



## Our Sunday Visitor Serving the Church and Millions of Individuals

By Symone C. Skrzycki

**Company:** Our Sunday Visitor

**Address:** 200 Noll Plaza, Huntington

**Telephone:** (260) 356-8400

**Web site:** [www.osv.com](http://www.osv.com)

**Management:** Greg Erlandson, president and publisher, publishing division; Kyle Hamilton, president and general manager, offertory solutions division

**Employees:** approximately 500

### What they do:

Huntington-based Our Sunday Visitor (OSV) is one of the largest Catholic publishing companies in the United States. OSV *Newsweek*, its signature publication, is the most widely circulated national Catholic newspaper in the country. Additional products and services include periodicals, pamphlets, books and religious educational materials.

The offertory services business serves more than 6,000 parishes throughout the United States and Canada. It produces approximately 750 million offering envelopes each year.

The company has employees in 16 states.

### History:

Father John Francis Knoll, a parish priest in nearby Fort Wayne, published the first edition of *Our Sunday Visitor* (now known as *OSV Newsweek*) on May 5, 1912.

The newspaper was the first entity of the organization. OSV began producing offering envelopes in 1917. From the beginning, OSV has called Huntington home. Its current headquarters span 250,000 square feet and is home to a warehouse and fulfillment center.

### Mission:

OSV's credo is "to serve the church."

OUR SUNDAY VISITOR



**Offering envelope production and packaging are underway. Customers can choose from pre-printed or customized designs.**

**Customers:**

Dioceses, parishioners, individuals, families, schools and bookstores are among OSV's clients. It reaches approximately 10 million to 15 million families annually.

**Spreading the word:**

OSV's publications cover three categories: trade book (there are currently 500 titles), curriculum (geared toward Catholic schools and parishes; more than 1,500 products are available) and parish resources (nearly four million informational pamphlets are sold annually).

**Turning a new page:**

Three acquisitions have allowed the company to expand its offerings:

AmericanChurch, Inc. (ACI, 2003). The offering envelope manufacturer and distributor was then OSV's biggest competitor. Today, OSV runs ACI's Ohio printing facility, which serves the Protestant church.

Harcourt Religion Publishers (2009). The curriculum company has offices in Orlando as well as 18 sales staff and consultants across the country.

"That's brought us into a whole new area, which is textbooks," Erlandson declares.

"We brought the inventory here. We're very blessed that we're able to have our own warehouse and fulfillment (center)."

In The Round Design Group (2011). OSV is partnering with the web site development and communication technologies company to help Catholic churches and others maximize communication capabilities and build/maintain community.

"We'll be looking at social networking applications inside those (customer) web sites to help parishes and dioceses, in some cases, stay in contact with their parishioners," Hamilton reveals.

**Changing with the times:**

The electronic world has brought challenges and opportunities.

"The drama in publishing is what's going on in journalism and publishing in general. There's changing reading habits – sort of the digital reality," Erlandson observes.

"If there's anything that kind of defines the change, it's that people want the information they want *how* they want it *when* they want it."

To accommodate those preferences, OSV introduced web-based products, e-books, online giving and more.

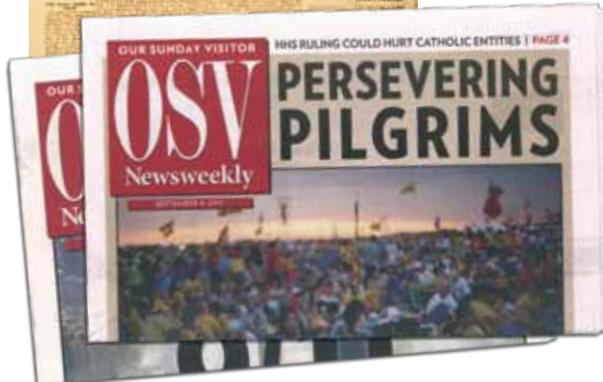
"We have hundreds of churches on that (the online giving system, which was launched three years ago) and it's growing," Hamilton comments.

On the other side of the coin, evolving technology has increased competition for people's time.

"If you look at what's happened in the last six years, we've seen Facebook. We've seen Twitter. We've seen YouTube. The iPad is just a little over a year old and has already turned everything on its head," Erlandson points out.

The solution, he says, is to adapt without losing sight of OSV's mission. Balance, he emphasizes, is everything.

**At its peak, *Our Sunday Visitor* (now *OSV Newsweekly*) had a circulation of one million.**



"We have to continue to do these new areas and develop them, but at the same time we have to make sure that we don't forget what brought us here. We still have to do the best books. We still have to do the best print periodicals."

**Living 'Lean':**

For the last six years, Lean concepts have played a major role in day-to-day operations.

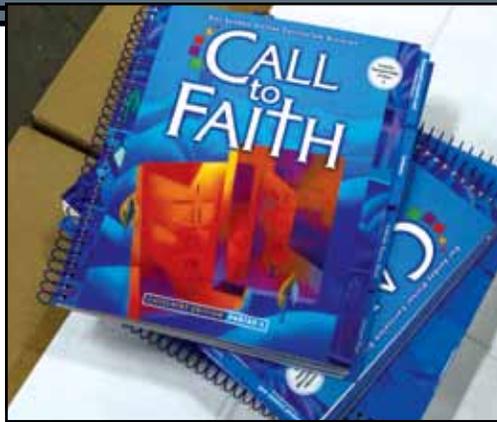
"We very much have a continuous improvement side," Hamilton remarks. "How can we do things better today than we did yesterday? How can we simplify things?"

Erlandson adds, "It started as (an initiative targeting) manufacturing, but both of us are trying to see 'how far can we push this into an office environment?'"

**Growing pains:**

The acquisition of Harcourt Religion Publishers ultimately strengthened OSV's corporate culture. However, it wasn't an easy transition.

Erlandson recalls, "We thought, 'They're Catholic, we're Catholic. This should be a piece of cake.' But it wasn't a piece of cake at all because they (former Harcourt employees) were used to an enormous billion-dollar company. ...



**One of OSV's newest products is its "Call to Faith" series geared toward K-8 students.**

Our Sunday Visitor Institute. Grants focus on catechesis; apologetics and evangelization; vocations to the priesthood and religious life; and stewardship.

"What we prefer is to find projects that are seed projects, kind of the Catholic version of entrepreneurial efforts," Erlandson shares.

He praises the foundation for providing the opportunity to "give twice."

"It took a long time and a lot of sharing, and recognizing what we had to learn from them and (in turn) them recognizing what our culture was. Everyone tells you merger and acquisition is a challenge – and it is a challenge – but I think it made us appreciate some of those elements: knowing the bottom line needs we have, but also keeping an eye on mission.

"You have to find a way to cultivate that."

**Keeping the faith:**

Hamilton joined OSV shortly after graduating from Purdue University in the mid-1980s.

"There are a lot of people here that it really is as much their personal ministry as it is a job," he contends. "That's kind of an overriding part of our culture – a lot of people really love what they're doing and want to be here."

Open communication, a collaborative environment and volunteer initiatives (such as a green team and health and wellness team) help engage and motivate employees.

**Giving back:**

OSV distributes \$2 million to \$3 million each year to Catholic organizations across the country through a foundation called

**OSV's recycling center plays an important role in day-to-day operations. "We recycle everything we possibly can," Kyle Hamilton emphasizes.**



"You're giving not only whatever it is that you're producing (at OSV) – kind of our day job – but at the same time, the revenues that we bring in, we're able to disperse again and give back," Erlandson stresses.

"Virtually every diocese in the United States or an organization in that diocese we've given funds to (in order to) give talks, produce materials and for campaigns," he explains.

Examples include programs for unwed mothers and Hispanic outreach.

"We've been doing more and more in the Spanish area," Erlandson relates. "That obviously is a growing area in the Catholic church."

**Centennial celebrations:**

Various festivities will mark OSV's upcoming 100-year anniversary.

The first is an open house in May for employees, families, retirees, local government and educational officials. Another involves co-sponsoring an annual Catholic media conference in June with *The Criterion*, published by the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.

In September, a large gala in Fort Wayne will feature dinner and mass with Catholic dignitaries and Northeast Indiana business leaders.

**Heart of the matter:**

OSV expects the best from its employees. In return, they are treated like family.

"When you sum it all up, it's about our people," Hamilton asserts. "It's a cliché that people are your greatest asset, but people are only your greatest asset if you let them use their God-given gifts and talents."

Mass is held in OSV's on-site chapel several times a week. In addition, a priest who works in the publishing division welcomes questions from colleagues and is a comforting presence.

"Even if you're not Catholic, you can talk to him about how you're feeling," Hamilton notes.