



The Holy See

ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS TO A DELEGATION OF THE BIAGIO AGNES AWARD

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 24 June 2023*

[Multimedia]

*Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,
Welcome!*

I greet Ms Simona Agnes; the President, Mr Gianni Letta; the members of the Jury and all of you present, who in various roles, dedicate yourselves to the field of communication. The Foundation that promotes the international prize in journalism and information carries the name of Biagio Agnes, a renowned Italian journalist, a key player for Rai, a defender of its public service, [a person] who was capable of intervening with wisdom and decisiveness to guarantee authentic and correct information.

The Prize is now in its 15th edition: a time frame which captures the great changes that are still underway and which, at the same time, allows for the laying of foundations for a style inspired by Biagio Agnes, among others. In this regard, I would also like to mention Rai's closeness to this initiative — represented here by its management — and for some years, also that of Confindustria. Only together, each with their own characteristics and prerogatives, can a horizon of hope be drawn.

This is the daily task of journalists, called to “hit the streets” or to walk the digital roads, always listening to the people they encounter. “Journalism too, as an account of reality, calls for an ability to go where no one else thinks of going: a readiness to set out and a desire to see. Curiosity, openness, passion” (*Message for the 55th World Communications Day*, 23 January 2021). This is something also highlighted by the Jury with the Prize for war correspondents: an attention that, in

recounting the tragedy and absurdity of conflicts, makes everyone feel like part of the same suffering. I would like to point out, in this regard, three “elements” of journalism, that perhaps are increasingly less used, but which still have much to teach: a notebook, a pen and looking.

A notebook. Jotting down a fact always entails great interior work. One jots it down because one is a direct witness or because a source that is considered reliable reports it, paving the way for subsequent verification. A notebook is a reminder of the importance of listening, but above all of letting oneself be pierced by what happens. A journalist is never a bookkeeper of history, but a person who has decided to experience its implications with participation, with *com-passion*.

A pen. It is used ever less, substituted by more advanced means, and yet the pen helps one elaborate one’s thoughts, by connecting the head and the hands, fostering memories and linking memory to the present. The pen evokes craftsmanship, to which the journalist is always called: one picks up the pen after having verified the details, sifted through theories, reconstructed and ascertained every single step. In this weaving, intelligence and conscience work together, touching one’s existential strings. The pen thus highlights journalists’ and media workers’ “creative act”, an act which requires uniting the search for truth to righteousness and respect for people, in particular to the respect of professional ethics, exactly as Biagio Agnes did.

Looking. The notebook and the pen are merely accessories if one lacks the ability to look at reality. A real gaze, not only a virtual one. Today, more than in the past, one can be distracted by words, images and messages that pollute life. Let us think for example, about the sad phenomenon of fake news, about bellicose rhetoric or everything that manipulates the truth. We need to look carefully at what takes place in order to disarm language and promote dialogue. Our gaze must be directed from the heart: from there “come the right words to dispel the shadows of a closed and divided world and to build a civilisation which is better than the one we have received. Each of us is asked to engage in this effort, but it is one that especially appeals to the sense of responsibility of those working in the field of communications so that they may carry out their profession as a mission” (*Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 57th World Communications Day*, 24 January 2023).

Dear friends, I encourage you to continue in your commitment to promote cultural initiatives to support the dissemination of accurate information, educating and forming young generations. I thank you again and I congratulate the award recipients. And, please, remember to pray for me. Thank you.

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