



The Holy See

AUDIENCE TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS MEDIA

ADDRESS OF THE HOLY FATHER POPE FRANCIS

*Paul VI Audience Hall
Saturday, 16 March 2013*

Video

Dear Friends,

At the beginning of my ministry in the See of Peter, I am pleased to meet all of you who have worked here in Rome throughout this intense period which began with the unexpected announcement made by my venerable Predecessor Benedict XVI on 11 February last. To each of you I offer a cordial greeting.

The role of the mass media has expanded immensely in these years, so much so that they are an essential means of informing the world about the events of contemporary history. I would like, then, to thank you in a special way for the professional coverage which you provided during these days – you really worked, didn't you? – when the eyes of the whole world, and not just those of Catholics, were turned to the Eternal City and particularly to this place which has as its heart the tomb of Saint Peter. Over the past few weeks, you have had to provide information about the Holy See and about the Church, her rituals and traditions, her faith and above all the role of the Pope and his ministry.

I am particularly grateful to those who viewed and presented these events of the Church's history in a way which was sensitive to the right context in which they need to be read, namely that of faith. Historical events almost always demand a nuanced interpretation which at times can also take into account the dimension of faith. Ecclesial events are certainly no more intricate than political or economic events! But they do have one particular underlying feature: they follow a pattern which does not readily correspond to the "worldly" categories which we are accustomed to use, and so it is not easy to interpret and communicate them to a wider and more varied public.

The Church is certainly a human and historical institution with all that that entails, yet her nature is not essentially political but spiritual: the Church is the People of God, the Holy People of God making its way to encounter Jesus Christ. Only from this perspective can a satisfactory account be given of the Church's life and activity.

Christ is the Church's Pastor, but his presence in history passes through the freedom of human beings; from their midst one is chosen to serve as his Vicar, the Successor of the Apostle Peter. Yet Christ remains the centre, not the Successor of Peter: Christ, Christ is the centre. Christ is the fundamental point of reference, the heart of the Church. Without him, Peter and the Church would not exist or have reason to exist. As [Benedict XVI](#) frequently reminded us, Christ is present in Church and guides her. In everything that has occurred, the principal agent has been, in the final analysis, the Holy Spirit. He prompted the decision of Benedict XVI for the good of the Church; he guided the Cardinals in prayer and in the election.

It is important, dear friends, to take into due account this way of looking at things, this hermeneutic, in order to bring into proper focus what really happened in these days.

All of this leads me to thank you once more for your work in these particularly demanding days, but also to ask you to try to understand more fully the true nature of the Church, as well as her journey in this world, with her virtues and her sins, and to know the spiritual concerns which guide her and are the most genuine way to understand her. Be assured that the Church, for her part, highly esteems your important work. At your disposal you have the means to hear and to give voice to people's expectations and demands, and to provide for an analysis and interpretation of current events. Your work calls for careful preparation, sensitivity and experience, like so many other professions, but it also demands a particular concern for what is true, good and beautiful. This is something which we have in common, since the Church exists to communicate precisely this: Truth, Goodness and Beauty "in person". It should be apparent that all of us are called not to communicate ourselves, but this existential triad made up of truth, beauty and goodness.

Some people wanted to know why the Bishop of Rome wished to be called Francis. Some thought of Francis Xavier, Francis De Sales, and also Francis of Assisi. I will tell you the story. During the election, I was seated next to the Archbishop Emeritus of São Paulo and Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Clergy, Cardinal Claudio Hummes: a good friend, a good friend! When things were looking dangerous, he encouraged me. And when the votes reached two thirds, there was the usual applause, because the Pope had been elected. And he gave me a hug and a kiss, and said: "Don't forget the poor!" And those words came to me: the poor, the poor. Then, right away, thinking of the poor, I thought of Francis of Assisi. Then I thought of all the wars, as the votes were still being counted, till the end. Francis is also the man of peace. That is how the name came into my heart: Francis of Assisi. For me, he is the man of poverty, the man of peace, the man who loves and protects creation; these days we do not have a very good relationship with creation, do we? He is the man who gives us this spirit of peace, the poor man ... How I would like a Church

which is poor and for the poor! Afterwards, people were joking with me. “But you should call yourself Hadrian, because Hadrian VI was the reformer, we need a reform...” And someone else said to me: “No, no: your name should be Clement”. “But why?” “Clement XV: thus you pay back Clement XIV who suppressed the Society of Jesus!” These were jokes. I love all of you very much, I thank you for everything you have done. I pray that your work will always be serene and fruitful, and that you will come to know ever better the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the rich reality of the Church’s life. I commend you to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Star of Evangelization, and with cordial good wishes for you and your families, each of your families. I cordially impart to all of you my blessing. Thank you.

(In Spanish)

I told you I was cordially imparting my blessing. Since many of you are not members of the Catholic Church, and others are not believers, I cordially give this blessing silently, to each of you, respecting the conscience of each, but in the knowledge that each of you is a child of God. May God bless you!