



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF JOHN PAUL II
TO THE MANAGERS AND STAFF OF VATICAN RADIO
ON THE STATION'S 70th ANNIVERSARY**

Tuesday, 13 February 2001

Dear Brothers and Sisters!

1. I gladly offer a cordial welcome to all of you who form the great family of Vatican Radio. Thank you for this visit, which you wanted to pay me on the 70th anniversary of the foundation of your praiseworthy radio station.

I think affectionately of each of you who intelligently and devotedly make it a living and effective instrument of service each day to the Apostolic See. Today's meeting gives me the opportunity to express my gratitude to you all. I am particularly grateful to Fr Pasquale Borgomeo, General Manager, for his courteous words on your behalf, which also illustrated the great variety of activities you have carried out, especially during the Jubilee Year. With him I greet Fr Federico Lombardi, Programme Director, and Fr Lino Dan, Director of Technical Services. Through them I would like to extend my gratitude to all the Fathers of the Society of Jesus who from the beginning have made their valuable contribution to this institution in a genuine spirit of fidelity to the charism of St Ignatius of Loyola.

It was also to express my appreciation in a concrete way that I decided to make Fr Roberto Tucci, Chairman of your Administrative Committee, a member of the College of Cardinals. I extend my most cordial thanks to him for the work he has done at Vatican Radio, as well as for having helped me for many years with my apostolic journeys to so many parts of the world, with the active assistance of Dr Alberto Gasbarri, Administrative Director.

2. Today we would like to commemorate Vatican Radio's 70 years. How could we not offer a hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for granting the Church, for love of the Gospel, to become a

pioneer in the field of radio communications? My thoughts return to 12 February 1931, when my venerable Predecessor Pope Pius XI inaugurated the first worldwide radio station by broadcasting a prophetic message to the world.

Since then the history of what you call, with legitimate pride, the "Pope's Radio", has been interwoven with the tragedies, expectations and hopes of humanity. For seven decades your station has followed the exciting and terrible events of the century just ended. It has spread the Gospel message and the words of Peter's Successor to every corner of the globe. It would take too long to list the variety of services it has rendered to the Apostolic See. I will limit myself to recalling its contribution to the success of the Great Jubilee just ended and, in particular, the special *Jubilaeum* broadcasts which were also transmitted over the Internet, with thousands of work hours in various languages, over 2,500 studio guests and almost double that number by telephone, as well as an exceptional number of link-ups. These programmes involved volunteers and were in regular contact with other stations around the world, providing special arrangements for national pilgrimages along with many other initiatives. Once again, I thank all those who have collaborated in various ways during these 70 years in the daily work of Vatican Radio, with a special thought and prayer for all who have entered eternal life in this period.

3. By statute Vatican Radio is entrusted with the task "of proclaiming the Christian message with freedom, fidelity and efficacy, and linking the centre of Catholicism with the various countries of the world by spreading the voice and teaching of the Roman Pontiff, providing information on the Holy See's activities, reporting on Catholic life in the world, giving guidance for evaluating current problems in the light of the Church's Magisterium and paying constant attention to the signs of the times".

What my venerable Predecessor, the Servant of God Paul VI, whom you rightly consider the second founder of Vatican Radio, said to you on your 40th anniversary is an illuminating comment on this text: "What power the voice acquires!", he said on that occasion, "What a function is entrusted to the Radio! Is there any service more akin to our apostolic mission than the one that you, made ministers of the Word, render to the cause of the Gospel and the Church?" (27 February 1971; *L'Osservatore Romano* English edition, 11 March 1971, p. 11).

Yes, your primary mission is to broadcast the Magisterium, the words and the very voice of Peter's Successor; to make known with your aerials the Church's vitality, her charitable projects, her joys, her sufferings and her hopes. Continue to dedicate all your best energies to this singular mission for the good of the entire Christian people. Yours is a modern, professional contribution to the work of the new evangelization in our time, which is marked by the expansion and intensification of global communications.

4. In this regard, you are facing two great challenges today: the technological and the editorial. The technological challenge involves the production and broadcasting of programmes. Many years

ago, satellite and telematic broadcasting was opportunely begun, with a decisive increase in listeners thanks to the retransmission granted to about 800 local stations. Moreover, the introduction of digital technology, offering vast, unprecedented production possibilities, is significantly changing its classic professional features. If the technological challenge requires financial resources and technical and administrative skills, the editorial challenge primarily involves intellectual and creative abilities. It is a question of giving to the richness and depth of the content to be communicated the specific forms and language of radio broadcasting, adapted to its evolution and capable of achieving the goals of a radio station serving the Church.

Evangelizing by radio means offering professionally unexceptionable information which, with its implicit and explicit commentary on the facts, can become a daily catechesis rooted in life and the listener's experience. This evangelization demands a continual effort of adaptation and updating, but also a solid human, cultural and professional formation along with sound spiritual and missionary motivation. The ability to proclaim the Good News effectively depends above all on intense prayer, on listening to God and on courageous fidelity to Christ, the divine Communicator of salvation.

5. Dear brothers and sisters! The 70th birthday of Vatican Radio falls at the beginning of the third millennium and just after the close of the extraordinary Jubilee experience. The enthusiasm which the Great Jubilee brought to the Church can only spur you to set out afresh with humble courage on a new stage of your journey in service to the Gospel. The Pope counts very much on your help in carrying out his Petrine ministry and asks you to broadcast each day the truth that sets man free.

Continue to write interesting pages of your history, already rich with noble memories. May the Church's urgent apostolic needs in this phase of rapid change encourage you to go forward with enthusiasm. I now give you the same exhortation I made in my recent Apostolic Letter *Novo millennio ineunte*: "Now we must look ahead, we must 'put out into the deep' trusting in Christ's words: *Duc in altum!*" (n. 15). Put out into the deep and be not afraid, dear members of the great family of Vatican Radio. Before you lies a future not without shadows, but one in which Christian hope sees promises that do not disappoint. Do not let difficulties, limited resources and your own limitations discourage you. Do not be upset by the ever faster change of contexts, structures, methods and ways of life.

"*Duc in altum!* - Put out into the deep!". In serving the faith and unity of Christians, in defending life and human rights, in proclaiming peace to all people of good will, you are not alone: you are in the heart of the Church. You are also present in my daily concern and prayer.

I willingly entrust you, your work and your plans to the motherly protection of Mary, Star of Evangelization. I accompany my wishes with a special Apostolic Blessing, which I affectionately extend to your families and to the millions of listeners throughout the world who are the treasure

and boast of Vatican Radio.

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