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"GO AND PROCLAIM" (MK 16:15)
Mission and Social Communication in a New Culture for Evangelization

This contribution will not address so much technical questions as look into communicating for a "new culture" under the perspective of missiology and social communication.

The paper will sketch *first* some developments and indicate direc-tions in the field of social communication to clarify developments which shape our communication situation in a *digital world* as the environ-ment wherein evangelization takes place. This will be followed, *second,* by presenting two mission documents and their communication conse-quences and show—*third*—how this is reflected in the Asian church. The paper concludes—*fourth*—by reflecting on the need for a proper communication spirituality to be based on a mission spirituality as pro-posed by Pope John Paul II.

I

1.1 From Mass Media to Social Communication

The very first draft for the social communication document of Vati-can II was built around the concept and reality of the different *mass media.* But in the course of deliberations this was questioned from in-side the Vatican with a remark that the church and especially the Council should not be concerned that much with technology, but rather with people. [1] From this arose the proposal for a new expression which was labeled *Social Communication.* It was included as a *declaratio* be-fore the footnotes of the final Council document, [2] accepted, and from then on, used but never further explained or promoted within the church.

As a result, the expression "Social Communication" is used but most of the time interchangeably with *Mass Media* or at least *Media,* which

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[1] Andreas M. Deskur, unpublished note from the Plenary Council for Social Communication, 2004.

[2] Franz-Josef Eilers, *Church and Social Communication. Basic Documents. 1936-2014* (Manila: Logos Publications, [3]2014), 143.

the *declaratio* to *Inter Mirifica* labeled as not sufficiently expressing the real concerns of the church. The expression "*social* communication" re-fers to the communication of and in human society, thus comprising *all* ways and means of communication in human society. It means that it refers to interpersonal as well as group communication and all cultural expressions of and for communication, far beyond media and technolo-gy. [3]

Unfortunately, this understanding and proposal has never developed its full implications in the church in general nor for her mission. Thus, most documents and texts also after Vatican II are still determined by technology, by the media, and the *instruments* of communication in-stead of seeing and accepting communication as a basic and essential element of human life and society with important consequences for the church and her mission. The Vatican II *Inter Mirifica* proposal adds to the word "communication" *social* which refers to human society. No person or group of humans can live without communication, which in fact is the backbone of social life. All this is implied in the Vatican II name of *social communication*. This has important consequences also for communication in mission but seems not really being fully under-stood and included in the realities of the church. It actually is at the center of Vatican II's understanding of social communication and also implied in Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* where he says that we are "not obsessed with the disjointed transmis-sion of a multitude of doctrines" but our message "has to concentrate on the essentials, on what is most beautiful, most grand, most appealing and at the same time most necessary" (EG 35). In fact with his message for World Communication Day 2015 on the family [4] he even places the origin of communication already in the relation between the child and mother when the child is still in her womb!

All this becomes even more urgent when we see today, how after 50 years, this Vatican II proposal and concept seems to be vindicated when we talk about *social* networks, *social* media, etc. where the social role of communication is underlined far beyond any simple *media* use. In fact, instead of the church, other academic fields like sociology and psycholo-gy (Braga; Fiedler) [5] have started to use this expression already soon after the Vatican Council. In the professional field the expression "communication" was first used 1940 as the name for the present-day

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[3] Ibid., 141f.

[4] Cf. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/docu-ments/papa-francesco_20150123_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html

[5] Cf. Giorgio Braga, *La Comunicazione Sociale* (Torino: RAI, [2]1974); Klaus Fiedler (ed.), *Social Communication* (New York: Psychology Press, 2007).

"National Communication Association" including also speech, theatre, semantics, phonetics and other communication activities. [6]

One consequence of this for church and mission is to re-think the or-ganization and structure of *Communication Offices* and ministries which are usually divided according to media, like press, radio/TV (broadcasting), film. Under a *social* communication perspective and con-sidering modern communication developments, they should rather re-flect instead the three main dimensions of the whole field of *Social Communication* which can be divided into sections like 1. Interpersonal/ Cultural, 2. Media, 3. Social Networks Communication. In this perspec-tive, the three main dimensions of the whole field can be seen according to the *social* role of the participants in the process: in section 1 *all* par-ticipants are *producers* and *consumers* at the same time; in section 2 with media they are only (passive) *consumers*, whereas in section 3 *of social networks*, they are partly producers and consumers, thus *Pro-Sumers*, combining and switching between both activities and disposi-tions.

1.2 From Analog to Digital

We easily talk today about "digital" situations. I am not so sure if we are sufficiently aware what this word and fact really means and what the consequences it carries are. Of course everybody knows the digital watch and the analog one, where we read the time in relation to the before and after the indicator from minute to minute. In the digital, however, the time pops up from nowhere and is just there without any relation to the before and after. That is because "digital" and digitaliza-tion works with bytes and bits, the language of the computer, with 0's and 1's only. Does this mean that in digital, there is no history, no envi-ronment, and its signs are just standing alone?

Could this mean that in our digital life, we are not "bothered" about the past, the relation to the environment and culture because it's just there? Could this be one of the reasons why in our modern time every-thing goes—no need to look forward and backward, to adjust to people and cultures? Are we only fascinated by a digital presence and nothing else? Do religions and similar binding principles have any role to play in such an environment or is one of the reasons for the seeming decline of religion the fact that we live now in a digital world where 2000 years of Christianity do not count anymore?

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[6] Pat J. Gehrke and William M. Keith, *A Century of Communication Studies. The Unfinished Conversation* (New York/London: Routledge, 2015), 8.

The "digital revolution" might not be stimulating our approaches and worldview, and even not promote the sense of responsibility. We just accept and seem to live it without any foundation and background con-sidering the consequences—good or bad.

Robert S. Fortner observes in his *Communication, Media and Identi-ty: A Christian Theory of Communication* that "a rapid movement to-wards a digital landscape can be easily problematic as to whether the moral imperatives of connected analog culture will maintain sufficient legitimacy to allow adequate consideration of these issues. So many moral questions in American society, for instance, are already argued under the assumptions of the digital culture, that is, everyone does what is right in his own eyes. Abortion, gun control, Internet filtering in libraries, pornographic (or 'adult') business establishments, genetic en-gineering—all increasingly have found their hold on the American mor-al consciousness fading as the premises of digital culture have become more a part of our consciousness." [7]

1.3 From Consumer to Producer

In the past, the journalist—but also the missionary!—was considered and worked as a "gatekeeper." S/he decided which news would be print-ed, when and where, because it was only him or her who had access to all the news over 24 hours from the tele-printer. Today, news is availa-ble to everybody, everywhere and anytime on the net. Thus, the indi-vidual who was formerly a receiver now determines him/herself what he/she watches and reads. Thus the role of the journalist is, in the best case, not any more the gatekeeper but that of a guide. This way, the roles of the old linear communication model, i.e. Sender-Message-Receiver, are changed in the receiver becoming the sender.

It means that the consumer becomes a producer and the other way around. Because of this, the Communication Commission of the German Bishops' Conference recently (June 2011) has used the new word "Pro-Sumer" (producer-consumer). [8] What does this mean for the responsibil-ity of the individual and technical developments? Because of digitaliza-tion TV channels multiply in such a way that people have access to at least 800 channels. Who looks, by the way, in such a reality just for a Catholic or for a spiritual program? How does this also affect our mis-

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[7] Robert S. Fortner, *Communication, Media and Identity. A Christian Theory of Communication* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 183.

[8] *Virtualität und Inszenierung. Unterwegs in der digitalen Mediengesellschaft. Ein medienethisches Impulspapier,* Die deutschen Bischöfe Nr. 35 (Bonn: Sekre-tariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 2011).

sionary approach? What does such a development mean for the church community in general? Will there be more participatory and greater shared responsibility for *all* members of the community?

In modern communication everybody can now develop his or her own program and determine how and with whom s/he communicates, like for example through blogging, social networks or placing his products on YouTube.

This leads to the next consideration:

1.4 From Media Education to Communication Competence

Quite some church documents have underlined the importance of *media education* as the education for the critical use of the media: how to critically read a newspaper, watch a film or television program. [9] This was applicable especially during the time of strong domination of the big media for political and/or commercial purposes. Mass media and big media organizations or even governments were dominating the market and determining to quite an extent public life and daily discussions among people. Here, a critical approach was needed for many reasons. But today, this so-called "market" of information is scattered and every-body has access to everything from everywhere. This seems not to call anymore for this kind of "education" but rather for *competence* in com-munication which means to be able to properly use and apply the differ-ent ways and means of communicating in mission and the church com-munity.

The French Bishops wrote already in 1998 that "competence" in a general way would need in their understanding: [10]

- A clear perception of one's own identity;
- A strong ability to listen;
- An ability and attitude to
  - analyze the motivations of the other;
  - decode his/her concerns;
  - foresee his/her reactions.

All this indicates important consequences also for the missionary dimension of communication!

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[9] Eilers, *Church and Social Communication. Basic Documents*, Index.

[10] Franz-Josef Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission. Introduction to Pastoral and Evangelizing Communication* (Manila: Logos Publications, 2009), 79.

The German Bishops' Conference's Communication Commission un-derlined in an 88-page document on "digital media society" the need for *communication competence* which will help towards any missionary communication of the Church.
[11]

The document lists four competencies which, however, have in my understanding to be further developed and extended:

1) *Factual, or technical competence*, which enables the proper knowledge and use of available means and applications, in-cluding hardware and software.

2) *Critical competence* or the understanding of modern commu-nication language and possibilities including economic and political implications of their use.

3) *Creative competence* for proper acting in and creating cultur-ally proper communication, including proper encoding and decoding also of artistic works.

4) *Ethical competence* for the application of ethical rules and demands for a realistic approach and the ability for a respon-sible move within the modern communication world.

There are, however, some further competencies needed especially al-so for a more detailed *theological competence* which can be subdivided into four levels:

1) There is what I call the *"spiritual"* level which refers to any spiritual approach in general terms of the "Holy," like in Ru-dolf Otto's *"Numinosum."* This goes from "wellness" to "su-perstition" and any other kind of "religious" feelings in gen-eral.

2) *Religious competence* refers to the ability and practice of rit-uals like pilgrimages, veneration of images, saints, living faith in a simple way like what is also called "Popular Pie-ty." [12]

3) *Theological competence* refers to theology in the strict and even academic sense through studies, teaching, living and re-flecting scripture, interpreting theological texts….

4) Finally there comes the *pastoral competence* which reflects the ability to apply religious and theological insights to the daily lives of people ("pastoral ministry") which is reflected in individuals, but also religious communities, integrating faith

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[11] *Virtualität und Inszenierung*, 63, 85.

[12] Cf. *Evangelii Nundiandi* 48.

into their daily lives and practices like bible sharing, medita-tion, catechesis…. All this has also consequences in the way we develop our mission approaches and activities: When Pope Gregory in the 6th century demands that his missionar-ies to England not destroy the heathen temples but convert them into Christian churches he in fact points to a shift from the first level of competence above ("spiritual") to the second one related to the practice of Christian faith!

In addition to this also *cultural, social* and *digital* competencies must be added.

Nobody can be competent in everything but it seems to be important for any missionary to be at least socially, critically, creatively, ethically, culturally and especially theologically competent: How far are we com-petent as communicators not only in the technical sense but also in spir-ituality and a proper disposition which should grow in the encounter with Jesus Christ, the "Master of Communication," [13] and not be deter-mined by power or dominance?

1.5 From Institution to Community

The participation in church services seems to diminish in many plac-es today as well as the membership of the church. Can this not also be a result of our communication approaches which are often seen as power-driven or institution-determined? Does the church, in a predominantly Catholic country like the Philippines, not seem to appear to many as a political power rather than a living community? [14] As long as the church acts and appears mainly as a human institution (offices, office hours, etc.), it seems not to reflect sufficiently being a living community, the Body of Christ. [15] Pope Francis refers to this as the "unwelcoming at-mosphere of some of our parishes and communities" (EG 63). Do we in this way really fulfil our mission as the living community of Christ's disciples, especially in a time of social networks and personal approach-es and support? At the time of the "Acts of the Apostles" it was mainly the living communities who attracted more and more people to Christi-anity. Pope Paul VI points to this in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* saying that

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[13] Cf. *Communio et Progressio* 11.

[14] Some years ago in our Pontifical University of Santo Tomas (UST) graduate program on Pastoral Communication, we made a content analysis of leading newspapers in the country for a period of one month. From the 23 articles on the church in two leading newspapers, there was not even one that was related to spirituality or even theology.

[15] Cf. *Lumen Gentium.*

they radiate "in an altogether simple and unaffected way their faith in values that go beyond current values…." (EN 21).

Today "social networks" also are somehow, "communities." The church is, right from her origin, called to be a living community as she appears already in the *Acts of the Apostles*. Could this in a time of *social networks* with personal relations and support in communication, not also be a very special missionary challenge? It has consequences for any attempt to evangelization which must be based solidly on a living faith and not only on media, technology or any domineering communications or similar kinds of power.

1.6 From "Psychology" to a Holistic Theological Approach

In considering our missionary and pastoral communication ap-proaches, sometimes I have the impression that we have moved away from theology and theologically grounded spirituality to "psychology." This is not only reflected in the over-promotion sometimes of psycholog-ical tests, or in counseling, but also in developing all kinds of communi-cation "tricks" and gadgets which go in the direction of "New Age," without any attempt to a deeper theology and prayer. How much time do we spend in "searching" the net, looking for all kinds of so-called entertainment? Don't we lack deeper theological studies and experienc-es? How can we develop deep and consistent prayer if we are so much engrossed in psychological schools, technical gadgets and other superfi-cial activities, including spending hours on the Internet, Facebook and grounded in superficiality with a growing number of addicts? [16]

The many technical and psychological opportunities of modern com-munication seem to carry us away from a solid and unified theological approach and foundation: If we honestly analyze ourselves and our lives, how much of it is solid Christian living and how much of it is su-perficial busybody-ness? Most priests can testify to the fact that they are so busy that they find no time anymore for solid grounding and to develop a center in their spiritual and professional life. Our means of communication today are so overwhelming that we need a special effort and direction not to lose the ground. This goes far beyond the develop-ment of a single medium and gadgets without a personal "touch" and

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[16] A study of our UST MA Program on Pastoral Communication on Social Communication Formation in selected seminaries in Metro Manila with some 230 answers of seminarians on their Internet use shows that *all* of them spend at least one hour a day on the net, but many also admit that they spend up to three hours a day on Internet. Cf. Virgilio F. Ciudadano jr., *Social Communica-tion Formation in Seminaries and Schools of Theology. An Investigation* (Ma-nila: Logos, 2015), 92ff.

deeper theological approach. We might have to develop a special com-munication spirituality for our times.

Vatican II grounds mission in the Trinity as flowing "from the 'fount-like love' or charity of God the Father who, being the 'principle without principle' from whom the Son is begotten and the Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son… calling us… to share with Him His life and His glo-ry… and does not cease to pour out still His divine goodness" (AG 2). This reason for "mission" [17] is the same also for a newly developed ap-proach to "Social Communication in Theological Perspective: Communi-cation Theology." [18] Such a theology sees any communication as being grounded in and originating from the communicating Trinitarian God. In this understanding theologians like Bernhard Häring, Avery Dulles, Carlo Martini, Gisbert Greshake and others see communication as a "theological principle" which has to be applied to the whole of theology. Communication is in this understanding not just instruments ("media") or psychology but at the essence of Christian Faith which is based and reflected in the communicating Trinitarian God. Eastern icons like the ones on the Trinity but also the many western illustrations of the "Mer-cy Seat" in Christian art are considered as an illustration of this: the Father presenting his Son in the Holy Spirit.

1.7 From Local to Global

Another development of our time is the move from local to global which must be considered for the mission of the church in a special way. In earlier days, people were confined to their local villages or even cit-ies. Today, they are immersed in global programs. Not only do global politics affect their lives, but through internet and all its possibilities, they can now "skype" from continent to continent even without cost. We all can share with "friends" from Africa to Latin America, Europe and the States in the same or a similar way we used to do in our villages, families and communities. What happens in one place many kilometers away today affects our personal and community lives here. What are the consequences of this not only for technology, but more so for our personality, spiritual convictions and our lives with the Lord? What does it mean, on the other hand, for our missionary commitment and the sharing of our faith? What does it mean for evangelization? Do we need to develop our own *cyber missionaries*?

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[17] Cf. Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context. A The-ology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 286ff.

[18] Anh Vu Ta and Franz Josef Eilers, *Social Communication in Theological Per-spective: Communication Theology,* Communicatio Socialis Prints 1 (Manila: Lo-gos Publications, 2015).

All these considerations are part of an unfolding "*New Culture*" of communication which John Paul II has referred to in *Redemptoris Mis-sio* (1990) as the first *areopagus* of modern times with new ways of communicating—new technologies, new languages, and a new psycholo-gy which is also reflected in the two mission documents *Evangelii Nun-tiandi* and *Redemptoris Missio* which are also important for the relation between mission and social communication.

II

Beginning with the encyclical *Vigilanti Cura* of Pope Pius XI on film from 1936 and Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Miranda Prorsus* on electronic media from 1957 there is quite a number of church documents on media and communication. They can all be applied to the mission work of the church in a general way but none of them develops a special approach under the perspective of mission. This, however, is done by the two out-standing *mission* documents *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), the Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, and *Redemptoris Missio* (1990), the encyc-lical letter of Pope John Paul II. These two documents not only high-light the importance of communication for mission in general but bring a new dimension to the communication process which is "groundbreak-ing" also for a general view of the social communication of the church.

2.1 Evangelii Nuntiandi

Ten years after the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI convened a Synod on Evangelization, which is reflected in the Apostolic Exhorta-tion *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975), a document which has not lost its topi-cality even today. The Pope lists there the means of evangelization/ communication, which must be considered in this way as basic for of any (new) evangelization (EN 40-48). At the same time the selection of the "means" listed here indicates a broad perspective of social communi-cation which sees (mass) media only as *one* small part of a bigger spec-trum.

It is also significant to note that the listing starts as the very first "means" with the *witness of life* (EN 41) which the Pope mentions as well on two additional occasions in the same document (EN 21, 76). No technical gadget can substitute living examples, not even in our present day and age!

> Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and
> if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses… it is
> therefore primarily by her conduct and

by her life that the Church will evangelize the world… (EN 41).

A *living preaching* (EN 42) follows as the next step. Despite all emp-ty talk, "the word remains ever relevant, especially when it is the bear-er of the power of God." This has not changed even in a time of the In-ternet and the digital world. Pope Francis confirms this with a longer reflection on homily and preaching in his 2013 Apostolic Exhortation
Evangelii Gaudium (135-159).

In a similar way also the *Liturgy of the Word* (EN 43) maintains its power: a "simple, clear, direct, well-adapted" homily "dependent on the Gospel… full of hope, fostering belief and productive of peace and uni-ty."

Catechesis (EN 44) should lead to a living catechumenate as another way to evangelization. This should immerse people…. Modern means and ways of teaching, which are available today, can be of help but there is as well the example of a living catechumenate which we can see today also in and with social networks.

Under the section on the *"Mass Media"* (EN 45) Pope Paul VI places the often quoted sentence: "The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that humans still are daily rendering more perfect." Though we are today less "mass media" but increasingly more *"new* media" oriented, this quote has not lost its power and challenge. These means of communication should be "pierc-ing the conscience of each individual, … implanting itself in his heart as though s/he were the only person being addressed…."

In all this, however, the *personal contact* (EN 46) "remains valid and important." It refers to the fact that through personal contact "an indi-vidual's personal conscience is reached and touched by an entirely unique word that s/he receives from someone else." Here the spiritual guidance and support of priests and spiritual masters but also the (spir-itual) sharing with each other has its place which actually starts al-ready according to Pope Francis in his "World Communication Day" Message 2015 with the communication of the child with the mother in her womb.

Also the *sacraments* (EN 47) have to be considered as means of evangelization today. The sacraments do not merely preach and teach. They also "must touch in giving meaning and perspective to life." Sac-raments should lead in new evangelization towards a "permanent and unbroken intercommunion between word and sacrament" as the sources of our faith. The communicative power of the sacraments must "lead each individual Christian to live (them) as true sacraments of faith" (EN 47). This is the goal of every proclamation and evangelization.

The search for God as expressed especially by simple and poor people in so-called *popular piety* which is "rich in values" (EN 48) makes people "capable of generosity and sacrifice even to the point of heroism." It reflects "an acute awareness of profound attitudes of God: fatherhood, providence, loving and constant presence." Popular piety also shows interior attitudes like "patience, the sense of the Cross in daily life, de-tachment, openness to others, devotion." All these are and should be lively elements of any evangelizing communication, but are also an at-tempt to strengthen and invigorate these gifts in ourselves for a renew-al of faith and the love of God and neighbor.

These considerations from *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975) have lost none of their topicality and relevance in today's digital world. In fact, they must be considered as essential and basic for any modern mission-ary communication. They constitute also the basis for opportunities and developments of a *New Culture* of communication which Pope John Paul II addressed 15 years later in his mission encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* and the World Communication Day Message 1990 where he notes that already in the Council, especially *Gaudium et Spes,* the Council Fathers recognized "developments in communication technology" which were "likely to set off chain reactions with unforeseen consequences."

2.2 Redemptoris Missio

In fact, John Paul II's encyclical initiates a *paradigm shift* in the ap-proach of the church to social communication in general and thus goes also far beyond just "mission" in pointing out the reality of a *New Cul-ture* created by communication.

An analysis of the church documents on communication, especially the Vatican II document *Inter Mirifica* , shows that there were basically two concerns of the church which are clearly addressed in the Council document: 1. the "inherent right" ("birth right") of the church to use the modern means of communication, and 2. to secure and defend the prop-er moral use of these means by the faithful: "It is the inherent right of the Church to have at its disposal and to employ any of these media so far as they are necessary or useful for the instruction of Christians and all its efforts for the welfare of Souls" (IM 3). The purpose of the media is declared here as "to instruct and guide the faithful" (Vatican transla-tion).

In *Redemptoris Missio*, however, Pope John Paul II brings about a paradigm shift when he places social communication into the perspec-tive of a *New Culture,* an approach which is not found in this way in any earlier official communication document of the church and sometimes

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even overlooked by researchers who pretend to write on the social com-munication approach of Pope John Paul II.

In this encyclical on mission the Pope presents three "parameters" of the modern world in which mission is exercised "in order to gain a real grasp of the situation" (RM 37). These are: a) *territorial limits* for mis-sion, b) "new worlds and *new social phenomena*" where everything is in flux, like "urbanization and massive growth of big cities" with the fact of migrants, refugees, and finally c) *cultural sectors*, the "modern equiva-lents of the Areopagus" which the apostle Paul experienced in Athens. Here the Pope calls as the "first areopagus" the "world of communica-tions," to be followed by peace and development as well as the "immense areopagus of culture, research and international relations" which need "dialogue and a response to spiritual needs" (RM 38).

Pointing at a "new culture" created by communication the text reads (RM 37c):

> The *first areopagus of the modern age is the world of com-munications*, which is unifying humanity and turning it in-to what is known as a "global village." The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular, the younger gen-eration is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass-media. To some degree perhaps this Areopagus has been neglected. Generally, preference has been given to other means of preaching the Gospel and of Christian education, while the mass-media are left to the initiative of individuals or small groups and enter into pastoral planning only in a secondary way. Involvement in the mass-media, however, is not meant merely to strengthen the preaching of the Gos-pel. There is a *deeper reality* involved here: since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the Media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to inte-grate that message into the "new culture" created by mod-ern communications. This is a complex issue, since the "new culture" originates not just from whatever content is even-tually expressed, but from the very fact that there are new ways of communicating, with new languages, new tech-niques and a new psychology. Pope Paul VI said that "the split between Gospel and Culture is undoubtedly the trage-

dy of our time" and the field of communications fully con-firms this judgment.

The "deeper reality" which the Pope mentions here goes beyond the *use* of media for "strengthening the preaching of the gospel" as if the role of media and communication were only to support the apostolate. In reality, however, we are confronted with the need to *integrate* the message of faith into a "new culture created by modern ways of com-municating...." All this was said already in 1990—25 years ago!—where John Paul II characterized this "new culture" as being determined by

"*new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology*." Thus it is not any more the "birthright" of the church to use the means of communication or a paternalistic moral care but the challenge of a new communication environment which must be ad-dressed. All this is in a document on the mission of the church and not in a document on social communication!

What now are these "new ways of communicating," new techniques, new languages and psychologies to be addressed? Some of them we have mentioned already earlier in this paper. But in general it seems that even after some 25 years these concerns have not yet been sufficiently responded to. We are still talking about "media" and "means" instead of looking at the life and understanding especially of young people and the way they live and share with each other. Could a vote on gay marriages like in Ireland in May 2015 with 62% of voters in favor in a seemingly Catholic country be an indicator of a failure to understand new reali-ties? As Archbishop Diarmuid Martin from Dublin said in an RTE in-terview: "… If this referendum is an affirmation of the views of young people, the church has a huge task in front of it to find a language to be able to talk to, and get its message over to, young people not just on this issue but in general…. We need to find as in so many areas a *new lan-guage* which is fundamentally ours, that speaks to, is understood and is appreciated by others." [19]

Communication is not only a means but a process! Yes, there are studies and even a few documents like World Communication Day mes-sages and two documents of the Pontifical Council for Social Communi-cation on Internet, but how far do they respond and challenge us in the realities we live? It is not any more just the pastoral "care" we used to talk about but maybe it is more the missing "communicative" priests and members of the church which are at stake. Pope Francis is a posi-tive example along the real needs of people in a "new culture" with the

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[19] *The Tablet* (May 30, 2015) 5.

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"Death of Distance" [20] determining our daily lives which the "mission" the church has to address.

Thus, "go and proclaim" today means listening to people, realistically studying, seeing and actually living new ways of communicating in our missionary work and life. Thus social communication is not an option or *one* possibility for mission beside many others: it really is at the center and heart of our mission today without which we are unable to "func-tion" as a community and a church in the modern world.

III

The Second Vatican Council has shifted the mode of communication and mission of the Catholic church from conquest and confrontation to *dialogue*. This is reflected for example in a special way in the Declara-tion *Nostra Aetate* on the non-Christian religions which Pope Benedict XVI once called the most important document of the Council. The Fed-eration of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) followed this lead in their first Plenary Assembly 1974 in Taipei with the need for a *triple dia-logue:* 1. with the people, especially the poor, 2. with cultures and 3. with religions. At a later general assembly they also reflected on the *disposition* needed for such a dialogue within and through the Asian Christian communities in a reflection on "A New Way of Being Church in Asia" which must be also seen as basic for any social communication and the challenges of an interactive and digital world. The church in

Asia is: *1. a communion of communities; 2. a participatory church; 3. a witnessing and dialoguing church; 4. a prophetic church.*

In 1997, the bishops-in-charge for communication in Asia took this up in their annual "Bishops' Meet" and developed in a more specific way the communication dimensions of these criteria, saying: [21]

- A *communion of communities.* The church is at its deepest level a communion (*koinonia*) rooted in the life of the Trinity and thus in its essential reality a sacrament of the loving self-communication of God. If we are a communion of com-munities our communication must aim at community build-ing.

- A *participatory church.* If we are a truly participatory church, "where the gifts that the Spirit gives to all… are rec-

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[20] Frances Cairncross, *Death of Distance: How the Communication Revolution Is Changing Our Lives* (London: Texere, 1997).

[21] Franz-Josef Eilers (ed.), *Church and Social Communication in Asia: Docu-ments, Analysis, Experiences* (Manila: Logos Publications, ^{2}2008), 27 -32.

ognized and activated" [22] there must be communication that encourages co-responsibility at all levels both vertically and horizontally.

- A *witnessing and dialoguing church.* If we are a witnessing and dialoguing church, our communication must be con-cerned with the world, where people live in their joys and hopes, their fears and anxieties, reaching "out to people of other faiths and persuasions in a dialogue of life towards the integral liberation of all." [23]

- A *prophetic church.* If we are a prophetic church we should be a "leaven of transformation in this world and serve as a prophetic sign to point beyond this world." [24] Therefore, our church communication must challenge, announce and de-nounce... In what way are we crying out like the prophets with conviction and in a convincing manner? Where is our witness of life "which communicates first"? [25] Are we seen as standing with people crying out for justice, harmony, equali-ty, ecology? We should not only cry over unsolvable problems of our countries but also highlight the fact that our continent is rich in cultures, traditions, values and religions. Filled with such riches, the church should think of herself as a giv-ing and not only receiving community. She should perceive this as a new call to integrate gospel values into the "new culture created by media." [26]

How is this related to mission and communication?

First: In Asia, we do not only "missio *ad* gentes" but rather "missio *inter* gentes." What does this mean for our "*dialogue*" with the people, cultures and religions? Are we ready and disposed for such a dialogue as communities and individuals?

This is first and foremost *not* a question of technical means and pos-sibilities. Rather, it is primarily a question about *disposition.* We need first to develop an inner disposition among church leaders and the faith-ful including those who have left or are dormant in their faith life. This is not done by using "tricks," "technical gadgets" and special communi-

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[22] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences Plenary in Bandung, 1990.

[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences, "Bishops Meet 1997. A New Way of Being Church in Asia—Communication Consequences," in: Eilers, *Church and Social Communication in Asia,* 27.

[26] Ibid.

cation methods or even the so-called mass-media in the first place. What is first needed are *living examples* like Mother Teresa, Joseph Freinademetz, Charles de Foucauld, John Vianney, John Paul II, Pope Francis…. "*Social* Communication" is not just "media" but a process in society with people who share and support each other.

All this further needs—*second*—a special attempt at *listening* in the broad sense. Solomon in the first book of Kings asked the Lord for a "listening heart." It is revealing to see how Pope Benedict XVI placed this story at the beginning and center of his speech to politicians in the German "*Bundestag*" (parliament) in Berlin during his visit to Germany on September 22, 2011. There he concluded his speech with the follow-ing words:

> As he assumed the mantle of office, the young King Solo-mon was invited to make a request. How would it be if we, the law-makers of today, were invited to make a request? What would we ask for? I think that, even today, there is nothing else we could wish for but a listening heart—the capacity to discern between good and evil, and thus to es-tablish true law, to serve justice and peace. [27]

"Listening" includes in our case not only "listening" to new technical communication developments and means, but listening to people and cultures. What are their experiences, concerns, longings, visions and also expectations in their lives, communities, as well as their spirit in life and faith?

This refers especially also to young people in a way of partnership. We have to learn more about the inner disposition of our "digital na-tives" (born after 1991!) who are born already with the "tablet." Are we able to still accompany them in a positive and understanding (not "commanding"!) way? This challenges us to equip ourselves with basic understandings of new life situations and to develop a proper *disposi-tion* of a deeper, spiritual life to be able to listen, to share not what we read but what we live.

For the FABC "Dialogue with Cultures" there is—*third*—the rapidly growing field of *Intercultural Communication* which seems not to be much in the awareness of the church despite Pope John Paul II's special interest in culture. He demonstrated this already for the field of com-munication when as an auxiliary bishop of Krakow during the Second Vatican Council he reminded the preparatory commission for this doc-ument in a written intervention to the Council Document on Social

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[27]   Cf.   http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/docu-ments/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110922_reichstag-berlin.html.

Communication (IM) on the need to also include culture. "Communi-cating between cultures" is a special field of studies and should be of special concern for mission! St. Arnold Janssen sent right at the begin-ning of his community in Steyl some of the young members not only to study theology and philosophy but also anthropology and linguistics, which resulted in persons like Fr. Wilhelm Schmidt, the founder of the Anthropos Institute. Its publication under the same name was—with the blessing of Janssen in 1907—to publish the observations and stud-ies of his missionaries on the culture of the people they were living with.... When I started studying missiology under Thomas Ohm in Münster, he referred me already in 1961 to Edward T. Hall, the "father of Intercultural Communication" who declared already in 1959 in his "Silent Language": [28] "Culture is *Communication.*" Unfortunately it seems that this has never been of special concern to Catholic missiolo-gists—unlike some Protestants like Eugene Nida, Charles Kraft, David J. Hesselgrave and others. Today the field develops rapidly especially for business and political reasons, but the missionary dimension is still to be developed. Where are the missiologists and church entities in-volved in intercultural communication studies and training?

There is today—*fourth*—a very special need for study and research into the *new culture* of John Paul II which is—or should be—also a spe-cial concern of our theological schools and universities. This seems not to have started yet though we are trying something along these lines in our MA/Lic. theol. academic program at the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas (UST) in Manila where we have scholars from quite a number of Asian countries including China, Vietnam, Bangladesh, My-anmar, Indonesia and others....

<center>*IV*</center>

Finally, there is a very special relation between mission and social communication because of a common *spiritual disposition and dimen-sion* needed for both.

There is no special church document on the spirituality or even the-ology of *social communication*. But the encyclical letter *Redemptoris Missio* gives us a special lead with its last chapter (RM 87 to 91).

What is said there about missionary spirituality applies in full force also for any Christian communicator:

    1)   For communicating we need a "complete docility to the Holy Spirit," being "molded from within" before we communicate....

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[28] Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* [1959] (New York, Anchor Books, 1973).

2) We need especially as communicators an intimate communion with Christ, with total self-emptying and this way being "weak with the weak."

3) Real Christian communication needs apostolic charity: Christ's burning love for souls; the missionary and communicator needs the "power of charity" with a proper openness to people which must be more than just a general interest or search for "news"!

4) With a universal call to holiness (Vatican II) missionaries and communicators should be saints which is not done just through updating techniques but needs a *real ardor* to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

5) Like the missionary the communicator also is a "contemplative in action" if s/he wants to "proclaim" and share Christ in a credible way! Both are called to witness to their experience of God!

6) Like the missionary the Christian communicator also should be a person of the beatitudes on the path of poverty, meekness, acceptance of suffering and even persecution, desire for justice and thus showing concretely the "Kingdom of God."

All this will lead—in the words of St. John Paul II—to that inner joy with which we communicate, a joy that comes from faith which we can also observe today with Pope Francis as a "missionary" to the whole world as an excellent and convincing communicator.

A similar call leading to a proper spirituality in all our planning we also find in the reflections of Pope John Paul II at the beginning of the new millennium in his Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (Janu-ary 21, 2001): instead of starting with plans and visions he uses the first two parts of the document for promoting a proper spirituality which must underlie all activities, including social communication. There he states that everything must start from "contemplating the face of Christ" which Jesus himself confirms after Peter's confession of faith: "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in Heaven" (Mt 16:17). Any missionary social communication must start here!

Like in *Redemptoris Missio* he repeats the fact that our communi-cating "must be embedded in holiness" (RM 30f.) and does not allow "to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by minimalist ethics and a shal-low religiosity."

In this process the *Art of Prayer* becomes an essential part of any pastoral and evangelizing communication. Only this way we develop

"that conversation with Christ which makes us intimate friends: abide in me and I in you" (Jn 15:14). This is "the very substance and soul of Christian life and the condition of all true pastoral life" (*Novo Millennio Ineunte* 43). It is "the secret of a truly vital Christianity, which has no reason to fear the future, because it returns constantly to the sources and finds in them new life…."

Finally we should be convinced that the *primacy of grace* must be considered as basic for any Christian communication! It goes beyond any temptation to believe that our communication results depend on our own ability to act and to plan instead of trusting first in the Lord, because "without Him we can do nothing."

Actually, St. John Paul II sees a proper communication as being based on three dispositions: 1. prayer, 2. being filled with the Holy Spir-it, and 3. speaking the Word of God boldly.

Conclusion

Jesus calls us according to the gospels of Mark (16:15) and Matthew (10:7) to "go and proclaim," which means mission/sending and com-municating/sharing Him—also in a digital world, the "new culture" of today which is determined by new ways of communicating, which we considered in the first part of this paper. Mission means also to be aware of *social communication* as an essential part in this process ac-cording to the mission documents of Pope Paul VI and John Paul II ("ways of mission"/"new culture") . Finally: Social communication is not just instruments or means but a disposition which must be based on a proper "Mission Spirituality" of the communicator if it is to really "pro-claim," reflect Christ!

Saints like Arnold Janssen were convinced and lived out of such a disposition in their personal life and mission. Saint Arnold intended and later realized a "contemplative" membership of his own which even-tually led to a special congregation of sisters, the "Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration" (SSpSAP).

In view of the relation between communication and mission it should also be noted here that Janssen—historically—was first an editor, start-ing a publication, and only from this experience learned that he was also called to be the founder of a special Mission Congregation, the Di-vine Word Missionaries (SVD). He became a missionary because he was *first* a communicator which also determined all his activities later, when with his own printing press and successful publishing he not only could financially maintain his foundation but attracted many vocations because of this press and its publications.