



# The Holy See

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## JUBILEE OF JOURNALISTS

### *ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER JOHN PAUL II TO THE JOURNALISTS ON THEIR JUBILEE*

*Sunday, 4 June 2000*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Brothers and Sisters, In this year of the Great Jubilee, the Church is celebrating the event of the Incarnation, proclaimed by the Evangelist John in these words: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (*Jn* 1: 14). A truly great mystery, a mystery of salvation, which culminates in the Death and Resurrection of Christ. The world's destiny is contained in this event. From it, through the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, flows redemption for the people of every time and place. In the light of this mystery, I affectionately greet all of you who have gathered here to celebrate *the Jubilee of Journalists*. In particular, I greet Archbishop John P. Foley, President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, and Mrs Theresa Ee-Chooi, President of the International Catholic Union of the Press, and thank them for their kind words expressing the sentiments of everyone here. I was keen to have this meeting with you, dear journalists, not only for the joy of joining you on your Jubilee journey, as I am doing with many other groups, but also out of the desire to pay a personal debt of gratitude to the countless professional journalists who have done all they can to make known the words and events of my ministry throughout the years of my Pontificate. I am deeply grateful for all this effort and for the objectivity and courtesy which have marked the great part of this service, and I ask the Lord to give each of them a fitting reward.

2. In the world of journalism this is a time of profound changes. The proliferation of new technologies is affecting every area by now and, to a greater or lesser degree, involves every human being. Globalization has increased the powers of the media, but has also made them more liable to ideological and commercial pressures. This should prompt you journalists to ask yourselves about the meaning of your vocation as committed Christians in the world of communications. This is the crucial question that must characterize your Jubilee celebration on this World Day of Social Communications. Your passing through the Holy Door as pilgrims expresses a choice of life and says that you would like "to open doors to Christ" in your profession as well. He is the "Gospel", the "Good News". He is the model for everyone who, like you, is striving to make the light of truth penetrate every area of human life. 3. This encounter with Christ has

been the aim of the programme you have followed in these days. On Thursday you prayed in the Sistine Chapel, where the splendour of art set before your eyes the drama of human history from Creation to the Last Judgement. On this great journey of humanity, we also see the *truth about the human person* created in the image of God and destined to eternal communion with him; we see *the truth which is the basis of all ethics* and which you are called to observe in your profession. Yesterday you were at St Paul's tomb and today you have come to pray at St Peter's. They were the great "communicators" of faith at the dawn of Christianity. May their memory remind you of the specific vocation which distinguishes you as followers of Christ in the world of social communications: you are called to devote your professionalism *to the service of the moral and spiritual good of individuals and of the human community*.<sup>4</sup> This is the crux of the ethical question, which is inseparable from your work. Journalism, with its immense and direct influence on public opinion, cannot be guided by economic forces, profit and partisan interests alone. Instead, it must be regarded in a certain sense as a "sacred" task, to be carried out with the awareness that the powerful means of communication are entrusted to you for the common good and, in particular, for the good of society's weakest groups: from children to the poor, from the sick to those who are marginalized or discriminated against. One cannot write or broadcast only with a view to audience share, to the prejudice of truly educational services. Nor can one make an indiscriminate appeal to the right to information without taking other personal rights into account. No freedom, including freedom of expression, is absolute: it is limited, in fact, by its duty to respect the dignity and legitimate freedom of others. Nothing, however fascinating, can be written, produced or broadcast to the detriment of the truth: I am thinking here not only of the truth of the facts you report, but also of the "truth about man", of the dignity of the human person in all his dimensions. As a sign of the Church's desire to be close to you as you meet this great challenge, a few days ago the Pontifical Council for Social Communications published the document *Ethics in Communications*. It is a warm invitation to journalists to commit themselves to serving the human person by building a society based on solidarity, justice and love, through the communication of the truth about human life and its final fulfilment in God (cf. n. 33). I thank the Pontifical Council for this document, which I recommend for your study and reflection.<sup>5</sup> Dear Brothers and Sisters! The Church and the media must walk together in their service to the human family. I therefore ask the Lord to grant that you may leave this Jubilee celebration with the conviction that it is possible to be both authentic Christians and excellent journalists. The world of the media needs men and women who strive day after day to live this twofold dimension as best they can. This will happen more and more, if you can keep your gaze fixed on the One who is the centre of this Jubilee year, Jesus Christ, "the faithful witness ... who is and who was and who is to come" (*Rv* 1: 5, 8). As I invoke his help on each of you and on your particularly demanding work, I cordially impart my Apostolic Blessing to you and willingly extend it to your families and to all your loved

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ones.

*The Holy Father then greeted the pilgrims and visitors in French, English, Spanish, German, Portuguese and Polish.* I cordially greet you, the journalists present at this Jubilee. May you find in your pilgrimage the strength to fulfil your service of informing and forming our contemporaries, by helping them to open their hearts on a global scale! It must be your concern to make yourselves witnesses to the truth, so that the human person will always be respected. The Church is counting on you to know how to retransmit to the world the message of hope that comes from Christ. With my Apostolic Blessing, I warmly greet the English-speaking participants in the Jubilee of Journalists. May these days of pilgrimage be a time of intense personal renewal for each one of you, and an encouragement to you in your demanding profession. The great challenge facing you is to use your skills and your immense influence over public opinion in the faithful service of the truth about the human person. This means to defend life and build a human community ever more solidly based on solidarity, justice and love. May the joy and peace of Christ fill your hearts! May you and your families be blessed in every

way! I greet the Spanish-speaking media professionals who are taking part in this Jubilee celebration today. I encourage you to continue your work at the service of information by basing it on the truth and fostering solidarity and understanding among all. I extend a cordial welcome to the German-speaking journalists. Your profession is a service to the truth. In your speaking and writing be guided by love, especially when the truth is hard to bear. For this I invoke God's Holy Spirit upon you. My cordial greeting to the Portuguese-speaking journalists and others who work in the communications media: you can and do know how to raise the level of solidarity in the world; today the Pope would once again like to express his gratitude and esteem to you all for the variety of projects you support for the victims of so many human tragedies. May God reward you for them and bless you. I cordially greet the Polish-speaking journalists. I hope that you will maintain your freedom of thought and objective judgement of reality. Be faithful to the truth! May the splendour of the truth pervade your service to man, to the Church and to the world! I cordially bless you.

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