

Cardinal Bevilacqua Scores Philadelphia Inquirer For Church Coverage, Declines Interview

For a planned major article on the first anniversary of some significant structural changes announced by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* requested an interview with Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua.

Before committing himself to the interview, the Cardinal asked his staff to review the *Inquirer's* coverage of the Church during the past year. As a result of that study, the Cardinal declined the interview request and issued a public letter to William Macklin, of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, which detailed the reasons for his refusal:

I have declined your request for an interview due to your unfair and unbalanced coverage of the Archdiocese in the last year, in general, and the disproportionately negative coverage of our regional planning process in particular.

This view is based on a review of Inquirer articles from May 1993 to May 1994. This review included 23 articles written about the Catholic Church. Of these 23 articles, eighteen were considered to be unfair and unbalanced. The unfairness and imbalance occurred in five areas including the selection of negative topics, a disregard for positive news, the use of unqualified experts, the use of negative language and a consistent omission of factual information. Some examples of these attributes might include two recently misleading articles on a new evangelization center at Saint Peter Claver, a recent characterization of the Archdiocese as "usually strident" or a description of the Holy Father as

“uncompromising. “

It is particularly frustrating to continue to read negative characterizations of the Roman Catholic Church with no regard for our role as the largest provider o f social services in Southeastern Pennsylvania and our role as the most visible religious organization in the poorest areas of our city.

Cardinal Bevilacqua concluded his letter with a statement addressing the original subject of the intended interview: progress on the regional planning process. He pointedly addressed criticisms of the planning process and made clear the Church's commitment to the inner city and to minority populations within the Archdiocese.

The Cardinal's letter was published in the June issue of his newsletter, *The Voice of Your Shepherd*.



The *Philadelphia Inquirer* and political cartoonist Auth have a long history of doing hatchet jobs on the Catholic Church. Little wonder then that this state-of-the-art effort was captioned "Hatchet!" Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua's criticism of the *Inquirer* (story above) only addressed print articles. It did not even touch on the vicious editorial cartoons, many by Auth, which have attacked the Church.