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by Thomas C. Fox

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Robert J. Heyer, acclaimed Catholic book editor, died Jan. 13. He was 87.

In 1984, after Publisher Bill McSweeney took the helm at NCR, he purchased the respected, but then dormant, Sheed & Ward book imprint from Andrews McMeel Publishing. He then asked Heyer to head the new division.

Heyer quickly began to channel his creative energies into reprinting books from Sheed & Ward's formidable backlist of classics. Heyer also began to publish titles by leading Catholic authors, placing an emphasis on publishing books and newsletters with a pastoral bent.

During his time at Sheed & Ward, Heyer worked closely with his wife, Jean Marie Hiesberger, another longtime Catholic educator. Hiesberger died in 2017.

NCR sold the Sheed & Ward imprint in a company restructuring in 1997.

In 2002, Heyer was named to the Association of Catholic Publishers' [Hall of Fame](#). The award recognized his "more than three decades of creative leadership and service to Catholic adult faith formation and publishing" and "inspirational tenacity to giving voice to those whose ideas have made a tangible difference within the

ministering Church in the modern world."

Heyer was born April 26, 1932 in Jersey City, New Jersey, and attended Fordham University, Woodstock School of Theology and Columbia Teacher's College. He spent 20 years as a Jesuit of the New York Province, teaching theology, Latin and English at Fordham Preparatory School and Regis High School.

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From 1971 to 1984, before coming to NCR, Heyer served as a senior editor for Paulist Press, where he developed the Renew program, served as managing editor for New Catholic World and acquired nearly 400 books. During that time, he also co-founded, with Hiesberger, the Community for Bread and Justice.

Heyer is survived by his daughter, Kristin Heyer, a Boston College theologian, and her husband, Mark Potter; grandsons Owen and Luke Potter; and a sibling, Patricia Gallagher. Condolences may be expressed at [Burke Family Funeral Homes](#).

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