Final documents of Medellín

Part II - The visible Church and its structures

XVI. "Social communication media"

I. Situation

1. Social communication is today one of the main dimensions of humanity. Opens a new era. It produces an impact that increases as satellites, electronics and science in general advance.

Social media (MCS) encompasses the whole person. They embody man and society. They fill their free time more and more. They forge a new culture, a product of audiovisual civilization that, if on the one hand it tends to massify man, on the other it favors his personalization. This new culture for the first time is made available to everyone, literate or not, which did not happen in the traditional culture that hardly favored a minority.

On the other hand, these means of social communication bring men and peoples closer together, make them close and supportive, thus contributing to the phenomenon of socialization, one of the achievements of modern times.

2. In Latin America, the means of social communication are one of the factors that has contributed the most and contributes to awakening the consciousness of large masses about their living conditions, raising aspirations and demands for radical transformations. Although in an incipient form, they have also been acting as positive agents of change through basic education, training programs and public opinion.

However, many of these media are linked to national and foreign economic and political groups interested in maintaining the social status quo .

3. The Church undertook a series of initiatives in this field. If some of them did not fulfill their pastoral purpose, it was due more than anything to the lack of a clear vision of what Social Communication is in itself and to the ignorance of the conditions that its use imposes.

II. Justification

4. The universal Church welcomes and fosters the marvelous inventions of technology that look mainly to the human spirit and have opened new paths to communication between men, such as the press, the cinema, radio, television, the theater, the discs.

In Latin America too, the Church joyfully receives the providential help of these media, with the confident hope that they will contribute more and more to the human and Christian advancement of the continent.

5. Social communication media are essential to sensitize public opinion in the process of change that Latin America is experiencing; to help channel it and to promote the centers of power that inspire development plans, orienting them according to the demands of the

common good; to disseminate said plans and promote the active participation of the whole of society in their execution, especially of the ruling classes.

6. In the same way, the means of social communication become active agents in the transformation process, when they are put at the service of an authentic integral education, capable of developing the whole man, enabling him to be the architect of his own promotion, This also applies to evangelism and the growth of faith.

On the other hand, it cannot be ignored that the use of social media increasingly occupies the free time of all categories of people who seek recreation in them. This use provides them with information, knowledge and positive and negative moral influences at the same time.

7. In today's world the Church cannot fulfill the mission that Christ entrusted to her of bringing the Good News "to the ends of the earth" if she does not use the means of social communication, the only ones capable of effectively reaching all men .

The word is the normal vehicle of faith: fides ex auditu . In our times the "word" also becomes image, color and sound, acquiring varied forms through the various means of social communication. Such means, thus understood, are an imperative of the present times for the Church to carry out its evangelizing mission.

8. Finally, Social Communication and the use of its instruments are for the Church, the means of presenting to this continent a more exact and faithful image of itself, transmitting to the general public not only the news related to the events of life ecclesial and its activities, but, above all, interpreting the facts in the light of Christian thought.

9. For all these reasons, the Decree "Inter mirifica" urges all the children of the Church to use the means of social communication effectively, without the slightest delay and with the maximum effort and to the sacred Pastors to fulfill their mission, intimately linked to his ordinary duty to preach.

III. Pastoral Recommendations

10. The ever-growing and overwhelming influence that Social Communication exercises throughout the life of modern man, prompts the Church to be present in this field with a dynamic pastoral that encompasses all sectors of this wide world.

11. Recognizing the right of the Church to possess its own resources, which in some cases are necessary for it, it is an indispensable requirement to justify this possession, not only to have an organization that guarantees its professional, economic and administrative efficiency, but also that they provide a real service to the community.

12. The insertion of Christians in today's world requires them to work in the means of social communication outside the Church according to the spirit of dialogue and service indicated in the Constitution Gaudium et spes . The Catholic professional, called to be leaven in the dough, will better fulfill his mission if he dedicates himself in these means to expand the contacts between the Church and the world, as well as to contribute to the transformation of the latter.

13. Given the social dimension of these media and the shortage of qualified personnel to act in them, it is urgent to raise and promote vocations in the field of Social Communication, especially among the laity.

14. These personnel must receive adequate apostolic and professional formation, in accordance with the various levels and categories of their functions. This training must include the theological, sociological and anthropological knowledge required by continental realities.

15. The training work, in relation to Social Communication, will be extended to people of all conditions, particularly young people, so that they know, value and consider it as one of the fundamental means with which the contemporary world, developing a critical sense and the ability to make their own decisions responsibly. It is convenient to begin this training already from the lower levels of education and should also be included in the catechesis.

16. Due to their character as servants of the word and educators of the People of God, it is equally necessary to offer bishops, priests, religious of both sexes, courses that inform them about the meaning of Social Communication and train them in the knowledge of the conditions that govern the use of its instruments. This formation should be a matter of systematic study in seminaries and houses of religious formation.

Due to the importance that the Church attaches to the media, we ask ecclesiastical superiors to facilitate the training and dedication of priests, men and women religious to the specific task of training, advising and inspiring apostolic works related to this field.

17. Scholars and intellectuals, and particularly specialized sections of universities and institutes of social communication media, are asked to delve into the phenomenon of communication in its various aspects, including the theology of communication, in order to to specify more and more the dimensions of this new culture and its future projections. In the same way, it is requested to promote and use all kinds of research that teaches how to better adapt the work of the social media to an effective promotion of the different communities.

18. The production of material adapted to the various local cultures (for example, newspaper articles, radio and television broadcasts) should be encouraged so that it promotes indigenous values and is conveniently received by users.

19. In order to achieve the specific objectives of the Church, it is necessary to create or strengthen, in each Latin American country, National Press, Film, Radio and Television Offices, with the autonomy required for their work and with efficient coordination among the themselves.

20. These offices must maintain a close relationship with Continental (ULAPC, UNDA-AL and SALOCIC) and International Organizations. In the same way, these Organizations must provide all their collaboration to the Department of Social Communication of CELAM to structure plans at the Latin American level and promote their execution.

21. It is essential to foster sincere and effective dialogue between the Hierarchy and all those who work in the media. This dialogue should be particularly maintained with professionals who work in the Church's own social communication media, in order to stimulate and guide them pastorally.

22. This attitude of openness favors the necessary freedom of expression, indispensable within the Church, following the spirit of the Second Vatican Council. "The Church ... becomes a sign of the fraternity that allows and consolidates sincere dialogue. Which requires, first of all, that mutual esteem, respect and harmony be promoted within the Church, recognizing all the legitimate diversity, to open, with ever increasing fruitfulness, the dialogue between all those who make up the one People of God, both the pastors and the other faithful.The bonds of union of the faithful are much stronger than the reasons for division between them. There is unity in what is necessary, freedom in doubtful things, charity in everything "(Second Vatican Council, Past Const.Gaudium et spes , No. 92).

23. This Episcopal Conference reminds the National Episcopates of the provision of the Inter mirifica Decree on the celebration of the World Day of Social Communication, which offers an exceptional opportunity to sensitize the faithful about the importance of the same in the life of man and of the society.

24. The foregoing observations and pastoral guidelines highlight the importance of the means of social communication today; Without them, the promotion of the Latin American man and the necessary transformations of the continent cannot be achieved. From this it follows not only their usefulness and convenience, but also the absolute necessity of using them at all levels and in all forms of the pastoral action of the Church, to achieve the ends that this Assembly proposes.

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