

ACPA Award Winners 2007

Announced in Auckland on Thursday 20 September.
Sponsored by Catholic Church Insurances, Australia.

Judges Comments

Category 1: Best News Story

Winner: NZ Catholic

Author: Gavin Abraham Title: "Wine ban ends prison Masses" April 27 2007

Comment: Gavin Abraham's winning piece was a hard-news story, of vital interest to his readers, which effected change. By shining light onto the clash between secular and bureaucratic rules and spiritual beliefs it emphasised the danger of blind adherence to regulations. Having challenged the authorities to justify their stance on record, *NZ Catholic* was then able to report the triumph of common sense when the ban was lifted.

Highly commended: Kairos Catholic Journal

Author: Rebecca Cullen Title: "Remembering Ryan"

Highly commended: Eureka Street

Author: James Massola Title: "Simple Pleasures in Melbourne's North African Heart" October 3 2006

Category 2: Best Feature Story

Winner: Eureka Street

Author: Peter Cronau Title: "Catastrophe on Australia's doorstep" October 3 2006

Comment: Peter's story of the HIV/Aids crisis in Papua New Guinea was told in a poignant, original way. He used the combination of a

photo essay and a feature story to lay bare the issue and the plight of those in its midst. With pictures and words, Peter revealed faith and social justice in action through the Aids Angels – the nuns, lay workers, and activists – battling to help those in need; the courage of its victims; and the desperation of the prostitutes who continue to ply their trade, despite knowing the danger they face. The story's backbone was its strong reporting through the gathering of the staggering figures, and the setting out of the debate.

Highly commended: Aurora

Author: Julieta Gibbons Title: "Easter Dreaming" April/May 2007

Comment: An elegant piece of writing about Ash Wednesday, written in a lilting, conversational style.

Highly commended: Australian Catholics

Author: Fr Andrew Hamilton, SJ Title: "Addictions" Spring 2006

Comment: A thought-provoking piece about addiction, its impact on our everyday lives and how faith, freedom and love can save.

Category 3: Best Editorial

Winner: The Swag

Author: John Jegorow Title: "The Swag Editorial" Summer 2006

Comment: In a generally pedestrian collection of entries, the piece chosen as Best Editorial stands out for its brevity, its punch and its plain language. It sets out to make a point and makes that point in no uncertain terms.

That is what editorials ought to do. They usually don't because editorialists, as the old joke of the newspaper journalists' trade puts it, are like scavengers who come down from the hills after a battle and shoot the wounded. Editorials which argue "on the one hand, but then again on the other" have no place in the religious press. Jesus' (and the Apostles') statements were invariably unequivocal; so should our editorials be.

The Swag contribution succeeds in spite of the author's painful ignorance of the use of the comma, some of which he places where they oughtn't to be, while missing others from where they ought to be.

Since this is a magazine principally read by priests, who are generally well-educated and quite literate, I hope he takes my point.

Highly commended: Kimberly Community Profile

Title: "Real Aussie Values" November 2006

Comment: The Diocese of Broome is given a highly commended because its editorial, too, is straight to the point and takes a firm stand on a matter of national interest and concern.

Highly commended: Madonna

Author: Fr Chris Gleeson, SJ
November/December 2006

Title: "Trying to be here"

Comment: Father Gleeson's piece, written in the first person, is rather different from most editorials, but since he is editor of the magazine he can suit himself how his editorial pages are filled. He makes a good point well, if somewhat long-windedly.

Category 4: Best Column

Winner: Kimberly Community Profile

Author: Bishop Christopher Saunders
April 2007

Title: "Imagination and Faith"

Highly commended: Madonna

Author: Michael McGirr Title: "Dog time: God Time" May/June 2006

Highly commended: Marist Messenger

Author: Fr Paddy Cahill Title: "A minute or two"

Highly commended: Madonna

Author: Fr Peter Steele, SJ Title: "The Pursuit of Happiness"
May/June 2006

Comment: As can be seen from the above, such was the quality of a small number of the total offerings that the judging of this section provided considerable difficulty. It must be said, however, that Bishop Saunders' contribution was a standout winner.

His dissertation touches on one of the most profound problems facing not just the Catholic Church but the whole of Christianity today, and is expressed with a rigorous and unvarnished honesty.

Nevertheless, his views are put with an engaging humility which is tremendously appealing, for it serves to drive his points home with clarity and power without engendering any inference of preaching or finger-pointing.

If a columnist's job is to make people think – and as one myself I believe it is – then Bishop Saunders has in this piece succeeded brilliantly.

But, perhaps above all, his writing is beautiful, his words illuminate as they flow gracefully, the down-to-earth word pictures he draws are vivid in their everydayness and simplicity.

Bishop Saunders' viewpoint certainly deserves wider circulation in the Christian media than the Kimberly region over which he presides.

The highly commended awards are readily given and each of them, in their own way, shows a mastery of the art of column-writing, be it about our relationship with animals, everyday events from which we can take comfort (or lessons), or the church calendar.

Category 5: Best Headline

Winner: The Catholic Weekly

Author: John Pierce Titles: "Light from a silent darkness"
February 25 2007 and

"Archdiocese guidelines for funeral Mass rites, wrongs" March 4 2007

Comment: John Pierce's winning headlines stop the reader and lure him or her into the story below. The "Light from a silent darkness" achieves a poignancy that captures the mood of the story below, personal and moving. The hard news heading, while verbless, still manages to attract the reader through the double play in the final words. It gets to the nub of the issue for Catholic readers -- what they can no longer do at funeral Masses

Highly commended: Catholic Voice

Author: Geoff Orchison Title: "Pilgrims cook up trip of a lifetime"
December 2006

Category 6: Best Social Justice Coverage

Winner: The Far East

Author: Fr Peter O'Neill Title: "A case for outrage" January/February
2007

Comment: I began reading this story while just generally examining the awards to see what was entered — but I couldn't put the story down until I'd got to the end. It was captivating, well-written and an utterly compassionate account of a heart-breaking situation.

The well-written account of Sanan Tahmasee's trip to Taiwan to find work and the dreadful tragedy which unfolded there would not be out of place in any major international publication.

This was by far the most outstanding work submitted in this category and immediately jumped out as the clear winner.

Highly commended: Aurora

Author: Michael Elphick Title: "The death penalty, a Catholic
perspective"

Category 7: Best example of education coverage

Winner: Marist Messenger

Author: Br Romuald Gibson, FMS Titles: "I have seen the future", "I
cannot chose not to be'" and "Visit to a friend in prison"

Comment: Brother Romuald Gibson's three articles - the stand-out being "I have seen the future", from the Marist Messenger. All his

three articles were written in the same style. People talk in their own language of how they turned their lives around. Very inspirational, captures the way people speak and portrays this so clearly, you can almost hear the dialogue, see the people talking, sit in on their meetings. Well-crafted, stylistic and the obvious winner of the category.

Category 8: Best Devotional Article Applying Faith to Life

Winner: Champagnat: A Marist Journal of Education

Author: Brendan Geary, FMS Title: "Resisting prayer" December 2006

Comment: Devotional articles often fall into the trap of being either overly pious or other-worldly; either way, they are inclined to put this reader off. But here's a piece that talks about prayer in ways that make it sound as normal as breathing – and just as necessary if we want to keep our faith alive.

Brendan Geary is a Marist Brother from Scotland, with a doctorate in pastoral counselling from Loyola College in Baltimore. His article began as one of a series of reflections aimed at helping students in Africa prepare for religious life, but this distillation of personal experience, study and reading is helpful to anyone intent on spending time with God.

The title – *Resisting prayer* – says it all. There are good reasons why many of us find prayer difficult, and in simple, straight-forward language Brendan Geary names several of them. But in the end, it's our hunger for God and our own perseverance that will win through. God speaks to us in our silence, even in our distractions and desires – all we have to do is to make the space.

Here's writing to help beginners on their way, encourage those who are struggling, even persuade those who have given up to start again. With helpful headings and well indented quotes, the article is enhanced with thought-provoking photos by Australian Jesuit Paul Fyfe. Many outside the Marist network could find this piece both relevant and rewarding.

Category 9: Best Editorial Feature, newspaper or magazine

Winner: NZ Catholic

Editor: Gavin Abraham Title: "A future for the family" November 26 2006

Comment: This category attracted several strong entries, but "A future for the family" stood out. The special publication was a bold contribution to debate about a topic causing anxiety in society at large, the breakdown of family values.

Expertly crafted with clean layout, fine pictures and illustrations, the publication was an easily-digestible package. The writing was set-off with a stimulating editorial and an introduction from the Governor-General, and followed by a fine mixed collection of views – Catholic and non-Catholic. The use of devices such as quotes from children, political parties, and tips for marriage gave the reader plenty to graze on.

Highly commended: Catholic Voice

Editor: Geoff Orchison Title: "Farewell Fr Francis" August 2006

Comment: A touching, well-illustrated special tribute to the obviously much-loved Archbishop Francis Carroll.

Highly commended: Voice Katolika, Solomon Islands

Editor: Fr Ambrose Pereira, SDP Title: "Health and the Environment" Third quarter

Comment: A series bringing readers practical advice and spiritual guidance on issues of importance in their everyday lives.

Category 10: Best Original Photograph

Winner: The Catholic Weekly, April 22 2007

Photographer: Kerry Myers

Comment: Having worked for *Zealandia* for 16 years, judging the best original photograph entry certainly brought back memories. For me a great picture is one that has to stand up with no headlines, no caption, and lest we forget, fulfils the criteria of technical excellence, imagination, topicality, humour and presentation. The winning picture was one that told its own story – that of the old digger honouring his mates, reaching out to the crucified Christ, the ultimate symbol of love and sacrifice, and the old digger had been through it. Perhaps the presence of a grandchild would have perfectly completed the image.

Highly commended: Catholic Voice, September 2006

Photographer: Geoff Orchison

Comment: The second runner up is the photograph taken by Geoff Orchison for the *Catholic Voice* publication. It was a spontaneous image of Archbishop Coleridge and Tom Brewer that captured a real sense of delight.

Finally, there are two points I would like to mention. The first is that it was a shame that some of the images submitted were not the original photograph, making it difficult to judge the criteria of technical excellence.

The second, is to get clicking for the papal visit next year, an event that I am sure will provide photographers with many inspirational images.

Category 11: Best Magazine Front Cover

Winner: Kairos Catholic Journal, October 29 2006, August 20 2006

Designer: Ramesh Weeraratne

Comment: The winning cover makes striking uses of abstract colour and a polar bear with stylised footprints. It is a work of art and forces the reader to think carefully about the pun in the coverlines "Change bears consideration." The three words are in contrasting colours and type weights but they fit together into an effective single statement. A second *Kairos* cover takes a completely different tack and sticks to the same typeface for both the heading and text (a quote from Pope Benedict XVI on migration). This is embedded into a sepia illustration,

reminiscent of an old photo album, to suggest deprivation and disruption, both of which characterise migrants or refugees. It would not be out of place in a world-class magazine of any type.

Category 12: Best Newspaper Front Page

Winner: Catholic Voice, September 2006, Issue 214

Editor: Geoff Orchison

Comment: This entry stood above others because of its combination of strong visual impact and news value of the story.

The use of one dominant image provides the strong visual interest a front page needs. The image chosen also tells the story, capturing the act of handing over of the crosier.

The main headline is well written to reflect the story and is also a good visual anchor point.

The design makes the front page a strong pointer to the extended coverage of the story and draws the reader to turn the page and read on.

The reverse strip on the bottom of the page reinforces the special treatment of the story.

A pointer positioned adjacent to the masthead, predominantly a picture of a toddler girl, gives another entry point to readers.

There's nothing better on a front page than a news story of great interest to readers and a strong image well presented. The *Catholic Voice* has achieved that with this front page.

Highly commended: Catholic Life, April 2007, Issue 104

Editor: Colin Coomber

Comment: This entry used two images to tell the story, but perhaps just the more dramatic of the two used by itself would have been more

eye catching.

The design of the page is let down by the dated look of the pointer which dominates.

Highly commended: Catholic Viewpoint, Vol. 15, No.9, 22 October, 2007

Coordinator: Nell Farrawell

Comment: The main image draws interest but does not relate to the story on the front page. A headline for the picture and extended caption-cum-pointer would help visually give it its own space rather than being confused as connected to the story in the panel down the side of it. The use of colour is a little overpowering and makes the page look too busy. The pointers using images look good and would help push readers inside.

Category 13: Best Magazine Layout and Design

Winner: Echo From Africa and Other Continents

Editor: Sr Miriam Lorenz, SSPC

Comment: This is a smart and colourful magazine that exploits its compact size (A5) with short, well-written articles and effective photography. The layout is clean and consistent with clever use of labelling stories by national flags. This reinforces the wide range of countries covered by the missionary sisters. During the past year, Echo has undergone a subtle redesign that no longer mixes its main heading types (now all sans serif) and uses more eye-catching graphics that lead the reader into the text. The reader is presented with a highly attractive package that doesn't belie its serious content and message that, to quote its editorial mission, to "speak loudly and unceasingly about the needs of missionaries and asks help for them."

Category 14: Best Newspaper Layout and Design

Winner: The Southern Cross Monthly

Editor: Elizabeth Hook

Comment: This is a Catholic newspaper which is well planned and designed.

The consistent high quality of its images, which are put to good use, sets it apart from other ACPA entries in this category.

Its index on page 2 helps readers make their way through the newspaper.

Each page has a clean layout, making it reader friendly. There is mostly a good balance of text and images. Even its ad placement is modular, adding to its uncluttered look.

Deep etched images are used to good effect as are devices such as break-out quotes and fact boxes.

The *Southern Cross Monthly* also has a good flow from news pages to features, opinion, national and world news, obituaries, school news, parish pump and a children's page.

It's hard to imagine any reader of any age would not be satisfied.

The only real criticism would be for story length, on occasion, tending to be over long.

Highly commended: Catholic Voice

Editor: Geoff Orchison

Comment: Liberal use of photographs helps to lift the design of this newspaper which has a spread of news, opinions features, and archdiocese news.

There is a tendency for some pages to be too heavy on text, but shorter stories as well as sidebars or breakouts would help remedy this. Watch out for clashing headlines.

Category 15: Most Improved Publication

Winner: Connections, newsletter of Catholic Healthcare

Manager communications: Therese Spruhan

Comment: A very difficult category to judge as clearly many publications have made enormous changes in the past year.

Connections shows the biggest improvement, thanks to a shift from a black and white presentation to full colour and a major lift to content. Layout and fonts have improved and there is much to read in this newsy publication which includes useful information, nice profiles and good choice of photographs.

Highly commended: Catholic Outlook

Editor: Jane Favotto

Comment: Highly commended is Catholic Outlook which also changed its look substantially, making it very magazine-like in approach.

Category 16: Best Regional Publication

Winner: The Tasmanian Catholic

Editor: Pip Barnard

Comment: This bi-monthly magazine was an outright winner in this category thanks to its beautiful layout and range of stories that would appeal to a wide audience, not just Catholics. It features stories that are informative and entertaining, and clearly has a good sense of what's happening in its community. Very nice use of photographs and particularly good graphics which set it apart from the other regional publications. Well done.

Category 17: Best Website

Winner: The Southern Cross Monthly

Editor: Elizabeth Hook

Comment: The easy-to-read design and its ease of use made this a

clear winner.

Even less frequent net users would find this site simple to navigate.

The inclusion of pictures enhanced the design.

Clear and simple headlines with lots of white space delineated each story on the news pages.

Features such as emailing the story or printing the story were readily found and easy to use.

A wide variety of stories and information was readily available.

The archive was a helpful feature.

Highly commended: Catholic Voice

Editor: Geoff Orchison

Comment: The news and events page was a little cluttered and slowed navigability somewhat. A simplified design could still provide as much information.

A good level of content with good variety.

The archive facility is a good tool for any publication.

Category 18: Best Media Campaign or Media release of a Church Event

Winner: Elizabeth Hook, Director Catholic Communications, Diocese of Adelaide

Campaign: Child Protection Policy Launch

Comment: Elizabeth won this award because she achieved her objective of gaining positive coverage in the secular media for the launch of the Church's Child Protection Policy in the face of rather daunting odds and a skeptical media.

She decided that a robust and honest discussion of these sensitive issues, clear messages acknowledging past mistakes and a commitment to transparency in the future was the way to go. The policy was launched with a Mass attracting about 700 people and an article in the Sunday Mail on the same day. The well-written media release also initiated positive coverage on radio and ABC TV News. This was a sound strategy backed up by assured media skills. Mission accomplished.

Category 19: Best Advertising Feature

Winner: Kairos Catholic Journal

Authors: Janette Mentha and Adam Pearson Title: "Retirement and Aged Care" March 18 2007

Comment: In the end, it came down to two contenders for this category, and they were difficult to separate. The winner is *Kairos* Catholic journal's feature/supplement "Retirement and Aged Care". There is a lot to like about this supplement. It's written in a brisk, engaging style that treats its reader as an intelligent person. The layout, while a little staid, is friendly and drew me in on every page. Good use of generously sized pictures, sidebars and pullouts — coupled with equally generous measures of white space — make this supplement easy on the eye, giving the editorial every change of being read!

One of the challenges of advertising supplements is balancing the interests of the readers with those of advertisers. I was impressed by this supplement's handling of this area: There was plentiful reference to retirement villages — who were well represented in the supplement's advertising — but overt "plugs" for specific providers were kept to a minimum and handled discreetly.

Moreover, it was clear that in selecting story topics, the editor/s had put the readers at least on a par with, if not ahead of, advertisers — something which, sadly, does not always happen. The articles on accreditation of aged care facilities and the new super rules (note to New Zealand Government: Please look into this for here!) were informative and, as far as I could tell, genuinely useful for anyone planning retirement.

Category 20: Best Ecumenical/Interfaith story

Winner: Catholic Outlook

Author: Dan McAloon Title: "Forum facilitates interfaith dialogue"
October 2006

Comment: Sadly, the entries in this category were minimal and, also regrettably, none focused on ecumenism.

Interfaith stories seem to be the flavour of the times. Ecumenism has faded.

And therein, I think, lay a significant story in its own right waiting to be written!

The winning entry was a report of a high-level interfaith dialogue rather than a story itself about interfaith relations and (mis)understandings.

However the reporter wrote with insight, fairness and direction. His introduction, intelligently and even a little controversially, set the scene for his particular audience. He then brought out critical issues from the dialogue which left the reader with a sense of having been there.

After reading the report I was better-informed on the issue than I was prior — and that has to be a measure of success.

Category 21: Best Original Artwork

This year, the judge decided to make no award in this category.

Category 22: Bishop Phillip Kennedy Memorial Prize – Magazines

Winner: Echo from Africa and other continents

Editor: Sr Miriam Lorenz, SSPC

Comments: Choosing a clear winner in this category was difficult as there were a number of publications that do very well given their limited resources.

I chose *Echo* primarily because of its visual appeal and strong sense of its own identity. Its mission appears simple: to inform its supporters about the work of the Missionary Sisters of St Peter Claver. Other publications were a bit confused about this, with the end result looking like it was put together by committee.

Each publication of *Echo*, however, is consistent and has a beginning, a middle and an end, with readers knowing what to expect from issue to issue.

It is well-designed with good use of photos, illustrations and typefaces. Production values could be higher but I think they are adequate.

The editor resists using great, meandering slabs of text, as many other publications do. There is a good mix of story lengths with none being particularly long. This suits the page size of this publication. Longer stories are broken up with write-offs and break-out quotes increasing readability.

In terms of content, *Echo* is engaging and most stories have a news angle though they are written in a feature-style as they should be in a magazine. Where a story is a letter or a speech from a church leader, this is clearly marked so there's a nice demarcation between the purely religious and the broader stories.

In summary, I think *Echo* fulfils its mission effectively, whereas many of the other publications try to be too many things to too many people.

Category 23: Bishop Phillip Kennedy Memorial Prize – Newspapers

Winner: NZ Catholic

Editor: Gavin Abraham

Comments: *NZ Catholic* best fulfils the criteria for "excellence in performance as a Catholic newspaper in its specific" market and extends its performance well beyond the criteria.

NZ Catholic's "newsy" approach ensures that its target community is well informed over a range of topics of general and specific Catholic interest.

The newspaper avoids over concentration on reporting just Catholic Church affairs in its market area so that it keeps not only in touch with the community but also includes the community in the reporting.

Obviously, as a Catholic newspaper it includes religious material and opinion but it does not fall into the trap of simply reproducing religious tracts, something that some of the smaller newspapers have a tendency towards as they try to meet the demands of producing a newspaper.

Given the size of *NZ Catholic's* market it ensures a good spread of

material to match a range of interests and age groups.

NZ Catholic's size and resources gives it the ability to produce a highly professional, well laid out and 'busy' newspaper with a lot to read. It utilises material from Catholic news sources efficiently and effectively ensuring its own community and local reporting are well supplemented. Some of the other entrants use similar, or the same material, but *NZ Catholic* seems to present columnists better and balance external material with its own.

In the end the decision was difficult, particularly in relation to some tiny operations that produce high quality community newspapers, but it did not just depend on the high quality of the production. The final factor giving *NZ Catholic* the final judgment was its editorial attitude – a newspaper with the interest of its community at the forefront without jeopardising its Catholic essence.