

COLUMNS

Internet, not print, reaches younger readers

Past surveys have indicated that the readership of diocesan newspapers consists largely of Catholics in their late 50s, 60s and 70s. For practical purposes, the Catholic press does not reach Catholics in their 20s, 30s, and 40s, much less those in their teens.

A recent study conducted by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press suggests that this phenomenon is not peculiar to the Catholic press. The survey found that although more than half of those over 50 had read the previous day's secular newspaper, less than a third of those under 30 had done so.

Even more troubling to news organizations were the findings that only 31 percent of young adults enjoy keeping up with the news, and that almost half of that group go online once a week for news.

No post-World War II development had a more far-reaching effect on the news gathering habits of Americans than the sudden proliferation of the television set. From 1950 to 1955 alone, the percentage of homes with television sets jumped from under 10 percent to 67 percent.

With television, came evening news programs, and with them the eventual demise of afternoon newspapers and the decline of pictorial news magazines.

Cable television appeared 30 years later,



essays in theology

BY FATHER RICHARD P. MCBRIEN

cutting into the networks' share of the viewing audience. Today, 20 years after the advent of CNN, the Internet is encroaching upon the markets of all other news outlets, including cable television itself.

The Pew survey is the first to document the effect of online news on traditional news audiences. One key statistic of the study is that, while 32 percent of college graduates under the age of 50 go online for news every day, only 20 percent of this group regularly watch the evening news.

According to a recent front-page report in *The Boston Globe* (6/12/00), analysts regard the Pew numbers as evidence of "the segmentation of the old mass media audience and of the rapidly shifting sands beneath the information industry."

The appearance of the computer in American homes almost matches the rate

at which television sets proliferated 50 years ago. The Pew study reports that 59 percent of today's homes have computers, nearly double that of 1994.

Since 1994, the number in the survey who had watched television news the previous day dropped 20 percent, while those regularly watching a nightly network news program declined 50 percent.

Meanwhile, the percentage of those going online for news at least once a week increased in the past two years from 20 percent to 33 percent, while those who did so on a daily basis increased from six percent to 15 percent. This segment of the population consists largely — and disproportionately — of well-educated younger men.

Because many under-50 college graduates work until 8 o'clock at night, "What's really happening to the nightly news," an industry analyst states, "is it's turning into a demographic ghetto for older people."

A recent story in *The New York Times* (6/19/00) indicates how much more difficult it is for traditional media outlets to reach younger viewers and readers. Until now, for example, the CBS television network has had the oldest viewing audience of any of the major networks. However, its new hit series, "Survivor," about survival and relationships on a tropical island, has stunned the television industry by gener-

ating for CBS the kind of ratings with young viewers that normally are associated with shows on the Fox network or ABC.

Young viewers constitute a cherished market for advertisers, and bring the networks premium prices for commercials. To promote its new show among younger people, CBS bought time on cable channels like MTV and Comedy Central and on rock radio stations. As did Willie Sutton, CBS went where the money is.

The point of this week's column, subtle though it may seem, is that the Catholic press, and diocesan weeklies in particular, are not going to attract a younger readership simply by adding some youth pages or running more photos of young people.

Like their peers in society at large, young Catholics are being drawn more to the electronic than to the print media, and increasingly to the Internet over all else. Younger Catholics who don't read their local newspapers or watch the nightly news on television are even less likely to pick up their diocesan newspaper.

Efforts to reach younger Catholics cannot ignore the Internet. Ask your sons and daughters — or your grandchildren! — how it might be done.

•••

Father McBrien is a professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

The bread of life changes us into 'other Christs'

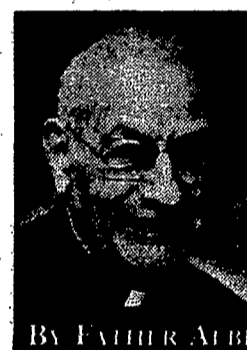
19th Sunday of the Year (Aug. 13): (R3) John 6:41-51; (R1) 1 Kings 19:4-8; (R2) Ephesians 4:30-5:2.

One of America's best loved comedians, Jack Benny, so carefully cultivated the image of being a tight-wad that everyone assumed it was real. Benny did nothing to discourage it, because it gave him a ready device for comedy.

Once, having lunch with Edgar Bergen of "Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy" fame, Benny asked for the check. The waiter, feigning surprise, said, "Mr. Benny, I'm surprised to hear you ask for the check."

"So am I," Benny said. "That's the last time I'll ever eat with a ventriloquist."

Once people think they have you figured out, it is hard to change their perception. Jesus ran into this. He lived in a small town, in a small country. People knew his mother and Joseph. They may have even known him as a carpenter. He didn't begin his public ministry until he was 30, working most of his adult life in a carpenter shop. Can you not imagine how people responded when he proclaimed himself to be the one spoken of by the prophets, claiming "I am the living bread come down from heaven?" They murmured, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph? Don't we know his father and



a word for sunday

BY FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

mother? How can he claim to have come down from heaven?"

Don't we often categorize people, putting them in a box? We know where they come from, we know who their parents are, we know where they went to school. We make all kinds of assumptions. And so often we are wrong as were so many about Jesus.

Many years ago, in New Mexico, a Mrs. Maria Rubio was rolling out tortillas when she saw the face of Jesus on a tortilla. The skillet had burned a perfect representation of a slender, bearded face onto the surface of the bread. Mrs. Rubio felt that this was Jesus, and she convinced a priest to bless the piece of bread. She built a shrine around it, quitting her job to devote all her time to tending the tortilla shrine.

People stopped by to look at it, or to pray in front of it. Mrs. Rubio said that God had come into her life through this tortilla.

All of us yearn to see God. We yearn to know that God is with us, that God knows us, understand us, heals us.

Yet we know God comes into our life through the most holy Eucharist. The Blessed Sacrament is Jesus Christ — really, truly, and substantially present among us. As the bread we eat becomes one with us, nourishes us and gives us strength, so the "bread" we receive in Holy Communion not only becomes one with us but nourishes us and, little by little, changes us into other Christs. "You will not change Me into thee," Augustine has Jesus say, "but thou wilt be changed into Me."

Last August King Abdullah of Jordan wanted feedback from the average Jordanian citizen. He disguised himself as a common citizen and roamed the streets as a taxi driver. The King chatted with citizens from all walks of life and learned about their thoughts and desires.

Jesus walked the earth in disguise. Those who did not know him intimately could not accept him. They grumbled, fell away. But a few believed. They followed him, even to the cross. It was to them the risen Christ appeared. They heard his

words. They saw the things he did. They knew the full force of his personality, and they testified to us that he can be believed when he says, "I am the bread of life. ... If anyone eats this bread, he shall live forever." Mrs. Rubio saw Jesus on a tortilla. That might strike us as silly, but it is much sadder to realize that many people have never seen Jesus at all. Yet he is on our altars.

•••

Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, August 14
Ezekiel 1:2-5, 24-28; Matthew 17:22-27

Tuesday, August 15
Revelation 11:19, 12:1-6, 10;
1 Corinthians 15:20-27; Luke 1:39-56

Wednesday, August 16
Ezekiel 9:1-7, 10:18-22; Matthew 18:15-20

Thursday, August 17
Ezekiel 12:1-12; Matthew 18:21-19:1

Friday, August 18
Ezekiel 16:1-15, 60, 63 or Ezekiel 16:59-63;
Matthew 19:3-12

Saturday, August 19
Ezekiel 18:1-10, 13, 30-32; Matthew 19:13-15

MR. DOMINICS AT THE LAKE

Smoke-free, air-conditioned dining room

(off street parking available)

Delicious appetizers, soups, veal dishes, vegetarian, chicken, fish, and homemade pasta

10% Senior Discount

Lunch: Tues.-Fri. 11-2

Dinners Daily from 4-9 p.m.

4699 Lake Ave.
(716) 865-4630

HART MONUMENT COMPANY

Since 1856

Monuments, Markers and Cemetery Lettering

2301 Dewey Avenue
(OPPOSITE HOLY SEPULCHRE CEMETERY)
(716) 865-6746

Gregorian Chant Mass

on the Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary

sung by the Schola Feminarum
(Women's Chant Group)

Colleen Liggett, conductor

Tuesday, 15 August 2000, at 7:30 pm

Saint Anne Church

1600 Mt. Hope Avenue, Rochester, New York