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# **BOLLETTINO**

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## **Audience with participants in the meeting organized by the Coordination of Communication Associations (COPERCOM)**

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, the participants in the meeting organized by the Coordination of Communication Associations (COPERCOM), on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding.

The following is the Pope's address to those present:

### **Address of the Holy Father**

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning!

I welcome you and I thank the President of the Coordination of Communication Associations for his kind words. I am pleased to share this moment of celebration – postponed by two years due to the pandemic – for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Coordination, along with all the associations that currently form part of it. It is an occasion that invites us to give thanks for the happy intuition of constituting, with the support of the secretary general of the Italian Episcopal Conference, an organization that creates a network of the various national associations working in the field of communications. At the same time, it is a good opportunity to reflect on the mission required today of a body like yours: indeed, communication processes change continually and rapidly, and this demands more of your planning and vision. Therefore, I would like to seize this opportunity to reflect with you on some objectives.

The first is, so to speak, institutional: coordination. It is a noble aim, that of bringing together various realities to reach a precise target. To coordinate is a verb that is familiar to you. But for whom? And what? To coordinate is not a simple activity; it demands patience, vision, unity of intentions and, above all, the valorization of the individual associations, which must be placed in the service of the whole. It is necessary to make talents and competences bear fruit for the benefit of all, in the service of the Church in Italy. I encourage you to start out again from here, and to look to the future with confidence, ready also to set out on different, innovative paths.

The journey taken in these twenty-five years offers you a good pool of experience to be able to improve further your work of coordination.

A second objective is *change*. Many times we have observed that “what we are experiencing is not simply an epoch of changes, but an epochal change. We find ourselves living at a time when change is no longer linear, but epochal. It entails decisions that rapidly transform our ways of living, of relating to one another, of communicating and thinking, of how different generations relate to one another and how we understand and experience faith and science” (Address to the Roman Curia, 21 December 2019). Therefore, we must not be afraid of being open to the challenges and opportunities that the present time offers. In this, you should be experts: experts in change! Indeed, as you are engaged in communication, you are well aware of how technological innovations are accelerating processes and generational transitions. Change, to be faced and managed in a fruitful way, requires a good educational and formative capacity. I invite you to look, in a particular way, at the new generations and to identify the most suitable pathways to establish meaningful contact with them. And be careful, because to change does not mean following the fashions of the moment, but converting one’s own way of being and thinking, starting from the attitude of wonder when faced with what does not change, yet is always new! Wonder is the antidote to repetitive habit and self-centredness. Wonder leads you forward, it makes you change, it makes you go forward. Habit is repetitive, and self-centredness makes you look at yourself in the mirror, to look at yourself.

The third objective is a triptych: *encounter, listening and word*. It is a sort of “a-b-c” of the good communicator, because it is the dynamic that is at the basis of every good communication. First and foremost, the encounter with the other: this means opening up one’s heart, without artifice, to the person in front of you. Encounter is the precondition for knowledge. If there is no encounter, there is no communication. But for there to be an encounter, there must be sincerity. To pretend to encounter is not to encounter, and this is a bad thing. Then comes listening. Very often we approach others with our convictions, made up of preconceived ideas, and we risk remaining impervious to the reality of who is in front of us. Instead, it is a matter of learning to be silent, primarily within ourselves, and respecting the other: respecting them not formally, but effectively, listening to them, because every person is a mystery. Listening is the indispensable ingredient for true dialogue. Only after listening does the word come. Saint John writes: “What we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 Jn 1:3). The word, coming out of silence and listening, can become proclamation, and then communication opens up to communion. Encountering, listening and then speaking. May your work always be guided by these actions, always placing attention to nouns, that is the person, rather than adjectives that distract. We are in a culture that has fallen into adjectivalism, and when one adjectivizes, one loses the substantiality of the thing. This same dynamic can also mark a turning point for the various conflicts that seem to want to engulf this time.

And finally, one last element: the *synodal journey*, which you have all heard about. The Church, also in Italy, is making a journey, a process that is part of the one initiated last year at the universal level, and which will continue until 2024. Beyond the temporal perspective, walking in a synodal way means fully living ecclesiality. Just as we are taught by Vatican Council II, which took its first steps sixty years ago. I therefore urge you to bring your specific contribution to this journey of the Church in Italy. As national associations you are places where every day, concepts and theories are measured against the fatigue and hope of men and women. This fraternity of life can open up an important window in a time of great conflict. May you be, in your daily effort, witnesses and weavers of communion.

I entrust you to Saint Francis de Sales, patron of journalists and communicators, and to Blessed Carlo Acutis, who shows us how important it is to be creative, to be ingenious in the world of digital communication, not repetitive. I bless you and I pray for you. And please, pray for me. Thank you!

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