

Pontifical Council
for Social
Communications

Conclusions of the World Congress of Catholic Television

Introduction

"The rapid development of technology in the area of the media is surely one of the signs of progress in today's society" (The Rapid Development, 1). This development poses a constant challenge for us.

We, the representatives of Catholic television from 48 countries around the world, participated in the World Congress of Catholic Television in order to learn from each other's experience and to initiate new types of cooperation with respect for the very diverse work already being done in this field and the challenges each faces.

The importance of this work was expressed by Pope John Paul II in The Rapid Development (5): "The communication between God and humanity has thus reached its perfection in the Word made flesh. (...) In light of so decisive and definitive a communication, the media provide a providential opportunity to reach people everywhere, overcoming barriers of time, of space and of language; presenting the content of faith in the most varied ways imaginable; and offering to all who search the possibility of entering into dialogue with the mystery of God, revealed fully in Christ Jesus."

The New Media Culture

The extraordinary development of communications technologies has led not only to digital convergence, but also to greater integration of media and content. For these reasons technological platforms increasingly involve cultural institutions. This novelty is expressed not only in the multiplication of channels, formats and languages, but also in new ways of thinking which overlook the classical relation of cause and effect. The cultural change we are witnessing poses a new anthropological scenario and this new "mediasphere" requires special study.

It is important to understand the growth of new consumers of the media. The viewer today demands a variety of contents in which the cognitive and the emotional aspects are united and able to generate new relationships. This interactivity blurs the old model between broadcaster and viewer. Now there are bonds between viewers, who become privileged protagonists and active subjects in the process.

Television is one of the protagonists of this complexity of modern day communications driven by consumers. Our response to facing this complexity is a renewed effort to defend the dignity of the human person, as members of families and society and in the face of a rampant individualism at times promoted by the new technologies.

That is why a utilitarian concept of television would be inadequate in helping to adapt to the cultural transformation taking place around us. Television is a global cultural phenomenon. It demands not only being very aware of technological developments, but also understanding its impact on the human person and society. We have to communicate with our viewers understanding their diversity of styles and languages. We must consider that the new technologies also lead to "narrowcasting", since our audiences are increasingly fragmented. We wish to make programs marked by elements of persuasion and hope. This approach should integrate four characteristics of modern media: the integration of artistic styles and technology; the interactive dimension, the ability to depict the reality of different walks of life and offer a new way of telling stories rooted in the Christian experience. Our programs must be characterized by using the television language - based on ethical and professional criteria, and sparking an interest which gives witness to the beauty of the creation.

Catholic Identity and Diversity of its Expression

The understanding of Catholic identity comes from faith and shared experience. Our definition of Catholic identity in television is, in many ways, dynamic.

Being Catholic requires a spirit of service for all humanity and the transmission of a universal message destined for all peoples, offered also through our productions and broadcasts. We wish to communicate the experience and fullness of our faith, to better live it and know how to communicate it, to serve the truth and to promote a sense of unity and communion in society. Television is an unquestionably valid means for evangelization and pastoral service which calls for professionalism and specialized training. For many of our contemporaries, television is the first source of human and religious values, the place where initial formation can happen in our fragmented cultures.

The Catholic experience in television is expressed with respect to the format, principles and types of programming. This Catholic presence should be strengthened and consolidated.

The coming together of Catholic initiatives serves as a public expressi-

on of identity and service to one another and the Christian community. In Europe, for example, television as a public service is no longer understood as an exclusive dependence on the state. Part of their role and service should be taken on by Catholic television professionals as an authentic service to the human family. Catholic identity crystallizes in a series of principles which must be seen in all Catholic television efforts:

- Catholic television station and/or programs broadcast by initiative or with the support of the local ecclesiastical authority or a Catholic organization. The catholicity must distinguish the channel and reflect the universality of Christian experience. Catholic television programming must be imbued with both a specific and overall Christian spirit and vision of the human person and the world.
- In its vision and carrying out its work, Catholic Television bases itself on the values of the Gospel, on the teachings of the Church, and on the integral promotion of the human person. "There is required a management system capable of safeguarding the centrality and dignity of the person, the primacy of the family as the basic unit of society and the proper relationship among them" (The Rapid Development, 10).
- National and international legal norms and obligations are followed. There should be no place for unplanned, amateur or risky initiatives.
- A financial plan should be made to guarantee the coverage of present and future needs and also to ensure the possibility of self-financing. A list of some of these basic points (see attachment) of the working group focusing on this theme will be developed in the Congress Proceedings.

Creation of a Network of Organizations and Services

"The multiplicity of initiatives, in so many of which the Holy Spirit is moving forward, now calls for a greater collaboration among them and a true effort to raise its professional quality, so that a more enriching dialogue between the Church and the world is facilitated. In this respect, each institution makes a unique contribution to the Catholic voice in the world of the media" (Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, Secretary of State).

During the Congress we also studied various types of collaboration that demonstrate our unity and the richness of our diversity. One of the great needs felt by all is one involving formation to raise the quality of media productions. The call for a "program bank" of Catholic television programs has generated much interest and led to a collection which now numbers almost one hundred fifty works. In addition to creating a net-

work of programs available for all, the initiative's goals also include mutual support and shared professional experience. In order to move this initiative forward, various technological platforms will be studied, a legal framework on copyright will be considered and a basic structure for the exchange developed.

Another initiative, generating authentic communion with the Church, concerns the work of the Vatican Television Center (CTV). Discussions focused on: live broadcasts via satellite at both regional and continental levels; the creation of continental centers for rebroadcasting; ways to offer texts and information on the broadcasts; and a needed integration of CTV efforts with the Vatican website.

The experience of the Digital Network of the Church in Latin America (RIIAL) and the way it was brought together can offer ideas on how greater integration can be achieved.

There is synergy of experiences happening as a result of international meetings organized by the Pontifical Council for the Social Communications, including the Continental Church Congress and Computer Science (Monterrey, 2003) and this meeting in Madrid. Both congresses have helped promote the creation of networks and Church initiatives in a spirit of solidarity and with special attention to those requiring help.

Study Groups and Workshops

The proposals of the work groups can be summarized as follows:

- 1) This Congress has demonstrated to us that we can and must work together. Many producers television channels share the same interest, goals and difficulties. The contacts with people making an effort to reach similar objectives are an invaluable service. In the Church we have one of the best and most thorough networks of communion and communication in the world. This reality can help facilitate work by professionals and offer mutual support.
- 2) We believe that Christian experience and goodwill are necessary but not enough to start a Catholic television. The Church supports expertise in the technical area as well as in the preparation of content and programming. It would be advisable to create not only a network of Catholic television outlets, but also a network of Catholic experts in the field. It is important that such a team be formed to lead the group. We suggest that the Pontifical Council for the Social Communications choose a group of experts so that they are able to form such a network.
- 3) Professionalism in the work of a Catholic television entity requires

technical and practical expertise, quality journalism, humanistic formation, Christian experience and sensitivity, all according to the degree of responsibility for the entrusted task.

- 4) The formation of Catholic professionals must be of doctrinal, spiritual, intellectual and technical excellence. A specific formation for work in each particular medium is necessary. The formation must offer clear ethical criteria for professional work. A tighter collaboration with universities is desirable, particularly Catholic ones, for the specific and continued formation of professionals who work in television. The creation of networks of Catholic universities is considered necessary to facilitate professional formation. Also, pastoral support to journalists is needed. The promotion of vocations in education in Catholic universities is necessary. A specific hope of this Congress is also for education in responsible use of the mass media by the public.
- 5) Catholic television has to be maintained through normal means of financing and also from the contributions of the community it serves.
- 6) It has been suggested to call on Catholics to understand the necessity of sponsorship of channels and TV programs. The idea is that countries with greater resources might support outlets requiring support in developing countries. We must invest in new technologies, developing marketing models (also commercial), and establishing criteria common for the selection of suitable technology.
- 7) The generalist television offers great opportunities for a Catholic presence of which we have to take advantage. A Catholic presence in general television must be adapted to the formats, programs and nature of the channels.
- 8) WebTV is one of the future goals and can offer lower cost possibilities. People are becoming accustomed to pay for contents of services offered on mobile phones. We recommended developing commercially viable contents to transmit on mobiles as soon as possible. Whether using traditional TV, WebTV or TV for mobile phones, we must offer helpful content on human and religious issues.
- 9) Before considering new types of programs, the principles upon which existing ones are based must be clear. It is necessary for Catholic television to adapt to changes taking place in the television world. More active and dynamic formats are needed. In order to develop the new formats, it is necessary to keep in mind the need for interactive, multimedia dimensions. However, the clarity of the message is key as also are the contents of the various formats.
- 10) The programming schedule of a television outlet is based on an editorial line and an overall philosophy. Conventional television is not

the only model of television. New models of television are emerging with interaction among them. In order to know how to make a program schedule, an audience survey is needed. There is no programming schedule without a good story line that responds to the outlet's philosophy. The schedule must gain the interest and trust of the public.

11) The broadcast of Mass continues to be one of the most widely followed programs of Catholic television channels.

Other topics of reflection and ideas for possible collaboration among organizations were touched upon, such as Catholic TV information services in various languages and the creation of a group of experts in different work fields (technology, scripting, training, business management, etc.). The idea is that they can offer services to Catholic organizations, collaboration with Catholic universities for formation of heads of television outlets, etc. This Congress, more than signifying the end of a process, instead marks the beginning of a new phase of greater unity among organizations as a way to finding varied and useful ways of expression for all.

Basic Framework for the Catholic Television Guidelines

1. Nature

The nature of all Catholic television (CATHOLIC TV) is based on its ecclesial identity and it recalls the mission of evangelization of the Church in order to transform, according to the Gospel, society in general and the individual. This basic nature is complemented with the specific signs of identity and the traditions of the place in which it is located. CATHOLIC TV should be independent of all partisanship (political, economic and ideological) in order to be able to fulfill its evangelising and social mission freely.

2. Aims

In view of its own nature, CATHOLIC TV has among its aims the following:

- To guide public opinion with Christian perspectives and to communicate the life and doctrine of the Church;
- To promote a model of humanity and society, open to the importance and enriched by correct moral conscience and the Christian faith;
- To promote peace and human rights, as well as the human, social and cultural values, with special regard for the poorest, all according to the social doctrine of the Church;

- To contribute to people's understanding of the Christian principles of the sacredness of life, marriage and the family;
- To offer television programming that helps to educate, edify society, promote solidarity and peaceful coexistence;
- To reflect the legitimate cultural and artistic expressions of the population it serves.

3. *Commitments*

In coherence with its nature and aims, CATHOLIC TV should make the following commitments:

The Christian and ecclesial identity of CATHOLIC TV has to permeate its style and organization, publishing and work operation. CATHOLIC TV should make sure to be as professional as possible and to take special care to ensure formation of its collaborators. Whether in news or opinion programs, CATHOLIC TV will verify the truth of the facts and the reliability of their informed sources. Errors will be corrected as soon as possible. CATHOLIC TV will show respect for people and institutions and promote a civil dialogue on issues. CATHOLIC TV will take note of the needs and aspirations of the society in which it is located.

The acceptance of an editorial position also implies the acceptance of the moral and professional commitments called in these guidelines. In the programming of CATHOLIC TV, explicitly religious programs that reflect and interpret the Church today will reflect close communion with the magisterium of the Church and its legitimate leaders.

(Vatikan, Päpstlicher Rat für die sozialen Kommunikationsmittel, Prot. N 3848/06 vom 22.11.2006.)