



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY OF
THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE**

Clementine Hall

Saturday, 13 November 2010

Your Eminences,

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate and in the Priesthood,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am pleased to meet with you at the end of the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Culture, in which you examined the theme: “Culture of Communication and New Languages”. I would like to thank Archbishop Gianfranco Ravasi for his kind words and to greet all the participants. I am grateful for this contribution to the study of such a significant theme for the mission of the Church.

To speak about communication and language means not only to touch upon a crucial topic of our world and culture, but, for us believers, means drawing close to this mystery of God. Through his goodness and wisdom, he wanted to reveal himself and to make known to man the mystery of his will (*cf.* Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution, *Dei Verbum*, 2).

In Christ God indeed revealed himself to us as *Logos*, which is communicated to us and challenges us, creating the relationship on which is founded our identity and dignity as human people, loved as children by the one Father (*cf.* Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, nn. 6, 22, 23). Communication and language are also essential dimensions of the culture of humanity, which consists of information and notions, of beliefs and lifestyles, but also of laws, without which people could hardly progress towards humanity and social relations. I value the original decision to inaugurate the Plenary Meeting of the Assembly in the Promoteca Hall at the Campidoglio [Capitol], the civil and institutional heart of Rome. The inauguration included a

roundtable discussion on the theme: “In the City, listening to the languages of the soul”.

The Dicastery desired in this way to express one of its essential tasks: to listen to the men and women of our time in order to promote new opportunities to proclaim the Gospel. Thus, listening to the voices of the globalized world, we notice the profound cultural transformation that is taking place with new languages and new forms of communication, which also foster new and problematic anthropological models.

In this context, the Pastors and the faithful notice several difficulties in the communication of the Gospel message and in the transmission of the faith in an ecclesial community. As I wrote in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*: “a great many Christians need to have the word of God once more persuasively proclaimed to them, so that they can concretely experienced the power of the Gospel” (n. 96). Problems sometimes seem to increase when the Church turns to the men and women who are far away or indifferent to an experience of faith. The Gospel message reaches them in a feeble and non-inclusive way. In a world that makes communication its winning strategy, the Church, repository of the mission to communicate to all peoples the Gospel of Salvation, does not remain indifferent and alien. On the contrary she seeks to avail herself of the new languages and new forms of communication with a renewed and creative spirit, but also with a critical eye and attentive discernment.

The incapacity of language to communicate the profound sense and beauty of the experience of faith can contribute to the indifference of many people, especially the young, it can become the reason for estrangement. The Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* already confirmed this, revealing that an inadequate presentation of the Gospel conceals rather than reveals the authentic face of God and religion (*cf.* n. 19). In the search for truth, the Church wishes to speak to everyone but for the dialogue and communication to be effective and fruitful, it is necessary to tune in to the same frequency, in the context of friendly and sincere gatherings, in that ideal “Courtyard of the Gentiles”, the project I proposed a year ago to the Roman Curia and which the Dicastery is now putting into practice in various emblematic places of European culture.

Today many young people, stunned by the infinite possibilities offered by computer networks or by other forms of technology, establish methods of communication that do not contribute to their growth in humanity. Rather they risk increasing their sense of loneliness and disorientation. In the face of these phenomena I have spoken on various occasions of an educational emergency, a challenge to which one can and should respond with creative intelligence, committing oneself to promote a humanizing communication which stimulates a critical eye and the capacity to evaluate and discern.

In today’s culture of technology too, the Gospel is the guide and the permanent paradigm of inculturation, purifying, healing and elevating the best features of the new languages and the new forms of communication. For this difficult and intriguing task, the Church can draw on the

extraordinary patrimony of symbols, images, rites and acts of her tradition. The rich and concentrated symbolism of the Liturgy in particular must shine out with all its power as a communicative feature to deeply touch the human conscience, the heart and intellect. The Christian tradition, moreover, has always closely connected the language of art to the Liturgy, whose beauty has a special communicative power. Last Sunday, we experienced this artistic language in Barcelona at the Basilica of the Sagrada Família, a work of Antoni Gaudí who brilliantly combined the sense of the sacred and of the Liturgy with modern artistic forms and with the best architectural traditions.

Yet the beauty of Christian life is even more effective than art and imagery in the communication of the Gospel Message. In the end, love alone is worthy of faith and proves credible. The lives of the Saints and Martyrs demonstrate a singular beauty which fascinates and attracts, because a Christian life lived in fullness speaks without words. We need men and women whose lives are eloquent and who know how to proclaim the Gospel with clarity and courage, with transparency of action and with the joyful passion of charity.

After going on [pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela](#) where I had the opportunity to admire in thousands of people, especially the young, the involving power of witness in the joy of walking together towards truth and beauty, I hope that many of our contemporaries can ask as disciples of Emmaus, listening to the voice of the Lord: “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Lk 24:32).

Dear friends, I would like to thank you all for your daily work, done with competency and dedication and, as I trust you to the maternal protection of Mary Most Holy, I also cordially impart an Apostolic Blessing to you all.

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