



## A MESSAGE FROM POPE JOHN PAUL II FOR WORLD COMMUNICATIONS DAY 1993

*"Videocassettes and Audiocassettes in the Formation of Culture and of Conscience."*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

More than a year after the publication of the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae* on the communications media, I once again invite all of you to reflect on the vision of the modern world which the Instruction presented and on the practical implications of the situations it described. The Church cannot ignore the many unprecedented changes brought about by progress in this important and ubiquitous aspect of modern living. Each of us should ask for the wisdom necessary to appreciate the opportunities which developments in modern communications technology offer for serving God and his people, while at the same time recognizing the challenges such progress inevitably poses.

As the Pastoral Instruction *Aetatis Novae* reminds us, "a vast expansion of human communications is profoundly influencing culture everywhere" (No. 1). Indeed we may speak of a "new culture" created by modern communications, which affects everyone, particularly the younger generation, and is itself largely the result of technological advances which have created "new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology" (cf. *Redemptoris Missio*, 37). Today, as the Church strives to carry out her perennial mission of proclaiming the Word of God, she faces the immense challenge of evangelizing this new culture and expressing the unchanging truth of the Gospel in its language.

Because all believers are affected by these developments, each of us is called to adapt to changing situations and to discover effective and responsible ways to use the communications media for God's glory and for the service of his creation.

In my message for World Communications Day last year, I mentioned that among the realities we celebrate on this annual occasion are the God-given gifts of speech, of hearing and of sight which make communication possible between us. This year the theme of the Day focuses on two specific "new" media which serve these very senses in a remarkable way, namely *audiocassettes and videocassettes*.

The audiocassette and the videocassette have made it possible for us to have at hand and easily transport unlimited numbers of programs in voice and vision, whether for instruction or entertainment, for a more complete understanding of news and information, or for the appreciation of beauty and artistry. These new resources should be recognized as instruments which God, by means of human intelligence and ingenuity, has put at our disposal. Like all of God's gifts, they are meant to be used for a good purpose and to assist individuals and communities to grow in knowledge and appreciation of the truth, as well as in sensitivity to the dignity and needs of others. Audiocassettes and videocassettes therefore have a powerful potential for helping individuals to develop culturally, socially, and in the religious sphere. They can be of great service in transmitting the Faith, even though they can never replace the personal witness which is essential to the proclamation of the full truth and value of the Christian message.

It is my hope that those engaged professionally in the production of audio or video programs in cassette or other forms, will reflect on the need for the Christian message to find expression, explicitly or implicitly, in the new culture created by modern communications (cf. *Aetatis Novae*, 11). This should not only be expected to happen as a natural consequence of "the Church's active, sympathetic presence within the world of communications" (*ibid.*), but also as the result of a precise commitment on the part of communicators. The professionals who rate at their true value the impact and influence of the media productions they create will take particular care to make them of such high moral quality that their effect upon the formation of culture will invariably be a positive one. They will resist the ever-present lure of easy profit and will firmly refuse to take part in any production which exploits human weakness, offends consciences, or affronts human dignity.

It is likewise important that those who make use of media such as the audiocassette or videocassette should not see themselves as mere consumers. Each individual, simply by making his or her reactions to media offerings known to those who produce and market them, can have a definite effect on the subject matter and moral tone of future offerings. The family in particular, as the basic unit of society, is deeply affected by the media environment in which it lives. Parents therefore have a grave duty to educate the family in a critical use of the means of social communication. The importance of this task needs to be explained especially to young married couples. Nor should catechetical programs overlook the need to teach children and adolescents a proper and responsible use of the media.

On this World Communications Day, I extend my cordial best wishes to all the professional men and women striving to serve the human family through the communications media, to all the members of the International Catholic Media Organizations active throughout the world, and to the vast body of media consumers who are their audience and towards whom they bear a very weighty responsibility. May Almighty God pour forth his gifts upon you all.

From the Vatican, January 24, 1993, Feast of Saint Francis de' Sales, Patron of the Press.

**The 1993 Catholic Communications Campaign collection will be taken up on the weekend of June 12-13. Half the funds raised remain in the diocese for local use such as our Catholic Telecommunications Network programming. The other half supports national projects such as the acclaimed film "Romero".**

**The goal of the campaign is to assist in evangelizing through the use of modern media. That is, the audience will become aware of the good of the Catholic Church; will have Christian/Catholic values presented to them (care for the poor, action on behalf of justice, love for the stranger, rights of the human being, etc.); and will be called to a belief in God.**

**Your support helps bring people to an awareness of God's continuing presence.**

HOW THE GOOD NEWS GETS AROUND



JUNE 12-13

THE CATHOLIC COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGN