

Published on *National Catholic Reporter* (<https://www.ncronline.org>)

June 6, 2013 at 2:45pm

Personnel changes at NCR

by Dennis Coday

NCR Today

Just like graduation season and the school year ending, it's a time of transition at *NCR*. I'll be sharing some of the details over the next few weeks.



The first announcement, I am sad to say, is a goodbye. Jerry Filteau, *NCR* Washington correspondent since 2007, has decided it is time to retire. This is actually Filteau's second retirement from the Catholic press. He came to *NCR* after 37 years with Catholic News Service, the world's largest editorially independent Catholic news agency. He started there as a researcher in 1970 and became a CNS reporter in 1973, foreign editor in 1975 and Rome Bureau chief in 1978.

In his three years in Rome, he covered Pope John Paul II's travels to five continents -- papal visits to the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Poland, Ireland, the United States, six African countries, Brazil, Turkey and France.

In 1981, Filteau returned to Washington, where he continued his chief work love, reporting on social justice issues, ecumenical and interreligious affairs, and canonical, theological, sociological and other developments and trends in the church.

With a background of philosophy and theology degrees from The Catholic University of America, Filteau

has reported extensively on those issues and related public policy concerns, as well as the Vatican theological investigations into Frs. Hans Küng, Edward Schillebeeckx and others, and the development of the U.S. bishops' pastoral letters on peace (1983) and the economy (1986).

In 2003, he was only the second reporter ever to receive the St. Francis de Sales Award of the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada for outstanding contributions to Catholic journalism. The first was a posthumous award to *NCR*'s Latin American affairs correspondent Penny Lernoux in 1990. All other previous recipients of the association's highest award had been Catholic press editors, publishers or advertising directors.

Filteau has been an invaluable resource, not just for his reporting skills but for his deep knowledge and experience of so many facets of American Catholicism, from the trivial to the profound. One call to Jerry gave me the background and context on many contemporary issues. More times than I can count, when I had to dig deep into the CNS archives to research some aspect of church life or the issuing of a document, I would inevitably find Filteau's byline attached to the material for which I was searching.

I only agreed to Jerry's retirement after he had promised to allow us to tap into those resources when we needed.

"I've greatly enjoyed my last five years with *NCR*," Filteau said. "I hope my reporting has in some ways helped to rejuvenate the spirits of the moderate and liberal wings of U.S. Catholicism, which have taken a tremendous beating under Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI."

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My next announcement also concerns a Catholic University of America alumnus. Effective July 1, Joshua J. McElwee will become *NCR* national correspondent. Later in the summer, he will move from Kansas City, Mo., and set up shop in Washington, D.C. If you're not familiar with McElwee's byline, you haven't been reading *NCR* much these last four years. McElwee has distinguished himself as a first-rate general assignment reporter, taking whatever task each day presents while earning a number of honors from the Catholic Press Association and the Religion Newswriters Association. Meanwhile, he has developed specialties in reporting on theology, women religious and global Catholicism, filing stories from Japan, Rome and Kenya.

We expect McElwee to expand his portfolio as he develops the national correspondent post. He will be adding the U.S. bishops' conference and Washington politics to his reporting portfolio, and will also use Washington as a jumping-off pad to keep his hand in Vatican coverage as the first years of Pope Francis develop.



I also want to welcome Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese to the *NCR* team. Reese has been director of the Religion and Public Policy program at Georgetown University's Woodstock Theological Center. When we learned that the Woodstock Center would be closing June 30, we approached Reese about joining us. He accepted, and we couldn't be happier. He will carry the title of senior analyst. He is a former editor of *America* magazine, author of a trilogy of books on how the church is run at the diocesan, national and international levels, and an expert on church affairs frequently cited by CNN, The Associated Press, *The New York Times* and many other print and broadcast media here and abroad.

Reese will be in California at Santa Clara University for the summer as a visiting scholar with the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics and in the fall he will be on sabbatical. He will return to Washington, D.C., in January.

"I like the idea of a priest working for a lay Catholic publication," Reese said. "This is the church of the future."

He will be blogging on NCRonline.org and writing a monthly column for the newspaper. I have asked him to mentor our young writers and interns and help us develop story ideas.

Finally, I am happy to announce that we have filled the managing editor position that has been open since I became editor in 2012. Caitlin Hendel starts as managing editor July 1. Hendel returns to Kansas City after 16 years in Washington, where she most recently was an editor for CQ Roll Call, a leading provider of congressional news and analysis, bill tracking, member profiles and committee coverage. I will introduce Hendel more properly in the next couple of weeks.

Source URL (retrieved on 08/21/2017 - 07:06): <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/personnel-changes-ncr>

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