



The Holy See

**LETTER OF THE HOLY FATHER PAUL VI,
SIGNED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE,
TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF WELLINGTON**

Thursday, 2 March 1978

Your Eminence,

The Holy Father wishes you to know that he will be following with close interest the deliberations of the Episcopal Commissions for Social Communications and their media experts who, at the instance of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications, will gather at Palmerston North from February 20 to 26 to plan together an overall pastoral strategy designed to guide the Church's mass media apostolate in the years ahead throughout that vast region of the world which comprises Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, and the whole complex of island groups in Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia.

His Holiness sees a particular significance in the composition of this meeting, in that it brings together representatives of the episcopates both of the so-called developed countries and of those still in process of development. To the one, no less than to the other, the modern mass media present a daunting challenge and a marvellous opportunity, and the Pope is greatly pleased and encouraged to see that, in a true spirit of fraternal concern and collaboration, the Bishops from such widely differing backgrounds have elected to confront these challenges together and, with divine grace and through mutual help, to exploit the "rich promise" of the media to the fullest, in favour of evangelization, of the promotion of the highest human and spiritual values, and of the genuine improvement of man's lot here on earth.

The task which you now undertake in your Continental Meeting should be seen as a vital and integral part of the universal Church's carefully devised programme for the implementation of the Second Vatican Council's Decree "[Inter Mirifica](#)". This Decree clearly declares that the Church has an obligation to proclaim the news of salvation using the instruments of social communication, and

further, to instruct mankind in the worthy use of those instruments (*Inter Mirifica*, 3). Conscious that “the fate of humanity grows daily more dependent on the right use of these media” (*Ibid.* 24), the Council Fathers carefully indicated the structures which were required in order that the pastoral responsibilities of the Church relating to social communications might be effectively carried out. The Conciliar Decree was complemented by the Pastoral Instruction “Communio et Progressio”, approved by His Holiness in 1971.

The Pontifical Commission for Social Communications has since been concentrating its efforts, in close and harmonious collaboration with the local episcopates in each of the regions and continents in turn, on the task of adapting the provisions of the two documents to the particular circumstances and requirements experienced by the Church in every country. In this whole process, as you will recognize, the Holy See takes proper account of the great diversity of local circumstances in which the Church must carry out her mission, and places heavy reliance on the united wisdom and experience of the Bishops entrusted by the respective Episcopal Conferences in each area with the direction and guidance of the social communications apostolate.

Thus the plan which emerges from your days of consultation and sharing in Palmerston North, while adhering faithfully to the general directives of “*Inter Mirifica*” and “*Communio et Progressio*”, will at the same time make due and adequate provision for their application in the actual concrete situations which you encounter locally. It will be your plan wisely conceived and prudently inserted into the general programme of the universal Church: to proclaim to the world Jesus Christ and his life-giving and uplifting Gospel of salvation.

The range of action of modern media, as the Council Decree points out (*Inter Mirifica*, 22), reaches far beyond national boundaries, and the individual today increasingly feels himself a member of the global human community. It is for this reason that the Holy See advocates a caring and energetic cooperation, as far as this may be possible and useful, between the Church’s communications personnel and structures in the different countries, with a free and generous sharing of facilities and expertise, particularly as regards technical training and the circulation of accurate information.

Your meeting will certainly explore all the possibilities that suggest themselves for a broad-based collaboration along these lines. It will take account also of the opportunities which doubtless exist for a fruitful cooperation with the many media professionals who share the concern of the participants for the promotion of the highest human values. It will wish to examine also whether the possibilities of fraternal collaboration in communications matters with the media workers of the other Christian Churches are being fully availed of, and how such common efforts can be intensified and rendered more fruitful.

You will be well advised also to study how your initiatives in social communications may most profitably utilize the services offered by the International Catholic Organizations for Media,

approved by the Holy See, whose world-wide experience, accumulated over half a century of dedicated work and research, puts a rich resource at your disposal.

The “prudent and well informed planning” which the Pastoral instruction “*Communio et Progressio*” (PONTIFICII CONSILII COMMUNICATIONIS SOCIALIS PRAEPOSITI *Communio et Progressio*, 165) advocates and which it declares to be “the rightful province of the ecclesiastical authorities”, who in turn, “should depend upon the advice of experienced experts in the different branches of communication”, presupposes a careful appraisal of the actually existing situation. The Holy Father notes with approval that this appraisal has indeed been made, not only in the regional meetings in Port Moresby, Sydney, Suva and New Zealand, but in the individual national studies which preceded them. His Holiness commends with cordial gratitude the dedicated labour of the many people who have contributed to the completion of these studies. On the basis of their work, it should now be possible to plan a pastoral programme in social communications which is truly realistic and which never loses sight of the urgency of communicating Christ.

It will be opportune to incorporate in this programme the most adequate provision possible to ensure a fruitful and effective annual celebration of World Communications Day, so that each and all of the benefits envisaged by the Second Vatican Council when it established this celebration may be realized in full. This year’s celebration concentrates on a theme—the formation of the receiver—which must be a continuing pastoral concern.

Your prayerful deliberations, the Holy Father urges, should have the aim of initiating “a fresh forward impulse” (PAULI PP. VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 2) within those far-flung areas of the Church entrusted to your care, a reinvigorated proclamation of the Gospel by every means, traditional and modern, which God in his providence has made available to you. “The conditions of the society in which we live oblige all of us... to revise methods, to consider every means by which we can bring the Christian message to modern man... presenting it to the people of our time in a way that is as understandable and persuasive as possible” (PAULI PP. VI *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 3).

The Holy Father knows how deeply sensitive you are to this obligation of evangelization, which you share with him and with all the other pastors of the Church. He knows the strength of your attachment and the depth of your loyalty to the See of Peter and to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. He assures you that you have a special place in his heart and that you are daily in his prayers. He offers you the fullness of his encouragement in the tasks which now confront you, and entrusts the work of this Continental Meeting to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. And he sends to all the participants in the meeting, and to all who have worked in the preparations for it, his paternal Apostolic Blessing.

Assuring you of my happiness in transmitting this message to you, I remain

Yours devotedly in Christ.

Copyright © Dicastero per la Comunicazione - Libreria Editrice Vaticana