



The Holy See

PAUL VI

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

***Theme: The role of Communications Media
in promoting unity among men***

*Dear Brothers and Sons,
and all men of good will,*

"The means of social communication at the service of the unity of mankind": such is the goal which the World Day of Social Communications proposes this year for your reflection, for your study, for your discussions, for your prayer and for your activity.

Who would not wish with all his heart to see the unity of the human family promoted more effectively? Have not men become aware of the solidarity that unites them in daily life as well as in exceptional moments, in the face of scientific achievements as well as in the face of world calamities. In every way, men seem determined to widen continuously the spheres where fruitful and peaceful collaboration is established at the various levels of economic, social, cultural and political life, without, for all that, losing the richness of so many multiform characteristics. Would it be utopian to imagine a universal human family in which all men would be fraternal citizens? (cf. *Populorum Progressio*, n. 79).

In any case, the conviction of Christians is well assured: "God... has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood. All men have been created in the image of God... and all men are called to one and the same goal, namely, God Himself" (*Gaudium et Spes*, n. 34, p. 1).

Desire for unity

Solidarity in the vocation of the first Adam, as well as in his sin, is henceforth lived and intensified in Christ: by His cross He has broken down the wall that divided the people, reconciling them to God (c *Eph.* 12,14), and by His resurrection He has diffused His Spirit of charity into the hearts of men, these scattered children of God whom He has called to form in

Him one People, one single Body. While the Church too experiences tensions and even divisions within her bosom, she will not rest until she realizes this unity in a visible way among her children of every language and nation, in all social and professional environments. This being so, the Church is conscious of being a prophetic sign of unity and peace for the entire world (cf. *Is.* 11,12).

Given the fact that the means of social communication have taken of such importance that they are used almost universally in modern culture, the question now arises: will the means of social communication become the privileged means of promoting this unity and brotherhood, that is to say, this mutual respect, this open dialogue and this trustful collaboration in a world where problems are becoming planetary?

Existing tensions

We would gravely delude ourselves were we to underestimate the power of the tragic tensions that exist in the social environments, between societies and persons, between industrialized nations and nations of the Third-World, between adherents of ideological or political systems that are antagonistic. Conflicts which often provoke increasing repercussions all over the world continue to create dangerous rifts and translate themselves, alas, into acts of violence and warlike situations. In the face of these manifestations of tensions and discords among men and nations, we certainly cannot expect the press, the radio, the television and the cinema to minimize them or pass over them in silence. Is not their role quite the contrary, that is, to bring out all the aspects of a reality, even the most tragic ones, to approach them in an ever more profound and objective way, of a reality where misery unfortunately exists and the sin of selfishness spreads, in short, the multiple wounds that bleed in the heart of the great human family, but also of a reality where positive accomplishments appear, the signs of renewal and the reasons for hope?

Courageous confrontation

Who would say that one is not tempted to use these powerful audiovisual means, with their profound impact, in order to aggravate tensions, discords and division, pushing them to their extreme consequences, going so far as to discourage many men of good will in their imperfect but generous attempts to promote unity and brotherhood? We must denounce this risk with force and confront it with courage. On the other hand, must we not admit that the immense possibilities of the marvelous means of social communication, still insufficiently explored, help readers, listeners and viewers become aware of the real problems of others, help men know each other better and appreciate each other more in their legitimate differences, overcome obstacles of all kinds in a spirit of understanding and love, better still, experience true solidarity in spite of so many obstacles, a solidarity that unites us one with the other and one for the other in seeking the common good of the great community of men? (cf. Allocution to the General Assembly of the U.N.O. in New York, October 4, 1965, in *A.A.S.*, 57, 1965, pp. 879-884). The very future of man is at stake, man, "to whom all things on earth should be related as their centre and crown" (cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 12).

Reflect and pray

Artisans and beneficiaries of the means of social communication, unite your efforts that this may be so everywhere throughout the world and at all levels of participation and responsibility. Reject whatever disrupts true dialogue among

men, whatever masks duties of rights of men, whatever fans misunderstandings and hatred, whatever diverts from peace and ever widening brotherhood, and whatever hinders us from seeking truth in liberty. Finally, is not the following question posed to each one of us: what are you seeking? what do you want? do you wish to be a brother to your brother, yes or no? For if communication is not by itself already a communion, then it can be its privileged road.

As for you, Christian, brothers and sons, We ask you especially to reflect and to pray. We also ask you to use all the means your competence and zeal suggest with boldness, discretion and courage, so that from so many threads interwoven and frequently enmeshed you may draw out the fabric and weave a world of brothers and sons of God.

"Overcoming all the destructive forces of contestation and confused talk, it is the city of men which must be built up, a city of which the sole durable cement is fraternal love between races and peoples as well as between classes and generations" (Discourse to the General Conference of the I.L.O., Geneva, June 10, 1969, n. 21, in *A.A.S.*, 61, 1969, p.500).

To all those who work through means of social communication to realize this aspiration of men according to the plan of God, We impart whole heartedly our particular Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 25 March 1971

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