



10-B-53

SAINT MARY'S PRESS: MINISTRY THROUGH PUBLISHING

Around the world, the Brothers of the Christian Schools are involved in many forms of ministry. Essential to our charism is that we are "catechists by vocation". A natural extension of our vocation is publishing. Saint Mary's Press of Winona, Minnesota makes its focus very clear in this Mission Statement approved by its Advisory Board on 16 January 1986:

Mission Statement

"Saint Mary's Press is a contemporary expression of the traditional educational apostolate of the Christian Brothers. As an activity of the Christian Brothers of Minnesota, ... the Press is a working community dedicated to publishing materials that advance the catechetical ministry of the Catholic Church, primarily as that ministry relates to adolescents...

"In pursuit of this mission and ministry, Saint Mary's Press seeks to accomplish the following specific tasks:

1. Our *development* tasks are to acquire and to create materials that further the ministry of the Word in school and parish settings. This ministry, which centers on initiating adolescents into the Catholic Christian community, encompasses pastoral as well as educational concerns.
2. Our *marketing* tasks are to promote, sell, and distribute materials to religious educators and youth ministers as well as to provide customer service before and after sales.
3. Our *production* task is to provide attractive and durable materials on schedule and produced at reasonable cost. ...
4. Our *economic* task is to insure that high quality materials are produced efficiently and are marketed at fair prices that permit us to continue to pursue our mission.
5. Our *communal* task is to strive for the financial well-being, personal safety, job satisfac-

tion, and professional growth of the members of our working community".

A Brief History

Saint Mary's Press began in 1943 when the Catechetical Commission of the Lasalle Brothers asked Brother Alphonsus Pluth, to write a series of high school religion texts that would replace the *Catechism of Christian Doctrine (1911)*. Brother Alphonsus brought enthusiasm to the task because he was aware that teachers and students had a great need for materials to help make religion classes more alive and meaningful. By the end of 1943, he had finished writing *Living with Christ, Course 1* for first year high school students. Courses 2, 3, and 4 followed in due time.

In 1953 Brother Alphonsus bought a used printing press and spent his Saturdays as an apprentice in a commercial printing plant, becoming proficient in the printing craft. Thus, he not only wrote and edited, but also, printed *Living with Christ* and a journal for religion teachers that developed a national following. In addition, Brother Alphonsus taught full-time at De La Salle High School in Minneapolis.

In 1954 Brother Alphonsus moved to St. Mary's College. Working out of a small basement room, he published a steady stream of religion textbooks and guides. In 1967 the Press moved into a spacious new building. Seven years later, after thirty-two years of leadership, Brother Alphonsus resigned as President. Brother Damian Steger assumed direction of the Press.

Scope of Press Publications

Publishing high school religion textbooks has been the central work of the Press since its foundation. This work continues, but it is now complemented by other areas of publications. *Sharing* by Thomas Zanzig is a comprehensive parish religious education program for high school students. It is the most widely used parish program in the U.S. In addition, the Press published books and manuals for use in parish youth ministry and in campus ministry. PACE (Professional Approaches to Christian Education), edited by Mary Perkins Ryan, is an award-winning monthly journal for religious educators. Saint Mary's Press also publishes resource books for catechists, like the *Sourcebook for Modern Catechetics* edited by Professor Michael Warren. Recently the Press has begun publishing books on prayer. Finally, *Ministry Management*, a complimentary, quarterly newsletter, is sent to all high

school principals, campus ministers, and chairs of religion departments.

Saint Mary's Press is always looking for new areas in which its publications can be of help. Consequently, a resource manual for those ministering to young adults is being prepared. Frequently young adults are a large, overlooked portion of the church community. There is a growing awareness in North America that these people need to have specific programs to meet their unique faith-development needs. Presently there are no other sourcebooks for young adult ministry available. Another area of development at the Press is a parish religious education program for junior high school age adolescents: those in grades seven and eight. Research into the needs of students in this age-group is being undertaken, and an entire religious education course will be published for them. In the immediate future, the Press will undertake research into the religious education and ministry needs in the ever-growing Hispanic community in the United States. One estimate says that by the year 2000, one-half of all U.S. Catholics will be of Hispanic origins. The Press will try to develop ma-

terials specifically tailored to this community.

The apostolate of religious education is flourishing at St. Mary's Press. Thousands of teachers and hundreds of thousands of Catholic students are benefiting from the work begun in a small basement office over forty years ago by Brother Alphonsus. Given the success of the Press, the work of publishing in the Lasallian tradition will continue into the indefinite future.

Bro. Carl KOCH, F.S.C.

*St. Mary's Press,
Terrace Heights,
WINONA, MN 55987*

POST-SCRIPTUM: Some weeks after sending us his article, Brother Carl has written to inform us that Brother Alphonsus Pluth, the founder of Saint Mary's Press, died peacefully in his sleep on 23 April 1986. Brother Carl adds the comment: "This was sad news for those of us here at the Press who will have to work on without his inspiration and good cheer". May he rest in peace.

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