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Interview with John Gay, president of Justin Press

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Justin Press is a Canadian publishing house founded in Ottawa in 2009. The following is an interview by

Richard Bastien* with its president, John Gay.

There are many publishing houses in North America. Can you tell us why you thought it necessary to add another?

Justin Press is a non-profit Catholic apostolate. While it is true that there are, in the United States many (120 at last count!) Catholic publishing houses, and that these supply a great many excellent books, Catholic publishing is almost absent from Canada.

Does that really matter? The Catholic Church is universal, not national; we don't restrict our reading to works by Canadians.

Certainly not; you would read very little if you did. But Canada has a unique Catholic culture that is both universal and distinctive. The Catholic Church played a formative

role in the development of Canada, and Catholics remain the largest Christian group in the country. We have tried, I think successfully, to bring this Canadian Catholic culture to life in Canadian Saints, a book that describes the lives of the fourteen canonized Canadian saints in a way that shows how a universal faith can take root in a particular place and period. Canadian Converts is a book that describes the path to the Catholic Church by twelve contemporary Canadians, and that shows the continuing vitality of the Church in this country. Books like these would not be published in any other country, since they have a specifically Canadian focus.

You describe publishing as an “apostolate.” What do you mean by that?

Simply that books are a powerful instrument for the transmission of

Christian culture. I know this from personal experience; it was a book, *Mere Christianity*, given to me by a high-school friend, that awakened my interest in the faith, and another, Newman's *Apologia*, that led me to the Church. St Josemaria recognized this when he said that "Reading has made many saints." (*The Way* #116) He also said that Christians have a responsibility to be actively present in the culture of their time, and that they must not abandon it to secularist and often hostile voices.

What criteria does Justin Press use for the publication of its books?

We publish works of apologetics and Catholic culture that reflect the teaching of the Church's magisterium. We have published 34 books to date, counting the forthcoming *The Measure of My Days*.

Many of these books have no specifically Canadian reference; why have you published them?

Another of our objectives is to provide the opportunity for Canadian Catholic writers to publish their work. We hope, in this way, to encourage the development of talented Catholic authors in Canada and to foster the growth of a Catholic reading public.

You mentioned *The Measure of My Days*. Could you tell us what it is about?

It is about death — or rather, about dying. The book deals with the meaning of a “good death”. It is intended as a counter to the impending legislation on euthanasia and assisted suicide, that is, to strengthen Catholics, and others, against the temptation to have recourse to these things. The core of the book is a collection of essays by

people who have cared for a family member during a final illness. The essays do not disguise the pain and difficulty of the experience, but also reveal its value for both the dying person and the families. The book has other unique features: a *Physician's Way of the Cross* by Thomas Bouchard, an essay on medical ethics by French philosopher Therese Nadeau-Lecour, and a series of letters to Jesus written by a woman admitted to a nursing home by Donna Procher.

Where does the name *Justin Press* come from?

I am glad you asked that. The name comes from St Justin Martyr, a Christian apologist martyred in 165 AD.

* Richard Bastien is Vice-President of Justin Press.

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