



The Holy See

PAOLO VI

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

Theme:

Social Communications and the Development of Nations

We would like to invite you all, our beloved sons and brothers, as well as all men of good will, to celebrate with us the Day specially dedicated to the means of social communication. We wish to help you to consider the significance of the changes that are taking place in this field under our very eyes, and to ponder the serious responsibilities that these imply for one and all. Until recently, many did not have anything more to stimulate their reflection than vague memories of what they learned at school or in the family and what they heard in their environment. Now however, with the echos of the press, motion pictures, radio and television clamoring for attention, new horizons open wide before them and they are attuned to the throbbing life of the universe. Who will not rejoice at this progress? Do we not all see in it a road destined by Providence for the advance of the whole of mankind? There is room for all hopes if man learns to master these techniques; but everything can be lost if he shirks his responsibilities.

Will the press, motion pictures, radio and television in actual fact, help the development of nations? That is the question we earnestly put to you all, our Catholic sons and daughters, and no less, every human being. To begin with, what kind of progress do we have in mind? Is it economic progress? Yes, surely. Do we mean social progress? That too, undoubtedly. We have said as much in our encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio*; but, as we also stress untiringly, "Progress, in order that it might be authentic, must be all-embracing, advancing all men and the whole of man" (No. 14). He will not truly feel at home with this fresh vision of the universe provided by the means of social communication, nor profit by it, unless it helps him to appreciate in their true light - without pride or awkwardness - the values as well as the shortcomings of his own way of life. This vision must also help him to discover - without complacency or bitterness - the worth of other

civilizations. It will help him to take his destiny personally in hand, and to achieve it in fraternal cooperation with his brethren. Lastly, it will help him to understand that there is "no true humanism that is not open to the Absolute" (Ibid., No. 42).

Does the flood of words, of articles and of images that is poured out each day over the world favor this awareness and this broad outlook? This is a problem that we would like to put before all communicators through the press, the radio, the cinema and television, who desire to work generously in the service of their fellow-men.

It is dangerous to foster in a people a spirit of self-sufficiency and narrow nationalism. On the other hand, no less is it important to aid a country to discover with legitimate pride, the material, intellectual and spiritual talents with which it has been endowed by the Creator that it might bring these to full fruition for the good of the entire community of nations.

It is mistake to foster constant dissensions and a spirit of corrosive and destructive criticism, or to nourish the illusion that violent revolution would be the universal cure for all ills and injustices. Equally is it important to enlighten responsible people about intolerable situation, to denounce crying abuses, and to persuade opinion in favor of "bold changes, radical renewals and urgent reforms that are to be undertaken without delay".

In a world where so many people lack what is necessary - bread, knowledge and spiritual light - it would be a serious fault to use the means of social communication to encourage personal and collective selfishness, to create new and unreal needs among consumers who are already fully satisfied, and tickle the taste for pleasures by multiplying empty and enervating amusements. Once this temptation is overcome, a great enterprise lies before them: they can do so much to voice the appeals of a humanity in distress, to put in bold relief the efforts at cooperation, the initiatives and strivings for peace, so as to awaken a healthy and helpful rivalry. Who does not see in this dramatic challenge that faces our world the importance of the means of social communication in encouraging "true development which is the transition for one and all, from inhuman conditions to more human" (Ibid., No. 20)?

Christians will not forget on their part that this brotherhood that unites them to the rest of mankind has its roots in a shared divine sonship. The beginning and end of all supreme values, the living God is also their guarantee. We ask all, our Catholic sons in particular, to leave no stone unturned in order that the means of social communication, in the midst of a world that seeks, as it were in darkness, the light that can save it, might proclaim from the roof-tops (Matt. 10.27) the message of Christ, the Saviour, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14,6).

In this way they will make their indispensable contribution to this progress of peoples that we, together with all men of good will, wish with all our heart and for which we intend to strive with all our forces. "The future is there, in the insistent cry of peoples for greater justice, in their striving for

peace, in their thirst, conscious "or but vaguely perceived, for a nobler life, precisely that life which Christ's Church is able and willing to give". (Introduction to the Council's Message to the World December 1965).

It is this future that we invite you to build generously. It is with these sentiments that we impart to you our heartfelt blessing.

From the Vatican, 26 March 1968

PAULUS PP. VI

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