Culture



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Editor's note: *This story has been updated to include information about J.D. Flynn.*

Two top editors at the EWTN-owned Catholic News Agency are leaving effective Dec. 31, in a move that could signal further chaos inside one of the largest media empires covering the Catholic Church.*

Ed Condon, the Washington bureau chief of Catholic News Agency, confirmed to NCR that Dec. 31 would be his last day on the job and that he was leaving on his own terms. He declined to offer further reasons for his departure.

J.D. Flynn, the editor-in-chief of Catholic News Agency, declined to provide comment on Condon's departure. When asked whether he would remain in his own post, Flynn also declined to comment.

In a tweet one hour after the publication of NCR's story, Flynn confirmed that Dec. 31 would mark his last day on the job.

"The entire team at CNA [Catholic News Agency] is a crack outfit, all of whom enjoy my full confidence and professional esteem," Condon told NCR. On Twitter, Flynn

said he made the decision "a few weeks ago for personal and family reasons."

News of Condon's and Flynn's departure comes just one day after the Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) announced a number of changes to its television and radio programming, including the ouster of Gloria Purvis, an outspoken champion of racial justice and host of the "Morning Glory" radio show. NCR previously confirmed with Purvis that she was informed of the immediate cancellation of her show on Dec. 30 and was not provided further explanation.

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The Catholic News Agency was founded in 2004 and bills itself as "one of the fastest-growing Catholic news providers in the world," through its offering of free content to media providers. In 2014, it was acquired by EWTN, the conservative Catholic media conglomerate, which also owns the National Catholic Register newspaper.

EWTN, which similarly boasts of being "the largest religion-news organization in the world," has come under fire in recent years for its regular criticism of Pope Francis from a number of its regular hosts and guests. Most recently, in a Dec. 22 article in Commonweal magazine, veteran religion journalist Paul Moses offered a stinging indictment of both EWTN and the Catholic News Agency's journalistic standards.

The latest changes to the leadership of Catholic News Agency come less than two years after a major shake-up at EWTN's nightly television news show, which led to the departure of its lead anchor and managing editor. In July 2019, NCR published a four-part series examining EWTN's connections to Republican politicians and the Trump White House, to wealthy conservative Catholic donors and to some of the most public anti-Francis forces in the Catholic world.

Condon (along with Flynn) is a trained canon lawyer, and in a recent podcast Condon revealed he continued to actively practice canon law. Flynn, who hired Condon, was named as the editor-in-chief effective Aug. 1, 2017. He had previously served as communications director for the Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, and chancellor of the Denver Archdiocese.

Michael Warsaw, chief operating officer and chair of the EWTN board, did not immediately respond, through a spokesman, to NCR's request for comment.

** The description of EWTN has been clarified.*

Editor's Note: This story was updated at 2:57 p.m. Dec. 31 to include the departure of J.D. Flynn.