



The Holy See

LETTER OF POPE JOHN PAUL II TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF RADIO POPULAR – CADENA COPE

To Fr Salvador Sánchez Terán

Chairman of the Board of Directors of Radio Popular – Cadena COPE

1. I am pleased to send a cordial greeting to those taking part in the annual convention of the directors of all the COPE broadcasting stations, their associates and the directors of the main programmes, now taking place in the Eternal City. In view of the forthcoming extraordinary Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, their intention is to demonstrate their sentiments of loyalty and affection to the Successor of the Apostle St Peter, and of their closeness to the Holy See.

I truly thank you for this act which is most eloquent. On the last day of this convention, the participants will have the opportunity to be present at the General Audience which every Wednesday gathers numerous pilgrims around the Pope and, on this occasion, they will be able to receive the Apostolic Blessing, together with some words of encouragement. However, in the meantime I would like to offer them my greetings in advance and to reiterate my appreciation and gratitude for their contribution, made over the radio, to the Church's mission of proclaiming Jesus Christ to the men and women of our time.

2. The origin of the Cadena COPE broadcasting network dates back to the parish broadcasts promoted by the apostolic zeal of priests and lay Catholics who enlivened the villages and towns of Spain in the 1960s. There was no lack of diocesan broadcasting stations whose outreach and possibilities were certainly greater. A few became firmly established and so emerged the Cadena COPE of the present day. Since then and for almost 40 years, many men and women have contributed their work and hopes to it, not always with abundant means but always motivated by a creative and enthusiastic apostolic spirit.

Today times have changed. Technical progress has given us powerful means, and although there is no lack of material or equipment, the work of social communicators is still difficult. The present challenge consists rather in knowing how to channel the immense power of the modern media to ensure that it contributes to a worthier life with higher standards. Concerning this, as I wrote in my [Message for World Communications Day](#) this year: "It can never be forgotten that

communication through the media is not a utilitarian exercise intended simply to motivate, persuade or sell. Still less is it a vehicle for ideology. The media can at times reduce human beings to units of consumption or competing interest groups, or manipulate viewers and readers and listeners as mere ciphers from whom some advantage is sought, whether product sales or political support" (*L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 28 January 1998, p. 7).

In this regard, as COPE you must keep your objectives and motivations clear. The Spanish Episcopal Conference which follows your activity with concern and is represented at this meeting by its President, Archbishop Elías Yañes Alvarez of Zaragoza, has established principles on your behalf with the aim of effectively applying the Church's teaching on the role of the means of social communication in society.

The Catholic character of COPE must avoid ambiguities that jeopardize its adherence to the principles and values of Christian humanism. This does not necessarily mean identifying with a form of radio broadcasting with an explicitly and exclusively religious content, although this may be a very valid way respected and followed by several broadcasting stations. As COPE you have opted for a more general radio model which claims to reach a wider public and therefore assumes broader horizons. Nevertheless, this must not prevent you from attempting to take the message and peace of Jesus Christ to everyone, near and far (cf. Eph 2:17), including those who show no interest in him. It obliges you to seek to maintain a balance; putting you on your guard in order to overcome the tension between the human and the divine, between the Gospel and materialism, between the perennial values proclaimed by Jesus Christ and the demands of secularization.

3. Christians who work in the social communications media face a great challenge which I mentioned in the [Message for World Communications Day](#) cited: "not only to use the media to spread the Gospel but actually to integrate the Gospel message into the 'new culture' created by modern communications, with their 'new languages, new techniques and a new psychology'" (*L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 28 January 1998, p. 7). In this sense, a serious commitment is required of you: on the one hand, to carry out joyfully your explicit evangelizing activity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the *Magisterium* of the Pastors in expressive and persuasive language; on the other, to adopt the realities of the present world, presenting them to the men and women of our time within the framework of the Christian vision of the cosmos which embraces the person, society and all nature.

Furthermore, the transcendental importance of the personal and professional witness of those who work in Cadena COPE should be kept in mind. This is why I encourage you not to succumb to temptations as subtle and misleading as ambition, vanity, money or popularity. Make yourselves available with simplicity to those who expect of you the invaluable service of rigorous information, a considered opinion, the call to a respectful and peaceful coexistence with others, and in short, Christian love.

4. Finally I would like to refer to the great event awaiting us and for which we are preparing: the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, when the Church will be celebrating the 2,000th anniversary of Christ's coming into the world, the principal event of all history, the fullness of time (cf. Gal 4:4) and the origin of Christianity. Jesus Christ is the centre of the cosmos and of history, the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the beginning and the end. With regard to this event, it is necessary to energetically ask the question I put to communicators last year: "Is there still a place for Christ in the traditional mass media? Can we claim a place for him in the new media?" ([Message for the 31st World Communications Day](#), 24 January 1997;

L'Osservatore Romano English edition, 29 January 1997, p. 9). I therefore encourage you to redouble your efforts in Cadena COPE so that Jesus Christ, the Word of God, may be present and guide your footsteps in a task as noble as the one you are accomplishing.

On this occasion, I am pleased to impart the desired Apostolic Blessing to you all, to the workers and staff of the COPE, to your relatives and to your listeners.

From the Vatican, 6 July 1998.

IOANNES PAULUS PP. II

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