



The Holy See

PAUL VI

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER
FOR THE WORLD SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DAY**

Theme: Social Communications and Evangelization in Today's World

*Dear Brothers and Sons,
and all men of goodwill,*

Yet once more We are pleased to address a special message to you on the occasion of World Communications Day, the celebration of which was instituted by the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council (*Inter Mirifica*, no. 18).

The importance of the instruments of social communication in the structure of society today goes on steadily increasing, as likewise does their influence on the shaping of human relations. Conscious of this growing importance We reiterate Our firm conviction that all men are called to offer their own contribution in the field of media, in such a way that all become involved in communication in one way or another, each according to this own particular circumstances. The manner of this involvement can take the most varied forms, ranging from direct intervention in programming and production, to the making of responsible choices concerning what one will watch or listen to. And again, each must make his own informed decision whether to accept wholly or only with some reserve, each particular message which he receives from the social communications media.

We hold, too, that Christians in particular are bound to keep themselves alert always in relation to the media, ready to make fresh evaluations with each new advance in the field, quick to establish updated criteria and thus keep pace with new demands as these present themselves. This Day, now being celebrated for the eight successive year, is intended to promote and to accomplish precisely this. It is a pause for reflection on the mass media, this extraordinary modern phenomenon. It is a moment for re-evaluation, for determining attitudes.

Duty to spread the Word

On this year's World Day, We invite you to reflect with Us on "Social Communications and evangelization in today's world", a theme which suitably coincides with the study conducted in the various countries in preparation for the coming Assembly of the Synod of Bishops.

"If the Church - We said in Our encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam* - is truly conscious of what the Lord wishes her to be, there must arise in her an overflowing fullness and a compulsion to spread, with a clear advertance to a mission which transcends her, to an announcement that she must broadcast" (*Acta Ap. Sedis*, vol. LVI, page 639).

The fulfilment of this duty is conditioned by the particular circumstances of each period in history, and thus it must in our time be carried out by means of the instruments of social communication. "It would be difficult to suggest that Christ's command was being obeyed unless all the opportunities offered by the modern media to extend to vast numbers of people the announcement of the Good News were being used" (Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio*, no. 116).

Evangelization is an integral part of the mission of the Church, sent by Christ into the world to preach the Gospel to every creature (*Mk 16,15*). The Church carries out this duty above all in her liturgical life, but she is constrained to fulfil it also in all the ways and by all the means which are available to her to use as she abides among the people of each continent.

Evangelization continues

On close reflection it will be seen that the entire life of the Christian, in so far as it conforms to the Gospel, is in a permanent situation of evangelization in the midst of the world. The Christian, living as he does amongst other men, sharing their anxieties, sharing the world's suffering, engaging himself in matters of temporal development, himself always there among the currents of human search, idea, debate and exchange - he bears his evangelical witness, he makes his contribution, the contribution of a Christian leaven, a Christian influence within. And in the social communications world, this Christian influence finds a vast perspective and assumes an enormous importance.

There are many urgent necessities which vie for our attention in this context. For one, there is the need to set the contemporary vehicles of information and allied services along a line of development which will facilitate the diffusion of the Good News and create a favourable climate for the strengthening of concepts such as the dignity of the human person, justice, universal brotherhood; values which make it easier for a man to understand his own true vocation and which at the same time open the way to a constructive dialogue with others and to union with God.

Then, there is the search for new and improved methods of apostolate which apply the new audiovisual and related instruments to catechesis, to educational work in many forms, to the presentation of the Church's life, of her liturgy, her aims, her difficulties, but above all to the

witness of faith and charity which animates and ever renews her.

Using the best methods

Finally, Christians must consider how best to employ the instruments of social communication in order to reach countries, societies and persons to whom the apostolate of the Word cannot be brought directly because of particular situations, or scarcity of ministers, or because the Church is unable to exercise her mission freely.

We are well aware of the efforts which are in fact being made and of the research which is being conducted - even if not yet sufficiently advanced - to find solutions to these various problems, thanks to the generous and solid work of Bishops, priests, religious and of well-qualified lay men and women full of high purpose. We are following with careful attention the initiative of Our Commission for Social Communications, of the Episcopal Commissions in the various countries of the world, of the International Catholic Organizations for mass media, and of Catholic professionals. We know very well the difficulties which they are encountering, in some cases because of local conditions, in others because of limited resources, in all to some extent because it is new ground which they are breaking.

We address to them Our word of comfort and encouragement. We address it too to all men who are served by the instruments of social communication and helped towards the true advance of the human family and a better tomorrow in the world. We impart to all Our special Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 16 May 1974

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