



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE 17th ASSEMBLY
OF THE EUROPEAN BROADCASTING UNION**

Saturday, 30 April 2011

Dear Friends,

I am very happy to welcome all of you, members and participants in the 17th Assembly of the European Broadcasting Union. This year the Union is a guest of Vatican Radio, on the occasion of its 80th anniversary.

I greet Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, President of the [Pontifical Council for Social Communications](#). I thank Mr Jean-Paul Philippot, President of the European Broadcasting Union, and Fr Federico Lombardi, General Director of Vatican Radio, for the courteous words with which they have presented the nature of your meeting and the problems you must face.

When my Predecessor Pius xi spoke to Guglielmo Marconi about setting up a radio broadcasting station in Vatican City State equipped with the best available technology in this epoch, he showed that he had clearly perceived the direction in which the world of communications was developing and the potential the radio could offer for the service of the Church's mission.

Through the radio the Popes were effectively able to broadcast beyond frontiers messages of great importance for humanity, such as the famous [Messages of Pius XII](#) during the Second World War which gave a voice to the deepest aspirations of justice and peace, or that of [John XXIII](#) at the height of the crisis between the United States and the Soviet Union in 1962.

[Pius XII](#) was also able to broadcast hundreds of thousands of messages from families concerning prisoners and those who disappeared during the war, carrying out a humanitarian initiative which earned him undying gratitude. And also, via radio, he kept alive the hopes of believers and of

peoples subjected to regimes, that oppressed human rights and religious freedom, for a long time.

The Holy See is aware of the extraordinary potential the world of communications has in reserve for the progress and growth of people and of society. It could be said that the Church's entire teaching in this sector, starting with [Pius XII's Discourses](#), passing through the documents of the [Second Vatican Council](#), to my most recent [Messages](#) on the new digital technologies, contains a vein of optimism, hope and sincere sympathy for those who are committed in this area to encouraging encounter and dialogue, to serve the human community and to contribute to the peaceful development of society.

Each one of you knows of course that there are latent difficulties and risks in the development of social communications. Allow me to express to all of you my interest and my solidarity in your important work. In today's society, the basic values for the good of humanity are at stake, and public opinion, in the formation of which your work has great importance, is often disoriented and divided. You well know what the concerns of the Church are on respect for human life, the defence of the family, the recognition of the authentic rights and the just aspirations of peoples. Her concerns over the imbalances caused by underdevelopment and hunger in many parts of the world, the reception of immigrants, of unemployment and of social security, the new forms of poverty and social marginalization, discrimination and the violations of religious freedom, disarmament and the search for a peaceful solution to conflicts.

I have mentioned many of these issues in the Encyclical [Caritas in Veritate](#). To produce each day balanced and correct information and a mature debate in order to find the best shared solutions on these issues in a pluralist society, is the task of radio stations as well as television channels.

It is a task that demands great professional honesty, correctness and respect, openness to different perspectives, clarity in the treatment of problems, freedom with regard to ideological barriers and an awareness of the complexity of the problems. It is a matter of patient research to identify the "daily truth" which best expresses values in life the better to direct the journey of society, and sought with humility by everyone.

In this search, the Catholic Church has a specific contribution to offer, which she intends to offer by witnessing to her adherence to the truth that is Christ, yet doing so in a spirit of openness and dialogue. As I said during my meeting with leading figures from the worlds of British culture and politics at Westminster Hall in London last September, religion does not seek to manipulate non-believers, but to assist reason in the discovery of objective moral principles. Religion contributes by "purifying" reason, helping it not to fall prey to distortions, such as manipulation by ideology or partial application that fails to take full account of the dignity of the human person.

At the same time, religion likewise recognizes its need for the corrective of reason in order to avoid excesses, such as fundamentalism or sectarianism. "Religion ... is not a problem for legislators to

solve, but a vital contributor to the national conversation". I therefore invite you too, "within your respective spheres of influence, to seek ways of promoting and encouraging dialogue between faith and reason" with a view to serving the common good of the nation.

Yours is a "public service", a service to the people, to help them each day to know and understand better what is happening and why it is happening, and to communicate actively so as to accompany them in society's journey together. I am well aware that this service meets with difficulties that take on different features and proportions in different countries. These can include the challenge of competition from commercial broadcasters, the conditioning of politics understood as the carving up of power rather than service of the common good, scarcity of economic resources made more acute by situations of crisis, the impact of developments in new technologies of communication, the laborious search for viewers and listeners. But the challenges of the modern world on which you have to report are too great and too urgent to let yourselves become discouraged or tempted to give up in the face of such difficulties.

Twenty years ago, in 1991, when your General Assembly was received in the Vatican by the [Venerable John Paul II](#), whom tomorrow I shall have the joy of beatifying, he encouraged you to develop your mutual collaboration in order to favour the growth of the community of the peoples of the world.

Today, I think of the processes unfolding in certain countries of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, some of which are also members of your Association. We know that the new forms of communication continue to play a role of some significance in these very processes. I urge you to place your international contacts and activities at the service of reflection and commitment aimed at ensuring that the instruments of social communication promote dialogue, peace and development of peoples in solidarity, overcoming cultural separation, uncertainties and fears.

Finally, dear friends, while I sincerely wish all of you and your Association much success in your work, I would also like to express my thanks for the specific collaboration that on many occasions you have provided for my ministry, and that you continue to provide, as during the great festivals of Christmas and Easter, or on [my Apostolic Journeys](#). For me too, and for the Catholic Church, you are therefore important allies and friends in our mission. In this spirit I am pleased to invoke the Lord's blessing upon all of you, upon those who are dear to you and upon your work.