



**VERITAS ASIA INSTITUTE
OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION**



Communication for Pastoral Leadership

INTER MIRIFICA Vatican II Decree on Social Communications

Fr. George Plathottam sdb
Executive Secretary, FABC Office of Social Communication

IM: Origin

- At the first announcement for a Council on January 25, 1959 by Pope John XXIII there was no word about Communication.
- Among the answers from Bishops, Major Superiors and Catholic institutions on subjects to be treated at the Council out of a total of 2150 answers only 18 mentioned media or communication.

IM: Preparation

- Already in the first internal pre-preparatory Commission of the Vatican II in November 1959 a proposal was made for a *Commission on modern means for the Apostolate, especially Cinema, Radio/TV...*
- In the first session of this group the following agenda was proposed:
 1. How can these means contribute to the spreading of the Christian Message?

IM: Agenda

2. Examine the negative effects on the ideology and practice of the faithful through wrong use of the media.
3. The actual presence of the Church in the Media.
4. Doctrinal principles and practical applications.

IM: Preparatory Commission

- June 5, 1960: A Secretariat was created to handle “*all questions related to the modern means of Social Communication: Press, Radio/TV, Film.*”
 - *President:* Archbishop Martin J. O’Connor
 - *Secretary:* Andrea M. Deskur.
 - 41 members from 21 different countries, one Asian Msgr. Giustino Ortiz (Manila) all of them bishops or priests; no laity or professionals
 - Name now: *Secretariat of the Press and Film*
 - Purpose: Preparation of a Council document...



...e del Segretariato Preparatorio: 13 novembre 1969. - Da sinistra a destra: R. Pichard, Heinzmann, A. Stefanizzi, J. Tucek, A. Spada, J.L. McNulty, A. Del Campo, P.C. Van Beck, M.J. O'Connor, A. Galletto, (D. Composta), W. Kempf, R. Stourin, S. Laszlo, M. ard, A. Moreno, E. Gabel, A. Devoto, K.A. Siegel, E. Baragli.



- **Aim: To address the problems facing humanity in the modern age**
- **To rediscover the Gospel message in an age of technological innovations**



DE ORGANIS AUCTORITATIS ECCLESIASTICAE

55. [Partitio]. Ut in tam gravi et implicato campo competenter prudenterque procedatur peculiaria Officia, cum in Romana Curia, tum in singulis nationibus et, si res ferat, in dioecesibus, operentur oportet.

56. [De competenti Officio Sanctae Sedis]. Summus Pontifex supremam suam potestatem in materia istorum instrumentorum exercet non solum suo magisterio sed etiam ope competentis Officii quod Pius XII, imm. rec., constituit atque¹ Ioannes XXIII, f. r., in *stabile ac permanens Officium Sanctae Sedis* evexit, eiusque competentiam rerumque agendarum provinciam auxit.²

57. Patres Concilii vero, votum *Secretariatus de Scriptis prelo edendis et de Spectaculis moderandis* libenter excipientes, Summum Pontificem reverenter rogant, ut huius Officii munera et competentia ad omnia communicationis socialis instrumenta, prelo non excepto, extendantur.³

58. [De Episcoporum munere]. Sicut Sancta Sedes pro universo Orbe, ita Episcopi habent in sua quisque dioecesi ius et officium docendi ac moderandi ut instrumenta communicationis socialis ad rectum usum dirigantur.⁴ Episcoporum propterea erit huiusmodi operibus et inceptis in propriis dioecesibus invigilare eademque promovere et, quatenus ad apostolatatum publicum spectent, ordinare iis non exceptis quae religiosi exempti moderantur.⁵ Id autem efficacius faciliusque obtinebitur si dioecesana, vel si res ferat, regionalia, de his instrumentis Officia instituantur.⁶

59. [De Officiis ecclesiasticis nationalibus]. Cum efficientia instrumentorum communicationis socialis fines plerumque excedat singularum dioecesium, cumque efficax pro tota Natione apostolatus virium unitatem requirat, haec Sancta Synodus statuit et mandat, ut, iuxta normas a Summis Pontificibus latas,⁷ in omni-

La pagina 230 del volume degli Schemi, con in margine un «Optime» di Giovanni XXIII.

bus Nationibus Officia nationalia sive pro re cinematographica, sive pro re radiophonica et televisifica actuose operentur, ac omni ope adiuventur; immo ut etiam de prelo Officium nationale constituatur. Quorum Officiorum in unaquaque natione suprema moderatio peculiari Episcoporum coetui, vel alicui Episcopo delegato, concedatur, qui imprimis curabit ut ista Officia ordinate inter se adlaborent; horum autem Officiorum membra sint praesertim viri laici catholicae doctrinae et harum artium periti, quos aliquis sacerdos moderetur ab Episcopis delectus.⁸

60. Horum Officiorum praecipua munera sunt: operam navare ad efformandam conscientiam christianam fidelium, ut ii recte omnibus istis instrumentis utantur;⁹ consulere ut fideles a periculis et damnis moralibus inde orituris arceantur, praesertim eos certiores faciendo de qualitate morali taenilarum¹⁰ et, quatenus fieri possit, foliorum prelo editorum et transmissionum radiophonicarum et televisificarum;¹¹ publicis opinionibus prodesse prompte notitias veras colligendo atque vulgando, falsas perniciosasque valide infirmo; incepta promovere vel auxiliis sustinere quae utilia reputentur ad catholicorum in hac rerum parte apostolatatum augendum; ordinare quidquid ope instrumentorum communicationis socialis a catholicis agitur,¹² diem quottannis celebrandam a competenti Auctoritate ecclesiastica statutam promovere et apparare;¹³ praecepta ac mandata Sanctae Sedis, vel ab Episcopis propriae Nationis lata, ad effectum deducenda diligenter curare.

61. Haec autem Officia ab omnibus sese absteant, quae negotiationis aut mercaturae speciem prae se ferant.

62. [De Consociationibus Internationalibus Catholicis]. Cum instrumenta communicationis socialis, sua efficacitate, limites singularum Civitatum et Nationum excedant, atque homines quasi cives efficiant totius consortionis humanae, Officia nationalia operose adlaborent una cum peculiaribus Consociationibus Internationalibus catholicis; quae quidem ipsis Officiis nationalibus prodesse studeant, mutuas consultationes promovendo, experientias et communia incepta cum ipsis communicando ac denique quaestiones tractando, quae in singulis Nationibus congruam solutionem nancisci nequeant.¹⁴

La pagina successiva dello stesso volume, con l'autografo dello stesso Pontefice: « numerare con rilievo praecipua munera officiorum ».

IM page with handwritten remarks by Pope John XXIII

IM: in the Making

- On February 23, 1962 the final document with 114 paragraphs was ready. It was presented to the Central Committee of the Council in March: *De Instrumentis Diffusionis seu Communicatio Socialis*
- Approved and discussed by the Central Committee of Vatican II in two sessions April 2/3, 1962

IM: Preparation

- *Pope John XXIII* personally addressed on April 3, 1962 the Central Committee. There he also commented on the *Communication document* in a somehow extensive way seeing Communication as a challenge and opportunity.
- He referred to the two encyclical letters of his predecessors
- He also pointed to his own allocations especially for the Press.

IM: Document

The final Communication Document had all in all 114 paragraphs in 4 sections:

1. Doctrine of the Church
2. Action and Apostolate
3. Ecclesiastical Discipline and Structure
4. Single instruments/Media: Press, Radio, TV, Film and other technical means like tapes etc.
This last chapter alone constituted almost half of the document!

IM: Reception

- The document was placed for discussion on November 23, 24 and 26, 1962 with 57 interventions from the floor and 42 in writing, including one from the then auxiliary bishop of Krakow Karol Woytila.
- The document was accepted by a great majority with the following proposals:
 1. The text is approved and is worth the treatment at a Council...
 2. Trim the text to the essentials of doctrine and pastoral directives
 3. There should be a special Pastoral Instruction worked out by experts at a later stage....

IM: Revisions

- After the discussion in the first session of the Council the original document was reduced to essential parts.
- According to the Council interventions the following ‘corrections’ were inserted:
 - ✓ Role of *Laity* in Communication (cf. Nos. 3,13,19)
 - ✓ *Youth* is especially included (Nos. 10,12)
 - ✓ Support for Catholic *Press* by faithful
 - ✓ *Theatre*, which was excluded in the original considerations of the Secretariat, is now included (14)

IM: Voting

- The revised document (24 paragraphs only) was promulgated at the end of the *second Council* session by Pope Paul VI together with the Document on Liturgy on December 4, 1963. IM is one of the first two documents of the Council.

IM: Critical Opinions..

Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI), was expert of Card. Joseph Frings (Cologne) at the Council. He commented those days about IM:



“ There is no doubt that the text does not express what it should as a text of a Council”

IM: Permanent Value

➤ Though the reception of *Inter Mirifica* was not all positive and the revised text is more a collection of statements and prescriptions, there are some points to be made on the *permanent value of the document* which proved to be *providential for future developments*:

I. With *Inter Mirifica* it is for the *first time in history* that an ecumenical Council discusses Communication and agrees that it is an important subject, worth to be treated at a Council: The Fathers voted overwhelmingly on *Communication as essential for the Church and Ministry*.

IM: Perennial Value..

II. The expression *Social Communication* was created and accepted through the Council though it was still used as an expression instead of “Mass Media”, “Media of Diffusion” or similar as a footnote at the official document .

- The full potential of this expression, however, as covering a whole range of social (human) communication beyond media and technology was never seen and taken up in the following years...

III. The introduction of *World Communication Day* with annual messages of the Pope on different themes in Communication (since 1967) - a rich resource of Church teachings...

IM: Perennial Value..

IV. The introduction of a *permanent structure* for communication with a Pontifical Office (Council) , national and diocesan offices should be appreciated and followed...(John XXIII commented handwritten on this section: *Optime*

V. The publication (1971) of the *Pastoral Instruction Communio et Progressio (CP)* as “*demande*” by the Council. Far beyond IM it is seen as the new *magna Charta* for Communication. This is a decisive development triggered by the Council ...

CP not only has a theological ‘Introduction’ (6-16) but also does not start with “right of the Church” but with *communication in human society* in general (19-100) before treating the Catholic commitment to the field (102-180)...

IM: Perennial Value..

VI. The *professional training and formation* for production and reception of the Media and the importance of *Media Education* is an important demand which unfortunately is not followed up till now...

- Fr. Enrico Baragli SJ, - one of the main actors on IM – stated in a review after 20 years of IM that this demand was not fulfilled at all till that time...
- This may be repeated also now after more than 60 years...

IM: Challenges

➤ Considering the value and importance of *Inter Mirifica* in modern perspective leads to further following Challenges:

I. From 'Media' (instrumentality) to socio-cultural Reality...

II. (*Social Communication*)

III. From instrumental perspective to *Communication Theology*..

In fact *Dei Verbum* the document on Revelation which was issued 1965 at the end of the Council (after 7 drafts) must be seen also as a *communication document*, devoted to the communicating God and somehow substituting the missing theology in IM ...

IV. From pastoral means/use (methodology) to *disposition*, Spirituality...

IM: Challenges..

- IV. From structure to “spirit” : *Disposition...*
- V. From Isolation to *Integration*: Communication dimension of *all* ministries ...
- VI. From “Means of Communication” to the *full* sense of *human* Social Communication...
- VII. From IM to a “*New Culture of Communication*” with “new ways of communicating with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology” (JPII: RM 37c)

**“All the members of the Church should make a concerted effort to ensure that the means of communication are put at the service of the multiple forms of the apostolate without delay and as energetically as possible, where and when they are needed”
(IM 13).**

