Opinion



by Jamie Manson

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The $5,000 challenge grant has been met! Because of your generosity, our anonymous $5,000 challenge grant has been matched. Thanks to all of you who have made a donation or joined our membership program during this Spring Fund Drive. You doubled your money and put us within reach of our $100,000 goal. Help bring this drive to a successful close.

The matching challenge grant for today was in memory of Tim Unsworth, the Chicago-based columnist who wrote for NCR from 1981 to 2006. The obituary NCR ran in 2008 began like this: "Tim Unsworth, a longtime columnist for NCR known for his wit and keen observation of how ordinary Catholics lived their faith in the pews and the streets, died April 30 after a long illness. He was 78."

*Read the **full obituary here**. Then NCR Vatican correspondent John L. Allen Jr offered **this remembrance of Unsworth in 2008** and NCR publisher Tom Fox wrote this on **the first anniversary of Unsworth death** in 2009.*

*Here's **a sampling of Unsworth's columns**.*

"What would we do without NCR?" It's a question I hear often when I'm out on the road. It's a question that demonstrates our readers' awareness of the unique contribution that NCR makes to landscape of the Catholic media.

Because NCR is an independent and lay-led publication, its writers have unparalleled freedom to challenge the injustices of the institutional church that might otherwise go unquestioned and the injustices of society that might otherwise go unreported, such as Heidi Schlumpf's latest investigations into right-wing funding of the Catholic youth program FOCUS. Work of that depth requires not only skilled reporting, but also funding to support our reporters' travel and lodging expenses — costs that add up quickly.

NCR also remains committed to having a full-time Vatican correspondent so that our readers always have access to all that goes on in Rome. NCR's presence in Vatican City allows us to be the first to hear breaking news from a pope and a church with a vast, global impact. But being privy to this kind of news requires financial support from our readers, who we know value the unique expertise and insight that we bring to reporting on and analyzing stories from the Vatican.

NCR is no less vital to the world beyond the church. In its commitment to highlighting the social servants and community activists who give their lives to doing work that makes real the Catholic doctrines on social justice, spirituality and the primacy of conscience, NCR offers a fuller picture of who and what the church is outside of the walls of the institution.

One of NCR's most significant contributions to the Catholic media is its continued commitment to spotlighting the voices of those on the margins of our church and society. Whether they are the voices of the poor, or black or Latinx Catholics, or feminists, or LGBT persons, NCR is singular among other Catholic media outlets for the range of voices it includes in its reporting and its commentary.

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Not all publications that are independent can boast this kind of diversity. For nearly a decade, I have been proud to contribute to a news organization that courageously and consistently takes full advantage of this opportunity.

The truth is, no other Catholic publication reflects the thoughts and opinions of Catholics in the United States the way NCR does. Countless studies have suggested that the majority of Catholics in the U.S. support the ordination of women and married men, reproductive rights for women, and marriage for same-sex couples. Only NCR is bold and visionary enough to offer reporting and commentary that gives depth and theological weight to the views of so many members of our church — views that the hierarchy would rather deny or ignore.

NCR's voice is your voice in the Catholic media. Please support us today so that we can continue to speak prophetically and independently about the issues in our church that matter most to you.

[Jamie Manson is NCR book review editor, and she writes the column Grace at the Margins. She received her Master of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School, where she studied Catholic theology and sexual ethics. Her email address is jmanson@ncronline.org.]

This story appears in the **Spring Fund Drive 2018** feature series. View the full series.