Culture



by Tom Roberts

View Author Profile
troberts@ncronline.org

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It is a pleasure to announce that National Catholic Reporter was named "best national newspaper" by the Catholic Press Association in its 2019 awards competition, a pleasure heightened by the assessment of the judges that the publication fosters "worthwhile discussions" among our readers. The citation was one of 15 received in the newspaper awards category for reporting, commentary and use of graphics.

"I was impressed that the courage of the writers and editors seemed to fuel the courage of the readers of this publication, many of whom took bold stances in letters to the editor," wrote one of the judges. "Don’t read me wrong: I'm not saying that this is an intentionally controversial, provocative publication. I am saying that the writers ask good questions, tackle relevant issues, and engage readers in worthwhile discussions."

Peter Feuerherd, recently appointed news editor, won first place for best in-depth news/special reporting for his story, "No 'church of nice' for Church Militant," a piece the judge described as "Great investigative reporting. The writing held me to the end. Told me about a segment of the 'culture wars' that has received scant attention."

NCR's Vatican correspondent, Joshua McElwee, won multiple awards. He and NCR national correspondent Heidi Schlumpf received a first place award in the category of best news writing on a national or international event for their report headlined: " 'Cede authority': Cardinal Cupich has clear idea of what bishops must do." According to the judges: "A very complex topic is clearly displayed to the readers as a picture is painted through the eyes of Bishop Cupich." It was the fifth consecutive year that McElwee has won or co-won in this category.

NCR also took second and third place in that category: staff writer Brian Roewe was awarded second place for "Questions abound about SNAP's future," which judges described as "vibrant writing" about "complex workings and problems of a group working for social justice." Bertelsen intern Maria Benevento took third place for the story "Latinos could transform faith's role in U.S. politics." Remarked the judges: "The issues of politics and faith are handled very nicely. Great interviews make the article sing."

McElwee received a second place in the Gerard E. Sherry Award for analysis and background writing for "Legal moves signal new phase in abuse crisis." The judges described it as "Excellent work" and "Textbook roundup reporting. … A perfect snapshot of where gathered momentum becomes a societal wave."

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He also earned a second placed for best coverage of a papal trip for " 'Pain and shame': Francis in Chile."

McElwee and Cindy Wooden, Rome bureau chief for Catholic News Service won first place in the books awards under popular presentation of the Catholic faith for *A Pope Francis Lexicon,* a book of essays they edited reflecting on the words of Francis.

Schlumpf won first place for best investigative news writing for "A fight for this generation"; "Big money, conservative connections"; and "FOCUS plans to graduate to parishes with 'spiritual multiplication.' " "Writer carefully isolates and emphasizes key elements in the coverage. A steady writing hand leads the reader through this movement that is having serious effects on young Catholics," wrote the judges.

Roewe, who specializes in environmental reporting, also won two other second place awards, one for reporting on care for God's creation. The story, "Natural connections

," details a project in Wisconsin which, the judges wrote, "shows how reverence for nature can inspire young people's concern for environmental stewardship." The second award was for a personality profile, "Who is Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò?" The judges wrote: "A difficult article that was well and thoroughly researched."

Menachem Wecker, a Washington-based freelancer who writes regularly for NCR on art and culture, won first place for "Two new art exhibits address earthly spirituality ."

NCR also won first place for editorial on a national or international issue. The editorial, "Let us choose painful path of purification," commenting on the sex abuse scandal, demonstrated "a great depth of knowledge on one of the most relevant issues of our time," wrote the judges. "While no easy answers are given, a plan is clearly laid out that readers can take back to their own churches."

A third place award for coverage of "Violence in our Communities" was given to a series of articles, including Dawn Araujo-Hawkins' GSR story on combatting racism in Cincinnati; coverage of the March for Our Lives by GSR's Dan Stockman, Washington freelancer Julie Bourbon, as well as Roewe and Benevento; and NCR editors for an editorial accompanying the package on gun violence.

Long-time NCR contributor Patricia Lefevere won third place for "Witnesses and Watchmen," a feature connecting the 50th anniversary of the death of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. with Thomas Merton and contemporary issues.

NCR Art Director Toni-Ann Ortiz won a first place award for graphic design illustrating "Witnesses and Watchmen."

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This is awards season in the journalism world and a number of reporters and writers for NCR and Global Sisters Report have been named finalists in the 2019 Religion News Association Awards for Religion Reporting Excellence.

The RNA contest is open to a much broader range of writers and publications including major general newspapers such as The New York Times and The Washington Post, as well as smaller daily newspapers and outlets focusing on religion.

Among those named finalists are Schlumpf (in two categories), Roewe, and columnist Jamie Manson for NCR; and Melanie Lidman, Elisabeth Auvillain, Elizabeth Eisenstadt Evans, and Chris Herlinger, for GSR. The awards will be announced during RNA's September conference in Las Vegas.

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