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Pastoral Instruction....
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Pontifical Commission for the Means of
Social Communication

PASTORAL INSTRUCTION

FOR THE APPLICATION OF
THE DECREE OF THE
SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL
ON THE MEANS OF

SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

1971

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20005

His Holiness Pope Paul VI has graciously approved in its entirety this Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication, and confirmed it with his authority. He ordered it to be published so that it can be put into effect by all concerned, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given in Rome on the twenty-third of May, in the year of the Lord nineteen hundred and seventy-one.

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Introduction

June 3, 1971

The Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication, *Inter Mirifica*, approved by the Second Vatican Council and promulgated by Pope Paul VI, specifically provides for the issuance of a "pastoral instruction" by which the "principles and norms" set forth by the Council "may achieve their effect." (#23) The Council recognized, in effect, that in the diverse and fast-changing field of communication, principles alone do not suffice. There is need for continuing application of principles by the Church if the Christian message is to have relevance in this crucial area of modern-day life.

Since 1964 the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications has been at work carrying out this mandate of Vatican Council II. The Pastoral Instruction is one fruit of its efforts. It is in many ways an impressive document. The Commentary which accompanies the Instruction underlines a number of the areas in which the document has particular relevance for the Church in the United States and for the American communications industry.

It would be superfluous to repeat all that is said in the Commentary but one point deserves special emphasis. It is that the Pastoral Instruction is intended in the first instance for the guidance of churchmen. It offers remarkably forward looking guidelines by which they can evaluate the Church's own efforts in communications and devise and implement future pastoral programs in this field.

This is entirely as it should be. For while it is true that the Church has much to say to the media of social communication, it is also true that the Church has much to learn. And it is true as well that the Church has a serious obligation to learn, if it is to proclaim the Good News of Christ effectively in the twentieth century and beyond.

The Pastoral Instruction is a document which both churchmen and communicators can ill afford to ignore. It speaks with particular relevance to the Catholics of the United States, where both the tech-

nology and the ideology of communication are among the strongest influences shaping our culture and our society. One must hope—and pray—that its message will be heeded.

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Commentary on the Pastoral Instruction on Social Communication

In one of its closing passages the Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication states explicitly an objective and an aspiration which all those concerned with either the Church or the media, or both, must share. "It is hoped," the Instruction says, "that this publication marks not so much the end of a phase as the start of a new one." (#186) In a real sense this document can be viewed as an expression of the Church's coming of age, at least conceptually, in regard to the world of modern communications. And maturation implies looking to the future—responding to newly perceived responsibilities and opportunities—rather than preoccupation with the past.

Still, it is appropriate at such a moment to give at least some attention to the past, in order that the present and the future can be seen in perspective. For example, no American Catholic can fail to take pride in the contribution that American thought and practice made to the shaping of this significant document. This contribution occurred in several ways. From the inception of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications, Americans have played an important role in this body, as members and consultants. American bishops and American communications specialists were intimately involved in the exhaustive work that went into the composition of the Instruction. Even more important, perhaps, the theory and practice of American communications media—concepts such as the importance of public opinion, the right of the public to be informed, the constructive and indeed essential role of media in the life of modern society—have clearly had an impact in the formulation of this document. The Instruction as it now stands would not have been possible without the proving ground provided by the American experience in communications.

One must admit, however, that not all of the reflections to be drawn from the past in regard to this document are positive ones. The Church has not always been quick to understand the implications of modern communications or to put its theoretical understanding into immediate practice. There have been painful episodes in the relationship between the Church and the media. Points of misunder-

standing—on both sides—and of conflict still exist today. It is not realistic to expect that these difficulties will vanish overnight. But what is more important is that the Pastoral Instruction provides a framework—detailed but sufficiently flexible to allow for local adaptation—within which the role of the Church vis-à-vis communications can be re-thought and necessary improvements can be made.

In reading and evaluating the Instruction, of course, it is necessary to bear in mind that this is a universal document, addressed to churchmen and communicators and communications “recipients” throughout the world. It is not directed exclusively to the United States, and there is no reason to suppose or to pretend that all it says is directly applicable here. Certain problems with which it deals—such as state control or censorship of information media—happily do not exist in the United States or else do not exist to the same degree as in some other parts of the world. There is no need, therefore, to attempt close application of the Instruction in all its particulars either to the Church or to the communications media in the U.S. For, as the Instruction itself says, “It carefully refrains from going into minute details on a subject which is continually changing and developing and which varies so much according to time and place.” (#3)

At the same time, there is a great deal here that is directly pertinent to both the Church and the communications media in our country. Of the two, the Church probably has the most to learn from this document. On the practical side, for example, matters like adequate staffing and financing of Church communications operations obviously require the attention of Church authorities. Communications is a central reality in the lives of men today, and it must therefore receive a corresponding degree of serious attention on the part of Church authorities. Those who work directly on behalf of the Church in this crucial area should not be handicapped by inadequate resources—for their handicap is the Church’s handicap.

Again, many of the principles laid down in this document have direct application to the communications policy of the Church in this country. The Instruction, for instance, puts great emphasis on the importance of public opinion in the Church and the consequent necessity that its members—as well as all others—have full and accurate information about what the Church does and says. (cf. #114–129) A need for secrecy is acknowledged but also strictly

limited: "Secrecy should therefore be restricted to matters that involve the good name of individuals or that touch upon the rights of people whether singly or collectively." (#121) Without at all imputing motives, one must acknowledge that secrecy is a matter on which churchmen have sometimes exhibited an excessive and ill-advised caution, which in particular cases may have done more harm than good.

Even more important, the Instruction makes it clear that the media of social communications are not simply useful tools—much less interesting toys—which somehow in the last analysis lie outside the range of "real" life and therefore at the periphery of the Church's concern. As noted above, social communications are central to the life of modern man and therefore central to the mission of the Church, as it continues the mission of Christ and ministers to the needs of men in our times. As the Church takes this message increasingly to heart, it is safe to predict that basic and healthy changes in its orientation toward communications media will result.

The Pastoral Instruction speaks also to the media of communications. It is to be hoped that the communicators will hear what it is saying. The message for communicators, as for churchmen, is the centrality of the communications vocation in modern society. The newsman, the broadcaster, the playwright, the film maker cannot be considered—or consider themselves—merely as entertainers or technicians. As much as anyone in contemporary society, they form the world-view of modern man. They convey information and ideas that are essential to the functioning of society; even more important, they help to shape the very ethos of the world in which we live. Theirs is, then, a calling of high honor—and of heavy responsibility.

Communicators in our country have generally met this responsibility with a conscientiousness and dedication which does them deep credit. In some areas, however, there are problems. The gratuitous exhibition of brutality and exploitative sexuality in some media should, for example, cause soul-searching on the part of communicators who are sensitive to their duty to their audience and concerned about the possible debasement of the media themselves. As the Instruction says, wherever one places the duty of seeking solutions to such abuses, "the means of social communication have no small part to play" in the necessary remedial steps. (#22)

The Instruction should also serve to remind U.S. communicators that they have a global responsibility. The document remarks that

the communications media “offer man of today a great round-table” for instantaneous exchanges from every part of our shrinking world village. (#19) Americans are, de facto, international leaders in the technology, the content, and the style of contemporary mass communications. The technological and creative products of their genius have an unprecedented importance from this perspective. U.S. communicators ought not to take a parochial or narrowly nationalistic view of their responsibilities. They must be increasingly sensitive to the cultural and moral imperatives of other societies than our own.

The Pastoral Instruction also addresses itself to members of the audience of communications media and lays down important guidelines for them. One should not be a merely passive recipient of communications—a tendency which is perhaps discernible among many Americans today. One has instead an obligation to be “active” in regard to the media, constantly exercising one’s critical faculties and, too, constantly taking the necessary steps in self-education to develop and sharpen one’s critical skills. In this regard, Catholic institutions are exhorted to develop effective media training programs—not only for the development of competent communicators but also for the training of an equally competent, sophisticated audience. Catholic schools and other educational programs are already making progress in this area, but it is to be hoped that the Instruction will give increased impetus to their efforts.

The document takes an unusually optimistic and refreshing view of the relationship of young people to communications media. While stressing that the young must be protected—by law, if necessary—from “permanent psychological or moral harm” (#89), the Instruction reminds over-thirty Americans that today’s youth, because of their deep familiarity with media, have an almost innate sophistication and knowledgeability in this area. Speaking specifically to parents, it says: “Naturally they wish their children to use the media in a proper manner. Nevertheless, let them trust the young because these have been born and have grown up in a different kind of society. Because of this, they are better forewarned and better forearmed to meet the pressures that come from every side.” (#31)

The Pastoral Instruction, as noted, is by no means a comprehensive treatise on communications. It was not meant to be. It aims instead to provide general concepts within which the Church, the media, and the audience can interact with growing respect, sophistication, and

mutual benefit. It accomplishes its goal admirably; but it leaves the responsibility for action squarely up to all of us.

Communications Committee
U.S. Catholic Conference

+ *John L. May*
MOST REV. JOHN L. MAY
Bishop of Mobile
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PASTORAL INSTRUCTION
FOR THE APPLICATION OF
THE DECREE OF THE
SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL
ON THE MEANS OF
SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

Foreword

1. THE UNITY AND ADVANCEMENT of men living in society: these are the chief aims of social communication and of all the means it uses. These means include the press, the cinema, radio and television. The constant improvement in the media puts them at the disposal of more and more people who in their daily lives make increasing use of them. More than ever before, the way men live and think is profoundly affected by the means of communication.

2. The Church sees these media as “gifts of God”¹ which, in accordance with his providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to co-operate with his plan for their salvation.

A deeper and more penetrating understanding of social communication and of the contribution which the media it uses can make to modern society, can be derived from a number of documents issued by the Second Vatican Council. These are, notably, the Constitution on “The Church in the Modern World,”² the Decree on “Ecumenism,”³ the Declaration on “Religious Freedom,”⁴ the Decree on “The Missionary Activity of the Church,”⁵ and the Decree on “The Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church.”⁶ And, of course, there is a Decree that is wholly devoted to a discussion of “The Media of Social Communication.”⁷

The deeper understanding based on the teaching and spirit of this Council will now guide Christians in their attitudes to the media and will make them the more eager to commit themselves in this field.

3. This Pastoral Instruction which is being published at the direction of the Second Vatican Council⁸ sets out basic doctrinal principles and general pastoral guidelines. It carefully refrains from going into minute details on a subject which is continually changing and developing and which varies so much according to time and place.

¹ Encyclical of Pius XII *Miranda Prorsus*, A.A.S., XXIV (1957), p. 765.

² *Gaudium et spes*, A.A.S., LVIII (1966), pp. 1025–1120.

³ *Unitatis redintegratio*, A.A.S., LVII (1965), pp. 90–112.

⁴ *Dignitatis humanae*, A.A.S., LVIII (1966), pp. 929–946.

⁵ *Ad Gentes*, A.A.S., LVIII (1966), pp. 947–990.

⁶ *Christus Dominus*, A.A.S., LVIII (1966), pp. 673–696.

⁷ *Inter mirifica*, A.A.S., LVI (1964), pp. 145–157.

⁸ Cf. *Inter mirifica*, 23.

4. It will therefore be the task of Bishops and their conferences and, equally, of the Synods of the Eastern Churches, to consult experts and their diocesan, national and international councils. This should be done not only to implement this Instruction efficiently and in a spirit of collegiality, but also to discover the best way of explaining it and suiting it, as precisely as possible, to the needs of the people in their care. And while they do this, they will keep in mind the unity of the Church.

In this task Episcopal Conferences will lean upon the professional assistance which priests, religious and laity can offer. For a proper use of the media of social communication is the responsibility of the entire People of God.

5. This Instruction, it is hoped, will be well received by all those who are professionally involved in the field of communications and, indeed, by all who, in good will, seek the progress of mankind. So, as a result of exchanges of views and co-operation with such men, the vast potential that lies in the means of social communication will be made good and this for the advancement of all.

PART ONE

The Christian View of the Means of Social Communication: Basic Points of Doctrine

6. The channels of social communication, even though they are addressed to individuals, reach and affect the whole of society.⁹ They inform a vast public about what goes on in the world and about contemporary attitudes and they do it swiftly. That is why they are indispensable to the smooth functioning of modern society, with its complex and ever changing needs, and the continual and often close consultations all this involves. This exactly coincides with the Christian conception of how men should live together.

These technical advances have the high purpose of bringing men into closer contact with one another. By passing on knowledge of their common fears and hopes they help men to resolve them. A Christian estimate of the contribution that the media make to the well-being of mankind is rooted in this fundamental principle.

7. All over the world, men are at work on improving the conditions for human living and the latest scientific wonders and technical achievements play their part in this. The Christian vision of man, of his motives and of his history, sees in this development a response—though usually an unconscious one—to the divine command to “possess and master the world.”¹⁰ It also sees it as an act of co-operation in the divine work of creation and conservation.¹¹

It is within this vision that the means of social communication fall into their proper place. They help men to share their knowledge and to unify their creative work. Indeed, by creating man in his own image, God has given him a share in his creative power. And so man is summoned to co-operate with his fellow men in building the earthly city.¹²

⁹ Cf. *Inter mirifica*, 1.

¹⁰ Gen 1:26–28; cf. Gen 9:2–3; Wis 9:2–3; *Gaudium et spes*, 34.

¹¹ Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 34.

¹² Cf. *Gaudium et spes*, 57.

8. Social communications tend to multiply contacts within society and to deepen social consciousness. As a result the individual is bound more closely to his fellow men and can play his part in the unfolding of history as if led by the hand of God.¹³ In the Christian faith, the unity and brotherhood of man are the chief aims of all communication and these find their source and model in the central mystery of the eternal communion between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit who live a single divine life.

9. The media of social communication can contribute a great deal to human unity. If, however, men's minds and hearts are ill disposed, if good will is not there, this outpouring of technology may produce an opposite effect so that there is less understanding and more discord, and as a result, evils are multiplied. Too often, we have to watch social communications used to contradict or corrupt the fundamental values of human life. The Christian considers these evils evidence of man's need to be redeemed and freed from that sin which entered human history with man's first fall.¹⁴

10. When, by his own fault, man turned away from his Creator, chaos succeeded crime and man became embroiled in discord and deadly fraternal strife.¹⁵ He was no longer able to communicate with his fellow men. But for all that, God's love for man persisted, despite its rejection by man. It was he who made the first move to make contact with mankind¹⁶ at the start of the history of salvation. In the fullness of time, he communicated his very self to man¹⁷ and "the Word was made flesh."¹⁸

When, by his death and resurrection, Christ the Incarnate Son, the Word and Image of the invisible God,¹⁹ set the human race free, he shared with everyone the truth and the life of God. And he did this more richly and lavishly than ever before. As the only mediator between the Father and mankind he made peace between God and man and laid the foundations of unity among men themselves.²⁰ From that

¹³ Cf. *ibid.*, 36; Encyclical of John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, A.A.S., LV (1963), p. 257 and *passim*.

¹⁴ Cf. Rom 5:12-14.

¹⁵ Cf. Gen 4:1-16; 11:1-9.

¹⁶ Cf. Gen 3:15; 9:1-17; 12:1-3.

¹⁷ Cf. Heb 1:1-2.

¹⁸ Jn 1:14.

¹⁹ Col 1:15; 2 Cor 4:4.

²⁰ Cf. *Ad Gentes*, 3.

moment, communication among men found its highest ideal and supreme example in God who had become Man and Brother. He ordered his disciples, always and everywhere,²¹ to spread the Good Tidings "in the light of day" and "from the roof-tops."²²

11. While he was on earth Christ revealed himself as the Perfect Communicator. Through his "incarnation," he utterly identified himself with those who were to receive his communication and he gave his message not only in words but in the whole manner of his life. He spoke from within, that is to say, from out of the press of his people. He preached the divine message without fear or compromise. He adjusted to his people's way of talking and to their patterns of thought. An he spoke out of the predicament of their time.

Communication is more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion. At its most profound level, it is the giving of self in love. Christ's communication was, in fact, spirit and life.²³ In the institution of the Holy Eucharist, Christ gave us the most perfect, most intimate form of communion between God and man possible in this life, and, out of this, the deepest possible unity between men. Further, Christ communicated to us his life-giving Spirit, who brings all men together in unity.²⁴

The Church is Christ's Mystical Body—the hidden completion of Christ Glorified who "fills the whole creation."²⁵ As a result we move, within the Church and with the help of the word and the sacraments, towards the hope of that last unity where "God will be all in all."²⁶

12. So, "among the wonderful technical inventions"²⁷ which foster communication among human beings, Christians find means that have been devised under God's Providence for the encouragement of social relations during their pilgrimage on earth. These means, in fact, serve to build new relationships and to fashion a new language which permits men to know themselves better and to understand one another more easily. By this, men are led to a mutual understanding and shared ambition. And this, in turn, inclines them to justice and peace,

²¹ Mt 28:19.

²² Mt 10:27; Lk 12:3.

²³ Jn 6:53.

²⁴ Cf. *Lumen gentium*, A.A.S., LVII (1965), no. 9, p. 14.

²⁵ Eph 1:23; 4:10.

²⁶ 1 Cor 15:28.

²⁷ *Inter mirifica*, 1.

to good will and active charity, to mutual help, to love and, in the end, to communion. The tools of communication, then, provide some of the most effective means for the cultivation of that charity among men which is at once the cause and the expression of fellowship.

13. All men of good will, then, are impelled to work together to ensure that the media of communication do in fact contribute to the pursuit of truth and the speeding up of progress. The Christian will find in his faith an added incentive to do this. And the message of the Gospel thus spread will promote this idea—which is the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God.

Contact and co-operation among men depend, in the last resort, on man's free choice which, in its turn, is affected by psychological, sociological and technical factors. And so the importance and ultimate significance of the media of communication depend upon the working of man's free choice in their use.

14. Since it is man himself who decides how the available means of communication shall be used, the moral principles at issue here are those based on a true interpretation of the dignity of man. And man, it should be recalled, must be accounted a member of the family of the adopted children of God. At the same time, these principles derive from the essential character of social communication and the innate qualities of the medium in question. This follows also from what is said in *Gaudium et spes*: "By the very fact of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order which man must respect. . . ." ²⁸

15. Whoever wants to see the media take their allotted place in the history of Creation, in the Incarnation and Redemption, and to consider the morality that governs their use, must have a full and proper understanding of man. He must also have a sound knowledge both of the true nature of social communication and of the tools at its service.

"Communicators" are all those who actively employ the media. These have a duty in conscience to make themselves competent in the art of social communication in order to be effective in their work.²⁹ And as a man's influence on the process of communication grows, so does this duty. All this applies even more to those who have to instruct the tastes and judgments of others. It applies to those who

²⁸ *Gaudium et spes*, 36.

²⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 43.

have to teach the young or the uneducated. And it applies to all who can in any way enrich or impoverish man's nature, whether that man be a man alone or a man engulfed in a crowd.

"Recipients" are those who, for their own purpose, read, listen to or view the various media. Everything possible should be done to enable these to know about the media. So they will be able to interpret their message accurately, to reap their benefit in full and play their part in the life of society. Only if this is done will the media function in the best possible way.

16. The total output of the media in any given area should be judged by the contribution it makes to the common good.³⁰ Its news, culture and entertainment should meet the growing needs of society. The news of something that has happened must be given and so too must the background of the event so that people can understand society's problems and work for their solution. A proper balance must be kept, not only between hard news, educational material and entertainment but also between the light and the more serious forms of that entertainment.

17. Every communication must comply with certain essential requirements and these are sincerity, honesty and truthfulness. Good intentions and a clear conscience do not thereby make a communication sound and reliable. A communication must state the truth. It must accurately reflect the situation with all its implications. The moral worth and validity of any communication does not lie solely in its theme or intellectual content. The way in which it is presented, the way in which it is spoken and treated and even the audience for which it is designed—all these factors must be taken into account.³¹

18. A deeper understanding and a greater sympathy between men, as well as fruitful co-operation in creative work, these are the marvelous benefits that should come from social communication. These are ideals which are completely in tune with the aims of the People of God. Indeed, they are strengthened and reinforced by them. "For

³⁰ The "Common Good" is defined in the Encyclical of John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, as the "sum of those conditions of social life by which men can attain their perfection more fully and with greater ease." A.A.S., LIII (1961), p. 417. See also *Pacem in Terris*, A.A.S., LV (1963), pp. 272-274; *Dignitatis humanae*, 6; *Gaudium et spes*, 26 and 74.

³¹ Cf. *Inter mirifica*, 4.

the promotion of unity belongs to the innermost nature of the Church," since she is "by her relationship with Christ, both a sacramental sign and an instrument of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind."³²

³² *Gaudium et spes*, 42; *Lumen gentium*, 1.

PART TWO

The Contribution of the Communications Media to Human Progress

CHAPTER I

THE WORK OF THE MEDIA IN HUMAN SOCIETY

19. The modern media of social communication offer men of today a great round table. At this they are in search of, and able to participate in, a world-wide exchange of brotherhood and co-operation. It is not surprising that this should be so, for the media are at the disposal of all and are channels for that very dialogue which they themselves stimulate. The torrent of information and opinion pouring through these channels makes every man a partner in the business of the human race. This interchange creates the proper conditions for that mutual and sympathetic understanding which leads to universal progress.

20. The swift advances of the means of social communication tear down the barriers that time and space have erected between men. They can make for greater understanding and closer unity. A mass of information is continually on the move to and from all parts of the world and, as a result, men can learn what goes on and how other men live. Teaching at all levels has benefited by the use of these aids. These media play their part in eliminating illiteracy and in providing both basic and further education. They can, very effectively, help people in developing countries to achieve progress and freedom. They can establish a measure of universal equality in which all men, whatever their place in society, can enjoy the delights of culture and leisure. They enrich men's minds. They help them to keep in touch with reality by providing the sights and sounds which are the very stuff of life. They bring far-away times and places within their grasp. And when illiteracy is rife—and this is not in any way to question the validity of traditional cultures—citizens can quickly be brought in touch with recent developments in modern ways of life.

21. In the light of these advantages, the communications media can be seen as powerful instruments for progress. It is true they present difficulties but these must be faced and overcome. Both the communicators and the recipients ought to be aware of their inherent dangers and difficulties. For instance, how can we ensure that this swift and haphazard and endless stream of news is properly evaluated and understood? The media are bound to seek a mass audience and so they often adopt a neutral stance in order to avoid giving offence to any section of their audience. How, in a society that is committed to the rights of dissent, is the distinction between right and wrong, and true and false, to be made?

How in the face of competition to capture a large popular audience are the media to be prevented from appealing to and inflaming the less admirable tendencies in human nature? How can one avoid the concentration of the power to communicate in too few hands so that any real dialogue is killed? How can one avoid allowing communications, made indirectly and through machinery, to weaken direct human contact—especially when these communications take the form of pictures and images? When the media invite men to escape into fantasy, what can be done to bring them back to present reality? How can one stop the media encouraging mental idleness and passivity? And how can one be certain that the incessant appeal to emotion does not sap reason?

22. It is obvious that there has been a decline in moral standards in many areas of life today and this decline is the cause of profound concern to all honest men. It is easy to find evidence of this decline in all the means of social communication. But how far these means must be blamed for the decline is open to question. Many responsible men hold that these means are only a reflection of what already exists in society. Others hold that they increase and spread those tendencies and that, by making them commonplace, lead to their gradual acceptance. And still others would put most of the blame squarely upon the means of social communication. What is certainly true is that the weakness lies in society itself and that the attempt to restore standards must involve the whole of society, its parents, teachers, pastors and all who care about the common good. In this attempt the means of social communication have no small part to play. It is however impossible to put the means of social communication into a quite separate category from that of the everyday life and attitudes of the people.

23. In order that the benefits offered to society by social communication can be better understood and used to the full and the incidental difficulties they present set aside, the chief aspects of the working of the media among men must be investigated.

1. PUBLIC OPINION

24. The means of social communication are a public forum where every man may exchange ideas. The public expression and the confrontation of different opinions that occur within this dialogue influence and enrich the development of society and further its progress.

25. Public opinion is an essential expression of human nature organized in a society. This opinion is formed in the following way. In everyone there is an innate disposition to give vent to opinions, attitudes and emotions in order to reach a general acceptance on convictions and customs. Pius XII describes public opinion as "the natural echo of actual events and situations as reflected more or less spontaneously in the minds and judgments of men."³³ So freedom of speech is a normal factor in the growth of public opinion which expresses the ideas and reactions of the more influential circles in a society defined by geography, culture and history.

26. If public opinion is to emerge in the proper manner, it is absolutely essential that there be freedom to express ideas and attitudes. In accordance with the express teaching of the Second Vatican Council it is necessary unequivocally to declare that freedom of speech for individuals and groups must be permitted so long as the common good and public morality be not endangered.³⁴ In order that men may usefully co-operate and further improve the life of the community, there must be freedom to assess and compare differing views which seem to have weight and validity. Within this free interplay of opinion, there exists a process of give and take, of acceptance or rejection, of compromise or compilation. And within this same process, the more valid ideas can gain ground so that a consensus that will lead to common action becomes possible.

27. Communicators have therefore a most important part to play in forming public opinion. They have to gather up different views and

³³ In his Allocution to Catholic Journalists on February 17, 1950. A.A.S., XLII (1950), p. 251. See also *Gaudium et spes*, 59; *Pacem in Terris*, A.A.S., LV (1963), p. 283.

³⁴ *Gaudium et spes*, 59.

compare them and transmit them so that people can understand and make a proper decision.

28. Every citizen is expected to play his part in the formation of public opinion. If needs be, he must do this through representatives who reflect his own views.³⁵ Those who exert influence because of the office they hold or because of their natural talent or for any other reason have an important part to play in forming public opinion: they help to do so whenever they express their views. The greater their quality of leadership, the greater is their responsibility to exert it in this way.

29. The process of promoting what is sometimes called a "propaganda campaign," with a view to influencing public opinion, is justified only when it serves the truth, when its objectives and methods accord with the dignity of man, and when it promotes causes that are in the public interest. These causes may concern either individuals or groups, one's own country or the world at large.

30. Some types of propaganda are inadmissible. These include those that harm the public interest or allow of no public reply. Any propaganda should be rejected which deliberately misrepresents the real situation, or distorts men's minds with half-truths, selective reporting, or serious omissions, and which diminishes man's legitimate freedom of decision. It is necessary to stress this because the power of propaganda is increasing. And its power is being augmented by the growth of behavioral sciences like that of psychology and of the technical resources at the disposal of the communications media.

31. Not every opinion that is given publicity should be taken as a true expression of that public opinion which is held by a significant number of people. A number of differing opinions can flourish at the same time in the same area, though, usually, one has a greater following than the others. The opinion of the majority, however, is not necessarily the best or the closest to the truth.

Public opinion, moreover, changes often. The same idea sometimes gains and sometimes loses hold of the public. Because of this, it is prudent to maintain a certain detachment towards the opinions currently in public vogue. There may well be good reasons that require one to oppose them.

32. However, views openly and commonly expressed which reflect the aspirations of the people should always be carefully considered.

³⁵ Cf. *Inter mirifica*, 8.

This is especially binding on those in authority, whether civil or religious.

2. THE RIGHT TO BE INFORMED AND TO INFORM

33. If public opinion is to be formed in a proper manner, it is necessary that, right from the start, the public be given free access to both the sources and the channels of information and be allowed freely to express its own views. Freedom of opinion and the right to be informed go hand in hand. Pope John XXIII,³⁶ Pope Paul VI³⁷ and the Second Vatican Council³⁸ have all stressed this right to information which today is essential for the individual and for society in general.

(a) Access to the Sources and Channels of News

34. Modern man cannot do without information that is full, consistent, accurate and true. Without it, he cannot understand the perpetually changing world in which he lives nor be able to adapt himself to the real situation. This adaptation calls for frequent decisions that should be made with a full knowledge of events. Only in this way can he assume a responsible and active role in his community and be a part of its economic, political, cultural and religious life.

With the right to be informed goes the duty to seek information. Information does not simply occur; it has to be sought. On the other hand, in order to get it, the man who wants information must have access to the varied means of social communication. In this way he can freely choose whatever means best suit his needs both personal and social. It is futile to talk about the right to information if a variety of the sources for it are not made available.

35. Society, at all levels, requires information if it is to choose the right course. The community requires well-informed citizens. The right to information is not merely the prerogative of the individual, it is essential to the public interest.

36. Those whose job it is to give the news have a most difficult and responsible role to play. They face formidable obstacles and these obstacles will sometimes include persons interested in concealing the

³⁶ Cf. *Pacem in Terris*, A.A.S., LV (1963), p. 260.

³⁷ Cf. the Allocution given on April 17, 1964 to "Séminaire des Nations Unies sur la liberté de l'information," A.A.S., LVI (1964), pp. 387 ff.

³⁸ Cf. *Inter mirifica*, 5; 12.

truth. This is especially the case for reporters who give close-up impressions of the news and who, in order to do this, often travel to the four corners of the earth to witness events as they actually happen.³⁹ At times they risk their lives and indeed a number of them have been killed in this line of duty.⁴⁰ The safety of such correspondents should be ensured in every possible way because of the service they render to man's right to know about what is happening. This is particularly true in the case of wars—which involve and concern the whole human race. So the Church utterly condemns the use of violence against newsmen or against anyone in any way involved in the passing on of news. For these persons vindicate and practise the right of finding out what is happening and of passing on this information to others.

37. It is hard for anyone to learn the whole truth and to pass this on to others, but newsmen face an additional problem. Of its nature, news is about what is new. So journalists deal with what has just happened and with what is of present interest. More than that, out of a mass of material, they must select what they judge to be the significant facts that will concern their audience. So it can happen that the news reported is only a part of the whole and does not convey what is of real importance.

38. Communicators must give news that is quick, complete and comprehensible. So more and more they have to seek out competent men for comments, background briefing and discussion. Often these comments are required immediately, sometimes even before the expected event has happened. Trustworthy men are rightly reluctant to make hasty or unprepared comments until they have had a chance to study a situation in its context, and especially when they are in a position of responsibility or authority. And so because the media are impelled to demand quick comment, the initiative often passes to men who are less responsible and less well-informed but who are more willing to oblige. Those acquainted with a given situation should try to prevent this happening. As far as they can, they should keep themselves up-to-date so that they themselves can reply and ensure that the public is properly informed.

39. Then there is another problem. Those who have to keep the public informed must give the news quickly if it is to appear fresh and

³⁹ Pius XII in an address given to American journalists on July 21, 1945. *L'Osservatore Romano*, July 22, 1945.

⁴⁰ An address to a similar group on April 27, 1946. *L'Osservatore Romano*, April 28, 1946.

interesting. Competition also obliges them to do this and speed is often won at the price of accuracy. The communicator has also to know the tastes and cultural level of his public and to take into account its known preferences. And when he comes to present the news, it is in the face of such hazards that a communicator must remain faithful to the truth.

40. But as well as these problems which are inherent in the nature of the news and communications media, there is another. Communicators must hold the wandering attention of a harried and hurried public by vivid reporting. And yet they must not give way to the temptation of making the news sensational in such a way that they risk distorting it—by taking it out of context or by exaggerating it out of all proportion.

41. The recipients who piece together the news that comes to them in fragments may well end up with an unbalanced or distorted idea of the whole picture. To a certain extent, accuracy can be restored by the continuity of the flow from different sources, which must always be carefully assessed.

The recipients of information should have a clear conception of the predicament of those that purvey information. They should not look for a superhuman perfection in the communicators. What they do have a right and duty to expect, however, is that a rapid and clear correction should follow any mistake or misrepresentation that has found its way into a report. They are to protest whenever omissions or distortions occur. They are to protest whenever events have been reported out of context or in a biased manner. They are to protest whenever the significance of events has been wildly exaggerated or underplayed. This right should be guaranteed for recipients by agreement among the communicators themselves and, if this cannot be got, then by national law or international convention.

42. But the right to information is not limitless. It has to be reconciled with other existing rights. There is the right of truth which guards the good name both of men and of societies. There is the right of privacy which protects the private life of families and individuals.⁴¹ There is the right of secrecy which obtains if necessity or professional duty or the common good itself requires it. Indeed, whenever public

⁴¹ "The manner of the [communication] should be honorable and appropriate, namely, one which keeps sacred the laws of morality and the legitimate rights and dignity of man in reporting the news." *Inter mirifica*, 5.

good is at stake, discretion and discrimination and careful judgment should be used in the preparation of news.

43. The reporting of violence and brutality demands a special care and tact. There is no denying that human life is debased by violence and savagery and that such things happen in our own time and perhaps more now than ever before. It is possible to delineate all this violence and savagery so that men will recoil from it. But if these bloody events are too realistically described or too frequently dwelt upon, there is a danger of perverting the image of human life. It is also possible that such descriptions generate an attitude of mind and, according to many experts, a psychosis which escapes the control of the very forces that unleashed it. All this may leave violence and savagery as the accepted way of resolving conflict.

(b) Freedom of Communication

44. This right to information is inseparable from freedom of communication. Social life depends on a continual interchange, both individual and collective, between people. This is necessary for mutual understanding and for co-operative creativity. When social intercourse makes use of the mass media, a new dimension is added. Then vast numbers of people get the chance to share in the life and progress of the community.

45. Because man is social by nature, he feels the need to express himself freely and to compare his views with those of other people. This applies today more than ever before now that man's intellect and genius are often enough served more by team work than by individual effort. So the result is that when people follow their natural inclination to exchange ideas and declare their opinions, they are not merely making use of a right. They are also performing a social duty.

46. Those societies which tolerate diverse component groups and are called "pluralist," can well understand the importance of the free flow of information and opinion that enables the citizens to play an active part in the community. Laws have been passed in such countries to guard this freedom. Moreover, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has proclaimed this freedom to be fundamental and thereby implies that the same freedom is essential in the use of the means of social communication.

47. This freedom of communication also implies that individuals and groups must be free to seek out and spread information. It also

means that they should have free access to the media. On the other hand, freedom of communication would benefit those who communicate news rather than those who receive it if this freedom existed without proper limits and without thought for those real and public needs upon which the right to information is based.

3. EDUCATION, CULTURE AND LEISURE

48. The means of social communication have an ever-growing role to play in the vast field of human education. In many places audio-visual aids, the new video cassettes and the regular use of radio and television have become accepted teaching instruments. They make the work of experts in different fields accessible to more and more people. Elsewhere the means of social communication are used to complement the established ways of teaching. They also give opportunities for further education to adolescents and adults. In places where the educational facilities are inadequate, they can provide religious instruction and basic education; and they fight illiteracy. They are useful instruments for instructing people in agriculture, medicine, hygiene and in many forms of community development. As far as possible, this use of the media for education should have a creative quality and elicit an active response. In this way, the pupil is not only led to knowledge but learns to express himself by using the media.

49. Moreover, in a manner that is unique, the media, which are already a conspicuous element in daily life, bring artistic and cultural achievements within the orbit of a great part of the human race. And soon, perhaps, they will do the same for the whole of it. This is as authentic a mark of social progress as is the removal of economic and social inequality.

50. The media can deepen and enrich contemporary culture and communicators should recognize that everyone has a right to this enrichment. They should not therefore hesitate to take the chance offered by the so-called "mass media" to reach great numbers of people. The media also make it possible to cater for differing needs and interests since, in a professional and attractive manner, they can produce the fruits of every type of artistic expression.

People, then, will find no difficulty in using the media to deepen and refine their cultural life, as long as they supplement this use with the exercise of personal reflection and an exchange of views with others.

51. An example of the cultural potential of the media can be found in their service to the traditional folk arts of countries where stories, plays, song and dance still express an ancient national inheritance. Because of their modern techniques, the media can make these achievements known more widely. They can record them so that they can be seen and heard again and again and make them accessible even in districts where the old traditions have vanished. In this way, the media help to impress on a nation a proper sense of its cultural identity and, by expressing this, delight and enrich other cultures and countries as well.

52. It should be recalled that many great works recognized as the products of genius, particularly in music, drama and literature, were first presented to the public as entertainment. So entertainment need not lack cultural validity.⁴²

Today, through the media, the noblest forms of artistic expression offer true recreation—in the fullest sense of that word—to more and more people. And there is more and more call for this in our complex society.

Simple entertainment, too, has a value of its own. It lightens the burden of daily problems and it occupies men's leisure. The wide variety of productions that the media offer for these hours of leisure, is in fact a remarkable service to mankind. But recipients should exercise self-control. They must not allow themselves to be so beguiled by the charms of the media's products or by the curiosity that these arouse that they neglect urgent duties or simply waste time.

53. The media are themselves new factors in contemporary culture, serving as they do large numbers of people at the same time. But as well as enriching culture, they can occasionally degrade it. They often play for the applause of the lowest cultural levels of their audience. And because they take so much of modern man's time, they can easily divert him from higher and more profitable cultural pursuits.

An unrelieved diet of productions geared to the lowest cultural level within a population would tend to debase the taste of those who have already attained a higher level. These dangers can be avoided if communicators really care about the well-being of culture and buttress their good intentions with a sound knowledge of the science of education. Moreover, it will be recalled that the media are perfectly

⁴² Cf. Encyclical of Pius XII *Miranda Prorsus*, A.A.S., XLIX (1957), p. 765.

capable of productions on the highest artistic level, and for the great majority these are not necessarily the most difficult to follow and to enjoy.

4. FORMS OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

54. The media of social communication do more than present the traditional forms of artistic expression, they themselves create new ones. And now that the media cover the whole earth and multiply the opportunities for international cultural co-operation, especially in creative work using the talents of artists from many nations, it is only right that both communicators and recipients should seek to acquire a truly catholic taste, one that includes both the traditional and the latest forms of artistic expression, one that appreciates and understands the art-forms of all nations, of all cultures and of all sub-cultures within the same areas of civilization.

55. Artistic expression both for its own excellence and for what it does for man should be highly appreciated. Of itself, beauty ennobles the mind that contemplates it. The work of the artist can also penetrate and illumine the deepest recesses of the human spirit. It can make spiritual reality immediate by expressing it in a way that the senses can comprehend. And as a result of this expression man comes to know himself better. This is not only a cultural benefit but a moral and religious one as well. "It is a fact that when you writers and artists are able to reveal in the human condition, however lowly or sad it may be, a spark of goodness, at that very instant a glow of beauty pervades your whole work. We are not asking of you that you should play the part of moralists. We are only asking you to have confidence in your mysterious power of opening up the glorious regions of light that lie behind the mystery of man's life."⁴³

56. Those who would truly understand the spirit of another age have to study not only its history, but also its literature and artefacts. And this is so because, in a very precise and lucid way, the creative arts are more revealing than conceptual descriptions of the character of people, of their aspirations, emotions and thoughts. Even when the artist takes flight from the tangible and solid world and pursues his creative fantasies, he can give priceless insight into the human

⁴³ Paul VI: Allocation given on May 6, 1967 to a large number of those who devote themselves to the theatre, the cinema, radio and television, and other media of social communication. A.A.S., LIX (1967), p. 509.

condition. Stories fashioned out of imagination in which the artist creates characters that live and evolve in a world of fiction, these too communicate their special truth. Even though they are not real, they are realistic; for they are made of the very stuff of human life. They even affect those deep causes that rouse men to blaze with life.⁴⁴ For, in the light they throw on these causes, the sensitive man may know them for what they are. And with this knowledge he can begin to foresee the direction that humanity will take.

57. Pope Pius XII taught that human life "certainly cannot be understood, at least when considering violent and serious conflicts, if one deliberately turns one's eyes from the crimes and evils from which they often have their origin. How then, can ideal films take this as their subject? The greatest poets and writers of all times have occupied themselves with this difficult and rough matter, and they will continue to do so in the future. . . . When the conflict with evil, not excluding cases when evil prevails for a while, is treated, within the context of a work as a whole, in an effort to understand life better, to see how it should be ordered, or to show how man should conduct himself, how he should think and act with more consistency, then, in such cases, such matter can be chosen as an integral part of the development of the whole film."⁴⁵ Such a work would contribute to moral progress. Even though they are quite distinct, genuine artistic values do not clash with moral standards. Each, in fact, confirms the validity of the other.

58. Moral problems may, at times, arise in productions that deal with evil. For instance, these may occur when the audience is unable to grasp, as it should, the full implications of evil, either because its members are young and undeveloped or because their education is inadequate.

The artist is faced with life in its entirety, with its good as well as its bad aspects. Good sense and judgment are therefore called for when a work is destined for a large audience with different backgrounds. This is especially true when the subject is man confronted by evil.

⁴⁴ Pius XII: Allocution given on June 21, 1955 to the patrons of the art of the cinema in Italy meeting in Rome. A.A.S., XLVII (1955), p. 509.

⁴⁵ Pius XII: Allocution given on October 28, 1955 to the patrons of the art of the cinema gathered in Rome for their International Convention. A.A.S., XLVII (1955), pp. 822-823.

5. ADVERTISING

59. The importance of advertising is steadily on the increase in modern society. It makes its presence felt everywhere; its influence is unavoidable. It offers real social benefits. It tells buyers of the goods and services available. It thus encourages the widest distribution of products and, in doing this, it helps industry to develop and benefit the population. All this is to the good so long as there is respect for the buyer's liberty of choice, even though in trying to sell some particular object the advertiser makes it appear as a real need. Advertising too must respect the truth, taking into account accepted advertising conventions.

60. If harmful or utterly useless goods are touted to the public, if false assertions are made about the goods for sale, if less admirable human tendencies are exploited, those responsible for such advertising harm society and forfeit their good name and credibility. More than this, unremitting pressure to buy articles of luxury can arouse false wants that hurt both individuals and families by making them ignore what they really need. And those forms of advertising which, without shame, exploit the sexual instincts simply to make money or which seek to penetrate into the subconscious recesses of the mind in a way that threatens the freedom of the individual, those forms of advertising must be shunned. It is therefore desirable that advertisers make definite rules for themselves lest their sales methods affront human dignity or harm the community.

61. It is true that a judicious use of advertising can stimulate developing countries to improve their standard of living. But serious harm can be done them if advertising and commercial pressure become so irresponsible that communities that seek to rise from poverty to a reasonable standard of living are persuaded to seek this progress by satisfying wants that have been created artificially. The result of this is that they waste their resources and neglect their real needs, and genuine development falls behind.

62. In fact the vast sums of money spent in advertising threaten the very foundations of the mass media. People can get the impression that the instruments of communication exist solely to stimulate men's appetites so that these can be satisfied later by the acquisition of the things that have been advertised. Moreover, because of economic demands and pressures, the essential freedom of the media is at stake. Since advertising revenue is vital for these media, only those

can ultimately survive which receive the greatest share of advertising outlays. Consequently, the door is open for monopolies to develop in the media which may impede the right to receive and give information and inhibit the exchange of views within the community. A variety of independent means of social communication must therefore be carefully safeguarded even if this requires legislative action. This will ensure that there is an equitable distribution of advertising revenue among the most deserving media of communication and prevent the lion's share from going to those that are already the most powerful.

CHAPTER II

THE MEDIA: THE BEST CONDITIONS FOR THEIR PROPER WORKING

63. If the media of social communication are to give their best service to mankind, the importance of the human element must be recognized. This element plays a more decisive role than the most marvellous electronic and mechanical instruments by themselves. For the proper functioning of the media in society does not occur of its own accord. Both communicators and recipients, according to their own requirements, need a suitable grounding if full advantage is to be taken of the opportunities offered by these instruments. All should know what their particular role requires of them and then proceed to play it, both as individuals and members of society. Civil authorities, as well as religious leaders and educators, should play their part too so that the rich promise of the media may be effectively realized for the good of society.

1. TRAINING

64. A training that grounds a man in the basic principles governing the working of the media in human society, as explained above, is nowadays clearly necessary for all. If their character and function is understood, the means of communication genuinely enrich men's minds. On the other hand, men who do not sufficiently appreciate their importance, may find their own liberty diminished.

Training should include a practical consideration of the special nature of each medium and of its status in the local community and

how it can best be utilized. And this should be done with special reference to man and society.

(a) The Recipients

65. Recipients need some basic training if they are to benefit to the full from what the instruments of social communication have to offer. This training is not merely for their personal advantage, but it should help them to make their contribution to the give-and-take of society as well as to the constructive work of the community. Such a training will also help them to discover the best way of achieving these ends. It will help them to play their part in the process of striving for justice among nations and for the elimination of glaring inequalities between the richer and poorer countries.

66. For this they require a knowledge of the media that will keep pace with their maturing. And the process of education, which should be available to all, does not come to an end. It is to be supplemented continually by lectures and discussions, by special courses and study sessions that make use of the help of professionals in this field.

67. It is never too early to start encouraging in children artistic taste, a keen critical faculty and a sense of personal responsibility based on sound morality. They need all these so that they can use discrimination in choosing the publications, films and broadcasts that are set before them. This is necessary because the young are naturally vulnerable, but this self-discipline acquired in childhood will richly serve the adult too. Generosity and idealism are admirable qualities in young people, so are their frankness and sincerity. But these qualities, along with self-discipline, will only survive if they are guarded and fostered from an early age. This is why parents and teachers should urge children to make their own choice even if the educators should reserve at times the final decision to themselves. And if they find themselves forced to disapprove of the way their children are using some aspect of the media, they must clearly explain the reasons for their objections. Persuasion works better than prohibition and this is especially true in education. Adults should realize that the psychology of children differs from that of adults. Because of this, programs that seem meaningless to them may be useful to children and even to teenagers. Young people can, without doubt, influence one another for the better when it comes to culture. Their very years serve as a passport to the new forms it takes, giving them an entrance

to their own circle. There is ample evidence to prove how effective this can be.

68. It is useful for educators to take note of some of the broadcasts, films and publications that most interest the young in their care. They can then discuss them together and this helps to develop the child's critical powers. As for the more difficult or even controversial artistic productions, here the parent should, at the right moment, help his children to discover the human values in the production and to interpret its details within the context of the work as a whole.

69. This sort of training must be given a regular place in school curricula. It must be given, and systematically, at every stage of education. In this way, young people can be helped gradually to develop a new perception in their interpretation of what is offered them by the press, the other media and the literary publishing houses. All this should be taught in study courses planned to include special sessions where the teacher can call on the help of professional communicators for lectures and for practical exercises.

70. It is obvious that parents and other educators cannot meet these obligations unless they themselves are reasonably well grounded in an understanding of the media. Here it must be remembered that parents who have not grown up to be at home with the media often find it harder to comprehend the language used than do the young people of today. Often parents are disturbed by the frankness with which the media treat every question, including the problems that face both the civil government and the Church. Naturally they wish their children to use the media in a proper manner. Nevertheless, let them trust the young because these have been born and have grown up in a different kind of society. Because of this, they are better forewarned and better forearmed to meet the pressures that come from every side.

(b) The Communicators

71. Not a few communicators handle well the tools of their profession, but even so lack a deep understanding of the art of communicating with all it implies. It is obvious that the communicators who wish to excel in the media need a serious and specialized training in every aspect of their work. The growing practice of founding Communications Faculties in institutions of higher learning—faculties with authority to confer degrees—is a welcome development. For if com-

municators are to meet their professional obligations, they must have sound knowledge as well as experience.

72. In the training of a communicator human qualities as well as professional competence should be developed. Since the media of social communication are for mankind, communicators should be consumed by the desire to serve men. They can only achieve this if they really do know and love their fellow man. The more communicators remember that beyond the lifeless instruments which pass on their words and images are countless living men and women, the more satisfaction they will get from their work and the better they will help others. The more they get to know their audience, the more they understand it and appreciate it, the more they will make what they communicate suit those who receive it. If they do this, they help to make the process of communication a communion of the spirit.

2. OPPORTUNITIES AND OBLIGATIONS

(a) Communicators

73. Communicators breathe life into the dialogue that happens within the family of man. It is they who preside while the exchange proceeds around the vast "round table" that the media have made. Their vocation is nobly to promote the purpose of social communication. This purpose is to accelerate every sort of human progress and to increase co-operation among men until there exists a genuine communion among them.

74. When they come to choose the subjects for their productions, communicators will attempt to match all the needs of their public. They will be scrupulous in seeing that every relevant group is fairly represented. To do this, they have to try to foresee the kind of audience they serve. There should, accordingly, be close co-operation between communicators and recipients. Only in this way can these social communications set up a working and workable dialogue between free and adequately prepared people. And this dialogue must not ignore the age, culture and social background of the participants. The media of social communication are the right instruments for the propagation of this sort of interchange between men.

75. Pope Paul said of communicators that they are obliged to pay continual attention to and to carry on an uninterrupted observation of the external world: "you must continually stand at the window, open to the world; you are obliged to study the facts, the events, the

opinions, the current interest, the thought of the surrounding environment.”⁴⁶ Because factual information provides a public service, not only must news reporting keep to the facts, and bear down upon the most important of these, but the meaning of what it reports should be brought out by explanation. The real bearing of one item of news upon another should be pointed out, especially when different items reach the recipient without evidence of any discernible pattern. In this way the recipient will be able to use this information as a basis for his judgment and decision in matters affecting the community.

76. Communicators should not allow themselves to forget that the nature of the mass media makes their audience a vast one. While they must keep faith with their artistic integrity, they should at the same time remember both their power and the grave responsibilities it brings with it. For they have been given a rare chance to promote the happiness and progress of men. In their productions justice and integrity of judgment will impel artists to be concerned with the needs of minorities as well as with those of larger and more numerous groups. And if some of the means of social communication, whether by law or local practice, in fact enjoy a monopoly, then a scrupulous impartiality must be sought, since in such a situation the danger is that monologue may replace dialogue.

77. Communicators who debase their skills and their work for money, or for easy popularity and passing acclaim, are not only failing their public. In the end, they are demeaning their profession.

78. Critics have a commanding role in getting communicators to maintain the highest standards of integrity and service and continually to make progress. As they are themselves communicators, they provide the self-criticism within the profession. In this way they are able to protect creative artists from external pressures. They must be convinced that integrity and incorruptibility are the essence of their profession. They will be inspired by fidelity to truth and a passion for justice. In a cool and objective way, they should try to display both the strength and the weakness of the work under review so that the public can make its own fair judgment. The importance of their own creative art should not be underrated, especially when through their wide knowledge and their penetrating judgment they are able to discover in works of art meaning and riches that may have escaped

⁴⁶ Paul VI: Allocation given on January 24, 1969 to the Officers of the Catholic Association of Italian Journalists (U.C.S.I.). *L'Osservatore Romano*, January 24, 1969.

even the artists themselves. Yet they should not attract all the attention to themselves at the expense of the work under study.

79. The founding of professional associations for communicators is most valuable. They provide a forum where opinions and experiences can be exchanged. They form a basis for organized co-operation. They help in coping with the sort of difficulties that are inherent in the communicator's task.

These associations can draw up codes of ethics on a basis of principle and experience. Through the guidance they offer, these codes can help in producing work that meets the needs of social communication. Fundamentally, the codes of these associations ought to be positive. They should not be wholly preoccupied with forbidding; rather they should concentrate on how to improve what can be done for the communicators' fellow men.

80. In order to survive and to expand, the means of social communication require reliable financial backing. It therefore happens that communicators must at times, either directly or indirectly, seek funds from public or private sources. The men who provide these funds can powerfully influence the quality of the product. But they must be discerning in choosing which enterprises to support, and desire the good of mankind rather than financial advantage. As long as they bear in mind that the means of social communication are more than commercial enterprises, and are, in fact, at one and the same time, cultural and social services, these investors should not exercise any undue pressure that might distort the proper liberty of the communicators, the artists or what we have called the recipients.

(b) Recipients

81. The recipients can do more to improve the quality of the media than is generally realized; so their responsibility to do this is all the greater. Whether or not the media can set up an authentic dialogue with society depends very largely upon these recipients. If they do not insist on expressing their views, if they are content with a merely passive role, all the efforts of the communicators to establish an uninhibited dialogue will be useless.

82. Recipients can be described as active when they know how to interpret communications accurately and so can judge them in the light of their origin, background and total context. They will be active when they make their selection judiciously and critically, when

they fill out incomplete information that comes their way with more news which they themselves have obtained from other sources, and finally, when they are ready to make their views heard in public, whether they agree, or partly agree or totally disagree.

83. There is the obvious objection that there is little a man can do alone at the receiving end. This is unnecessarily pessimistic. Recipients can find strength in unity. There exists no reason why they should not work closely together. They can band themselves into associations, just as communicators have been advised to do. Their organizations need not be set up with the single end of giving expression to what the man in the street feels about the products of the media. They could just as well avail themselves of organizations that already exist and which have a wider scope but compatible aims.

3. CO-OPERATION

(a) Co-operation between Citizens and the Civil Authorities

84. The media are there for the good of everyone and to serve everyone. So, at once, they concern both citizens and public authorities. These authorities have the essential duty of maintaining freedom of speech and of seeing that the right conditions exist for it. Every individual must have the chance of following his informed judgment. Human dignity must be fully respected. The good of the country and the interests of international co-operation must both be given due consideration.

85. The well-being of society requires absolutely that individuals and groups be free to exercise initiative. It also requires that citizens exercise responsibility and self-control both as communicators and as recipients. With this end in view, voluntary associations may not only be desirable; they may even be essential.

86. The role of the civil authorities in this matter is essentially a positive one. Their chief task is not to create difficulties or to suppress, though at times corrective measures may become necessary. The Second Vatican Council explained that man's freedom is to be respected as far as possible, and curtailed only when and in so far as necessary.⁴⁷ Censorship therefore should only be used in the very last extremity. Moreover the civil authorities should respect the prin-

⁴⁷ Cf. *Dignitatis humanae*, 7.

ciple of subsidiarity which has often been affirmed in the official teaching of the Church—the gist of which is: “Let them not undertake to do themselves what can be done just as well, or even better, by individuals or private groups.”

87. Therefore it is right that, in the light of these principles, freedom of communication and the right to be informed be established in law and guarded from excessive economic, political and ideological pressures that might weaken them. There should be legislation to guarantee to citizens the right to criticize the actual workings of the communications media. This is particularly desirable where the media are conducted as a monopoly. This is all the more necessary if the monopoly is exercised by the civil authorities themselves.

It is undoubtedly the task of the law-makers to legislate about the media. In fact the media must have the support of law so that they can survive, and survive in a sufficient variety and independence in the face of the encroachment of economic interests that make for harmful concentration. Again, the good name of the private citizen and of minority groups needs the protection of the law. Cultural and human values require protection. Religious liberty in the use of the media should be guaranteed.

88. It is highly recommended that professionals in the media, or their institutions, set up councils on their own account. These will have their own statutes and will be concerned with all aspects of social communication. Representatives of the different sections of the population should be invited to sit on these councils. This, it is hoped, will eliminate the wrong sort of interference from state or economic interests. It will strengthen co-operation and fellow-feeling between communicators, and that will be to the benefit of the whole community.

In some cases, however, the state may have to intervene and set up these advisory boards to supervise the media. In these cases, the boards should be, by law, representative of all shades of the opinion within the community.

89. As far as possible, the law should protect the young from what can do them permanent psychological or moral harm. It is the task of legislation in this field to give the necessary support to the family and the school in educating the young.

90. Legislation should be encouraged to provide financial support to initiatives in the use of communications that clearly serve the general

good. These would include organizations that provide information, specialist educational publications, films and broadcasts, particularly when these are made for children. This support is more desirable when the initiatives have little hope of financial success. This encouragement also applies to feature films of high artistic quality and to publications and performances which are destined for a restricted public and which are therefore unlikely to pay their way.

91. The responsibility of civil authorities over the means of social communication is now world-wide, for they have to guarantee the development of social communication for the good of all mankind, and this without selection or discrimination. This development can be secured by the use of international agreements including those that touch on the use of space satellites. In this way, all nations will be guaranteed a fair place within the dialogue and interplay of mankind.

(b) Co-operation between Nations

92. Those forms of aid which help emerging nations to develop their own means of social communication are of great importance among the many forms of international effort which the media demand. The lack of proper means of social communications is, in fact, a sign of slow development in a community, as well as being one of the causes of it. Without the use of modern techniques of social communication no country can provide its citizens with necessary information or proper education. This inability endangers political, social and economic progress.

93. "Development," said Pope Paul VI, "is the new name for peace."⁴⁸ Countries that are well equipped should provide technical assistance to those which are not. This is as true in the field of social communication as in any other. The developed countries are to help in the training of professionals and provide the necessary equipment. Their responsibilities for the common good do not end at their national frontiers. They extend to the whole of mankind. This requirement is all the more pressing now that developments in the field are progressing so swiftly. Developing countries should be helped with training

⁴⁸ Paul VI: Letter to the Honorable U Thant, Secretary General of the United Nations. A.A.S., LVIII (1966), p. 480. See also the Holy Father's Allocution to the delegates present at Milan for the second meeting of the Administrative Council of the United Nations' Program for Development. A.A.S., LVIII (1966), p. 589.

centers for social communication set up within their own boundaries. Otherwise the trainees may be forced wastefully to leave their own country. Such centers will prevent a "brain drain" from the developing countries.

94. It goes without saying that the aid given to developing countries can never be at the expense of their own cherished traditions, of their culture and art forms, for these are rich in human significance. Cultural co-operation is not the giving of alms. It is an exchange that is mutually advantageous.

95. In developing countries, particularly in those where illiteracy hinders progress, audio-visual means are very effective in spreading knowledge. These means can help to improve agriculture, industry, commerce, hygiene and public health. They can serve to develop the individual's personality, to strengthen family life, social relations and civic responsibility. It is virtually impossible to do such works at a profit. It is therefore necessary to appeal to the generosity of private citizens and of private organizations in the richer countries as well as to the support of international bodies.

*(c) Co-operation between Christians, all Believers
and all Men of Good-will*

96. The means of social communication are not likely to achieve their purpose—which is actively to further human progress—unless they face the formidable problems besetting modern man, and strengthen his hopes and lead to a concerted effort on the part of all who believe in the living God. This is especially true in the case of those who are united in the Sacrament of Baptism. So teaches the Second Vatican Council in the documents on Ecumenism and non-Christian Religions.⁴⁹

97. As a result of the work of the communications media, Christians are better able to understand the state of contemporary world society, a society which is frequently alienated from God. Dramatists and journalists describe this alienation in significant terms—asserting human liberty with all the force of their genius and with all the depth of their thought. Their creative power and descriptive skill has our admiration and gratitude.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Cf. *Unitatis redintegratio*, A.A.S., LVII (1965), pp. 90–112. See also *Nostra aetate*, A.A.S., LVIII (1966), pp. 740–744.

⁵⁰ This was expressed by the World Council of Churches in their "Instruction" issued at Uppsala in 1968, p. 381.

98. When their faith gives them real inspiration, people of different religions can render notable service to social communications. This will do more than further human progress both social and cultural. It can under Divine Providence institute a universal dialogue on the highest level that can lead man to cherish and foster in his daily life his common brotherhood under the One Eternal God, the Father of All.

99. There is almost no end to the opportunities for such collaboration. Some are obvious; joint programs on radio and television; educational projects and services especially for parents and young people; meetings and discussions between professionals, perhaps at an international level; recognition of achievement in these fields by annual awards; co-operation in research in the media, especially in professional training and education. All these can help towards the fair and equal advancement of all peoples.

100. To make practical the possibilities that are inherent in the media there should be a joint program of action. Resources will have to be made available for this. As a practical step the Vatican Council suggested the establishment of World Communications Day. Every man who believes in God is invited to spend one particular day every year to pray and think about the future and the problems of the media. He is also invited to friendly meetings with the different sorts of professionals. In this way it should be possible to explore what projects can be started and what initiatives encouraged, whereby the media can be used to further the progress of mankind. The People of God (both pastors and laymen) commit themselves, in the fulfillment of these duties, to give support to the initiatives of men of good-will everywhere so that the means of social communication may be used for justice, peace, freedom and human progress.

PART THREE

The Commitment of Catholics in the Media

101. By the Second Vatican Council Catholics have been asked to consider still more carefully and in the light of the Faith what new work and responsibility the modern means of social communication place upon them.

In the first part of this Instruction, we have suggested how the history of salvation implied a vital role for social communications in God's creative and redeeming work among men. In interpreting her responsibilities in this, the Church tries to give a coherent vision that will embrace both the Faith and the practical working of social communication. It is in this light that she will fulfill her divine mission which is the object of all her pastoral activity, and which has the dual aspect of helping men and of announcing the Good News.

The aspect of human advancement by the media has been generally discussed in the second part of this document. The specifically Christian and Catholic contribution to human advancement will be dealt with briefly in the following chapter of this third part, which is concerned with the role of the media in the life of Catholics.

CHAPTER I

THE CONTRIBUTION OF CATHOLICS TO SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

102. If Catholics are to be of service to the means of social communication and to act so that these may serve humanity's ends, it goes without saying that it is in the spiritual sphere that the Church can best help. The Church hopes that, as a result of her spiritual contribution, the basic nature of social communication will be more clearly appreciated. The Church hopes, too, that the dignity of the human person, both communicator and recipient, will be better understood and respected. In this way this social interplay that makes neighbors of men can lead to true communion.

103. Therefore the active co-operation of Christians who are professionally competent in this field is a major service to social communication. The excellence which they bring to their professional duty is itself a powerful testimony to Christianity. Moreover, as members of companies or organizations without religious affiliations, they will bring to the fore a Christian point of view on all questions that exercise men in society. They can help news editors and newscasters not to overlook news items about religious life which will interest their audience. They can give the religious dimension to human life. It goes without saying that they are not at this work in order to dominate the media with their viewpoint. Rather they aim to give a service which will earn the sympathy of their colleagues simply by its quality.

104. Communicators have the right to expect the kind of spiritual help that meets the special needs of their important but difficult role.

It is a source of strength for Catholic communicators that they receive from the Church spiritual help to meet the needs of their important and difficult role.

105. Fully aware of the importance of their profession and of the special difficulties it involves, the Church is very willing to undertake a dialogue with all communicators of every religious persuasion. She would do this so that she may contribute to a common effort to solve the problems inherent in their task and do what is best for the benefit of man.

106. As representatives of the Church, bishops, priests, religious and laity are increasingly asked to write in the press or appear on radio and television or to collaborate in filming. They are warmly urged to undertake this work which has consequences that are far more important than is usually imagined. But the complexity of the media requires a sound knowledge of their impact and of the best way to use them. It is therefore the task of the national centers and of the specialized organizations to make certain that those who have to use the media receive sufficient and timely training.

107. The Church considers it to be one of her most urgent tasks to provide the means for training recipients in Christian principles. This also is a service to social communication. The well-trained recipient will be able to take part in the dialogue promoted by the media and will demand high quality in communications. Catholic schools and organizations cannot ignore the urgent duty they have in this

field. These schools and institutions will take care to teach young people not only to be good Christians when they are recipients but but also to be active in using all the aids to communication that lie within the media, now called the "total language." So, young people will be true citizens of that age of social communication which has already begun.

108. The whole question of social communication deserves attention from theologians, particularly in the areas of moral and pastoral theology. Religious education, too, ought to include instruction on the modern media and their principal implications. This will be more readily achieved when theologians have studied the suggestions in the First Part of this Instruction and enriched them with their research and insight.

109. Parents, educators, priests and Christian organizations should encourage young people with the right qualities to take up a career in social communication. To do this and to provide properly trained candidates, funds are necessary. In developing areas, the national hierarchies should get financial help for the training of local candidates both in theory and practice.

110. Bishops, priests, religious and laity, all in their own ways, have a clear duty to contribute to Christian education in this field. They must make this contribution with the social teachings of the Church in mind.

They should of their own accord keep in touch with the latest developments in communications so as to be well informed themselves. Otherwise they will lack that familiarity with the media which actual use requires. Working with professional communicators, they will be wise to go more deeply into the problems presented by communicating through the media and to exchange their experiences and ideas.

111. If students for the priesthood and religious in training wish to be part of modern life and also to be at all effective in their apostolate, they should know how the media work upon the fabric of society, and also the technique of their use. This knowledge should be an integral part of their ordinary education. Indeed, without this knowledge an effective apostolate is impossible in a society which is increasingly conditioned by the media.⁵¹ It is also desirable that

⁵¹ Cf. The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, "The Fundamental Characteristic of Priestly Education." A.A.S., XLII (1970), pp. 321-384. See especially para. 4 and no. 68.

priests and religious understand how public opinion and popular attitudes come into being, so that they can suit both the situation and the people of their time. They can find the media of great help in their effort to announce the word of God to modern men. Students who show a special gift in the handling of the media should be given higher training.

112. Reviews of radio and television broadcasts, of films and illustrated magazines can be of help in cultural and religious education. They will also help those who wish to make a wise choice of what the media have to offer, particularly for the family. In this connection, particular attention should be paid to reviews that have real competence. These include assessment of the worth, the morality and the Christian value of films, broadcasts and writings issued under the pastoral care of bishops in different regions by specially appointed boards.

113. Catholic universities and educational institutions should be more assiduous in the promotion of scientific studies and research on social communications. They should try to collate all the findings of research, themselves play a part in this research, and make all of it available to the service of Christian education. While they will need financial help from others for these projects, they in turn should readily co-operate with other institutions.

CHAPTER II

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA TO CATHOLICS

1. PUBLIC OPINION AND CLOSER COMMUNICATION IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH

114. The Church looks for ways of multiplying and strengthening the bonds of union between her members. For this reason, communication and dialogue among Catholics are indispensable. The Church lives her life in the midst of the whole community of man. She must therefore maintain contacts and lines of communication in order to keep a relationship with the whole human race. This is done both by giving information and by listening carefully to public

opinion inside and outside the Church. Finally, by holding a continuous discussion with the contemporary world, she tries to help in solving the problems that men face at the present time.

(a) *Dialogue within the Church*

115. Since the Church is a living body, she needs public opinion in order to sustain a giving and taking between her members. Without this, she cannot advance in thought and action. "Something would be lacking in her life if she had no public opinion. Both pastors of souls and lay people would be to blame for this."⁵²

116. Catholics should be fully aware of the real freedom to speak their minds which stems from a "feeling for the faith" and from love.

It stems from that feeling for the faith which is aroused and nourished by the spirit of truth in order that, under the guidance of the teaching Church which they accept with reverence, the People of God may cling unswervingly to the faith given to the early Church, with true judgment penetrate its meaning more deeply, and apply it more fully in their lives.⁵³

This freedom also stems from love. For it is with love that the liberty of the People of God is raised to an intimate sharing in the freedom of Christ himself, who cleansed us from our sins, in order that we might be able freely to make judgments in accordance with the will of God.

Those who exercise authority in the Church will take care to ensure that there is responsible exchange of freely held and expressed opinion among the People of God. More than this, they will set up norms and conditions for this to take place.⁵⁴

117. There is an enormous area where members of the Church can express their views on domestic issues. It must be taken that the truths of the faith express the essence of the Church and therefore do not leave room for arbitrary interpretations. Nonetheless, the Church moves with the movement of man. She therefore has to adapt herself

⁵² Pius XII: Allocution given on February 17, 1950 to those who were in Rome to participate in the International Congress for Editors of Catholic Periodicals. A.A.S., XVII (1950), p. 256.

⁵³ Cf. *Lumen gentium*, 12.

⁵⁴ Cf. "Réflexions et suggestions concernant le dialogue oecuménique," *L'Osservatore Romano*, 21-22 September 1970.

to the special circumstances that arise out of time and place. She has to consider how the truths of the Faith may be explained in different times and cultures. She has to reach a multitude of decisions while adjusting her actions to the changes around her. While the individual Catholic follows the Magisterium, he can and should engage in free research so that he may better understand revealed truths or explain them to a society subject to incessant change.

This free dialogue within the Church does no injury to her unity and solidarity. It nurtures concord and the meeting of minds by permitting the free play of the variations of public opinion. But in order that this dialogue may go in the right direction it is essential that charity is in command even when there are differing views. Everyone in this dialogue should be animated by the desire to serve and to consolidate unity and co-operation. There should be a desire to build, not to destroy. There should be a deep love for the Church and a compelling desire for its unity. Christ made love the sign by which men can recognize his true Church and therefore his true followers.⁵⁵

118. For this reason, a distinction must be borne in mind between, on the one hand, the area that is devoted to scientific investigation and, on the other, the area that concerns the teaching of the faithful. In the first, experts enjoy the freedom required by their work and are free to communicate to others, in books and commentaries, the fruits of their research. In the second, only those doctrines may be attributed to the Church which are declared to be such by her authentic Magisterium. These last, obviously, can be aired in public without fear of giving scandal.

It sometimes happens, however, because of the very nature of social communication, that new opinions circulating among theologians, at times, circulate too soon and in the wrong places. Such opinions, which must not be confused with the authentic doctrine of the Church, should be examined critically. It must also be remembered that the real significance of such theories is often badly distorted by popularization and by the style of presentation used in the media.

119. Since the development of public opinion within the Church is essential, individual Catholics have the right to all the information they need to play their active role in the life of the Church.

In practice this means that communications media must be available for the task. These should not only exist in sufficient number but

⁵⁵ Cf. Jn 17:21.

also reach all the People of God. Where necessary, they may even be owned by the Church as long as they truly fulfill their purpose.

120. The normal flow of life and the smooth functioning of government within the Church require a steady two-way flow of information between the ecclesiastical authorities at all levels and the faithful as individuals and as organized groups. This applies to the whole world. To make this possible various institutions are required. These might include news agencies, official spokesmen, meeting facilities, pastoral councils—all properly financed.

121. On those occasions when the affairs of the Church require secrecy, the rules normal in civil affairs equally apply.

On the other hand, the spiritual riches which are an essential attribute of the Church demand that the news she gives out of her intentions as well as of her works be distinguished by integrity, truth and openness. When ecclesiastical authorities are unwilling to give information or are unable to do so, then rumor is unloosed and rumor is not a bearer of the truth but carries dangerous half-truths. Secrecy should therefore be restricted to matters that involve the good name of individuals or that touch upon the rights of people whether singly or collectively.

(b) Dialogue between the Church and the World

122. The Church does not speak and listen to her own members alone; her dialogue is with the whole world. By virtue of a divine command and by the right to knowledge possessed by the people whose lot she shares on earth, the Church is in duty bound publicly to communicate her belief and her way of life.⁵⁶ Moreover, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, she is “to read the signs of the times,” for these too reveal the message of God and indicate the unfolding of the history of salvation under Divine Providence. This is another reason why the Church needs to know contemporary reactions to ideas and events, whether they be Catholic or not. The greater the extent to which the means of social communication reflect these reactions, the more do they contribute towards this knowledge required by the Church.

123. It is the mission of those with responsible positions in the Church to announce without fail or pause the full truth, by the means

⁵⁶ Cf. Mt. 28:19.

of social communication, so as to give a true picture of the Church and her life. Since the media are often the only channels of information that exist between the Church and the world, a failure to use them amounts to "burying the talent given by God."

The Church naturally expects news agencies to put out religious news with all the care and attention that the subject demands. On her part, the Church is consequently bound in duty to give complete and entirely accurate information to the news agencies so that they, in their turn, can carry out their task.

124. What was said above,⁵⁷ where commentaries on the news were discussed, equally applies when the news is about the Church. Responsible leaders in the Church should try in advance to be ready to deal with a difficult situation and should not abandon the initiative. Further, it is wise to see that important decisions and statements be made available in advance, using time embargo on publication. In this way, arrangements could be made in the interests of the Church for proper explanation and discussion.

125. The means of social communication help Catholics in three ways. They help the Church reveal herself to the modern world. They foster dialogue within the Church. They make clear to the Church contemporary opinions and attitudes. For the Church has been ordered by God to give men the message of salvation in a language they can understand and to involve herself in the concerns of man.

2. THE USE OF THE MEDIA FOR GIVING THE GOOD NEWS

126. Christ commanded the Apostles and their successors to "teach all nations,"⁵⁸ to be "the light of the world"⁵⁹ and to announce the Good News in all places at all times. During his life on earth, Christ showed himself to be the perfect Communicator, while the Apostles used what means of social communication were available in their time. It is now necessary that the same message be carried by the means of social communication that are available today. Indeed, it would be difficult to suggest that Christ's command was being obeyed

⁵⁷ Cf. paragraph 38 above.

⁵⁸ Mt 28:19.

⁵⁹ Mt 5:14.

unless all the opportunities offered by the modern media to extend to vast numbers of people the announcement of his Good News were being used. Therefore the Second Vatican Council invited the People of God "to use effectively and at once the means of social communication, zealously availing themselves of them for apostolic purposes." ⁶⁰

127. The necessity for doing this is quite obvious once it is realized that modern men are immersed in the tide of social communication when they are forming their profound convictions and adopting their attitudes. This is as true of religious convictions and attitudes as it is of any other sort.

128. The modern media offer new ways of confronting people with the message of the Gospel, of allowing Christians even when they are far away to share in sacred rites and worship and in ecclesiastical functions. In this way they can bind the Christian community closer together and invite everyone to participate in the intimate life of the Church. Of course, the mode of presentation has to suit the special nature of the medium being used. The media are not the same as a church pulpit. It cannot be overstressed that the standard of such presentations must at least equal in quality the other productions of the media.

129. The media are invaluable helps for Christian education. They can call on the services of the greatest specialists in religious teaching as well as of experts on all the questions that arise. The media have at their command all the technical facilities required for attractive and contemporary presentation. They can back up most effectively the personal work of the teacher day by day. Their resources make possible the radical changes that are required in the whole style of religious instruction today.

Since the instruments of social communication are the usual channels for giving the news and for voicing contemporary man's attitudes and views, they offer marvellous opportunities to all for considering the implications of their religious convictions through the discussion of events and problems of the day. The Christian can then apply these deepened convictions to his daily life.

130. People today have grown so used to the entertaining style and skillful presentation of communications by the media that they are intolerant of what is obviously inferior in any public presentation. The

⁶⁰ *Inter mirifica*, 13.

same applies if this be a religious occasion, such as, for example, a liturgical ceremony, a sermon or instruction in the Faith.

131. In order to make the teaching of Christianity more interesting and effective the media should be used as much as possible. Every effort should be made to use the most appropriate technique and style in fitting a communication to its medium.

132. The Church can use means of communication that are not under her control but which, under agreed conditions, are offered for her use. Where it is necessary, she may also herself own and administer means of communication. No hard and fast rules can here be laid down; the situation varies from place to place. Religious authorities will advise those who are involved in this apostolate what to do within the differing conditions of different countries. They should give this advice when they have consulted the local experts and, if it should be necessary, after seeking international advice.

133. Considerable financial resources are required if Catholics are to meet their different commitments to further human progress in the light of the Gospel, both by making their proper contribution to social communication and by using these God-given methods themselves. Catholics are called upon to consider their responsibilities in this field and to meet them with generosity "as it would ill become the faithful to suffer the word of salvation to be confined and circumscribed."⁶¹

134. In view of the mounting importance of the means of social communication—to the life of mankind in general and of the Church in particular—the media should receive a great deal more emphasis than they presently get in the overall plans for pastoral action made by Episcopal Conferences. These plans should make the necessary funds available for use in the areas under their jurisdiction. Funds should also be made available for international co-operation.

CHAPTER III

THE ACTIVE COMMITMENT OF CATHOLICS IN THE DIFFERENT MEDIA

135. We have considered⁶² what should be the right approach of dedicated Catholic communicators towards their work, an approach

⁶¹ *Inter mirifica*, 17.

⁶² Cf. paragraphs 102–113 above.

shared by colleagues, whatever the nature of their beliefs. For the Catholic, his Faith provides an extra incentive.

Then we dealt with the special duties of communicators working specifically as Catholics. In this we confined ourselves to general discussion, without dealing with the media one by one.⁶³

Here we deal with the duties of Catholic communicators in each separate medium of social communication. These are duties that affect anyone who appears in the name of the Church, whether he appears in media that are officially Catholic or as a spokesman in some uncommitted institution that opens its facilities to the expression of a Catholic point of view.

1. THE PRINTED WORD

136. The Press, of its power and nature, is of towering importance. Because of its adaptability, because of its variety and of the number of its publications, it can go into detail when reporting the news. It can also comment on the news and, without boring the reader, interpret it in a way that makes him think for himself. It is a most useful complement to the audio-visual means of communication. It is a most effective means of stimulating men's critical faculties and of helping them form their own opinions. Since it is able to deal with such a variety of material and since it can so admirably encourage men to think, it has prime place in the promotion of social dialogue.

Moreover, today all the classics of religious literature are available to everybody in the form of paperbacks, booklets and every sort of leaflet. So also are the accepted masterpieces of every nation, scientific works and every sort of light reading that can provide pleasant relaxation. "Comics" and illustrated stories are not to be despised. They can for instance be used to illustrate the Sacred Scriptures and the lives of the saints. All these productions of the printing press deserve our interest and support.

137. The Catholic Press—and this includes reviews, magazines and periodicals—can be marvellously effective in bringing a knowledge of the Church to the world and a knowledge of the world to the Church. It does this by imparting information and by stimulating those processes by which public opinion is formed. There is, how-

⁶³ Cf. paragraphs 126–134 above.

ever, no advantage in founding new publications if quantity is achieved at the cost of quality and if the new injure the old.

138. That part of the Catholic Press which is of general interest publishes news and opinions and background articles about all the facets and problems and worries of modern life. This it does in the light of Christian principles. It is the task of the Catholic Press to balance, to complete and, if necessary, to correct the news and comments about religion and the Christian life. At one and the same time it will be a glass that reflects the world and a light to show it the way. It will be a forum, a meeting place for the exchange of views. This Press needs talented men and funds if its professional competence is to be above dispute.

139. The Catholic Press must be able to acquire suitable offices and the proper facilities for obtaining news reports and features. Otherwise, a Catholic-run Press cannot effectively promote dialogue inside the Church and between the Church and the outside world. It must also achieve professional standards in printing up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive news about the life of the Church. In the collecting, collating and passing on of the news throughout the world there is need for co-operation at the international level.

140. Catholics are encouraged to read Catholic publications regularly. Naturally these must deserve the name of being Catholic. It is hard to see how people can keep in touch with what is happening in the Church without the Catholic Press. Neither can people keep a Catholic attitude towards what happens in the world without the help of commentaries on the news written in the light of Christian principles. This is certainly not intended as an interference in the individual's right to read what he chooses. Still less is it intended as an interference with the freedom of expression of writers with different convictions, nor is it intended to discourage the diversity ordinarily taken for granted in a particular area. It is self-evident that Catholic writers must earn their popularity and following by the high standard of their work.

141. When the events of the day raise questions that touch fundamental Christian principles, the Catholic Press will try to interpret these in accordance with the Magisterium of the Church. Apart from this, clergy and laity will encourage a free expression of opinion and a wide variety of publications and points of view. They should do this because it will satisfy the different interests and concerns of readers,

and because it contributes to the formation of public opinion in the Church and the world.⁶⁴ Those Catholic newspapers which are recognized as the official organs of the various authorities and institutions of the Church should always, in accordance with usual press practice, try to explain fully the thinking of the organization for which they are accepted as public spokesmen. In these newspapers, an unrestricted liberty of expression should be maintained in those pages where it is made quite clear that the editors are not committing themselves in a particular question that is still under discussion.

2. CINEMA

142. The Cinema is part of contemporary life. It exerts a strong influence on education, knowledge, culture and leisure. The artist finds in film a very effective means of expressing his interpretation of life, and one that well suits his times. The improvement of techniques that increase audience-participation and the general availability at low cost of filming and projecting equipment, presage an even wider use of films in the future. Because of all this, it is possible to derive a deeper appreciation and a richer cultural dividend from the film and filming.

143. These developments should be carefully studied in pastoral planning, for there are many openings for a greater use of this medium in pastoral action. There has been a growth of international co-operation in this field. And it is easier now to produce films that are completely adapted to various needs and circumstances and to project these, not only in large cinemas, but also in small halls and even in homes.

144. Many films have compellingly treated subjects that concern human progress or spiritual values. Such works deserve everyone's praise and support. The Catholic organizations specializing in films should be among the first to support them. They should also promote these films in an organized manner. In this connection, it will be recalled that among films which have been widely accepted as classics, many have dealt with specifically religious themes. This not only

⁶⁴ Cf. paragraphs 114–121 above, where dialogue in the Church is discussed. Cf. Paul VI: *Ecclesiam Suam*. See also the outline of the principles for ecumenical dialogue in the document "Réflexions et suggestions concernant le dialogue oecuménique," especially nos. IV, 4b and IV, 5. *L'Osservatore Romano*, September 21–22, 1970.

proves that the cinema is a proper vehicle for such noble themes, but it is a strong encouragement to produce films of this kind.

145. Catholic associations for the cinema should collaborate with their counterparts in the other media in endeavors to plan, produce, distribute and exhibit films imbued with religious principles. With discrimination, they should also use for religious teaching all the new developments in this field which make inexpensive productions possible. These include records, audio- and video-tape-recorders, video-cassettes and all the machines that record and play back either sound or static or moving images.

146. In regions where there is illiteracy, films can make a very effective contribution to the provision of basic education. They can also help in teaching religious truth. The illiterate are profoundly affected by images and can readily grasp the facts and ideas presented through them. The media should be used effectively in the effort to promote human and religious progress. But, of course, the films chosen for use must be suited to the cultural traditions of the local population.

147. Those engaged in film-making must cope with considerable professional difficulties. So all Catholics, and in particular those who belong to associations concerned with the cinema, should readily establish and maintain contact with them. This friendliness will clearly demonstrate the high regard in which their work is held as an art, and so all will convince themselves that this product of man's ingenuity is outstandingly useful.

3. RADIO AND TELEVISION

148. Radio and Television have given society new patterns of communication. They have changed ways of life. Broadcasting stretches out, further and further, towards every corner of the earth. Instantaneous transmissions break through political and cultural barriers. What they have to say reaches men in their own homes. Broadcasters have access to the minds and hearts of everyone. Rapid technological advances, especially those that involve satellite transmissions and the recording and storage of programs, have done still more to free the media from the restrictions of time and space, and these promise still more effectiveness and influence. For the listener and viewer, radio and television open up the whole world of events, of culture and of entertainment. Television, especially, brings individuals and events

before the general public, as though the viewers were actually present. And besides the established forms of artistic expression, broadcasters have created art forms of their own which can affect man in new ways.

149. The religious aspects of human life find a place in daily broadcasting, both on radio and on television.

150. Religious programs that utilize all the resources of radio and television enrich people's religious life and create new bonds between the faithful. They help in religious education and in the Church's active commitment in the world. They are bonds of union for those who cannot share physically in the life of the Church because of their sickness or old age. In addition they create new relationships between the faithful and those people—and today they are legion—who have no affiliation with any Church and yet subconsciously seek spiritual nourishment. They carry the message of the Gospel to countries where the Church is not. The Church cannot afford to ignore such opportunities. On the contrary, she will make the fullest use of any fresh opportunities that the improvement of those instruments may disclose.

151. The transmission of the Mass and of other sacred rites is to be included in religious broadcasting. Both in their technical and in their religious aspects, such transmissions must be carefully prepared in advance. The vastness of the audience must be considered and, if transmissions cross national frontiers, so too must the religious sensitivities and conditions of other nations. How often such programs are transmitted and how long they should last must be decided upon in the light of the popular demand.

152. Sermons and homilies must be adapted to the nature of the medium that is used. Those who are given the task of preaching in this way should, therefore, be carefully chosen from among those who have a sound practical knowledge of the technique of broadcasting.

153. Religious broadcasts, such as newscasts, commentaries, reports and discussions, can contribute a great deal towards education and dialogue. What has already been said about the Catholic commitment in the press, applies here too. And here, also, the general rules for giving a fair hearing to different points of view are equally valid, especially when the medium in question enjoys, in practice, a monopoly in a given region.

154. Well-known Catholics who go on the air, whether they are clerical or lay, are automatically regarded as spokesmen of the Church.

They must keep this in mind and try to avoid any confusion arising from this. Even so they will be conscious of the responsibility when they express their views, when they decide on the style of their broadcast and, indeed, on their whole manner of behavior. If they can do so in time, they should consult competent ecclesiastical authorities.

155. Listeners and viewers will contribute to the betterment of religious programs by making their reactions known.

156. If the active presence of the Church in general and in religious programs is to be ensured, then a close collaboration based on mutual trust must be established between the responsible Catholic authorities and the broadcasting companies.

157. In those countries where the Church is forbidden the use of the media of social communication, listening to foreign religious broadcasts may be the only way the faithful can learn about the life of the Universal Church and hear the Word of God. In the name of Christian solidarity, such a situation puts a grave obligation upon the Catholics of other countries. It is necessary to organize religious broadcasts that are specially suited to the needs of fellow Christians who suffer this sort of deprivation.

4. THE THEATRE

158. The theatre is one of the most ancient and lively forms of human expression and communication. Still, today, it commands a large audience, not only of those who go to plays, but also of those who follow drama on radio and television. Moreover, many plays have been adapted for films.

159. The partnership of the theatre with the mass media of communication has brought about forms of dramatic expression that, aptly, have been called "multi-media," and these add something of their own to the traditional theatre. Using their different resources, these have created a kind of synthesis of the potentials of each of the media of communication.

160. Finally and most significantly, the contemporary theatre is, without doubt, an experimental workshop for the expression of new, daring and challenging ideas about modern man and his predicament. The impact of all this goes far beyond the audience attending a particular play, which may be quite small. Ultimately it extends to all the media of communication.

161. The Church has always shown considerable interest in the theatre which, in its origins, was closely connected with manifestations of religion. This ancient interest in the theatre should be maintained by Christians today and full use be made of its possibilities. Playwrights should be encouraged and helped to set man's religious preoccupations on the platform of the public stage. This is often the first step in a much wider diffusion made possible by the communications media.

CHAPTER IV

EQUIPMENT, PERSONNEL AND ORGANIZATION

162. The place of the instruments of social communication in human destiny, the opportunities and the problems that they set before the Christian conscience, all this makes it essential that a way be found for a pastoral approach to this field. Trained and experienced men must be found for this work. The proper pastoral structures, with all the necessary funding, rights and resources, should also be set up.

Finally, special organizations should be devoted to the apostolate of each of the media.

163. This modern mission of the Church will mean a great deal to the faithful. They will offer their prayers and support so that she will be adequately equipped to fulfill it. The latest media of social communication are indispensable means for evangelization, and for enlightening the minds and hearts of men. They also contribute towards co-operation in furthering human progress by a Christian leavening of the social order.

164. The official Catholic organizations and enterprises that work in social communications with a pastoral end in view, should be able to call upon trained personnel. The training of laymen, priests and religious is to be given a high priority by those responsible for this work in the Church.

165. A careful appraisal of the entire range of the communications media, a prudent and well-informed planning for pastoral work and in every apostolic enterprise, all this is the rightful province of the ecclesiastical authorities. They, in their turn, should depend upon the advice of experts in the different branches of communication.

According to the ground rules laid down in *Inter mirifica*, this duty devolves upon every bishop in every diocese,⁶⁵ upon a special commission of bishops or a bishop-delegate in each country⁶⁶ and, for the Universal Church, upon the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications.⁶⁷

166. The different sorts of projects and organizations for the specialized apostolate in social communications should everywhere be promoted and co-ordinated one with another.⁶⁸ The ecclesiastical authorities should encourage the free flowering of Catholic initiative in this, but they should retain guidance over those works which properly belong to the priestly ministry, and over those which—according to the circumstances of time and place—demand a commitment on the part of the hierarchy on behalf of the faithful.

167. The competent ecclesiastical authorities at all levels (mentioned in para. 165) will lend their full support to the preparation and celebration of World Communications Day. This day has been designed specially to honor the professionals in the media and to encourage their co-operation.⁶⁹ The ecclesiastical authorities will present regularly to the Episcopal Conferences projects for financing pastoral activity in the field of social communications.

168. The local hierarchies will take a keen interest in the apostolate of social communications. They will seek the advice of their priests and laity. Wherever possible, diocesan or, at least, inter-diocesan offices will be set up. One of the chief tasks of these is to organize this pastoral apostolate within the diocese, penetrating right down to parish level. Another task is to prepare for the celebration of World Communications Day (mentioned above) within the diocese.

169. A national office for the communications media should be set up in every country. It can be divided into specialized and reasonably autonomous departments for each of the media. Or it can have separate offices for the press, cinema and broadcasting that work closely together. In any case, the whole of this apostolate should be placed under a single, overall direction.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Cf. *Inter mirifica*, 20.

⁶⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 21.

⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁸ Cf. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 19 and 21.

⁶⁹ *Inter mirifica*, 18.

⁷⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 21.

170. It is the mission of the national and diocesan offices to stimulate, promote and harmonize Catholic activities in the field of social communications. They will take particular pains about the training of the faithful, clerical and lay, by means of organized courses, conferences, study sessions and critical assessments prepared by their experts, so that the faithful can use their own informed judgment. The offices will also be ready to give advice to producers engaged on films, performances or broadcasts that concern religious subjects.

171. The national and diocesan offices will maintain these contacts with the professional world of social communications. They will furnish the documentary material, the advice and the pastoral assistance that professional communicators may require. They also are to organize World Communications Day on the national level and organize the collection of funds that the Decree of the Council suggests should be made on that day.⁷¹

172. The national episcopal commission for social communications or the delegated bishop is in charge of the direction of all the activities of the national offices. They are to lay down general guidelines for the development of the apostolate of social communications on the national level. They will keep in touch with the other national episcopal commissions and collaborate with the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications. The status of this Commission is described in the Conciliar Decree *Inter mirifica*⁷² and in the Apostolic Letter, by Pope Paul VI, *In Fructibus multis*.⁷³

173. On continents or in regions where an Episcopal Conference exists that embraces several countries, this Conference will have an office for social communications under the overall direction of a bishop or a number of bishops.

174. Every diocese, all Episcopal Conferences or Bishops' Assemblies and the Holy See itself should each have its own official and permanent spokesman or press officer to issue the news and give clear explanations of the documents of the Church so that people can grasp precisely what is intended. These spokesmen will give, in full and without delay, information on the life and work of the Church in that area for which they are responsible. It is highly recommended that individual dioceses and the more weighty Catholic organizations also

⁷¹ Cf. *Inter mirifica*, 18.

⁷² Cf. *ibid.*, 19.

⁷³ Cf. *In Fructibus multis*. A.A.S., LVI (1964), pp. 289–292.

have their own permanent spokesmen with the sort of duties explained above.

All these officials and, indeed, all those who are identified with the Church in the mind of the public, should take into account the principles of public relations. They should consider the sort of audience they are, at various times, addressing and establish a relationship that is based on mutual trust and understanding. This can only be maintained as long as people have a genuine regard and consideration for one another and a scrupulous respect for the truth.

175. It is not enough to have a public spokesman. There must be a continual two-way flow of news and information. On the one hand, this aims to present a true image of the Church in a way that makes it visible to all. On the other, this exchange reveals to the ecclesiastical authorities the surges, currents and ideas that stir the world of men. Clearly this calls for the cultivation of friendly relations based on mutual respect between the Church, people and groups. In this way continual exchanges can be fostered, with each side both giving and receiving.⁷⁴

176. To make sure of an effective dialogue, both within the Church and with the outside world, on the subject of recent events and their religious significance, official news releases are indispensable. These will publicize relevant news-items as quickly as possible. The public, in this way, will get their information in good time. Needless to say, all the necessary means are to be used to make these releases absolutely accurate and so avoid the necessity for subsequent corrections. News flashes, telex, all the latest techniques will be used to convey precise meanings in the most dependable way.

177. Religious Orders and Congregations will give thought to the many pressing tasks of the Church in the field of social communications and consider what they themselves can do to fulfill them under their constitutions. Their own specialized institutions for social communications will collaborate with one another, and they will keep abreast of the overall pastoral planning of the diocesan offices, and of the national, continental or regional offices, since these are, usually, the competent bodies for the apostolate of social communications.

178. The national offices⁷⁵ and the corresponding central offices of the Religious Congregations will co-operate with the International

⁷⁴ Cf. paragraphs 138–141 above.

⁷⁵ Cf. paragraph 169 above.

Organization for the Press, (U.C.I.P.), for the Cinema, (O.C.I.C.), and for Radio and Television, (UNDA). This will be done in accord with the statutes of these international organizations as approved by the Holy See.⁷⁶

179. These international Catholic organizations for social communications—each in its own sphere and in a way that fits its statutes—will help the national professional bodies of Catholics who have given themselves to these tasks. The way to do this is to keep abreast of research and development in the media. They will foster mutual aid and international co-operation. They will keep themselves informed on Catholic activity in the field. They will prepare the co-ordination of international programs and projects. They will continually seek advice on the best ways to help developing countries. They will encourage fresh initiatives. They will produce and distribute films and recorded broadcasts and every sort of audio-visual material, including the printed word. They will do all this for the advancement of social progress and for the betterment of Catholic life. These international Catholic organizations are exhorted to undertake and to co-ordinate research for the solution of their common problems.

180. The Episcopal Conferences, through their specialized offices, and the Catholic professional associations, will assure for the international Catholic organization the funds necessary for doing this work.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Inter mirifica*, 22.

Conclusion

181. The question is posed whether we are on the threshold of an utterly new sort of era in social communications or whether we face merely a change in degree and not in kind. There is no easy answer to this question and it continually increases in complexity. What is certain is that soon, due to the latest technical developments—especially those that concern communication satellites—sounds, images and the messages they bear will soon be reaching men, simultaneously, all over the world. It will be possible to record these and play them back at will—either for entertainment or for instruction. So it will be possible for all peoples to learn more of each other as a result of this real dialogue. They can then work together for the unity of mankind and the establishment of peace.

182. Suddenly, and in proportion with these changes, the responsibilities of the People of God will enormously increase. Never before will they have been offered such opportunities. It will be possible to ensure that the media promote the advancement of the whole human race and the development of those countries in what is called the “Third World.” It will be possible to strengthen the brotherhood of man. And then the Good News can be given everywhere, bearing witness to Christ, the Saviour.

183. This Pastoral Instruction lays down some guidelines chosen after consideration of the general situation that prevails in social communications. As things stand at present, it would not be reasonable to try to be more precise and detailed. The Christian outlook is based on certain immutable principles that are founded on that message of love which is the Gospel’s Good News and upon the dignity of man, who has been called to be an adopted son of God. It is obvious that directions and practical applications, as well as pastoral guidelines, will have to be adapted to the different conditions that obtain in different places—depending on their degree of technical progress and their social situation. They will change too with the changing conditions of the media and of their inherent laws, and the future is certain to bring changes in this area of social communications. In so fluid a situation, it is clear that those who are responsible for

pastoral planning must stay flexible and be always willing to try to keep pace with new discoveries in this field.

184. Even today there is a great deal that must still be learned about the present media and how the fullest use can be made of them, in education particularly and indeed at every level. There is room for study, in much greater depth, of the effects of social communications on different cultural environments and on different types of people.

In order to be able to understand the functioning of the media of social communication within the family of man, and to comprehend both their potential and present performance, to reach a better assessment of their varying psychological and cultural effects, it is necessary to concentrate on a rigorous program of scientific research. Indeed, a much greater effort than that now being made is required of all the concerned parties in furthering this research.

Universities, whether of new or ancient foundation, have an open field before them. The problems they face are not only urgent; they are also fully consonant with the dignity of the traditional disciplines. For her part, the Church wishes to let researchers know how eager she is to learn from their work in all these areas and to follow out its practical conclusions. Thus she herself may the better serve the process of social communication and use its means to the best advantage of all men.

185. In this connection, it appears necessary to discover through scientific research the true effectiveness of the Church in the field of social communications. It will then be possible to deploy her resources so that they suit the importance of the tasks she faces throughout the world. Catholics will then find it easier to start new projects that match the ever-growing importance of the media.

186. In the meantime, faced by the most urgent need for making closer contact with the professionals in social communication, for engaging these men in dialogue, for making her contribution and for urging all men to use the media to serve both the progress of man and the glory of God, the Church could no longer delay this Pastoral Instruction. The Pontifical Commission for Social Communications issues this Instruction in accordance with the mandate from the Second Vatican Council but only after intensive consultations on a world-wide basis. It is hoped that this publication marks not so much the end of a phase as the start of a new one.

187. The People of God walk in history. As they, who are, essentially, both communicators and recipients, advance with their times, they look forward with confidence and even with enthusiasm to whatever the development of communications in a space-age may have to offer.

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