

Why NCR Is Worth Cheering For and Contributing To

Ken Briggs | May. 2, 2014 NCR Today

I'm coming rather late to the NCR pitch party, but not for lack of enthusiasm. I've been feeding on the labors of the newspaper's reporters and editors for nearly five decades. It is a history with outstanding journalists who have often sacrificed time and money in dedication to an enterprise that is a cause as well as a publication.

By "cause" I don't mean a slanted report or a predetermined mold into which news must be shaped. No, the remarkable tradition that has energized generations of writers and editors has been the fierce independence of its premise and the courage to make it work that way despite the odds. Financial constraints are foremost among those odds.

These days journalism is increasingly indistinguishable from public relations in wider and wider sectors of coverage. Reportorial interests too often coincide with special interests with the financial clout to press their aims without worrying about paying the bills. That has never been NCR's fate. It's one thing to champion independence when you have resources such as those at the *New York Times* (not that it makes for an easy ride), quite another to sail against the tide without emergency life rafts. Rarely do the terms "independent" and "modest means" belong in the same publication description. Many more are beholden to persons or institutions with an agenda.

Giving to NCR means keeping the ship afloat out of admiration for its commitment to speak to Catholics and non-Catholics in church climate where candor is at the premium and for the courage and persistence of those men and women who are willing to be pesky enough to get behind the public relations facades. I cannot exaggerate how difficult it is to attempt to tell the truth when the watchword in the institution you're covering is "secrecy." Fact is that few are trying because rewards tend to go to those who echo the party line.

NCR has kept its vigil for the other side of the story for a long time, not without bumps and grinds and moments when it seemed the bottom would fall out. Its faithfulness has made it an indispensable corrective to a much larger information provider. Through it, they've maintained the requisite wryness and rascally camaraderie to retain their credentials as throwback journalists who work hard and laugh often. They are so worth your loyalty as readers and your dollars as buoys in the waters of the emerging church.

Give to keep open a vital forum for the church's future.