

The Catholic Press

By Ethel M. Gintoft
President, Catholic Press Association

An American archbishop commented recently that 90 percent of the letters he receives expressing confusion or concern over something that has happened in the Church are from people who obtained their information from only the secular press.

This was not necessarily an indictment of the secular press, for the secular press surely does not have the background or the space to present all the details, clarifications, nuances, and contexts in which events in the Church occur.

What he was emphasizing was that it is the Catholic press that brings us all the information we need to live Gospel-committed lives both in the Church and in the world of which the Church is part; not mere headlines or paragraphs taken out of context, but full, detailed reports that lead readers to understand the implications of what is happening.

And information is only one of the Catholic press's services. Through a variety of publications, the Catholic press provides others of significant merit:

- Through commentaries the Catholic press offers guidance on how to make a Gospel-inspired response to the human, economic, political, and cultural events of the day.

- For most adult Catholics, the Catholic press is the only easily-accessible vehicle for continuing education in the faith.

- Through its feature stories about real people, the Catholic press becomes a channel of inspiration on how to live the Gospel.

- The Catholic press is probably the most effective means in the Church for the mass exchange of ideas: from hierarchy to people, from people to hierarchy, and from people to people. Through this forum, Catholics can enjoy an open dialogue that kindles new insights and nurtures concord.

- The Catholic press generates support for major Church efforts, like the Campaign for Human Development, pro-life movement, and individual diocesan fund appeals.

- The Catholic press reflects the Christian community to the world at large, communicating to that broader population the example of a Christian life guided by the Gospel of Jesus Christ and characterized by an attitude toward life that is nourished by faith, hope, and love.

"At one and the same time it (the Catholic press) will be a glass that reflects the world and a light to show it the way." (Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication)

It is difficult to envision a Church without the Catholic Press. Our information would be limited in scope and amount. Our perspective would be merely parochial. Our links with the larger Church and churches of other denominations would be weak. And our voices as a faith community would be only whispers barely heard beyond the confines of our own building.

(Ethel Gintoft is Associate Editor of the Catholic Herald Citizen, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Wisc.)

A Second Viewpoint

By Bishop Norbert F. Gaughan
Chairman, Communication Committee
U.S. Catholic Conference

The human mind has always sought to discover the forms of things. Since civilization began, we have tried to look behind appearances and learn the basic structure of reality. The outline, the blueprint, are expressions of these attempts. Artists such as Piranesi and Palladio made their architectural drawings become works of art. Their sketches survive because they delineate so well the solid lines of buildings. Blueprints, well drawn, correct to every detail, not only have served as plans for buildings but have occasionally become art pieces.

The Catholic press offers itself as "a blueprint for a better society." In the many forms of expression of that press, in Catholic magazines, newsletters, and diocesan newspapers, a rich diversity occurs. Every form offers its own approach and viewpoint. Yet each is a part of that greater design: a blueprint for a society based on the Good News of Jesus Christ, the Gospel as lived by Christians over the centuries. Catholics should rejoice there exists such a wide range of expression in the Catholic press. They should be pleased to know that the Gospel is mediated through Jesus Christ in varying ways to each generation and society. They should be willing to hear these many voices speaking, in different tongues indeed, but telling the wonderful works of God, done through the One Who is the keystone in any society — the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ.

This is what the Catholic press does best. It seeks to echo the psalmist: "Unless the Lord builds the house, he who builds it labors in vain." And the blueprint for a better society which omits a place for the keystone, Christ, is a plan to build on shifting sands which will not survive the tides and the storms of the day.

A blueprint must be true. It must reveal the weaknesses and strengths of a building. Where there is weakness, proposals must be offered for solutions. So, too, the Catholic press. It can't merely criticize; it must suggest constructive ways to overcome faults.

When Pope John Paul II was in Germany, pointing out the connection between media personnel and artists, he said this: both have to present "the images of man, the truth of man, including his history, his world and environment, as well as the social, economic, and political context."

This is where the Catholic press stands with its blueprint for a better society. First, it needs you, its readers. You have to tell your story to the world, about what living the Gospel means for you. But then you must be willing to hear the stories of other Catholics and Christians who, with you, seek to give public witness that it is the Gospel of Christ and only the Gospel that can make a better society. Only then can the blueprint move to the building of that society — a task that involves us all.

(Bishop Gaughan is auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of Greensburg, Pa. He is Honorary President of the Catholic Press Association.)

ME Marks 10th Year

The diocesan Worldwide Marriage Encounter will celebrate its 10th anniversary on Saturday, Feb. 21. The celebration will take place at St. John the Evangelist school, 2376 Ridge Rd. W., in Greece. Father Leo Klem, CSB, who is very active in Marriage Encounter, will be honored at the celebration.

Encounter began here in 1971 and offers ME weekends for couples each weekend except for major holidays.

The purpose of ME is to provide couples with good marriages an opportunity to enhance their communication with one another, according to an ME release. Anyone interested in Marriage Encounter may call (716) 334-8471 for further information.

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