

Debate continues over purpose of the Catholic press

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States and abroad. "If there are Catholics on both sides of an issue, you need to present that. It's a tough call, but the Gospel is supposedly the Good News and not all the news in the Gospel is good — like Peter denying Christ three times."

The obligation to report unpleasant news also was emphasized by Christopher Gunty, editor of *The Catholic Sun* in Phoenix, Ariz. "I believe if you want to be a newspaper, then it should be a newspaper," Gunty told the *Courier*. It can't just be a house organ (bulletin-style publication), printing nice things."

One weakness often cited about Catholic newspapers that publish only "nice things" is that they fail to present material that would encourage readers to reflect on their faith in the light of current events.

According to Bishop Matthew H. Clark, president and publisher of the *Catholic Courier*, it is the purpose of Catholic newspapers to "engage the community in discussion; to test, probe and challenge."

Thus, Bishop Clark said, it isn't necessarily bad for criticism of the church to reach the *Courier's* pages.

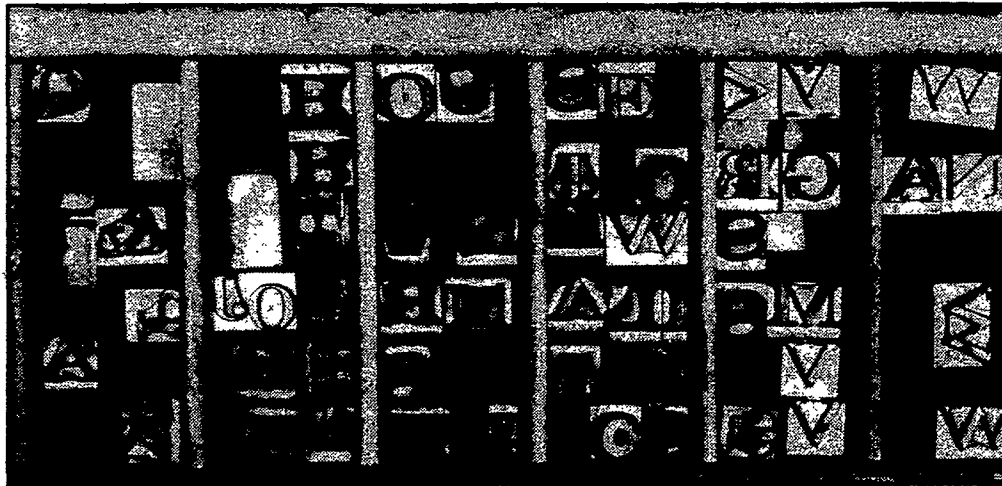
"I read in another paper, which I won't name, an editorial policy stating that it won't print any letters to the editor critical of the bishop or public church figures," Bishop Clark related. "I didn't think that was a healthy kind of policy to have. ... I don't endorse personal attacks, but we should be open to criticism."

Yet when editors attempt to incorporate their own philosophies into Catholic newspapers, they do so realizing that they might be overruled at any time by their publishers.

"The bishop has a couple of roles he needs to think about," Gunty acknowledged. "As a publisher, he can't do anything he wouldn't do as a bishop." "There are parallels with the secular press about the role of the publisher," Lorscheid concurred. "If the bishop is the publisher, then he has a certain responsibility to carry out, which is the mission of the church as he sees it."

Even the editors of various Catholic newspapers differ on their perceptions of journalistic freedom within the Catholic press.

Gunty, for one, said he believes it is



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor
This tray of handset letter type has been rearranged to spell several words associated with journalism. The tray was photographed at the Rochester Institute of Technology's Typography Lab.

not "censorship" for a bishop-publisher to forbid the publication of a certain story in his diocesan newspaper. "He's the publisher, and if I acknowledge that, it makes life a lot easier," he remarked.

Joe Michael Feist, editor and associate publisher of *The Texas Catholic* in Dallas, Texas, takes a different view.

"The bishop is not a true publisher; he's a publisher in name only. It's not like a secular newspaper where a bishop is involved in day-to-day operations," said Feist, who, for that reason, believes it is censorship for a bishop to ban publication of a story.

Feist served on a five-person CPA subcommittee that developed a definition of censorship. That definition, which was forwarded to Zyskowski's committee, will be presented at the CPA convention.

According to the subcommittee, censorship is:

The interruption of usual editorial and publishing process by the intrusion of non-editorial persons to forbid or suppress the publication of articles, facts, information or opinions not previously determined as foreign to the character and nature of a particular publication, or contrary to its announced goals, purposes and policies, or whose publication would be contrary to moral or ethical principles.

Suppression of publication can be by physical or moral coercion, a threat of economic retribution or loss of position.

Feist said he has not experienced recurring situations of this sort in Dallas with his publisher, Bishop Charles

Grahmann. "I must say, to his credit, there was only one time in two years that he said not to run a story."

Yet Feist charged that "there are some papers where the bishop is writing the headlines and saying where his picture's going to go on the page."

One such scenario was described by a first-person article in the June 20, 1986 issue of the *National Catholic Reporter*. The article's author was Edgar Miller, former editor of the *Catholic Standard* newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.

In the article, Miller said he was hired to transform the *Standard* from a house organ into one that strove for complete, unbiased reporting. But three years later, a conflict with then-Archbishop James A. Hickey caused Miller to be fired.

According to Miller's article, circulation and advertising revenue rose dramatically during his tenure as editor of the *Standard*. Yet, he wrote, toward the end of his employment there, he was subjected to "orders barring publication of certain stories — stories that in some cases had not even occurred."

"I do not, nor have I ever, disputed the right of the archbishop or any other publisher to determine what goes into his newspaper," Miller wrote. "However, this prior blanket censor-

ship violated the policy that had been established before I came to the paper and that had been in effect for three years."

Last year, the bishop of San Diego, Calif., exercised his right to determine the content of his diocesan newspaper by making sweeping changes.

The *Southern Cross* got a new look in September after Bishop Robert Brom halved the paper's eight-person staff and hired a new editor as well as an assistant publisher.

"We took an analysis and decided we didn't like (the paper)," remarked Father Chuck Fuld, the *Southern Cross* assistant publisher who also serves as director of communications for the Diocese of San Diego. "Now it's more readable, graphic and punchy, and much more diverse. We tend to go after issues, rather than a chronology of what the bishop does."

Despite the developments in Washington and San Diego, Daniel Medinger, editor and chief executive officer of the *The Catholic Review* in Baltimore, Md., said bishops generally decline to exercise their rights as publishers to become actively involved in their newspapers.

"It's my opinion that there's more censorship in the secular press than in the Catholic press," Medinger remarked. "A bishop is a publisher, but most of them don't exercise that right. They leave it up to the editor."

Regardless of who makes the final editorial judgment, open communication between the editor and publisher seems to result in the greatest benefit to diocesan newspapers.

"When I came to the *Catholic Sun* (in 1985), I said that I must have access to the bishop. And I got that," said Gunty.

"Editors need to be talking on an equal plane with their bishops," Zyskowski agreed.

"The publisher and editor must not only be able to understand each other, but also what's healthy for the people," said Lorscheid.

Obituaries

Sr. Martina Marie Wahl, SSJ, 96, founding principal of St. Anne's

Sister Martina Marie Wahl, SSJ, who served as the first principal of St. Anne's School in Rochester, died Saturday, Feb. 1, 1992, at the Sisters of St. Joseph Convent Infirmary in Pittsford. She was 96.

Monsignor William H. Shannon celebrated a Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Martina Marie at the SSJ motherhouse, 4095 East Ave., on Feb. 4. Monsignor Shannon was assisted by her brother, Father Raymond J. Wahl, who lives at St. Alphonsus rectory in Auburn.

A Rochester native, Sister Martina Marie entered the Sisters of St. Joseph from St. Boniface Parish in 1915. After graduating from Nazareth Academy, she earned a state life teaching certificate from Nazareth Normal School. Sister Martina Marie later earned a bachelor's degree in English and science from Canisius College in Buffalo, and a master's degree in biology and German from St. Bonaventure University in Olean.

Sister Martina Marie's teaching career began at Rochester's St. Francis

Xavier School in 1916. From 1919-23, she taught at Nazareth Grammar School, which was then part of Nazareth Academy. She again taught at Nazareth Academy from 1923-49 and 1953-74.

In 1949, Sister Martina Marie became the first principal of St. Anne's School in Rochester. She served as the school's principal and eighth-grade teacher until 1953.

Sister Martina Marie retired from active teaching in 1974. She moved to the Sisters of St. Joseph Convent Infirmary in 1978.

According to a release from the Sisters of St. Joseph, "Sister Martina Marie was an excellent teacher, a devoted friend and a very thoughtful woman. For some years she was moderator of the Mission Committee at Nazareth Academy and inspired a love for the missions in students."

In addition to Father Wahl, Sister Martina Marie is survived by another brother, Robert Wahl of Rochester; a sister, Marcella Wahl, of Rochester; as well as several nieces and nephews.



R.S.V.P.

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Dear Sr. Edward:
Please contact me with additional information about planning a visit to your Community.
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R-NY

"I will obey God anywhere, at any time, with courage!"
Rose Hawthorne, Foundress.