The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE
"UNIVERSITÉ DES COMMUNICANTS EN ÉGLISE"SYMPOSIUM

Clementine Hall
Friday, 12 January 2024

[Multimedia]

Impromptu words of the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sister!

I welcome all of you, who in France, work in the field of communications for dioceses, religious congregations, Catholic associations and movements, new communities and parishes. Thank you for coming. I would like to read the entire address, but I am having a bit of a problem with bronchitis, and I cannot speak very well. I hope you are not offended, but I will have to give you a copy of the speech. My apologies. I will pass it on to all of you because of my difficulty in speaking. Thank you for your understanding. Once again, thank you for coming. In particular, thank you for your work because it is not easy to communicate, even though it is the very first thing a person does. From the moment Adam saw Eve, he began to communicate. Communicating is the most fundamental activity of the human person. Continue to do this. Now I will give you a blessing and then greet you one by one, because in greeting you I don't have to speak. It comes from the heart.

Prepared address of the Holy Father

Communication is your mission. A great mission, in a world that is so hyperconnected and bombarded by news. For this reason, you have decided to take a break every now and then – this

time in Rome – to share, to pray, to listen. How we need this! I say this first-hand, because even the Pope's ministry today is within the world of communication. And so, these moments serve to rediscover the root of what we communicate, the truth to which we are called to bear witness, the communion that unites us in Jesus Christ; they help us not to fall into the trap of thinking that our communication consists of our strategies or individual undertakings; not to close ourselves up in our solitude, in our fears or ambitions; not to stake everything on technological progress.

The challenge of good communication is more complex than ever today, and the risk is that we face it with a worldly mindset: with the obsession of control, power, success; with the idea that problems are primarily material, technological, organizational, economic.

I know that you held your first meeting in Paray-le-Monial, the city of the Sacred Heart, of Saint Marguerite Marie Alacoque. A place that recalls the centre, the source from which the salvation of humanity flowed and continually flows. And which tells us also of the importance of communicating with the heart, of listening with the heart, of seeing with the heart things that others do not see; to share them and recount them, overturning the perspective and categories of the world. There is a great need for this. To set out again from the heart.

You have also been to Lisieux, the city of Saint Thérèse, witness to an Gospel radicalism that is also healthy for the communication of our time, so polluted by bombastic words, by dreams of power and greatness. Communicating for us is not overpowering with our voice that of others, it is not propaganda; sometimes it is also silence; it is not hiding behind slogans or catchphrases. Communicating for us is not focusing everything on organization, it is not marketing; it is not just adopting this or that technique. For us, communicating is being in the world to take charge of the other, of others, it is being all things to all people; it is sharing a Christian reading of events; it is not surrendering to the culture of aggression and denigration; it is building a network of sharing the good, the true and the beautiful, made up of sincere relationships; it is involving young people in our communication.

How can we fail to remember the famous phrase of Saint Francis de Sales, patron of journalists and Catholic communicators: "*Le bruit fait peu de bien, le bien fait peu de bruit*".

Dear friends, thinking of your work, I would like to leave you three words as a pathway: witness, courage, and a broad outlook.

The first. Remember that communication is above all *witness*. And when it is made of words, of images, it is a way of sharing this witness. It is this that makes us credible in our relationship with the secular media; and it is also this that makes our communication network more and more attractive and makes it grow day by day, from person to person. I know that, after the shame of the abuse scandal, the Church in France is on a path of purification. Go ahead. The darkest moments are often those that precede the light. In Marseille, I could see how much vitality there is in the

Church of France. Do not hesitate to share through communication all the good that there is in your dioceses, congregations, movements. Do not hesitate to build communion in the Church and brotherhood in the world through communication. Be creative. Be welcoming. Society wants and needs to hear the word of the Church as a loving Mother to all.

The second pathway: do not be afraid, be courageous. A courage that is different from the courage of those who believe they are at the centre. The courage that comes from humility and professional seriousness, and that makes your communication a cohesive and at the same time open, extrovert network. I know, it is not easy. But this is your mission, our mission. And even if the recipients may seem indifferent, sceptical, sometimes critical, even hostile, do not be discouraged. Do not judge them. Share the joy of the Gospel, the love that makes us know God and understand the world. The men and women of our time also thirst for God, they seek an encounter with Him and they also seek Him through you.

The third word is *broad outlook.* Look far. Look at the entire world in its beauty and complexity. In the midst of the murmurings of our time, the inability to see what is essential, to discover that what unites us is always greater than what divides us; and that it must be communicated, with the creativity that comes from love. Let us always remember this. It is an ignored truth, but it is charity that explains everything. Everything becomes clearer - even our communication - from a heart that sees with love.

Dear brothers and sisters, thank you for what you do! I bless you and your work. And please, do not forget to pray for me.

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