

## **“The Rapid Development” (RD) and World Communication Day Message 2006**

### ***Some Considerations***

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The last Apostolic Letter in the life of Pope John Paul II “Il Rapido Sviluppo” from January 24, 2005 basically summarizes and confirms former teachings of the Church on Social Communication. Thus the document *confirms* beside others:

1. The existence of a “New Culture” which is determined by the Media and the need to integrate the message of Salvation into the “New Culture”. Thus contemporary communication is seen as “integral part” of the Church’s mission in the Third Millennium. (RD Nos. 2,3; cf. RM 37c)
2. Communication Theology as viewing the whole of Theology under a communication perspective. Sacred Scripture is the record of God’s communication (Revelation); Jesus Christ in his Incarnation is the reality and example of communication with God and others; finally the Trinity is confirmed as basis for communication and as the essential dimension of the Church. (RD 4-6; 13. cf. C+P 10,11;AN 6)
3. Sees following the Communication Theology perspective modern developments in Communication as an “essential dimension of the Church” giving her also the ability for more intensive and immediate exchange among local Churches. This gives her also a greater opportunity to inform about herself and to reach out through Evangelization, Catechesis and Formation. For her the Media Culture gives new opportunities for liturgy and catechesis. The proper approach in this is a responsibility of the whole Church community.. Proper pastoral and cultural approaches have to be developed. (RD Nos. 7,8. cf. C+P 6-9;114 ff.).
4. Admonishes to consider beside the Internet also other traditional means of communication (cf. C+P 54-62; EN 41-44; 46-48)and to give special Formation and pastoral attention to Media professionals. (RD No. 9; cf. C+P 102-104; 171;175; AN 19).
5. Proposes that modern Media should be seen and handled as a patrimony for the common good and should serve the centrality and dignity of the human person (RD 10; cf. C+P 16; 19ff.)
6. Sees three fundamental options for the Church in the field of Social Communication:
  - a) The formation for the intelligent and appropriate use of Media and new technical means especially for the participation of young people in this field is needed (cf. C+P 64ff.)
  - b) True participation by and for the Media must be secured (cf. C+P 73ff;99;101ff.).
  - c) Modern Communication should in a special way promote constructive *dialogue* and peace (cf. C+P 117;122;125; AN 8;10). This is also needed within the Church herself. (RD 11,12. cf. C+P 115-121).

7. Finally the document stresses the role and importance of the Holy Spirit in any communication. Even the best modern means are finally nothing without the power of the Holy Spirit and the Truth (RD Nos. 13,14. cf. C+P 102)

With this underlining of the need for a *communication spirituality* goes the special encouragement not to be afraid of

- New Technologies
- Opposition of the 'World'
- Own weakness and inadequacy

The "Rapid Development" document does not really break new grounds for communication but it does confirm the direction for Church activities in this field.

### *New Approach*

New, however, is the strong assurance of Pope John Paul II to all communicators not to be afraid. It will be good to reflect deeper on this positive approach. Not being afraid of new technologies encourages a full cooperation and adaptation of new technological developments for their use for Church and humanity. In not being afraid of the opposition to worldly values John Paul II encourages a living and convincing life of faith and Christian witness in Social Communication. With not being afraid of own weaknesses and inadequacies he encourages every communicator not to be taken by own limitations but despite this fulfill with trust and confidence his/her duties to the best of their abilities.

This special encouragement of Pope John Paul II connects in a special way to Pope Benedict XVI' s message for World Communication Day 2006 with its concern about the Christian community as basis for communication:

We should recognize God's self-communication in Christ as a dynamic force in us to be shared with others and the world without fear. He states that "authentic communication demands principled courage and resolve." This is exactly the opposite to fear. He calls for responsibility and fearless promotion of the truth without being determined by profit only or a self serving attitude. Social Communication and especially the Media should be a constructive presence in society.

### *In Asia*

For our situation in Asia we could indicate for all points raised in the document several examples and experiences, especially in our attempt for regular meetings and considerations in the annual FABC "Bishops Meet" a gathering of all Communication bishops and secretaries of Asian Bishops' Conferences or our occasional FABC "Bishops' Institute for Social Communications" (BISCOM) on special topics which are open to any interested bishop in the continent.

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