



The Holy See

PAUL VI

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER
FOR THE WORLD SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DAY**

Theme:

Social Communications and the Family

Beloved Sons and Daughters, and men of good will everywhere,

The observation of the third annual "World Communications Day" with the theme "Social Communications and the Family" affords Us an opportunity which We accept with pleasure, as We have done on previous similar occasions, of inviting all those who are interested, to a positive and fruitful meditation on this subject. Indeed, who can claim today not to be affected by a phenomenon of such world-wide proportions as the ever growing expansion, of the press, radio, motion pictures and television, or by their immense influence on families?

One obvious consideration comes at once to mind: the instruments of social communication have now penetrated into the very heart of the family circle. They influence people's time-tables. They change established habits. They form the subject of conversation and stimulate discussions. Above all, these instruments have an impact on the psychology of those who use them. This impact, at times truly profound, is exercised over the emotions and the intellect. It extends to the moral, as well as the religious spheres. There is hardly a news item or matter of discussion, one may almost say, that is not brought within the family circle by means of the printed page, or an audiovisual means, so that it can influence the conduct of one and all, awakening the most diverse reactions.

The advantages of this new situation are undeniable. There is no doubt that the intellectual development of young people is hastened. Their cultural heritage is enriched. Their hearts and spirits are more easily alerted to the great problems of the human community, such as peace, justice and development. It is also clear however, that the persuasive force of these new means can be utilized for good or for evil. Moreover, an abuse, even be it only quantitative, of audio-visual

programmes, can bring with it a deterioration of the values of family life; as a result it may well set people apart, instead of bringing them together. It is necessary then, to form consciences, to use intelligently these sources of cultural enrichment. This is a new chapter added to the traditional duties of educators. It is time that the family undertake its "aggiornamento" in this area, so that with the indispensable cooperation of the school, the family may progressively take care to train consciences to come of their own accord to calm and objective judgments leading them to accept or reject the various programmes that are offered to them.

The work of education however, does not stop here. It is necessary that a dialogue be established between the families and those who are responsible for social communications. The families are called upon not simply to make known their wishes and criticisms, but also to show understanding for those who, often at the price of strenuous effort, provide them day by day with so many elements for their culture and entertainment.

The communicators must, in their turn, know and respect the needs of the family. This presupposes at times much courage on their part, and always a high sense of responsibility. It means in practice, that they should exclude on the one side all that can damage the family in its existence, its stability, its order and its happiness, for every attack on the true fundamental values of the family - whether it be eroticism or violence, the defense of divorce or antisocial attitudes among young people - is an attack on genuine human welfare and the good of society. On the other hand, communicators have the difficult task of educating the public to know, appreciate and love values that are often unknown or despised but which are the strength and the glory of a given society: such as, the dedication of one's self to a great ideal, the sense of sacrifice and the hidden heroism of daily routine.

We invite all families to collaborate with those associations which by constant contact make known their yearnings and just requests to those responsible for social communications. May this World Communications Day mark the beginning of a genuinely fruitful and constructive dialogue, heralding a more tranquil future in this troubled area of modern living.

The question of the presence of Christians in the professional world of social communications now calls for close consideration. If there is a sector of present-day life where this presence is especially necessary and desirable, it is surely that of social communications. Families should not be deterred by any misgiving they might have when one of their members wishes to embark on such a career. Evil that is much more publicized than good, is not bound up with one particular profession more than with another. Thank God, in the world of social communications, no less than in others, there are shining examples of moral living both in professional and in family life. There are those in the world of journalism, the theatre and the field of motion pictures who live out their faith in God in the calm and conscientious exercise of their profession. The very history of Christianity teaches us that the force of evangelical leaven increases rather than diminishes in proportion to the difficulties caused by one's environment. The evangelical leaven gathers force by

vivifying and transforming an environment. Young people who have received a solid moral and religious formation and who are inspired by a genuine ideal are therefore, to be encouraged to engage in the different activities of social communication.

A realistic appraisal of the situation leads one to see that the influence of these techniques, far from being lessened; will be on the increase in the society of the future. Nothing should be left undone in order that this influence have a positive effect on every family.

We hope that Our voice on the occasion of this World Communications Day will be heard in every country to encourage good production in the field of social communications; to enhearten those who employ these means in the service of family life and thus contribute towards a happy future for the great family of mankind.

From the Vatican, 7 April 1969

PAULUS PP. VI