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US bishops' spokesperson: No equal weight for Catholic views

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News organizations which cover the Catholic church should not give weight to viewpoints from Catholic organizations not officially aligned with church structures, the U.S. bishops' staffer responsible for relations with the media wrote in a blog on the bishops' website Wednesday morning.

Giving weight to such organizations, said Mercy Sr. Mary Ann Walsh, director of media relations for the U.S. bishops, gives a sense of "false balance" in news stories about the church.

"False balance reports are those that appear fair because they have two sides, except that one side reflects neither knowledge nor a right to speak," wrote Walsh, directing her comments to the public editor at *The New York Times*.

"Reports on Catholicism are especially vulnerable to false balance, and often it is achieved through manipulation of the name "Catholic" and religious symbols such as veils and Roman collars."

Walsh specifically mentioned the pro-choice group Catholics for Choice as one organization media supposedly give too much weight, saying "there seems little evidence of Catholics in their ranks and no evidence that they represent Catholic teaching."

"Surely the Catholic Church has a right to its "brand" which includes getting to say who validly can use its name," wrote Walsh.

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