

**TRANSCRIPT - New York Times interview with Michael Voris, Dec. 19, 2016**

Samuel Freedman (SF): I wanted to ask first just some basics about the business operation. So I'm a little fuzzy. Is Church Militant now operating as a non-profit, as a for-profit, or are there elements in each camp?

Michael Voris (MV): There are elements of both. There are two distinct entities: St. Michael's Media is the non-profit and that's been around since 2000, late 2005.

SF: Right.

MV: I don't know exactly when that paperwork happened, the winter around 2005, 2006. And that's the non-profit side of it. The for-profit side of it is a private company, private concern, that is hired by St. Michael's to administer the website, run the website, because the only thing St. Michael's Media does is produce videos of theological content.

SF: Is that different from Vortex episodes then?

MV: Correct — Vortex and those sorts of shows where we discuss more cultural, political, those sorts ...

SF: Right.

MV: ... of things, mainstream culture things, those are all produced by Church Militant, which is a separate company than St. Michael's Media.

SF: Right, so is the Church Militant LLC, and that's the for-profit arm of the operation?

MV: Yeah. Church Militant is the for-profit arm. But, essentially what happens at the end of the year financially is we just push everything over to St. Michael's Media anyway. So we have kind of, how you'd say, regular, scheduled quarterly payments.

SF: Mm-hm.

MV: The end of the year, everything that Church Militant has generated as profit goes over to St. Michael's anyway.

SF: Okay, got it.

MV: But your open account kind of gets cleared out at the end of the year and starts over. The Church Militant is really in the path of service of helping St. Michael's stay solvent.

SF: Okay, and you're back on the up and up with the state. There's a period of time where I think you said just through your oversight that the registration of St. Michael's with the Secretary of State's Office in Michigan had lapsed?

MV: Oh yeah. Gosh that was —

SF: 2012 or something like that?

MV: I think that was '09 and '10, or '10.

SF: Okay.

MV: Yeah, I just didn't know when. I didn't know you had to fill out this little form. All you do is just check a box that says "yes, sign your name, send it off with \$5." I didn't do that two years in a row 'cause I didn't know you were supposed to.

SF: Okay. All right.

MV: So that's been fine for years.

SF: Okay then. I assumed so but I just want to double check. And so what's the annual budget for your operation?

MV: For?

SF: Well, assuming that Church Militant is what's paying the bills, so if you're paying salaries, if you're paying for facilities, if you're paying for business travel, if you're paying for equipment; all the things. You know if the — you know the upfront money, if you're doing a retreat on a cruise ship and you're paying?

MV: Well, I don't want to get into specifics with that. I would just leave it to say that there are 30 full-time people and a couple of either part-time or contracts, remote, associated people with us, and it's roughly, I think we're probably in line, from what I know of them, with other Catholic apostolates as far as their budgets are of a similar size.

SF: Are we talking mid-six figures? Seven figures? And understand you're under no obligation to give me an exact number but just a ball park so I can convey to a reader.

MV: I'd really have to clear a question like that first with other people here.

SF: Okay.

MV: ... on the St. Michael's side of the house, that information's discoverable through the 990 file.

SF: No I understand that. But —

MV: But on the Concept-Church Militant side of the house that all makes its way over to St. Michael's.

SF: Okay. Well if you could check with whoever you —

MV: All that gets over to St. Michael's is not anywhere near — we have a pretty high overhead here.

SF: Right, but that would be basically the end-of-the-year profit would move over into St. Michael's, correct?

MV: We move quarterly profit.

SF: Or quarterly, right. But that's different from the — And what I'm asking — just a sense what the operating expenses are.

MV: It's a million dollars-plus.

SF: Okay.

MV: As far as expenses.

SF: Okay. And your 30 staff people those are all paid staff or are some paid and some volunteer?

MV: No, they're all paid.

SF: Okay. And in terms of your matrix, when Naraj Warkioo was writing a couple years ago in. I can't remember if he writes for the news or the Free Press but —

MV: He writes for the Free Press.

SF: Free Press. He talked about your YouTube viewership, was cumulatively up into the millions. What is the most up-to-date metric you have on the YouTube views, Facebook followers, unique visitors to the website, things of that kind?

MV: I'm pretty certain that we run, if you were to add all of those up — Well, let me back up and just give you a little background on it.

SF: Sure.

MV: The website as such right now underwent a massive overhaul coming up on two years ago. And we weren't really directing people to the website. We didn't have much of a foot in the news world, Catholic/cultural/political news world prior to that. And so since that time, meaning April of 2000 — what is it now? — 16, 2015. April of 2015 is when we launched the totally revamped news site. Sorry website that has news on it and prominent discussions, all that sort of stuff. So since that time the website has probably gained, probably generates website plus Facebook views of a given program plus YouTube all together — I mean, Vortex alone gets probably in the neighborhood of 10,000 to 12,000 views a day when you add those three up. And then the various news

articles, some of our premium shows — I'd say that we're probably in the neighborhood of cumulatively probably one and a half million views a month.

SF: Okay.

MV: Add them all up. We're trying to. Because we had a presence on YouTube for many more years than we have the actual come to this website and watch things. So we're trying to slowly move traffic over to the website. And that's been successful, but you know some people just are used to going on YouTube or.

SF: Right.

MV: So.

SF: How long ago did you start uploading the videos to YouTube since obviously that predates the, you know, revised website?

MV: We probably started putting those up, I'm guessing, oh my gosh, probably 2007 maybe? 2008? I think. We started doing the Vortex in 2008.

SF: Okay.

MV: September 1, 2008. We just passed our 2,000<sup>th</sup> episode anniversary this past September. But we were putting up much of the St. Michael's Media theological, strictly theological content onto YouTube. But back in the early days of that YouTube still wasn't able to handle a video longer than ten minutes and I think it was 28 seconds.

SF: Mm-hm.

MV: And those were hour-long or just short of an hour long shows so we would take, after we would air them here locally on local television, uh we'd buy time on a local TV station then we'd bring them back and edit them down to roughly seven, eight, nine, ten minutes and put that on YouTube.

SF: Got it. Got it.

MV: So our very first YouTube broadcast, so to speak, were abbreviated versions. But those are probably ten years old.

SF: Okay. Just wanted to get a rough sense of the timeframe. And I'm just curious how did you end up locating this Detroit Metro area as opposed to anywhere else? Is that just because you were on the Fox station there when you were still working in TV, or secular TV?

MV: Pretty much. I was working for — I was just a regular investigative producer reporter, at the time, it was the CBS station. It switched over. I don't know if you remember that big huge flip of stations between.

SF: No, not off hand but.

MV: Back in the mid-90s. A bunch of CBS affiliates were sort of — sorry, a bunch of independent stations that were affiliated with CBS sold and changed their affiliations to Fox. WJBK where I worked was one of those.

SF: Okay.

MV: AND KDFW in Dallas. A few other big-name stations. But when I — for most of my career — there it was eight years, for the first six-and-a-half years it was CBS. But I was just here and then I transitioned out of that.

SF: Right when did your just basic factoid. When did your um career with TV secular news end at? What year?

MV: 1999.

SF: Okay.

MV: Yeah, '99. And I moved into doing production of commercial and communications videos and marketing strategies and things with General Motors here in Detroit as a contractor. And I did that for about six years and in the last year, maybe year and a half of doing the General Motors work, is when I began the apostolate and started doing that work. So overlap of about year and a half or so.

SF: Right and I know I've read you know in some of your articles about you. You've talked about the personal tragedies that really were catalyzed you know catalyzed your movement into St. Michaels and what ultimately became Church Militant. Um where do you see your operation fitting into the discussion both the Catholic discussion, nationally as well internationally and the political discussion more? More nationally than internationally?

MV: I would think that the major place we would want to be — I mean, we don't make any, you know, bones if you watch some of the stuff. You know we don't make any bones about, you know, trumpeting ... I don't make any bones really. We don't make any bones here about trumpeting what we consider to be the glories of the catholic Faith, both temporally as well as theologically. Since I'm sure your audience is more interested in the temporal I can concentrate on that. In the political arena, I don't mean just politics, but I mean in sort of a body politic, I think it's important that an electorate, a civilization understand its roots, understand how morality is the ground for any sort of legislation. You can just compare the United States to, for example, the old former

Soviet Union or Nazi Germany. Everybody has a morality. Every person has one, and every government or civilization or culture has one. So the question becomes what informs the morality? I mean, something horrible was informing the morality of the Nazis. How evil could that be? And you could say the same thing about the Soviet Union and communism, Marxist Communism. There's a morality that's there, but it's being informed by something. So the expression we use in theological realms is: Bad philosophy leads to bad theology, which leads to bad morality, which leads to Hell on earth and then Hell in eternity. There's a progression, and I think the place of this apostolate is to continually focus people back to that first grounding. What is it that's informing the morality? And that gets right down to a religion, to a question of religion and religion and the cult — not crazy cults like Jim Jones, but the cult of religion and how it informs the culture.

SF: Right and what do you see as Church Militant's role as a voice in the public in the public square on these issues?

MV: Theologically to announce the teachings of the Church; secularly to announce the rationale behind the teachings of the Church, to do a sort of social apologetics on why the teachings of the Church make eminent sense both in this world as well as the next. Are people who are Catholics or theologically minded they might want to hear both sides or both dynamics of that discussion. Lots of other people for whatever reason not interested or they're in ignorance of the teachings or whatever just want to hear the more sort of secular presentation dynamic. And we are happy to speak to both.

SF: Right. You know I know that it was just a coincidence and not anything linear or causal that uh Steve Bannon in his speech to Vatican conference talks about the concepts of the Church Militant as well. You know as has.

MV: Oh talking about us.

SF: Yeah.

MV: No.

SF: Right you know as people like Patrick Buchanan as well but for Bannon framed it in terms of really civilizational conflicts. He talked about the Church Militant is going to be they're in the battle for western civilization itself. Do you share that viewpoint?

MV: Oh absolutely. Absolutely. Now again there. Everything we answer and discuss and present for general consumption is really has this double dynamic, this dual dynamic. There is the secular situation about why you should lead this moral life as opposed to another immoral life and then there is the eternal reason for doing that, of the theological that is informing those moral choices. So I don't think somebody has to — if you go to the March for Life, for example, in Washington, D.C. you'll see signs that

say “Atheists for Life.” I don’t know if that’s an official organization or not but that’s part of that. That can serve as a good example. They are accepting of the morality, these atheists are accepting of a morality that says to kill these children in the womb is wrong and it shouldn’t be allowed. They probably haven’t stopped to think or it just hasn’t come up to them what’s informed that morality. Well, what’s informed that morality is Western Judeo-Christian civilization and its belief that all life is sacred. So you can arrive at step two and then move onto conclusion three without necessarily having thought through step one. But then if you stop and turn around and go, “Oh, wait a second; I guess it is kind of why this is the case.” So we need to be in a situation — we, this apostolate, and we believers, and I think this is probably what Steve Bannon was getting at, have to realize is that the Catholic Church built Western civilization. There was no civilization. Rome fell apart and for 150 years you have after a continuing rampage of barbarians all over Europe burning whatever little villages they could find to the ground and raping, pillaging, bringing all the horrible things we imagine — and it was the Church, the Catholic Church that brought order to that. Many times too, most oftentimes to personal sacrifice. Sometimes martyrdom, but little by little in theological terms again we simply [see] the Church baptized the barbarians and settled down all of these different tribes. And from all of that emerged what came to be known as Western civilization. You know the famous scene of the pope placing the crown of the Holy Roman empire on the head of Charlemagne in St. Peter’s in Rome in the year 800 at Midnight Mass at Christmas Eve. And it really stayed that way roughly for a thousand years. Of course, there’s all kinds of history in there. This is not a history course here, but from all of that came the idea. For example, there was the Roman Empire, even the Muslims today — not many have any respect for women. It was the Catholic Church that brought the notion onto the world’s stage that, “Wait a minute. Women are equal.” They might have different roles but women are equal. They have the same dignity. They don’t get to not vote or, you know, they don’t count so they can’t be witnesses in trials or whatever. It’s one of the very interesting things in the gospels that if the gospels were fake on the accounts of the resurrection of Jesus, they did a very poor job of picking their first witnesses to testify to that because they were women. It was testament that immediately discounted in the ancient world.

SF: You’re saying that that last for 1,000 years and then what’s the vivid point you’re moving towards?

MV: The pivot point is really when the Protestant Reformation occurs or Protestant Revolt, spearheaded by Martin Luther, and occurred in 1517, coming up on a 500-year anniversary. A mindset was introduced into Catholic Europe that authority did not reside

with the Church or the pope but ultimately and what it is sort of evolved into now is authority just resides within the individual —

SF: Right.

MV: — who have these two great competing worldviews of: Is the authority something that is given to us and we submit to it, or is the authority something I determine for myself?

SF: Right but if you look at the idea of a civilizational conflict now. Who. Who do you perceive being on? On each side of it?

MV: Who as in individuals? Or?

SF: No I don't mean. We'd be here a long time if we're going to name names. Broad factions let's say. Broad.

MV: Very broad factions, I would say that this is breaking down into forces that believe in God and those that don't. Now you'd have to break down the God side a little bit more clearly. Obviously, Islam believes in God but that's an entirely different understanding theologically and practically than what Christians and Jews believe about God. Largely I would say this is a war of religion versus non-religion.

SF: Mm-hm.

MV: So very broad terms and again they need much breaking down but it's kind of God versus God or another way to say it might be the way Pope St. John Paul said it. It is a conflict between the gospel and the anti-gospel.

SF: Right.

MV: That's it.

SF: And. And. And that way I assume that Islam would be on the anti-gospel side of things.

MV: Correct.

SF: Okay.

MV: Now I mean if you have, if you take a look at Islam, for example, Islam you have this situation where it's almost like the Protestants' authority problem. There aren't really any Muslims who can stand up and say to an opposing Muslim, "You're wrong" on, say, for example, using terrorism. I don't believe for a moment that 95% of Islam believes in blowing up buildings and killing people and chopping their heads off and stuff. Probably 95% are opposed to that or even more. I don't know. But the fact is there is a significant enough portion of Muslims who do believe that and there's nothing that can be — and

they cite their own scripture for it. And then there's others who say, "No, the scripture should be this way." So you've got this almost Protestant war going on protesting.

SF: Who gets to interpret the text?

MV: Who gets to interpret the text? I mean that's what's going on in Protestantism as well.

SF: Right.

MV: And I think that becomes a real problem. The authority has to lie outside of the people who are affected by the authority.

SF: Right. Where? In the American idiom, particularly where do Protestants fit in then for you because on a lot of the you know social and theological issues that are important to you, you know abortion, um same sex marriage. I don't. I have. Can't say I've seen these articles specifically on your website but I'm imagining things like school prayer and you know support for parochial schools, public dollars. 0:25:11.3 a lot of evangelical Christians would be definitely in sync with you on that. So but theologically you're talking about them as kind of enemies. So how do you reconcile that?

MV: Well, various people who, who might not get along on — you could have two neighbors side by side in their houses who don't like each other for a host of reasons, but if there is somebody going around the neighborhood you know putting explosives in their mailboxes, well, they can both agree for the moment to deal with that issue. But that doesn't eradicate or doesn't dispose of their other issues. It's just that something else has stepped up to the fore right now which is sort of more attention-grabbing or needs dealing with in the short term. I'm not sure that I would classify — and I do need to make this distinction if you could be clear —

SF: Sure.

MV: — to your readers in this article, I'd appreciate it. I don't say anything about individual Protestants, individual people. I don't talk in those terms. I talk in the terms of Protestantism as an -ism and what it presents, since there are so many different sects; there's like 40,000 or whatever it is now. There are so many different approaches to the truth, half-truth, partial truth, almost full truth, almost no truth that it's kind of hard to speak in terms of any one particular denomination, which I generally don't. I don't think I've done anything on a particular denomination. If I've done one, I can't remember.

SF: No I've certainly. I didn't come across it.

MV: But I do talk about Protestantism because the -ism is a core of beliefs by which you get to decide what Scripture means and ultimately then what's right and wrong. And a very good example: I was talking to a Protestant minister once and we were both in the

same radio station giving interviews in different studios. We happened to come out in the hallway. We met at the same time, introduced himself. I introduced myself. He asked what am I. I said, "I'm Roman Catholic." He said he's — I believe he said he was Baptist, but I don't remember that. And he said, "That doesn't matter about all these differences and things. The only thing that's important is that we agree on the essentials. It's the nonessentials we can let go." And I thought, "Hmm." So I asked him, "Well what's a nonessential in your view?" And he said, "Well, divorce, for example. Divorce is a nonessential. Divorce and remarriage is a nonessential." And I said, "Really? So when Our Lord is talking in Matthew's Gospel and says 'What God has joined together let no man put asunder. Any man who takes up his wife or leaves his wife and takes up another commits adultery.' All this?" And he says, "Well, that's nonessential." And I asked him, "Well (a) if that's nonessential, what else do you say that Jesus said is nonessential? And (2) who decided what Jesus said is essential and not essential?" And he kind of got a little stumped and had to go do whatever he had to do. But that's my point. You accept the whole thing or you break down into 40,000 different groups who choose what they want. That's extremely difficult.

SF: Right and I want to touch on something it's all related to the question about civilizational conflict, which is. Which comes very much out of the recent presidential election, little sub exit and you know and other events in European politics. But you had written or broadcast very you know approvingly about the idea that this was a moment of pushing back against globalism. And that elites in the world were trying to impose a globalist agenda.

MV: Mm-hm.

SF: Um what do you see in the present moment in that defacto? What do you make of it and where do you see Church Militant fitting into this defacto populous moment?

MV: Well —

SF: I say de facto 'cause I don't mean that anyone could you know formally brought these things together but there have been these events popping up literally all over the world that do seem to fit into a larger pattern.

MV: I think there is something in the human spirit that is desirous of truth. Nobody wants to be lied to. Nobody asks a question so that they can knowingly hear a lie. They want to know what the truth is or they wouldn't ask. So I think that what has happened on a great big global stage is that people have a sense, enough people have a sense, that they have been lied to. Maybe not deliberately, maybe not in some evil, Machiavellian way, but they have a sense that what they have been told is not true on a global stage, and they have reacted. And various subgroups of people have reacted against that.

People who are more nationalist-minded. And by nationalist I don't mean crazy, "every other race sucks and we're the ones that have to conquer the world." By nationalist, I just mean a love of your homeland. I'm sure you've encountered some Parisians and their fixation on their language.

SF: Yeah.

MV: There's nothing wrong with that. It's kind of annoying if you're a tourist but you know there's nothing wrong with that. To love the things of your own nation that expresses certain culture as long as that's all moral and good, that's a good thing. Another subgroup would be what I would call sort of the gospel crowd as opposed to the anti-gospel crowd. They sense that part of the globalist agenda has their belief in God firmly in the crosshairs, like the nationalists believe that the globalist agenda has individual nationhood, patriotism, really, in the crosshairs. So I think that we certainly here in America, 'cause we sort of have a foot in both camps, really, in that we're America and freedom of speech and this and that and everything else. But more to the point, more on this gospel side saying the very values which made this nation are under assault and the assault has rolled back much of an authentic understanding of the gospel and God and the role of religion. I think that's why you saw this massive push — I mean, Catholics voted in the majority for Trump, not a huge overwhelming —

SF: Right but about 60% of the white Catholics by the polls I've seen. And I. I get the sense also that. I lost. Wait Mike I've lost you. The sound went out.

MV: Can you hear me now?

SF: Yeah that. Yeah.

MV: I was going to say, I think you get the 60% because they voted for Obama the last two — in '08 and close to 50/50, slightly leaning in his direction in '12. But this is a pretty solid turn-around. It's a flip roughly from '08 of about ten points, and that's a lot that one out of ten Catholics who vote would actually change their perspective; and I don't know that a lot of people think in terms of big, huge, 80,000-foot views of things. I don't think they think of that consciously. But I do think that gets into a person in sort of an intuitive sense. They just sort of feel that things are slipping away. It's kind of like in a basketball game I was watching — watching Notre Dame play Purdue this past weekend and Notre Dame was up by 14 points, but then all of a sudden something happened; then you could sense five minutes into the second half Notre Dame was going to lose the game. You just felt it slipping away. They still had the lead. Everything was fine, but you knew that everything was in place underneath for a defeat. I think people have that general sense. You know, we call it momentum in sports, but I think it's a sort of intuitive

— an intuition, a national intuition, a religious intuition that something just isn't right here.

SF: Right. And so do you find yourself heartened by Trump's election along those lines?

MV: I feel myself, yes, but I say that secondarily. I voted for Trump. I supported his views on some of these things, like predominantly the Supreme Court nominations, but other things also. But largely I voted as much against Hillary as I did for Trump, because I just thought Hilary was an absolute clear and present danger. The entire Democratic machinery to me was a clear and present danger to the Catholic faith.

SF: Right well you do call her satanic so that's.

MV: Yeah, I think she's — that doesn't mean somebody's going around privately worshipping Satan. It means as Our Lord said to the Scribes and Pharisees in His day, "Your father is the devil because you do his will." If you set up the entire theological construct of which father do you serve, well, if you go back to the Book of Genesis, it says: "I will put hatred, enmity between you and the Woman" — talking to the serpent, to the devil — "between your offspring and hers." So at the end of the day it's gospel, anti-gospel. It's: Which father are you serving? Our Father in Heaven or our father who does evil?

SF: Do you see and I don't mean this question in any flip way. Do you see providence in Trump's election?

MV: I see an answer to the prayers, the Rosaries of millions and millions of Catholics pleading that the Church be spared from what would have been in my view and I think many of their views certain persecution under a Democratic regime; rolling back of religious freedoms; Hillary's speech before the International Women's Conference in, think that was the summer of 2015, where she said that religious views are going to have to change; the forcing down the throat of the Obama Contraception Mandate, the HHS Mandate; encroaching — you have to accept the bathroom thing that happened, the transgender bathroom thing that actually started in Iowa about a month or two — I think there was a quote rolling before the election a month or two, the whole gay bakery, florists, wedding photographers, bed and breakfasts, the whole bit. You could see it. And I really think they have an agenda which — everybody has their agenda. They have their agenda. It's a free world. You get to fight for your agenda. They lost, but I think the reason they lost was because they really overstepped their bounds. When you add up all the little things — the economy, the threat to religion, the threat to patriotism — you add all these little things up, no one [thing] took Trump over the line, but the combination of them certainly did.

SF: Right.

MV: Absolute repudiation of everything that the globalists — the Democratic machinery has been sort of reaching out for that brass ring for all these decades — it's a repudiation of it on many different levels.

SF: Do you. Do you have folks being you know these indirectly influential or having (0:37:00.4 inaudible) years in this administration not only because of Steve Bannon but also you know um General Flynn, Kelleyanne Conway. There are a number of theologically conservative Catholics who were in the inner circle?

MV: I would hope that authentic Catholicism has a say as it did after the fall of the Roman Empire, as it did in various countries throughout Europe in the day. I would hope that those same principles and truths have a great deal of influence in Trump's administration or any president's administration. As to us here at Church Militant specifically being a part of that or one of the trumpeters or something, I guess that's not for me to say. Sure it would be fun, I guess. I'd like to have White House press credentials and sit there and ask questions about this, that or the other, but I mean that isn't germane. I shouldn't say germane — that's not essential to our mission here. It would be nice to do. I would love to sit down with President-Elect Trump for thirty minutes and say, "Here's a little history lesson on the great value that Catholic theology can inform your administration."

SF: Right. And. And. And actually picking up on that or someone picking up on it, how for you what does the term Church Militant connote? And look I understand you know Church Militant, Church Penitent, Church Triumphant so you know so I'm up to speed on that but it's a somewhat contested term in catholic intellectual theological thought. So I just want to get a sense of sort of how you position it.

MV: It's a term that has been used theologically for centuries and centuries and centuries. What it really refers to is the war, the spiritual warfare or the spiritual combat that must take place in every individual's soul to resist evil and to do good. And that's largely what it is. That also, however, does have a social dimension. If I'm a father and I have five children and they're walking down the street with me and we walk past some stores and there's pictures or videos or whatever or naked women in the store and there's someone over here handing out condoms and these guys over here are saying whatever immorality thing you want to talk about — well, then I have a duty to fight against that as well, because that is the spillover of other people's militancy, that they have lost a sense of morality, and them losing a sense of morality impacts my children who I want to instill a certain morality in to. So none of this is private. It's personal but it's not private.

SF: Okay and. And in the American idiom do you feel that the Democratic Party or the liberal project, however you would frame it is intrinsically immoral now?

MV: Sure. Yeah. I think it's the moment the Democratic Party — and sad to say with many leading Catholics in it at the beginning — the moment the Democratic Party accepted the killing of children in the womb, it gave itself over to the diabolical. It was only a matter of time until many other things fell into sway. I would even back it up further than that as in the case of Casey vs. Planned Parenthood, where — I can't remember who wrote the majority opinion — but he said in there that ... we can't get rid of abortion because it can now become the backup for failed contraception. It says that in the majority opinion. So in the Catholic world, many of these Catholics, politicians and notables who went on to accept abortion like Ted Kennedy — Ted Kennedy was staunchly pro-[life] — well, I don't know how staunchly he was if he switched his mind on it, but at some point he at least professed to be pro-life and then in 1972 and '73, a few years after a secret meeting with a number of extremely liberal priests, Father Robert Drinan being one of them, at the Hyannisport Compound, they changed their minds and all of the sudden said, "Oh, I'm actually opposed but ..." Something that came from Pierre Trudeau and Mario Cuomo, and Mario Cuomo trumpeted it at Notre Dame. And when you have this whole scene of rebellion within the Church over the teaching on birth control and then that was 1968 — five years later you have this rebellion by these same people in the Church over the question of contraception — question of abortion.

SF: Right.

MV: So one would just sort of naturally flow from the other.

SF: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cut you.

MV: So the killing of children. The killing of innocent life can simply never be and I think that's why there has been such a coalescence from both sides around that issue, because what is at the heart of it there, even more so than the 60 million-plus dead American babies since Roe, at the heart of that, what's really being attacked beyond their life is truth. Is that a human life that deserves to live or is it not? And that's a morality question which has a theological — information of a philosophical and theological informing saying what do we think as a culture? As a civilization, how do we value life?

SF: Right. And how. To what extent do you feel yourself in your. In your work really pushing against the opposition of the official American Catholic Church?

MV: Oh, a lot, a lot. There's a great unwillingness on the part of much of the American hierarchy and many of the, what I call the Establishment Church — there's a great

unwillingness to confront the culture dead on. Why that is the case individually really depends on the individual person — the bishop, the priest, the deacon, the whoever. But there's been a great collapse of any kind of serious Catholic education, religious theological education across the board — grade school, middle school, high school, university, seminary, everywhere — a great collapse because I believe back in the 1960s, even prior to that, there was too much of an acceptance of "Let's abandon the idea of militancy and let's start dialogue." They replaced — we now are kind of the Church of Dialogue, the Church of Nice, not the Church of Militants anymore and that caused the complete loss of Catholic identity. And so when we stand in the marketplace saying, "Rediscover yourself, Church. Rediscover yourself, bishops, priests, clergy, all you people. Rediscover your roots" — they don't like hearing that. It's kind of like a Baptist thing, I guess.

SF: So. So is the Second Vatican Council kind of the original sin?

MV: Oh gosh, no. No, no, no. You would have to go back probably 100 years before the Second Vatican Council historically to look at the beginning of all these little movements in parallel to the Trump win. The Second Vatican Council really became sort of a set piece battle, I suppose you could say, where things were introduced informally in such a way where the interpretation could be whatever you wanted it to be. The writing wasn't tight (you'll appreciate that), it wasn't tight enough in some cases, and what it left open wasn't really a questioning of the documents of Vatican II but a questioning, for example, that sort of became classified as the "Spirit of Vatican II," which doesn't really have anything to do with what was written in Vatican II. The very first example I would give and you hear also Vatican II with its liberal reforms and they'll show pictures of Mass, TV stations or whoever will show video of Mass. There isn't one thing that you see at Mass, a usual Catholic Mass today that was ever taught, prescribed or anything at Vatican II. The very first document of the 16 documents of Vatican II that came out, "Sacrosanctum Concilium," never said anything about turning it all around and facing the people. It never said anything about getting rid of Latin. It never said anything about getting rid of Gregorian chant. It never said anything about let's start giving Holy Communion in the hands. If you just go down sort of a checklist of every single thing that has evolved in the liturgy, the Catholic liturgy for the most part over the past, say, roughly 40 years, 45 years, none of this was called for by Vatican II. Not one thing. It didn't say put in guitars. It didn't say, "Let's get Eucharistic ministers involved." None of this stuff. But because it didn't say that, what we all were pushing for here is an authentic presentation of Vatican II. But what you have now and for the most part spearheaded by many bishops is an inauthentic expression of Vatican II. But St. John Paul and Pope Benedict were also after this authentic expression of Vatican II.

SF: Right. I get the sense that for you that two of the issues that really comes to a cutting edge with the American Church hierarchy now are immigration specifically and in a broader sense because it's never quite exacted to find but the concept of social justice on the other. So can you talk on both of those about where you see yourself being at odds with uh with the American church's leadership?

MV: Sure, I think they have made a big mistake in talking. Because the Church doesn't have a social justice teaching. The Church has a social teaching that is — and it might seem insignificant but it's a very big difference, certainly theologically. How does the Church propose to a culture, to a civilization that it should be socially, how should it interact? So it talks of things about the common good. It talks about taking care of the less fortunate, a number of these things, the thirteen encyclicals —

SF: Right.

MV: — distribution of capital labor and all of that, that there is always a balance that needs to be struck, this sort of thing, but always with the idea in mind of the dignity of the human person, every person, and that the government movements and the movements of people and nations should be to try to respect, uppermost respect the dignity which begins with life of every human. That got co-opted in the 1960s and kind of changed from the Church's social teaching, the language now became social justice sort of just hanging on one aspect of the Church's social teaching, and it became sort of a vehicle to begin importing into the language and the life of the Church here in America false notions of justice.

SF: What are some of those false notions?

MV: Well, what Archbishop Cupich [of Chicago] said when those Planned Parenthood videos, those selling the baby pieces parts came out in August, and everybody was reacting to them. He said of those videos — or not the videos but the information the videos revealed — he said, "Oh, yes, this is horrible and gruesome and everything but we also must remember joblessness. And we also must remember homelessness and unemployment." What the American Catholic leaders have done en masse — not all of them, certainly — has been to accept the notion of what came to be known as Cardinal Bernadin's "seamless garment."

SF: Right.

MV: All of these issues sort of carry the same weight [according to the seamless garment theory].

SF: I was actually going to ask you about seamless garment. What's your take on it?

MV: It is a total whitewash of Catholic social teaching. And it is proposed to people, Catholics, to muddy, deliberately muddy the waters and so to level the playing field where all issues ... have the same importance and should be weighed the same. The Catholic mind is a mind that makes distinctions, and anything that gets introduced into the Church that obliterates distinctions is generally unhealthy and spiritually corrupting.

SF: Right I just want to. And you. You know on. I can't remember if it was the Podcast or the Video cast but talked about the idea that the bishops have taken a favorable stance on immigration truly as a kind of cynical gesture they need Hispanics, legal or illegal in the pews.

MV: Yeah, I think it's disturbing. Look, the Church has a very longstanding tradition that as long as civil laws, secular law is moral and not rooted in any sort of evil, then it must be respected. Canon law even says that, if a case comes up in canon law and there's a civil law, the civil law trumps most of the time depending on what the case is. So ecclesiastical law must give way in a secular thing to secular law. So when I hear bishops talking about using the Democratic Party vocabulary of immigration, it's not immigration, it's illegal immigration. When you talk about an undocumented worker, I think if I'm not mistaken the last time you are an undocumented car driver going down the street they take your car and put you in jail. You [pay] a big fine. So it's this willingness on the part of many in the hierarchy today to co-opt and incorporate the Democratic Party language, its vocabulary, into their official statements and pronouncements and all of that. And look I'm the son of an immigrant. My mother came over here from England, and I'm the son of an immigrant and I'm also the son of a Protestant. My father converted to Catholicism also, so these are about issues. It's never personal with me. I never get personal with these things. I may speak to a person's choice about something but only as a stepping stone to get to the mechanism of the choice.

SF: Right. It just seems like you're in kind of a paradoxical moment in which to kind of repair what you see is amiss within the American Church. Some of those answers are going to come from the political system potentially because if you know abortion is unruled unconstitutional and made illegal again, if um a border wall is put up or deportation happens, those are things that I think bring you to the stances you feel are theologically correct but the irony in a way is that it'll be maybe through the mechanism of the Trump Administration rather than the bishop's conference.

MV: Well, there is precedent throughout all of salvation history. Cyrus freed the Jews. Constantine saved the Church. So there is certainly to your earlier question about divine providence, I guess you need time and perspective to see in some cases the playing out of divine providence, but we certainly know there's precedent throughout all of

salvation history that a secular ruler or form of government or whatever can be used by Heaven to initiate Heaven's will.

SF: Okay now a number of the stances that I've been reading up on and listening to over the last few weeks you know as I've um delving into your different media offerings written, broadcasted. So I kind of intuitively understand these sort of issues that are um religious issues or being catholic issues, they being partisan issues. The one thing that I have to say made me scratch my head and maybe you can explain to me is what's the deal with Church Militant and Saul Alinsky?

MV: I guess I would say Saul Alinsky — just a quick sound bite for you. Saul Alinsky —

SF: It can be a longer sound byte.

MV: You got paper, we don't. We have digits; you have paper.

SF: Yeah well I have 1,200 words so it's not infinite.

MV: Saul Alinsky is essentially the godfather of the entire social justice movement that has corrupted Catholics' understanding of the authentic faith. And in the Church there are two dynamics spoken of: spiritual and temporal. And in the corporal, the bodily. On the spiritual side, we have what we call seven spiritual works of mercy, and on the material side we have the seven corporal works of mercy. And the seven corporal works of mercy are all the — taking care of the poor, feeding the homeless, those sorts of things, which are all very good and the greatest saints in the history of the Church have all engaged in that routinely. But they did not eject the spiritual works of mercy in doing that: instructing the ignorant, admonishing the sinner, talking to all of these things. If the Church has really been allowed to become under sort of the philosophical aegis of Saul Alinsky or Alinskyism, this great, big, monster, social help agency that sort of has an occasional cross on the wall here or there. That's not the role of the Church.

SF: So is what makes Alinsky particularly pernicious the fact that he did work with Catholic uh institutions and individuals, which of course he did?

MV: Well, certainly, that's the big ... he wanted in at the Archdiocese of Chicago back in the 30s with the Backyards movements and all of that. But when it looked like he had the blessings — when it appeared to people and they saw, "Oh, look he has the blessings of the Church" and the whole labor union involvements and all of that, that set the groundwork for somebody like a Cardinal Bernadin to step forward and propose in a quasi-theological fashion the whole "seamless garment" theory because taking care of the poor now became equal to preserving life in the womb. And the social justice movement has become sort of a Trojan Horse in the Church, where an overthrow or an ignoring — one or the other depending on who's doing it — of the moral teachings of the Church, the theological teachings of the Church can be attacked and disregarded.

Because they're taking care of the poor, so we're good. That's not the only thing Christ said. The most important thing Christ said was get to Heaven and pick up your cross and follow Me. And the Church was never — look, there's tons of wonderful agencies that do all kinds of wonderful things to help the poor and orphans and save the whales and everything else. And to the extent that the Church should be involved in that kind of work, it is predominantly, predominantly, predominantly for the salvation of souls, not the work of making sure that Habitat for Humanity has a nice house. They can be involved in that, absolutely. It's what the Franciscans were founded on. The core players were founded on this. The Church has dozens and dozens of orders that were involved in all of this kind of social work. They did not establish that social work to begin to assail all the teachings of the Church. They did it to [help the] body while at the same time most importantly they were helping the souls of these people.

SF: There was another question I wanted to ask vis-a-vis Alinsky and it also ties in with Soros who I understand is more front of mind political opponent right now. Which is that.

MV: Soros and Saul Alinsky with lots of money.

SF: Okay. You identify them both prominently as being Jewish and I'm wondering why that's relevant to say it so prominently.

MV: I think because as they look at the culture, the U.S. culture, particularly Saul Alinsky — let's take them both separately in the context of their times. Saul Alinsky was in an America that while it was certainly on paper a heavily Protestant majority the ethics of the time and the morality of the time in the 30s, 40s was really a Catholic morality: no divorce, no contraception, all of these things are Catholic, even though many Protestants were living a different theological bent, they were certainly sharing the same moral bent.

SF: Mm-hm.

MV: And Saul Alinsky being Jewish doesn't have those same moral underpinnings. There's certainly an overlap, absolutely, but not a sufficient enough overlap to be able to just disregard it. When you fast forward to the present day, last 15, 20 years, and the George Soros influence, George Soros has — it runs a very close parallel. As a matter of fact, George Soros, if I remember correctly, correct me if you know, but I seem to believe George Soros is a nonbelieving Jew, I think.

SF: That's my sense. I don't know that for a fact.

MV: I seem to have read that somewhere, or maybe it was an editorial but whatever. I don't get the sense from anywhere that he's a practicing Jew, certainly not an orthodox Jew. And much of the fuel, as it were, for the Democratic Party has come from a liberal, Jewish mindset here in the United States, just like on the other end of the spectrum

much of what would you call sort of right or right-leaning census from an evangelical Protestant sense. So I always think it's good to be able to just sort of draw — here are the various distinctions, and that people have not an agenda but these are their motivations.

SF: Right. Right. And.

MV: Saul Alinsky was atheist. So.

SF: Right well that's what I'm curious about him why more with Soros you feel the Jewishness rather than the liberalism that's the challenge to correct morality.

MV: I think the liberalism is born, the political liberalism is born from a very liberal — at least in Alinsky's case — atheistic (and I'm pretty sure that's the case with Soros also or very close to it), born from an atheistic liberal theological reading of their own religious faith. So they just reject them out of hand, if not in belief, certainly in practice. And so their political liberalism is informed by their theological liberalism. And that same thing holds true in the Catholic Church among some bishops also. Their political liberalism — I think, like Cardinal Cupich of Chicago for example, he is a wildly theological liberal.

SF: Right.

MV: But that's informed. I'm sorry he's a wildly political liberal, but it's informed by his theological liberalism. So I think it's important to point again —

SF: Right.

MV: — underneath your morality, what is your theological underpinnings that find their expression in your morality?

SF: Right. I want to ask you something else on. On the subject. Obviously I'm Jewish myself so I won't make any secret of that. But I'm sorry can

MV: Do you practice?

SF: Yes.

MV: Good.

SF: But even you know there are many Orthodox Jews whose stances on social issues and moral issues would be very in sync with uh, with theological conservative Catholics and Protestants who were part. I'm sorry. I've lost you.

MV: I said absolutely.

SF: Okay. And yet what you say about the covenant ending at the time of the destruction of the second Temple and Judaism being a manmade religion would be

probably offensive even to those Jews who are in sync with you on many of these moral issues. And for a lot of Jews those statements are triggers of wondering if someone harbors anti-semitic attitudes. So what would your response be?

MV: Oh, no, I'm not anti-semitic at all. I'm speaking on theological grounds, that Our Lord, Who was Jewish, predicted the destruction of Jerusalem, and He predicted the destruction of the Temple and the whole city, in fact, as He says, "because you did not recognize the time of your salvation." And so again, it's fine if we're moving into the theological realm, I'm happy to discuss that, but the Church is the fulfilment of the Jewish covenant and there was a remnant, the whole entire Church at the beginning, small numbers were Jews. It wasn't until Saul/Paul comes along who was a Jew and brings the message more completely and fully to the Gentiles. But up until St. Paul starts his journeys around the Mediterranean, the Church was completely Jewish and it was really the doings of the Jewish leaders that brought about, compared to the Roman Empire, a minor persecution of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem in the first 10, 15, 20 years of the Church's existence. And so the covenant isn't rejected by God. The covenant is *fulfilled* by God through the final expression of it in the Catholic Church. That's why if you go into a Catholic Church there's so many — it's kind of interesting; some things that Protestants object to about Catholicism is its kinship to Judaism. Some of these crazy, off-the-wall, Protestant, weird, cult groups. We have priests, tabernacles, candles, incense, altars, sacrifice — everything, all of this, and we even have manna, not exactly understood in the same way, but we have manna there in the tabernacle. The Church has never not seen itself as the outgrowth or the fulfilment of the covenant, but to cling to a covenant which has now been fulfilled in another direction puts those people who support that or agree with that — we're saying, "Wait, wait. Wait. Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Over here's the fulfilment of the covenant. The Messiah has come. Here He is. And as long as you see things that way over there, you're mistaken. Come here and understand that historically what happened is when the covenant, when the fulfilment of the covenant was rejected and Jerusalem was destroyed. The faith of the Jewish nation continued on in the Catholic Church. And what was developed on the other end of it, the rabbinical Judaism didn't exist prior to that. So would people find that? Are there some people who would find that offensive? I suppose so. There's lots of Jewish converts who've accepted that argument. The Apostles themselves were all Jewish and accepted that argument. They made the argument. I'm just agreeing with it.

SF: Okay. And I just want, you know we were talking before about Church Militant as a theology and as a term and of course the '92 catechism changes the language.

MV: Mm-hm.

SF: Is that too emblematic of what's wrong with the Church? Or one evidence of it?

MV: First of all, I'm not sure I would say necessarily changes the language but presents things in a different way. You can add things on in your vocabulary which doesn't necessarily abandon or decry the former language. In 2012, then-Pope Benedict issued a statement. It was right around the time we renamed the apostolate, as a matter of fact. And the term "ecclesia militans," or "militans ecclesia," has somewhat fallen out of regular use. But it is the term which most fully represents the expression of the Church here on earth. So I don't know that I would say the Church necessarily changed the language or that it tried to emphasize something else. Look, dialogue with the world is not bad. Dialogue with the world is necessary — but not for its own sake. If the Church and people can agree or not — but if the Church's mission, which is to bring salvation to the world, to be the vehicle by which salvation is brought to the world, then of course you have the dialogue. That you have to explain. That's what the whole apologetics, catechism, evangelization efforts have been all about for 2,000 years. But when somebody just wants to continually mire themselves in dialogue with no end and no goal, well, then, that's wrong. That becomes defeating. That's self-defeating. I think that's what happens in many parts of the Church today. The Church, including many, many, many of our leaders, have lost their Catholic identity.

SF: Right.

MV: That's concerning.

SF: Right, and speaking of that, and this is both a theological question but also sort of a political in how religion moves in the material world, I guess I'm partly put in mind because of your geographical location in Detroit, you know, was Father Coughlin a kind of a role model for you?

MV: Oh no. I didn't really know much about Father Coughlin. Events surrounding him seem to be kind of shrouded in history. I mean everything I read, all I can gather is he was a very partisan figure, I'm sorry, a very [inaudible] figure and he was a lightning rod for both sides. I don't really know enough about him to be able to make a judgment or really have an opinion other than I know he was not particularly liked by the Roosevelt administration, and somebody asked the Roosevelt administration, asked the bishops to put pressure on him and shut him up, and that's what happened. I don't even know if that's right.

SF: Right, and Father Feeney?

MV: I know a little bit more about Father Feeney because of the "No salvation outside the Church" teaching. What I do know is that he used to go preach in the commons of Harvard and he was converting many students to the Faith. Many of them came and joined his community. He ran afoul — I believe at the time it was Cardinal Cushing in

Boston — and he was ordered to come to Rome to defend what he was saying. ... He refused, and for his refusal to come to Rome he was excommunicated. I don't believe it had anything to do with what he was teaching. It was his refusal to come to Rome and defend it or explain it or whatever they wanted him to do. I do know that at the end he died reconciled to the Church, so the excommunication was lifted.

SF: Right with who do you consider your role model? I mean is it you know and I mean among living people, not to say your Lord, but with all due respect living people. I mean is it someone like Fulton Sheen because of the way he was so much part of the public discourse in his time? I mean would you hope to be the you know Fulton Sheen of the digital era?

MV: Oh, I would. If God would bestow that grace on me, I would love it. I don't pretend in my mind to have any sort of self-thought of that at all. But yes, I would consider both him and Mother Angelica, who just died last Easter, God rest her soul — they were very clear-spoken. They were lightning rods in their own way. They grasped the sense or had grasped the notion of the importance of the media, and in matter of fact the two big studios we have here, one is named after Fulton Sheen and the other's named after Mother Angelica.

SF: Oh really? Okay, glad I asked.

MV: I would say those are probably our two, those are our modern communicators in the last century. It would be Sheen and Mother Angelica. There are other wonderful theologians, and Father John Harden has a beautiful catechism which explains the deep, stirring beauties of the Faith in very plain, simple language. There are a number of people who I would consider not necessarily contemporary, because those three people have died, but they were all alive during my lifetime. So I would consider them contemporaries and great role models for us.

SF: Okay. And one other thing. Like a couple of things and I promise to be wrapped up in the next ten minutes or so. How do you look back on your education at ND?

MV: Oh.

SF: Because you know you left there. You went into secular media. You were — and I'm not saying this to be you know snarking or outing, but you've written about yourself, you were living a gay life subsequent to that. So how do you assess now some distance in time and personal way of life what ND did or didn't give you Catholically?

MV: I would say that my formal Catholic education really came to an end in high school.

SF: Where is that, by the way? Is that Catholic school or public school?

MV: Catholic school in California.

SF: Okay.

MV: Near Napa Valley.

SF: Okay.

MV: That was in the early to mid-70s. I entered high school in 1975, graduated in '79. And by that time, the revolution in the Church had really established itself —

SF: Right.

MV: — in all the major areas of the Church's life: liturgical, devotional, just everything. And so by the time I got to Notre Dame, the insanity, theological insanity and spiritual insanity that was just rampant at Notre Dame in the late 70s and early 80s, did nothing to encourage people, the average student, to pursue anything in spiritual concerns — very depressing in a way. Notre Dame was the icon of Catholicism in the public's view. You know, Knute Rockne and Frank Lahey and football and all that business and everything. Notre Dame's lore is part of the American landscape, and to see what made Notre Dame what it was, was the Catholic faith. And to see that abandoned and overturned and rejected — I ran into the president of Notre Dame when I was down there a year and a half ago, John Jenkins. Father John. I was walking across campus and it was kind of funny. Actually, I woke up that morning in South Bend and I was down there visiting somebody and I had a — I don't know what to call it. A thought came into my head just after I kind of fully woke up and I was still lying in bed. And the thought was, "You're going to see Father Jenkins today."

SF: And tell him why you don't donate to the alumni fund?

MV: Well, they don't need any donations, trust me. So I'm walking across campus and I glance over. You know I'm down there, I went to school, with my nostalgic connection, and I'm walking around and I happened to glance over, and there he is about 50 yards away, and I'm like, "Oh my gosh. There's no one here on the main quad except him and me." So I yell out after him, "Father!" and he turns around, and I said, "Hi, Father. Michael Voris, class of 1983." He's like, "Hello, Michael." I said, "Father, I have to tell you, I'm concerned about some of the decisions that both you and the Board of Trustees and the fellows make here at Notre Dame and have made for a very long time and how it's eroding the Faith." His face went beet red. His veins popped out and he said, "I can't stand it when people say that. This is the most Catholic university in America." And he turned and he says, "Look at that basilica." And he turns around. We were about 100 yards. He points at the basilica and I said, "With all due respect, Father, that's a building of brick and mortar. I myself have heard heresy preached from the pulpit in there. A nice building doesn't mean that you're faithful to the Faith." And he

said, “Our students here take (I think he said two) two semesters of theology before they graduate.” I said, “Yeah, and I come back here for reunion weekends and football games and I talk to the students because I care. Rarely do I bump into a student here who has any sort of cognition of the Faith, any sort of authentic transmission of the Faith.” He grabbed me by the shoulders and shook me — not violently, but emphatically — and said, “We’re not going to agree on these sorts of things, so this conversation is over.” And he released my shoulders and walked into the administration building. I thought to myself, “If I’d have done that, I’d be arrested for assault.” ...

SF: Oh that definitely answers my ND question. One last thing, which is I just want to carve out one thing. So you refer to Church Militant as an apostolate. So where does that designation come from? I mean is it?

MV: It’s certainly emphasized a lot in the documents of Vatican II when you’re engaged in the work of apostolate, and a specific example of being engaged in the work of apostolate is known as an apostolate, or the apostolate.

SF: Right, but does anyone have to confer that on you?

MV: Oh, no. If I were to just sit down at McDonald’s and start handing out, “Here’s why you should become Catholic” business cards and talk to two or three people having a Big Mac, that would be the work of apostolate.