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A CATHOLIC PAPER IN EVERY HOME WAS THE AIM

By Sister Carol Anne O'Marie, printed in the September 2, 1976 issue of *The Catholic Herald*

"If St Paul was on earth today, he would be a Catholic editor," Bishop Thomas Grace, second bishop of Sacramento, wrote on the front page of the first Catholic Herald. The date was March 14, 1908.

The bishop, who called the early 1900's "an era in which reading is a universal passion", strongly felt the need for a diocesan paper. Spurred on by the Council of Baltimore which recommended "a Catholic paper in every Catholic home", he was determined to have a paper.

In 1908, Bishop Grace wrote a "most encouraging letter" to Thomas A. Connelly, editor of the San Francisco Monitor. Thomas Augustus Connelly was born in Philadelphia on March 10, 1858. After graduating from Notre Dame, Indiana, he began his journalistic career on the *Cleveland Universe*. From there he moved to the *Baltimore Mirror* and then to Washington, DC as an editorial writer for a number of Catholic newspapers.

In Baltimore, Connelly met and married Miss Mary Fink. Nine children were born to them. Connelly, a kindly man, was devoted to both his large family and his religion. The letter written by Bishop Grace must have been very "encouraging" indeed, since Connelly left *The Monitor* and moved his large family to Sacramento.

The Herald opened for business on February 22, 1908 at 416 J Street. The paper cost 2 dollars per year, paid in advance, and was published on Saturday. T.A. Connelly, Esq., was the first editor and publisher.

The first edition of the *Catholic Herald* had something for everyone. The front page posed solutions to "our most urgent national problem" which was identified as "perils of prevalent extravagance, worldliness and the mad pace of social life."

In it, Cardinal Gibbons spoke out against prohibition. "The Church," he said, "holds that any attempt to curtail liberty is to be discouraged. Prohibition is such an attempt."

The readership was warned that "ecclesiastical news as chronicled in the daily press dispatched from Rome must be accepted with a liberal allowance of salt."

The first edition published the Lenten regulations. The faithful were reminded that during Lent "meat and fish may not be used at the same meal even on Sunday." However, "necessity and custom have authorized the use of lard instead of butter in preparing food."

Catholic Herald

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA, SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 1908

Price Five Cents

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CATHOLIC PRESS

Tardy Recognition of the Practical Value of the Most Potent of Moral Weapons of Offense and Defense

Present Social Conditions Demand an Alert and Vigorous Religious Press to Combat the Evil Forces and Influences of the Times

The Catholic press in this country has long been recognized as a potent moral weapon. It has been the most effective means of spreading the Catholic faith and of combating the evil influences of the times. The Catholic press has been the most potent of moral weapons of offense and defense. It has been the most effective means of spreading the Catholic faith and of combating the evil influences of the times.

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Catholic News in Brief

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Our Most Urgent National Problem

The Perils of Frequent Extraneous Wars, Revolution and Social Life

The One Hour of Every Day Must be Devoted to the Cause of the Nation

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First edition

Shown above is the front page of the first edition of the Catholic Herald, published on March 14, 1908. The picture is of Bishop Thomas Grace, who was then Bishop of Sacramento.

The *Herald* was filled with local marriages, deaths, and parish meetings. There was a good-sized section called *Children's Playground* and another entitled *The Home Hour*. *The Home Hour* contained such tidbits as: A woman with eight young children entered the street car which was already comfortably filled. The conductor became impatient because it took the family so long to get on board; and when the mother finally reached the platform and the car began to move he said: "Are these all your children, mum, or is it a picnic?" "They are all my children," returned the woman with a grim smile, "and I can tell you it's no picnic."

Until his death in 1921, Bishop Grace remained a faithful supporter of the *Herald*. He wrote: "I regard the publication as a most valuable addition to the spiritual advancement of the large and rapidly developing diocese of Sacramento. I will do all in my power to extend the journal's field of usefulness."

By 1914, the *Herald* was having some financial difficulty. On August 1, 1914, Connelly launched the first subscription campaign. He explained the need for the campaign to his readers: "The diocese is so extensive," he wrote, "the towns so small and far apart," that he found it "impossible to obtain satisfactory agents to solicit unless on such terms as entail a heavy pecuniary loss to the publisher."

The campaign which extended from August 1 to December 16, 1914, promised the first three winners 100 dollars in gold, 50 dollars in gold and 25 dollars in gold. The prizes, Connelly promised, "shall be in the hands of the successful campaigners by Christmas morning."

By 1916, the ante was raised. The first prize in that year's subscription campaign was an Overland Model 83B, Touring Car, valued at 795 dollars. Second prize was a Sherman and Clay Victrola and third prize, a Singer sewing machine.

Connelly edited and published the *Herald* for 21 years until his death on December 17, 1929. In his obituary, the *Herald* paid tribute to him as a "splendid example of what a loyal American Catholic gentleman should be."

After Connelly's death, *The Register*, published in Denver, replaced the *Herald* as the diocesan paper. Monsignor Patrick McHugh became the special editor for the Sacramento edition.

Over the years, the *Herald* has been called *The Register*, *The Superior California Register*, *The Superior California Catholic Herald* and finally, back to *The Catholic Herald*.

The diocesan paper, founded in 1908 by Bishop Grace, has spanned five bishops and six editions. Time has changed the name, the location, the price and the day of publication. However, one thing has remained constant – the need for a subscription campaign. This year, Bishop Alden J Bell has designated the week beginning September 19 "Catholic Press Week." A drive will take place in all the parishes of the diocese on that Sunday.