



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS TO MEMBERS OF THE "CORALLO" ASSOCIATION

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 22 March 2014*

I thank you very much for what you have said, and I thank you all for the work you do. That truth ... seeking the truth with the media. But not only truth! *Truth, goodness and beauty*, the three together. Your work ought to unfold along these three paths: the path of truth, the path of goodness and the path of beauty. But that truth, goodness and beauty which are consistent!, that come from within, that are human. And along the path of truth, along these three paths we can encounter errors, even traps. "I think, I seek the truth...": take care not to become an intellectual without intelligence. "I am setting out, I am seeking goodness...": take care not to become an ethicist without goodness. "I take pleasure in beauty...": yes, but take care not to do what is often done, i.e. "masking" beauty, looking for cosmetics to create an artificial beauty that does not exist. Truth, goodness and beauty as they come from God and are present in man. And this is the work of the media, your work.

You mentioned two things, and I would like to go back to them. First of all, *the harmonious unity of your work*. There are great media outlets and those which are small.... But if we read Chapter 12 of St Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians we see that there is neither great nor small: each fulfills a role, the help he gives the others. The hand cannot exist without the head, and so on. We are all members, also your media outlets which may be greater or smaller are members, are harmonized through the vocation to service in the Church. No one needs to feel that he is small, too small compared with someone too great. We are all little in the sight of God, in Christian humility, but we all have a role. Everyone! Like in the Church.... I would ask this question: who is more important in the Church? The Pope or that old lady who prays the Rosary every day for the Church? Only God can say: I cannot say. But everyone is important to this harmony, because the Church is the harmony of diversity. The body of Christ is this harmony in diversity, and the One who creates this

harmony is the Holy Spirit: He is the most important of all. This is what you said, and I wish to emphasize it. It is important: to seek unity and not to follow the logic that the big fish swallows the little one.

You spoke of something else, which I mentioned in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. You spoke about *clericalism*. It is one of the evils, one of the evils of the Church. But it is a “complicit” evil, because priests take pleasure in the temptation to clericalize the laity, but many of the laity are on their knees asking to be clericalized, because it is more comfortable, it is more comfortable! This is a double sin! We must overcome this temptation. The layperson must be lay, one who is baptized, with the power that comes from his baptism. A servant, but with his lay vocation, and one does not sell this, one does not bargain with it, one should not be complicit with another person.... No. I am this way! Because that is my identity. I have heard this so many times in my homeland: “In my parish, you know, I have an excellent layman: he is a good organizer.... Your Eminence, why don’t we make him a deacon?”. The priest’s suggestion is immediately to clericalize. Let’s make this layman.... Why? Why is the deacon or priest more important than the layman? No! This is the mistake! Is he a good layman? Then let him continue and grow as such. Why treat his Christian identity lightly. In my opinion, clericalism impedes the layman’s growth. But keep in mind what I said: the two parties are accomplices in the temptation. For there would be no clericalism if there weren’t laymen who wanted to be clericalized. Is this clear? Therefore I thank you for what you do. Harmony: this is another form of harmony, because the priest cannot carry out the role of the layman, and the Holy Spirit is free: sometimes he inspires the priest to do something, at other times he inspires the layman. We talk about this in the pastoral Council. Pastoral Councils are so important: a parish — and here I cite the Code of Canon Law — a parish that does not have a pastoral Council and a Finance Council, is not a good parish: it lacks life.

Then there are so many virtues. I noted at the beginning: travel along the path of goodness, of truth and of beauty. There are so many virtues along these paths. But there are also the *sins* of the media! Allow me to speak a little about this. In my view, the sins of the media, the gravest, are those that go along the road of lies and falsehood, and there are three: *misinformation*, *calumny* and *defamation*. The last two are very grave! but not as dangerous as the first. Why? I will explain. Calumny is a mortal sin, but one may clarify and come to know that it is calumny. Defamation is a mortal sin, but one can arrive at saying: this is an injustice, because this person did that a long time ago, but he repented, he changed his life. But misinformation is telling only half of the story, the half that is more convenient for me, and not telling the other half. And so the person who is watching TV or listening to the radio cannot judge correctly, because he doesn’t have all of the facts and they aren’t given to him. Please flee from these three sins. Misinformation, calumny and defamation.

I thank you for what you do. I have asked Msgr Sanchirico to give you the address that I had written: but the words [of the President] inspired me to speak to you spontaneously, and I spoke with the language of the heart: hear it this way. Not with the Italian language, because I don’t

Speak in the style of Dante!.... I thank you very much, and now I invite you to pray an *Ave Maria* to Our Lady before giving you the blessing. *Ave Maria*...

Address prepared by the Holy Father:

Dear Friends,

I welcome you and I thank the President for the words with which he introduced our meeting. I also extend my greetings to all those who are following us on the Corallo Association's radio and television network. These broadcasters seek to express the commitment of the Church in Italy *to be close and to be a friend* to every person, and to speak to people where they dwell, live, work, love and suffer.

You are a "*net*". I would like to begin with this image, which makes us think of Jesus' first disciples: they were fishermen, they worked with nets. Jesus called them to follow him and he made of them "fishers of men" (Mt 4:19). You too can be "fishers of men" through your local radio and television network which covers the whole of Italy; it is a simple, popular network and it would do well to remain so. Reaching every city and quarter, your broadcasts become instruments so that the Lord's voice might be heard by everyone.

The episode of the prophet Elijah on Mount Horeb springs to mind (cf. 1 Kings 19:9-13), as he stood before the cave and beheld startling phenomena: the mighty wind, the earthquake, the fire ... but the Lord did not speak through these. Then Elijah heard "a still small voice" (v. 12). And in that light breeze he heard the Lord's voice speaking to him. Well, your radio and television network can broadcast something of that voice over the air so that it can speak to the men and women who are looking for a word of hope and reassurance for their lives.

In this way you become the voice of a Church that is not afraid to enter into man's deserts, to go out to meet him, to go in search of him in his restlessness, in his dismay, dialoguing with everyone, even with those who, for various reasons, have distanced themselves from the Christian community and feel far from God. But in reality God is never far away. He is always nearby! And you can contribute to making that "still small voice" resound, a voice capable of saying to each person: "The Teacher is here and is calling for you" (Jn 11:28). It is this being called by name that warms the heart!

In what way can you, through your "net", help Jesus Christ in his mission, in proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God today?

First, I would say by giving *attention to issues that are important* for the lives of individuals, families and society; and treating these issues not in a sensationalistic manner, but rather responsibly, with

sincere passion for the common good and for the truth (cf. John Paul II, *Message for the 28th World Communications Day, 24 January 1994*). Often, in large broadcasting stations, these issues are addressed, without *due respect for individuals and the values in question*, in a spectacular way. On the contrary, it is essential that this respect in your broadcasts is evident, and that people's stories are never instrumentalized.

And the other contribution which you can make by the human and ethical quality of your work. You can help to form what Pope Benedict called a media 'eco-system', that is, an appropriate environment that maintains a just equilibrium between silence, words, images and sounds (cf. *Message for the 46th World Communications Day, 24 January 2012*). Today there is much pollution, and even the media environment has its forms of pollution, its "poisons". People know it, they perceive it, but then unfortunately they become accustomed to breathing in contaminated air from the radio and television, which is not healthy. Clean air needs to be circulated so that people might breathe freely and receive oxygen for mind and soul.

All of this requires a fitting professionalism, but it goes beyond that. It requires you to live "communication in terms of 'neighbourliness'" (*Message for the 48th World Communications Day, 24 January 2014*). It calls you to become the face of a Church who becomes a "good Samaritan", even through radio and television. The Parable of the Good Samaritan, in fact, can also be a parable for the communicator: "Those who communicate, in effect, become neighbours. The Good Samaritan not only draws nearer to the man he finds half dead on the side of the road; he takes responsibility for him" (*ibid.*). In this parable Jesus reverses the situation: "It is not just about seeing the other as someone like myself, but of the ability to make myself like the other" (*ibid.*).

Therefore, as I thank you for your commitment, I ask the Lord that your network may increasingly become an experience of neighbourliness, capable of giving voice to the Lord who stirs hearts and spreads hope and joy.