



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PLENARY MEETING
OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL
FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Friday, 1 March 2002

*Your Eminences,
Brother Bishops,
Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

1. From the five continents you have come once more to Rome for the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. I thank Archbishop John Foley for his gracious words and for the leadership he has given as President of the Council, with the able cooperation of Bishop Pierfranco Pastore. I wish to take this opportunity *to thank the Council as a whole for the help you continue to offer me in my apostolic ministry*. In today's world, how is the Successor of Peter to accomplish his mission of preaching the Gospel and strengthening his brothers and sisters in the faith if not also through the media of social communication? I am deeply conscious of this, and therefore most grateful to you and to groups like the Knights of Columbus who generously support your work.

2. I welcome the theme which you have chosen for this Plenary Meeting: "The Media and the New Evangelization: Current Activities and Plans for the Future". For it is essential that we see our engagement with the world of the media as *a vital part of that new evangelization* to which the Holy Spirit is now summoning the Church throughout the world. As I stressed in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, we must devise "a detailed pastoral plan...which will enable the proclamation of Christ to reach people, mould communities, and have a deep and incisive influence in bringing Gospel values to bear in society and culture" (No. 29). It is not enough to wait for things to happen or to act in a random way: *now is the time for concrete and effective planning* of the kind you are undertaking at this Plenary Meeting. The special challenge before you is to find

ways to ensure that the voice of the Church is not marginalized or silenced in the modern arena of the media. You have a role to play in ensuring that the Gospel is not confined to a strictly private world. No! *Jesus Christ must be proclaimed to the world*; and therefore the Church must enter the great forum of the media with courage and confidence.

3. Not only must we use the media to communicate Christ to the world, but we must preach the Gospel to the world of the media itself. What I have said elsewhere of the Internet is true of the media as a whole: it is "a new 'forum' understood in the ancient Roman sense of... a crowded and bustling urban space, which both reflected the surrounding culture and created a culture of its own" (*Message for World Communications Day 2002*, 2). *This media culture must itself be evangelized!* And you are called to provide the Church with inspiration and ideas for that great work, drawing upon the highest standards of professionalism and the deepest resources of the Christian faith and Catholic tradition.

This is a task to which the Pontifical Council has given itself with great energy. During this Plenary Meeting, for instance, you will publish two important documents which have been in preparation for some years: "Ethics in the Internet" and "The Church and the Internet". These are signs not only of your professional creativity, but of your commitment to preach the Good News in the fast-moving world of social communications.

4. The Gospel lives always in conversation with culture, for *the Eternal Word never ceases to be present to the Church and to humanity*. If the Church holds back from culture, the Gospel itself falls silent. Therefore, we must be fearless in crossing the cultural threshold of the communications and information revolution now taking place. "Like the new frontiers of other times, this one too is full of the interplay of danger and promise, and not without the sense of adventure which marked other great periods of change" (*ibid.*). For the Church, the adventure is to bring the truth of Christ to bear upon this new world, with all its promise and all its searching and questioning. This will especially involve *the promotion of a genuinely human ethic* which can build communion rather than alienation between individuals (cf. *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 43), and solidarity rather than enmity between peoples.

However, the fundamental question is this: "From this galaxy of sight and sound will the face of Christ emerge and the voice of Christ be heard?" (*Message for World Communications Day 2002*, 6). For in all our planning, we can never forget that *Christ is the Good News!* We have nothing to offer but Jesus, the one mediator between God and man (cf. *1 Tim 2:5*). To evangelize is simply to enable him to be seen and heard, for we know that if there is no room for Christ, there is no room for man.

Therefore, dear Brothers and Sisters, I urge you, in all your planning, *to make room for Christ*. In the print media, in radio and television, in the world of cinema and the Internet, seek to open doors to him who so mercifully is the door of salvation for us. Then the mass media will be a world of

genuine communication, a world not of illusion but of truth and joy. I pray fervently that this will be so, and I entrust your work to Mary, Mother of the Word made flesh. I gladly impart my Apostolic Blessing to all involved in the work of the Pontifical Council, as a pledge of Christ's presence among you and his power upon all that you do in his name.