

Pope says Catholic newspapers have ‘irreplaceable’ role

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI said the Catholic press has an irreplaceable role in forming Christian consciences and reflecting the church’s viewpoint on contemporary issues.

Despite the crisis in print media today, the Catholic newspaper still has a vital role to play in diocesan communications, the pope said. He made the remarks Nov. 26 to members of the Italian Federation of Catholic Weeklies, which represents 188 Catholic newspapers.

The pope said that while secular media often reflect a skeptical and relativistic attitude toward truth, the church knows that people need the full truth brought by Christ.

“The mission of the church consists in creating the conditions so that this meeting with Christ can be realized. Cooperating in this task, the communications media are called to serve the truth with courage, to help public opinion see and read reality from an evangelical viewpoint,” he said.

A primary task of the Catholic newspaper, he said, is to “give voice to a point of view that reflects Catholic thinking on all ethical and social questions.”

The pope said the printed newspaper, because of its simplicity and widespread distribution, remains an effective way of spreading news about local diocesan events and developments, including charity initiatives.

As “newspapers of the people,” he said, Catholic papers can also favor real dialogue between different social sectors and debate among people of different opinions.

“By doing this, Catholic newspapers not only fulfill the important task of providing information, but also perform an irreplaceable formative function” in the education of “critical and Christian consciences,” he said.

The pope said Catholic journalists should give witness to their faith in their work. Their success as Catholic communicators will depend above all on their personal relationship with Christ, he said.