SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE
BOLLETTINO

HOLY SEE PRESS OFFICE BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIÈGE PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS
OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE SALA DE IMPRENSA DA SANTA SÉ
BIURO PRASOWE STOLICY APOSTOLSKIEJ دار الصحافة التابعة للكرسي الرسولي

N. 221112d

Saturday 12.11.2022

Audience with Employees and Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Dicastery for Communication

This morning, the Holy Father Francis received in audience, in the Vatican Apostolic Palace, employees and participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Dicastery for Communication.

After handing out the address prepared for the occasion, the Pope delivered an impromptu address to the participants in the meeting.

The following is the address prepared by the Holy Father for the occasion, and handed to those present:

Address to the Holy Father

Dear brothers and sisters, good morning and welcome!

I thank Dr. Ruffini for his kind words, and I greet all of you who are participating in the Plenary Assembly of the Dicastery for Communication, on the theme “Synod and Communication: a journey to develop”.

The Synod is not a simple exercise in communication, nor is it an attempt to rethink the Church with the logic of the majority and minorities who have to find an agreement. This type of vision is worldly, and follows the model of many social, cultural and political experiences. Instead, the essence of the synodal path resides in a basic truth that we must never lose sight of: it has the purpose of listening, understanding and putting into practice God’s will.

If, as a Church, we want to know God’s will to make the light of the Gospel even more current in this time of ours, then we must return to an awareness that it is never given to the individual, but always to the Church in her entirety. It is only in the living fabric of our ecclesial relations that we become capable of listening and understanding the Lord who is speaking to us. Without “walking together”, we can become simply a religious

institution, which has however lost the ability to let the *light* of its Master's message shine, which has lost the ability to bring *flavour* to the different events of the world.

Jesus warns us against such a tendency. He repeats to us: “You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house. Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father” (*Mt* 5: 13-16). This is why the synodal dimension is a constitutive dimension of the Church, and the reflection that we have been engaged with in these years aims to bring out strongly what the Church has always implicitly believed.

The Bible is full of stories of men and women whom, at times, erroneously, we imagine as solitary heroes. For example, Abraham, the first to whom God addresses his word, is not a solitary wayfarer, but a man who takes seriously the voice of God, who invites him to leave his own land, and he does this together with his family (*Gen* 12:1-9). The story of Abraham is the story of Abraham’s kinship.

Moses too, the liberator of Israel, would not have been able to fulfil his mission were it not for the help of his brother Aaron, his sister Maria, his brother-in-law Jethro, and a host of other men and women who helped him to listen to the Word of God and put it into practice for the good of everyone. He is a man who is wounded in his personal life, and has no oratorical skills; indeed, he stammers. We might even say that he is a man who has difficulty in communicating, but those around him compensate for his own inability (cf. *Ex* 4, 10:12-16).

Mary of Nazareth would not have been able to sing her *Magnificat* without the presence and friendship of her cousin Elizabeth (cf. *Lk* 1:46-55), and would not have been able to defend her child Jesus against the hatred of those who wanted to kill him had Joseph not been by her side (*Mt* 2:13-15; 19-23).

Jesus himself is in need of bonds with others, and when he has to face the definitive battle of his mission to Jerusalem, the night of his arrest he takes his friends Peter, James and John with him to the Garden of Gethsemane (cf. *Mt* 26:36-46).

The contribution of communication is indeed that of making possible this communal dimension, this relational capacity, this vocation to connections. And, therefore, we understand that it is the task of communication to promote closeness, to give a voice to those who are excluded, to attract attention to what we normally reject and ignore. Communication is, so to speak, the *craft of bonds*, within which the voice of God resonates and is heard.

I would like to indicate three things to you as possible avenues for future reflection in this area.

The first task of communication should be that of *making people less lonely.* If it does not diminish the sensation of loneliness to which so many men and women feel condemned, then that communication is merely entertainment, it is not the craft of making bonds as we said earlier.

In order to put such a mission into practice, it must be clear that a person feels less lonely only when they realise that the questions, the hopes, and the hardships they carry within find expression outside. Only a Church that is immersed in reality truly knows what lies in the heart of contemporary humanity. Therefore, all true communication is made up first and foremost of genuine listening, it is made of encounters, faces, stories. If we do not know how to be in reality, we will we will merely issue from above directions that no-one will heed. Communication should be a great aid to the Church, to dwell genuinely in reality, promoting listening and intercepting the great questions of the men and women of today.

Connected to this first challenge, I would like to add another: *giving a voice to the voiceless.* Very often we witness communications systems that marginalize and censure what is uncomfortable and what we do not want to see. The Church, thanks to the Holy Spirit, is well aware that it is her task to stay with the least, and her natural habitat is that of the existential peripheries.

But the *existential peripheries* are not only those that find themselves on the margins of society for economic reasons, but also those who are sated with bread but deprived of meaning; they are also those who live in situations of marginalization due to certain choices, or family failures, or personal events that have indelibly marked their history. Jesus was never afraid of the leper, the poor, the outsider, even though these people were marked by moral stigma. Jesus never ignored the *irregular* of any kind. I wonder if as a Church we too know how to give a voice to these brothers and these sisters, if we know how to listen to them, if we know how to discern God's will together with them, and in this way address to them a Word that saves.

Finally, the third challenge of communication that I would like to leave you is that of educating ourselves in the labour of communicating. Not infrequently, even in the Gospel we find misunderstandings, slowness in understanding Jesus' words, or misinterpretations that at times become veritable tragedies, as happened to Judas Iscariot, who confused Christ's mission with political messianism.

Therefore, we must also accept this dimension of "hardship" in communication. Very often those who look at the Church from outside remain perplexed by the various tensions within. But those who know how the Holy Spirit acts are well aware that he loves to make communion among diversity, and to create harmony from confusion. Communion is never uniformity, but the capacity to keep very different realities together. I think we should be capable of communicating even this hardship without pretending to resolve or conceal it. Dissent is not necessarily an attitude of rupture, but it can be one of the ingredients of communion. Communication must also make diversity of views possible, while always seeking to preserve unity and truth, and fighting slander, verbal violence, personalism and fundamentalism that, under the guise of being faithful to the truth, only spread division and discord. If it succumbs to these degenerations, communication, instead of doing much good, ends up doing much harm.

Dear brothers and dear sisters, the work of this Dicastery is not simply technical. Your vocation, as we have seen, touches the very way of being Church. Thank you for what you do. I encourage you to go forward in a decisive and prophetic way. To serve the Church means being trustworthy and also courageous in venturing on new paths. In this sense, always be trustworthy and courageous. I bless you all from my heart. And please, do not forget to pray for me.