



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONGRESS ORGANIZED BY
THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS***

*Clementine Hall
Thursday, 7 October 2010*

*Dear Brothers in the Episcopate,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,*

I welcome you with joy at the end of the four days of intense work dedicated to the Catholic press, organized by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. I cordially greet all of you who come from 85 countries and work in daily newspapers, weeklies and other periodicals, and on Internet sites. I greet Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, President of the Dicastery, and thank him for expressing the sentiments of all. I also greet the Secretaries, the Undersecretary, all the Officials and the Personnel. I am pleased to be able to address to you a word of encouragement to persevere with renewed motivation, in your important and qualified task.

The world of the *media* is pervaded by a profound transformation, also within itself. The development of new technologies and, in particular, the widespread use of multimedia, seem to call into question the role of the more traditional and consolidated means of communication. Your Congress is appropriately taking the time to consider the particular role of the Catholic press. In fact, attentive reflection on this aspect brings two specific aspects to the forefront: on the one hand the specificity of the means, the press, and therefore the written word and its timeliness and efficacy, in a society that has seen the multiplication of antennae, parabolic aerials and satellites that have become, as it were, the emblems of a new way of communicating in the era of globalization. On the other hand there is the connotation of "Catholic", with the responsibility that derives from it of being explicitly and essentially faithful, through the daily commitment to taking the highway of the truth.

The quest for the truth must be pursued by Catholic journalists with passionate minds and hearts, but also with the professionalism of competent operators, equipped with adequate and efficient means. This is even more important in our period of history which asks the journalist, as mediator of the flow of information, to put into practice profound change. Today, for example, with the development of new technologies, the world of images has an ever greater influence. However, if on the one hand all this involves aspects that are undoubtedly positive, on the other hand, true image can also become independent of reality. It can give life to a virtual world with various consequences; the first of these is the risk of indifference to the true. In fact, the new technologies, together with the progress they bring, can make the true and the false interchangeable and can lead people to confusing the real with the virtual. Furthermore, the coverage of an event, joyful or sad, can be consumed as a spectacle rather than as an opportunity for reflection. The search for authentic ways to promote the human being is then relegated to the background because the main reason for presenting the event is to evoke emotion. These aspects sound like an alarm: they are an invitation to think about the risk that the virtual may distance people from reality rather than serving as an incentive in the search for the true, for truth.

In this context the Catholic press is called in a new way to express its full potential and, day after day, to account for its indispensable mission. The Church has at hand a facilitating element, given that the Christian faith has a fundamental structure in common with communications: the fact that the *means* and the *message* coincide; indeed the Son of God, the Incarnate Word, is at the same time both a message of salvation and the means through which salvation is brought about. And this is no mere concept but a reality accessible to all and also to those who, in spite of living as protagonists in the complexity of the world, are able to preserve the intellectual honesty of the "little ones" of the Gospel. Moreover the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ, in our time present everywhere, nourishes the capacity for more fraternal and human relations, representing both a place of communion among believers and a sign and an instrument of the vocation to communion of all. The Church's power is Christ, and in his name she "follows" human beings on the highways of the world to save them from the *mysterium iniquitatis*, treacherously active within it. In comparison with any other means of communication, the press evokes more directly the value of the written word. The Word of God came to men and women and was also passed on to us through a book, the Bible. Words remain the fundamental, and in a certain sense, constitutive means of communication: today they are used in various ways and have kept their value intact, even in the so-called "civilization of the image".

On the basis of these brief reflections it seems evident that the challenge of communications is very demanding, both for the Church and for those who share in her mission. Christians cannot ignore the crisis of faith that has arrived in society nor can they simply trust that the patrimony of values passed down past centuries will continue to inspire and shape the future of the human family. The idea of living "as though God did not exist" has proved harmful: rather, the world needs to live "as though God existed", even if no effort to believe is made, otherwise it results in nothing but an "inhuman humanism".

Dear brothers and sisters, anyone who works in the means of communication, if he does not wish to be merely "a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal" (1 Cor 13:1) as St Paul would say must have within him a strong basic option that enables him to deal with the things of the world always placing God at the top of the scale of values. The times in which we live, although they have a strong positive charge because the threads of history are in God's hands and his eternal plan is increasingly revealed, are also still darkened by shadows. Your task, dear members of the Catholic press, is to help contemporary men and women turn to Christ, the one Saviour, and to keep the torch of hope alight in the world, in order to live a dignified life today and to build the future adequately. For this reason I urge you constantly to renew your personal option for Christ, drawing from those spiritual resources underrated by the worldly mindset whereas they are invaluable, and indeed, indispensable. Dear friends, I encourage you to continue in your task that is far from easy and I accompany you with my prayers, so that the Holy Spirit will always make it fruitful. I intend my Blessing, full of affection and gratitude which I willingly impart, to embrace you who are present here and all who work in the Catholic press throughout the world.

© Copyright 2010 - Libreria Editrice Vaticana

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana