

THE POPE

Catholic Weeklies Have Irreplaceable Role

Vatican City (NC) — Here is the NC translation of Pope John Paul II's Dec. 3 speech to the Italian Federation of Catholic Weeklies:

Meeting the world representatives of the world of journalism is always a cause of deep enjoyment to me. The meeting which I am having with you today, dearest directors, administrators, and editors of Italian Catholic weeklies, who have come to Rome for your seventh national convention, is a cause of such enjoyment for particular reasons.



I heartily thank the federation president for the filial remarks through which he gave expression to your sentiments, and I am grateful to him for having recalled the ideals and principles from which you draw inspiration, and — what is more important — to which you intend to remain true in your complex and so-deserving mission.

I gladly express my deep pleasure, and I desire to extend this expression of pleasure together with my affectionate thoughts to the whole family of your readers. They are at once those who benefit from and who support Catholic weeklies. It is like a big family, spread throughout the dioceses, and it embraces the whole peninsula, from the Alps to Sicily.

I well know, my dearly beloved, that in modern journalism the specific form of the Catholic weekly entails many problems and meets with grave difficulties. But I also know that, thanks to the good will, the commitment and the courage of those who dedicate themselves to it, such problems and difficulties are not enough to diminish or reduce their manifold, irreplaceable role.

Because of its particular make-up, a weekly is not called upon to be early with information. That is the qualification which befits the daily press. Rather is it called upon to give a reasoned summary of events and well-pondered evaluation of them. This specific purpose presupposes previous analysis of the news, carried out calmly and with marked critical sense, with the intention of assigning their proper importance to news events reflecting the most significant stages in the way life is going, and deserving to be accompanied with appropriate and enlightening comments.

So, editing a weekly calls for daily dedication, training in sacrifice, attentive and serene application. In a word, it calls for all those requisites which are the qualification of the hard and magnificent profession of a journalist who feels and always is conscious of his own responsibility.

However, it is comforting to observe that such a periodical character, or "weekly deadline," makes it possible to carry out better that task of instruction which is one of the objectives which ennoble the work of the pen in an outstanding way.

Articles, reports, comments, conceived in such light, and written with the clarity and vivacity of which you journalists are masters, putting the deepest ideas into forms accessible to all, little by little have their effect on minds. They call for reflection and elicit the acquiring of

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knowledge. If necessary, weeklies function as correctives to distorted news or calculated silences. At the same time they have the privilege of being able to make decisive contributions to that pondered meditation and that interior maturation which give shape to the "civilization of thought," of which modern society has immense need, exactly because it is exposed to the dangers of distraction and superficiality.

Your declaration of being Catholic enriches and elevates your mission incomparably. As the weekly is Catholic, so is the producer of it. It is exactly this title which makes your work a real, true apostolate, and, I might say, a generous priesthood.

I see with pleasure that quite a few among you are priests.

Your presence, dearest brothers, reminds me of a statement in the council's decree, "Presbyterorum ordinis" (On the Ministry and Life of Priests): "The needs of the local and the universal Church are to be eloquently described in the press." (n.11)

Nonetheless, the connection between journalism and priesthood befits you, too, dearest brethren in the laity, exactly in connection with this order of ideas. Awareness of accomplishing a "priestly" work accentuates the greatness of your profession. When practiced in transparent coherence with the sacramental character of the Christian, it corresponds to a genuine vocation.

Catholic weeklies are actually a precious instrument for nourishing "sensus ecclesiae," sense of the Church, in the people of God constantly. I would add, sense of the particular Church, of which they are a direct expression and emanation, as is not rarely to be learned from the names — at once humble and glorious — which your publications bear. I would say also: sense of the universal Church, from which a guarantee of authenticity reaches its single parts, concerning the supreme values of faith and morals.

Your weeklies are moreover so many natural and no less precious instruments of union of the Christian community with the universal Church, which is guaranteed by the charism of Peter.

From such a point of view, when appreciated with that intelligence and versatility which are marks of mass media operators, the periodical makes it possible to carry out systematic and penetrating evangelizing activity. This enters into the general picture of the Church's life, when skillfully inserted into the diocese's pastoral programs and into the content of the respective environments.

The Catholic weekly has many other tasks to which to devote itself.

It is intended to be an attentive and loving echo of the reality from which it emanates and to which it addresses itself. Such tasks become all the more arduous the scarcer financial and technical resources are.

But this very "modesty of means" brings out the value of the voluntary element in it. In a certain sense, this constitutes a richness of the first quality, if it makes more acceptable the sound of a voice which is marked out as a friendly and familiar voice even in its material poverty. Constant experience attests that penury of means is often linked with greater enthusiasm, vigorous seriousness, liberty from suffocating conditionings. These are all characteristics which must be at all times carefully safeguarded, so that the Catholic press shall be up to performing its particular service responsibly.

One of the tasks which I must say I have supremely at heart today is that of safeguarding and promoting moral values. In the present atmosphere of permissiveness — which is not rarely led to extreme excesses, by demagogic organs also, this function in the moral ethical order takes on a most lofty significance, which alone would be enough to justify the presence of the Catholic press.

Courage and vigor are conatural to the journalist's militancy. They are indispensable for going against the stream and overcoming the temptation posed by demagogic enticements. Today it is more necessary than in the past to propose, honor and defend virtue and goodness, show tirelessly how they are in harmony with the truth on man and the quality of life, whereas degradation of behavior and connivance with vice lead to subjection to various forms of painful servitude.

Finally, in the jubilee year of the redemption, I cannot fail to mention that the great themes assigned to it offer you themes of vast scope and keen interest. Think of the question of penance, of reconciliation, of peace. When handled competently and when kept close to the reality, these can offer a valid contribution to the wished for re-awakening of sensibility of consciences and raising of the level of public morality. I trust, dear brethren, that strengthening of those federative bonds, which you propose to achieve as the fruit of your assembly in Rome, may confirm and add value to your adhesion to your common ideals and increase the vitality of each of your Catholic weeklies, which are also ours.

With this heartfelt wish I call down plentiful celestial graces upon your persons, your fellow workers, and on your labors. And I impart my affectionate apostolic blessing in encouragement to you from my heart, and willingly extend it to the family of your faithful readers.

The Role of Catholic Newspapers: To Consistently Offer the Truth

By Father Norman J. Muckerman, CSSR Editor, Liguorian Magazine President, Catholic Press Association

The theme this year for Catholic Press Month is: "Be an Informative Catholic: Read Your Catholic Press."

The key word, of course, is "informed," and the emphasis that must be given to it is both apparent and appropriate. We live now in a time when information is as precious as gold, and sometimes as difficult to find, especially when we seek honest information.

We are members of a society that constantly explores new sources of information, stores more information in millions of bytes, and exposes more information on countless pages of computer printouts.

We are citizens of a nation where, for better or worse,

facts and follies of our public and even private lives can be instantly researched, recalled and revealed. Information apparently belongs to everyone.

Ours is in many respects an Orwellian world, even though the author of "Nineteen-Eighty-Four" was so often off the mark in his predictions. What should concern us more is the fact that in our society today so many of the purveyors of information, the people of the secular media, are so often off the mark in their reporting.

This is only one of the reasons that, as Time magazine announced last December, public confidence in the news media is at an all-time low.

We need not cite instances here of how poorly, inadequately, or even unjustly, religious news -- especially of Catholic issues, papal announcements or performances,

ecclesiastical events or personages -- has been presented in the non-Catholic media, just during the past year. Each instance is proof enough of how absolutely necessary it is to get out correct information, the straight story, the complete Catholic view.

More than ever, Catholics need to have access to accurate and honest reporting of what is going on in the world. Even beyond that, they need the kind of knowledge and information that will help them to put real meaning into their lives. Above all, they must learn and know the truth, the truth which Jesus proclaimed Himself to be, the kind of truth which He said would make us free.

To consistently offer this truth -- black and white and on the printed page -- and to present this Jesus as Way and Light, is the role and the glory of the Catholic press.



LECTURE SERIES - "Face to Face" features "Images of Domination in Highland Peru," by Billie Jean Isbell, associate professor of anthropology, Cornell University, 2 p.m., Saturday, March 3. Free with general museum admission. CLASSIC FILMS - "The Agony and the Ecstasy,"

starring Charlton Heston and Rex Harrison in this biography of Michelangelo, 2 and 8 p.m., Tuesday, March 6, Eisenhart Auditorium, Rochester Museum and Science Center. Free with general museum admission.

GALLERY EVENTS - "An Italian Straw Hat" (1927) directed by Rene Clair and starring Albert Prejean, Vital Geymond and Olga Tchekowa, 2 p.m., Thursday, March 1 - admission is free to non-members, free to non-members with gallery admission or with lunch at

the gallery's Women's Council's Le Cafe Francais: Costumes of La Belle Epoque from the Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Concourse Gallery, through April 15; Tour, 2 p.m., Sunday, March 4. Free to members; free to non-members with gallery admission. "Tales of Hoffman," starring Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger (1950), 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 6, auditorium; free. All events at Rochester Memorial Art Gallery. COMEDY - Thriller, "Stage Struck," pre-

sented by Shipping Dock Theatre, 8:15 p.m., Saturday, March 3 and 3 p.m., Sunday, March 4. Admission is \$7. Discount on Sunday for senior citizens, students and groups. Reservations recommended at 271-4320, ext. 411.

GENESEE - Country Antique Dealers Association sponsoring a lecture "19th Century Furniture" by Patricia Tice, curator of furnishings at Strong Museum, 7:30 p.m., Monday, March 5, Asbury Methodist Church, 1050 East Avenue. Public invited.

NFP - Natural Family Planning information sessions, sponsored by Natural Family Planning Education of Rochester, 7:30-9 p.m., Friday, March 2; Holy Trinity Church, Webster; 7:30-9 p.m., Monday, March 5, St. Mary's Hospital, east auditorium. Contact Marian LaPorta, 464-8705.

SENIOR MATINEE - "The Crystal Ball," (1943), starring Paulette Goddard and Ray Milland, 1:30 p.m., Thursday, March 1, George Eastman House.

Management Focus of College Seminar

A one-day Nazareth College seminar March 15 will focus on management skills for women. Keynote speaker will be Nancy Woodhull, managing editor/enterprise, USA Today.

Seminar leader is Ellen de Buono, retired vice president, First Federal Savings and Loan Association.

Tickets, \$68, including lunch and materials, may be purchased through the Continuing Education Office, 586-2525, ext. 400. Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. and the seminar will begin at 9 and last until 4 p.m.

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