

**TANGAZA COLLEGE
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**CHURCH AND COMMUNICATION:
The Church's Teaching on Social Communication and its
Application in the Congolese Local Churches.**

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DEDICATION

To my dear parents and all Congolese communicators who strive for truth, justice and peace; and to all those who in one way or another have been source of support to my priestly formation.

EPIGRAPH

“The Church has a two-fold aim in regard to the Media. One aspect is to encourage their right development and right use for the sake of human development, justice, and peace —for the upbuilding of society at the local, national, and community levels in light of common good and in a spirit of solidarity...” (P.C.S.C., *The Church and Internet*, 3.)

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Finally, thanks to my parents (MAGARI Phocas and N’NUTUZO Appolonia) and my benefactors (whoever and wherever they are) for their loving care. May God bless them all and grant their heart desires.

By Jérôme of God’s Love.

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this long essay (thesis) is my original work achieved through my personal reading, scientific research method and critical reflection. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Ecclesiastical Degree of Baccalaureate in theology. It has never been submitted to any other college or university for academic credit. All sources have been cited in full and acknowledged.

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This long essay has been submitted for examination with my approval as the College Supervisor.

Signed: *[Signature]*
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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The Church is all about communication with and of God. Vatican II, in its dogmatic constitution *Dei Verbum*, corroborates this reality and shows that the Church's essence is about communication with God and among her members for "the invisible God, from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company."¹ It follows that the Church cannot do without communication since she is intimately connected with the mystery of the self-communication of God and the making known of his will.

1. Problematic

The Church communicates. She communicates God to her members and at the same time she communicates with God. This communication has not been always easy for the Church. She faces many difficulties: political, social and economic. In other words, conditions of the time influence the way she communicates.

¹ VATICAN II, *Dei Verbum*, 2.

2. Hypothesis

In her structure and mission the Church is communication. But sometimes, due to situations of the time she lives in, she fails to effectively communicate. Then, questions are: “How does the Church communicate?” “How does she understand communication?” “What are the problems she meets to not communicate effectively?” This essay tries to discuss these questions to evaluate some of the practical problems the concretisation of the teaching of the Church meets.

3. Structure of the Essay

This essay is developed in three Chapters. Chapter one defines and develops the “reality Church” and the “notion communication” and their relationship. It also discusses the Church as essentially communication on the model of the Trinity.

Chapter two goes down in history, from Jesus’ communication to our days’, and discusses the Church’s attitude towards mass communication and brings out her present understanding of mass communication as culture creation factor.

The third chapter discusses communication as approached by the National Episcopal Conference of Congo. It brings out the historical and political setups and the development of the relationship between the Congolese local Church and mass media. It stresses the fact that the Congolese Church positively uses mass communication for evangelisation.

4. Methodological Remarks and Sources

To develop this essay, "*Church and communication*", I have used different approaches. A systematic approach helps analyze Church, communication and their nature. However, for the great part of the work, I approach the topic from a historical and pastoral/practical point of view.

The main sources of my reflections are essentially the Church's documents on social communication. However, as they are many and treat various topics, I drew a lot from those concerned with the Church's attitude towards mass communication. This does not mean that I overlooked others, rather used available Church document on social communication providing doctrinal, historical and pastoral/practical elements to substantiate my reflections.

In order to ensure objectivity to evaluate the application of the Church's teaching in the Democratic Republic of Congo, I used some publications of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo of many relevant data and information concerning the topic, at the archive of the CENC.²

5. Limitations

Though it was easy for me to get literatures related to the first and second chapters, it has not been easy for me to select data and information I needed from the National Episcopal Conference of Congo. This was so because of abundance of sources that were not necessarily helpful in my research. It took me more than two

² CENC stands for Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo.

weeks, working day after the other, to get what was helpful. Moreover, it was not possible for me to reach every and each individual diocese in order to get all information about what has been done or being done as far as communication is concerned. Thus, as a synthesis of theological and communicational reflections, this essay does not exhaust whatever could be said as regard to the theme. The empirical field research of the impact and extended application in the local Churches is still to be done.

Chapter I

The Church as Communication

1. Introduction

In this chapter I am going to define the “reality Church” and “notion communication,” bring out their relationship, and suggest some basis for any theological reflection on communication. I shall also show how, in his inner life, the Triune God communicates and expends his communication to the Church which, in her turn, communicates not her own message but God’s to the whole of humanity. Lastly, using Avery Dulles’s models of the Church, I shall underline the fact that any understanding of the Church one can have calls for its own model of communication.

2. Church and Communication

There are close links and close relationships between the Church and communication for, by her origin, the Church is communicated and by her mission, she communicates. The main questions are: What is the Church? What is communication? How do they relate?

This section deals with definitions of both the “reality Church” and “notion communication;” it discusses their relationship to suggest some basis for a theology of communication.

2.1. The Church

What is the Church? Many authors have tried to give answers but not even one satisfactorily says all about what she really is. A single and complete definition of the Church is impossible for it is of the nature of the Church to imply more than what the human mind apprehends and exhaustively defines. Despite all the definitions ecclesiologists attempted through centuries, the “reality Church” remains a mystery. Rightly, in the opening address of the second session of Vatican II, Pope Paul VI affirms that the Church “is a mystery. It is a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God. It lies, therefore, within the very nature of the Church to be always open to new and ever greater exploration.”³

The lack of an all-inclusive definition of the “reality Church” does not mean lack of intelligibility to the human mind. Rather the “reality Church” is not fully intelligible to the finite human mind. The Church is a supernatural reality; she cannot be objectified.

In his book *Models of the Church*, Avery Dulles studies a number of ecclesiologists and concludes his exploration of the question of the definition of the “reality Church” in these words:

There is something of consensus today that the innermost reality of the Church – the most important constituent of its being – is the divine self-giving. The Church is a union or communion of men with one another through the grace of Christ. Although

³ A. DULLES, *Models of the Church*, 22.

this communion manifests itself in sacramental and juridical structure, at the heart of the Church one finds a mystery.⁴

In Dulles' conclusion, one finds two inseparable aspects: the supernatural and natural elements of the Church. In her essence, the Church is a divine reality with divine components and therefore is a mystery. However in her manifestations, she is a structured human society. Communion or communication is not only the permanent and perpetual link between the supernatural and the natural but also between the various components of the ecclesiological society which is the only visible side of the Church.

The Church has a two-fold dimension which involves communication. First, she is a supernatural reality. She communicates with the "Supernatural" and the "Supernatural" communicates Himself to the Church. It is this communicative relationship that escapes from total human apprehension. Second, the Church is a human society where its members communicate among themselves. They communicate themselves to each other and to the "Supernatural" as He communicates Himself to them.

2.2. Communication

Very light and very simple as it is, the word "communication" covers a lot of subjects and activities. As rightly writes Patrick Granfield, "It is not easy to define communication, since it is a complex reality. It is a concept and a technique, a dynamic process that is both interactive and purposeful."⁵

⁴ A. DULLES, *Models of the Church*, 21.

⁵ P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 3.

Communication can mean the fact of communicating, the action of communicating or its result; it can also mean the means or techniques used to communicate: "It ranges from road, railways and telephone system of a country to the computers and data processing."⁶ It can further "be defined as that dynamic and reciprocal process by which persons, individually or collectively, share messages of meaning and value with one another."⁷ This means that it takes two to communicate: on one side a "sender" and on the other a "receiver". A sender is the one from whom/where the message originates. A receiver is the one to whom/where the message is directed. With this understanding, Father Richard Mugaruka rightly joins Patrick Granfield when he defines communication as "a process by which an information is transmitted from a sender to a receiver."⁸ He also rightly observes that, in a broader context, communication can be understood as an action of which the goal is to deliver messages to different audiences (publics) in order to influence their knowledge, their attitudes or their behaviour.⁹

With Father Richard Mugaruka one can agree that, generally understood, communication is the fact of revealing, or making known to someone a thing or reality that he/she totally or partially ignored, conscientiously or unconsciously.¹⁰ In this way, communication is primarily an inter-human relation, it is about revealing, unveiling and knowing or discovering what one ignored.

⁶ F.-J. EILERS, ed., *Communicating in Community*, 11.

⁷ P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 3.

⁸ R. MUGARUKA, *Cathéchèse et Homilétique dans le Champ de la Communication*, 10.

⁹ Cf. R. MUGARUKA, *Cathéchèse et Homilétique dans le Champ de la Communication*, 10.

¹⁰ Cf. R. MUGARUKA, *Cathéchèse et Homilétique dans le Champ de la Communication*, 10.

The field of communication touches all the aspects of the “being-of-the-person.” It has several dimensions. One cannot not communicate. It is of man/woman’s nature to communicate. Therefore every one’s word or action is a communication. Thus, any one’s single action is a communication either in its horizontal dimension or in its vertical dimension.

Communication can be seen at two levels: first, one communicates with others (any one and anything which is not me). This is the horizontal dimension of communication. Second, in the vertical dimension, one communicates with the “Supernatural.” Questions that arise are: If communication is defined as a dynamic process through which messages, values, and more are shared, how can one share with the “Supernatural?” Under which ground is this sharing possible? How does it happen?

2.3. Relationship Between Church and Communication.

In his book *The Church and Communication*, Partrick Granfield defines the Church as “a worldwide communications network seeking to bring the human family into union with God.” He goes on as to note that “communication is at the very heart of the Church, because it sustains Christians in their pilgrim journey toward the full realisation of the Kingdom of God.”¹¹ This is what Franz-Josef Eilers affirms when he writes: “The Church, as the realisation of God’s self-communication in time, is in her essence communication ... It was through

¹¹ P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 4.

communication, preaching and teaching in the power of the Holy Spirit that she grew all over the world.”¹²

Being a structured community, the Church has a mission: to unite the human family with each other and with God. As no human society can exist without the natural sharing of signs and meanings, so the Church cannot. Thus, the Church, in her life, is a clear expression of communication with God and with one another. By her mission and by her life, she communicates with both God and human beings. It is in her very essence that one finds her relationship with communication. If there is no communication there is no Church. This is what Patrick Granfield means when he writes:

The Church has a two-fold mission which involves communication. The Church gathers and sends forth. First, the Church is a gathering of persons into community membership. Most often within a parish context, the Church preaches the Word, catechizes, celebrates the sacraments, and assists the needy. Second, the Church sends forth its message to the unevangelized, to the poor, and to all who seek perduring truth and meaning in their lives. Communication is necessary for both of these missions. According to Avery Dulles, ‘communications is [sic] at the heart of what the Church is all about. The Church exists to bring men into communion with each other.’¹³

From the very beginning of the Church, there is a special relation between Church and social communication. This relation flows from the ecclesiological basis that defines the Church as the realisation of God’s self-communication in time.

Communication is not an option for the Church. Rather it is her mission. Born from God’s self-communication in Jesus Christ – the perfect sacrament of communion between God and humanity – the Church is found to be a community that finds its “raison d’être” and its growth in communication.

¹² F.-J. EILERS, ed., *Communicating in Community*, 195.

¹³ P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 5.

2.4. Some Basis for a Theology of Communication

A theology of communication is related in a special way to ecclesiology. It is a reflection on communication in light of God, faith and revelation.

Any theological reflection on communication has to start with the fact that God is communication in himself.¹⁴ In fact, by his communication, the Triune God communicates himself, with himself and to humanity. This is what the Fathers of the African synod stressed when they based all theological point of departure, as far as theology of communication is concerned, in “Christ, the communicator par excellence who shares with those who believe in him the truth, the life and the love which he shares with his Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit”¹⁵

Another important element to be considered for any theology of communication is the fact that communication involves two complementary dimensions: descending and ascending. The point of departure of the descending aspect of theology of communication is God himself and his self-revelation. “Man and woman would never discover the intimate life of God if he does not reveal himself.”¹⁶ The point of departure of the ascending aspect is the human’s acceptance of God’s self-revelation. In his/her obstinacy man and woman can refuse and reject God’s communication to him/her. Therefore, the ascending aspect of theology of communication deepens basic truths of theology from the human experience of communication.

¹⁴ Cf. P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 5; also see F.-J. EILERS, ed., *Communicating in Community*, 35; see also A. FALCONI, SSP, *Théologie de la Communication*, 3-4.

¹⁵ J. PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 122.

¹⁶ A. FALCONI, SSP, *Théologie de la Communication*, 3.

Without undermining other elements that can be considered as basis of theology of communication, I would like to stress the fact that communication is the fabric of everybody's life. It is by communication that we become what we are, in our corporal, relational and spiritual life. Communication is also the way in which God makes himself known to people and people respond to him. Therefore, to theologially reflect on communication forgetting these presuppositions would lead to erroneous conclusions.

3. The Church as Essentially Communication

This section discusses how the Church is essentially communication. To do so, it firstly discusses the Trinitarian communication as a model of communication in the Church. To show how the Church is communication in herself, it also discusses the models of the Church to bring out the fact that each model of the Church calls for its model of communication.

3.1. Communication in the Trinity as Model of Communication in the Church

One may ask: what has the Trinity to do with communication? Or, what is the relationship between communication and the Trinity? How does the Church communicate concerning the model of the Trinity?

3.1.1 The Trinitarian Communication

Any Christian consideration on communication has to start with the fact that God is communication in himself. God is One but a Trinity. Whatever He does, He does as Trinity. His intimate life, as far as we can comprehend it, "is a profound and

ongoing inexhaustible communication between the divine persons.”¹⁷ Hence, communication is a highly important quality of God. In fact it is by communication that God shows his essence, “love”

The Father ‘speaks’ the Son and in so doing he generates and communicates everything he is and he has. The Son calls the Father and gives himself in totality with perfect obedience. The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son and is the living bond, the perfect and personal fruit of the love dialogue between Father and Son.¹⁸

A number of Jesus’ sayings can help us see how profound is the communion between the persons of the Trinity: “Everything is given to me from my Father, no one knows the Father except the Son and the those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”(Mt 11: 27); “the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves his Son and shows him all he does.” (Jn 5: 19); “...he, the one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone” (Jn 8: 29); “The Father is in me and I am in the Father.” (Jh 10: 38); “ Father, ... you always hear me...” (Jn 11: 41); “I did not speak on my own account, but the Father who sent me commanded what to say... whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.” (Jn 14: 9). “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another counsellor to be with you, the spirit of truth” (Jn 14: 16); “... the Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.” (Jn 14: 26).

The Trinitarian communication is God’s act of self-giving. The Father empties himself and in so doing he generates the Son who, in receiving himself from the Father, gives himself back to the Father while giving himself to the world, in the Holy Spirit. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit live in a permanent communicational

¹⁷ F.-J. EILERS, ed., *Communicating in Community*, 35.

¹⁸ F.-J. EILERS, ed., *Communicating in Community*, 35.

communion of love. They invite man and woman to share in it. Vatican II affirms this when, in the dogmatic constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, the synod Fathers declare that the Church is “a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men...”¹⁹

In the Trinitarian communication, the Father is the only one from whom everything originates. All communication – message – comes from him. He is the “Sender”. The Son receives all that he is and he has from the Father and communicates all that he receives to humankind. He is the link between the Father and humankind. He self-receives from the Father all that he is and he has. He also “self-gives,” for he receives to give back to the Father and to give to the human race.

Another dimension in the “inter-Trinitarian life,” the redundant communion of love that characterizes the Trinity, is the inter-changeability of communication. The Son who receives himself from the Father fulfils himself in giving himself back to the Father, in total and perfect obedience. In so doing, the Father becomes the Receiver of his Son while the latter is the Sender of himself to the Father.

One may ask then: “What is the role of the Holy Spirit in the Trinitarian communication?” Although he neither sends nor he receives, he is “the living bond, the perfect and personal fruit of love dialogue between Father and Son.”²⁰ He is the one through whom the divine self-giving and self-receiving are realised. He is the product of the Father-Son communication and its agent; he is the expression of the Father-Son mutual self-giving and self-receiving in love.

It is in the self-giving and the self-receiving in love that lies the Trinitarian foundation and model for any human communication. “Communication is more than

¹⁹ VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 1.

²⁰ F.-J. EILERS, ed., *Communicating in Community*, 35.

the expression of ideas and their indication of emotion. At its most profound level, it is the giving of self in love.”²¹

There are profound communion and communication, exchange of divine being, which live in the mystery of God. This divine mystery that I name, as far as Trinitarian communication is concerned, “the communicational mystery of the Trinity” lies in the sharing of one “being-God” that makes the three divine persons one God though three distinct persons.

Since human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1: 26) and since God is communication in himself as a Trinity, human beings are communicative beings. Therefore the Church, which is a human society in which the goal is communion with God, is not only communicative but she communicates on the model of the Trinity.

3.1.2 The Church Communicates

The Church communicates. She primarily communicates God and with God. She is a “trustee and transmitter”²² of God’s self-communication; she is the channel that God uses to communicate himself. With this understanding, the Church is permanently communicating and her communication is a participation in and prolongation of God’s self-communication to the human race. In the words of Franz-Josef Eilers:

The Trinitarian self-communication of God in revelation and incarnation is continued till the end of time through the Church. The Church is and must be a living expression and continuation of God’s communication into any culture and time. Through the Church God’s revelation and Jesus Christ’s incarnation are to be further unfolded under the guidance of the Holy Spirit into the ‘koinonia’ and

²¹ P.C..S.C., *Communio et Progressio*, 11.

²² It is the Latin American bishop’s conference of Puebla in 1979 that called the Church “trustee and transmitter” of the gospel.

‘diaconia’ of the faithful as a living experience and witness of God’s communication today.²³

The Church communicates through all her activities. however it is important to note that though a participation and prolongation of God’s communication – not in the Trinitarian sphere but in the world – she both perfectly and imperfectly communicates; perfectly because she is a channel of supernatural realities: God’s grace, God’s reconciliation with sinners; and imperfectly because she is made of human beings who are sinners.

On the other hand, the Church permanently communicates God’s immanent presence among people by her teaching and preaching, and more so by her liturgical celebrations. In all of these, she cannot neglect, among many other communication possibilities, to use the powerful means of mass media and social communications that human genius is daily improving.

Communication is the major concern of the Church. More than common people can think, the Church communicates beyond the simple fact of mere passing on of information, mere sharing of values. She deeply enters into God’s inner life. For this reason, mass media are not the only means of communication for the Church. There are other channels and possibilities of communicating as human beings, starting from the witness of life to liturgical activities, celebration of sacraments and different popular pieties.²⁴ To these one can add the different Church’s organisations and institutions as the Church’s daily means of communion with God and with one another.

²³ F.-J. EILERS, ed., *Communicating in Community*, 45.

²⁴ Cf. J. PAUL II, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 40-48. See also F.-J. EILERS, ed., *Communicating in Community*, 47.

Beyond all discussions on how the Church communicates and what means she uses to do so, she must be seen as a permanent and perpetual communicating community where the “realisation and sharing of God’s redeeming power with men”²⁵ are made present in her every day life. From this consideration, I call upon ecclesiologists to discard as wrong, any vision of the Church which does not favour “communionness” and “communicationness”.

All in all, one can rightly affirm that the most important constituent of the essence of the Church is God’s self-giving: it is in and through the Church that God manifests and communicates “both himself [as a Trinity] and the eternal decrees of his will concerning the salvation of mankind.”²⁶ It is in the Church that the triune God shares with us “divine benefits,” reveals himself to us, communicates his being and receives us. By his revelation and communication, God, “from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends, and moves among them, in order to invite and receive them into his own company.”²⁷

The divine self-giving aims to lift up humanity into the Trinitarian communicational life. Thus Christian communication is ultimately meant to glorify God; it is an act of worship and self-receiving; it is an act of mutual recognition that leads brothers and sisters to share the same divine and ecclesial life as the Father shares with the Son, in the Spirit. “Communication is at the heart of what the Church is all about.”²⁸

²⁵ F.-J. EILERS, ed., *Communicating in Community*, 47.

²⁶ VATICAN II, *Dei Verbum*, 6.

²⁷ VATICAN II, *Dei Verbum*, 2.

²⁸ A. DULLES, “The Church is Communication”; In *IDOC International (North American Edition)*, 27 (June 12, 1971): 69. Quoted by P. GRANFIELD, *The Church and Communication*, 5.

3.2. *Models of the Church and Models of Communication*

Different understandings of the Church reflect different patterns of communication in the Church, for, “where we place ourselves regarding the Church, will determine to a great extent the kind of communication we judge to be the most apropos of the proclamation of the Gospel.”²⁹

After studying a good number of ecclesiologists both Protestant and Catholic, Avery Dulles comes out with “five models of the Church”³⁰ through which the Church’s character can be understood. In my humble view, each model of the Church calls for a model of communication. Paul A. Soukup writes: “These fives models of the Church mark out a range of possibilities for our thinking about the ways in which the Church touches our lives.”³¹

3.2.1 The Church as a Hierarchical Institution: Vertical Model of Communication

This model uses analogies from political society and sees the Church as a pyramidal society where the weight of the Roman Pontiff and his cardinals, bishops, priests, deacons and that of all recognised Church authorities burden the simple Christian faithful. Communication that comes from this Church is a one way vertical communication. In this one-sided communication, Christian faithful are seen as mere passive receivers, as executors of orders while all decision comes from above.

²⁹ P.A. SOUKUP, “Interweaving theology and communication” In *Media Development*, Vol.32, n. 1, 38.

³⁰ For more details on the Models of the Church according to A. Dulles see his book entitled *Models of the Church*, Garden City, New York 1978.

³¹ P.A. SOUKUP, “Interweaving theology and communication” In *Media Development*, Vol.32, n. 1, 39.

“Today, not even a multinational corporation can afford to subscribe to the resulting communication model which is vertical, one way, stifling [sic] creativity.”³²

3.2.2 The Church as Communion: Participatory Model of Communication

This model defines the Church in terms of “a community of people who are bound by both exterior and interior bonds.”³³ It stresses the fact that the function of the Church as community is to foster fellowship. This is the Church as understood by Vatican II in its “people of God ecclesiology.”³⁴ In terms of communication, such understanding of the Church calls for a dialogical communication. As communion, the Church calls for a participatory, interpersonal communication. This is a two-way communication where feed-back is seriously taken into account.

3.2.3 The Church as Sacrament: Symbolic Model of Communication

Here the Church is defined as symbol and sign which effects the reality it signifies. The members of the Church are then the true sign, the true symbols and address each other. The model of communication that comes to mind is the symbolic communication where the Church communicates to both the world and her members as a living sign “prefiguring” the eschatological fulfilment of communion. In easier words, the Church on the earth symbolises the communion that is to be on the last day.

³² AMECEA & IMBISA, *Communication in the Church and Society*, III, 16.

³³ P.A. SOUKUP, “Interweaving theology and communication” In *Media Development*, Vol.32, n. 1, 39.

³⁴ Cf. VATICAN II, *Lumen Gentium*, 9-18.

3.2.4 The Church as Herald: “Transmittory” Model of Communication

This model sees the Church as an official receiver of messages to pass on. “Here the mission of the Church is seen as proclamation of the word to the whole world.”³⁵ The function of the Church is to preach and reach out to all who hear and see her living. She is a transmitter of a message that is not hers: the Good News of Jesus Christ. With this understanding, all media of communication in the Church aim to propagation of the Good News.

3.2.5 The Church as Servant: Intercessional Model of Communication

This model sees the Church as a “humble church walking in the midst of people without claiming special authority.”³⁶ She is a community which exists for others, which goes out to meet people in their daily needs. In terms of communication the Church is defined as a helper in the service of others; she is the “voice of the voiceless.”³⁷

To conclude, these models are not the only ones through which the Church’s character can be understood and expressed. The point is that each Church model we accept comes with its concomitant model of communication.

4. Conclusion

Without pinning down the “reality Church” and “notion communication” into narrowed and limited understanding, this chapter has introduced the links and relationships between Church and communication and the origin and object of the

³⁵ AMECEA & IMBISA, *Communication in the Church and Society*, III, 16.

³⁶ AMECEA & IMBISA, *Communication in the Church and Society*, III, 17.

³⁷ P.A. SOUKUP, “Interweaving theology and communication” In *Media Development*, Vol.32, n. 1, 39.

Church's communication. From this, one can deduce that despite the Church's ambivalence and fear regarding mass communication during a certain period of her history, she cannot not communicate. It is not only of her essence to communicate but also it is the mission she received from the Trinity, whose model of communication – self-giving and self-receiving – she must follow.

Chapter II

The Church's Attitude Towards Communication

1. Introduction

Down the centuries, history has shown a vivid relationship between church and communication. From the beginning of Christianity to the discovery of the printing press,³⁸ the Church-communication relationship knew no hindrance because Christians made use of the various “communication media”³⁹ available.

Ambivalence and fear of social communication arose in the Church with the discovery of the printing. Thus the Church cautiously considered mass media and saw them as “destructors of the Truth” because the media world appeared to be “indifferent and even hostile to Christian faith and morality.”⁴⁰ With Vatican II, the Church came to see social communication, especially mass media, as a means to aid

³⁸ It is Gutenberg who invented the movable letters for printing around 1450 AD. The later improvement of the Gutenberg's discovery brought about revolution in the production of books and this made the protestant reformation in 1517 AD more successful than it would have been without the printing. It is as reaction to the protestant reformation that the Catholic Church developed a cautious, but fearful, attitude towards mass communications and especially the printing press.

³⁹ Here “media” is plural of the word “medium”. I interchangeably use “mass media” and “communication media” to inclusively mean all means (materials or devices) that can be used to transmit messages and reach out to a big number of people. On the other hand I use “mass communication” to mean the fact of transmitting messages to many people.

⁴⁰ J. PAUL II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 71.

in spreading the Good News of salvation; because, by nature, mass media “can reach and influence not merely single individuals but the very masses and even the whole human society.”⁴¹ Lastly, with the Post Vatican II Church documents on communication, the Church sees the communication industry as a new culture and civilisation. She calls for inculturation of the Good News in view of the new culture brought about by mass communication.

In this chapter, I try to explain how these trends have helped advance the understanding and use of communication in the Church.

2. Church and Communication Before the Printing Era

Jesus Christ deliberately used a style of communication which made his message accessible to the lower and rural classes, those who were socially and religiously dispossessed by the politics of the time but who were the main hearers of his message. After his death and resurrection, the Christian “community passed on the tradition of Jesus, orally and then in writing, making use of various communication media available. [...they] maintained not only an oral and written tradition, but also utilized music, art, and images to proclaim, sustain and pass on their faith.”⁴² However, things were to change with the invention of the printing press.

⁴¹ VATICAN II, *Inter Mirifica*, 1.

⁴² P.A. SOUKUP, *Christian Communication*, 3.

2.1 Jesus' Communication

Though writing was the common medium used by elites before and after Jesus time, Jesus' message and teachings were strictly oral. "We have no evidence, apart from the perhaps apocryphal story of the woman taken in adultery (Jn: 7), of Jesus writing anything."⁴³ Jesus' communication reflected the daily communication characteristics of his hearers. In his preaching of the kingdom of God, he used parables and images drawn from people's day-to-day life. He adapted his speeches to suit and make meaning to lower and outcast, marginalized people of his time.

Through his incarnation he utterly indentified [sic] himself with those who were to receive his communication and he gave his message not only in words but in the whole manner of his life. He spoke from within, that is to say, from out of the press of his people. He preached the Divine Message without fear or compromise. He adjusted to his people's way of talking and to their pattern of thought. And he spoke out of the predicament of their time.⁴⁴

Where people seemed not to understand what he meant Jesus could clarify, like in the parable of the sower (Mt. 13: 18-23); the parable of weeds Mt. 13: 36-42). Sometimes he could ask his hearers questions to ensure if they understood what he was teaching them.

In a word, Jesus' communication was a success. He took into consideration people's life and used convincing methods which "cover the whole of non-verbal and verbal communication of his time and culture."⁴⁵ This is why crowds marvelled at him. "... unlike the scribes he spoke with authority. He also spoke in parables, using images of daily life – farming, wedding, housecleaning. He spoke like one of them but convincingly of the kingdom of God."⁴⁶

⁴³ J. McDONNELL & F. TRAMPIETS, ed., *Communicating Faith in a Technological Age*, 88.

⁴⁴ F.-J. EILERS, ed., *Communicating in Community*, 42.

⁴⁵ F.-J. EILERS, ed., *Communicating in Community*, 43.

⁴⁶ P.A. SOUKUP, *Christian Communication*, 2.

2.2 The First Christians' Communication

Jesus' communication did not end with his death. His resurrection and the sending of the Holy Spirit effected in his followers the power for the continuation of what he had started: the proclamation of the kingdom of God.

The apostolic and post-apostolic communities were dominantly characterised by oral prophecies. The whole life was centred on oral preaching and communal relationship among Christians. All members of the community were seen as spirit-gifted to contribute to the building up of the community. Communication was easier and fruitful for it reposed on the community life.

Though the strength of the apostolic and post-apostolic communication dwelt in the interpretation and adaptation that could be applied to Jesus' sayings and stories to suite the local community needs, its weakness was the risk of alteration of the message.

2.3 Christian Communication in the Writing Culture

Another period of interest in studying the relationship of Christianity with communication practice is the period of literacy and its influences among the Christian communities of the early centuries.

According to Peter Mann, prior to the emergence of textual Christian communities, characteristics of oral communities were dominant.⁴⁷ Though writing was one of the means of communication for early Christians, it was not their main one. The majority of Christian communities were centred on oral culture and

⁴⁷ Cf. J. McDONNELL & F. TRAMPIETS, ed., *Communicating Faith in a Technological Age*, 91.

charismatic leadership. However, with a growing number of Hellenistic converts to Christianity, more literate people from all levels of the society joining Christian communities, Christianity came to be “ part of a broader cultural development of a literate sensibility over the oral sensibilities of the wandering charismatics who were the direct descendants of the Jesus movement.”⁴⁸ With this, the new communities departed from the communication style modelled by Jesus. Orality gave place to literacy.

In other words, the written culture brought about in Christianity, by the conversion of Hellenists to Christianity, changed the Christian tradition in many significant ways:

First, the community organisation moved from a pattern of Christian communities based on charismatic leaderships to a new pattern based on elite leaderships. Only literates lead the community prayers and interpret the word.

Secondly, on the dogmatic side, Jesus’ spoken words that were open to “transculturation” to suit various contexts, once written could no longer be varied in order to apply to new contexts. From there on, Christianity becomes a text-based religion.

Thirdly, as far as “expansional” level, writing aligned Christianity with the authors’ cultures and audiences. Where writers did not reach, nothing is known for only written records were handed down to us and they preserved just a slice of the full diversity of the Jesus tradition that had developed.

Lastly, regarding the communicational level, written culture brought about one sided communication model in the Christian communities of the early centuries.

⁴⁸ J. McDONNELL & F. TRAMPIETS, ed., *Communicating Faith in a Technological Age*, 89.

Written texts being fixed became dogmas to be believed in, rather than being “Jesus’ Message” which one was to experience in his/her day-to-day life. To interpret these dogmas, a one sided literate-illiterate communication without interaction came in. It is in this context that homilies and sermons came to be part of the liturgy as to actualise the readings and adapt them to the local and accurate situations, especially for those who could not read for themselves.

2.4 Christian Communication in the Artistic Culture

Throughout history, Christianity has utilised various modes of communication. It maintained not only an oral and written tradition, but also utilised images and icons to proclaim, sustain, and pass on the Christian faith.

The written tradition brought in the Church some consequences, one of them being the rigidity of the text. To remedy this situation and avoid isolation and non-participation of illiterate Christians from the Church’s life, a system that allowed illiterates to read for themselves; namely the use of arts, images and icons was formulated.

To speak of images and icons, against iconoclasts,⁴⁹ Gregory of Nyssa found that “when the predicator has ended to speak, images, though speechless, continue to instruct the faithful.”⁵⁰ Pope Gregory the Great favoured this understanding and exhorted the bishop of Marseille “to introduce paintings in

⁴⁹ By iconoclasts I mean people who were against the use of images, paints ... in the Eastern Church. Here, I would like to recall the Iconoclastic crisis that broke, around the year 720 AD, in the Eastern Church. It was influenced by Arabs adepts of Islam, whose Koran absolutely prohibited the use and the fabrication of images. The crisis lasted for almost two centuries. It is the second council of Nicaea (787 AD) that declared iconoclasm a heresy.

⁵⁰ A. FALCONI, ssp, *Théologie de la Communication*, 84.

churches so that the illiterates, looking at them, may perceive what they cannot read from written texts.” He argued that “what the written text represents for the literates, the image equally represents it to the illiterates.”⁵¹ For him, with images, illiterates perceive what they ought to learn. Thus paintings are as valuable as written texts. This is what, in 1025 AD, the synod of Arras in France confirmed saying: “When illiterates cannot comprehend the written message, let it be taught to them by images.”⁵²

All in all, the use of arts in the life of the Church aimed at more effective communication of the Good News. This shows us that to effectively communicate one is to take into consideration the cultural exigencies of the audiences he/she is dealing with.

3. From the Printing Discovery to Vatican II

3.1 Before Vatican II: Ambivalence and Fear

I consider the 15th century discovery of printing by Gutenberg, as the most important moment in the history of Church-communication relationship. Having been at ease with the mass media of her time and culture, this new invention, especially with the development of books and newspapers, put the Church to fight.

From the discovery of printing to Vatican II council; though some Popes personally admired publications even from non-Catholics, the Church’s attitude towards publications [not only from non-Catholics but also from Catholics

⁵¹ A. FALCONI , ssp, *Théologie de la Communication*, 84.

⁵² A. FALCONI , ssp, *Théologie de la Communication*, 84.

themselves] was generally suspicious. As a consequence, all publications were to be checked for their orthodoxy and some were censored.

When we go through the history of the relationship between the Church and mass media, we discover that “the Church, as well as many other institutions, fought against freedom of expression up to the middle of the 20th century, in accordance with a theory which can be summarised in these terms: no freedom for the foes of the truth.”⁵³ In fact, publications outside the Church were considered as propagation of faulty doctrines and therefore enemies of the truth.

The long period from the discovery of printing to the printing of the first newspapers in the middle of the 19th century can sociologically be seen as a time of maturation of the modern society that leads to conflicts and tensions between the Church and the modern society.⁵⁴ These tensions were mainly due to the fact that the modern society characterised by freedom of expression did not find its space in the Church, since it was considered as a threat to “the truth.” Clearly speaking, books and publications contradicting the Church or publishing views other than those held by the Church were the main cause of the Church’s suspicious attitude towards the modern society. That was why, “in 1479 AD, Pope Sixtus IV, speaking to the academic board of the university of Cologne (Germany), congratulated them for their commitment to defend the catholic doctrine and encouraged them to prevent and to reprimand the abuse of the printing.”⁵⁵

⁵³ A. FALCONI, ssp, *L’Eglise Proclame*, 38.

⁵⁴ Cf. A. FALCONI, ssp, *l’Eglise Intervient*, 39.

⁵⁵ A. FALCONI, ssp, *L’Eglise Intervient*, 30.

During the long period, of ambiguous controversies between the Church and mass communication there was no official Church position about mass media, especially on books and newspapers. For example, when Pope Innocent VIII, on 17th November 1489 published the decree *Inter Multiplices*,⁵⁶ he declared the control of all printed documents. Any document that was to be published without control from the Ordinary implied excommunication of its author, who had to pay a certain amount of money⁵⁷ to have the excommunication revoked.

This position was to be revisited by Pope Leo X during the Council of Trent, on 4th May 1515, when he published the constitution *Inter Sollicitudines* in which he praised the technical progress of publications, defining them as a “gift from God.” However, he denounced the risks they posed in diffusing teachings contrary to the catholic religion and morals.⁵⁸

As it can be seen, until Vatican II the Church was suspicious towards printings, especially newspapers. However, in as much as many Popes were cautious towards books and any other printings contrary to catholic teachings, and later on towards video and cinema⁵⁹, a few of them saw in mass media a “gift from God.”⁶⁰

It was with the culture of democracy, which implied a change of mentalities, that we see the rise of the public opinion. The Church, from then, was to deal with mass communication no longer as “ destructors of the Truth” but as a gift

⁵⁶ The decree *Inter Multiplices*, by Pope Innocent VIII, is considered as the first papal document on the mass media.

⁵⁷ Cf. A. FALCONI, ssp, *L'Eglise Intervient*, 30.

⁵⁸ Cf. A. FALCONI, ssp, *L'Eglise Intervient*, 30.

⁵⁹ For more on the Church's attitude towards video and cinema before Vatican II see PIUS XI, *Vigilanti Cura*, Vatican 29th June 1936; see also PIUS XII, *Miranda Prorsus*, Vatican, 8th September 1957. While the former is exclusively about motion pictures, for it was addressing problems brought about by the cinema, the latter deals with cinema, radio and television all together.

⁶⁰ Cf. PIUS XII, *Miranda Prorsus*, 44. & VATICAN II, *Communio et Progressio*, 2.

from God and hence as an essential part of her life. This is why Pope Pius XII, speaking of mass communication and its influence on public opinion declared: "... the Church is a living body which will lack something of her life if she lacks public opinion."⁶¹ In other words, with Pope Pius XII, the Church re-discovered that she could not do without mass communication. But, is this enough to allow us to say that mass media from then on got their right place in the Church?

3.2 With Vatican II: A Utilitarian Approach of Mass Media

Truly speaking, Vatican II inaugurated a new era in the history of the relationship between the Church and mass communication. If from the discovery of the printing to Vatican II the Church was suspicious of mass media, now she sees them with a utilitarian approach.

With Vatican II, through *Inter Mirifica*, mass media are given an important place in the Church. From then on, the church sees them as "the public place of the modern society" for they "can reach and influence not merely single individuals but the very masses and even the whole of the human society"⁶².

This means that to reach out to the public in the modern society the Church necessarily needs mass media. It is with this understanding that *Inter Mirifica* considers mass media as channels through which the Church can reach out to masses.

⁶¹ See Pope PIUS XII's speech of 17th February 1950. This speech is integrally found in *Documentation Catholique*, 1950, 1064. See also A. FOLCONI, ssp, *l'Eglise Intervient*, 99.

⁶² VATICAN II, *Inter Mirifica*, 1.

Thus with Vatican II, the Church considers mass media as means by which she communicates the Good News. Hence, it critically appears that though *Inter Mirifica* wants media to be neutral, it calls the media to the propagation of moral and Christian values: “the propagation and consolidation of the kingdom of God”⁶³. In fact, “the Council passes from suspicious and defensive conception of mass media to a positive theological synthesis on all the aspects of communication.”⁶⁴ The Church definitively gives up its fearful and defensive attitude towards mass communication. She now assumes an attitude of presence and service proposing the use of mass media to achieve her mission of propagation of the Good News.

However, though *Inter Mirifica* has the merit of being the first official Church document on social communication, it is limited in the sense that it considers mass communication as being all powerful and therefore capable of influencing without meeting any resistance. But, though media can influence so many people, it is also true that each and every individual remains free in conscience and dignity. One can choose to get influenced or not by media according to the way he/she chooses to use them. Moreover, *Inter Mirifica*'s approach to social communication is one-sided for it considers mass media as channels of Christian values. Is this the only media's mission? I do not think so.

4. A New Understanding of Mass Media in the Church

If Vatican II in *Inter Mirifica* focalised its efforts on the place and morality of mass media in the Church and came out with a utilitarian view ; the approach the Church has to media after Vatican II is quite different. Only a few years after

⁶³ VATICAN II, *Inter Mirifica*, 2.

⁶⁴ A. FALCONI, ssp, *l'Eglise Intervient*, 120.

Vatican II, in 1971, the church published *Communio et Progressio*, another document on social communication with a somewhat modified view. The stress is no longer the use of media in evangelisation, – though the document points out that “modern media offer new ways of confronting people with the message of the Gospel or allowing Christians even when they are far away to share in sacred rites and worship and in ecclesiastical functions”⁶⁵ – but on cultures, their values and fragilities. Media are then brought closer to living cultures that they influence and reformulate and from which they subsist.

With *Communio et Progressio*, mass media are not seen through their utility or importance in spreading the Church’s teachings, but also their relationship to the living cultures. This view was clearly pointed out by Pope John-Paul II when he called mass media “the first Aeropagus of the modern age” and declared: “it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church’s authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the ‘new culture’ created by modern communications.”⁶⁶

The Church’s attitude towards mass media after Vatican II can be summarised in a two-fold aim and approach. The first is to encourage mass media’s right development and use for the sake of integral human development. Secondly, to engage in efforts to understand mass media, their purposes, their culture, their procedures, their forms and genres, in order to offer support and encouragement to all those involved in media work.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ P.C.S.C., *Communio et Progressio*, 128.

⁶⁶ J. PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 37.

⁶⁷ See P.C.S.C., *The Church and Media*, 3.

However, a very important question as far as the relationship between the Church and mass media, namely the cultural dimension of mass media, still remained unanswered after Vatican II. In the encyclical *Christifideles Laici*, however, Pope John Paul II responds to the question when he defines social communication as “the more favourable way to create and transmit culture.”⁶⁸ Following the insight and thoughts of the Pope, the Pontifical Council for Social Communication later on elaborated on the question of the cultural dimension of mass media and published *Aetatis Novae*.⁶⁹ Mass media are no longer seen as means for, but as a culture. From an instrumental and utilitarian vision, with *Aetatis Novae* the Church passes to the conception of inculturation of mass media.

5. Mass Media: Creation and Transmission of Culture

In their anthropological dimension, cultures are seen not to be static but dynamic. In this sense mass media are very powerful partners to cultures so that the later express and develop themselves. This means that mass media greatly affect and influence cultures in their development.

For Aldo Falconi, “culture is not simply the memorial of the past, it is also the dynamism and progress of a people towards its future. Therefore, the media cannot do away with culture but identify themselves to cultures.”⁷⁰ With this

⁶⁸ J.PAUL II, *Christifideles Laici*, 44.

⁶⁹ *Aetatis Novae* is a pastoral instruction on social communications which was prepared by the PCSC in 1991 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of *Communio et Progressio*. Its actual publication was in 1992. The merit of *Aetatis Novae* is that in proposing pastoral plans for communication it takes into consideration cultural and social contexts of local peoples.

⁷⁰ A. FALCONI, ssp, *l'Eglise Intervient*, 194.

understanding, one can conclude that culture is that by which the human being is made more humane and gets more and more in touch with his/her being.

It is very clear that cultures cannot develop nor survive and extend without communication. In my view, the communication process is like a process whereby a reality is produced, maintained, repaired and transformed. For instance, mass media have greatly affected African cultures, not overnight but gradually.

In themselves, mass media are “a culture,” and are also factors of creation and expression of cultures. This is why *Aetatis Novae* calls her for an attitude of inculturation when dealing with communications media when it writes:

... in seeking to enter into *dialogue with the modern world*, the Church necessarily desires honest and respectful dialogue with those responsible for the communications media. On the Church’s side, this dialogue involves efforts to understand the media – their purposes, procedures forms and genres, internal structures and modalities – and to offer support and encouragement to those involved in media work. On the basis of this sympathetic understanding and support, it becomes possible to offer meaningful proposals for removing obstacles to human progress and the proclamation of the Gospel.⁷¹

From this quotation it follows that the Church must maintain an “active listening presence”⁷² in relation to mass media. This listening presence must dialogue and support mass communications’ agents in seeking acceptable solutions to peoples’ problems.

Then, the question should no longer be how to use means of communication in spreading the Good News but how to maintain this “active listening presence” and communicate the Good News in and to the culture of mass media.

⁷¹ PCSC, *Aetatis Novae*, 8.

⁷² PCSC, *Aetatis Novae*, 8.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter we have seen that though from the very beginning of Christianity Church-communication relationship knew no hindrance, for Christians made use of the various communication media that the cultures into which they entered provided; a suspicious attitude toward mass media arose in the Church with the printing discovery. From then to our present day it is a good thing to note that the Church, in her attempt to understand communication, has made progresses moving from a cautious and fearful vision to a cultural understanding through an instrumental and utilitarian vision of mass media.

However, is the Church's recognition of the world of mass communication as a culture enough to say that the relationship between Church and communication is doing well? For sure, the Church would be more effective if her members tried their best to put into practice the recommendations she gives. Thus the task of each and every Christian, at all levels, is to do one's best to inculturate, without altering, the Good News of the Kingdom in the culture of mass media.

Chapter III

The Congolese Local Church and Media. Application of the Church's Teaching on Social Communication.

1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the historical setup and the development of the relationship between the Congolese local Church and the media. It highlights the fact that the Congolese political power, for long, was unfavorable to the implementation of the Universal Church's teaching on social communication. It underlines that the "National Episcopal Conference of Congo"(CENC)⁷³ has proven itself committed, though not exhaustively, to use mass media communications.

2. The National Episcopal Conference of Congo

Since the CENC spearheads actions of the Church in the Democratic Republic of Congo (D.R. Congo), not only as communication is concerned but at all plights of the Church, I find it appropriate to briefly present the CENC, its work and goal as far as communication is concerned.

The National Episcopal Conference of Congo (CENC) is a body in which the Congolese Bishops conjointly exercise their pastoral duty to promote the good the

⁷³ CENC stands for « Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo » that I translate as "National Episcopal Conference of Congo."

Church offers to the people of Congo. The main goal of this conference is to, collegially and nationally, promote the Church's forms and methods of apostolate adapted to local churches in the present circumstances. The CENC is divided into six ecclesiastical provinces,⁷⁴ to facilitate an efficacious adapted and coordinated apostolate.

In its fundamental priority –to proclaim the Good News of Christ – CENC forms various commissions each headed by a bishop, to deal with specific questions. Questions related to social communication are handled by the “Episcopal Commission for Evangelization.” Beside the service of communication, it supervises the liturgy, the catechism and the administering of sacraments.

The service of social communication in the CENC is chaired by the vice secretary and supervised by the secretary of the Episcopal Commission for Evangelization. Its mission is to promote, to stimulate and coordinate Catholic media and communicators at all levels of the local church.⁷⁵ To carry out this mission, the service of social communication works in collaboration with individual dioceses and with the “ Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa;” which also is a catholic university owned by the CENC.

3. The Church Media Before 1972

Historically, a decade before independence to our present days, the D.R. Congo has been marked with a permanent interaction between politics, media and

⁷⁴ The six ecclesiastical Provinces that form the CENC are: KINSHASA (9 dioceses); BUKAVU (5 dioceses); MBANDAKA (7 dioceses); LUBUMBASHI (8 dioceses); KISANGANI (9 dioceses); and KANANGA (8 dioceses). The whole Church of Congo is made of 47 dioceses grouped into 6 ecclesiastical provinces making one Provincial Conference each.

⁷⁵ Cf. « Règlement d'Ordre de la CEZ », 8. (Archive); CEZ stands for “ Conférence Episcopale du Zaïre” to mean the Episcopal Conference Of Zaire.

the Catholic Church. On the side of the Church, as far as policy and use of media are concerned, one may speak of the Congolese local church anticipating Vatican II. However, the political setup in which she found herself did not allow further in understanding and use of media. Rather, she was reduced to a simple “caller for” freedom of opinion and expression, right to information and liberalization of media.

3.1 The Government Against the Rise of Church Media

One of the main facts that have marked the relationship between the Congolese Church and media was the elaboration of a pastoral program by the 6th Plenary Assembly of the CENC, from 22nd November to 2nd December 1961.⁷⁶

This pastoral program came as result of the Congolese Church’s long praxis in mass media communication. In fact, the Congolese Church, through actions of her Bishops’ Conference, did not wait for *Inter Mirifica* to positively consider mass communication and fruitfully make use of them.⁷⁷ In fact, if troubles on reclamation and proclamation of the independence were to, on 30th June 1960, lead to the proclamation of the independence of Congo; this was mainly due to the Church’s media, which had successfully created awareness among the Congolese people. Thus, after seeing how effective and promising Church media were, in the Bishops’ 6th Plenary Assembly, Congolese Prelates proceeded to evaluation of what

⁷⁶ Other facts were: the banning and confiscation of the Church media under Mobutu regime in 1972; the liberalization of media on 24th April 1990; and the coming of President Laurent Kabila in power in May 1997.

⁷⁷ Before *Inter Mirifica* called for use of means of social communication to spread out the Good News of the Kingdom, the official attitude of the Church towards mass communication was characterized with cautiousness and fearfulness.

they called the Church's "diffusion technique," meaning the Church's means of communication, to give directives to media agents.⁷⁸

Shortly before and after the Congolese independence, the Church media were promising and effective. Their main goal was "to create, throughout the entire country, a Christian opinion on all the problems that arise in the country."⁷⁹

Though the 6th Plenary Assembly of the CENC decided to go ahead with the same objective, namely to support and create catholic newspapers, radios and press agencies,⁸⁰ things were to change shortly after independence. Politicians who witnessed how effective Church media were in shaping public opinion decided to overlook them.

Thus, despite the Bishops' efforts to create more catholic "diffusion techniques" that could provide Christian analysis of realities and events, the Congolese government abstinely banned Church media in 1972. This reduced and forced the Church's communicative action to a mere reclamation of "freedom of press" and "liberalization of media" for almost two decades. Unluckily, it is during this period that the Universal Church issued important documents to guide the Church's actions as far as mass communication is concerned. The Congolese local Church will only turn to these documents after liberalization of media was declared in D.R Congo in 1990.

⁷⁸ Cf. F. BANGA, "Politique, Médias et Eglise en R.D. Congo, 40 ans après... », 20.

⁷⁹ F. BANGA, « Eglise et media en R.D. Congo », 165.

⁸⁰ Cf. F. BANGA, « Eglise et media en R.D. Congo », 168.

3. 2 *Anticipating Vatican II*

A thorough examination of Congolese Bishops' actions, shortly before and after independence, as far as the means of communication are concerned, reveals that the CENC anticipated *Inter Mirifica*'s understanding of media.

For instance, on 15th august 1959, Congolese Bishops, together with those from Rwanda and Burundi were very explicit on what they expected from Media. For them, media were to be "a constructive factor"⁸¹ of the nation. Also, from the pastoral directives from the 6th Plenary Assembly of the Congolese Bishops in 1961 one notes that Congolese Prelates insisted that the "diffusion work" –meaning catholic printing press, radio and cinema– should be seen as a true apostolate but never neither as peddling nor as business.⁸² The understanding was that mass media should be taken as an important pastoral means to spread Christian values.

Another important point to note from the 6th Congolese Bishops' Plenary Assembly is that though the Prelates did not explicitly call for the training of the clergy to meet the needs and challenges brought about by means of communication, as clearly as Vatican II did,⁸³ they called priests to consider the use of media in their apostolate. They also encouraged all Christian faithful interested in mass media communication to search for true competence and experience in the domain.⁸⁴

Taking into consideration these practical pastoral directives it can be concluded that before the Universal Church, through *Inter Mirifica*, officially called for the abandonment of the cautious and fearful attitude the printing press discovery

⁸¹ See the pastoral letter from Apostolic Vicars and Prefects of Congo, Rwanda and Burundi in *Recueil CENC*, 49-59. (Archive in the Secretariat of the National Episcopal Conference of Congo.)

⁸² Cf. F. BANGA, « Eglise et Media en R.D.Congo », 171.

⁸³ See VATICAN II, *Inter Mirifica*, 15.

⁸⁴ Cf. F. BANGA, "Eglise et Media en R.D. Congo", 171.

had raised in the Catholic Church, the CENC was involved in mass media communication. In fact, it had already laid down some foundation for a future systematic pastoral care of means of communication. Unfortunately, the directives the Congolese Prelates issued were not taken into consideration due to the post-independence government interference in the Church's use of media. The government banned many of the Church's media and turned others into its own means of ideology and propaganda.

4. The Banning of Church Media

As I have already said that one of the decisions of the 6th CENC Plenary Assembly in 1961 was to strengthen the already existing catholic newspapers, radios, press agencies and even, if possible, create others; the aim of this decision was to provide to the Congolese elite a press organ which would give Christian analysis of realities and events to counteract communism which was expanding in Africa.

With this in mind, the weekly catholic newspaper *Afrique Chrétienne* (Christian Africa), created in July 1961, carried out many articles of public interest. In 1972, it published a severe critique from Marcien Towa, a Cameroonian philosopher, of the president Mobutu's authenticity,⁸⁵ which for Marcien Towa, was

⁸⁵ President Mobutu's authenticity was an ideology that preached secularisation of Congo. Mobutu initiated this ideology in 1972 when he changed the name of the country from "Democratic Republic of Congo" to "Zaire." He called for secularisation of all the public sectors. He confiscated all catholic primary and secondary schools, as well as universities, radios and press agencies. Christian names from non African origin were forbidden. Crucifixes and crosses were prohibited in public institutions. Courses related to religion were suppressed from schools and faculties of theology in public universities (Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Kisangani) were suppressed.

a form of communism in the Zaire.⁸⁶ This publication resulted in the banning of the weekly newspaper and the exiling of Joseph Cardinal Malula to Rome. However, the Church did not give up. Alternatively, a new communicational way of informing and forming the Congolese elite was found. There was creation of parish notice boards on which news and Christian analysis of events and realities were frequently displayed, not without menaces from the government.

Eventually, the Congolese Bishops' focus moved from pastoral concerns of "diffusion techniques" to a mere reclamation of the return of Joseph Cardinal Malula to Kinshasa, and later on liberalization of media, restitution of confiscated media to the Church, and freedom of opinion and expression. The Congolese Bishops kept on telling the government:

We want to highlight that the radio, the television and all the national mass media belong to the whole Zairian people. These means are to serve the nation. It is consequently unacceptable that they be confiscated by one political opinion. That is also one of the requirements of a true democracy.⁸⁷

Indeed, the Congolese local Church tirelessly fought for free access to national media, for the release of the catholic media and for freedom of opinion and expression. Though this was a worthy thing to do, she consequently went in a position whereby the universal Church's documents on social communication were given less attention. Fortunately, immediately after liberalization of media and openness to democracy by President Mobutu in his speech of 24th April 1990, a great explosion of journalistic publications dawned. The Congolese Prelates, from

⁸⁶ Many people call the D.R. Congo Former Zaire. In reality the former Belgian Colony was called D.R. Congo in 1908 by Belgians. Twelve years after independence, in 1972, with Mobutu's authenticity, this appellation was changed to Zaire. It was with the coming in power of president Laurent Désiré Kabila, on 17th may 1996, that Zaire was recalled D.R. Congo. By Zaire or D.R. Congo one means the same Country.

⁸⁷ CEZ, "Pour un nouveau projet de société Zaïroise", 262 ; see also F. BANGA, « Eglise et media en R.D. Congo », 174.

there on, turned to the universal Church's teaching on social communication and tried to put it into practice. Was it late? Better late than ever.

5. Liberalization of Media and its Outcomes

For more than two decades mass media were under control of government interests while the catholic media were confiscated or simply banned from publishing. Thus, when president Mobutu, on 24th April 1990, announced his openness to democracy and liberalization of media, the outcome was a great increase of publications, which led to a new era in the history of mass communication in the D.R. Congo. Commenting on the outcome of liberalization of media, Bwana Kabwe had this to say: "the dikes of monolithism had fallen down, the pipes of truth were open, wise observers of the press feared the violent and uncontrollable return of waves."⁸⁸

It was a victory for the National Episcopal Conference of Congo, after a long struggle of the Congolese Bishops to get the government liberate media and give back the Church media facilities they confiscated. Though with difficulties, for many of the Church media facilities were damaged or not given back, the Bishops were not discouraged. They decided to create a new "...catholic press organ to educate people to moral and evangelic values, to development and healthy democracy."⁸⁹ Consequently, many catholic media projects were re-established. For example, to substitute the weekly printed newspaper *Afrique Chrétienne* that was

⁸⁸ F. BANGA, "Eglise et Media en R.D.Congo", 177.

⁸⁹ See Mgr L. MOSENGO PASINYA, "Aux Chrétiens Catholiques et aux homes de bonne volonté." This is a letter Mgr Laurent MOSENGO wrote, to the Catholic Faithful and people of Good will, on the day of the launching of the CENC's journal *Renaitre*, on 16 December 1991, in Kinshasa.

banned in 1972, the CENC launched the Christian bimonthly of information and opinion known as *Renaitre*. In the electronic media sector, the CEN opened many radio and television stations. Radio and TV Zenith (under the care of Salesians of Don Bosco) were launched in Lubumbashi on 24th December 1994; Radio TV Amani of the Archdiocese of Kisangani on 11th August 1995 and Radio Elikya of Kinshasa archdiocese in 1995. With these, the three main cities were covered with catholic electronic media.

However, before the launching of these catholic means of mass communication, the CENC was aware of the impact catholic media were going to have on Congolese public opinion. Thus, the Congolese Bishops decided to train catholic communicators. In 1992, they created a faculty of social communication in the “Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa” with the goal: “to form both professionals of communication scientifically competent and men/women ready to engage themselves and integrate the Gospel message in the new culture ...”⁹⁰

From the liberalization of media to August 2004, the Catholic Church in the D.R. Congo has established many media through which she hopes to reach out not only Catholics but also many Congolese of other faith. To only mention some, bellow is the list of the CENC actions in favor of mass communication since the liberalization of media in 1990.

- In 1992, re-launching of the catholic weekly newspaper *Afrique Chrétienne* under the title *Renaitre*. Afterwards, many other newspapers, journals and newsletters.

⁹⁰ FACULTES CATHOLIQUES DE KINSHASA, *Programme des cours 1999-2000*, 20. The new culture that is about here is the culture created by mass media as presented by Pope JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 37.

- In 1992, creation of a faculty of social communication in the “Facultés Catholiques de Kinshasa”
- February 2004, creation of a federation of catholic journalists and communicators. The aim is to make catholic journalists and communicators work under the same catholic guidelines and policies.
- Though catholic radio and television stations were confiscated in 1972, from 1990 up to August 2004 the Catholic Church in the D.R. Congo already had 17 diocesan broadcasting radio stations, 3 broadcasting television stations, 8 radio and one TV stations projects already approved by the CENC⁹¹. Also the Church does her best to use other private and public media.⁹²

In a word, the Catholic Church in the D.R. Congo has invested much in media communication. She tries her best to use modern means of communication. Questions are: for what does she use them? What are the dominant themes of her teaching on social communication? What are the challenges she meets?

⁹¹ The Catholic radio stations in the D.R. Congo and the respective dioceses in which they are located are: Radio Malkia wa Amani (Bukavu); Radio Moto (Butembo-Béni); RTD (Idiofa); Radio Boboto (Isiro-Niagara), Caritas (Kabinda); Radio Metanoia (Kamina); Radio Diku dietu (Kanganga); Radio Tomisa (Kikwit); Radio Elikya (Kinshasa); Radio Amani (Kisangani); Radio et Télévision Zenith (Lubimbashi); Radio Tutante (Luiza); Radio Vuvu kieto (Matadi); Radio Fraternité (Mbuji-Mayi); Radio Lendisa (Molegbe); Radio Nepoko (Wamba) and Radio Candip (Bunia). Radio Candip was the only catholic radio that was broadcasting before 1990. The TV stations are: RTV-Zenith (Lubumbashi); RTV-Idiofa (Idiofa); and RTV-Amani (Kisangani).

⁹² The non-catholic channels that the Church uses are: RAGA, RTNC1, RTNC4, and Tropicana TV.

6. The Main Themes of the CENC

The pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio* calls Bishops and their conferences (provincial, national, continental ...) to consider it their task to implement the universal Church's pastoral instructions in a way that suits their situations and needs of the people in their care.⁹³ Therefore, it is not surprising to see that what the CENC emphasizes as urgent for Congolese people may not be important to others and vice versa.

The political and economic setups influence a lot the way the Catholic Church in D.R. Congo understands mass media and their role in society. To many, Governmental and commercial media in the D.R. Congo work to serve their own interests: profit making for the latter and ideology propagation for the former. For these, media to achieve their goal it does not go without hardships, at all plights, to the Congolese people.

To the Government, the Church repeatedly addresses the following message: "... governmental media must stop to serve as instruments of manipulation of public opinion in favor of one political tendency."⁹⁴ To the commercial media the Church always reminds about the true role of media in society. Not only are they to inform, educate and entertain, but also "to promote values such as freedom, tolerance, responsibility, solidarity, social justice, sharing of common good..."⁹⁵

⁹³ P.C.S.C., *Communio et Progressio*, 4.

⁹⁴ C.E.Z, *Sauvons la nation* (let us save the nation). A Pastoral letter of the C.E.Z. of 19th February 1993.

⁹⁵ F. BANGA, *Politique et Eglise face aux Medias*, 44.

She also constantly asks them “to move away from and avoid all that divides and hold on that which unites.”⁹⁶

To the professionals of media, either of public, commercial or community media, the Church often reminds them of their duty to be correct, clear and accurate. She calls them to work for a “press of quality” – not to broadcast neither wrong news nor those “onesided” and avoid screening pornography and violence as well as broadcasting defamatory and denigrating utterances.⁹⁷

To sum up, as far as social communication is concerned in the D.R. Congo, the CENC is not only trying to bring media owners and professionals of media to work for the Common good of Congolese people over “maximalization of profits” , but also tries to exhort Gospel Messengers to enter into the media world and understand its civilization and culture to discerningly use them to propagate what is good, true and right.⁹⁸ But, this is not an easy work for there are many challenges to face.

7. Mass Media Communications Challenges in the CENC

In a context of civil wars leading to poverty, of scarcity of resources and migration of professionals for “greener pastures,” it is not easy to think of mass media communications as priorities. This being the situation in the D.R. Congo, in the CENC, there are a number of major communications challenges that the Congolese Prelates face.

⁹⁶ F. BANGA, *Politique et Eglise face aux Medias*, 44.

⁹⁷ For more on what the Church calls the professionals of media to do, see F. BANGA, *Politique et Eglise face aux Media*, 45-46.

⁹⁸ CENC, *Nouvelle Evangélisation et Catéchèse dans la Perspective de l’Eglise Famille de Dieu en Afrique*, 194.

For instance, all the radio and TV stations in the CENC goal for evangelization and human promotion. The realization of this noble objective is rendered difficult by lack of funds. Not only is updating the stations' equipments difficult but also to remunerate professionals who end up leaving Catholic media for better salaries elsewhere. As a consequence, catholic media present no good quality programming, which results in loss of interest in catholic media.

In many dioceses, there is lack of support and investment by local ordinaries and private sectors in the Catholic media houses. This results in lack of funds, loss of interest, no improvement of information and communication infrastructures.

Another great difficulty is related to hydro-electric power supply. Most of Congolese towns have insufficient supply of hydro-electric power or simply not at all and therefore rely on thermal power generators. This renders the financial cost of media extremely high.

For media to succeed not only they must meet the needs of their audiences but also qualitatively respond to them. This is a real challenge for Catholic media in the D.R. Congo. The lack of funds, which results in shortage of media professionals – for even those trained by the Catholic Church leave Catholic media for better salaries elsewhere –, has as consequence poor quality programs on Catholic media. Moreover the Congolese music, which some times is void of any cultural value, seems to take the upper hand in all the Congolese media. The Catholic ones are not exempted from this trap. The few catholic professionals of media dedicated in the catholic media would do better if they could initiate a new programming strategy in order to provide good quality programs to Catholic media. This is true for both

electronic and print media. However, this can only be possible if the Congolese Bishops do their best to financially support the media.

Nevertheless, despite all the difficulties, Congolese church media are committed to provide local products programs. Not only this is very difficult but also very costly in personnels and in funds. Congratulations! I encourage them to continue and at the same time I call them to thoroughly pay attention to the quality of their local products programs' contents.

To conclude, the CENC would do better to initiate concrete actions for a more adapted system of communication to the needs and situations of Congolese people. To do so, the Church must first initiate community projects to develop the country and urge the Congolese government and internal donors to do something to develop Congolese basic infrastructures such as roads, power supply and landline telephone network; and thereafter consider communication projects as priorities among many others.

8. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we have based our discussion on two fundamental assumptions. First, that the Congolese Church did not wait for Vatican II to consider mass media and abandon the cautious and fearful attitude towards mass media that has characterized the Catholic Church for centuries. Second, that the Congolese post-independence political setups were unfavorable to the application of the Universal Church's teaching on social communication.

Hence, this chapter has, though not exhaustively, tried to identify and discuss the CENC's effort to implement the Church's teaching on communication. It

has also presented the principal challenges the CENC faces. Nevertheless, congratulations to the CENC for its efforts to use mass media communications means despite all the difficulties it meets. The Congolese Bishops, along with them, all those involved in Church communication projects in the D.R. Congo deserve our heartfelt congratulations for the work they have accomplished. However, there is still more to be done, let them not get discouraged by the difficulties, rather be empowered to collaborate with the Universal Church.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The question that this essay has tried to answer is whether the Church effectively communicates or whether her wonderful teaching on social communication is only on papers.

Thus, the first chapter presents the Church as essentially communication with and of God. It stresses the fact the Church cannot not communicate for her mission calls for communication. Going down in history, from Jesus Christ to the present days, the second chapter discusses the Church's attitude towards communication. From this, it clearly appears that the Church is a daughter to her time and therefore she regards and uses mass media according to the understanding and conditions of the signs of the time. The third chapter confirms this view. It highlights the fact that the Congolese local church takes consideration of political and social situations to try to find adequate solutions to communicational problems they posed.

With the Pontifical Council for Social Communication, this essay has led me discover the fact that the Church is made of people of God who walk in history. Thus, "As they (...) advance with their times, they look toward with confidence and even with enthusiasm to whatever the development of communications in a space age may have to offer."⁹⁹

⁹⁹ PCSC, *Communio et Progressio*, 187.

The modern world is becoming more and more secularised than ever. It is sometimes creating cultures which are against Christian values. The question is: “How can the Church effectively communicate in the ‘Church-killing’ situations?” Without getting discouraged, what Church communicators can do, in this modern world where Christian values are declining, is “to comply with certain essential requirements, and these are sincerity, honesty and truthfulness.”¹⁰⁰ They must, at all cost, “state the truth.” They must “accurately reflect the situation with all its implications.”¹⁰¹ The forced exile of Joseph Cardinal Malula, the confiscation and banning of Catholic media in the Democratic Republic of Congo, in the early seventies, made a true example of how this is possible; and showed how, at all cost, the Congolese Local Church is committed to the implementation of the Universal Church’s teaching on social communication.

¹⁰⁰ PCSC, *Communio et Progressio*, 17.

¹⁰¹ PCSC, *Communio et Progressio*, 17.

ABBREVIATIONS

AD:	After death of Jesus Christ
AMRCEA:	Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa
CENC:	Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo
CEZ:	Conférence Episcopale du Zaïre
Cf:	Confer, compare
Dr.:	Doctor
D.R. Congo:	Democratic Republic of Congo
ed.:	Edited by
Gen:	Genesis
IMBISA:	Inter-regional Meeting of Bishops of southern Africa
Jn:	John
Mgr:	Monsignor
Mt:	Matthew
PCSC:	Pontifical Council for Social Communication
Rev.:	Reverend
RTNC1:	Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise (Chanal one)
RTNC4 :	Radio Télévision Nationale Congolaise (Chanal Four)
RTV-Amani:	Radio Télévision Amani
RTV-Idiofa:	Radio Télévision Idiofa
RTV-Zenith:	Radio Télévision Zenith
SDB:	Salesian of Don Bosco
trans.:	Translation

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