

THE POPE

Pontiff Lauds Catholic Journalists

Vatican City (NC) — Here are excerpts from the NC News translation of the Holy Year speech given in Italian by Pope John Paul II to journalists Jan. 27.

Dear journalists, friends! Permit me to call you so. Friends, not only by reason of the link which this meeting confirms, a relationship of esteem, reciprocal trust, hence, friendship, but friends also because it might be said you are travelling companions. I thus wish to let you know in advance of this as it were, with the feelings of my heart, of the high consideration with which the Church and the Apostolic See regard your profession. You are communications professionals. And is not evangelization, the announcement of the kingdom and the Church's prime task, above all communication?

Our paths converge and cross. They can cross and unite when they aim at that objective which I indicated in my speech to UNESCO as the "fundamental criterion" for use of the social communications media. That is to say, these must become "the means — and what an important means! — of the society which makes use of them and

ensures their existence. They ought to take account of that society's real needs. They must not be subjected to the criterion of interests, the sensational, and immediate success. But, having the demands of ethics in mind, they ought to serve building up of a more humane life." The Church looks at the world of social communications with extreme attention. She has shown this in her statements on the means of social communication in the Second Vatican Council, and now in the new Code of Canon Law. She looks at social communications in that way because of the importance which it has assumed and will go on to assume even more in man's life and that of the world. Such attention is therefore directed at you in the first place, at your profession: in awareness of its intrinsic nobility, because of the skill and sacrifices which it constantly requires.

This meeting, in intent and in time, relates to the jubilee commemoration of the redemption. Are there links between the redemption and the journalistic vocation; is there any tie between the work the divine redeemer did on the cross and goes on accomplishing in the hearts of men and in the texture of society, and that work which you go on doing through your trying labors?

If a Christian practices journalism as an exercise of an apostolate with the conscience and supernatural vision which are typical of the apostolate, his profession becomes a commitment to the message of salvation so that it may reach all men.

The primary sources from which the effectiveness of such testimony flows is the cross. In the cross was accomplished the mystery of human redemption. St. Paul was engaged in evangelizing a pagan world. With a purpose did he put at the center of his preachings and writings Christ crucified, foolishness to the eyes of the Jews and folly in the eyes of pagans. He did it to preach the power and wisdom of God to those who had come to the faith.

The redemption is a historical truth, an event which belongs to mankind's common heritage. Christ's cross rises up over the course of the centuries, and is at least an obligatory reference point for all. In the redeemer — as I affirmed in my encyclical, "Redemptor Hominis" — the truth of the creation of the world and of man was revealed in a new and more marvellous way. St. Paul made himself an acute and eloquent interpreter of the groans and sufferings pervading the entire cosmos. He likens them to birth pains, arising from anxiety to reach the revelation of the children of God.

Philosophical thought and the literature of every age is full of such groanings, in spite of foundations and trajectories being far from the cross of Calvary, and sometimes even hostile to it. The conscience of mankind is full of them, even with a thousand diversions along the sidepaths of skepticism, doubt and negation.

The more material progress imposes itself and becomes gigantic, the more man fears being squashed by his conquests, of which, however, he still boasts. He then feels the need for salvation throbbing ever stronger in him. And he becomes aware that the source of salvation cannot be found in the works of his hands, but he has to seek for it elsewhere, outside himself, indeed above himself. For, as Pascal pointed out, the truly human is but that which surpasses man.

You have devoted your attention to the crosses marking the path of the history of the last fraction of the 20th century. Those crosses delineate the deep drama of our civilization. You yourselves, for that matter, are not seldom witnesses of repetitions of the martyrdom on Golgotha in our day, of crucifixion of contemporary man, of scandalous violation of rights and liberties of human persons in every latitude.

Avalanches of crises recur with surprising regularity. There are disappointments, fears, bewilderments, many phenomena of spiritual, moral and social degradation. Amongst all these things, spirits responsive to culture and people borne up by elementary wisdom ask questions and are concerned. As they seek a way to serenity, to fraternity, to peace, they invoke a higher principle.

However imprecise and vaguely felt it may be, the need for redemption throbs with particular intensity in these latter years of the 20th century. The cross of Christ imposes itself on all without distinction, with mute but powerful eloquence. And the Church continues to lend her voice humbly and trustfully.

It is comforting to note that many among those who do not see themselves in the Church, admit her contribution to the values of mankind with ever greater conviction.

The world aspires to a universal redemptive and regenerative action. You journalists have a role of great responsibility in such action, because of the nature of your mission, the place which you occupy, and the influence which you can exert upon society.

Rightly proud of the rights and duties of information, you are vigilant witnesses of everything which life offers in the variety and multiplicity of her aspects. But at the very moment when any piece of news, idea, reflection is transmitted by means of the most modern transmission channels, it escapes from the individual sphere and enters the social circuit. It thus becomes a spark, kindling further ideas and reflections. These in their turn go together to form public opinion, one of the preponderant phenomena of our day.

Scrupulous devotion to objective truth, seriousness and intellectual honesty in subjective interpretations and comments are native virtues of journalism. They show the degree of professional credit and the journalist's stature in regard to professional ethics. They therefore give a basic qualification to the social dimension of this difficult and fascinating vocation.

No one is a professional user of the pen for his own exclusive benefit. The social dimension and the raison d'etre — the essential logic — are perhaps the most delicate aspects of modern journalism. It pressingly and

incessantly demands an effort to remain tuned in to the wavelengths of reality, and balanced discernment which may limpidly safeguard the rights of truth and duties toward society. It is a grave problem of responsibility, and you certainly feel all its weight, above all when themes deeply affecting the supreme reasons for existence are in question. This is especially true in the world of today when perils abound that objective truth is deformed and manipulated: a truth which is above all the truth of man and about man.

May I be permitted to point out that religious information cannot evade such criteria. The role and tasks of those working in this specific field have undergone progressive evolution since the Second Vatican Council, indeed exactly thanks to the council. New, wider spaces of interest for religious information have opened up, through the deeper reflection which the Church has carried out on her own nature and mission, with the dialogue which she has resumed and developed with the contemporary world. Proof of this is the echo which theological debates, local Churches' pastoral initiatives, and their commitment in the field of social justice and human rights, the acts of the Apostolic See, the apostolic pilgrimages of pontiffs, have awakened and continue to awake in newspapers.

The religious newsman, therefore, has had to acquire a whole range of special knowledge, leading him to take an interest in all aspects of the human and social reality of our time: a range running from the religious dimension, obviously, to politics, economics, the great topical themes, peace, disarmament, development, the problem of the family, the problems of youth, of culture, etc. All this leads to the religious media practitioner having increased responsibility. On the other hand, it imposes a great effort on him to comprehend and analyze the great phenomena of contemporary society. Partiality and manipulation are always to be rejected, at every moment and in every aspect of the journalist's profession. There is even greater reason for this when what is concerned are problems and situations affecting man and his conscience in what is one of the fundamental dimensions, the religious dimension.

The Church tries and will try more and more to be a "glass house," where all may see what is happening, and how she accomplishes her mission in fidelity to Christ and the evangelical message. But the Church expects that a similar effort of authenticity will be performed by those who are put in the position of an observer, and have to report the Church's life and doings to others, the readers of their newspapers or periodicals.

In the bull of indiction of the Holy Year, I declared that it will attain its end only if it will stimulate in fresh commitment, on the part of one and all, to service of reconciliation, not only among all disciples of Christ, but also among all mankind, and in service to peace among all peoples."

Every human being, not only the Christian, has a part to play in this most grave task. The journalist's mission has a role to play in privileged forms and models. Here returns what we might call the analogy between the Church mission and that of the journalist, which is included in the wider mission of the world of communications. It is an analogy between the commitment to which the Church must attend in pursuing the work of actuating the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, and the commitments to which society is called in order to set itself on the way of progress marked out by peace and justice.

Greater circulation of ideas and information in the ecclesial community, between the Apostolic See and the local Churches, between one local Church and another, will undoubtedly not only be able to favor deepening of the spirit of collegiality and strengthening of the bonds of communion, but can also favor growth, ripening of the individual and collective consciences of members of the people of God. The right and faculty must be acknowledged to individual faithful to be informed on everything needed for being able to take an active part in the Church's life. Analogically greater circulation of ideas and information in human society, among the various peoples and within each people, will certainly be able to favor not only reciprocal knowledge, but even more removal of those obstacles — distrust, suspicions, incomprehensions, discrimination, injustices — which still create tangles on the path toward peace and solidarity among individuals and peoples.

In a pluralistic world like that of today, marked by an unprecedented revolution such as the technological revolution, it is clear that — if used for distorted purposes, or, worse, bent to the logic of any power — the social communications media can provoke further and deeper lacerations in the connective tissues of society. If, on the contrary, they are made to work according to the ethic which safeguards the rights of man and elevates him to be the active subject of communications, instead of considering as a simple object or "user," they can be of decisive importance for the future of mankind, in the process of integration and unification, moral renewal, spread and formation of culture, in a word, in realizing better human living together. This is an alternative which will always have to be constantly kept in mind, in efforts being made for elaborating a new world order in information and communication.

This explains why today more than yesterday even, the journalist's mission demands professional competence and moral responsibility. With powerful instruments at its disposal, journalism can actually forge consciences to enjoy the taste of the good. It can infuse a sense of God in consciences, educate to virtue, cultivate hope, revive sensitivity to transcendental values. Your mission can illuminate, orientate, sustain everything which really helps authentic and integral progress in human society. It can open horizons to minds and hearts, stimulate individuals toward those objectives which work in favor of a better quality of life.

Calendar

METALWORKS - By E.C. Pfeffer, now through March 11, Williams Gallery, First Unitarian Church, 220 Winton Road South.

CHILDRENS' THEATER - "Jack and the Beanstalk," a comic opera presented by The Broque Opera Company, 2 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 18, small auditorium, Nazareth Arts Center. Tickets, \$4.

CAFE - And Cinema series featuring "Boudou Saved From Drowning," Jean Renoir, a light-hearted adaptation of Anatole France's satiric short story about the bourgeoisie society, 2 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 16, Memorial Art Gallery. Film free with cafe or with gallery admission.

SPOTLIGHT TOUR - "Man and Nature as Interpreted Through the Permanent Collection," 2 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 19, Memorial Art Gallery. Free to members, free to non-members with gallery admission.

RECITAL - Eastman School of Music Concert Series presents Alex Shuban in a horn recital, 3 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 19, auditorium, Memorial Art Gallery. Free.

LECTURE - Jim LaVilla-Havelin, gallery associate in education, will discuss the image of turn-of-the-century France in cinema, followed by "Under the Roofs of Paris" film. Free.

KILBOURN HALL - Baroque Ensemble featuring music of Bach, Corelli, Schmelzer, 8 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 16; Musica Nova, Sydney Hodgkinson, director, 8 p.m., Friday, Feb. 17; Intermusica featuring the music of Mozart, Bach & Schumann, 8 p.m., Monday, Feb. 20 - all events free; Kilbourn Concert, Barbara Lister-Jones, piano, music of Mozart, Adlar, Chopin, Rachmaninoff and Schubert, 8 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 21 - tickets available at the Nazareth School House which was Oct. 1983 - tickets \$2.00; "The Music of the Baroque," 8 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 22 - tickets \$2.00; "The Music of the Baroque," 8 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 23 - tickets \$2.00.

conducting the music of Sousa, von Suppe, Herbert, Respighi, von Weber, and Tchaikovsky, 3 p.m., Sunday, Feb. 19, Eastman Theatre, free.

SENIOR MATINEE - "The King and I" starring Deborah Kerr, Yul Brynner, 1:30 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 16, George Eastman House.

NFP - Informational sessions, sponsored by Natural Family Planning Education of Rochester, 7:30-9 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 15, St. Charles Borromeo Church, Greece; 7:30-9 p.m., Thursday, Feb. 16, St. Margaret Mary School, Irondequoit.

SCHOOL BREAK - Programs featuring "The Little World" 2 and 3 p.m., Tuesday through Thursday, Feb. 21-23. Free with general museum admission. "Celestial Cycles," 2 p.m., Monday through Friday, Feb. 20-24, Strasenburgh Planetarium. Matinee admission is \$2.50 for adults, \$1 for senior citizens and children, free to R.M.S.C. members. Children's films, including "Tom Sawyer," "Great Expectations," 2 p.m., Monday through Friday, Feb. 20-24, Eisenhart Auditorium. Films are free with general museum admission. Cross country ski instruction films and staff led hikes Monday through Friday, Feb. 20-24 - Or drawn sleigh rides on Wednesday through Friday, Cumming Nature Center. All programs free with general Nature Center admission of \$2 for adults 50 cents for students through high school and free to senior citizens on Tuesdays. For map and information call 271-4320, ext. 232.

ADVENTURE SERIES - "Bermuda Race," a film portrayal of vintage yacht racing at the 1956 competition, narrated by filmmaker Walt Chappelle, 7 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 22, Eisenhart Auditorium. Admission \$5.50, (members \$5).

AUDITIONS - The Shipping Dock Theatre will hold auditions for "Heartland," 7:30-9 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 22-23, at Strasenburgh Planetarium. For information call 271-4320, ext. 435.

"Born to Run" starring Christopher Crawford, 7:30-9 p.m., Wednesday, Feb. 22, Eisenhart Auditorium. Free with general museum admission.