



The Holy See

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

Friday, 16 March 2001

*Your Eminences,
Dear Brother Bishops,
Dear Friends in Christ,*

1. I am happy to greet you on the occasion of the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. I take this opportunity to express my thanks for all that you are doing in support of the Church's diversified presence in the world of the media. In a special way I wish to congratulate your Council for its specific contribution to the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000.

The Jubilee in fact has been an extraordinary experience of faith in the City of Rome and throughout the Church. A significant part of its impact was due to the coverage given to the Jubilee events by the media. The Pontifical Council rendered invaluable service by coordinating worldwide telecasts of many of the Holy Year ceremonies, and by offering professional and pastoral assistance to the thousands of men and women working in the fields of radio, television, the print media and photography. The Council was also responsible for organizing the memorable Jubilee celebrations for Journalists in June, and for the Jubilee for the World of Entertainment in December. Your commitment was undoubtedly sustained by the desire to make the Jubilee Year a genuine response to the Gospel injunction to bring "good news to the poor, liberty to captives and new sight to the blind" (*Lk 4:18*).

2. Over the years the Pontifical Council for Social Communications has acquired a very positive experience of cooperation with the international media in bringing the important events of the Church's life to people in all parts of the world. My thoughts go back to the beginnings of this

activity, and especially to the Holy Year of 1975 when your Council, under the leadership of Cardinal Andrzej Maria Deskur and with the generous assistance of the Knights of Columbus, set a pattern as it were for this kind of religious broadcasting. Thanking God for what has already been achieved, I encourage your Council to carry forward the task entrusted to you by the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*.

3. Work done at your previous Plenary Meeting in 1999 made it possible for the Council to publish last June the document *Ethics in Communications*, which sought to offer moral guidance regarding the use of the media, a varied and complex human reality in which ethical concerns are often subordinated to commercial interests. I am pleased that in these days you have been considering a similar document on the theme of *Ethics in Internet*, which would indeed be very timely, given the rapid spread of cyber-communications and the many moral questions involved. The Church cannot be a mere spectator of the social results of technological advances, which have such decisive effects on people's lives. Your reflection on *Ethics in Internet* therefore can be of great help to the Church's Pastors and faithful in facing the many challenges of the emerging "media culture".

The problems and opportunities created by new technology, by the process of globalization, by deregulation and privatization of the media present new ethical and indeed spiritual challenges to those who work in social communications. These challenges will be met effectively by those who accept that "serving the human person, building up community grounded in solidarity and justice and love, and speaking the truth about human life and its final fulfilment in God were, are, and will remain at the heart of ethics in the media" (*Ethics in Communications*, No. 33). Praying that these high goals will always guide the work of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, and entrusting your every effort to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Word Incarnate, I gladly impart to you and your families my Apostolic Blessing.