



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

Saturday, 23 April 2005

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is a pleasure to meet with you and I cordially greet you, journalists, photographers, television technicians and all those who, in various sectors, belong to the world of communications. Thank you for your visit and especially for the service that you have provided to the Holy See and the Catholic Church throughout these days. I cordially greet Archbishop John Patrick Foley, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, and I thank him for the words he addressed to me on behalf of all who are present.

It can be said that, thanks to your work, the attention of the entire world has been fixed for some weeks now on the Basilica, on St Peter's Square and on the Apostolic Palace, the latter where my Predecessor, the unforgettable Pope John Paul II, peacefully ended his earthly existence, and where afterwards, in the Sistine Chapel, the Cardinals elected me as his Successor.

2. Thanks to all of you, these historically important ecclesial events have had worldwide coverage. I know how hard you have worked, far away from your homes and families, for long hours and in sometimes difficult conditions. I am aware of the skill and dedication with which you have accomplished your demanding task. In my own name, and especially on behalf of Catholics living far from Rome, who were able to participate in these stirring moments for our faith as they were taking place, I thank you for all you have done. The possibilities opened up for us by modern means of social communication are indeed marvellous and extraordinary!

The Second Vatican Council spoke of the great potential of the media. In fact, the Council Fathers devoted their first Document to this theme, and said that the media, "by their nature, are capable of reaching and influencing not only individuals, but whole masses of people, indeed the whole of

humanity" (*Inter Mirifica*, n. 1). Ever since 4 December 1963, when the Decree *Inter Mirifica* was promulgated, humanity has been witnessing an extraordinary media revolution, affecting every aspect of human life.

3. Fully aware of her mission and the importance of the media, the Church, especially beginning with the Second Vatican Council, sought out collaboration with the world of social communications. Certainly, John Paul II was a great pioneer of this open and sincere dialogue, together with you, workers in the field of social communications, with whom he maintained constant and fruitful relations throughout the more than 26 years of his Pontificate. And it was precisely to those responsible for social communications that he wished to dedicate one of his last Documents, the Apostolic Letter of 24 January, which calls to mind that "ours is an age of global communication in which countless moments of human existence are either spent with, or at least confronted by, the different processes of the mass media" (*Rapid Development*, n. 3).

It is my desire to continue this fruitful dialogue, and in this way I share an observation made by John Paul II: "The current phenomenon of communications impels the Church towards a sort of pastoral and cultural revision, so as to deal adequately with the times in which we live" (*ibid.*, n. 8).

4. The responsible contribution of each and every one is needed, so that instruments of social communication can provide a positive service to the common good. An ever better understanding of the perspectives and responsibility that their development involves becomes necessary with regard to the influences which, as a matter of fact, can be ascertained on the conscience and mentality of individuals and on the formation of public opinion. Those who thus work in this field must be given clear indications of their ethical responsibility, especially regarding the sincere search for truth and protection of the centrality and dignity of the person. Only with these conditions are the media able to respond to the design of God, who placed them at our disposal "to discover, to use and to make known the truth, also the truth about our dignity and about our destiny as his children, heirs of his eternal Kingdom" (*ibid.*, n. 14).

5. Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, I thank you again for the important service that you provide to society. I extend to each one of you my cordial appreciation with the assurance of a remembrance in my prayer for all your intentions. I extend my greeting to your families and to all who belong to your work community. Through the intercession of the heavenly Mother of Christ, I invoke abundantly upon each of you the gifts of God, through whom I impart my Blessing to all.

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