

Editorial: Building up the kingdom through Catholic media

There was at least one thing on which all of the participants in the first Days for Catholic Literature could agree: Everyone hoped that it wouldn't be the last.

The *Giornate Dell'Editoria Cattolica*, sponsored by the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication, were held June 26-29 in Rome. Arising out of discussions held at the Frankfurt Book Fair (the largest book fair in the world, where publishers worldwide go to buy and sell foreign rights to books), the Days of Catholic Literature were over a year in the creation. Spearheaded by Friar Giulio Cesareo, the publishing manager of *Libreria Editrice Vaticana* (LEV, the Vatican's publishing house), the event was designed not to replace Frankfurt, but to provide Catholic publishers from all over the world, including Our Sunday Visitor, with the opportunity to discuss the challenges they all face.

Those challenges are often sobering. Some arise from within the Church – declining participation because of the clerical sexual abuse scandal, for instance, or the failure to keep millennials engaged in the Faith – while others are common to all publishers. The digital world presents opportunities for engagement, but it also distracts and divides in a way that prevents people from becoming reflective readers. Nick Morris, the founder of Canvas8, a firm that helps publishers understand their audience so that they can create products that will appeal to them, noted that Catholic publishers should not regard themselves in competition with one another, but with the distractions of the digital world. Publishers can make use of the tools of that world, and of the increasing desire to have times when we disconnect, to draw people back

to books and periodicals, but only if they meet potential readers where they are – a tough adjustment for Catholic publishers, who are forced to reconsider how even Mass-going Catholics see the Church and its teachings today.

The encounter with Christ in the liturgy must always be central to the mission of Catholic publishing, as Jesuit Father Marko Ivan Rupnik, a theologian, artist and director of the *Centro Aletti* in Rome, argued. The books and periodicals that Catholic authors and publishers create, and readers read, are a means to an end, and not the end itself. The end itself is to pass on what we have received: the encounter with Christ, found most fully in the life of the Church. Making any form of media – print or digital – into an idol undermines that mission.

In that sense, the mission of the Catholic publisher is the mission of all Catholics, each in our own sphere. We must strengthen our relationship with Christ, not just for our own sake, but for the sake of those to whom we are called to reveal him.

And the Days for Catholic Literature are a model not only for those Catholic publishers who did not participate, but for other parts of the Church. While we are working toward a common goal, we too often see our fellow Catholics as standing in the way. And such tensions arise not just among Catholic organizations and apostolates, but, for instance, between the laity and the hierarchy.

For four days in June, more than 50 publishers from more than 20 countries came together to talk – and, even more importantly, to celebrate Mass together, to share meals and to engage in events that reminded them of our common Catholic culture. In encountering one another, they opened themselves more deeply to the encounter with Christ – the first fruit of the meeting. May the Days for Catholic Literature continue to bear fruit for the whole Church in the coming years.

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