

On the passing of a conservative Catholic commentator

Heidi Schlumpf | Jun. 6, 2011 NCR Today

While the NCR family was still mourning the loss of journalist Joe Feuerherd last week, I learned that a prominent [Catholic commentator in Chicago had died](#) [1]. Tom Roeser, a conservative columnist, blogger and radio talk show host, was 82 when he died May 28.

The adjective "acerbic" was used in several obituaries, and it is fitting. I regularly checked out Roeser's [blog](#) [2] to see what "the other side" thought and was up to. It's no secret that I agreed with very little of his opinions not only about the church but about secular politics.

I knew a bit about Roeser's background, but his [obituaries](#) [3] reminded me what a complex background he had. He had been a GOP publicist and worked for the Nixon administration, but left the Commerce department because he believed it wasn't doing enough to help minority businesses. His next job: communications director for the Peace Corps. For years, he worked as a lobbyist for Quaker Oats, and his pro-business attitude was evident. But he was also pro-little guy, as evidence by his support of a local program for down-and-out alcoholics and substance abusers.

I hesitate to call Roeser a "journalist," even though he started out at as a cub reporter and once interviewed Eleanor Roosevelt. While the distinction is sadly weakening, Roeser was more accurately a "commentator," at least later in life. He wore his opinion on his sleeve.

His legacy, in addition to his family, will probably be two organizations he helped found: [Catholic Citizens of Illinois](#) [4] (CCI) and the [Chicago Daily Observer](#) [5]. The former is an organization dedicated to rooting out liberalism in the church; the latter an online conservative publication covering local politics.

While some progressive Catholics may not miss his criticisms, neither will many in the hierarchy [for whom he didn't spare harsh words](#) [6]. These seemingly irreconcilable aspects of Mr. Roeser remind me of so many in our church (our current pope included) who cannot be neatly summarized as either "liberal" or "conservative"--or for whom different labels may apply at different points in their lives.

Several readers at ncronline.org commented on the [news of our publisher's passing](#) [7] by noting that they may have not agreed with Joe Feuerherd but they were sad to hear of his untimely death. I echo that sentiment about Mr. Roeser. While he may have not always believed there was room for such diversity in Catholicism, he and I were part of one church. As a fellow Catholic, I wish him everlasting peace and offer my condolences to his friends and family.

Source URL (retrieved on 05/23/2017 - 01:57): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/passing-conservative-catholic-commentator>

Links:

[1] http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-05-30/news/ct-met-roeser-obit-20110529_1_faith-and-politics-

quaker-oats-conservative-stances

[2] <http://blog.tomroeser.com/>

[3] <http://www.suntimes.com/5662430-417/political-voice-social-activist-thomas-roeser-dies-at-82.html>

[4] <http://www.catholiccitizens.org/http://www.catholiccitizens.org/>

[5] <http://www.cdobs.com/>

[6] <http://blog.tomroeser.com/2010/03/personal-aside-we-have-letter-from.html>

[7] <http://ncronline.org/news/people/feuerherd-ncr-editor-chief-and-publisher-dies>