



Missouri Catholic Conference

# Good News

March/April 2018

*Bringing the Light of Christ to Missouri*



In the spring of 1911, the body of a young Russian boy named Andrei Yustshinsky was found in a cave near the western district of Kiev. His body was razed with 47 stab wounds, and his school cap and notebooks were strewn nearby. The many stab wounds led the Black Hundreds, a militant right-wing group, to call the atrocity a ritual murder by Jews. They called for the killing of all Jews and the newspaper, the *Russian Banner*, said the Jewish religion had transformed Jews into a “criminal species of murderers, ritual torturers, and consumers of Christian blood.”

Tsar Nicholas II, his Justice, and his Interior Ministers accepted the ritual murder theory without question. Before long, local authorities had found their suspect: a Jew named Mendel Beiliss, who worked as a clerk at a factory that happened to be near the murder site. Belief in Beiliss’ guilt was spurred by local media and pamphlets, including the so-called Protocols of the Elders of Zion, a forgery concocted by the Russian

secret police that identified Jews as the driving force in a worldwide conspiracy to subjugate all Christian nations.

Beiliss sat in prison for two years while police and the media built up a horrific portrait of him. Doctors who conducted the autopsy of the boy had to change their report so that the killing fell in line with the ritual murder charge. But the evidence against Beiliss was flimsy and an international outcry eventually led to his release.

This sad tale is just one example of how “fake news” has been used throughout history to whip up local prejudice and lead to a rush to judgment against a person or an entire people. Today, Muslims often play the role of villain, as in “all Muslims are terrorists” or could become terrorists because that is the core of their Islamic faith.

Earlier this year, Pope Francis discussed “fake news,” describing it as “false information based on non-

existent or distorted data, meant to deceive and manipulate the reader.” The Holy Father said that fake news is often used to demonize others and foment conflict. The Pope warned people against the crafty strategies of the “Father of Lies”, who employs all forms of seductive rhetoric and half-truths to lead people in false directions.

The road to the discovery of truth can be treacherous. It is not easy for citizens to decipher whether what is said about a public figure is true or false. The problem is made worse when people allow themselves to be placed in a selective information bubble where they only hear what they want to hear and make little effort to check out the veracity of the claims being made. Along these lines, some “convict” public figures on little evidence while those accused may dismiss even well sourced and documented stories as “fake news.”

When accusations are very serious, we are fortunate in this country to have a robust judicial system where a court of law can review the evidence to determine guilt or innocence. This system is not foolproof, but at least the focus is on gathering and reviewing all of the available evidence before rendering any judgment.

But legal forms alone are not enough. Pope Francis urges people to seek the truth at all times with a charitable heart. This non-vengeful attitude is essential to sort out the true from the false and to arrive at decisions that are just to all parties involved. Only in this way can justice be hoped for.

*Mike Hoey is the Executive Director of the Missouri Catholic Conference*

## How to Spot Fake News



If you feel like there's something fishy about the headline or story you just read, it might be fake news. Sometimes, it can be hard to tell. Here are some tips to help you figure out which news is fake and which is real.

### Resist clickbait

It's common for “fake news” sites to mislead the reader with a catchy or inquisitive headline. Printed tabloids are famous for this—and now the internet sites have grabbed hold of their tactics. Don't be tempted to click unless you know it's a reputable news site.

### Check your sources

If you're unsure about a particular news source or article, check and see what other reputable sources are reporting.

### Ask the MCC!

We're happy to help you decipher the truth, or point you in the direction of a reputable news source.

## Modern News Consumption: Key Trends in Social & Digital News

The Pew Research Center keeps a close watch on news consumption and how it's changing during modern times. In an Oct. 2017 report, the Pew Research Center mapped out 10 findings about social and digital news.

The gap between television and online news consumption is narrowing.

Use of mobile devices for news continues to grow.

Older adults are driving the growth in mobile news use.

Many Americans believe fabricated news is sowing confusion, and about a third (32%) say they often see made-up political news online.

Two-thirds of Americans (67%) get at least some news on social media.

Nonwhites and the less educated increasingly say they get news on social media.

An analysis of nearly 2,700 different search terms associated with the water crisis in Flint, Michigan, shows that online searches can be a good proxy for the public's interests, concerns or intentions.

Online news that comes via email and text from friends or family is the type of news encounter most likely to result in a follow-up action.

Americans have low trust in information from social media.

Social media and direct visits to news organizations' websites are the most common pathways to online news.

Statistics and other information courtesy of the Pew Research Center <http://www.pewresearch.org>

The Missouri Catholic Conference strives to provide Missourians with the most accurate and latest news available. To keep up with what we're sharing, take a look through our publications at [mocatholic.org](http://mocatholic.org).

### UPDATE

#### MCC Weekly Update

Our weekly emailed newsletter covers the latest happenings in the State Capitol and other local/worldwide news that matters to Catholic readers.

### GOOD NEWS

#### Good News

Good News is a bimonthly publication that can be received digitally or in print—or both! This publication is a four page newsletter that covers policy related news.

### MESSENGER

#### MCC Messenger

This quarterly publication can be found in all four diocesan newspapers. Generally, MCC Messenger sheds light on one specific topic with in-depth, Catholic-minded coverage.

Missouri Catholic  
Conference  
PO BOX 1022  
Jefferson City, MO  
65102-1022

RETURN SERVICE  
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Phone: (573) 635-7239  
Fax: (573) 635-7431



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### Beware of the Filter Bubble



What is a "filter bubble"? It's a situation in which an Internet user encounters only information and opinions that conform to and reinforce their own beliefs, caused by algorithms that personalize an individual's online experience.

The filter bubble became especially apparent during the 2016 elections, when internet users found themselves in a highly politically polarized bubble through their searches. With the exponential increase of personalization of the internet, it is becoming more likely to find yourself stuck in a filter bubble.

Sure, it can be comforting to only read news that reflects your own point of view and political leanings. But isn't it better to find balance? And if nothing else, to see what the opposing views have to say? Though we might not be able to fight the automatic filters, we can make an effort to seek out opposing views and differing opinions to ensure the news we're taking in is fair and balanced.

For more information about filter bubbles, watch Eli Pariser's TED talk.