



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE DELEGATION OF THE
"BIAGIO AGNES" INTERNATIONAL JOURNALISM AWARD**

*Clementine Hall
Monday, 4 June 2018*

[Multimedia]

Dear friends,

Welcome! I greet and I thank Dr Simona Agnes, members of the Panel and all of you present, who in various capacities play important roles in the sphere of communication. The Foundation which promotes the Award bears the name of Biagio Agnes, one of the most renowned Italian journalists, a defender of public service, who spoke many times about the role of the journalist as guarantor of correct, reliable, authentic and accurate information.

Taking his teaching to heart, all of you are committed, first and foremost personally, to communication that is able to place the truth above personal or corporate interests. Moreover, observing how much is produced by the cultural industry, with this Award you identify for society the men and women journalists who distinguish themselves in the responsibility with which they exercise the profession. Indeed, being journalists pertains to the formation of people, of their view of the world and of their attitudes toward events. It is demanding work which at this moment is experiencing a season characterized, on the one hand, by digital convergence and, on the other, by the transformation of the media itself.

It often happens that I see, during apostolic journeys or other encounters, a difference in the means of production: from the classic television crews to the young men and women who with a mobile phone know how to package a news story for some portal. Or also from traditional radio to true and proper interviews also done with a cell phone. All this shows that truly we are experiencing a pressing transformation of the forms and languages of information. It is arduous to

enter this process of transformation, but it is even more necessary if we want to continue to be educators of the younger generations. I said that it is arduous, and I would add that wise vigilance is necessary. Indeed, “when media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously. In this context, the great sages of the past run the risk of going unheard amid the noise and distractions of an information overload” (Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, n. 47).

There are no recipes, but I would like to emphasize three words: peripheries, truth and hope.

Peripheries. Very often, the nerve centres of news production are found in large city centres. However this must never lead us to forget the stories of the people who live at a distance, far away, in the peripheries. At times they are stories of suffering and neglect; other times they are stories of great solidarity that can help everyone look at reality in a renewed way.

Truth. We all know that journalists are called to write what they think, what corresponds to their informed and responsible understanding of an event. It is essential to be demanding with oneself so as not to fall into the trap of the logic of contraposition for interests or ideologies. Today, in a world where everything is fast-paced, it is ever more urgent to appeal to the tormented and arduous law of in-depth research, of debate and, if necessary, also of staying silent rather than injuring a person or group of persons or delegitimizing an event. I know it is difficult, but a life story is understood at the end, and this must help us to become courageous and also, I would say, prophetic.

Hope. It is not a matter of describing a problem-free world: that would be an illusion. It is about opening spaces of hope while denouncing situations of neglect and despair. Journalists must not be content with the mere fact of having described an event according to their own free and informed responsibility. They are called to keep open a space of exit, of meaning, of hope.

I conclude by recalling one of the initiatives that, thanks to the tenacity of its President, the Biagio Agnes Foundation, carries out: the Forum of scientific dissemination, “Check-up for Italy”, a project that grew from one of Biagio Agnes’ ideas, the objective of which is to delve into medico-scientific subjects through accurate information that counters the proliferation of “do-it-yourself” information and quasi news, which can be found increasingly more often online and which attract public attention much more than science. A few weeks ago the Pontifical Council for Culture concluded an international conference on these very themes. In this regard I would like to remind you that “a broad, responsible scientific and social debate needs to take place, one capable of considering all the available information and of calling things by their name. It sometimes happens that complete information is not put on the table; a selection is made on the basis of particular interests, be they politico-economic or ideological” (*Laudato Si'*, n. 135).

I thank you again and I offer my congratulations to the Award recipients. And please, remember to

prayer for me. Thank you.

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