



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FIRST PLENARY ASSEMBLY
OF THE SECRETARIAT FOR COMMUNICATION**

*Consistory Hall
Thursday, 4 May 2017*

[Multimedia]

Dear Cardinals,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am very pleased to welcome you on the occasion of the First Plenary Assembly of the [Secretariat for Communication](#), which engages you in deepening mutual knowledge and examining the steps taken so far by the Dicastery — which I established for a new Holy See communications system — beyond reflecting on a theme more relevant and evocative than ever, that of the digital culture.

I thank the Prefect, Msgr Viganò, for his introduction, and I would like to express my appreciation to him and to you who are present here and also to those who have contributed in various ways to the preparation of the work of these days.

The topic addressed in the Plenary is one very close to my heart; I have already addressed it on several occasions. It is a matter of studying criteria and new modalities to communicate the Gospel of mercy to all peoples, in the heart of diverse cultures, through the media that the new digital cultural context provides to our contemporaries.

This Dicastery, which will mark two years on 27 June — two candles — is at the peak of its reform. We must not be afraid of this word. Reform is not just “whitewashing over things”: reform is giving another form to things, organizing them in another way. And it must be done intelligently, kindly,

but also, also — allow me to use the word — with a bit of “violence”, but good, soft violence, in order to reform things. It is in full reform since it is a new reality that is taking steps that are now irreversible. In this case, in fact, it is not a matter of coordination or a fusion of previous Dicasteries, but of constructing a genuine institution *ex novo*, as I wrote in the founding *Motu Proprio*: “The current context of communications, characterized by the presence and development of digital media, by the factors of convergence and interactivity, demands both a rethinking of the Holy See’s information system, and a commitment to reorganize it, while appreciating what has been developed historically within the framework of communications of the Apostolic See, certainly moves towards a unified integration and management. For these reasons”, I continued, “I believe that all of the realities which, in various ways up to the present have dealt with communications, should be incorporated into a new Dicastery of the Roman Curia, which will bear the title Secretariat for Communication. In this way, the Holy See communications system will respond ever better to the needs of the mission of the Church”.

This new communications system arises from so-called “digital convergence”. In fact, in the past, each mode of communication had its proper channels. Each expressive form had its own medium: the written word through newspapers and books; images through photographs, and moving pictures through the cinema and television; the spoken word and music through radio and cds. All these forms of communication today are transmitted with a unique code that uses the binary system. Within this framework, therefore, *L’Osservatore Romano*, which beginning next year will be part of the new Dicastery, must find a new and different modality, in order to reach a greater number of readers than it manages to do in the paper format. Vatican Radio, too, which has for years been a collection of portals, must be rethought according to new models adapted to modern technologies and to the needs of our contemporaries. On the subject of radio service, I would like to emphasize the effort that the Dicastery is making with regard to countries with little available technology (I am thinking, for example, of Africa) for the rationalization of shortwave broadcasts, which have never been abandoned. And I want to underline this: they have never been abandoned. In a few months, the *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*, the old *Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana* and, as I mentioned, *L’Osservatore Romano* will also become part of the new Dicastery’s large work community, and this will require the willingness to harmonize with a new production and distribution design. The work is great; the challenge is great, but it can be done. It must be done.

History is undoubtedly a patrimony of valuable experiences to preserve and to use as an impetus toward the future. Otherwise, it would be reduced to a museum, interesting and nice to visit, but not capable of providing strength and courage to continue on the journey.

Furthermore, the demanding effort of the formation and training of personnel must also be placed in this horizon of constructing a new communications system.

Dear brothers and sisters, the work that awaits you is vast and articulated. With each one’s contribution, this reform will be carried out, taking “into account the historic development of the

Apostolic See's structure of communication" and moving "towards a unified integration and management" (*Statutes of the Secretariat for Communication*, 6 September 2016).

Therefore, I encourage you to work in the study commissions, with detailed analyses and, once the paths are identified, to decide and proceed bravely according to the chosen criteria.

Moreover, I ask you that the guiding criteria be apostolic, missionary, with special attention to situations of hardship, poverty, difficulty, with the awareness that these situations today must also be addressed with appropriate solutions. In this way it is possible to bring the Gospel to all, to make the most of human resources, without replacing the communications of the local Churches and, at the same time, supporting the ecclesial communities most in need.

Let us not be defeated by the temptation of attachment to a glorious past; let us instead form a great team to better respond to the new challenges in communications that today's culture demands of us, without fear and without imagining apocalyptic scenarios. As I renew my expression of gratitude to you for assenting to work in this most important and delicate field of the Church's mission, I would also like to extend my greeting and gratitude to the recently appointed Consultants. I exhort you to give witness to cooperation and fraternal sharing, as I invoke the Lord's blessing upon all of you, through the intercession of Mary Most Holy Mother of the Church, who, with her tenderness, always watches over us.