



FAITH: A *FRESH TAKE*



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CNS/PAUL HARING

Pope Francis passes a portrait of himself as he arrives to meet with young people Jan. 18 at University of St. Thomas in Manila, Philippines.

This Headline Does (not) Tell You Everything You Need to Know

When it comes to news, the art of reading has become a lost art. Once, newspapers had a monopoly on information sharing. If it wasn't in the newspaper, chances are people wouldn't believe it happened.



Today, the power of the press has shifted to the Internet. People write their own headlines. And, as Twitter has

shown us, a headline of less than 10 words is enough to change the world.

That's why those making the biggest impact are people like you and me. When we see something interesting, everyone we know sees something interesting. We post. We tweet. We share. If our friends think it's also interesting, they share as well.

A few weeks ago, I pulled into the parking lot where I work. At least I started to. Blocking the path to my usual parking spot was a school bus. This wasn't any school bus. It was a school bus that had physically melted from the wheels up after a sudden and devastating fire. Fortunately, no students were on board at the time.

Once I maneuvered past the emergency vehicles, I parked my car and shot a picture with my phone.

My co-workers did the same thing. Within an hour, the remains of the bus were towed away and those who arrived at our office after its removal had no idea anything had happened until they read the newspaper article (online of course) many hours later.

Even then, they didn't realize the incident occurred in our parking lot. Why? Because they read only the headline.

Don't get me wrong. Headlines are important; they grab our attention, but they don't tell the whole story.

Consider these three tweets of headlines from the past month. "A committee of French journalists protests to the French legislature over censorship," "Pope ... appeals to the press to promote peace among the belligerent nations" and "U.S. Senate probes the

president's power of filling offices during recess."

If you're semi-well-informed, you can guess the story and fill in the gaps based on the headline alone. French journalists are upset following terror attacks against a satirical newspaper that published controversial material. The pope wants all of us to just get along. And a change of power in the U.S. Senate means investigations of topics the previous majority party wanted to ignore.

All of those guesses, however, are incorrect. You can fill in the gaps only if you know all the pertinent information, which you don't because I didn't tell you.

Each of those headlines was tweeted recently, but the content is 100 years old. They're from a Twitter account called @CenturyAgoToday.

That's the power of a headline. Written properly, it gives readers the chance to jump to a conclusion. We now mutually share the power that was once only in the hands of a few.

What we say online becomes the headlines of our personal newspaper. Our words define our top stories. To those who read them, what they say becomes who we are.

If you want to know what people think about you, look at what you type and share online. Is it funny? Sarcastic? Serious? Angry? That's how people see you. Is that who you see when you look in the mirror?

Take a few minutes and truly read the words of those around you. Do you know the rest of the story? Chances are there is more beyond the headline you see. Take the time to make those discoveries.

Sometimes you'll discover you were wrong. Other times, you'll confirm you were right. And, on rare occasions, you'll identify those for whom confirmation isn't necessary.

For example, I'm pretty sure today, same as 100 years ago, there's a pope who just wants all of us to get along.

— Erick Rommel

(This column is part of the CNS columns package.)

Questioning Faith, Life and Adolescence

As a longtime reporter, I am guilty of asking questions all the time. When my teenagers arrive home, the first thing out of my mouth is: "How was your day?" "What did you do in school today?" "What did you learn?"



I can't stop at just one question and often my questions return a brief grunt before they both retreat to their bedrooms to escape my questioning, often deemed as "annoying."

According to my children, I bombard them with questions and they often feel overwhelmed and interrogated. I'm thankful we have an open enough relationship that they can express their true feelings, but I often wonder if questions play an important part of their own lives.

Too many times, people neglect to question their surroundings, the actions of others and most of all, their beliefs. The idea of "it is what it is" or "If it's on the Internet, it must be true" is debilitating and negates the idea that knowledge is power.

Questioning our beliefs, our thoughts and our actions doesn't mean we are betraying ourselves or our faith; instead, it shows we are thinking critically about our identity and our environment — both physical and spiritual.

Unfortunately, questions are often discouraged, especially when it comes to our faith. I remember internally questioning my own beliefs as a teenager.

I wondered why my friends stopped attending Mass, why I was one of the few attending youth events and wheth-

er or not I subscribed to the teachings of the church. I felt ashamed questioning my upbringing and my faith family, yet it happened, as it does with many teenagers. I didn't vocalize these questions for fear that some would think I was betraying my beliefs.

In reality, it wasn't a betrayal — it was a method to strengthen my faith. By questioning the reasoning and motivation behind my decision to participate in church activities, cantor at Masses and attend services with my family, I was developing a stronger understanding of who I was as a Catholic. Posing questions to myself strengthened my faith.

Our teenagers need a venue and encouragement to ask these same questions or they will continue to drift away from important aspects of their faith. Instead of bombarding them with questions, we need to encourage them to ask questions without judgment and without answers that are final and not up for discussion.

As a parent, I need to learn how to sit back and let my children ask the questions (at times) and trust that they are thinking critically about their life, identity and faith. When your job is to guide these young minds and nurture their every move, it is difficult to sit back and let go. However, young minds can't develop without their own discoveries.

So, my goal for this year is to ask fewer questions and encourage questioning in my home. Maybe, just maybe, my kids might even ask me about my day when I walk in the door.

— Shannon Philpott

Shannon Philpott is a freelance writer and college journalism instructor, but most of all a mother of two teens. You can see her work at www.shannonphilpott.com.



LIZ QUIRIN

LOCAL MARCHERS COME HOME: Some of the Mater Dei students who marched for life this year are arriving home. They traveled to Washington D.C., to express their support for life.

Fresh Take: a way to look at faith from a different perspective

This is an online-only page dedicated to young adult Catholics, their interests, their needs, their challenges and their faith.

We want to give young adults something to "chew on," to think about when they're looking for something more than an on-line horoscope or the

latest star news.

This page offers columns we believe will interest our young adults. Let us know.

Email us at cathnews@bellevillemessenger.org with questions, suggestions or for more information.

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