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Catholic publisher 'redefining strategy'

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NCR Today

Another Catholic publishing house has announced changes in its business in response to the economic crisis, which has hit many already-struggling religious publishers especially hard. Earlier this month, NCR reported that Our Sunday Visitor had acquired Harcourt Religion Publishers. Now St. Anthony Messenger Press has announced that it is "redefining its strategy" and reducing staffing, including closing its Cincinnati telemarketing center, offering early retirement to some employees and abandoning its independent sales force. At least 40 positions, many of them part-time, will be eliminated.

"Across the country, we have witnessed the decline of secular and religious newspapers and the diversification of traditional publishers," Franciscan Father Dan Kroger, CEO and publisher, said in a statement. The traditional Catholic audience and subscriber base is shrinking, and younger readers are moving from print to electronic sources of information, he added.

Kroger said three factors are driving the changes:

- changes in religious affiliation and commitment among American Catholics,
- changes in the way Catholic Church professionals use print and electronic resources,
- and the economic crisis that has resulted not only in increased costs but in significant changes in the buying habits of Catholic individuals and institutions.

St. Anthony Messenger Press, which is sponsored by the Franciscan Friars of St. John the Baptist Province, produces "St. Anthony Messenger," a monthly magazine with a circulation of 250,000; "Catholic Update," a parish resource used in about half of U.S. parishes; as well as St. Anthony Messenger Press and Servant Books, newsletters, homily services, audio books, DVDs and the American Catholic website.

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