



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II
TO THE DIRECTORS AND STAFF
OF ITALIAN RADIO AND TELEVISION (RAI)**

Monday, 27 November 2000

Ladies and Gentlemen!

1. In addition to visiting St Peter's Basilica to pass through the Holy Door and to celebrate the sacraments of divine grace, you have wanted to include in your Jubilee pilgrimage a meeting with the Successor of Peter. I cordially thank you for this visit and offer each of you an affectionate welcome.

First of all I would like to greet Dr Robert Zaccaria, Chairman of the RAI. I am grateful to him for his courteous words in your name. With equal respect I greet the General Manager, the members of the Board of Directors, the executives, journalists, staff, artists, technicians, workers and pensioners of your large concern. My thoughts also turn to your families, to those who have joined you on this journey of faith and to those who, although wanting to be here, were unable to come.

Today I have the pleasant opportunity to express again my grateful appreciation of the service which, thanks to your skill and dedication, the RAI has offered and continues to offer to the Church and the Holy See. It is a professional service of religious information, which has been even more demanding during the Holy Year. You have wished to meet these increased needs with a special structure called RAI-Jubilee, to accompany this time of grace and cover its major events. Once again, I thank you with all my heart! May the Lord reward you abundantly.

2. We are living in the era of the "image culture", in which radio and television with their enormous potential cover events where they occur and people where they live. This is why they contribute so much to shaping the daily life and morals of an ever more "globalized" society, to use a term popular today. The formidable instruments that technology makes available to you enable you to

transmit messages which reach millions of people, influencing their pace of life and helping to form opinions and lifestyles.

How can we fail to recognize the many positive aspects of your service to society, to families and to individuals? Through your work, people can more easily meet, cultures can engage in dialogue, humanity's dramatic events become the public domain for timely interventions and happy events can be shared. Nor could we fail to mention the educational impact of careful programming attentive to values and responsive to people's expectations. Yours is truly a workshop of words and images.

You are communication workers, *primary agents in the common task of building a society worthy of man*. In this important profession may you always aim at the common good and never yield to mere economic interests.

3. Moreover, believers who work in this sector have an added responsibility because, by their witness, they can affect the complex mechanisms that form the civil and social conscience. This is a challenging mission, which demands courage and often heroism. At times it is necessary to go against the tide, and one can experience loneliness, misunderstanding and even marginalization.

Faced with a culture of the ephemeral which is often more attentive to sensations than to values, Christians are called to be ministers of the inexhaustible newness of God's word, making their own contribution to *a sound culture* of life, of solidarity, of the family and of human rights. This route must be taken if we want to help build the civilization of love.

The Church, for her part, is deeply aware of her duty to evangelize society to the grass roots and knows the importance of engaging in correct and sincere relations with the communications world, because the vast means at their disposal today can greatly help to spread the Good News in every area.

She never tires, therefore, of recalling the *moral dimension of the communications field*. She urges, invites and encourages those who work in social communications to enter into a *correct and respectful relationship with people*, defending and spreading those indispensable human, moral and spiritual values that are also the heritage of the Italian people. And since the religious sense is one of the constitutive elements of the human person, television programming must also be able to tackle, with balance and unbiased openness, the basic problems of life, leaving the door open to solutions enlightened by sound reason and faith.

4. Dear friends, in preparing for this Jubilee celebration you wanted to make an act of concrete solidarity by collecting funds to rehabilitate child soldiers in Sierra Leone. With this project you intended to live fully the spirit of the Jubilee, which is a year of conversion, reconciliation and concern for the neediest. Your efforts also help to sensitize public opinion to one of the most

serious social problems of our time, which affects children and jeopardizes their future. I fervently hope that you will take every opportunity to call attention to this social aspect of the Jubilee Year, working with resolute determination in defending, respecting and loving every human being, especially the weak and defenceless.

May Mary, Star of Evangelization, help you to be faithful to your mission, and may St Clare of Assisi, your protectress, intercede for you. May you also be accompanied by my Blessing, which I cordially impart to you, to all the members of the great working community of the RAI and to all who follow your programmes each day in Italy and in many other countries of the world.

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