

# The Real Televangelists

From time to time, I will invite guest columnists to share their “Thoughts on our Church.” I would be especially anxious to introduce members of our Archdiocesan staff, given the extraordinary expertise they offer me and all our archdiocesan agencies.

Sean Caine, director of communications for the archdiocese, addresses the core energizer of our Faith, evangelization. He has been a key member of our Archdiocesan staff since 2003, and an invaluable advisor to me this last year. He is a media professional, trusted and respected by our secular communications professionals. I am pleased that he is willing to contribute to this column this week.

You have likely noticed in *The Catholic Review* and especially in the column that appears weekly in this space that much emphasis has been placed on the subject of evangelization and our duty as Catholics and as followers of Jesus to embrace this Baptismal call of ours with the heart of a disciple.

Frequently referenced by the Archbishop in his October installation homily and in several columns since his arrival, and by Pope Benedict XVI during his April visit to the United States, Catholics are being asked to chart a new course in a modern world to spread the age-old message of God’s love.

While it’s tempting to buy into the common misconception that to be an evangelist you have to possess some saintly quality or have a divine mandate from God, evangelists come in many forms and utilize many different vehicles to share their message. One such vehicle is the media.

It is impossible to discuss evangelization without accounting for the role of communications and the media. In 2002, Pope John Paul II said, “Persons are needed in this field who, with the genius of faith, can interpret modern cultural needs, committing themselves to approaching the communications age not as a time of alienation and confusion, but as a valuable time for the quest for the truth and for developing communion between persons and peoples.”

Sadly, the world just lost two such men in Tim Russert and Tony Snow. Though

possessing different roles in the media and different approaches to how they performed their jobs, each man was defined by his outstanding character, integrity, and faith, and by the civility each brought to the often-cynical and nasty world of Washington politics.

Tim Russert, who died of an apparent heart attack on June 13 at the age of 58, was best known as the longest-serving moderator of NBC's "Meet the Press," the Sunday morning television show that features interviews with the nation's political heavyweights. His death evoked an outpouring of love and support, not only from those in the media and politics, but from people who only knew him from his affable, but firm, television persona.

Educated by the Sisters of Mercy and the Jesuits, Russert maintained lifelong ties to the Church and was an outspoken advocate for Catholic education throughout his entire career, which included serving as a counselor to New York Governor Mario Cuomo and Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York.

Archbishop George H. Niederauer of San Francisco, chairman of the U.S. bishops' communications committee said, "Those of us who shared his Catholic faith and his deep love for it appreciated his sharing of the story of his own faith and his loyalty to the life of the Catholic Church in this country and the many charities to which he contributed his time and talent."

The Catholic Business Journal said, "Mr. Russert's life, what he cared about, how he conducted himself, his good character and integrity, his faithful adherence to the Gospel and Mass, these are things that set a person apart from the norm. These are the things that matter, that make an eternal difference on our souls and on those around us."

Many journalists make the cross-over from interviewer to interviewee. Tony Snow, one-time host of FOX News television and radio host better known for his service as White House Press Secretary under President George W. Bush, was perhaps the best known and the most successful to do so.

Snow died on July 12 at the age of 53 after a long bout with cancer. A convert to the Catholic faith, Snow, like Russert, was known as "one of the good guys" who brought

great civility and integrity to a job that required him to be firm and straightforward in his daily handling of the White House press corps.

Those who worked closest with Snow praised him as “a man of courage [and] a man of integrity,” and cited his unfailing commitment to his family. “We all loved watching him at the podium,” Dana Perino, the current White House Press Secretary said, “but most of all we learned how to love our families and treat each other.”

A year and two months prior to his death, Snow gave the 118th annual commencement address to the graduates of The Catholic University of America. He concluded his remarks by telling the graduating students, “Wherever you are and whatever you do, never forget at this moment, and every moment forward, you have a precious blessing. You’ve got the breath of life. ... And while God doesn’t promise tomorrow, he does promise eternity.”

Evangelization is the responsibility of us all, as children of God, and one doesn’t have to be a bishop or a priest or a religious ed. teacher to share God’s love with others. In fact, evangelists are all around us. Sometimes you just have to take time to look and listen for them.