



The Holy See

**LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II
TO CARDINAL CAMILLO RUINI
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 50th ANNIVERSARY
OF THE FOUNDATION OF THE ITALIAN ASSOCIATION
OF RADIO LISTENERS AND TELEVISION VIEWERS (AIART)**

*My Venerable Brother
Cardinal Camillo Ruini
President of the Italian Bishops' Conference,*

1. I learned with pleasure that in these days the Italian Association of Radio Listeners and Television Viewers (AIART) is marking the 50th anniversary of its foundation, and I am pleased to address to you my cordial greeting, Your Eminence, and to those responsible for such a praiseworthy Association as well as to those taking part in the celebrations of this meaningful anniversary.

Promoted by Catholic Action when radio and television began to spread throughout Italy, AIART dedicates its attention to the protection and promotion of the values and the rights of the human person and of the family in the sphere of radio-television broadcasting. In the "Directory" on the pastoral service of social communications, approved by the Italian Bishops at their last General Assembly, it is affirmed that it has "the two-fold objective of critically forming the users and to make their voice heard, especially whenever a programme offends the dignity of persons, above all minors" (n. 176).

2. The reasons that led to the Association's birth in 1954 are still valid today; indeed, in our media-oriented society, greater incisiveness and courage are needed to cultivate the taste for the beautiful with sensitivity for what is good and true. It is necessary to help consumers, especially families, to use television sensibly, to know how to choose with balance and wisdom the stations that are in harmony with the Christian perspective of the world and of the human person.

In this year's Message for the World Day of Social Communications I wanted to recall that communication, in each of its forms, must always set a standard of respect for the truth and dignity of the human person (cf. Message for 38th World Day of Social Communications, 23 May, *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 4 February, p. 6, n. 6). The legitimate demand for news and entertainment must be in keeping with the rights of each person and of families, never giving in to the enticements of those who want to confuse truth with opinions, and carefully preventing those most sacred and intimate aspects of family life from being exposed to sensationalism and banal vulgarity.

3. AIART appropriately aspires among its aims to promote the dignity of the person, family, school, and to protect the rights and moral, spiritual and cultural interests of citizens. It is a valuable service given to the Christian community and Italian civil society, whom I encourage to continue to defend in the first place the family and family life. In these years the Association has striven to draw up laws for the protection of minors; for this, it deserves appreciation and recognition. Alongside such important educational action, I hope that constructive dialogue can be cultivated between families and television employees, favouring a serious ethical reflection that is all the more necessary to those who work in the field of social communications in order to carry out a service with considerable implications.

I ask you, Your Eminence, to pass on to the employees and members of AIART my most cordial sentiments, together with my most sincere congratulations on this happy anniversary. I assure you that I will remember you in my prayers, and from my heart I impart my Apostolic Blessing to all of you.

From the Vatican, 10 November 2004

JOHN PAUL II