

Terrific teams
 Elmira Notre Dame's sports teams enjoyed an unprecedented year, taking five team sectional titles. Page 12.



CATHOLIC COURIER

Diocese of Rochester Thursday, June 28, 1990 50¢ 20 pages

Books cater to many needs

By Rob Cullivan
 Staff writer

At the conclusion of his Gospel, St. John wrote: "There are also many other things that Jesus did, but if these were to be described individually, I do not think the whole world would contain the books that would be written."

St. John may have ceased writing about Christ at that point, but his readers haven't followed suit. The whole world continues to fill up with more and more books written about the Savior's works and the works, thoughts and ideas of his many and varied followers — from St. Francis of Assisi and Dorothy Day to Roy Rogers and Dale Evans.

According to industry experts, Catholic book sales make up about 5 percent of the more than \$1 billion annual revenue taken in by the Christian book industry. About 85 percent of those sales are made by Protestant evangelical authors, with the remaining 10 percent split evenly between mainline and fundamentalist Protestant writers.

About 70 percent of the Catholic books sold are marketed to the average lay Catholic reader, with the remainder aimed primarily at Catholic educators, academics and clergy, said David Came, managing editor of Servant Publications.

Blessed Mother at various points throughout the world — most notably Medjugorje, Yugoslavia — has had the indirect effect of boosting Catholic book sales throughout the United States.

"What's happened is that Marian literature has taken prominence again because of Medjugorje," commented Michael Pierce, manager of Logos Bookstore in Greece, who said he used to stock Marian literature only on a "token" basis. Today, however, "a lot of young people are getting into the Marian thing again," he said.

Mary's apparitions are also drawing new readers in general into the Catholic book market, remarked one observer.

"The people who buy Marian books might not have been regular book buyers to begin with," William Griffin, a contributing editor of *Publisher's Weekly*, told the *Courier*.

Noting that he also sits on the board of directors of a New Orleans Catholic bookstore that regularly stocks half a dozen titles about Medjugorje, Griffin remarked, jokingly: "You almost wish ... that there were more of these apparitions."

What has also appeared in recent years is a resurgence of sales of Catholic books on the lives of the saints and biographies of other Catholic personalities.

For example, Catholic Digest Book Club has been selling more books on such figures as the late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen and author G. K. Chesterton, according to Jean B. Altman, book club manager.

Another area of current interest among Catholic readers lies in the fields of psychology and spirituality. Catholics, like their Protestant brethren, want to know how to combine the insights of psychology with the spiritual precepts handed down by their church, several members of the book industry observed.

Twelve-step programs, used to overcome addictions to such conditions as alcoholism and overeating, have become the subjects of much Catholic and Protestant literature. The 12 steps force people to admit that they are powerless, and that only by turning over their wills to a higher power can people be restored to sanity.

Alcoholics Anonymous can be credited for inspiring the recent slew of 12-step books examining addiction in a spiritual context, said Father David Toolan, associate editor at *America*, which operates the Catholic Book Club.

"AA never gives out (membership) figures," Father Toolan said, "(but) they're probably one of the most powerful spiritual movements in the country today."

Indeed, Servant Publications devoted the first two pages of its most recent catalog to books on overcoming emotional pain and addictions.

Personalizing such struggles can make good copy, too, many experts noted. Autobiography combined with painfully gained spiritual insight to form the basis of a triumphal book called *The Marilyn Krammar Story: Joy Comes in the Morning*, the autobiography of the California-based Catholic evangelist.

Krammar's promotional blurb for the book said that as an infant she had struggled to survive a deadly tumor, and as an adult watched her marriage collapse and her son nearly die from drug abuse. "Yet through it all, she knew that joy comes in the morning," the promotional copy said.

Many readers seek guidance on overcoming life's woes and challenges with and through God, one



Catholic publishing expert noted.

"Our ideal is to write and publish for the ordinary person to help their Christian life grow," said Father David Polek, director of the book and pamphlet department of Liguori Publications, which operates three other departments.

Father Polek noted that Liguori's best-selling books tend to be ones concentrating on the average Catholic's personal struggles and need for answers to faith questions. For example, Liguori plans to stock a book on Catholic social-justice teachings, but he said he doubted it would be a big hit with readers.

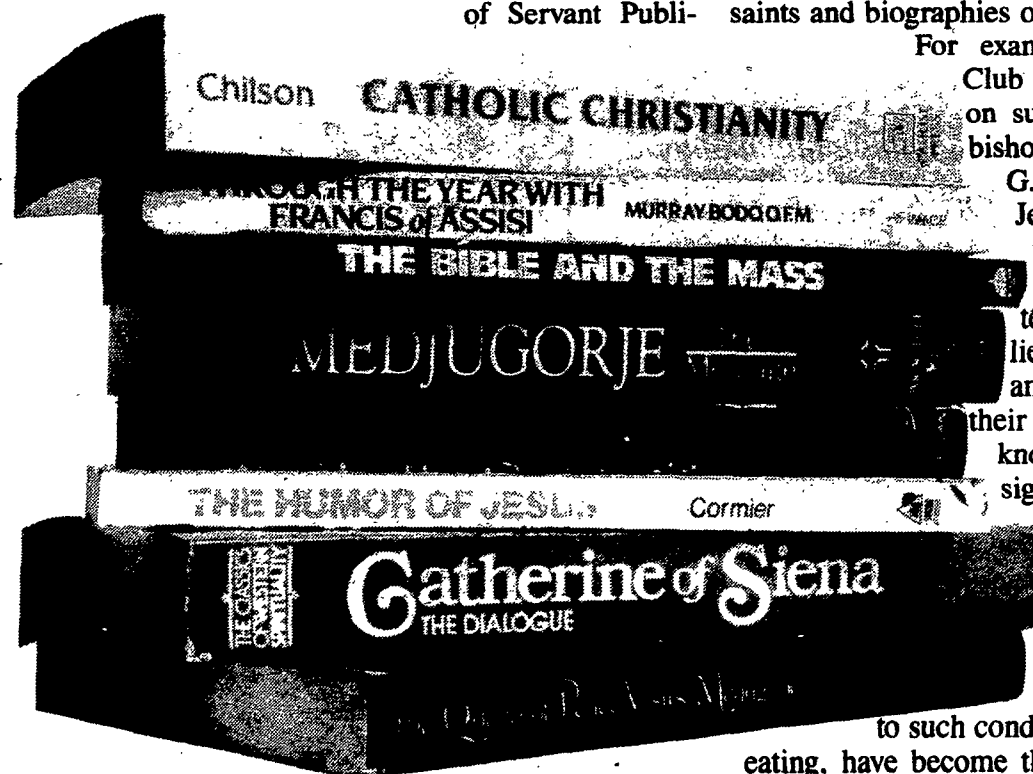
"Our church is not too tuned into social justice," he said. "It's tuned into how to raise your kids without killing them."

Liguori's most recent catalog amplifies the priest's point. The listings include such titles as *Handbook for Single Parents*, and several books and videotapes on personal meditation and prayer.

The desire for personal answers to spiritual questions reflects a trend that became prevalent over the last decade, noted several industry observers. U.S. Christianity — both Protestant and Catholic — experienced a reaction to the endless questioning of religion in the previous decades, and that swing back toward tradition was reflected in the religious literature publishers currently stock.

"In the '60s and '70s, the liberal theologians were kind of on top of the hill," Father Toolan said. "They were putting out stuff that was mainly revisionary and critical of church teaching ... I think at a certain point, even the liberals got a little tired of that."

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cations based in Ann Arbor, Mich. Came's company targets both Catholic and Protestant readers.

Industry experts say the average lay Catholic reader is more often than not a middle-aged woman who learns about potential buys through Catholic book clubs and magazines. Word of mouth and parish book racks also help inform readers about current Catholic literature.

Came told the *Catholic Courier* that women tend to buy such literature more often than men simply because "more women go to church than men." He also noted that "a lot of youth have been leaving the Catholic Church," which explains why older people generally buy Catholic literature.

Younger Catholics often leave the church in their late teens and come back when they get married and have children, noted John Sprague, vice president of the Thomas More Association, which operates a Catholic book club. Young adults may buy Catholic literature when they return to the church, but even then they have been exposed to a popular culture that no longer encourages reading, he told the *Courier* in a phone interview from his Chicago office.

"I think it's very difficult to reach younger Catholics," Sprague said. "I think they're more oriented ... to the TV, movie and video industry ..."

Interestingly, books about one Christian figure do seem to be attracting a significant number of young readers these days. The reported appearances of the

