



The Holy See

PAUL VI

**MESSAGE OF THE HOLY FATHER
FOR THE WORLD SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS DAY**

***Theme: The Mass Media and the Affirmation
and Promotion of Spiritual Values***

*Venerable Brothers,
Dear sons and daughters,
and men of good will everywhere,*

Today, for the seventh time, we celebrate the annual World Communications Day. We invite all of you to reflect with us on the theme chosen for this year's celebration: "The Mass Media and the Affirmation and Promotion of Spiritual Values".

For centuries man has been seeking what is true and good and beautiful. Through this search he has been striving to reach the Absolute and to express a relationship with his Creator, often through sacrifice and prayer. He has hoped for a life beyond this life, and the hope for immortality has influenced his attitudes and behaviour in this world. With varying degrees of success his quest has likewise been for justice and freedom, for fraternal solidarity and brotherly love. Man has longed for peace within his heart, in his family and in his community. These and the other spiritual values of mankind are a heritage that is passed on by each succeeding generation, one that is the common treasure of all.

This heritage is, however, in a special way the responsibility of Christians. For the Gospel of Christ has confirmed these spiritual values and has extended their meaning and application. Christ himself, by his living, dying and rising from the dead, has given added significance to the life of every man. He has inspired men to even higher goals and made them conscious of the fact that they are called and really are the sons of God, sharing in the fellowship of his Holy Spirit (cf. 1 *Jn* 3:1; 2 *Cor.* 13:14).

Indeed the Church has received the mission of affirming the spiritual values of the complete Christian message. Christ the Lord has challenged the Church to take this message to the ends of the earth (cf. *Acts* 1:8; *Mt* 28:19). His Apostles were to preach the love of God and man, for givenness and reconciliation, and to proclaim a message of peace. They were to go out and be concerned about the sick and the oppressed and like their Master bring the uplifting Gospel to the poor (cf. *Luke* 4:18). Enlightened by God's guidance, and uniquely rich in human experience, the Church knows and proclaims that the true advancement of man, the true progress of peoples, can be realized only when the spiritual values which answer their highest aspirations receive due emphasis. And so the Church throughout the ages has communicated these values and promoted initiatives for the development of peoples, initiatives aimed at embracing every man and the whole man (cf. *Populorum Progressio*, 14). The Church must then continue to affirm all the values of a truly human life, showing at the same time that our hearts are restless until they rest in God.

Christians of every age have given witness by their lives and often by their death to the spiritual values which they hold as children of God destined for eternal life. The great Martyrs have found successors in every culture to testify with them to the values that make life worth living and show the true meaning of death. By a happy coincidence, this World Communications Day is also the feast of Saint Charles Lwanga and his Companions. They were certain of the spiritual values in which they believed and their willingness to die for their convictions shows how deeply spiritual values can be rooted. These sons of Africa are now held in honour by the entire world precisely because they affirmed spiritual values.

Every Christian of every age, like these courageous saints, is bound to give the witness of his good example and to show reasons for the hope within him (cf. *1 Peter* 3:15). It has always been thus. One of the greatest blessings of our age, however, is the advance of technology and the great progress made in social communications. Now as never before spiritual values can be affirmed and spread from one end of the earth to the other. The marvellous providence of God has reserved this wonder for our age.

Men of good will are disturbed to see how these social communications are so often used to contradict or corrupt the fundamental values of human life and produce discord and evil (*Communio et Progressio*, 9). The abuses and the harm they cause are well known. The spread of false ideologies and excessive preoccupation with mere material progress frequently detract from concern for true wisdom and lasting values.

But what we are asking for today is positive action on the part of all Catholics and especially those engaged in the mass media, to diffuse in all their fullness the values of Christ's life-giving message and to make the world ring with their conviction, with the voice of their belief and with the Word of God. This is indeed an important vocation and a great service to the world. And we appeal likewise for a full measure of partnership with all brother Christians and with all men of good will in every land to affirm effectively the common principles upon which the dignity of man depends. We

are asking all those engaged in social communications to tell the story of the sacrifice and dedication that exists in the world, to make known the good that abounds, and the dynamism, enthusiasm and selflessness of so many, especially among the young. We know that there are numerous "Media Men" of good will who burn with the desire and determination to turn their "lifeless instruments" (cf. *Communio et Progressio*, 72) to the benefit of their fellowmen. We ask them all to renew their resolve to transform the mass media into burning torches and powerful beacons illuminating the path to the only true happiness. The world needs the affirmation of spiritual values as seen in their concrete expression. To reach this goal those who are able to use social communications in all their expressions must do so. The language of image and print, of light, music and sound must help to convey the message of goodness, beauty and truth. The press, the radio, television, the cinema, the theater and advertising must be utilized to the full in this mission of conveying a meaningful message to the world.

As the mass media affirm and promote the spiritual values of an ever striving humanity, they help to prepare for the day when there will be a new creation, in which the Fatherhood of God will be universally acknowledged and brotherhood, justice and peace will prevail. And so with the challenge that we offer goes the expression of our gratitude to all men of good will who endeavour to make this contribution. In this regard, we wish to express our deep appreciation to all the radio and television stations as well as to the press which present the news about the Church and the Holy See and their essential mission of affirming and promoting spiritual values. In a special way we thank our own sons and daughters of the Catholic Church who through a more effective use of the mass media and through a greater dedication to this apostolate collaborate with us in spreading the Gospel (cf. *Phil.* 1:5).

For the success of the great programme based on the theme of this World Communications Day - "the Mass Media and the Affirmation and Promotion of Spiritual Values" - we invoke the assistance of the Word made Flesh, and in his name we impart our Apostolic Blessing.

From the Vatican, 1 May 1973

PAULUS PP. VI