

March for Life reveals Emperor Obama's new clothes

Beyoncé lip-synching the Star Spangled Banner was part of the superficial environment. That one surreal episode epitomizes all the celebrity fakeness and sycophancy on display at Barack Obama's second inauguration in Washington, D.C., Jan. 21.

But we can hardly even see the environment, until the anti-environment shows up.

Over half a million real people crowded together in Washington Jan. 25, the anniversary of the 1973 Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion across the United States.

Take a look at the pictures of the protest. Does half a million people look like a lot? It sure does.

Multiply that number by at least one hundred. For each person present at that pro-life March for Life demonstration in Washington, there have been at least one hundred babies aborted since the Roe v. Wade decision.

Over 55 million babies. Can you imagine what the march would look like, if the skies were to open? If these, heaven's beloved children, were to descend?

"When the Emperor appeared in his new clothes, his courtiers did not see his nudity, they saw his old clothes.



Only the small child and the artist have that immediacy of approach that permits perception of the environmental," Canadian scholar Marshall McLuhan said in his 1966 essay on "The Relation of Environment to Anti-Environment."

Most remarkable was how the vast majority of the March for Life crowd – hundreds of thousands – was under the age of 25. No doubt they shared the keenness of "perception of the environmental" of which McLuhan wrote, that "immediacy of approach" which is able to see beyond the superficial everyday environment.

But there is so much superficial celebrity fakeness in our culture's everyday media experience, so much that everyone else can hardly notice the shocking reality.

McLuhan observed that new technologies have created a new information environment that "has made human life appear very cheap indeed." It is almost as if technology wants to "get rid of people entirely." McLuhan wrote to the *Toronto Star* that society's uncriti-



Crowds of people gather on the National Mall in Washington Jan. 21 to watch the public swearing-in of U.S. President Barack Obama. C.S. Morrissey writes the inauguration epitomized "celebrity fakeness and sycophancy."

Brian Snyder / Reuters / CNS

cal submission to abortion technology, for example, encourages us to think of "all existing human organisms as expendable fungus," leading to "the loss of all life values whatever."

This concern for the dignity of the human person explains McLuhan's life's work. If you don't understand how the media work, argued McLuhan, the result will be that, as you use media, they function as "prisons without walls," because you will dwell in them with a "subliminal and docile acceptance" that submits to their overwhelming power.

What we first have to notice, said McLuhan, in order to escape our prisons,

is this: "In the age of information, it is information itself that becomes environmental." For example, the media coverage of Obama's second inaugural is scarcely able to register it as the bizarre pageant it really was.

The Emperor is wearing no clothes, but the news cycle to which we are accustomed is pervaded by so much phoniness and unreality – for example, most people would have heard about Beyoncé but not the 55 million – that an escape from the prison of this environment requires the creation of an anti-environment. In the words of McLuhan: "new strategies of perception and attention have to be created."

Remarkably, the Pope in his message echoes McLuhan's concern with the new media "environment," making the same argument as McLuhan for the cultivation of awareness and attention: "a considered understanding of this environment is therefore the prerequisite for a significant presence there," writes the Pope.

The Pope's fearless approach to Twitter recalls a 1946 letter in which McLuhan wrote of the Catholic cultivation of perception: "My increasing awareness has been of the ease with which Catholics can penetrate and dominate secular concerns – thanks to an emotional and spiritual economy denied to the confused secular mind."

Because of the new technological environment that has been unleashed in the global theatre, McLuhan argued in that letter: "It seems obvious that we must confront the secular in its most confident manifestations
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and, with its own terms and postulates, to shock it into awareness of its confusion, its illiteracy, and the terrifying drift of its logic.”

Bringing this environment into our awareness and attention, he said, is what we need to do, in order to “educate a huge public, both Catholic and non-Catholic, to resist that swift obliteration of the human person which is going on.”

Msgr. Paul Tighe, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, spoke to a reporter about how it is no accident that the Pope’s message is being released now, right after the widely publicized opening of the Pope’s Twitter account.

The Pope’s Communications Day message, Tighe said, “is offering a kind of philosophical or theological justification for why that wasn’t just a one-off event, but it was a very important statement,” by this tweeting

Pope, “of the significance he attributes to new media.”

“There should be no lack of coherence or unity in the expression of our faith and witness to the Gospel in whatever reality we are called to live, whether physical or digital,” emphasized the Pope in his message. “When we are present to others, in any way at all, we are called to make known the love of God to the furthest ends of the earth.”

The Pope urged users of new media to “make an ef-

fort to be authentic since, in these spaces, it is not only ideas and information that are shared, but ultimately our very selves.”

Leading by example, the Pope tweeted his self Jan. 25: “I join all those marching for life from afar, and pray that political leaders will protect the unborn and promote a culture of life.”

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