

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE ANNUAL PLENARY ASSEMBLY
OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS**

*Clementine Hall
Friday, 9 March 2007*

*Your Eminences,
Dear Brother Bishops,
Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,*

I am glad to welcome you to the Vatican today on the occasion of the annual Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. My thanks go firstly to Archbishop Foley, President of the Council, for his kind introductory comments. To all of you, I wish to express my gratitude for your commitment to the apostolate of social communications, the importance of which cannot be underestimated in our increasingly technological world.

The field of social communications is fast-changing. While the print media struggles to maintain circulation, other forms of media such as radio, television and the internet are developing at an extraordinary rate. Against the backdrop of globalization, this ascendancy of the electronic media coincides with its increasing concentration in the hands of a few multinational conglomerates whose influence crosses all social and cultural boundaries.

What have been the outcomes and effects of this rise in the media and entertainment industries? I know this question is one that commands your close attention. Indeed, given the media's pervasive role in shaping culture, it concerns all people who take seriously the well-being of civic society.

Undoubtedly much of great benefit to civilization is contributed by the various components of the mass media. One need only think of quality documentaries and news services, wholesome entertainment, and thought-provoking debates and interviews. Furthermore, in regard to the internet it must be duly recognised that it has opened up a world of knowledge and learning that previously for many could only be accessed with difficulty, if at all. Such contributions to the common good are to be applauded and encouraged.

On the other hand, it is also readily apparent that much of what is transmitted in various forms to the homes of millions of families around the world is destructive. By directing the light of Christ's truth upon such shadows the Church engenders hope. Let us strengthen our efforts to encourage all to place the lit lamp on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the home, the school, and society (cf. *Mt 5:14-16*)!

In this regard, my message for this year's World Communications Day draws attention to the relationship between the media and young people. My concerns are no different from those of any mother or father, or teacher, or responsible citizen. We all recognise that "beauty, a kind of mirror of the divine, inspires and vivifies young hearts and minds, while ugliness and coarseness have a depressing impact on attitudes and behaviour" (No. 2). The responsibility to introduce and educate children and young people into the ways of beauty, truth and goodness is therefore a grave one. It can be supported by media conglomerates only to the extent that they promote fundamental human dignity, the true value of marriage and family life, and the positive achievements and goals of humanity.

I appeal again to the leaders of the media industry to advise producers to safeguard the common good, to uphold the truth, to protect individual human dignity and promote respect for the needs of the family. And in encouraging all of you gathered here today, I am confident that care will be taken to ensure that the fruits of your reflections and study are effectively shared with particular Churches through parish, school and diocesan structures.

To all of you, your colleagues and the members of your families at home I impart my Apostolic Blessing.