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Quoting God

How Media Shape Ideas about
Religion and Culture

edited by

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Chapter 11

Vatican Opinion on Modern Communication

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Of the world religions, Christianity has probably paid more attention than any other to communication. Evangelical churches cite the “Great Commission”—Jesus’ command to the disciples, “Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do everything I have told you” (Matt 28:19-20, CEV)—as a rationale. And as a “religion of the Book,” Christianity depends on the Bible; it therefore has an interest in copying and printing the Bible, making it available to as many people as possible. These two imperatives led to and continue to foster an ongoing alliance between Christianity and communication media: the Bible was the first book printed on Gutenberg’s press; within a year of the invention of motion pictures, filmmakers produced Bible films and continue to do so;¹ early radio featured church services; Marconi himself set up Vatican Radio; a Catholic bishop, Fulton J. Sheen, stands among the pioneer television personalities in the United States.

Besides this practical interest, Christian churches also show a theoretical interest in communication. Such an interest appears, first, in the writings of many individual pastors who seek either to teach people how to make appro-

priate use of the media (which programs to watch, which to avoid, etc.) or to influence public policy. Second, the concern appears in official statements from those churches that have a fixed public or hierarchical structure; these often address the same concerns as the local pastors, teaching congregational members and addressing public policy. Churches with fixed organizational structures that coordinate their comments on communication include the World Council of Churches,² the National Council of Churches of Christ (1992), and the Catholic Church.

Of the Christian churches, the Roman Catholic Church has most actively commented on communication. More likely than not, this results from the organizational structure of the Church itself. With a permanent bureaucracy in the Vatican (as well as local offices for each bishop, and national support structures), the Catholic Church has offices to address the whole range of Christian living. For example, the Vatican today has nine top-level “congregations” responsible for such things as doctrine, worship, evangelization, education, and clergy; eleven councils, which address laity, Christian unity, the family, justice and peace, inter-religious dialogue, culture, and communication; and seven commissions, which supervise everything from biblical theology to archaeology. The communication office’s rank as a midlevel council indicates its stature and the importance that the Vatican places on communication.

This chapter reports on the Vatican’s statements on modern (mass) communication, particularly those issued in the last forty years. Before addressing the statements themselves, the chapter will provide a brief history of Vatican interest in communication and then outline the Roman Catholic theology that establishes the context for those statements. Finally, it will introduce the statements themselves, highlighting repeating themes.

SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The very existence of a full-time office and staff for communication explains the consistency of both output and opinion of the Vatican’s statements on communication. Since its establishment in 1964, the Pontifical Council for Social Communication has issued eleven documents on communication in its own name, three of them extensive and influential. In addition, it has prepared thirty-seven shorter statements for the pope’s promulgation. This is a marked increase—the previous thirty years saw only four statements by the pope on communication, most of them on film, and only two of them extensive. Typically, when individual popes wrote about the media in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s, they responded to particular issues, such as commending the American Legion of Decency that sought to influence the morality of film content.³

Recognizing the power of the cinema, radio, and television, Pope Pius XII issued a major encyclical letter on these mass media. In *Miranda Prorsus*, the pope claims a twofold Church interest in mass media: their influence on people, and the possibility of their use in proclaiming the gospel to all nations. The letter itself aims for a comprehensive treatment. After examining the potential Church use of the media, Pius XII reviews the following: the prosocial and antisocial effects of the media; the freedom of communication and its errors; the role of public authority in its interactions with the entertainment industry; news; mass education; proper education for youth; and the role of Church communication offices. Then he turns to each specific medium, writing in turn about film, radio, and television and the various social actors involved in each—producers, exhibitors, audience members, and so forth. Though he addresses the letter to bishops and other Church leaders, his content speaks also to all who come in contact with the mass media. The overall tenor of this letter is one of concern for the dangers to Christian faith and morals posed by the media; despite this, the pope urges greater Church involvement with the media.

About ten years earlier, in 1948, Pius XII had established a standing Vatican committee for film. With its name and membership changing several times over the next few years, it formed a key advisory body in the preparation of the encyclical letter. After his election as pope in 1958, Pope John XXIII appointed within this committee a “Preparatory Secretariat for the Press and the Entertainment World” after he had summoned the Second Vatican Council. This subcommittee received the charge to assemble materials on communication for the approaching Council. More specifically, it was this Secretariat’s task “to identify the problems raised by the press and the audiovisual media and, while recognizing the individual character of each sector, to assemble all this material into a single study which would yet leave room for future developments in which the different instruments of social communication, as they were called from then on, would find their proper place and receive due consideration within the Church’s renewed ministry” (Pontifical Council, n.d., par. 11). The work of this secretariat led to the 1963 Vatican Council Decree on the Means of Social Communication, *Inter Mirifica* (Vatican Council II, 1963; henceforth *IM*).

The Second Vatican Council, a worldwide meeting of Catholic bishops and church leaders, with observers from other Christian churches, met from 1962 to 1965. As articulated at the beginning of its second session by the then recently elected Pope Paul VI, the Council had four purposes: “to define more fully the nature of the Church, especially as regards the person of the bishops; to renew the Church; to restore unity among all Christians . . . ; and to start a dialogue with contemporary men.”⁴ The dialogue with the contemporary world plays a large role in the various statements of the Council and in the subsequent work of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication.

Meeting in regular sessions in the fall of 1962, 1963, 1964, and 1965, the bishops of the Second Vatican Council debated schemata and proposals prepared by the working committees, which met throughout the year. By the end of its sessions, the Council had approved sixteen major statements, addressing topics ranging from the nature of the Church itself, the Church in the modern world, relationships with other Christian churches and with non-Christian religions, revelation, the roles of various groups within the Church (bishops, priests, laity, members of religious congregations), worship, missionary work, education, religious freedom, and the mass media.

In *Inter Mirifica* (the decree on communication), the Council acknowledges the ongoing importance of mass communication in the contemporary world and identifies several thematic areas: the right to information; the relationship between the rights of art and moral demands; public opinion; and the uses of the mass media in civil society and by the Church. To promote ongoing reflection on these and other communication issues, the Council established an annual “communication day” in each diocese and mandated the creation of the Pontifical Commission (later, Council) for Social Communication. This commission of bishops and lay communication experts would promote and coordinate Catholic thinking about communication. Finally, the Council added this charge: “The Council expressly directs the commission of the Holy See referred to in par. 19 to publish a pastoral instruction, with the help of experts, from various countries, to ensure that all the principles and rules of the Council on the means of social communication be put into effect” (*IM*, par. 32).

The commission fulfilled that mandate eight years later with the publication, in January 1971, of *Communio et Progressio*—the lengthy “pastoral instruction on the means of social communication.” This document, the first of the commission, sets the direction for the next thirty years of Vatican opinion on contemporary communication.

THE THEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Clearly, all of this Vatican thinking and writing about communication emerges from the Roman Catholic theological tradition. The most explicit exposition of the theological grounding for reflection on mass communication occurs in the introductory sections of *Communio et Progressio*. After a brief introduction, we read: “The Church sees these media as ‘gifts of God’ which, in accordance with his providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with his plan for their salvation” (*Communio et Progressio*, henceforth, *CP*, par. 2). This states the theme of the entire document: communication exists for increasing human communion, unity, and progress. This (and indeed all) communication, we read, results from God’s love. God “made the first move to make contact with mankind at the start of

the history of salvation. In the fullness of time, he communicated his very self to man" (CP, par. 10).

Setting this claim within the larger context of Catholic theology highlights more clearly the themes that will appear in the Church documents on communication. The theologian Richard McBrien concludes his magisterial introduction to Catholic theology and practice by identifying three key foci of the Catholic tradition:

No theological principle or focus is more characteristic of Catholicism or more central to its identity than the principle of *sacramentality*. The Catholic vision sees God in and through all things: other people, communities, movements, events, places, objects, the world at large, the whole cosmos. The visible, the tangible, the finite, the historical—all these are actual or potential carriers of the divine presence. Indeed, it is only in and through these material realities that we can even encounter the invisible God. . . .

A corollary of the principle of sacramentality is the principle of *mediation*. A sacrament not only signifies; it also causes what it signifies. Thus, created realities not only contain, reflect, or embody the presence of God. They make that presence effective for those who avail themselves of these realities. Just as we noted in the previous section that the world is mediated by meaning, so the universe of grace is a mediated reality: mediated principally by Christ, and secondarily by the Church and by other signs and instruments of salvation outside and beyond the Church. . . .

Finally, Catholicism affirms the principle of *communion*: that our way to God and God's way to us is not only a mediated way but a communal way. And even when the divine-human encounter is most personal and individual, it is still communal in that the encounter is made possible by the mediation of the community.⁵

Each of these three elements (sacramentality, mediation, and community) appears as fundamental to the Vatican ideal of mass communication. McBrien identifies other Catholic elements, which will appear in greater and lesser degrees in the documents: "[Catholicism's] corresponding respect for *history*, for *tradition*, and for *continuity* (we are products of our past as well as shapers of our present and our future); its conviction that we can have as radical a notion of sin as we like so long as our understanding and appreciation of *grace* is even more radical; its high regard for *authority* and *order* as well as for *conscience* and *freedom*."⁶

Applying these ideas to what several others have called the Catholic imagination, film critic Richard Blake finds some further specifications of Catholic theology in the practice of Catholic communication. He identifies a love for the physical and for devotional activities (extensions of sacramentality), a love for saints and for mentoring (kinds of mediation), a respect for conscience, a fondness for moral narratives, and a tendency to think in hierarchies (all flowing from the reality of community).⁷ These elements, or variations of them, will appear in the Vatican statements on communication.

Communio et Progressio draws on this Catholic tradition and presumes its way of thinking. For example, its emphasis on Jesus as the Incarnate Word of God calls attention to both the sacramental nature of communication and to the centrality of mediation:

When by His death and resurrection, Christ the Incarnate Son, the Word and Image of the invisible God, set the human race free, He shared with everyone the truth and the life of God. . . . As the only mediator between the Father and mankind He made peace between God and man and laid the foundations of unity among men themselves. . . .

While He was on earth Christ revealed Himself as the Perfect Communicator. Through His incarnation, He utterly identified Himself with those who were to receive His communication and He gave His message not only in words but in the whole manner of His life. He spoke from within, that is to say, from out of the press of His people. . . .

Communication is more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion. At its most profound level it is the giving of self in love. Christ's communication was, in fact, spirit and life. In the institution of the Holy Eucharist, Christ gave us the most perfect and most intimate form of communion between God and man possible in this life, and, out of this, the deepest possible unity between men. Further, Christ communicated to us His life-giving Spirit, who brings all men together in unity. The Church is Christ's Mystical Body, the hidden completion of Christ Glorified who "fills the whole creation." As a result we move, within the Church and with the help of the word and the sacraments, towards the hope of that last unity where "God will be all in all." (*CP*, par. 10–11)

This passage, which addresses "basic points of doctrine," calls attention to Christ's role as mediator as well as to the Church's role in continuing that process through the sacraments. Implicit here too is that respect for the created world, of which the mass media are parts. They are, in the words of Vatican II, "marvelous technical inventions" (*IM*, par. 1).

Finally, the passage also highlights the goal of communication: unity among people. Such teleology, which in *Communio et Progressio* also gives rise to the communion/community so typical of Catholic theology, becomes one anchor point from which the document will evaluate all communication. The other anchor point, which also appears here, comes from the example of Christ: true communication is the giving of the self in love. This theological preference for personalism encourages, in turn, a bias toward the individual, even in the world of mass communication. The themes built on this theology run through all subsequent Vatican opinion on contemporary communication.

THEMES IN VATICAN STATEMENTS

The Pontifical Council for Social Communication has published eleven documents since its establishment following the Second Vatican Council. They

are *Communio et Progressio* (1971), *An Appeal to All Contemplative Religious* (1973), *Guide to the Training of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communication* (1986), *Pornography and Violence in the Communications Media: A Pastoral Response* (1989), *Criteria for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Cooperation in Communications* (1989), *Aetatis Novae* (1992), *100 Years of Cinema* (1995–96), *Ethics in Advertising* (1997), *Ethics in Communication* (2000), *The Church and Internet* (2002), and *Ethics in Internet* (2002).

With the exception of *An Appeal to All Contemplative Religious* and *Criteria for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Cooperation*, the Vatican statements on communication media address both public communication and Church use of the mass media (for preaching, teaching, and internal organization); the same principles animate both discussions. To keep things simpler, this chapter on the Vatican thinking on communication will focus primarily on the public communication issues rather than those of Church communication. When the Pontifical Council addresses “the means of social communication,” it begins with the press, radio, cinema, and television, but it also includes every other form of modern communication.

Because the media have as their proper purpose the building up of human community, the documents emphasize, on the one hand, those things that build community and, on the other, defenses against the things that harm the community. These comments from the introduction to *Ethics in Internet* give a clear sense of the two poles of discussion of this theme. One pole is shown in *Communio et Progressio*, which states that “media have the ability to make every person everywhere ‘a partner in the business of the human race’” (par. 9). John Paul II reaffirms this statement when he says:

This is an astonishing vision. The Internet can help make it real—for individuals, groups, nations, and the human race—only if it is used in light of clear, sound ethical principles, especially the virtue of solidarity. To do so will be to everyone’s advantage, for “we know one thing today more than in the past: we will never be happy and at peace without one another, much less if some are against others. (“Address to the Diplomatic Corps,” par. 4)

Ethics in Internet, however, offers the other pole to the use of the Internet: “The spread of the Internet also raises a number of other ethical questions about matters like privacy, the security and confidentiality of data, copyright and intellectual property law, pornography, hate sites, the dissemination of rumor and character assassination under the guise of news, and much else” (par. 5–6). The line of thinking appears clearly here: the theologically “Catholic” characteristic of communion leads to the principles of unity and solidarity. On the one hand, communication media can foster these virtues and thus achieve a certain fulfillment; on the other hand, each individual communication medium can threaten these virtues in ways particular to it.

This pattern, as it appears here in a form refined during the 1980s and 1990s, begins with *Communio et Progressio*.

Where pre-Vatican II Council documents tended to address moral issues at length and as their primary focus, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications prefers to highlight the potential contributions of the media to human growth first and only later identify moral issues. Thus, *Communio et Progressio* treats communication media first in their role of creating and shaping public opinion. Here they establish a “great roundtable” for humanity (CP, par. 19) and offer the possibility of an end to the isolation of individuals and nations. Because of the importance of such communication, the document declares that people have a right to information, a right to inform, and a right to access the channels of information. From these rights flow protections against propaganda, manipulation, and deception in public affairs (CP, par. 33–48).

The Pontifical Council returns to this defense of the right to communicate in *Communio et Progressio*’s 20th anniversary document, *Aetatis Novae* (literally, “a new era”; henceforth, AN). The defense has shifted somewhat: where the 1971 document saw the greatest threats to the right to information originating in government activity, this 1992 document also warns against making people’s right to communicate contingent upon “wealth, education, or political power” (AN, par. 15). Connecting this right to the right to religious freedom, *Aetatis Novae* urges that the Church step in to defend human rights against political, legal, educational, or corporate limits.

This overarching theme of communication for the common good, for solidarity, for peace, for human unity, and the defense of access to communication as part of this human community finds a place in many of the Vatican statements, either centrally or as a presumption to specific actions. For example, the Pontifical Council mentions it in the documents *Ethics in Advertising* (par. 16–17), *Ethics in Communications* (par. 6, 20), and *The Church and Internet* (par. 3), as well as in those already cited. Pope Paul VI makes thematic reference to it in the annual World Communication Day addresses in 1968, 1971, and 1976, as does Pope John Paul II in 1983, 1986, 1988, and 2003.

A second theme—one not at all surprising in the light of the Vatican’s concerns with the media—involves the effects of communication media on individuals, groups, and societies. *Aetatis Novae* summarizes the issues:

[T]oday’s revolution in social communications involves a fundamental reshaping of the elements by which people comprehend the world about them, and verify and express what they comprehend. The constant availability of images and ideas, and their rapid transmission even from continent to continent, have profound consequences, both positive and negative, for the psychological, moral and social development of persons, the structure and functioning of societies, intercultural communications, and the perception and transmission of values, world

views, ideologies, and religious beliefs. The communications revolution affects perceptions even of the Church, and has a significant impact on the Church's own structures and modes of functioning. (AN, par. 4)

The overarching sense of the power of communication media appears also in the document *Pornography and Violence in the Communications Media: A Pastoral Response*, though in that document the Pontifical Council includes both moral and psychological media effects, including sin, desensitization to violence, confusion about appropriate sexual behavior, and psychological acting out. The ethics trilogy—*Ethics in Advertising* (1997), *Ethics in Communications* (2000), and *Ethics in Internet* (2002)—categorize the effects of the communication media in economic, political, cultural, and religious terms and recognize both positive and negative effects. Most of the World Communication Day addresses at some point accept the influence of mass communication and seek either to moderate that influence or to call attention to its power.

The acknowledgment of media effects seems natural to the Pontifical Council, since it flows easily from the theological principle of sacramentality. Just as material objects, people, and the events of one's life mediate one's experience of God, so too the communication media can filter and mediate all manner of human experience. For a group that believes so strongly in the reality and power of mediation through physical reality, the means of communication appear particularly important.

However, such a view does have its drawbacks. Too strong a focus on mediation when it writes about the means of communication leads the Pontifical Council "to a kind of optimistic or idealized view of these media which sees them in instrumental terms and not as social structures."⁸ In other words, by principally seeing mediation and sacramental efficacy, the Church documents tend to miss some of the other paths of influence and operation of modern communication.

A third theme in the Vatican documents on communication identifies typical problem areas associated with the media. Some, like the relationship between the freedom of artistic expression and the limits of the moral law, have roots that extend well before the Second Vatican Council and find an expression in *Inter Mirifica* (par. 6). Other issues, like the social responsibility of professional communicators also appear in *Inter Mirifica* (par. 9–10). *Communio et Progressio* continues these debates and opts for freedom of expression (which it joins to the rights to information and communication) as opposed to censorship (par. 54–58). In the attempt to balance the defense of free expression with the responsibilities of communication for the social good, *Communio et Progressio* stresses the moral virtues of truth and human dignity, together with an ethics of solidarity. This yoking of freedom, responsibility, truth, and ethics appears in many subsequent documents, particularly the ethics trilogy (*Ethics in Advertising*, par. 1, 5, 17; *Ethics in Communications*, par. 20; *Ethics in Internet*, par. 12–14) and in the

Communication Day talks of Paul VI (1972, 1976) and John Paul II (1981, 2003). Rather than resolve the issues, the documents highlight the need to balance the competing goals of free expression and social responsibility.

Other Vatican documents identify specific problems in communication, problems that trigger a moral response. Given the sense of media effects outlined earlier, the Pontifical Council makes less of an attempt at balance in discussing specific problems. These problems include pornography and violence—which merit a specific document (*Pornography and Violence*)—deception (*CP*, par. 30, 60), consumerism (*Ethics in Advertising*, par. 10), undermining democratic processes (*CP*, par. 29–30, 37–41; *Ethics in Advertising*, par. 11), the protection of cultural diversity (*CP*, par. 51; *AN*, par. 16), and intrusions on privacy (*CP*, par. 42). This problem identification approach picks up the theological touchstone of community as well as Catholic theology's recognition of the tension between authority and the demands of conscience. The latter categories rest on the theological touchstone of mediation.

A characteristically Catholic response to these problems constitutes a fourth general theme in the Vatican documents: media education. Where communication media prove troublesome or morally threatening, the Vatican eschews religious or governmental censorship or restrictions; instead, it encourages the greater education of those who read, view, or utilize the mass media. Building on the much older idea of educating people for the new media (see, for example, Pius XII, *Miranda Provisus* 1957), the Pontifical Council encourages educational responses to the media in *Communio et Progressio* (pars. 64ff). Then, beginning with the 1986 *Guide to the Training of Future Priests* (par. 9), it embraces the media-education movement as a way to “inoculate” recipients against questionable media content. The same recommendation appears in the document on pornography and violence in communication (par. 25), *Aetatis Novae* (par. 24)—where media education is encouraged for each diocese—*Ethics in Communication* (par. 25), and the *Church and the Internet* (par. 7). The majority of the publication *100 Years of Cinema* consists of media education units prepared by communication scholars and community activists from around the world (1995–96). Media education encourages personal responsibility in the face of media content, as one would expect from the Catholic emphasis on conscience and authority. At the same time, media education highlights the role of what Blake identified as mentoring—a kind of mediated approach to learning.

Consistent with this emphasis on individual responsibility and cooperative practice, the Vatican documents also stress the responsibilities of various individuals and groups who participate in mass communication. Such a widening sphere of responsibility again manifests the Catholic consciousness of mediation and community. Just as communication reaches individuals through the work of others, both individually and collectively, so the response to communication must similarly come through a kind of media-

tion of the community. An added motivation for those involved in improving communication arises from Christ's example of love. So the whole of the second part of *Communio et Progressio* focuses on the responsibilities of recipients, whether these be teachers, children, young people, parents, or other adults (par. 64–70; 81–83), and communicators (par. 71–80). The rest of this second part focuses on the roles of civil authorities (par. 84–91), nations (par. 92–95), and “all Christians and men of good will” (par. 96–100). This kind of approach, which calls attention to the responsibilities of groups, occurs frequently. It appears in the document on pornography and violence, where we read about the duties of communicators, parents, educators, youth, the public, public authorities, and the Church (par. 23–29). *Ethics in Communication* highlights the duties of professional communicators, audience members, parents, teachers, civil authorities, and the Church. (pars. 23–26). Over the years the papal addresses have similarly called attention to particular groups. Paul VI singled out families (1969), youth (1970), and receivers in general (1978); John Paul II has focused on the child (1979), the family (1980, 1994), the elderly (1982), youth (1985), and women (1996).

Among all these groups, the Pontifical Council has also looked to professional communicators (writers, editors, producers, directors, all those working in the communication industries). These bear particular responsibility, because they “preside while the exchange proceeds around the vast ‘round table’ that the media have made. Their vocation is nobly to promote the purpose of social communication” (*CP*, par. 73). The Church therefore wishes to provide them with “spiritual help to meet the needs of their important and difficult role” (*CP*, par. 104). Indeed, *Communio et Progressio* continues, “the Church is very willing to undertake a dialogue with all communicators of every religious persuasion. She would do this so that she may contribute to a common effort to solve the problems inherent in their task and do what is best for the benefit of man” (par. 105). This theme of moral and spiritual help continues in the Vatican documents. The “Appeal to Contemplative Religious” asks these monks and nuns to pray particularly for those working in communication, and *Aetatis Novae* sets the pastoral care of “communications personnel” as one of four pastoral priorities for the Catholic Church. The reasoning here bears out the Pontifical Council's reliance on a theology of mediation:

Media work involves special psychological pressures and ethical dilemmas. Considering how important a role the media play in forming contemporary culture and shaping the lives of countless individuals and whole societies, it is essential that those professionally involved in secular media and the communications industries approach their responsibilities imbued with high ideals and a commitment to the service of humanity.

The Church has a corresponding responsibility: to develop and offer programs of pastoral care which are specifically responsive to the peculiar working conditions and moral challenges facing communications professionals. Typically, pastoral programs of this sort should include ongoing formation which will help these men and women—many of whom sincerely wish to know and do what is ethically and morally right—to integrate moral norms ever more fully into their professional work as well as their private lives. (*AN*, par. 19)

Because their work influences so many others, the Church wishes to help them. The priorities elucidated here inform the later writings on the Pontifical Council, especially the ethics trilogy.

Among all of these concerns for individuals and groups and kinds of communications, the Pontifical Council never loses sight of the possibilities that communication media offer to the Church itself in its duty to proclaim the gospel. Precisely as media, the means of communication fit nicely into the Church's theological understanding of mediation. So it makes perfect sense for the Church to encourage its members to use all communication media possible to spread the news of Jesus Christ. The Church devotes as much attention to this theme as to any other in the various documents. *Communio et Progressio* specifically discusses how the Church can use the mass media, both under the rubric of “the use of the media for giving the good news” (*CP*, par. 126–34) and as a part of a much longer discussion of “the active commitment of Catholics in the different media” (*CP*, par. 135–61).

Most of the subsequent documents also lay claim to the media for the gospel. Part of the appeal to contemplative religious asks them to pray for the successful use of the media by the Church. Preparation to better preach the gospel to all people forms a chief motivation for training priests in using modern means of communication. Such a goal not only motivates their studies but also serves as one of the apostolates for priests (*Guide to the Training of Future Priests*). *Aetatis Novae* sets the “development and promotion of the Church's own media of social communications” as one of the priorities for the Catholic Church and argues that “media work is not simply one more program alongside all the rest of the Church's activities: social communications have a role to play in every aspect of the Church's mission” (*AN*, par. 17). The very same thinking appears with regard to the Internet (*Church and the Internet*, par. 5).

The pope's return to the theme many times. In addition to encouraging Church use of communication in his annual Communication Day addresses in 1967, 1973, and 1974, Paul VI wrote quite forcefully about using the media for evangelization in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (“Announcing the Gospel”):

When they are put at the service of the Gospel, [mass media] are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God

is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people. The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect. It is through them that she proclaims "from the housetops" [Matthew 10:27] the message of which she is the depository. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. Thanks to them she succeeds in speaking to the multitudes. (par. 45)

John Paul II included the topic in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* ("The Mission of the Redeemer," par. 37) as well as in the World Communication Day messages in 1984, 1989, 1992, 1997, 2000, and 2001.

CONCLUSION

Almost all Vatican comment and thinking about contemporary communication goes through the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, the agency set up in the 1960s for that purpose. In the eleven documents or statements that group has issued since 1971, six general themes or areas of concern emerge: the unity or solidarity of peoples as a goal for communication; a consciousness of the effects of the media on individuals and societies; an attempt to respond to specific problem areas or issues stemming from those media effects; the promotion of media education; the encouragement of individual and group responses, including the Church's pastoral care for communication professionals; and the Church's obligation and opportunity to make use of contemporary communication media to preach the gospel.

These areas of concern grow out of the Catholic theological worldview that stresses (or perhaps presumes) communion, sacramentality, and mediation as the three foci of the Catholic tradition. From these flow the more applied theological concepts such as the importance of conscience and its relationship to authority, the importance of the physical world and human invention, the understanding of hierarchy, and the dual motivation of human progress and love of God. More applied still are applications such as mentoring, education, and cooperative work.

As we have seen, Vatican opinion about modern communication does not so much apply the theological worldview in a set pattern but grows from it in an organic way. "The unity and advancement of people living in society; these are the chief aims of social communication and of all the means it uses," begins *Communio et Progressio* (par. 1). These goals and all things leading to them flow from God's creation and the model of God's love. Vatican opinion about modern communication calls people everywhere to live up to the example and gift of that love of God.

For more in-depth understanding of issues, at least four scholarly journals can be helpful to reporters. They are *Islam & Science*, published biannually by the Center for Islam and Science; *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith*, published quarterly on behalf of the American Scientific Affiliation; *Theology & Science*, published biannually by the Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences; and *Zygon: Journal of Religion & Science*, published quarterly on behalf of the Institute for Religion in an Age of Science and the Center for Advanced Study in Religion and Science.

Library shelves are burgeoning with monographs that cover the gamut from general to detailed examinations of religion and science in relation to one another. For an introduction to the religion-science relationship, see John F. Haught's readable *Science and Religion: From Conflict to Conversation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995) and Ian Barbour's more in-depth *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (London: SMC Press, 1998).

Chapter 10: View from the News Desk

- 1 “Catholics Gaze Toward Heavens; Mars Brings Into Focus Church’s Long-standing Battle to Reverse Galileo Error,” *Associated Press*, 25 August 2003.
- 2 Edith M. Lederer, “United Nations Delays Treaty on Human Cloning, a Setback for U.S. Effort to Ban it,” *Associated Press*, 6 November 2003.
- 3 See Scott Gold, “Religion, Science May Turn a Page Over Textbook in Texas,” *Los Angeles Times*, 6 November 2003, 11.
- 4 Gold, “Religion.”

Chapter 11

- 1 See Lloyd Baugh, *Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ-Figures in Film* (Kansas City, Mo.: Sheed & Ward, 1997).
- 2 For further information on the World Council of Churches, see D. Gill, ed., *Gathered for Life: Official report, VI Assembly, World Council of Churches, Vancouver, Canada, 1983* (Geneva: WCC, 1983).
- 3 For a readily available, edited summary of all relevant statements from 1935 to 1971, see Appendix I of the *Guide to the Training of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communication* (Pontifical Council, 1986).
- 4 R. F. Trisco, “Vatican Council II,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 565.
- 5 Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980), 1180–81; italics in original.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 1183–84; italics in original.
- 7 Blake, *Afterimage*, 15–21.
- 8 Paul A. Soukup, “Church Documents and the Media.” *Concilium: revue internationale de théologie* (December 1993): 77.

Conclusion

- 1 Henry James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (Lakewood, Colo.: Collier, 1961), 39.
- 2 Poll by Mitofsky International and Edison Media Research, conducted for *Religion & Ethics Newsweekly* and *U.S. News & World Report*, cited in “Exploring Religious America,” booklet accompanying videotape published by Public Broadcasting Corp. Channel 13, WNET, New York, 2002, p. 12.