

The Internet Must Transmit A Church Which Is Home To All



The Pontifical Council for Social Communications, whose president is Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, held its plenary assembly from 19 to 21 September, on the theme of “The internet and the Church”. This morning the participants in the meeting were received in audience by the Pope who, in his address, posed three questions: the importance of communication for the church, the internet, and the encounter with Christ.

With regard to the first, Francis recalled that this year is the fiftieth anniversary of the Conciliar Decree *Inter Mirifica*, and emphasised that this is “more than a commemoration; the Decree expresses the Church’s solicitude for communication in all its forms, which are important in the work of evangelisation. In the last few decades the various means of communication have evolved significantly, but the Church’s concern remains the same, though it assumes new forms and expressions. The world of communications, more and more, has become a 'living environment' for many, one in which people communicate with one another, expanding their possibilities for knowledge and relationship”.

Considering the role of the Church and her use of the media, he said, “In every situation, beyond technological considerations, I believe that the goal is to understand how to enter into dialogue with the men and women of today in order to appreciate their desires, their doubts and their hopes. They are men and women who sometimes feel let down by a Christianity that to them appears sterile and in difficulty as it tries to communicate the depth of meaning that comes with the gift of faith. We do in fact witness today, in the age of globalization, a growing sense of disorientation and isolation. ... It is therefore important to know how to dialogue and, with discernment, to use modern technologies and social networks in such a way as to reveal a presence that listens, converses and encourages. Allow yourselves, without fear, to be this presence, expressing your Christian identity as you become citizens of this environment. A Church that follows this path learns how to walk with everybody”.

Francis reaffirmed that in this communicative context, the question is not one of technical considerations. “We must ask ourselves – and here I come to the third step – are we up to the task of bringing Christ into this area and of bringing others to meet Christ? Are we able to communicate the face of a Church which is 'home' to all? The challenge is to rediscover, through the means of social communication as well as by personal contact, the beauty that is at the heart of our existence and our journey, the beauty of faith and of the encounter with Christ. Even in this world of communications, the Church must warm the hearts of men and women. ... The great digital continent not only involves technology but is made up of real men and women who bring with them their hopes, their suffering, their concerns and their pursuit of what is true, beautiful and good. We need to bring Christ to others, through these joys and hopes, like Mary, who brought Christ to the hearts of men and women; we need

to pass through the clouds of indifference without losing our way; we need to descend into the darkest night without being overcome and disorientated; we need to listen to the dreams, without being seduced; to share their disappointments, without becoming despondent; to sympathize with those whose lives are falling apart, without losing our own strength and identity”.

“It is important to bring the solicitude and the presence of the Church into the world of communications so as to dialogue with the men and women of today and bring them to meet Christ. This must be done, however, in complete awareness ... that the real problem does not concern the acquisition of the latest technologies, even if these make a valid presence possible. It is necessary to be absolutely clear that the God in whom we believe, who loves all men and women intensely, wants to reveal himself through the means at our disposal, however poor they are, because it is he who is at work, he who transforms and saves us. Let us pray that the Lord may make us zealous and sustain us in the engaging mission of bringing him to the world”.

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V.I.S.