

THIRD PLENARY ASSEMBLY: WORKSHOP DISCUSSION GUIDE**THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ASIA
AND THE MEDIA OF MASS COMMUNICATION – PRESS,
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This discussion guide has been prepared for the workshop sessions of the Third Plenary Assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), held at the Lux Mundi Seminary, in Sampran, Thailand, near Bangkok, 20th-27th October, 1982. The theme of the Plenary Assembly is: "The Church – a Community of Faith in Asia."

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Part One

The pastoral action of the Catholic Church in Asia regarding the media of mass communication is best discussed in the light of the Church's recent practice and thought in matters of communications, especially if this practice and thought are examined with reference to the present international debate on communications issues.

1. The Church's Practice

The Church's pastoral action in the last few decades embodies at least three different trends. Firstly, the Church has wanted to protect her flock against the presumed or actual nefarious influence of the mass media. Her main action, plausible in a monolithic world, was clear and definitive; censorship. Some books, some dramas, some films were declared sinful and leading to sin. Secondly, as times changed, censorship became less and less relevant even to devoted Catholics. Since the Church could no more prevent her sons and daughters from consuming programs she deemed poisonous, she felt challenged to combat the worldly influence of the media with her own use of these media. Thirdly, along with other people of goodwill, the Church started to reconsider the media in themselves and to assess their function in society.

At first (Trends I and II), the Church looked at the media – in order to control and use them – from the outside. Later on, she began to look at them from the inside. She discovered that the ideal of service of the world which the II Vatican Council had formulated finds an area of application in the mass media, for the communication media constitute one of the main forms of contemporary social life. They are social interaction, power structures, people – rich and poor, just and unjust. They are the world to evangelize.

The following table indicates the Church's attitude, action and position regarding the mass media of communication in recent years.

Evolution of the Relationship Church – Media

	Attitude	Action	Position
Trend I	suspicion & rejection	censorship & control	outside
Trend II	irritation & ambition	use at any cost	marginal
Trend III	critical understanding	discriminatory use & compassionate service	inside

The three trends sketchily described above developed successively in time but one trend did not replace the previous one. The second trend added to the first and the third added to the first two. It is contended here that the pastoral concerns which appeared in the three successive trends are complementary. It would be a loss to the Church if one concern obliterated the

other two. The question which today confronts pastors is that of blending realistic suspicion — even occasional rejection — of the media with critical understanding. How to lead the faithful in compassionate service of the media and, at the same time, how to protect them against these media? How to situate oneself both inside and outside this world which awaits the salvific action of Christ? Only tolerance — indeed loving acceptance — of diverse attitudes and approaches can lead to a flexible, rich response to the media. There are only too many examples of Church persons who antagonized other members of the Church by their narrow, dogmatic, exclusive, approaches: e.g., have not proponents of group media at times discouraged those working in the mass media? Have not some of those having an exclusive concern for censorship discouraged those who seek to serve the media compassionately? Have not some of those who advocate critical analysis excessively inhibited the action of those using the media for the Kingdom? Yet, proponents of any of the attitudes or actions mentioned above can find Church texts to buttress their positions/oppositions. The relationship of the Church with the communication media is indeed complex.

2. The Church's Thought

A thorough discussion of Church's statements on mass communication media would exceed the limits of this discussion guide. It is proposed to examine a few recent texts spelling out different aspects of the Church's relationship with the mass media — press, film, radio and television. The documents quoted hereafter do not, of course, carry the same degree of authority. They are:

- IM *Inter Mirifica*, Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication, II Vatican Council, 1963.
- CP *Communio et Progressio*, Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication, written by order of the II Vatican Council, 1971.
- EN *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope Paul VI, 1975.
- P *Puebla*, Evangelization at Present and in the Future of Latin America. Conclusions. Third General Conference of Latin American Bishops, 1979.

a) The Mass Media at the service of Evangelization

The Church claims as a birthright the use and possession of all instruments of this kind which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and for every activity undertaken on behalf of man's salvation. (IM, No. 3)

Given the sublime aim of the Church, costs and technical difficulties should not deter her from using the media.

It would be dishonorable indeed if sons of the Church sluggishly allowed the word of salvation to be silenced or impeded by the technical difficulties and the admittedly enormous expenses which are characteristic of these instruments. Hence the Sacred Synod admonishes these sons that they are duty bound to uphold and assist Catholic newspapers, magazines, movie enterprises, and radio and television stations and programs whose main purpose is to spread and defend the truth and to strengthen the Christian texture of human society. (IM, No. 17)

This is Trend II language. A shift from Trend I to Trend II is incorporated into IM by a request — which Paul VI granted — that the duties and competence of the then Secretariat for the Supervision of Publications and Entertainment be extended. The Secretariat is now known as the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications Media. (IM, No. 19, note)

This second trend of thought is emphasized in EN:

The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not use these powerful means (of mass communication) for it is through them that she proclaims from the housetops the message of which she is the depository. In them she finds a modern and effective version of the pulpit. (EN, No. 45)

b) The Primacy of Interpersonal Communication

However, there is in EN a shift from Trend II to Trend III. It is demanded that the Gospel

reach vast numbers of people, but with the capacity of piercing the conscience of each individual, of implanting itself in his heart as though he were the only person being addressed, with all his most individual and personal qualities and evoke an entirely personal adherence and commitment. (EN, No. 45)

This concern for the individual within the mass, for the primacy of interpersonal communication over the necessary mass communication is foremost in the present international debate on the communication media.

c) Communication for Communion and Development

The Church is concerned with the unity of man and womankind because "God has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another ("communicate" with one another) in a spirit of brotherhood." (II Vat. Council, "The Church Today," No. 42, integrating a text from *Lumen Gentium*, No. 1). But the communion — or disunion — of men is lived by them within social structures among which are the communication media and institutions. The communion of men depends on the development of just and efficient social structures and, in particular, on just and efficient social communication. That is why the first word of the Pastoral Instruction on social communication issued by the Church in 1971 is *COMMUNIO*. And the second word rightly is *PROGRESSIO*. The phrase "*communio et progressio*," communion and development, defines the goal of the Church in her communication ministry. The twin concepts of communion and development are, in fact, an application to social communication of the twin concepts of faith and justice. To promote social communication is to promote faith and justice. Indeed, as an expert has suggested, the very notion of a more "balanced flow" of communication in the world today is "perhaps the most recent incarnation of the millennial concept of justice."¹

d) The Church's Service in the Field of Social Communication

The Church hopes that, as a result of her *spiritual contribution*, the basic nature of social communication will be more clearly appreciated. The Church hopes too that *the dignity of the human person*, both communicator and recipient, will be better understood and respected. In this way this social interplay that makes neighbors of men can lead to true communion. (CP, No. 102, emphasis added)

This is Trend III thinking. Christian communicators are expected to effect this spiritual contribution granted that

they are not at this work in order to dominate the media with their viewpoint. Rather, they aim to give a service . . . (CP, No. 103)

The complex — at least twofold — relationship of the Church with the media is formulated in terms of the Catholics'

different commitments to further human progress in the light of the Gospel both by *making their proper contribution* to social communication and by *using these God-given methods* themselves. (CP, No. 133, emphasis added)

This reciprocal relationship is strongly emphasized by the very structure of the entire document. In Part Three on “the commitment of Catholics in the media,” Chapters I and II deal with “the contribution of Catholics to social communication” and “the contribution of communication media to Catholics.” (CP, No. 102-134)

e) **The best conditions for the proper working of Communications Media**

The Church’s thinking on Trends II and III lines does not mean she has abandoned her traditional teaching and pastoral concern of the Trend I type. But there has been an “aggiornamento.” The Church today is more concerned with “the dignity of the human person” (CP, No. 102) and with the protection and promotion of human rights, than with the good or bad qualities of particular media programmes. CP has made an acknowledged ² contribution to the definition of those human rights which are now emerging because of the advent of new forms of communication. CP likens public opinion to “the natural echo of actual events and situations as reflected more or less spontaneously in the minds and judgements of men.” (CP, No. 24 quoting Pius XII) It discusses freedom of speech (CP, No. 25), freedom to express ideas and attitudes (CP, No. 26), freedom to assess and compare differing views (*ibid.*), freedom of access to the sources and channels of information (CP, No. 33), the right to information (*ibid.*), the duty to seek information (CP, No. 34), freedom of communication, the free flow of information and opinion (CP, No. 46), freedom to spread information (CP, No. 47), freedom of access to the media (*ibid.*), all of which, it is said, have to be reconciled with the rights to privacy and to secrecy. (CP, No. 42)

Having these rights of the human person in mind, the Church discusses the best conditions for the proper working of the communications media in human society. CP goes into specifics. For instance, commenting on the role of civil authorities and referring to the Second Vatican Council which

explained that man’s freedom is to be respected as far as possible, and curtailed only when and in so far as necessary. (Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Humanae Dignitatis*, No. 7)

CP goes on to say that

editorial censorship, therefore, should only be used in the very last extremity. (CP, No. 86)

But freedom is to be protected not only in the face of civil authorities. CP states:

It is right that . . . freedom of communication and the right to be informed be established in law and guarded from excessive economic, political and ideological pressures that might weaken them. (CP, No. 87)

This last statement indicates a wide range of actions which the Church might undertake or support.

f) Social Communication and the Sociocultural Reality of Each Country

In their Third General Conference, the Bishops of Latin America recognized that

Social communication is conditioned by the sociocultural reality of our countries. It, in turn, is one of the determining factors in maintaining that reality. (P, No. 1067)

While P does not discuss the concrete mechanisms which interlink sociocultural reality and social communication, it offers an overview of the communication media in Latin American countries which has relevance to several Asian countries. The Bishops said:

We recognize that the media of social communication are factors for communication; that they contribute to the integration of Latin America and to the expansion and democratization of culture; that they also contribute to the entertainment of people, particularly those who live outside the great urban centers; and that they increase people's capacity for perception and sensory acuteness through auditory and visual stimuli.

Despite these positive aspects, we must denounce the control and ideological manipulation of these media of social communication exercised by political and economic power-groups. They seek to maintain the status quo, or even to create a new order of dependence and domination; or else they seek to subvert the existing order and to create one that is the very antithesis of it. Exploitation of passions, feelings, violence, and sex for consumeristic purposes constitutes a flagrant violation of individual rights. The same is true of indiscriminate use of messages, either subliminal or repetitive, which show little respect for the person — the family in particular. (P 1068, 1069)

3. The Current International Debate on Communication Issues – the MacBride Report

The Church's involvement in communications is becoming increasingly more complex and more profound in response to the development of the communication media. For these are now omnipresent. They exercise a multiform influence on the consciousness of contemporary man. Through her practice and thought the Church offers her spiritual contribution to the milieu where she bears witness to Christ. But at the same time the Church is influenced by that milieu. In particular, she finds in it enlightenment on the media, and indirectly on her eventual role regarding these media. For never before has the international community been so keenly aware of the role communications play in man's life. The Church has received the media of communication as a gift of God; she may also receive as God's gift the body of thoughts on communication issues which is being – so painfully! – articulated in the present international debate. Today the Church does not confront only the reality of the communication media; she also considers in the light of Christ's own Spirit man's awareness of the significance of these media for an ever more human life especially in Third World countries. That growing awareness will now be discussed.

Third World-ism started in 1956 when a number of developing countries grouped to propel the nonaligned countries movement. In the last few decades nearly 80 countries acquired independence. Next to the First and Second Worlds, the Third World countries have begun to make their voices heard in the international community. Since the sixties they have demanded a New International Economic Order and, related to it, a New International Information Order. The UNESCO has been the forum for their discussions. Today countries from the First and Second Worlds also strive for the establishment of a new order, whereas other countries – with support from Third World countries as well – oppose change and advocate the maintenance of the status quo. The debate came to a culminating point in 1978 when the members of UNESCO unanimously passed a Declaration on the mass media and their contribution to fostering peace. However, the consensus, arrived at after nearly 10 years of negotiation, was fragile and touched upon matters like the so-called freeflow of information, about which most countries were extremely sensitive. In order to clarify issues and to encourage a rational approach to the debate, the UNESCO appointed in 1979 a commission, headed by Mr. Sean MacBride, to survey present communication problems and to propose solutions to these problems. The Commission completed its difficult task in two years and presented its report to the UNESCO General Conference of Belgrade in 1980. The Report has been widely commented upon. Not a few in the Western countries have criticized it strongly for its alleged stand against the freedom of the press. Some critics in Third World countries have found that the Report did not go far enough.

It is not possible fully to discuss the Report within these few pages. We are not concerned so much with the Report as a text as we are with the process which the text formulates for us. The process is political in the noblest sense. It has to do with an international dialogue to arrive at a more just world without having recourse to violent confrontation and suicidal war. Whatever the Church says or does in matters of communications either fosters this dialogue or hinders it from progressing. Even if it were possible for her to withdraw, her very withdrawal would not be neutral. And the question on which she thus cannot be neutral is that of justice. It is therefore imperative that in offering her "spiritual contribution" (CP, No. 102), the Church be fully aware of the concrete nature of today's communications problems and what sort of action contributes to resolving them or aggravates them. In this she may find much help in the MacBride Report which is a sort of encyclopedia of *facts* pertaining to communications, of *approaches* to the management of communication with their respective merits and demerits, and of *guiding principles* for action. These facts, approaches and guidelines can be summarized thus:

a) Facts

There are disparities in the communication facilities available to the world today. Some of these disparities perpetuate unjust situations.

The development of communication technology has created a dilemma for most Asian countries. To use the new technologies is to expose themselves to alien control, not to use them is to deprive themselves of power.

Some of the disparities are embodied in Transnationals.

b) Approaches

There is a tendency to ever greater concentration of communication power in a few hands with consequent domination of communication contents and imbalances in the world flow of information.

On the other hand, in all countries some people strive for a democratization of communication and for a sharper definition of an emerging human right, the right to communicate.

c) Guiding principles

The following guiding principles with particular relevance to the Church in Asia are excerpted from the 82 Recommendations of the Commission. (*Report*, pp. 253-272)

1. Do not think of communication as an incidental service, but integrate it in an overall development policy. (No. 1)

What is said of development applies to evangelization and to pastoral policies.

2. Contribute to establishing or developing essential elements of your communication systems and adequate training facilities. (Nos. 5, 10)

The real need for communications and training facilities which is so strongly felt in developing countries is for the Church an invitation and an opportunity to serve.

3. Give adequate financing to development/support of communication. (No. 11)

The same may be said of evangelization and pastoral projects.

4. Education systems should prepare young people for communication activities. (No. 15)

The Church has already contributed to this in some countries. Much remains to be done.

5. Evaluate the positive and negative social implications of the introduction of new communication technologies (No. 24), and promote participation in that evaluation (No. 25).

This would contribute to the democratization of communication.

6. Ensure that creative artists and various grassroots groups can make their voices heard through the media. (No. 29)

Democratization.

7. Contribute to reducing the commercialization of communication. (Nos. 31-33)

Collective discernment is required.

8. Contribute to the fulfilment of human rights, expose infringements, support those whose rights have been neglected or violated, promote the just cause of peoples struggling for freedom. (Nos. 52, 53)

A spiritual contribution in these areas can hardly be divorced from political action.

9. Enlarge sources of information needed by citizens in their everyday life. (No. 55)

Church media can contribute significantly to making information available and "consumable."

10. Censorship and arbitrary control of information should be abolished. (No. 56)

11. Give attention to obstacles and restrictions which derive from the concentration of media ownership. (No. 57)

Without being sufficiently aware of it, the Church has a concentration of media in her hands, at the regional and diocesan levels.

12. Attention should be paid to the communication needs of women. (No. 60)

First, the Church would have to become more fully aware of those needs.

13. Readers, listeners and viewers should not be treated as passive receivers of information. (No. 63)

Unfortunately, as a result of habits they at times want to be considered such.

14. Think of ways whereby the management of the media could be democratized. (No. 65)

Democratization is never achieved once for all. The natural tendency is always towards non-democratic communication.

These guiding principles aim at fostering the democratization of communication, that is, at creating a communicational environment in which the individual's rights can be fulfilled and his human dignity fostered. It is clear that the Church can contribute to the implementation of these goals. The modalities of her contribution shall now be examined.

Part Two

The Church offers a vision of what communication should be that goes far beyond anything in the (MacBride) Report, but internally it is not yet practising what the Report proposes any better than does the average member-state of UNESCO.³

The Church can only address communications problems with great humility. She should constantly examine whether her own communications are democratic. For, should she maintain undemocratic forms of communication, her own members would find it difficult to foster democratic communication outside the Church and to communicate at all within the Church.

1. Points Requiring Elucidation

It would be useful first to clarify a number of points in order to arrive at an adapted and varied communication ministry.

a) Communications Personnel

For quite some time now those priests and religious persons who use audio-visual aids in their ministry are called "communicators." This appellation is misleading. The ministry of the Church is a communication ministry, and hence any one carrying a mission on behalf of the Church is a communicator — whether he uses modern audio-visual aids or not. It is suggested that only those Church persons be termed communicators whose ministry is to work as program-workers, trainers and critics in the mass media of the radio, press, television and cinema. This restriction in the use of the term would permit a more accurate assessment of the strength of the Church personnel assigned to that ministry.

b) The Church's Elected Relationship with the Media of Mass Communication

The Church has only one mission, namely to proclaim Christ's message and thus to build up the Kingdom of God. But circumstances are varied. And, hence, in the fulfillment of her mission the Church may be prompted either to *use the mass media* to preach the Gospel or to *contribute to the healthy functioning of these media*. In the latter case, the Church proclaims that the Kingdom is at hand by effecting the healing influence of Christ in the media institutions. In the former case, she uses these same institutions to preach. It is not always possible for the same Church-institutions to exercise these two functions. That is why there is tendency to create two types of communication centers. Some centers aim at the

personal growth of their public — Christian and non-Christian — in the life of faith. Other centers address Christians and non-Christians alike but aim at their overall human development, including their spiritual development. Both types of centers, inasmuch as they are Church's centers, are Christian centers. But it would be misleading to speak of "Christian Communication" for whatever type of center. For, communication is not Christian or non-Christian: it can only be healthy or non-healthy. It would also be misleading to seek to distinguish the two types of centers on the ground that one would be pastoral (the center for evangelization and catechetics), and the other, non-pastoral (the center for development). Both the centers are pastoral, though in different ways. Both the centers are expressions of the multiform pastoral concern of the Church.

What a Church communications center is meant for is a matter of policy to be defined by the competent authority in the context of an all-embracing pastoral strategy. An audio-visual center may exist primarily for evangelization and catechetics and also serve development needs. On the other hand, a center may exist primarily as a professional communication center. In that case, it belongs to various Church commissions to utilize the expertise and facilities of the center for their own specific aims. There is no one, exclusive formula. However, it may be argued that in poor Church-communities the use of expensive mass media equipments for the exclusive service of the Church seems to be at odds with the simplicity of the Gospel message which the Church has to preach. It might also suggest, in some instances, that a community suffers from what could be termed a "technological messianism."

The selection by a Church of a particular relationship with the mass media of communication is a matter for community discernment. The democratization of communication may well begin in this selection.

c) The Nature and Quality of Communication

Communication is a process. It is neither a thing nor a person. Hence, while communication institutions or persons (communicators) can be given tasks to accomplish, communication cannot be an agent capable of performing tasks. As a process, communication contributes to the economy of the social organism. It could be compared to an organ of the human body, like the heart, for instance. The heart has its function, to pump the blood in the entire organism. The heart could not be given tasks. It performs its function either wholesomely or badly. So also communication. Its function is the exchange of message within the social organism. This contribution may be more or less wholesome according to the manner in which communication is managed. In general, non-democratic communication processes are not wholesome and do not contribute to the welfare of the community.

The democratic character of wholesome communication and the demand today for the democratization of communications should not, it is suggested, be dismissed lightly as of no concern to bishops or to Church institutions. The concept of democratic communication and that of divine mandate have to be confronted, and the ensuing difficulties have to be solved at both the theological and existential levels. This confrontation may be an opportunity for the community of faith to grow around its spiritual leader – the bishop.

2. Various Forms of Mass Communication Ministry

How can the Church shed the light of the Gospel on the mass media of communication and thus offer her spiritual contribution? How can she help the “recipients” to answer the call of Christ in/through the media? Four groups of communication ministries can be mentioned.

a) Production

Through her “communicators” the Church can translate in the modern idiom of the mass media the message of Christ. The Church then produces and distributes media programs: films, video tapes, radio tapes, literature, etc.

- i) Some programs are specifically made to foster a personal relationship between Christ and the recipient.
- ii) Other programs portray and support Christian values, e.g., respect of the person, faith in God, mortification, service of others, etc.
- iii) All programs project an image of the Catholic community of faith as Christ-centered yet concerned with the ordinary, human problems of the larger community.

b) Education

The Church can address the recipients of media programs

- i) The ordinary recipient
 - to help him perceive the call of Christ in the media programs.
 - to help him perceive and criticize anti-Christian or a-Christian values (e.g., revenge, selfish interest, exploitation of other persons and of nature, independence from God, injustice, etc.)
- ii) The specialized recipient or critic
 - to propose to him/her Gospel-inspired values.

c) Training

The Church can address the professional communicators

- to offer training to artists and technicians.
- to offer guiding principles in the formulation of and adherence to professional ethic.
- to foster hope, encourage integrity, support worthy endeavors.

d) Criticism

The Church can address media institutions

- to offer collaboration in the building of these institutions.
- to remind them of their responsibilities through a criticism of their management of the communication processes.

3. Particular Problems

The field of mass communication is large and hence there are more ministry possibilities than most local Churches can attend to. A number of problems present themselves whenever a policy is being formulated. Three common problems are discussed hereafter.

a) The Technological Dilemma

The rapid development of technology has placed man and woman-kind in front of a difficult dilemma, as was noted already in Part One. The MacBride Commission used the phrase "technological dilemma," and courageously held on to the two terms of the alternative. The Commission's thinking was termed "schizoid" ⁴ because on the one hand it recommends the rapid development of communication technology in developing countries, and at the same time it warns against possible undesirable effects of such development. In fact, the dilemma *cannot* be resolved. It is too complex to admit of a simple resolution. Whatever course of action is adopted — use or non-use — has advantages and inconveniences, for most actions are ambi- (or even multi-) valent. In a pluralistic world one cannot strive for "ideological purity." And in a complex world — such as that of communications — one cannot hope to be protected from all errors.

b) The Impact of New Technologies on Culture

This problem is indeed an aspect of the technological dilemma. For instance, the very broadcast of radio programs in an area where there has been no general use of the radio may add its own impact to that of the broadcast messages. This impact may prove more profound than that of the messages themselves. Suppose radio sets are put into the keeping of certain persons for community listening, then a new form of power may be created.

This may threaten the structure prevailing up to that point and create tension within the community. When a new technology is introduced, there *always* results cultural change. There can be no change – especially in matters of technology – without some cultural change resulting. If in order to protect a group's cultural identity you want no cultural change, then you will have no change at all. Cultural change as such is not detrimental. In most cases it is an enrichment. For instance, when you learn a language you do change culturally, most likely for the better. What is harmful is a change that is imposed on a person or a group of persons. Then the change is the result of conditioning, at times even of manipulating, and the ensuing cultural change is destructive of identity.

c) The Complementary Relationship of Mass Media and Group Media

The Puebla document puts forward the following proposal:

Without neglecting the necessary and urgent presence of the mass-oriented media, it is urgent that we intensify our use of the media of Group Communication. Besides being less costly and easier to handle, they offer the possibility of dialogue and they are more suited to a person-to-person type of evangelization that will evoke truly personal adhesion and commitment (EN, 45-46) (P, No. 1090)

It is comforting to hear from Latin America that the presence of the mass-oriented media is necessary and urgent and should not be neglected even in favor of a greater involvement in the smaller media. Yet it is almost amusing to find that P quotes explicitly EN, but goes on to say that what EN would like the mass media to achieve is better and more easily achieved by the group media! This is tantamount to denying the point made by EN, namely that efforts are to be made to use the mass media in such a way that the single recipient feels that he is addressed as if he were alone.

In fact, this whole matter is muddled. First of all, the mass-produced media programs are not really mass-consumed. Even if a film, for instance, is seen by several hundred people at the same time, it is personally absorbed in the small group discussions that spontaneously follow after the screening of the film. On the other hand, it is not the small number of persons and the less costly equipment which make group communication "suited to a person-to-person type of evangelization that will evoke truly personal adhesion and commitment." (P, 1090) For small groups can reproduce the worst characteristics of the mass media. Under an authoritarian teacher in the class room, for instance, a slide show can be oppressive, non-dialogical and non-democratic – the exact opposite of what is claimed for group communication. The facts

are that democratic communication never can be taken for granted, and that it takes place only when people strive for it. The group media are suited to person-to-person evangelization when they have, at least to a degree, some or all of the following qualities:

- dialogical
- accessible (in their technology)
- democratic
- emancipatory
- participatory (especially in programming).⁵

Actually, the two forms of media are complementary. They have diverse functions and should not be opposed. It may be that in certain circumstances, the manner in which the mass media are managed invites a strategy whereby the public is made able to bypass these media and communicate through alternative, usually smaller, group media. However, it would be a mistake if the Church chose on principle to ignore the mass media and refrained from utilizing and criticizing them. Her involvement in both these media contribute to her own growth as a community of faith.

Conclusion

Thus, the communication ministry is at the core of the salvific action of the Church. However, in her action the Church joins hands with those people of good will who also strive for the communion and development of all men and women and without whom she could hardly accomplish her mission.

The objective of these men and women has found a clear expression in the MacBride Report: "to contribute to the liberation of mankind from want, oppression and fear, and to unite it in community and communion, solidarity and understanding." However, as the Report emphasizes, "unless some basic structural changes are introduced, the potential benefits of technological and communication development will hardly be put at the disposal of the majority of mankind." (*Report*, opening paragraph, p. 3) Again, communion, development and justice.

The goal of the Church in its concrete realization, and the goal of men of good will coincide. But for men and women of good will communication work — even though inspired by high ideals — is primarily an occupation; for the Church-member, it is a ministry. The difference is momentous. The contribution of the Church is essentially spiritual, but with necessary political implications. On the other hand, persons not belonging to the Church or acting in their personal capacity have a more directly political role to play, as the *Report* did not tire to repeat: "The success of measures to improve communication, in both form and content, is inextricably linked with steps

to make society itself less oppressive and unequal, more just and democratic. This fact should be highlighted rather than concealed.” (*Report*, p. 18)

However, in her communication activity the Church enjoys at least three advantages over secular co-workers.

1. Guided by the Spirit given her by Christ the Church can with great certainty identify the values which require to be fostered or protected at a particular time.

2. Since the Church was instituted to serve the Kingdom in the world she has — or should have — no other interest to further, and hence she can go about her work in a disinterested manner more easily than secular workers or institutions can.

3. The Church can share with all men and women of good will the hope which is hers and which is rooted in the Risen Lord. For what professional communicators need most — beyond any optimism or utopianism — is hope. Nothing could better proclaim this hope than the example of a faith-community, within which communication is really for communion, and with which other communities can engage in a mutually fulfilling dialogue. Indeed, if there can be seen no example of communion, then there is no hope for development. And without communion and development communication can no more function for the welfare of the social organism; it deteriorates into a dysfunction and fosters disintegration.

Footnotes:

1. Antonio Pasquali, “Mass Media and National Culture,” *Media Asia*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1978, pp. 62-67.
2. *MacBride Report*, p. 137, Note 1.
3. Fr. John Orme Mills, O.P., “MacBride and the Kingdom,” *Multimedia International*, Supplement to Bulletin 44, Autumn, 81, p. 7.
4. See Herbert I. Schiller, *Communication in the Eighties*, p. 56.
5. See Gaston Roberge, *Mediation*, sv. media, group media.

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