



WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS 2014

Sunday, 1 June 2014

During the Centenary Year of the birth of our Congregation and of the whole Pauline Family, also the celebration of the **48th World Day of Social Communications**, established by the Second Vatican Council for the whole Church, it must take on a “Pauline” colour in creative fidelity to the special consideration that Blessed James Alberione gave to the papal magisterium and left us as a legacy.

Reminiscing on the beginnings, Primo Maestro affirms: “The Pauline Family is born when the then reigning Holy Father was not supported in addressing the press” (*Vademecum*, no. 942). The expansion of the Pauline apostolate, with the subsequent utilization of the cinema, radio, television and compact discs, is also the result of the constant attention that the Founder was giving to the Pope's pronouncements on these media.

Starting from the conciliar decree *Inter mirifica* until the message that Pope Francis has published for this **48th World Day of Social Communications**, the whole Church is mobilized to think and act in order to evangelize as well with all forms of communication. What is true for the entire ecclesial community should inspire with particular interest for the Pauline charism.

The attentive reading of the papal message, which develops the theme of ***Communication at the service of an authentic culture of encounter***, allows some applications to the charism of our Congregation.

1. Pope Francis speaks of communication by explaining what he intends to deal with, whether the media in general or the social media, that is, the digital network, and in particular the internet. Therefore, the communication that must be put at the service of an authentic culture of encounter is intended as a complete phenomenon: **all of communication**, all forms and languages of communication that characterize the world today. The daily experience allows us to observe that digital communication has made profound changes in the way of communicating in the mass media, but certainly it did not eliminate them.

Our Congregation, through prudence and wisdom, must think about its own identity, form its own members to evangelize with the same mentality of **totality**, committed at the same time in the traditional media and in the forms of communication arising from the digital language. It is necessary to continue and improve what

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we can achieve more, in view also of the material conditions in adopting new forms of communication.

2. As a response to the questions: “How then can communication be at the service of an authentic culture of encounter? And for us disciples of the Lord, what does it mean to meet a person according to the Gospel?”, the Pope refers to the parable of the Good Samaritan, narrated by Jesus, to explain who is the “neighbour”. “Whoever communicates, in fact, acts himself as neighbour”.

Attention to the recipients of our apostolate constitutes one of the aspects that, with the cooperation of all, needs to be improved. The responses of our audience, also documented with figures, help us to deepen the totality of the programmatic phrase of Primo Maestro which characterizes our missionary identity: **“Save the people of today with the means of today.”**

If we are to progress in order to equip ourselves with the “means of today,” certainly we need to improve our knowledge of the “men of today”: the concrete and documented knowledge of persons is the "pastoral" characteristic of our apostolate in order not to offer what we find interesting and useful, but what the audience needs. The knowledge of our recipients is for us a form of “love of neighbour”.

3. Referring to the “street” of the parable of the Samaritan, Pope Francis invites the Church to get out in order to walk on all the streets where there are people: «Those “streets” are the world where people live and where they can be reached, both effectively and affectively. The digital highway is one of them, a street teeming with people who are often hurting, men and women looking for salvation or hope. By means of the internet, the Christian message can reach “to the ends of the earth” (*Acts* 1:8). Keeping the doors of our churches open also means keeping them open in the digital environment so that people, whatever their situation in life, can enter, and so that the Gospel can go out to reach everyone.»

So that the Congregation can accept and live the exhortation of Pope Francis: "Do not be afraid to become citizens of the digital world", it is important that we form an adequate mindset of the communication model of the digital network, different from the model of communication with the mass media: it switches from “transmission” to “conversation”.

The Pauline charism, which has already integrated some forms of digital communication, in order to assume fully the possibilities of evangelizing also in this new form, cannot be content by equipping itself with “technologies”, by having technical skills and limiting itself by being “present” in the web without accepting its demands.

Evangelization in the digital network requires a “formation” on how to bear witness to the faith that cannot be a simple preparation, to make available the “religious products” and to inform of their existence. Digital communication becomes an opportunity to think and live better evangelization as "fruit of one’s experience". Primo Maestro explains the meaning of “apostolate **of the edition**” which does not refer, first of all, to the editorial activity, but it is “to draw from what one experiences in order to communicate it to others using the languages of communication”.

Pope Francis explains: «Christian witness is not about bombarding people with religious messages, but about our willingness to be available to others “by patiently

and respectfully engaging their questions and their doubts as they advance in their search for the truth and the meaning of human existence”».

Already Paul VI, describing the method of “dialogue” as the new attitude of the Church’s mission in the world, presents a radical change: “The Church becomes the word; the Church becomes the message; the Church becomes conversation” (*Eccliam suam*, no. 65).

During the Centenary, in order “to revive” also our “vow of fidelity to the Pope,” we pledge to enhance the understanding of the Pauline charism, deepening and applying it to the Congregation and to the entire Pauline Family as the universal Magisterium indicates on communication to the whole Church.



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