

6.8 Church Structures and Organisation for Social Communication

Aim

- To familiarize students with the various communication structures existing in the Church.

Procedure

Prepare a list of Church communication. With a brief introduction of each of the following headings:

- Pontifical Council for SC
- International Offices- Africa (SECAM-AMECEA), Asia FABC- OSC,
- Latin America- DECOS-CELAM, Europe-
- National Offices
- Spokesman/Press Officer
- Diocesan Offices
- Communication Centres for Religious Orders/Congregations
- Catholic News Agencies: CNS, Fides, VIS, ANS, UCAN,
- Radio
- Media Centres

Input

Background of Church structures

The Church structures for social communications went through a gradual development over many years. The earlier defensive and reactionary documents called for the establishment of certain social communication structures. Later on, emphasis was laid on professional organisations and bodies for Episcopal conferences and dioceses. *Vigilanti Cura* of Pius XI in 1936 set the tone by calling for national offices for rating films. Pius XII broadened the role of these national offices to cover other electronic media. National offices for the press, the cinema, radio and television was called for in the conciliar decree *Inter Mirifica*.

Pontifical Council for SC:

It was first created in 1948 as a pontifical commission for education on religious films. Later, in 1952, the scope was extended to radio and television. It became a permanent institution of the Vatican in 1959 and in 1964, it was renamed Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social Communication.

National and Regional Offices

The Episcopal conferences are called upon to create these national communications offices in their countries. (*Inter Mirifica* 21). The Pastoral Instruction, 'Communio et Progressio' in these numbers has the following to say about national offices:

- It is the mission of the national and diocesan offices to stimulate, promote and harmonize Catholic activities in the field of social communications. They will take particular pains in training the faithful both clerical and lay, by means of organized courses, conferences, study sessions and critical assessments prepared by their experts, so the public will be enabled to make wise decisions. The Offices will also be ready to give advice to producers engaged on films, performances or broadcasts that concern religious subjects.
- The National and Diocesan Offices will maintain these contacts with the professional world of social communications. They will furnish the documentary material, the advice and the pastoral assistance that professional communicators may require. They also are to organize World Communications Day on the national level and organize the collection of funds that the Decree of the Council suggests should be made on that day.
- The national episcopal commission for social communications or the delegated bishop are in charge of the direction of all the activities of the national offices. They are to lay down general guidelines for the development of the apostolate of social communications on the national level. They will keep in touch with the other national episcopal commissions and collaborate with the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications. The status of this Commission is described in the

Materials Required

- Pen and Paper



Conciliar Decree, "Inter Mirifica" and in the Apostolic Letter, Inter Fructibus multis.

- On continents or in regions where an episcopal conference that embraces several countries exists, this episcopal conference will have an office for social communications under the overall direction of a bishop or a number of bishops.
- Every bishop, all episcopal conferences or bishops' assemblies and the Holy See itself should each have their own official and permanent spokesman or press officer to issue the news and give clear explanations of the documents of the Church so that people can grasp precisely what is intended. These spokesmen will give, in full and without delay, information on the life and work of the Church in that area for which they are responsible. It is highly recommended that individual dioceses and the more weighty Catholic organizations also have their own permanent spokesmen with the sort of duties explained above.

Examples of Bishop's conference's office and departments for social communication include:

- Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) Office of Social Communication.
- Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) communication office: DECOS-Celam
- Pan-African Episcopal Committee on Social Communications (CEPACS) (this was established at the 1973 Pan-African Meeting on Social Communications. It's role is to animate, encourage and co-ordinate the African church's activities in the area of communication at the regional and continental levels.)

Vatican Press Office and Vatican Radio

Radio Vaticana is the official broadcasting service of the Vatican. Set up in 1931 by Guglielmo Marconi, today its programs are offered in 47 languages, and are sent out on short wave (also DRM), medium wave, FM, satellite and the Internet. The Jesuit Order has been charged with the management of Vatican Radio since its inception. During World War II and the rise of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, Vatican Radio served as a source of news for the Allies as well as broadcasting pro-Allied (or simply neutral) propaganda. A week after Pope Pius XII ordered the programming, Vatican Radio broadcast to an unbelieving world that Poles and Jews were being rounded up and forced into ghettos. Today, programming is produced by over two hundred journalists located in 61 different countries. Vatican Radio produces more than 42,000 hours of simultaneous broadcasting covering international news, religious celebrations, in-depth programs, and music. Current general director is Father Federico Lombardi, S.J.

Radio Vaticana was one of 23 founding broadcasting organisations of the European Broadcasting Union in 1950. There are other catholic professional news agencies like Vatican Information Services (VIS), Fides, Catholic News Services (CNS) etc.

From the list given after this lesson on Media in Africa, let the students make a research and presentations of one of the radio stations that they are familiar with.

Spokesperson/Press Officer/Public Relations

This is what *Communio et Progressio* has to say on the above:

It is not enough to have a public spokesman. There must be a continual two way flow of news and information. On the one hand, this aims to present a true image of the Church in a way that makes it visible to all. On the other, this exchange reveals to the ecclesiastical authorities the surges, currents and ideas that stir the world of men. Clearly this calls for the cultivation of friendly relations based on mutual reverence between the Church, people and groups. In this way continual exchanges can be fostered, with each side both giving and receiving.

Others tasks are outlined in Aetatis Novae 31

Religious Orders and Congregations

Religious orders and congregations will give thought to the many pressing tasks of the Church in the field of social communications and consider what they themselves can do to fulfill them under their constitutions. Their own specialized institutions for social communications will collaborate with one another and they will keep abreast of the over-all pastoral planning of the diocesan offices, and of the national, continental or regional offices since these are, usually, the competent bodies for the apostolate of social communications.

Many religious orders and congregations have responded to this appeal and have media houses of various kinds as seen in the list at the end of this lesson. Most of them are actively pursuing the spread of the Gospel through social communications in the areas of radio, TV, video, print and digital.

Let students make a list of the media houses owned or operated by religious orders or congregations from the contacts at the end of this lesson. They should describe their mission and operations.

Professional Organisations

This is what the same document says about professional organizations:

- The national offices and the corresponding central offices of the religious congregations will cooperate with the international organizations for the press (U.C.I.P.), for motion pictures (O.C.I.C.), and for radio and television (UNDA). This will be done in accord with the statutes of these international organizations as approved by the Holy See.
- These international Catholic organizations for social communications—each in its own sphere and in a way that fits its statutes—will help professionals and the national professional bodies of Catholics who have given themselves to these tasks. The way to do this is to keep abreast of research and development in the media. They will foster mutual aid and international cooperation. They will keep themselves informed on Catholic activity in the field. They will prepare the co-ordination of international programs and projects. They will continually seek advice on the best ways to help developing countries. They will encourage fresh initiatives. They will produce and distribute films and recorded broadcasts and every sort of audiovisual material, including the printed word. They will do all this for the advancement of social progress and for the betterment of Catholic life. These international Catholic organizations are exhorted to undertake and to coordinate research for the solution of their common problems.
- The episcopal conferences, through their specialized offices, and the Catholic professional associations, will assure for the international Catholic organization the funds necessary for doing this work.

Diocesan or Provincial Radios, Magazine and Newspapers

There are many of them run in various dioceses and provinces, as found in the list of media houses provided below.

Presentations

Choose any two church structures of social communications that you are familiar with and present their ecclesial foundation (Church document that talks about its establishment and functions), their programmes, and their geographical coverage.

List of Catholic Media in Africa

AMECEA Gaba Publications, Eldoret gabapubs@net2000ke.com
 Bosco Eastern Africa Multimedia Services – BEAMS beams@donbosco.or.ke
 Bosco Information Services Africa www.donboscofrica.org
 Catholic Bookshop, Nairobi, Kenya paulines@iconnect.co.ke
 Catholic Information Service for Africa www.cisanewsafrika.org
 Catholic shop, South Africa www.catholicshop.co.za
 Daughters of St. Paul, Nairobi, Kenya paulines-av-africa@maf.org
 Comboni Media Centre, Nairobi algnew@africaonline.co.ke
 Hekima Review, Nairobi shahidi@insightkenya.com
 Koinonia and Africanews (Fr. Kizito), Nairobi koinonia@tt.sasa.unon.org
 Koinonia Media Centre (Africanews), Nairobi amani@iol.it
 Lwanga Communications, Mombasa, Kenya lwangacm@africaonline.co.ke
 Montfort Media, Malawi montfortmedia@malawi.net
 New People - Comboni Missionaries, Nairobi Npeople@elci.sasa.gn.apc.org
 O.C.I.C., Afrique ocic.afrique@lemel.fr
 O.C.I.C., Rome, Jean-Paul Guillet 101732.467@compuserve.com
 Radio Tumaini, Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania tumaini@africaonline.co.ke
 Radio Veritas, South Africa www.radioveritas.co.za
 Southern Cross, South Africa scross@global.co.za
 Salesian Don Bosco Print, Makuyu, Kenya boscoprint@iconnect.co.ke
 Sudan Catholic Information Service, Nairobi SCIO@tt.sasa.unep.no
 Social Communications Commission, Zimbabwe soccom@mango.zw
 Trefoil, South Africa elsemari@mweb.co.za
 Ukweli Video, Nairobi, Kenya ukweli@africaonline.co.ke
 Um Afrika, South Africa umafrika@wn.apc.org
 Vatican Radio English Africa and Swahili Service engafrika@vatiradio.va
 Vatican Radio Africa French Section francafr@radiovat.va
 Worldwide, South Africa wwide@mweb.co.za

Review

The Church structures for social communications went through a gradual development over many years. The earlier defensive and reactionary documents called for the establishment of certain social communication structures. Later on, emphasis was laid on professional organisations and bodies for Episcopal conferences and dioceses. Organs of communication in the Church include: Pontifical Council for SC, National and Regional Offices, Vatican Press Office and Vatican Radio, Spokespersons/Press Officers/Public Relations, Religious Orders Congregations, Professional Organisations and Diocesan or Provincial Radios, Magazines and Newspapers.



Reflection

‘It is the mission of the national and diocesan offices to stimulate, promote and harmonize Catholic activities in the field of social communications. They will take particular pains in training the faithful both clerical and lay, by means of organized courses, conferences, study sessions and critical assessments prepared by their experts, so the public will be enabled to make wise decisions.’ What tangible achievements has the national and diocesan offices made in your diocese? What have been its greatest successes and points of failure?

Relevant Skills

Analyse the impact of the church communication structure in your diocese or Province. Suggest improvements that are workable.

References

Eilders, Franz-Josef. *Communicating in Community: An Introduction to Social Communication*. Manila: Logos Publications, 1994.

Victor Sunderaj. *Pastoral Planning for Social Communications*. Montreal: Pauline Publications, 1998.

BOSCOM-INDIA, 2000. ‘SHEPHERDS’ FOR AN INFORMATION AGE. Matunga: Tej Prasarini