PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS

100 YEARS OF CINEMA

INDEX

TRAINING IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE MOTION PICTURE MEDIUM

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TRAINING IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE MOTION PICTURE MEDIUM

INTRODUCTION

Elements for the training of children, young people and adults in the interpretation of the values expressed through the cinema

Repeatedly and in many places the desire has been expressed for guidelines for reflection and practical suggestions aimed at helping parents and teachers to awaken children and adolescents to the problems posed, on their level, by the presence in their lives of the moving image and in particular of the Motion Picture, which this year celebrates its one hundredth birthday. It is well known that this desire accords with the appeal made in the Pastoral Instruction *"Aetatis Novae"*, which views as a duty action directed towards the formation of "a critical sense which is animated by a passion for the truth" and committed to the defence of values. It is indispensable, therefore, that serious efforts be made to educate our youth in the correct understanding of the mass media, and in our particular case, of the cinema (cfr. AN, nos 13, 14 & 28). In response to this call, groups of specialists from various countries have been formed. The outlines they propose for work and reflection suitable for the various age-groups are presented here. The overriding concern of these drafting committees is evident: children's fundamental right in life not only to their daily bread and a healthy environment but also to those values of existence which guarantee the development of their whole person in accordance with their highest aspirations. Among these criteria, it is essential to recognize the vital importance of spiritual and religious values, which express humankind's relationship with God and reach their culmination in the faith, hope and charity fully revealed to the world in Jesus Christ. If children have a precise right to know these values, to shed light upon their freedom and the responsibility of their choices, the church has a no less precise duty to acquaint them with such values, using all the means at its disposal, including the mass media. This directly involves parents and educators.

It should be clear, on the other hand, that the exercises proposed here, which are intended for various levels of age, commitment, means and participation, will have to be restudied and adapted according to the mentality... and the material capabilities prevailing. In some places information pamphlets and forms can be illustrated with pictures or drawings taken from local publications. In others, the initiatives suggested - crossword puzzles, songs, competitions, etc. - can be augmented by the local people themselves. It seemed appropriate, also, not to omit some points for reflection, to help the adult groups to realize more fully the significance of this anniversary and the responsibilities and opportunities associated with it. Below is a list and description of the texts which make up the attached document.

1. An introductory text prepared by Professor Luciana Della Fornace, Vice-President of AGIS (Italian General Association for Entertainment), Schools Section, with some observations on the various keys to achieving a critical approach to and understanding of the motion picture medium and its content. The ideal thing would be for each teaching authority to create its own training forms/questionnaires, in accordance with cultural and environmental conditions, for a made-to-measure programme for cognitive and psychological development.

2. A clear and simple proposal, easy to implement, prepared by a group of experts from the Catholic University of Uruguay, collaborators on the "Plan Deni", for the training of children and young people in social communications in Latin America. After an exposition for teachers, outline approaches are suggested for:

a) children from 6 to 9

b) children from 10 to 13

c) young people from 14 to 18.

3. A slightly more complex proposal, aimed at the development of personal maturity, in which certain values are examined in depth, in search of knowledge and a more thorough analysis of the audio-visual medium, of which the cinema is a part.

The catechetics prograrrlmes proposed cover:

1. Children up to 6 years of age: for parents and teachers

2. Children from 7 to 10: for parents and teachers

3. Adolescents from 11 to 14: for adolescents and teachers

4. Youth in general

5. Young people from 15 to 18: for young persons and teachers

6. For parents' associations

7. For groups of adults in general.

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1. DIDACTIC ELEMENTS FOR A CONSTRUCTIVE INTERPRETATION OF THE CONTENT OF THE MOTION PICTURE MEDIUM

Today, as soon as they are capable of a minimum degree of attention, our children are dumped in front of the television (Lyle and Schramm describe the TV as a baby-sitter), and, at first, most probably see programmes intended for their age-group. But at the same time they learn how to work the television

machine, to change channels and, if there is no control on the part of adults, to stay with the picture that interests them, regardless of whether or to what degree it is suitable for them. Added to this, in many homes where both parents work, mother and father can enjoy more time with their children if they allow them to stay up late. Due to lack of discernment or indifference, however, the TV programmes they watch are not chosen with any consideration for the age of the junior viewers. The youngest levels of our society by now consider the television as a normal household appliance, regardless of what it transmits; as a result, more hours are spent in front of the TV screen by small children and adolescents than by the successive age-group, since youngsters who are self-sufficient enough to go out on their own go to the cinema if they want to see a film. The average age of the cinema-goer in the USA is nineteen, in Italy twenty-three. So, the greater part of today's cinema audience is made up of young people.

On the other hand, all television channels, both state and private, show a marked preference for fiction (ignoring its specific association with the original topicality of the subject matter). Consequently, serials, soap operas and above all films of any and every period flood the small screen. It has been calculated that Italy's combined TV networks transmit a total of three thousand films every day.

And the fact that our children and adolescents can see, in the same day, two film versions of the same story, in one of which a principle is affirmed and defended and in the other opposed and attacked (think of Geronimo, the Apache, until recently portrayed with ridiculous chauvinism by US film-makers and today rehabilitated in Walter Hill's fine film), cannot fail to confuse them, not only with regard to cinema-on-TV but also with regard to TV as a whole.

The film, in my opinion, cannot be considered exclusively as an emanation of the society which produced it; it must also be seen as a product of that same society in a specific historical period.

This problem does not arise in circuit cinema, since films have approximately eight months of intense life in the movie theatres, after which they pass to the home video and then to television.

It is therefore necessary to pay more attention to the mass of messages our youngest viewers receive from the TV screen, since they can lead them not merely to a mis-reading of audio-visual language but also to a confused, at times discordant and contradictory, series of sensations and items of information.

What instructional and operative steps can be taken to counteract this situation?

A) Creating a greater awareness in parents, to encourage them to supervise their children's approach to TV as much as possible;

B) The use of film index forms and questionnaires by educators and teaching staff.

FILM INDEX FORMS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

The index form we have in mind is a sheet with entries regarding all the necessary information about a film: cast, artistic and technical direction, synopsis of the story, biographical notes concerning the director, screen-writer(s) and actors, and extracts from press reviews. Generally this form is more useful to teachers when they wish to take their class to see a film at the cinema or on video and discuss it with them afterwards.

Then there are other kinds of forms which can be used to investigate more deeply the message a film has communicated to the pupil. These questionnaires deal with the following types of information:

A) Cognitive
B) Psychological
C) Sociological
D) General.

A) **The questionnaire for cognitive information**, which can be presented to children of from 9 to 14 years of age, asks the child to provide the following:

1) Name and description of the leading character
2) Name and description of the second lead
3) Name and description of the "heavy" (villain)
4) Description of the supporting characters
5) Function and presence (or not) of crowd scenes
6) Setting
7) Effect of the experience.

The effect can be considered:

-**positive** = evidence of social gratification and personal satisfaction
-**semipositive** = evidence of social gratification but absence of personal satisfaction
-**negative** = absence of both social gratification and personal satisfaction.

Obviously the answers will be more or less complex according to age. However, with these questionnaires one can begin to give young spectators some critical requirements to elucidate, which little by little they will apply when they see other films, instead of continuing passively to accept their message.

B) **The psychological data questionnaire**, generally addressed to the younger viewer, sets some quick questions requiring equally quick answers, in which the children do not feel themselves involved or being tested and hence give impressions and opinions very close to what they really think.

Examples:

a) Give five adjectives describing the character you liked most;

b) Did you find a positive element (something good) in the negative character (the baddie)?

c) After the children or adolescents have seen at least three audio-visual films, get them to state the characteristics which the three heroes (or villains) have or do not have in common - their courage, their sense of friendship, their respect for others, etc.

C) **The sociological information questionnaire** is dedicated to older adolescents and consists of research into the historical period or the social environment in which the story of the film is set, to find out whether, in each one's opinion and without trying to be objective, this has been treated in the right way and, where it has not, how and possibly why, a "false" narration has been built up.

D) **The general information questionnaire** is intended for older pupils. In addition to investigating aspects of the film based on the Cognitive form and the deeper study inspired by the Sociological form, this questionnaire prompts the pupil to examine the film document from its origins, on the basis of any of a wide variety of themes: where the film is an adaptation of a book or a stage play, what is the relationship between the two authors; where it is based on a historical fact, why and how did the author/director decide to commit himself to its creation (Spielberg and his "Schindler's List", for example); if the work is based on a real incident reported in the press, which elements were related truly and which not, and, in the opinion of each person, were the omissions and falsifications a matter of choice or due to production requirements.

Opportunites for using these forms are innumerable, and in the end the teachers and councillors will possess reports prepared by the pupils as exercises which can also serve as clues to a deeper understanding of the young people themselves.

The exercises can be done with video-cassettes or, where schoolteachers are concerned, by telling the children to watch a film on a particular day on a specific channel as homework, or, best of all, by taking the class to a cinema and then getting them to fill in one of the questionaires provided.

In my opinion it would be a good thing to start using these questionnaires immediately, so that our children, our little ones, our adolescents and our youth, can learn to "live" their growing knowledge, not absorb it passively through the media. For although the media use a fascinating language combining the

moving image, the spoken word and music, what they communicate may resemble reality, but it is not Reality.

Professor Luciana Della Fornace
Vice President, AGIS (Schools)

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2. **THEME: A WAY OF TELLING**

INTRODUCTION

He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bed? No, it is put on the lampstand. Nothing is hidden except to be disclosed... "

(Mark 4, 21-22)

We know that when Jesus was teaching, when he proclaimed the Good News of Salvation, he would speak in terms of ordinary daily life and convey his message using narrative forms and techniques that made his story entertaining and therefore easily acceptable.

For example, he knew fishermen and talked to them of the Kingdom of God through stories related to their everyday life. In a simple, direct way, with many images and decriptions close to their own daily experience.

We can compare this kind of reality with our modern experience of the motion picture, a wonderful invention which is now one hundred years old. A medium which has allowed twentieth century man to draw near to remote traditions hitherto beyond his compass; even the Gospel message has been brought to him with exceptional clarity.

Since the cinema, however, can also be a bearer of negative messages, a preparation is needed to enable the viewer to extract and appreciate the true values, to separate the wheat from the chaff.

PRESENTATION

For teachers

The proposal that follows involves films on both the large and small screen, to the accounts prepared by groups of schoolchildren, and to the values presented by the Gospel (which frequently makes use of stories).

As can be seen, the main objective of the work will be the comparison of values. This can be achieved by a double process, comparing the underlying values in the film with those of the group, and then with those of the Gospel.

How to work on values?

In our post-modern context, it is quite common for a group of children, particularly adolescents, to reject certain values when they are presented in abstract form. Sometimes, when the subject is self-denial or solidarity, they even get on the defensive. There is no doubt, however, that these values are greatly respected by the same group when they are presented in a context of eye-witness accounts, real events, life-stories, etc. Young people can be caught defending self-denial when they see it in a character they admire, in a story in which they can picture themselves, or in circumstances they know.

In all cases, we suggest that three things be borne in mind

1) **How things are told**: this concerns films, or tales and legends associated with the group's own environment or daily life.
The films selected should be the kind that provoke discussion. Some age-groups could present accounts of them using sound and pictures, that is, with audio-visual language. In this case, the discussion that follows will be particularly important.

2) **The techniques used**: both in the analysis of the film chosen to be discussed and in the creative techniques employed to present the narration, the use of audio-visual teaching materials is recommended.

3) **How they grasp the message**: recognizing the values it contains is a decisive step in affirming certain values as higher than others.

Only a few guidelines are suggested here. Every teacher can make changes or try out all the combinations and extensions that circumstances and his or her own creativity permit.

The more chance we give children to talk and be listened to about what they feel when they see a film or how it compares with real life, the more chances we give them to exercise their own judgement, decode messages, question behaviour models and, together, find new meanings in things. Then at last we can give them opportunities for growth with freedom of expression and the affirmation of human and Christian values.

General Obiectives

* Discover the values which stand out in a story and compare them with the values in the Gospels. Point out all the values presented in the children's accounts of the story and see how the group reacts to them.

* Get the children to analyse the films, starting from the way they are received by each group. See what kind of impact the film has and note the way motion picture language is used to create this impact on the individual child/adolescent and on the groups.

* Encourage the group to make up their own stories and analyse them to see what values are given priority.

Methodology

The proposal's pedagogic objective is to create a critico-participatory attitude, emphasizing the experience of perceiving and understanding reality through use of the techniques frequently adopted by the audio-visual media.

The methodology concentrates on group activity and involvement:

-encouraging self-expression, exchange of ideas and the affirmation of the individual within the group;

-using games to arouse interest and contribute to the working out and application of ideas;

-stimulating research and experiment;

-viewing cultural reality from personal experience (knowledge of the situation and questions concerning events and behaviour shown on the screen lead to a more critical attitude);

-promoting the comparison and exchange of experience and information and creating new values in relation to the media (group discussion and shared interests contribute to a broader vision leading to enrichment through increased experience).

For children and young People

TODAY WE PROPOSE:

to find out why we enjoy watching stories on the screen;

to tell our own stories using entertaining techniques;

to discover the message in our story-telling.

For teachers of children from 6 to 9

Objectives

***** To learn why images and sounds excite and move them:

Find out the different functions of the moving image in their lives, with special attention to the "Electronic Babysitter", helping them to see its limitations; compare these effects and functions with those of reference groups (family, school, parish, etc.);

***** To stimulate the development of perceptive qualities and awareness so that they can distinguish the different artistic levels, the impact of the image, its colour, light and composition, combined with rhythm and music;

***** To discuss the traditional division of characters in film stories and cartoons into two categories, the good and the bad. Compare this with real life and the Christian point of view.

Exercises

1. See a film or animated cartoon together

Discuss what you have seen.

Did you like what we saw?

Which part did you like best? Ask them to describe precisely the images and sound used. If they don't remember, show the film again.

What happens in the story? Try to make them distinguish between their own interpretation and the feelings the story arouses, and what actually happens on the screen. For example, a child may say "...and then it crashed", but in the film we only heard a terrible noise, we did not see the actual moment of impact.

How do we feel while watching the story? If the group has difficulty in expressing its own feelings, the question can be worded in an impersonal way: How do children feel when they see something like this? Why do they watch certain films? Find out, on the basis of their answers (for example, about a "Tom and Jerry" cartoon), if they see it for amusement, and explain that, in that case, "it's because children enjoy seeing the little mouse making fun of the big cat".

Some groups or age-levels may be able to recognize the values expressed.

2. Listen to some music

Discuss the importance of music in arousing feelings and reactions. Play extracts from film scores, and then, with a reverse procedure, listen to different music and imagine what situations it could be used for.

3. Optional activities for the youngest children

-Ask the children to spend a period of time listening attentively to the sounds around them, in the garden, in the park, at home;

-Encourage them to look with "new eyes" at the things they see every day, so that they can perceive details they had never noticed before;

-Get them to play with closed boxes containing various objects such as buttons, glass marbles, etc. and to say what the sound makes them think of when the boxes are moved or shaken.

For teachers of children from 10 to 13

Objectives

***** To get them to observe their own environment and use it as a background for contrasting fictional characters with real people.

***** To encourage them to recognize various elements of film language and become aware of its power to stir up emotions.

***** To point out that every shot a film director takes is intended to show only what he wants, and anything else is eliminated.

Exercises

1. A search for real heroes.

Suggest that they get together and compile a list of characters, from world-famous and national figures to local heroes such as a grandfather, a neighbour, a personality in the district. Ask questions about the main character traits of these people.

It is important to rediscover values such as respect, love, self-denial, which are not often shown in the heroes children are usually exposed to in television series and the cinema. Suggest they compare and discuss them.

Speak of the life of Jesus and how he never discriminated between people.

2. Get them to make their own camera out of cardboard, with the lens aperture on one side and the window on the other.

Looking through this will give them an idea of the telecamera's limited field of vision, making selectivity unavoidable.

Suggest taking a series of shots of the same place but for different purposes, for example, to show its beauty, or point out what needs to be improved. (A polaroid camera and a selection of cardboard masks would be useful, if available.) Study the chosen "frames" and discuss the intention behind each series. The camera can never show everything.

A walk round the district, a simple stroll in the square, "camera" in hand, can become a fascinating journey of discovery. For those who own a real camera, this experience can lead to the creation of their own photomontage.

To complete the exercise, the children can make their own sound/music track to accompany the visual images.

3. Optional tasks.

See a short film together, or the introduction of characters at the beginning of a film, and discuss what you have seen.

What image impressed me most and why?

The answer may lead to picking out a close-up showing the actor/character's importance in the film, or the function of a sound effect.

Seeing only the beginning of a film allows us to analyse the way the director presents his leading characters and the main trend of his style. See what resources he uses as he continues to tell the story.

For teachers of young people from 14 to 18

Objectives

***** To make a deeper analysis of the film and of their own receptive capacities, with special attention to the comparison of values;

***** To reflect on the group's particular values through the analysis of a story recounted by the group itself;

***** To calculate what influence the media will have on the future of our youth;

***** To improve their knowledge of audio-visual codes by making a video film.

Exercises

1. Get the group to choose a current film and see it together.

Organize a discussion on the main themes of the film and the values it proposes. This could start from the analysis of their critical response to the film and lead up to a comparison of the group's daily life with what the film offers and with the values of the Gospel.

2. Suggest that the group produce a story of their own, reflecting their anxieties or their fantasies.

Tell the story in sound and images, using posters, songs, video, etc.

Show the work to other groups.

Lastly, compare the values in the group's work with those of the media. Detect any possible influences.

3. Set up an investigation into young people's image of what a man or woman should be and into their expectations for the future, by means of an open enquiry (which could be videoed).

Analyse the results obtained, contrasting them with the images of a man and a woman as presented by the media. Get the young people to affirm their own values.

It would be very interesting if these exercises could be performed on video, using cinematic language. Being behind the camera means giving serious thought to every take, if it is to transmit the desired sensation, emotion or problem.

This use of audio-visual techniques should be discussed as. soon as possible.

3

THEME: **A VEHICLE OF CULTURE AND VALUES**

1. ***Children up to six years of age***

To parents and teachers

I. YOUR CHILD NEEDS:

*** Serenity:**

Evangelization has its supreme success in the moment of joy.

*** Peace:**

Every child is "...a PERSON; his nature is endowed with intelligence and free will. By virtue of this he has rights and duties of his own, flowing directly and simultaneously from his very nature, which are

therefore universal, inviolable and inalienable..." *(Pacem in Terris)*

...this is the starting point for an education for peace, which can only be achieved if adults are mindful of their duties and children enjoy their rights.

*** Affection:**

It is always the "couple", father and mother, that provides the sense of life and love that leads to joy.

*** Beauty, truth, etc.:**

The true values are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness and selfcontrol" *(Gal.5, 22-23).* The child needs the experience of love, joy, forgiveness, sincerity, trust in others, little acts of kindness, respect for other people's property, obedience.

*** To discover the spiritual and the supernatural dimension.**

It is from the parents' attitude and their way of living their love for each other that children are led to discover the sense of God-as-Love, of trust in Him, of His Fatherhood...

--The child's world is rich with images, perceptions, the feeling of hidden powers slowly being revealed..., a sense of wonder before nature, before humankind...

--It takes just a glance, a smile, a voice, a song, for the child to communicate with the world.

--The message that we transmit to children today will lay the basis of their future response to education and of their future attitude towards themselves, towards their neighbour and towards God.

--Their first moments of wonder, their first excited admiration for things, people, animals, are their first steps towards the presence of God. It is essential, in this delicate stage of their lives, to ensure that our children are truly free to make their own choices.

II. THEREFORE:

--if it is now, while children are still incapable of judging and distinguishing, that the foundations are being laid for the development of their personality...

--of their life of faith and love...

--and if we know that images can act on them with all their hidden power...

We educators must ask ourselves:

--What standards do we apply when choosing television programmes?

--When and why do we take children to the cinema?

--What comics and magazines do we buy them?

--Do we help them to "reflect" to the best of their ability?

--Have we ever thought that leaving the radio or television on at full blast can affect their nerves? or that uncontrolled exposure to media programmes can draw them away from spiritual values by bombarding them with images that exalt false values?

--Do we surround them with beautiful things?

--Do we educate them, with all the means in our power, to a sense of beauty, harmony, peace, respect and love for others, to all the things which reflect the goodness and fatherhood of God?

2. *Children from 7 to 10*

To parents and teachers

I. THINGS TO REMEMBER

--Your children are moulded by what they see and hear;

--They assimilate uncritically;

--They have great intuition and are more accustomed to absorbing audio-visual language than adults;

--On the other hand, they will have difficulty in understanding the real meaning of the message conveyed, if they have not been taught to go beyond the outward sign, since interpreting the message is a process of synthesis and internalizing; *(1).*

Television programmes, where the image is less eloquent and polished than in cinema films but is also closer to everyday life, more capable of speaking directly to people and involving them through a sense of reality, offer a valuable opportunity for shedding the light of Christian standards on daily life;

In films, the image, sound track, content and message should all be studied and appraised;

Also the words and music and the message of songs should be listened to and interpreted;

Printed matter (comics, children's magazines, etc.) provides the best opportunity for encouraging young people to choose goodness and beauty rather than the negative values of violence, sex, egoism, etc.

II. WHAT CAN WE DO?

--Are we aware of our responsibility with regard to the choice of TV, radio and cinema programmes which our children follow?

--What can we do to get them to read the signs and symbols ever present in TV, motion pictures, radio and the press, and in daily life?

--Do we watch television with them so that we can talk about the programmes together, or do we leave them to watch on their own?

--How do we choose their magazines, and those we buy for ourselves and leave around the house?

--How can we help them to make responsible Christian choices free from the coercion of false values, and to check the message coming from the mass media against the message of Christ?

III. PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

To help children to discover and assimilate the above concepts, activities such as the following could be useful:

a) Ask them to write a composition or draw pictures expressing their opinions on the negative and positive aspects of the mass media for their age-group;

b) Make crossword puzzles on the values of the mass media;

c) Carefully analyse a children's programme and make an objective criticism of it (valid? negative? amoral? biased?);

d) Get them to watch a TV programme and then suggest that they make up one like it, but emphasizing the good aspects they noticed;

e) Using pictures and music of their choice, reconstruct a parable from the Gospel;

f) Organize the making of a collage on the theme of Charity (or Truth, etc.) with illustrations cut from comics (e.g. Mickey Mouse Weekly, etc.);

g) Ask them to answer the following questionnaire:

1. What TV programmes do you watch most frequently?

Why?
What positive values do you find in them?
What Christian values do you find in them?
What would you not like to see on TV?
If you were a director, what would you propose?

2. What films have you seen in the last three months?

Who with? When?
Which of the characters in the films would you like to be like? Why?
Was there a film which frightened you? Why?
What films would you not like to see again?

3. What are your favourite songs? Why?

Do you know that every song has a message?
Do you try to find out what it is?
(make a list of ten songs with their messages)
Why do you like music? Do you listen to music alone or in company? Why?

4. Which comics and children's magazines do you read most?

Why?
What do you find good in them?
What do you find bad?
Which ones help you most to live as a Christian and which least?
Are there any you wish you hadn't read?

In completing and going over this questionnaire, it should be borne in mind that it is in this period of their lives that children's moral sense is being formed, and that our guidance must be clear, calm and enlightened, helping them to acquire stability and to respond according to their free and conscious faith.

3. ***For children from 11 to 14***

The value "friendship"

I. GENERAL THEME*(2)*

Why this theme was chosen: The pre-adolescent is sensitive to this particular value, FRIENDSHIP, considered as an aspect of a spiritual value: GOOD.

Objective: To lead the pre-adolescent, according to his capacities, to an analysis of the image as a means of conveying messages and also as an affirmation or denial of values, by trying to awaken his critical attitude towards the "civilization of the image", in which he is called to live and in which, in fact, he is already living.*(3).*

II. DEVELOPMENT

This catechetical activity is intended to be developed in three stages, each with a specific aim, but at the same time it should maintain a certain logical unity in keeping with the general theme.

a) First stage

Objective: to make it unambiguously clear to young people that THE IMAGE SPEAKS, it conveys a message.

Method: Direct analysis of two or three carefully chosen pictures which express or deny the value FRIENDSHIP (figures to be selected from a collection of photos, etc., previously taken by the teacher from magazines, etc.).

The figures must be analysed in five steps:

-Look at the image simply as a picture;
-Look at the image as something to stimulate ideas;
-Look at the expression of the image;
-Observe the effects of the image on oneself;
-Communicate all this to the group (cf. *The Audio-visual and Faith,* p. 143).

b) Second stage:

Objective: to make the group clearly aware that THROUGH THE IMAGE PEOPLE AFFIRM OR DENY CERTAIN VALUES.

Method: Divide the youngsters up into two groups. Ask each of these to make a "poster" with photographs taken from magazines, newspapers, etc. expressing their ideas of FRIENDSHIP. The photos used should be numbered. Under the guidance of the teacher the young people choose which ones they want to use and make their posters. These should then be displayed and compared, with each group giving its opinion of the other group's work and, in turn, explaining what they were trying to say with their own poster.

c) Third stage:

Objective: to make them realize beyond doubt that in daily life the image has a profound influence on one's own scale of values and consequently on one's own human and Christian personality.

Method: a critical study of the value FRIENDSHIP in a comic: *(4).* How is it affirmed or denied? What reaction does it usually provoke? What influence does it have on one's life as a Christian?

Teaching aids:

--Pictures plus photographs taken from magazines and other publications which the teacher considers useful and evocative.

--"Notes for the Teacher" (below), with guidelines and questionnaires to help in the analysis of the images, the comparison of the posters and the criticism of the comic.

III. NOTES FOR THE TEACHER

a) First stage:

1. Guide the adolescents to carry out the analysis of the pictures following the five steps indicated;

2. Ask two or three appropriate questions to set them thinking and start interpreting the pictures;

3. Initiate an exchange of ideas on the pictures, pointing out the most important contributions.

b) Second stage:

1. Watch the groups quietly as they work, help them if they ask, but never take over;

2. Guide the comparing of the posters with suitable comments when necessary;

3. Sum up the discussion for them and make a critico-formative statement on true Christian friendship.

c) Third stage:

1. Suggest one or two criteria for the critical analysis of the comic (film, TV programme, etc.), help them along with a few simple questions suited to their age-level;

2. Join with them in evaluating the elements or scenes that particularly aroused their attention;

3. Guide them to a value judgement of their own attitude to friendship as Christian adolescents, and from this stimulate them to review their lives and renew their personal commitment.

4. *Youth in general*

Reflections on various suggestions
for direct participation

I. TELEVISION PROGRAMMES

Starting about five weeks before the Centenary celebrations begin, it would be a good idea to transmit a weekly series of short programmes specially designed for children (but also taking parents into account) on a local television network.

A catechist, religious or lay, could read a portion of the Holy Scriptures to five or six children in the studio with him, and then talk it over with them, possibly with questions and even little acted scenes, music, etc. With the right preparation this would also provide an opportunity for direct participation in the mass media. In this way, indirectly, parents as well as children would start to get some idea of the possibilities of television in religious matters. The children to take part in this programme would be chosen from one of the local parishes, with no advance announcement of the following week's team (the element of surprise is always a great attraction), and would be prepared by the catechist.

A local programme is more suitable than a transmission on a nation-wide network, because of its personal interest. This suggestion would also be a good way of awakening the community to the significance of the Centenary of the Cinema.

II. CROSSWORD PUZZLES

Crossword puzzles have a universal appeal because they are a challenge for all ages. They offer ample space for invention and can be adapted to suit any age or community. They can easily be compiled for a modern spiritual context aware of the power and scope of the media, and could also refer to the Centenary celebrations.

Crosswords are also a good way of getting through to teenagers; in practice they can act like real "questionnaires" and spark off discussion as well.

III. SONG CONTESTS

Basic premise: the spiritual message of a song that is "lived" can reach people of all ages.

Activities: we propose that part of the Centenary celebrations be dedicated to music.

1. Choose a good composer to write suitable words and music for a song associated with the Centenary of the Motion Picture, on national or diocesan level;

2. Organize a song contest on the theme: "The Motion Picture, Vehicle for Culture and Spiritual Values" (with explanations):

Necessary conditions:

--Words and music for guitar (or piano, etc)
--Age-limit or division into age-groups
--Time limit
--Pre-arranged locale

Prizes: guitar, CDs, tape recorders, etc., depending on the age and interests of the various groups contesting. The winning composition(s) to be presented, with due publicity, in the diocesan cathedral on the Day.

5. ***Young people from 15 to 18***

Outline of catechetics programme

I. OBJECTIVE:

To arouse in young people the necessary critical capacity so that they can discover spiritual values in the mass media.

We believe that the mass media can be a vehicle for culture and spiritual values, provided our young people adopt an active and personal attitude towards them. The following suggestions are aimed at stimulating such an attitude. They should not be seen as other than a way of awakening in young people a capacity for critical evaluation enabling them not to be enslaved to the media while appreciating the good things they offer.

II. THEME

The theme we have chosen as an example is: HOW A MAN OR WOMAN SHOULD BE TODAY: THE ROLE MODELS THE MEDIA OFFER US.

Other subjects young people care about could equally well have been selected. Below is a short list of some suitable themes:

Freedom	**Marriage**	**Sport**
Love	**Violence**	**Racism**
Friendship	**Social Conflicts**	**Religion**
Entertainment	**Taking Risks**	**Hunger**
Woman	**The Body**	**War**
Man	**Work**	**...**
Money	**The Community**	**...**

The teacher or the young people themselves should choose the theme or themes which are of genuine interest to the group on the educational level.

III. FIRST EXERCISE

The role-model in pictures and photographs

1. Starting point

On a display board pin up pictures (photos, postcards, etc.) of male and female rôle models as presented in magazines, posters, TV, films, etc., preferably provided by the young people themselves. Set up a straightforward exhibition of all these pictures, on the blackboard or any kind of panel.

2. Understanding the medium

The images of the mass media are a reflection of society itself. In other words, every society has the audio-visual media it deserves. It is important for young people to be critically aware of the mass media environment, including the press, that they are living in.

Following the exercises described below may help to achieve this goal:

Get each young person to pick out from the material displayed the picture of the person he or she sees most frequently in magazines, film posters, etc. They are not to choose the picture which impresses them most, but the person who is shown most often on the media.

Set out all their choices and find the one which they agree appears most frequently. Once this has been established, get them to describe what they think are the ambitions and life-style of the man or woman in the picture. This is a fundamental stage in analysing how the medium works. Each young person or group should write down the ambitions they think they see. These can be expressed with such phrases as:

1. I want to be a big success.
2. I couldn't care less about other people.
3. Money is the only thing that counts in life.
4. ...
5. ...

3. Christian analysis of the medium

Now the chosen picture must be evaluated from the Christian point of view.

What values or non-values do the young people see in the type of person depicted?

A marked contrast between the Gospel message and the message the image emits may emerge, one that will let us see just how Christian the values of the mass media are.

One can also look among the pictures on the display board for the one which most approaches the Christian mentality and study it in the same way.

4. Personal attitudes towards the mass media

Through the analysis of the picture the group should also examine their own usual attitude to what they see on the media. Do they normally analyse everything they see and evaluate it as they have done in this session?

What consequences derive from a personal and active appraisal of what is offered and what are the results of swallowing indiscriminately everything they are fed?

Undoubtedly they talk to their friends about what they see... How serious or otherwise are their comments?

What rôle-model is reflected in the pictures which our young people keep at home, in their schoolbags and in their books? Why have they chosen that type of person as their ideal?

The same method used here with still pictures could also be applied to screen images or to characters in certain books; they could judge the star of a movie or a soap, or the hero or heroine of a novel or a play...

IV. SECOND EXERCISE

The world of sound

This exercise may be more difficult than the preceding one. All the same, we think it may be constructive, as young people spend much of their lives with transistors, Walkmans, etc. To make it easier we have dispensed with a set theme, letting the trend emerge from the songs which are chosen.

1. Starting point

We could begin by listening to some songs, songs with various kinds of "atmosphere" - for example, a protest song, a song with superficial Iyrics and an easy tune, a poetic song...

2. Understanding the medium

Once the songs have been heard, they should be analysed. In a first exercise, for example, each young person could listen to a song of his or her choice. Then, as they wish, each group could set up a small panel of photos which tie in well with the song they have chosen, virtually transposing it into images.

The picture panels will give substance, visible form to the songs, greatly facilitating their analysis. With this translation before them, it will be a revelation to the young people when they realize how every song conjures up a world for our ears. Because it is also through hearing that we apprehend the world. The panels they have mounted will be proof of this.

Now the groups can listen to the songs again, looking at the illustrated versions they have created at the same time.

3. Christian analysis of the medium

Evaluate the world reflected by each song in the light of the Christian message. From the Christian point of view, what positive things are presented by each song, and what negative?

Which songs reflect a world, an environment, a life-style most consonant with the Christian message?

4. Personal attitudes towards the mass media

Do you like a particular kind of song? Is it because it really says something to you, or because it's the fashion?

Many young people just turn on the radio and listen to whatever is on. What do you think of this behaviour? What are its advantages and drawbacks?

When you listen to music, do you criticize it in any way?

6. ***For parents***

Round table on children and the mass media

I. OBJECTIVE:

To promote greater awareness of the importance of the mass media in the lives and education of their children.

II. FIRST STAGE: ADVANCE PREPARATION

1. Nominate a committee to prepare the round table, including:

-the Headmaster/Headmistress of the school
-a chaplain
-a chairperson
-a representative of the teaching staff
-parents of pupils, etc.

2. Hold a first meeting to define the tasks of the various members, to make arrangements for the round table and in particular to:

-look for ways to make parents grasp just how much effect the media have on their children, e.g. through surveys among children, parents, teachers (see suggestions below);
-fix the date of the parents' meeting (before the opening of the Centenary year);
-decide on practical issues (possible ordering of relevant publications for families, special projects in school, songs to learn, etc.).

III. SECOND STAGE: IMMEDIATE PREPARATION *(5)*

1. The preparatory committee should:

-study the findings of its surveys, etc. and send the results to all families, with a reminder of the date of the parents' meeting;
-decide on who is to lead the discussion, the secretary, etc. and prepare a brief agenda which can later be abandoned if fruitful debate develops on an unlisted theme.

IV. THIRD STAGE: PARENTS' MEETING

The parents should first assess the results of the surveys, after which the meeting could proceed by discussing the points suggested in the section for Adult Groups, below. The Minutes of the Meeting should subsequently be sent to all parents, with a reminder of the date of the anniversary we are celebrating.

V. SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE PREPARATORY SURVEYS

1. For children

Ask precise questions:

-How many hours a week do you watch TV?
-Which comics/illustrated magazines do you prefer?
-Have you got a camera? a tape recorder? a video camera?
-How many times do you go to the cinema every month?

Leading questions:

Ask them to
-name three songs by a currently fashinable pop singer/song writer;
-name the principal characters of a soap or series they particularly like;
-answer a number of questions about TV programmes they have seen over the last three months.

If the survey is properly handled, it will be possible to obtain a rough idea of the intellectual benefit our children receive from television.

Questions of appraisal:

-What film or programme did you enjoy most in the last three months? Why?
-Which programrne seemed the most objective (explain the word)? Why?
-Which programme did you think was the most useful? Why?
-Which programme was the worst or most unpleasant? Why?
-Was there any programme that seemed untrue to you? Why?
-Were there any that seemed harmful?
-Were there any programmes that helped you to see the goodness in life?

The questions should be stated so that they require only short answers and can be easily evaluated.

2. For parents

Only a few suggestions are offered for this second survey, since it is a much more difficult undertaking. It will only be profitable with a very open and well-disposed group, i.e. of parents of children in the same class who meet frequently to discuss their common problems.

All the same, it is still possible to carry out a very brief enquiry, to check one or two points emerging from the children's replies. The teachers could send the parents a short questionnaire, to be returned in a closed envelope, with questions such as:

-How much time do your children spend in front of the TV every week (not forgetting when the TV is on at mealtimes)?

-What comics and illustrated papers do they read?
-Do they like taking photographs? etc.

And one or two more important questions could also be asked:

-Was there any particular film/TV programme or magazine in the last three months that had a good influence on your children? Which?
-Did you all talk about it afterwards?
-Was it in any way helpful for your children's religious education?

3. For teachers

This is even more difficult but could be very useful. (To avoid any sense of reproof, it should perhaps be mentioned that according to a recent survey carried out in France 75 percent of audiovisual teaching aids are never used.)

Possible questions are:

-Do you ever use audio-visual media in your lessons? Which kind? For what purpose?
-Do you use them to help children to understand the the values in life? What values, and how?
-Do you encourage the children to start viewing the media according to aesthetic, moral and spiritual criteria?

7. *Adult groups*

Points for reflection

I. THE FACTS AS OBSERVED

1. On the positive side:

--The concern sometimes shown for objectivity in reporting events of a spiritual nature (in a broad sense);

--Programme time reserved for religious information and values;

--The efforts made by some sections of the press and other media to ensure that religious matters are covered by journalists with the proper religious and professional qualifications.

--The interest shown, even by non-practising Christians and unbelievers, in the Christian press and/or religious progammes of quality.

2. On the negative side:

--Intentional, meaningful omissions aimed at disparaging or concealing spiritual values (when not advocating outright atheism);

--Misinformation: ignoring the essential in favour of the detail, the marginal, the unattractive aspect, which is then blown up into something sensational, extraordinary, even scandalous;

--Biased interpretation of facts and religious teaching; one-sided public opinion campaigns (e.g. against the celibacy of the priesthood); exploitation of certain statements to further unrelated interests;

--The indifferent, negative or even destructive attitude to spiritual values and religious information on the media on the part of viewers and readers - among ourselves and all around us.

3. The disastrous or regrettable effects of such attitudes on the soul

--Doubt, eclecticism, indifference, even rebellion (for example, among young people).

II. SOME REFLECTIONS ON WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

1. It is only right that the marvellous opportunities offered by modern mass communications techniques should be used to aid the development of humankind: of the whole man and woman, of all men and women, on the human plane and on the level of their highest values, of their most sublime aspirations. Among these spiritual values are religious values, which for us Christians are sumrned up in the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

2. Just as they have a right to other values, men and women have a right to information concerning the life of their religious congregation (events, teachings) and even to receive instruction (through programrnes or articles on religious culture); to be reminded of what they live by, what they are building, what they seek.

3. The institutions which serve humanity through religious values (religions, churches) have the right to be presented truthfully, to have their life and teachings shown with objectivity, without favour but also without deformation.

4. Every one of us - individual, group, association - is responsible for the way the media develop and their use for or against the integral development of humankind and "the elevation of the authentic culture of peoples" (cf.*Communio et Progressio*, 63-100; *Aetatis Novae*, 13).

III. POSSIBLE ACTION

--What can we do to improve the situation in the various media, both individually and collectively?

--Express compliments and thanks for good programmes and articles; criticize and protest where necessary, demanding corrections or the right to refute publicly; launch petitions;

--Train professionals in communications, concerned to respect and promote religious values;

--Collaborate on an ecumenical basis, do as much as possible together; keep your own identity and respect that of others;

--Exploit the possibilities offered by the Centenary of the Motion Picture to make people aware of these problems (cf. *Communio et Progressio*, 135-160; *Aetatis Novae,* 31).

PARTICIPATION OF THE UNIVERSITIES

NOTES ON THE CINEMA AND TRANSCENDENCY

The cinema world's realization of its capacity to influence the masses was not immediate but came with time, as a result of a series of impressions progressively confirmed. When it happened, the motion picture industry became Big Business and since the second decade of the century has had its main driving force in Hollywood. Other centres of film production, situated in the old continent, acted with different principles from those prevailing in the American film industry. European cinema, in its most advanced forms, sees its rôle as an art to be compared to the other arts, understood as privileged forms of modern culture.

In the twenties France saw the phenomenon of the avant-garde cinema, closely related to the surrealist movement; in Germany, at the same time, expressionist cinema flourished: in Russia, Sergei Eisenstein and other directors gave birth to a new and original style which was to mark an important step in the

evolution of the language and art of cinema. The film industry and art cinema seemed, at least in theory, to take different directions, even if the real situation was much more complex and contradictory than may appear in these hasty notes. Take, for example, the case of Fritz Lang, who, after creating several masterpieces of expressionist cinema in Germany, moved to Hollywood, where he succeeded in retaining the demands of his personal style alongside those of the film industry.

Since its beginnings, in addition to well-tried subjects from the lighter forms of literature and popular theatre (adventure stories, dramas of passion, comedies), the cinema has always tried to tackle more culturally demanding subjects such as the life-stories of historical characters, adaptations of great masterpieces of literature and classical theatre. Among these have been stories from the Bible, above all the Passion of Jesus, which was one of the first subjects to be brought to the screen, following in the wake of popular religious dramas going back to the Middle Ages, whose traditions have been kept alive in certain places (such as Oberammergau in Bavaria) right up to the present day. The primitive "Passions" constitute an important chapter in the early history of the cinema. One scholar has counted over fifty which were filmed before 1915.

But it is obvious that subjects such as these, entrusted to the tender mercies of the film industry (which in the following decades has never ceased to remake them with ever more grandiose spectacle), can only obtain partially satisfactory results. The grandiose spectacle, in fact, is not always matched by a corresponding depth of interpretation, which can only be achieved with the requisite knowledge supported by the resources of art. This applies to many films which have been made on the life of Christ or of other Bible figures or the first Christian martyrs....

All the films of this kind, and there are many, are mainly characterized, with regard to the visual aspect, by a mawkishly sentimental style (known in France as *Saint Sulpicien*, in Italy as *oleografico*) which, while it may delight simpler people, nauseates persons of more cultivated taste and has often provoked the indignation of those who see in this sort of spectacle the exploitation of religious subjects for predominantly commercial purposes.

To escape from the trap of sentimentality, many film directors gifted with a personal style have preferred to approach religious subjects indirectly, particularly the passion of Jesus and the drama of redemption. Imaginary figures of priests, mostly drawn from pre-existing literary works, have been brought to the screen as a means of communicating the perennial immediacy of the Passion, as described in the words "Jesus will be dying until the end of the world". Jesus suffers, by substitution, in the figure of the priest, who bears witness in his life to the ancient axiom: *Sacerdos alter Christus.*

One can recall, in this context, films such as *The Fugitive* (1947) by John Ford, *The diàry of a country curate* (1950) by Robert Bresson, and *The Nazarene* (1958) by Luis Buñuel. Alfred Hitchcock also did something similar in his film *I confess* (1953). The proximity of the dates of these films tells us that there was a period when production of this kind of movie was really booming.

We may ask ourselves, at this point, how the cinema expresses transcendency. Is it really in the great film spectacles aimed at the masses, dealing with biblical, christological or hagiographic subjects and telling of miracles and divine intervention, with an abundant use of special effects? Would it not be more correct to seek traces of transcendency in films which eschew the extraordinary, in the spectacular sense of the word, and strive to show the extraordinary in the ordinary, the divine in the human, the miraculous in everyday life? Can transcendency be achieved through a realistic kind of cinematic narration presenting events in their unadorned objectivity? Or is it not better to think that transcendency is manifested in the cinema by means of the indirect and allusive use of symbolic language, rather than in the linearity of a realistic narration? May not transcendency, which is always present in some way in poetically inspired films, also be treated convincingly by well-made craft films not necessarily to be inscribed among the masterpieces of cinematographic art? To what extent are the personal convictions of film-makers involved in this type of subject? In other words, is it necessary to have the gift of faith to be capable of making a good religious film?

It is this yearning for transcendency with which the cinema has been imbued over its century of history which makes the film a valid object of study by those who question themselves on the rôle of religion within the scope of contemporary culture. To the directors noted above, products of various environments

in western Europe, should now be added Andrej Tarkowski and Kristof Kieslowski, coming, significantly, from eastern Europe. The grand old man of Portuguese cinema, Manoel de Oliveira, has also never ceased to work along these lines.

The need for brevity prevents the continuation of this list of names, to which many others should be added. One cannot fail to think of the leading performers in many films, particularly women, pictured on the screen in vibrant close-ups, figures on the borderline between the human and the superhuman, captured in moments of surpassing artistry? The film has indeed done much to communicate things that rise from the soul and reach the soul. With images that can be seen and heard, the cinema, in its state of grace, lets us perceive what can neither be seen nor heard.

There are directors who have been able to look at natural phenomena and the life of humankind which has developed from them with a particular attitude of detached yet at the same time involved observation that nevertheless captures a sense of the greater unity animating the created universe. Robert Flaherty's famous documentaries come to mind. Other directors, like Joris Ivens, have been able to catch with the movie camera the most meaningful moments of humanity's struggle to achieve conditions of life more in keeping with its dignity.

There was a period of Italian cinema, called Neorealism, when various film-makers seemed to be competing with each other to capture in the life of humanity in its everyday reality, submerged by conditions of humiliating poverty and deprivation, traces of a spiritual dimension all the more authentic for being cloaked by an instinctive modesty. The names of Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, Luchino Visconti, Michelangelo Antonioni, Federico Fellini, Pier Paolo Pasolini, have gone all round the world together with their universally admired films. Like the great artists and men of letters of past centuries, they can be considered as ambassadors, to other cultures, of a vision of the world imbued with humanistic and Christian values.

Other films from other cultural environments relate to a different order of values which nevertheless have certain important affinities with Christian culture, such as, for example, those which derive from the spiritual resources of the ancient civilizations of the Orient. Brief though these notes must be, it is impossible not to mention the films of the Indian director, Satyajit Ray, and of Yasujro Ozu of Japan, rich with intimistic sensibilities which to Christians reveal the features of those virtues defined by the Fathers of the Church, when they found them expressed in the works of pagan writers, as *naturaliter cristianae*. Their films are not restricted to addressing the question of values in a veiled and restrained manner for educational or propagandistic purposes but each time invent new ways of approaching a reality outwardly manifested in signs and tokens which, when correctly interpreted, lead to the discovery of an interior world rich with spirituality. The same could be said of films from other areas of the world such as Latin America, Africa or the Middle East, where the frequent poverty of technical and financial means is counterbalanced by the wealth of their poetic inspiration and human content. Interesting signs in this regard have also recently come from the new cinema in China.

Then, of course, there is all the production of the so-called "independent" cinema. Totally or partially free from the demands of the entertainment industry, the films so created move in syntony with the most advanced forms of culture and art today and, like them, manifest the profound spiritual unease which humanity is suffering from in the contemporary world. In this context we find phenomena typical of modern cinema art, pervaded with metalinguistic ferment and tense with anxiety to test and redefine the procedures on which its language is based, with products ranging from the aftermath of the French Nouvelle Vague to the less conventional forms of the new American cinema, born on the Atlantic coast as opposed to the old Hollywood.

Over these phenomena, too, stretches the broad sky of transcendency, though at times the horizon may appear streaked with the threatening clouds of an impending Apoclaypse, while the unconventional approach with materials derived from the collective religious imagination raises disturbing and even irritating questions on the rôle of religion in the contemporary world.

Faced with film products which exhibit these kinds of problems, we have more than once found ourselves, even recently, under attack by those who feel their own convictions challenged. One wonders, in cases like this, whether responding to noise with louder noise is an appropriate measure of self-

defence. The cinema is a form of culture now universally accepted; even in its more provocative manifestations it demands calm and articulate answers. But perhaps, before asking for answers, the cinema is simply waiting to be understood.

Fr. Virgilio Fantuzzi, SJ
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NOTES

1 This is above all a matter of teaching children to read the "signs and symbols" of the liturgy and of creation which they continually encounter in their religious training, and also of teaching them to understand the "signs" of daily life, which always have something to communicate.

2 "Friendship" has been chosen and developed as the theme by way of example. Other themes which interest adolescents could equally well be used, e.g. freedom, careers, sport, joy, loyalty, etc.

3 If preferred, the same process could be applied to a song, in which case, instead of images, the words and music would be analysed and reflected upon.

4 A critical analysis of a film, TV programme or novel could be made, if this appears possible and profitable.

5 Immediate preparation will always take into account what the Church intends to do with regard to specific events such as the Centenary of the Motion Picture (as in this case), World Communications Day, etc., where its relationship with the mass media is highlighted.