... these things can be overwhelming, seeing the suffering in this world," she said. "And having to follow these things, I can [pray about them]. And so there is a deep intersection I feel between my personal life and the work I'm doing for CNA. And that's something I hope CNA can be for the Church ... to keep the Church well-informed about what's going on in the world, [about] these tragedies, so that we can have people diligently praying every day with the full knowledge of what is needed. If there's a drought in Africa, or something like that, we can encourage people to pray the rosary, for example."

Several of the interviewees were people who knew or grew to know over time that they didn't fit ideologically with their colleagues in secular newsrooms. This most often manifested itself in a combination of political and ideological/moral differences and clashes.

After Christian Swezey started getting more into his faith, he said it was difficult for him to work in secular media, because his colleagues by and large did not share his zeal. He said they didn't like the fact that he was now much more religious, although a few respected his decision. Many stopped talking to him because of it. He said he began to stage his own "one-man resistance" to what he saw as biased coverage by the Washington Post, deliberately taking down web stories that he disagreed with. He would do little things too, like changing phrases written about Donald Trump such as "against immigration" to "against illegal immigration;" or: "There would be stories where somebody would mention Jesus, and the editor would take out the mention of God in the story, and I would put it back in," he said.

Swezey says he really believes in the work EWTN is doing, likening the spreading of EWTN's

message to the spreading of the Gospel (the “Good News” of Christianity) itself. He said he noticed that there were certain people and institutions—most notably the Catholic Church itself—that seemed to be a target for attacks by the Washington Post.

"For me, Catholic journalism is literally the Good News," he says. "We are literally the good news that God loves every single one of us. Obviously, we have to cover the bad news too...clergy sex abuse, all that stuff. I'm not saying we shouldn't cover that. But our overall message is so redemptive, and the mainstream media's overall message tears people down, especially certain people they don't like."

He says EWTN's philosophies fit with his own. He voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential election because of his views on abortion.

"EWTN is a miracle, and it works miracles...Now, instead of working for Jeff Bezos, I work for God. It's an upgrade, regardless of what the liberals will tell you."

Christine Rousselle says she feels more comfortable talking about her faith at CNA than at her old job with TownHall.com, which was nominally secular but staffed largely with conservative Christians who disagreed with her on some key theological points.

Most of the respondents cited an epiphany moment, sometimes after straying from their faith or converting, when they realized that they wanted to use their talents and gifts to directly benefit the Church. Choosing to work for EWTN is clearly a very intentional decision, and several interviewees pointed out that they appreciate the sense of collective purpose and mission at EWTN. For many of the interviewees, there was both a positive force drawing them toward EWTN specifically, as well as a negative force pushing them away from the secular media that they were working for before EWTN.

Swezey said his years at the Washington Post were challenging; he was working all the time, many night hours, and was struggling with alcohol. He wasn't happy, he said. Then, in December 2013,

he happened upon an EWTN radio channel on satellite radio in his car. He knew his dad had loved listening to Mother Angelica, the EWTN foundress, and decided to give it a listen. After listening for a while, Swezey said he ended up in tears. He was “home,” he said.

“All of a sudden...overeating was gone, the alcohol was gone...replaced by God, by happiness,” he says. “I started to see the [Washington] Post for what it was.” What it was, he said, was a “den of atheists and communists.”

Lauren Ashburn started out writing for her high school newspaper, and later attended Columbia University in New York. She says her decision to pursue a career in TV journalism started when she took a college course on the subject. “I had no idea 25 years ago that I wanted to go into Catholic journalism,” she says. “I just wanted to tell good stories on TV.”

Eventually Ashburn started working for Fox News, and eventually realized that even at a conservative-leaning outlet, she couldn't openly express her faith. While still working at Fox, she helped the Archdiocese of Washington to prepare for Pope Francis' visit to the United States.

“[Pope Francis], when I met him, changed my life” she said. “It was at that moment, at Catholic Charities, under a tent with homeless people, who we were feeding. And the Pope came and walked among the crowd, and I met him for the first time there. The aura around the Pope was the most calming and serene presence I've ever had the pleasure of experiencing. It was almost a conversion process. It was a yes to coming closer to God and to the Church.”

When EWTN called and asked if she would come and work for them as a White House correspondent, she said her experience with the Pope was a major factor in her decision to say yes to the offer.

Rodney Harris, after converting to the Catholic faith and leaving the local TV station where he worked, said: “When I heard about EWTN, I thought, awesome, here's the perfect way to blend my

faith, which I love, with journalism, which I also love.”

The community and “family” aspects of working at EWTN were cited by several of the respondents. They spoke about the fact that the company values their well-being and respects their dignity. Moreover, the ability to share their faith openly, and work in a very intentional environment, was clearly valuable to the journalists I spoke to. I could tell that it wasn’t an office that people just stumbled into; most had made a very conscious choice to come here. Twice a week, many of the staff working in the Washington, D.C. EWTN office convene in the office chapel for Mass, which for me was clearly a way of providing office unity that is different from most other forms of office community, like having lunch together, for example. The ability to worship together is one of the deepest bonds human beings can have, and although attendance at the Mass is sporadic, knowing that nearly everyone in the office believes in the same things you do is clearly a source of comfort for the people who work there.

“The culture at EWTN is different. We’re all united in a common purpose here,” Harris said.

Several interviewees, particularly on the CNA side, talked about how personally edifying it is for them to work in a job where they get to contemplate life's deep questions. Kate Viek, for example, mentioned that most people don’t get a chance to slow down and ponder the kinds of big-picture ethical and moral questions that CNA writes about on a regular basis.

“I...get to be at this office and have interesting conversations with smart people, and I’m able to chew on the big-picture questions, and who gets to do that at their job?” she said.

Several interviewees mentioned the fact that EWTN's business model, as a nonprofit funded almost entirely by donations, means they don't have to worry about how many “clicks” their stories get, which they found freeing and helpful.

Flynn says EWTN’s financial model helps with their Catholic mission. “I don’t have a

publisher over my shoulder telling me to get clicks...we're not as susceptible to sensationalism and stories with less substance," he said. He says this model also gives his reporters more leeway to cover "substantial issues that aren't sexy," such as the release of dense Vatican documents. He says he actively tells reporters not to worry about the online traffic on their stories. "We have the great privilege of being in a position of being in service to the truth, and I think any journalist would want that," he said.

Rodney Harris' appreciation for ENN's business model is more practical, but still speaks to the company's emphasis on family. He worked at a local news station in Detroit for several years before joining ENN, and he said working there was "annoying." For one thing, he got tired of reporting on the same crimes day after day. House fires, murders, robberies. For another thing, he worked the midnight shift for almost three years. Surprisingly, he says he actually liked working that shift more than working in the afternoon, because he could work from 11pm until 8am, sleep until the afternoon and spend the evening with his family before work. When they switched him to the afternoon shift, he says it was terrible because he never got to see his family in the evening and he would get back home late at night when they were asleep. With ENN, he only has to produce one show a day, whereas there were many shows per day at WXYZ.

## **Conclusion**

EWTN journalists have many of the same ideas about journalism as other more "traditional" journalists, but have made a very conscious choice to use those skills in a way that speaks to their deeply held beliefs, and specifically for a Catholic outlet whose overarching ideology fits with their own.



It is worth reiterating the point from the lede of this analysis: the journalism produced by EWTN is undeniably niche. I hope my analysis has provided an interesting glimpse into the minds of those working in there, many of whom gave up decent jobs working in secular media to pursue this mission. That being said, I am appreciative of the fact that a non-Catholic reader of this analysis may wonder why they should care that EWTN is occupying this particular niche, which they may not see as particularly significant. Allow me to try to fit this analysis into a broader journalistic context.

Firstly, I think it is significant that several of the respondents joined EWTN specifically after becoming disillusioned with their jobs in secular media. These journalists cited political as well as moral differences with their colleagues. In a time when audiences are becoming more and more fragmented, with a seemingly infinite collection of niche media outlets to choose from, many outlets can fall into a tribal attitude of “us vs. them,” even if their coverage is not overtly polemic. I would say most of the journalists working at EWTN could be seen as falling on the conservative side of the political spectrum. This is not necessarily a bad thing, and it does not necessarily mean that it influences how they cover the news. However, it is interesting to see the “conservative” and the “orthodox” intersect, especially given the Catholic Church’s positions as they relate to U.S. politics. As EWTN’s Chairman and CEO Michael Warsaw noted in a 2013 interview with the Washington Post, the Catholic Church’s teachings cover a wide range of topics, some of which line up with conventionally conservative ideology, such as opposition to gay marriage, and some that suggest a conventional liberal ideology, such as opposition to capital punishment. It is worth noting that there is one particular issue over which EWTN has particular influence: pro-life issues, especially abortion. Abortion-rights groups such as NARAL-Pro-Choice America specifically name EWTN as a mass media group that opposes the message that they promote, calling them “anti-choice media.” With abortion being such a divisive and important issue to so many voters in the United States, EWTN holds real influence over Catholic

voters on this issue.

Secondly, there has clearly always been an audience for journalism written from a similar moral perspective to a particular audience, but the impetus for the rise of expressly Catholic journalism is twofold: a reaction to perceived biases against the Church in mainstream secular reporting; and a desire to learn about the Church from organizations that actually share the audience's beliefs.

EWTN will continue its mission of educating and strengthening its audience's Catholic faith. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence to suggest that its content can bring and has brought outsiders into the faith, but only time will tell if their efforts will result in being able to attract a truly mainstream audience.

## APPENDIX: PROFESSIONAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

### **Introduction**

“I believe in the profession of journalism.” Thus begins Walter Williams’ famous Journalist’s Creed, a statement of values, principles and standards that practitioners and educators alike have found to be useful and relevant for providing normative ideals about what journalism should be and how journalists should behave.

In professional journalism today, there is a popular, almost a mythological idea about what journalism ought to be, which involves valuing objectivity and factual reporting (Winston, 2012, p. 8). Much has been written in a scholarly context about these normative ideals. Brown et al (2011) for example argue that an objective reporter should not become involved with particular “causes,” even if they are positive ones such as charities, believing that such association damage credibility and would seem to erode “cold, hard objectivity” (p. 286).

Significantly less has been written in a scholarly context about the normative ideals that ought to govern religious journalism. Because journalism is not a licensed profession in the United States, “individual journalists and the profession as a whole must work out their own role definitions according to (1) their perception of what society needs, and (2) an ethical recognition that constitutional protection must not knowingly be socially destructive” (Brown et al, 2011, p. 24). It would seem that journalism or journalists that profess a certain religion might hold ideals other than objectivity as the highest principles of their profession—so the overarching question

that guides the research I am proposing becomes: how do these religious norms manifest themselves in a journalistic setting?

The research I propose will focus on the normative journalistic ideals that exist at a major independent Catholic media organization, and how professional journalistic practices have influenced the way that Catholic journalists conduct themselves and do their jobs.

My time at the University of Missouri has prepared me for this project in several ways. The convergence program, in particular, has been invaluable due to the fact that I have become adept at telling a story in the best way possible by utilizing different media, whether it be producing a video, a web story, an audio piece, or all three. Having that versatility under my belt gives me the confidence that I can cover any story that comes along in the the most interesting way possible for my audience, and that I can comply with just about any request from my editors. Another key experience from my time at MU has been the Global Journalist program at KBIA, which really helped me to develop my confidence in talking to sources as well as my interviewing skills.

It has been fantastic to get the opportunity to rub shoulders with journalists of all backgrounds and opinions while I have been here, which has broadened my worldview to respect the viewpoints and morals of others, while encouraging me to develop my own ethical code as a journalist. Having to make ethical judgements as a news anchor for KBIA provided both a challenge and an opportunity for growth.

Perhaps most importantly, I have learned over the course of my journalism education that the content I create really does matter to people and can have a positive impact on their lives—as evidenced by the work I was able to do with KBIA creating a special series about homelessness

in Missouri. Above all, I would like the journalism that I do after graduation to make a meaningful difference in the world, and I have realized over the course of my education that working in Catholic journalism is the way I would like to achieve that. This project will help me to learn more about the profession of Catholic journalism and perhaps shed some light on how this profession, which I love, can even be improved in the future.

In the interest of full disclosure, I am a member of the Catholic Church myself. Though I may share the moral and religious views of many of the people I will interview for this research, I do not believe that this constitutes a conflict of interest, as I plan to press my interview subjects for meaningful and interesting information.

Following graduation, I would like to work as a digital journalist, producing multimedia content, particularly radio pieces and videos. In the next five years or so, I see myself firmly supplanting myself in the Catholic media sphere and hopefully becoming a reporter, videographer, or radio host. Academically, there was a time when I thought I wanted to continue my journalism education by pursuing a PhD, but over the course of my Master's degree I have made the decision that I would not like to pursue a PhD immediately following graduation, if at all, and I would like to enter the workforce as soon as I graduate. That being said, in the longer term, I hope to continue to work in media but I would also love to remain involved with higher education, and perhaps even pursue a position as a professor, teaching journalism and/or film studies. Ultimately, I simply want to utilize my education and my potential to be the most productive and morally upright person that I can possibly be.

### **Professional Skills Component**

For my professional skills component, I will be working at the Washington D.C. bureau of Catholic News Agency, a Catholic media company and wire service owned by EWTN and based in Denver, Colorado. I interned for CNA at their headquarters in Denver during Summer 2017. The bureau is housed in a building near Capitol Hill which is also where EWTN's flagship news program, EWTN News Nightly, is produced.

I will be primarily doing videography and video editing work, but I anticipate being involved in various capacities to produce any kind of multimedia—video, print, audio, etc.—necessary to tell the stories I am assigned, which will be posted to CNA's website, social media, and YouTube channel. My editors have already suggested that they have story ideas that they would like me to cover that would involve me traveling throughout the East Coast. I plan to begin my internship on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and work four days a week for at least 14 weeks. My work will, as far as I know, be supervised remotely by the editors in Denver, but I'll be working alongside CNA and EWTN journalists who will no doubt help me through the process.

CNA reports on news from the Vatican and news from within the Church, but also reports extensively on news stories that may be of interest to Catholics, and offers commentaries and blogs to help Catholics make sense of current events. The editorial style of CNA is very professional, in the sense that it makes a clear distinction between factual reporting and opinion and no overt political or partisan slant in their writing. Their stories run in diocesan newspapers across the United States, and their website serves Catholics all over the world. They are also working to expand their presence on social media, producing more video and multimedia content in addition to their online stories.

I feel fully confident that I can take on the work I will be expected to perform at CNA, for several reasons. During my time at CNA this past summer, I was given the freedom to pitch projects that I wanted to work on, as well as work on longer-term projects throughout the summer that I was able to develop more creatively than if I had been churning out dayturn stories. During my time there I filmed original content and conducted interviews, and also edited footage I was sent from various other sources such as CNA's bureau in Rome. I was able to not only produce at least one video per day during the summer about current events, but I also produced a short documentary that I filmed and edited myself, which my editors at CNA were very satisfied with. My work was posted to CNA's website, as well as their social media where was made available to nearly 2 million followers.

At the end of my summer internship, my CNA editors expressed a great interest in having me back to work for them, and told me that the organization needed a videographer in Washington—so when the opportunity arose to intern for them there as part of the conclusion of my master's degree, I jumped at the chance.

Beyond the fact that I am familiar with the organization and what will likely be expected of me, I have the skillset necessary to thrive in Washington's media environment. I possess advanced skills in shooting and editing video for any platform, as well as extensive experience interviewing subjects for radio, video, and print. I possess the confidence necessary to contact sources, research topics beforehand, and pitch story ideas to my editors.

In terms of "abundant physical evidence," much of what I will be producing will be in video format, so I will provide either links to the finished products or upload copies of the video files to show the work that I was able to do in Washington.

## **Analysis Component**

### **Background**

The central, overarching idea that underpins the analysis component of my professional project is the question of how the development of “Catholic journalism” has led to the media landscape of Catholic journalism that we see today, with EWTN, via a variety of channels, as the largest independent Catholic news source. Moreover, how does “Catholic journalism” fit into the broader media landscape in the United States? As will be explored further in the literature review section, a major role of Catholic journalism in the United States over the years has been “defensive”—seeking to protect and guard the faith from a culture that was and still is majority Protestant Christian, and historically, according to my sources, either did not understand the Catholic faith or was openly hostile to it. This defensive role was a contributing factor in the formation of EWTN in the first place.

To put this discussion in perspective, it’s important to note that journalism in the United States has its roots in the religiosity of its founders and those that came after them. European settlers in the “New World,” especially the Puritans, attached great teleological significance to daily events, which was reflected in their sermons, almanacs, and broadsheets (Winston, 2012, p. 6). By the 1730s, a thriving newspaper culture provided pervasive coverage of religion and religious affairs. “Religion was a fact of life covered by the press as well as a primary means for interpreting events, whether a rise in taxes or a series of freakish storms” (Winston, 2012, p. 6).



After the Revolutionary War, editors tended to value partisanship and debate over balance and objectivity, winning audiences over with sensational narratives during the “Penny Press” era (Winston, 2012, p. 7). Before this time, newspapers had covered both religious and secular news. But as newspapers became increasingly secular in tone, the religious press became an important subset of journalism for churchgoers and believers, especially after 1830. Between 1870 and 1930, religion became more and more peripheral in the press as the “power to sway public opinion had migrated from pulpit to press” (Winston, 2012, p. 8). Advertising became more and more important to the industry, as did the normative values of objectivity and factual reporting.

Many journalistic institutions developed codes of ethics during the 20th century. In 1996, the Society for Professional Journalists adopted its Code of Ethics, which include the following principles: Seek truth and report it, minimize harm, act independently, be accountable (Brown et al, 2011, pp. 8-10). None of these principles are in any way contradictory to a Judeo-Christian worldview, but the fact that none of them necessarily depend on a religious worldview is evidence for the claim that most journalists today are not guided primarily or explicitly by religious norms or values. Though journalism ethics is an oft-covered topic in scholarly research, duty-based ethics—as Judeo-Christian values are—are just one of several schools of thought that are often cited in journalism as a way to understand norms and principles (Brown et al, 2011, p. 6). “Journalism as an institution has a different set of values than, say, religion. Religion is based on faith. Journalists are always questioning, skeptical, often negative” (Brown et al, 2011, p. 5).

Professionalism in journalism matters because, quite simply, the practices associated with professional journalism produces better content and is more effective at serving the audience that

reads it. These practices involve observing the principles of ethical journalism, such as honesty and accountability to both the audience and sources, and clearly demarcating fact from opinion.

Why does professionalism matter in Catholic journalism? For one, a Catholic journalist with the goal of “spreading the Good News” is likely to find that professional journalism practices will make the transmission of their message more effective. But the answer to that question lies in the fact that journalism written for Catholics and about Catholic topics has not always taken advantage of practices and ethical principles that were largely developed in the world of secular journalism. There have been times when editorial standards in Catholic journalism have been relatively low, and their credibility has suffered as a result. In today's media environment where factual reporting is valued above all and perceived “bias” in reporting is abhorred, Catholic journalism has, in a sense and admittedly by definition, always been “biased” toward the Church itself, and toward Catholics. But as I hope I can demonstrate in this paper, there has been a shift after the 1960s in Catholic journalism toward a more general standard of news coverage, albeit through a Catholic lens, and Catholic journalism outlets are following and valuing many of journalistic techniques pioneered in the secular press. It seems to me that the adoption of many of these practices are, among other things, an ongoing attempt to build credibility in the eyes of not only their Catholic audience, but the wider world as well.

In light of this, I believe further research is needed into the ethical motivations of Catholic journalists and how their faith influences their ideas about journalistic norms and principles. This is what I hope to achieve in my research next semester. I believe it will be interesting to speak to journalists who have had to adapt the ethical principles that inform their

religious faith into a journalistic setting, especially a setting of religious journalism where they may often still find themselves on the defensive.

## **Research Questions**

- RQ1: What professional journalistic norms, practices, and ethical standards exist within EWTN? How are these norms and practices similar or different to those at secular media organizations?
- RQ2: How did these norms, practices, and ethical standards develop over the history of the organization?
  - What is EWTN's goal in moving toward more journalistic professionalism?
- RQ3: Why did EWTN journalists choose to work in Catholic media?
  - I'm particularly interested in hearing from journalists working at EWTN who are not Catholic. What made them decide to work for a Catholic media company?

## **Introduction to EWTN**

To reiterate, the objective of my research is to understand how professional journalistic norms, practices, and ethical guidelines influence the individual journalists working at EWTN, the largest independent Catholic media organization in the United States. EWTN is funded almost entirely by private donations, with television content reaching over 250 million homes (EWTN, no date), and in addition to television also produces content for radio stations and

numerous online platforms. EWTN is not directly owned or operated by the Catholic Church, but the network's goal, as stated on its website, is to "provide the means by which the various organizations within the [Roman Catholic] Church will have a nation-wide vehicle of expression," with a mission to "serve the orthodox belief and teaching of the Church as proclaimed by the Supreme Pontiff and his predecessors."

The factor that makes EWTN so compelling for a study about journalistic practices is the fact that the organization was not always focused on producing news— for much of its history, it is fair to say that the majority of its content was devotional material produced by and for Catholics. EWTN grew from almost nothing into the world's largest religious media organization, while largely espousing unwaveringly orthodox Catholicism. There are other Catholic media organizations that also have a wide reach and have been engaged in what could reasonably be called "journalism" for longer than EWTN has— the National Catholic Reporter is just one of many examples. But the fact that EWTN appears to have made a pivot at one point in its past toward a more professional journalistic ethic begs the question of why they chose that path. Thus, I believe EWTN is the most compelling subject for this study.

EWTN was founded by a cloistered Franciscan nun, Mother Angelica, who saw the potential for using television broadcasting to preach Christianity to the world after visiting a Baptist-run television studio in Chicago in 1978 (Wallace, 2016). She began to produce her own half-hour television program, and despite modest success broadcasting to local commercial stations as well as nationally on the Christian Broadcasting Network, Mother Angelica wanted to reach a nationwide audience on a television network of her own. Thanks in large part to private donations, EWTN acquired the necessary equipment and Federal Communications Commission

license to begin operation by 1981, transmitting four hours a day and reaching 60,000 homes. The network was founded and still has its headquarters in Alabama, which meant “most of the original employees were Baptists who disagreed with key tenets of the Catholic faith” (Arroyo, 2007, p. 165).

At the same time, the United States Catholic Bishops were conceiving of their own broadcast network, and in 1982 launched the Catholic Telecommunications Network of America (CTNA), also with the expressed purpose of evangelizing.

By 1987, EWTN was broadcasting—24 hours a day—a variety of programming including a daily rosary, daily Mass and the popular Mother Angelica Live, which featured the titular nun speaking on relevant spiritual topics (Wallace, 2016). CTNA shut down in 1995, two years after covering the 1993 papal visit to the United States alongside EWTN (Phelps, 2000, p. 1). Today, the television facet of EWTN alone broadcasts in 147 countries and territories (Wallace, 2016).

Mother Angelica, who died in 2016, was not trained as a journalist, but the organization she founded—beginning primarily as a vehicle for devotional programming—is becoming more and more journalistic. After former Associated Press journalist Raymond Arroyo established EWTN News in 1996, EWTN acquired the National Catholic Register, a leading independent Catholic newspaper, in 2011, and EWTN News Nightly launched in 2013 as a daily news program covering, according to its website, “major news events from a Catholic perspective.” EWTN also produces *The World Over* with Raymond Arroyo, a weekly in-depth interview program that often hosts current newsmakers both Catholic and non-Catholic. Finally, in 2014, EWTN announced that it would absorb Catholic News Agency and its Spanish-language sister

organization, ACI Prensa—the world’s largest Spanish-language Catholic news organization. As mentioned above, Catholic News Agency’s news content is provided to parish newspapers across the country, free of charge (EWTN, 2014).

## **Theoretical Background**

As was briefly addressed above, normative theories generally seek to analyze and prescribe the ideal role of the press in a democracy (Christians et al, 2009, preface). Normative theories of the press are generally prescriptive rather than descriptive, as they offer ideas about what the press should be or should do rather than describing what the press is or does (Christians et al, 2009, preface). The goal of this research will be to learn whether normative theories of the press can apply to Catholic journalism.

The authors of *Normative Theories of the Media* (2009) lay out what they see as the critical roles of the press in a democratic society. The monitorial role recognizes the press’ ability to provide intelligence, advice, and warning to the public. The facilitative role involves strengthening and supporting society’s activities—in other words, helping society to function as it should. The radical role sees the press as an occasional platform for views that are critical of authority. Finally, the collaborative role describes the relationship between media and sources of economic and political power (White, 2009, p. 49).

I would argue that each of these aforementioned roles are at work in the Catholic press, even though the authors who defined them intended them to apply to a secular press in a democratic society. Diocesan newspapers, for example, have historically been and still are often

collaborative efforts between the church hierarchy, which is unquestionably a source of economic and political power, and lay journalists, to facilitate the work of the Church. Independent Catholic journalism, such as EWTN, also can serve a monitorial role by reporting on the Church and topics of interest to Catholics. Finally, the radical Catholic press has played a role historically in serving as an alternative voice to official organs of the Church, particularly in the 1960s. Following the Second Vatican Council, a shift occurred toward a more provocative, investigative Catholic press, focused on the plight of the poor and the rights of the worker (Gunty, 1998, p. 87). This also signaled a shift away from publications that were purely devotional, and toward a more professional journalistic ethic that could have a wider appeal to audiences (Harrington, 1998, p. 93).

One aspect of Catholic theology that that is relevant to mention in the context of Catholic journalism is unity of opinion. The term “Catholic” comes from a Greek root that roughly means “universal,” and the Vatican II conference in the 1960s emphasized the “nature, dignity, spirituality, mission, and responsibility of the laity,” i.e. non-clergy (Daly, 1998). The laity are not meant to become so concerned with Church affairs that they neglect their “earthly” duties—“Catholic newspapers which are mainly devoted to Church affairs still do not fully grasp what Vatican II and recent Popes have had to say about the secular vocation of the laity” (Daly, 1998). This concept of a “secular vocation” would seem to suggest that Catholics working in almost any line of work should be expected to offer their work in service to God. For Catholic journalists, this would mean dealing shrewdly and sensibly with the world of advertising, which often “engenders greed and wastefulness” (Daly, 1998). Interestingly, Daly notes that secular media are often part of “vast and growing corporations...the mission of the future should be to

counter and reform the aims of corporate leaders” (1998). This would seem to suggest that the target audience for Catholic journalism goes beyond people who already agree with the Catholic position—that Catholic journalism ought to look outward, into the secular culture. Is this what EWTN is trying to do by working to increase journalistic professionalism?

## **Literature Review**

Why focus this research on Catholic journalism in particular? To answer that question, some additional context about the Catholic Church in the United States is helpful.

People who identify as Catholic constituted the largest single religious denomination in the United States in 2016 (CARA, 2016). Institutions associated with the Catholic Church such as hospitals, schools and charities continue to play an important role in the country. The number of students enrolled in Catholic elementary and secondary schools has experienced a generally downward trend in the past few decades, with around 1.3 million students enrolled in Catholic elementary schools and about half a million students enrolled in Catholic secondary schools, a drop from 4.4 million and 0.7 million respectively in 1965 (CARA). Although the number of Catholic hospitals has decreased since the 1960s, the number of patients served has increased dramatically from 16.9 million in 1965 to 87.7 million in 2016 (CARA, 2016). Finally, the number of people served by Catholic Charities has increased from about 2.5 million in 1980 to over 8 million in 2016 (CARA, 2016). All told, although most people in the United States identify with some branch of Protestant Christianity, the Catholic Church continues to influence



people's lives a variety of significant ways, and the information that people get about the church through the mass media matters in terms of shaping people's perception of this institution.

In the interest of terminological precision, I will be referring to the "Catholic press" in this project to mean media outlets that produce news and commentary, either from a Catholic perspective or primarily for a Catholic audience. Moreover, "media outlet" in this case has historically meant newspapers, and although Catholic print journalism still has a wide reach, with around 10 million households reached by member print publications of the Catholic Press Association, most media outlets have also branched out into digital forms of dissemination.

"The Catholic press" in the United States has never been a monolithic entity. While the overarching goals of Catholic media outlets today are largely similar, the purposes and goals of Catholic journalism in the United States have changed over time, and are marked by a variety of approaches and degrees of independence from the centralized and hierarchical structure of the Church. Today, the Catholic press in the United States is dominated by a central news service from Washington D.C., Catholic News Service, which is owned and operated by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, as well as the independent EWTN, which as mentioned above owns Catholic News Agency as well as the National Catholic Register, a leading newspaper. Most diocese in the United States have their own newspapers—priests and bishops are often involved as editors, with CNS or an independent news outlet providing content, often free of charge (EWTN, 2014).

There is considerable debate in the world of Catholic journalism today as to what the role of a Catholic media outlet should be. Moreover, the question of who gets to claim the title of "Catholic" is also a continual debate, as a publication may be Catholic in name, but not

“authentically Catholic” in content. An example of this, Lockwood (1998) argues, is the French newspaper *La Croix*, which is essentially a secular newspaper with a certain “Catholic sensibility” in its editorial stance. Interestingly, a 2012 study from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate found that the top concern cited by respondents for the Church’s presence online was the lack of a system for the Church to validate sites and content as authentically Catholic, with 45 percent of respondents citing this concern (Gray et al, 2012, p. 2). Another point of note regarding diocesan papers— and by extension websites— is the fact that “as house organs for the local church, diocesan papers tend to be more conservative in both reporting and opining on news and information relevant to Catholics. Oftentimes, the desire to provide interpretation of these events works at crosspurposes with journalistic ideals for a free and unbiased press (Ferguson, 2012, p. 511).

Today, the Catholic Press Association has around 600 member publications, which serve about 27 million people (Ferguson, 2012, pg. 509). As mentioned previously, the influx of trained journalists provided a boost to the Catholic press in terms of increased professionalism and a higher journalistic standard. What is also important to note in the context of this discussion is that the number of people in the United States entering the priesthood or consecrated religious life—nuns and brothers— has steadily declined. “In all areas of America we have witnessed a continuous decline in vocations,” writes the Holy See Press Office. “The rate has dropped, in turn, from 99.5 seminarians per million Catholics in 2010 to 90.9 in 2015” (Holy See Press Office, 2017). The shortage of priests in the United States means many diocesan priests are stretched thin, many among multiple parishes. Although priests and bishops today do not play as much of a role in independent publications as they did in the past, the decline of religious

vocations in the United States could also be a factor affecting Catholic journalism, leading to a greater need for laypeople to staff Catholic news organizations.

The “ideology” of any media outlet is shaped not only by its editors, but also by the individual journalists who work there. This begs the question: How do journalists working at the largest Catholic media outlet in the country view their personal role as journalists?

### **Historical Perspective**

We touched briefly on the role religion played in the development of journalism, both secular and religious, in the United States. To understand how this history led to the creation of EWTN, it is worth taking a historical view of Catholic journalism in the United States.

Robert Molyneux, a Jesuit priest, printed a catechism and a few other Catholic books in Philadelphia in 1786, and Irish immigrant Mathew Carey printed the first Catholic Bible in English in the United States in 1790 (Fink, 1998). In these early years and throughout the history of the Catholic press, countless small periodicals arose such that it would be almost impossible to account for all of them. What was the primary function of these early journals? From 1789-1840, most of the journals were focused on refuting anti-Catholic prejudice and promoting harmony in society (Baumgartner, 1930). The earliest “Catholic” journals were often “Catholic in general tone and sympathy, and under Catholic editorial guidance, although not distinctly Catholic in content.” These journals emerged at a time when the American press was in general was chaotic, and occupationally trained journalists were rare in the religious field. As mentioned previously, the press in general around this time was based around the exposition of

opinions, and many Catholic papers were militantly controversial (Will, 1930, p. vii). Before 1884, “the Catholic press was barely self-supporting, and, for the most part, unable to engage editors and writers of merit” (Baumgartner, 1930, pg. 13). Many early attempts to create a successful Catholic weekly paper did not last long.

In its early years, Catholic journalism in the United States was strongly linked to immigrant-nationalist sentiments among its readers and producers. Many ethnic German, Irish, Italian and know-other Western European immigrants felt their Catholic identity threatened by the dominant Protestant culture and openly anti-Catholic institutions such as the Know-Nothing Party that were entrenched in U.S. society. As a result, the editorial stance of many early Catholic publications was “defensive and polemic” (Real, 1975, p. 265). Irish papers, especially, though often Catholic in name, were “otherwise political rather than religious journals,” and often remained small and short-lived (Baumgartner, 1930, p. 2).

Bishop John England is credited with creating the first Catholic diocesan newspaper in the United States. He had originally tried to communicate the faith through the secular media, but realized he needed his own vehicle. He established the Catholic Miscellany in Charleston, South Carolina in 1822 (Catholic Press Association).

The 19th century was, in many ways, a difficult time for Catholics in America, especially immigrants, as they often faced persecution and prejudice (Baumgartner, 1930, pp. 12). As mentioned previously, the press in the United States at this time was viciously partisan—the Miscellany was established during a time when anti-Catholic papers were commonplace. The Catholic papers were also openly nationalistic, especially those devoted to Ireland and the Irish, and defended their country, religion, and way of life vigorously.

In the 1840s, attacks on Catholics expanded to more than just words—around this time there were several brutal attacks on convents, churches, and homes, spurred on by anti-Catholic groups such as the Know-Nothing Party and the Ku Klux Klan (Baumgartner, 1930). The goal of many publications during this time was to “unite and educate, to bring news from home, and to fight for civil and religious rights in a new country” (Catholic Press Association). It is also important to note that in the early 19th century, most papers and journals were largely independent of Church authority and of each other (Real, 1975, p. 265), but as early as 1829, the Catholic Bishops in the United States had begun to recognize the importance of strong Catholic periodicals (Fink, 1998). During the 19th century most Catholic publications were owned and edited by laypeople, but papers founded or endorsed by bishops began to chip readership away from the independent Catholic press. The American Catholic Bishops did urge support for Catholic publications on several occasions, but stressed that a publication ought to be given approval by the bishops in order to be able to call itself “Catholic” (Baumgartner, 1930, p. 25). The bishops, and later the pope himself, cautioned against papers that claimed to be Catholic but did not respect the authority of the Church (Baumgartner, 1930, p. 41). In 1884, the bishops recommended that each Catholic household receive at least one reputable periodical (Catholic Press Association).

Between 1889 and 1919, some individual members of the Catholic press combined resources for mutual support, and there was a desire around this time among Catholic journalists for a “more truly representative press” (Baumgartner, 1930, p. 37). For the first time, there occurred “the infiltration into the ranks of Catholic editors of men trained on the staff of the secular papers. They brought to the management of religious journals an understanding of news

as such, skill in collecting, writing and editing it, better typography, and sounder economic methods in the production and distribution of newspapers” (Will, 1930, p. vii). Around 1910, various Catholic universities began offering courses in journalism (Baumgartner, 1930, p. 66). The Catholic Press Association was formed at the conclusion of the first Catholic Lay Congress in Baltimore in 1889 (Baumgartner, 1930, p. 60), but was met with little encouragement from Catholic journals at first. In 1911 the CPA met for the first time in Columbus, Ohio, with the goal to “publicize news of Catholic interest, combat the negative influence of some of the secular press, develop a news service, secure national advertising and agitate against higher postal rates” (Catholic Press Association).

Between World War I and World War II a major consolidation of services and power took place in the Catholic newspaper press (Real, 1975, p. 266). Most notably, in 1919, the CPA News Service Bureau, the fledgling wire service of the Catholic Press Association, was transferred to the official organization of Catholic Bishops, which brought this arm of the press into the structure of the Church.

Larger publications started to print smaller diocesan editions of their paper in addition to their national editions. When the Great Depression hit, many independent Catholic publishers had to close down or sell to a diocese, which led to a majority of Catholic newspapers being owned by a diocese by the 1930s. Real (1975) asserts that this trend of consolidation into larger chains mirrored that of secular publications at the time. In 1939, an Erie, Pennsylvania bishop created a subscription model for diocesan papers whereby everyone in the diocese was mailed a copy of the paper, and the diocese collects the cost of the paper from the parish rather than from

individual members. This “forced subscription” model provided a financial base for diocesan papers (Real, 1975, p. 266).

By World War II, the Catholic media landscape was much more consolidated and centralized than it had been at its outset, with the central news service from Washington, several large national chains, and a saturation of diocesan papers (Real, 1975, p. 266). Catholic publications reached 15 million people in 1950 and 26 million in 1960. With priests as the editors and bishops holding the financial reins, it made for a system “well-suited to disseminate one-way information from leadership” (Real, 1975, p. 266).

But a shift was about to occur. Real (1975, p. 266) asserts that the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council from 1962 to 1965 were a watershed for Catholic journalism, because by the end of the council the United States bishops had developed a “new tolerance for freedom of the press.” Post Vatican II, more priest-editors enrolled in journalism courses, such as the ones offered at Marquette University (Gintoft, 1998, p. 74). The role of the Catholic press was no longer just reporting what the Church was saying what to do and what not to do, and not to guard the faith by withholding news considered disturbing to hurtful (Gintoft, 1998, p. 74). This “boom period” after the council led to more critical and controversial news coverage, about all kinds of topics once considered taboo, patterned after trends in the secular press and in society in general. Some of these topic included debates about birth control, the role of priests, nuns and laity, and even the nature of Church authority (Real, 1975, p. 268).

The 1960s were a period of immense progressive reform and social unrest, and the journalistic methods and ethos of “underground papers and alternative media could not help but influence” the Catholic press (Real, 1975, p. 268). Despite this, there were certain diocesan

papers during the 1960s that emerged as leaders, such as the St. Louis Review, which was widely viewed as a “prototype of quality Catholic newspaper journalism” for the quality of its appearance and editing (Real, 1975, p. 269). Subsidies from bishops across the country helped papers such as the New Orleans Clarion-Herald improve in quality of appearance and reputation. These “elite” publications often set the tone for smaller publications at the time to adopt a more aggressive, progressive stance. The strongly independent National Catholic Reporter, founded in 1964 and the only paper at the time that was not affiliated with a diocese and thus structurally independent of the church, set a critical and left-leaning tone for Catholic journalism during this time period with its commentaries and investigative reporting (Real, 1975, p. 268). It is important to note that “independent” did not mean antagonistic or opposed to the Church itself, but rather, as the founder of the Western Catholic Reporter said in his paper's founding statement, “I do not believe those in authority in the Church should control the flow of information. Consequently, I have entrusted the editor the responsibility for the editorial content and operation of the paper” (quoted in Western Catholic Reporter, 2015).

As a final major change in 1967, amid accusations of censorship, the National Catholic News Service—now known as Catholic News Service—adopted a policy of publishing any news about the Church that had already been made public in the secular media, which led to a shift toward more “open and complete” information (Real, 1975, p. 268).

After 1968, several factors compounded to change the landscape of Catholic journalism away from the aggressive and progressive reportage of the 1960s. Bishops began “officially condemning” papers such as the National Catholic Reporter and cancelling financing for broadcasting bodies such as the National Council of Catholic Men for their perceived liberal and



independent slants—the circulation of the Reporter alone dropped by half by 1972 (Real, 1975, p. 270). Financial cuts to papers such as the once-proud New Orleans Clarion-Herald and the St. Louis Review were seen as efforts to tone down their liberalism—similar cuts also took place at the diocesan level in many places (Real, 1975, p. 270). At the same time, national papers such as The Register and Our Sunday Visitor came under control of more traditionalist management. Real asserts that this ideological shift was influenced by trends in secular American society. The assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy happened in 1968, as well as the election of republican Richard Nixon to the presidency the same year. The declining national economy at the end of the decade made publishing more difficult—for all publishers, not just the Catholic press—and church attendance had started to decline. The result of all this was that the “brief heyday” of “liberal” Catholic journalism ended by the end of the 1960s (Real, 1975, p. 270).

It was within this context, after the reform and unrest of the 1960s, that EWTN was first founded, and it had to compete ideologically with the Catholic Telecommunications Network of America. In Mother Angelica’s vision, “EWTN would be ‘media for orthodox endeavors,’ even as [her] approach was profoundly unorthodox by almost any accepted business standard” (Arroyo, 2007, p. 162). EWTN placed a great emphasis on traditional Catholic spirituality and devotional material, while the CTNA broadcast “mainline Judeo-Christian fare” and was accused of peddling “liberal politics” (Arroyo, 2007, p. 209). Conservative and liberal are labels that are still affixed to Catholic journalists today. Mother Angelica herself was quoted saying: “I don’t want to be conservative and I don’t want to be liberal. I want to be Catholic. Now if that offends

the liberals, tough. If it offends the ultraconservatives, tough. I can't be influenced by any of them. I want to know what the Church teaches" (Arroyo, 2007, p. 209).

### **Professionalism in Catholic Journalism**

There has been a reasonable amount written about professionalism and the role Catholic journalism, mostly for a Catholic audience. Writing in 1998, the then-president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications wrote that the "mission of the Catholic press would seem to be the same as it was in 1822—to inform, form, inspire, educate, and strengthen the religious identity of Catholics" (Foley, 1998).

The primary objectives of the Catholic press as a whole—according to John F. Fink, a veteran of Catholic journalism of more than 50 years—are to provide news and information about all events relevant to Catholics—to provide interpretation of these events and to give helpful information for readers to form their own opinions—to announce the news of salvation and the teachings of the Church, as well as to provide prayer and meditation help—to foster dialogue within the Church among all Catholics, institutions and groups—and to bring fundamental Christian values to society (Fink, 1998). In Fink's view, one of the most important functions of the Catholic press is to provide a deeper analysis of religious issues than can be found in the secular press (Fink, 1998). Good Catholic journalism ought not to be only news that makes the Church look good, but rather an objective report of the good and the bad, with space for dissenting opinions (Fink, 1998). The *raison d'être* of journalism is to present the truth, which means the Catholic press ought to at least share this goal with the secular press (Fink, 1998).

The Catholic Press Association proclaims on its website that the organization faces “the same challenges that existed nearly 200 years ago: explaining and defending the Catholic Church” (CPA). The organization also released a development guide for Diocesan Newspapers in 1991 in which they called for an increase in professionalism among diocesan papers. It is interesting to read the CPA’s definitions and guidelines on professionalism, because many of the values and guidelines that they espouse are quite similar to those found in secular journalism. The CPA defined a professional as “a person who is good at what (s)he does and knows why (s)he is good” (CPA, 1991). Beyond personal excellence, a culture of professionalism includes “the ability to articulate standards of performance that allow others to duplicate that performance,” and within that concept a strong mission statement is vital (CPA, 1991). The leadership of the editor is also important to consider, since the editor ultimately has final say over the general tone of the news outlet. Another facet to professionalism that the CPA mentions is a culture of 2-way communication between the journalists and their audience. This culture involves accepting letters to the editor and perhaps even guest columns from readers (CPA, 1991)—a professional publication will engage with its readers in order to best serve them. There should also be a clear distinction between fact and opinion in the paper’s writing (CPA, 1991).

Technology clearly plays a role in changing professional practices among Catholic journalists. Arasa (2010) wrote an analysis of diocesan websites, focusing mainly in the strategies the Church itself is using to communicate effectively on the internet. The author concludes that, above all, diocesan websites are an instrument to serve the Church’s needs, often in very practical ways. The author’s conclusions seem to point to the fact that diocesan websites are often primarily targeted to a Catholic audience, so much so that they can seem almost like

intranets designed for the faithful (Arasa, 2010). The author also concludes: “There is no real tension between information and evangelization. The best way for diocesan websites to contribute to the Church’s evangelization mission is by offering accurate, up-to-date and complete information” (Arasa, 2010).

Arasa et al (2010) also wrote an analysis of several Catholic journalism outlets that are making use of the internet to disseminate information and expand their operations, including EWTN. Arasa et al’s analysis mainly deals with the origins and goals of the media outlet’s website in relation to their overarching journalistic goals. EWTN was founded based on an explicit desire to explain the faith and to evangelize, and so for its website, evangelization is a top priority.

Interviews with current editors and journalists at various Catholic media outlets other than EWTN, can provide some insight into their personal goals working in Catholic journalism. Greg Erlandson, former president and publisher of *Our Sunday Visitor*, noted in an interview that Catholic News Service—the official mouthpiece of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops—provides “a vital service for the Church as a whole,” and although much of the Catholic press is not Church-owned, it is still “dedicated to the mission of the Church” (Salai, 2016). Erlandson asserts that “the Catholic press is niche, and in many ways we should see ourselves as an alternative press.” For him, this means “covering the stories ignored or poorly reported by the secular media,” such as explanations of the Church’s teaching (Salai, 2016). Perhaps most importantly, Erlandson emphasized the fact that the mission of Catholic journalism more generally should be to “report intelligently, honestly, and from a perspective of faith, thus

helping to both inform and educate Catholics,” asserting that one of the most important roles of the Catholic press is as an educational tool for adults.

It will be both fascinating and enlightening to hear from current journalists at EWTN about their ideas about professionalism and their purpose as journalists, particularly since there has not been a scholarly paper written about this topic for some time.

## **Research Method**

The new research I am proposing will consist mainly of semi-structured interviews with editors, reporters, and writers specifically at EWTN. I plan to interview as many journalists as I can to obtain a robust sample size. Due to time constraints, I will hopefully be able to interview at least 20 journalists. Malterud et al (2016) write that a larger amount of “information power” that is contained within a sample size reduces the number of participants needed for the study. Because I will be interviewing editors and journalists who have extensive experience working in Catholic journalism, I would argue that my sample size does not need to be larger than 20. I am not conducting a survey, per se, but rather going in depth with my analysis of the responses of my interviewees, so I do not want to be inundated with too much information from too many sources. The factors that can have an impact on the information power of the sample: (a) study aim, (b) sample specificity, (c) use of established theory, (d) quality of dialogue, and (e) analysis strategy (Malterud et al, 2016, p. 1764). I have laid out all of these factors in this proposal—a narrow aim, a specific demographic from which my sample will be drawn, an established set of theories, a promise of quality dialogue with questions to be specified later in this paper, and a

strategy to analyze the dialogue based on a historical view of Catholic journalism. I am planning to make the possibility of anonymity available to my subjects, in case they may have any reservations about speaking with me on these topics.

A study similar to this one has been done at least once before. Michael R. Real, professor emeritus at Royal Road University in Victoria, British Columbia, and a former Catholic priest, surveyed the U.S. Catholic and secular press in 1975—three years before the inception of Mother Angelica’s Catholic television station—for *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*. Real bases his survey on interviews with religion editors of *The New York Times* and *Newsweek*, editors of *Our Sunday Visitor*, *National Catholic Reporter*, *Pittsburgh Catholic*, *St. Louis Review*, *Ave Maria*, *U.S. Catholic*, and “numerous other Catholic editors and Church officials.”

I hope to obtain a sample of older and younger journalists to see how their answers differ from each other. The entirety of EWTN’s existence has occurred after the Second Vatican Council, which took place from 1962-65. Some commentators argue that post-Vatican II Catholics lack the institutional identity of those old enough to remember what life was like before the Council. Lockwood (1998) argues that “there is a Catholic population that each day loses more and more institutional identity, a key to building a traditional Catholic press readership. Without background, depth of knowledge, Catholic language and mindset, as well as any clear Catholic identity, it appears there will be few readers of the Catholic press in the future” (Lockwood, 1998, p. 116). Do journalists old enough to remember a time before the council view their mission differently than those who are younger?

Some questions for my semi-structured interviews will include:

- Tell me a bit about yourself. How did you become involved in this field?
- How long have you worked in journalism?
- Have you worked on any big stories during your career?
- What is your educational background? How did you learn to do journalism?
- Did you study journalism in college?
- What is your faith background?
- What is “Catholic journalism” to you? Why is it necessary?
  - What do you see as the difference between Catholic journalism and secular journalism?
  - What, if any, do you think are the requirements to be able to call yourself a Catholic journalist?
  - In what way would you like outsiders—i.e. non-Catholics—to view the work that you do?
  - Do you think your work is well known/taken seriously in secular society?
- What norms, ethical principles, guidelines, and practices do you think are important for Catholics working in journalism to adhere to?
  - If it is someone who has worked at EWTN for a while: Have you seen attitudes toward the profession of Catholic journalism change at EWTN over the years? If so, how?
  - Have you noticed any practices or philosophies outside of Catholic media that Catholic journalism can or should learn from?

- How do you see yourself as a journalist? i.e. are you a Catholic that works in journalism, a “Catholic journalist,” or just a journalist that happens to work in Catholic media?
  - Note: if the journalist is not Catholic: Do you perceive any tension between your religious faith and the work you’re doing in Catholic journalism?
  - In what ways does your Catholic faith affect the way you do your job as a journalist?
  - What led you to work in Catholic media? Where did you work previously, if anywhere?
  - Why did you choose to work in Catholic media as opposed to secular or other media?
  - Do you ever feel any kind of tension between your profession as a journalist and your Catholic faith?
- If an editor: How do you make sure your coverage is fair and honest? How do you approach, for example, dissenting voices in the Church?
- How do you ensure that the diversity of the Church is being represented in your coverage? (in terms of race, gender, age, etc.)
- Could Catholic journalism do better in terms of being representative?
- Do you see any tension between the mission of the Catholic press and an urge to “politicize” your coverage, especially in light of today's highly politicized secular journalism?
- What is the next step for Catholic journalism? How do you see the profession changing in the future?



- What are some of the challenges facing EWTN and Catholic journalism at the moment?
- What do you think EWTN could do better? What could Catholic journalists in general do better?

### **Possible Avenues of Publication**

As I am planning a professional analysis, I hope to pitch my analysis to the National Catholic Register or The Catholic Journalist. The latter, I think, would probably be more likely to take it, even if they only chose to post it online as one of their resources for their website.

A new journal called Church, Communication and Culture is an open access academic journal put out by the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross' School of Church Communications and published by Routledge. In its mission statement, the journal seeks to offer “an international forum where researchers and practitioners can advance quality research on the Catholic Church and other religious communities” (Arasa, 2016). I think this will make a good avenue for publication if my analysis ends up being more scholarly, because it is an emerging journal that already has a good reputation, being associated with the Pontifical University.

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