

SPIRITUAL FRAMEWORK

COMMUNICATION AS AN EXPRESSION OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE AND RELATIONSHIP TO HUMANITY

The highest ideal and supreme example of communication is found in God who became man and brother to us. At liturgy, we pray that we might “come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity.”¹ That Jesus Christ came to earth in bodily form to repair the fractured relationship between God and humanity powerfully exemplifies the importance and significance of real relationships. Jesus walked among us. He listened. He spoke. He told stories and shared meals. He cried at the loss of a friend. He healed others with forgiveness, a touch, or a vocal command. Jesus Christ is the fullest experience of God being in relationship with us. We who desire to communicate God’s love for others and the invitation to be disciples of Jesus must recognize the value of real relationships in our various ministries.

Communio et Progressio,² published in 1971, highlighted a quote from Pope Pius XII's 1957 encyclical letter *Miranda Prorsus*, the Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication. It reads that: “The Church sees these media as ‘gifts of God’ which, in accordance with His providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with His plan for their salvation.”(2)

As the Church understands it, and Pope John Paul II articulated, the history of human communication is analogous to a long journey, bringing humanity “from the pride-driven project of Babel and the collapse into confusion and mutual incomprehension to which it gave rise, to Pentecost and the gift of tongues: a restoration of communication, centered on Jesus, through the action of the Holy Spirit.”³ In the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, “communication among men found its highest ideal and supreme example in God who had become man and brother.”⁴ (*Communio et Progressio*,10).

We know the Eucharist as the real presence of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. The truth that “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1: 14)⁵ is the heart of Roman Catholic incarnational theology. Our truest relationships involve an intimacy where we “dwell among” others. Because of this, our relationships involve, not a transitory acquaintanceship, but the fullest of commitment to one another. Pope Benedict XVI said in his 2009 *Message for World Communications Day*:

*It would be sad if our desire to sustain and develop on-line friendships were to be at the cost of our availability to engage with our families, our neighbours and those we meet in the daily reality of our places of work, education and recreation.*⁶



IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

Technology has, in part, helped to distort our understanding of intimacy. In virtual reality, there can be a false perception of closeness, but it is not true intimacy. In our faith, we understand the truest intimacy to occur when we are in communion with one another. The earliest Christians understood the role of communion, intimacy and relationship building as imperative to discipleship. In the Book of Acts (2:42-47), community is articulated as:

All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one's need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (NAB)⁷

As we fully enter into this new millennium, the vehicles serving ministry and relationships are rapidly changing. Advances in technology have increased the opportunities for the church to communicate her message. As Church, we have a wider variety of means to communicate within our faith community. Technology should not become an expedient and convenient means to evade the complicated, critical and often messy work of building human relationships.

Our goal, as Church, is to spread the love of Jesus Christ through evangelization and catechesis, using all creative venues presented to us. In this way, we become a more complete image of the Body of Christ,

striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: one body and one Spirit. . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4: 3-6 (NAB)⁸

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1. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *New American Bible*, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC December 2002
 2. Roman Missal, Liturgy of the Eucharist
 3. *Communio et Progressio*, On the Means of Social Communication written by Order of the Second Vatican Council, May 23, 1971
 4. John Paul II, Message for the 34th World Communications Day, June 4, 2000
 5. *Communio et Progressio*, n. 10



6. Pope Benedict XVI for the 43rd World Day of Communications “*New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship.*” May 24, 2009
7. Ibid.
8. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *New American Bible*, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, DC December 2002

REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS

From: Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *The Church and Internet*,
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228_church-internet_en.html

To all persons of good will. . . some virtues that need to be cultivated by everyone who wants to make good use of the Internet; their exercise should be based upon and guided by a realistic appraisal of its contents.

Prudence is necessary in order clearly to see the implications—the potential for good and evil—in this new medium and to respond creatively to its challenges and opportunities.

Justice is needed, especially justice in working to close the digital divide—the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor in today's world. This requires a commitment to the international common good, no less than the “globalization of solidarity.”

Fortitude, courage, is necessary. This means standing up for truth in the face of religious and moral relativism, for altruism and generosity in the face of individualistic consumerism, for decency in the face of sensuality and sin.

And temperance is needed—a self-disciplined approach to this remarkable technological instrument, the Internet, so as to use it wisely and only for good.

Reflecting on the Internet, as upon all the other media of social communications, we recall that Christ is “the perfect communicator” — the norm and model of the Church's approach to communication, as well as the content that the Church is obliged to communicate. “May Catholics involved in the world of social communications preach the truth of Jesus ever more boldly from the housetops, so that all men and women may hear about the love which is the heart of God's self-communication in Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever”.



PRAYER SERVICE

Opening Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, who created us in your image and call us to seek after all that is good, true and beautiful, and to grow in love and relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. We ask that through the intercession of Saint Isidore and Saint Claire, during our journeys through technology, you will direct our hands and eyes to what is pleasing to you. May we treat with charity and patience all those whom we encounter. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen

First Reading: A Reading from the Book of Genesis (11:1, 4-9) (NAB)

The whole world spoke the same language, using the same words.

Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the sky, and so make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered all over the earth." Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men had built. Then the Lord said: "If now, while they are one people, all speaking the same language, they have started to do this, nothing will later stop them from doing whatever they presume to do. Let us then go down and there confuse their language, so that one will not understand what another says." Thus the Lord scattered them from there all over the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel, because there the Lord confused the speech of all the world. It was from that place that he scattered them all over the earth.

The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Reflection

The first reading tells us the story of the Tower of Babel. In it, we are told that human beings began to believe that they could create great things apart from God. They began to plan, build and make decisions without recognizing the role of God. Our relationship with God is not meant to be something we do for an hour or so a week. Instead we are called to see that our identity, the relationships we have, and the decisions we make in our day to day lives all need to be rooted in God's love for us. In light of the removal of God from their creation, people were scattered, they struggled to communicate, they didn't understand each other, and their efforts to build didn't work.

Reflection Questions

Like the Tower of Babel, in what ways have I seen people separate their relationship with



God from their use of technology to communicate? How have I seen people fail to act as a disciple while online, texting, calling or emailing others? How does that affect other people?

Second Reading: A Reading from the Acts of the Apostles 2:1 – 8 (NAB)

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, “Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans? Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language?”

The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God

Reflection

In our reading from the Acts of the Apostles, we hear about Pentecost. We are told that after receiving the Holy Spirit, the disciples were able to communicate and have persons from varying cultures and with different languages understand them. As they went forth to do the work of God, the apostles were able to bring people together, communicate with everyone and proclaim the message of Jesus Christ without any barriers.

Reflection Question

What are some practical ways that I can make sure that the way I use technology is rooted in my relationship with God? Similar to disciples after Pentecost, what are some guidelines for what to write and say that will bring people together and reflect God’s love?

Closing Prayer

Loving God, We are thankful for your love. In all we say, all we do, and who we are may we remember that we are witnesses of your love in the world. May the power of the Holy Spirit strengthen us to make positive decisions and communicate your love. We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady Queen of the Angels, Patroness of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles . . . Pray for Us

St. Clare of Assisi, Patron Saint of Television and Telephones . . . Pray for Us

St. Isidore ... Pray for Us



ROLE OF ST. ISIDORE

Why St. Isidore? Alert Communications Ltd., <http://alert.com.mt>, a publication of the Chamber of Commerce of the island nation of Malta, provides the following explanation:

St Isidore wrote books on grammar, astronomy, geography, history, theology as well as numerous biographies. More than 1,000 of his manuscripts survive today but many more have been lost over the centuries. Yet he is today best known for being the first Christian writer to compile a summa of all the universal knowledge of his age. This early encyclopaedia, *Etymologies* or *Origines*, as it is sometimes called, epitomized all learning, ancient as well as modern, using a structure highly similar to what is today known as a database. In this twenty-volume magnum opus St Isidore gathered, systematised, and condensed information on the seven liberal arts. *Etymologies* contains detailed information about a wide range of subjects; from the books and offices of the agriculture, architecture and law to games, furniture and clothes. Contrary to other classical works, it was written in a style that was simple and lucid and these two attributes made it an extremely popular reference work. More than 1400 years before the World Wide Web was created, *Etymologies* put at the disposal of its readers massive amounts of knowledge - a one-man Internet Search Engine of the Middle Ages. The fame of the *Etymologies* imparted a new impetus to encyclopaedic writing within the Old World, and bore abundant fruit in the subsequent centuries of the Middle Ages. Not even the Renaissance seemed to diminish the high esteem in which it was held. Between 1470 and 1529 it was so popular it was reprinted ten times.

St Isidore was bishop of Seville for thirty-seven years. He died on the 4th of April 636 A.D. The Eighth Church Council of Toledo in 653 A.D. recorded its admiration of his character in these glowing terms: "The extraordinary doctor, the latest ornament of the Catholic Church, the most learned man of the latter ages, always to be named with reverence, Isidore." In 1722 Pope Innocent XIII proclaimed him a "Doctor of the Church" -- a title reserved for Christianity's intellectual elite. His feast day is celebrated on the 4th of April.



Pope Benedict XVI in the General Audience of June 18, 2008, provided additional insights into the life and works of this extraordinarily learned saint.

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20080618_en.html

PRAYER BEFORE LOGGING ONTO THE INTERNET

According to popular sources such as *Catholic Online*, this is a prayer you can say before logging onto the Internet:

Almighty and eternal God,
who created us in Thy image
and bade us to seek after all that is good, true and beautiful,
especially in the divine person of Thy only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
grant we beseech Thee that,
through the intercession of Saint Isidore, bishop and doctor,
during our journeys through the Internet
we will direct our hands and eyes only to that which is pleasing to Thee
and treat with charity and patience all those souls whom we encounter.

Through Christ our Lord.
Amen

