NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER
Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (https://www.ncronline.org)

# On Tim Russert's Anniversary

Sr. Rose Pacatte | Jun. 13, 2009 NCR Today

Today, June 13, is the first anniversary of Tim Russert?s unexpected death. He was 58 years old. Time magazine called him one of the most 100 influential people in the world. I watched him every Sunday morning for 12 years except when I was out of the country. Russert?s ?Meet the Press? was a great way to be part of the public debate, even if confined at times to the convent refectory.

It?s just not the same without you, Mr. Russert. I hope you are resting in peace, but I bet not too much!

Here is my tribute that I wrote that sad day:

My Tribute to Tim Russert:
Tim Russert?s Sunday morning Academy of Public Affairs
By Rose Pacatte, FSP June 13, 2008

I haven?t missed Meet the Press in 12 years. After Mass it is an essential part of my Sunday morning ritual. I am listening to MSNBC?s ongoing coverage of Tim Russert?s sudden death today, June 13, as I am working. I have this great sense of loss, as if a family member has suddenly gone to heaven without warning.

Tim Russert?s passing has touched me deeply. As a Daughter of St. Paul, with our mission of evangelization with communications media, I have had an enduring interest in discovering integrity in journalism, and civility. Tim Russert lived these values.

The 1971 **Vatican document Communio et progressio** **[1]**spoke about the necessity for people to have access to information so that they can take an active part in democracy:

?If public opinion is to be formed in a proper manner, it is necessary that, right from the start, the public be given free access both to the sources and channels of information and be allowed freely to express its own views. Freedom of opinion and the right to be informed go hand in hand.? (para. 33)

Tim?s journalistic style seemed to have been framed by this teaching because he went after truth, transparency, and accountability in those in public service and/or the public forum.

As Andrea Mitchell said today, on MSNBC?c coverage of Tim Russert?s death, ?Tim set the gold standard? for political journalism and analysis as the moderator of Meet the Press and NBC?s Washington Bureau Chief. Peggy Noonan, and others, commented beautifully on how Tim was a Catholic in the public forum with obvious joy ? and without apology. I think it was Howard Fineman of Newsweek that said that if he ever thought of becoming a Catholic, Tim Russert would be the one he would follow into the Church. Cardinal John Foley, with whom Tim and his family had lunch a few days ago in Rome, concurred with the above and more.

Someone just called Tim ?the great explanator.? Senator Joe Libermann called him ?The explainer-in-chief.?

With so much facility, and with dogged persistence, he got the facts and got at them for our information. He respected his guests but to the viewer?s benefit, he did not tolerate fools; he questioned them. What I most appreciated about Tim Russert?s style was that his show was not about him; he was not about his own celebrity. He let his guests speak and he drew them out. He challenged them with their own words but never ?talked over? them like so many radio and television commentators do - to my great annoyance.

As a media education specialist I know that the news industry has agendas and perspectives, that ideology and ratings drive the business. So over my years at the Sunday Morning Tim Russert Academy of Public Affairs I tried out other Sunday morning news shows to compare them with Meet the Press, to make sure I was getting as complete a picture of our political reality as possible. But none reached the level of objectivity that Tim achieved. Even though Tim?s persistence or insistence that his guests pronounce on a hypothetical situation could sometimes push the limit, I think Tim?s integrity and professionalism ultimately won the day because he made people think. His technique of meaningful and civil inquiry taught me to think beyond the limits of information status quo. For Tim Russert there never was a status quo he couldn?t disturb.

A nun friend of mine sent me an email today saying, ?Tim Russert was the best. Such an interviewer; a good man; a good Catholic.?

A few years ago the Catholic Academy for Communication Arts Professionals honored Tim Russert with a Gabriel Award for Personal Achievement. In his acceptance speech Tim talked about being a Catholic, meeting Pope John Paul II, and bringing The Today Show to the Vatican.

Tim Russert loved his family, his home town of Buffalo, New York, the Buffalo Bills, the nuns who taught him and his Catholic Jesuit education. How proud the Catholic community can be of this magnificent son. He has set the bar for people of good will everywhere who want to be political journalists. He was a mentor to his colleagues, a gentleman journalist who loved and lived his job with grace. A role model for Catholics who want to make a difference and contribute to the common good. Information is power and Tim empowered us, the regular people out there, by pursuing truth. Above all, he was who he said he was. May it be the same for all of us.

Someone once said that a person doesn't die until they have nothing left to learn.

We offer our prayers for the repose of Tim's soul, and that the Lord may console his loved ones at this sad time.

---

**Source URL (retrieved on *01/23/2017 - 01:48*):** https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/tim-russerts-anniversary

**Links:**
[1] http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_23051971_communio_en.html