INFORMING IN ORDER TO FORM:

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND MEDIA

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By

ANDREW R. M. FISHER

Dr. Victoria Johnson, Thesis Advisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

INFROMING IN ORDER TO FORM:
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presented by Andrew R. M. Fisher,

a candidate for the degree of Masters of Arts,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Professor Victoria Johnson

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Professor Wayne Brekhus

_____

Professor Richard J. Callahan Jr.

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Dr. Victoria Johnson, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

A dominate discourse in understanding the relationship between religion and media has been one of competition. This discourse of competition posits that the relationship between religion and media is inherently competitive. Yet, the Roman Catholic Church actively engages media and employs it as part of their religious dialogue with the broader societies in which they are embedded. These seemingly contradictory phenomena are in need of better articulation and examination. Using an ethnographic content analysis to examine a number of the Catholic documents this study aims to better understand how the Church constructs its relationship with media. As there have been no empirically based, comprehensive, examinations of how the Church does so post-Vatican II, this study aims to understand how the Church uses and understands media in the second half of the twentieth century. A dialectical discourse of "informing in order to form" develops throughout the data as the Church engages media.

Introduction

During his 2010 World Communications Day speech Pope Benedict XVI declared that, "Priests are thus challenged to proclaim the Gospel by employing the latest generation of audiovisual resources – images, videos, animated features, blogs, Web sites – which, alongside traditional means, can open up broad new vistas for dialogue, evangelization and catechesis" (Pullella 2010). Notably, this direct call for the use and engagement of media by a religion is not something that has been a normative focus of the relationship between religion and media in the Western world.[1] Rather, the relationship between religion and media has often been portrayed as one of competition (Newman 1996). Media, for many is a direct threat to religion and its power to influence the culture in which it is embedded. Whether it is a contrast between the religious and technology as informers of culture (Fore 1987), the usurping of religious influence by entertainment (Kuhns 1969), a conflict between the non-Christian media and the Christian media (Porter 1974), or the intentional effort by media to replace a Christian worldview with a secular understanding (Wildmon 1985), there may well exist a clear tension between religion and media. However, a fuller understanding of the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media is needed to understand Pope Benedict's recent statement.

Beginning with the popularization of television and the pervasive spread of mass media which began to accelerate during the middle of the twentieth century, research exploring the relationship between religion and media has focused a great deal on the competition between them for cultural influence in Western societies (Newman 1996). A threatening picture for religion has been painted, one that pits religion against media, the chosen vehicle for advancing mass culture (Ewen 1967), in a battle for members, viewers, consumers, and cultural influence.

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[1] Here religion is used in the common and popular understanding of the term used in Western society with the most easily accessible examples consisting of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam.

As technology and mass culture began to quickly reproduce itself and the world around it, a number of scholars began to call attention to the consequences of this advancement (See Marcuse 1964; McLuhan 1964; Horkheimer and Adorno 2002). They began to uncover and investigate the effects of mass culture and the progressing technology, which allowed the 'massification' to spread, as something that was destined to dramatically uproot any traditional sense of religion and the social world it produces. Rapidly, the social world was approaching "the final phase of the extension of man – the technological simulation of consciousness" (McLuhan 1964, p. 3). Others found the replication of culture in mass media and conversely mass culture to be a sign of the inevitable narrowing of public discourse, which left no room for religious influence (Marcuse 1964). Advances in technology, media, and consumer practices were seen as fundamentally changing the ways in which Western society understood itself and the role of religion. For some media was becoming our culture's "principle way of knowing about itself," and "how [media] stages the world [was becoming] the model for how the world is properly to be staged" (Postman 1983, p. 92).

Given these ontological shifts during this time, many began to wonder how religion was to survive as it has traditionally been practiced; some claimed it would not (Stark 1999). Secularization and the theories that explored its plausibility compounded and expanded the ensuing battle of religious influence in a public sphere that was, for many, becoming decidedly secular. Berger (1968) claimed that "in the twentieth century religious believers are likely to be found only in small sects, huddled together to resist a worldwide secular culture," indicating the waning religious cultural influence as a popular movement (p. 3). Sentiments such as these only added fuel to the fire that a secular media had its sights on usurping "a role which until recently [had] been the role of the church in [Western] society, namely, to shape our system of values,

embody our faith, and express our cultural essence" (Fore 1987, p. 11). These developments set the stage for the relationship between religion and media to be understood as one of competition.

Newman (1996), for example, explains the relationship between religion and media as:

A complex, multifaceted phenomenon that has been oversimplified in the analyses of polemicists and ideologists of various stripes, and that properly understands it, particularly in terms of the competition between forms of experience and culture, enables one to make sounder and more informed judgments not only about certain major issues of social and cultural policy but about the role that religion and [media] play and ought to play in one's own life and in the lives of those whom one is in a position to influence (p. 5). [2]

Newman identifies two camps, the "religionists," who have become "disturbed by the threat posed by [media] to traditional religious beliefs, values and attitudes," and the humanist, politician, secularist, and capitalist represent media to further their own agendas, often seen at odds with religionists (Newman 1996, p. 1).

Religionists and critics of media, according to Newman (1996):

See their principal paradigm of religion, which they associate with the soundest possible foundations for their society's culture, as threatened by, and involved in a competitive struggle with, a cultural and anti-cultural agenda that they associate with [media]. And while these critics all recognize that media can be, and sometimes has been, put to the service of promoting [religious] ideas, values, and attitudes, they regard the threat posed by [media] as primary (p. 7).

Exemplifying Newman's point, Kuhns (1969) explains, "[Media] has transformed the ways in which we believe and are capable of believing. An absolute kind of belief, as well as a belief in absolutes, becomes increasingly difficult as [media] trains people to believe tentatively and with elasticity" (p. 165). Continuing, Kuhns understands the issues specifically in regards to religious belief that, "the very concept of faith – to believe in that which you cannot see and cannot

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[2] The generic term "media" is used in place of any author's use of a word commonly accepted to represent all forms of technology which mediate human interaction to include, but not limited to, radio, television, cable, newspapers, books, movies, music, magazines, and the internet. As technological advances have altered and expanded the term to include a set of evolving practices rather than a limited form (Croteau and Hoynes 2003).

understand – comes with difficulty to a generation which has depended, as perhaps no generation before, on its senses" (Kuhns 1969, p. 166).

Seen in this light, a discourse emerges that pits religion and media at odds with each other. However, an understanding of the relationship between religion and media that is fundamentally based in competition does not allow us to fully understand the Pope's earlier remarks. How, then, does the Roman Catholic Church engage in practices with media that many claim are at odds with the aims of religion? Is it proper to understand the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media as one of competition?

Literature Review

Interestingly, a number of scholars pose a much less dire situation when exploring the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media. Rather than understanding media and the Church as competitors for cultural influence there is some evidence of a more nuanced relationship constructed by the Church and media. Scholars who have specifically explored the Roman Catholic Church's relationship to media have focused on media as a cultural and social phenomenon rather than a secular institution aimed at challenging the Church (Coleman1993; Soukup 1993; Budde 1997). Scholars exploring the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media have also focused more on a just media world and are interested in how the media shape, culturally, public discourse (Coleman and Tomka 1993). Furthermore, they choose to explore such avenues of inquiry while exploring a useful understanding of the role of media for the Roman Catholic Church and attempt at producing a dialogue between religion and media rather than a relationship between competitors (Coleman and Tomka 1993; Soukup 1993).

Coleman (1993) argues for a stronger emphasis on the role of agency in understanding the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media. Specifically addressing the

proponents who portray the relationship between religion and media as competitive, Coleman claims there is an over-emphasis of the "structural realities to the detriment of human agency" (p. 3). This structurally biased view of media and its relationship with religion has informed the debate between religion and media (see McLuhan 1964; Postman 1985) and leaves much to be desired. Coleman addresses the assumptions behind this view of media, as directly informing the larger social context, which are in need of adjustment for better understanding the relationship between the Catholic Church and media. Specifically, Coleman addresses three assumptions in order to balance the structural bias: (1) Audiences are never as undifferentiated and mass as the theories assumes; (2) Consumers of the mass media are not merely dupes and purely passive; and (3) Products of the mass media are not simply cultural commodities but 'texts' which, like any other text, require reading and are patient of multiple interpretations. Focusing on the role of agency allows for a basis in understanding the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media as something other than competitive. Rather, Coleman argues for an increase in agency in studying the effects of media – a cultural studies approach – he also calls for the need to recognize diverse audiences and their ability to discriminate and partake in critical judgments.

Understanding that media both mirror and shape society, Coleman (1993) does not refute the influential aspect of media, which is a dominant theme when understanding media and religion as competitors (Fore 1987). Coleman (1993) quotes Soukup (1985) stating, "The media heighten people's sense of immediacy. The excessive present tense built into [media] (live coverage, fast-breaking stories and so on) discourages truly in-depth reporting and absolutely outlaws patience and a sense of lived history" (p. 154). However, Coleman's main objective is to give guidance to Catholics troubled by the popular assumptions which place religion and media at odds. He argues that, "If it becomes harder to have a true conversation with nuance because of

the media's tendency to think in headlines, perhaps we need other forums of communication as the principal locales for important discussions" (Coleman 1993, p. 9). Furthermore, he argues that the Church's role in negotiating media is one that should assist individuals in "talking back to the [media]" and that if Catholics wish to engage in the use of mass media they must form a better understanding of media and its role in society for religion (Coleman 1993). Further, Coleman (1993) recognizes media does in fact directly inform the message of the Catholic Church as it is the subject of media and this needs to be recognized and dealt with. Understanding the role of agency, and the need for religion to "talk back" are contributing factors in the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media, which begins to loosen the competitiveness and allows for the beginning of a broader dialogue.

Coleman (1993), in approaching the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media as such, proposes ideas that begin to challenge an understanding of this relationship as strictly competitive. Take, for example, Fore (1987) when he explains the role of media in that it is an ever-ready companion for entertainment yet it also, "cultivates a mean world full of violence, that its values and stories demand and dehumanize us, and that its religious impact is the very antithesis of the Christian faith in which most people in our society profess to believe" (p. 122). Understanding media in such a sense leaves little room for the agency and dialogue that Coleman (1993) offers, which "stresses how viewers resist [media] messages and read [media] as a multiple message medium which is patient of multiple meanings" (p. 8). Furthermore, "Church people who want to understand the mass media need to remember the multiple functions of the mass media and communications in society;" additionally, media, "tend to support existing institutions in society and pass on the assumptions and consensus of society" (Coleman 1993, p. 9). In Coleman's understanding, media supports popular sentiments and institutions, such as

religion, and when it does not, this reflects more on the society, and the individuals in it, rather than the role of media. In a society that supports religion and religious practices, in Coleman's view, one would find a media that reflects this support because it is a product of the understanding of religions' role as an extension of broader beliefs.

Pursuing these points further, Budde (1997) allows for a more useful and broader understanding of a relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and what he identifies, in the tradition of the Frankfurt School, as "global cultural industries". Budde offers a useful way of understanding the Church's engagement with industries outside specific Catholic institutions as a practice of "sacramental liberalism". Sacramental liberalism is defined as:

> The notion that since all of Creation is made by God and judged good by God (Gn 1:31), all natural and human projects can in principle be revelatory of God and useful for divine purposes. Sacramental liberalism stands against any sort of dualism…that denigrates the material world or equates "the world" with utter sinfulness and evil. All aspects of material creation or human initiative can be used for good or bad purposes (and can be judged based on those uses), but a priori none can be condemned completely as incompatible with the Christian vision (Budde 1997, p. 98)

Understood as such, sacramental liberalism forms a context in which the Catholic Church might engage media. Media cannot inherently compete against the Church; rather, the purposes it is used for are what create competition. According to the view of sacramental liberalism, media is something the Roman Catholic Church should embrace, as it is a gift from God, and should be treated and engaged as such.

As the Catholic Church is placed, contextually, among all earthly creations outside of its encompassing worldview, it is placed in contrast to "everything else" as something that cannot inherently hold value a priori (Budde 1997). Rather, in this instance, media is understood, according to sacramental liberalism, as a creation, principally established by the Catholic

inception of God and core beliefs about existence, through the toils of humans, which can be used for a continuum of purposes spanning good and evil. Furthermore, it has to be assumed that, the use of media will dictate its goodness or badness, at least in the Catholic understanding of media. However, this stance is not without criticism and in need of expansion (Budde 1997).

While sacramental liberalism does help to situate the Catholic perspective somewhere other than in competition with media, it does not lend much to the understanding of how media is actually understood and used by the Roman Catholic Church. Budde (1997) notes that "sacramental liberalism falls short as a guide to theologically informed critique," due to its "reductive tendencies," which, "downplay analyses of systems and interactions in favor of decontextualized appraisals of parts and components," and these shortcomings fail to give the Church access to the structural relations in the media (p. 99). Furthermore, "the overriding privileging of the good to be had via the components" outweighs macro-level structural considerations (Budde 1997, p. 100).

Expanding on Budde's criticisms of the Church's stance of sacramental liberalism, Christians (2002) argues against any understanding of media as neutral. Rather, Christians argues for a wider scope and view of the use of media by religion as something that is inherently fraught with value because its use "proceeds out of our whole human experience and it is directed by our ultimate commitments" (p. 38). Yet, there exists a belief, represented by sacramental liberalism, before the Catholic Church engages media. The alteration of the message, which is intrinsic to media, is premised and cannot allow for a neutral interaction with media by religion. With this in mind a fuller understanding of the Catholic Church's relationship with media is needed. The Catholic Church cannot simply understand media as a neutral tool. Inherent within how it engages media is a broader internalization of context informing the Church's understanding of

media outside itself along with how it chooses to use it in the pursuit of its goals (Budde 1997; Christians 2002). To the point, "Every medium therefore affects the communication process in a unique way, entirely aside from the way a particular communicator 'uses' it," furthermore, "it is entirely accurate to say that the user is used by the medium at the same moment that the user uses the medium" (Fore 1987, p. 53).

Research that has directly examined the Roman Catholic Church's stance on media through analysis of papal encyclicals and other documents produced by Vatican councils note the existence of both a need for using media as a useful instrument along with understanding the importance of agency in the Church's engagement with media (Jorgenson 1984; Soukup 1993). The Roman Catholic Church, according to Soukup (1993), "has seldom hesitated to speak out about communication and the means of communication" and has tended "to address serious issues in a fairly competent manner" (p. 71). Both Jorgenson (1984) and Soukup (1993) have focused on, "Who issued the statement? Which audience does the statement address? What is it purpose? What are the issues it raises?" in order to understand the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media (Soukup 1993, p. 72).

Soukup (1993) understands these documents to offer a strong basis for discussion while highlighting a number of important issues. Specifically, he shows that the Roman Catholic Church is actively engaged in the understanding and use of media. The Church aims for a "deeper insight into the social role of communication," and wishes to "integrate communication much more closely into the larger pastoral activity of the Church" (Soukup 1993, p. 75). Throughout his analysis Soukup (1993) notes that the Church takes an "authoritative" or "provocative approach" towards media and also uses a mix of "analytic and didactic approaches" in their engagement with media within the documents under examination (p. 77).

However, as Soukup notes, there exists a substantial amount of ambiguity among the few documents which he examines, "the documents simultaneously address both the broad question of the mass media and the narrower concern of the church's use of those media. This latter point," he continues, "involves not a little self-interest on the part of the church. Whenever it arises, it raises some doubts about the impartiality with which the church has criticized the media" (Soukup 1993, p. 78). Their best value, according to Soukup (1993) "lies in their being read as starting points for further discussion and action" (p. 78). Ending the analysis here leaves much ambiguity about the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media. The question is begged: How does the Catholic Church relate to media?

Research Question

Since the Vatican II Council there has been no comprehensive examination of Roman Catholic documents pertaining to the Church's construction of its relationship with media, leaving an inadequate understanding of how the Catholic Church views media. Previous studies lack series knowledge of how the Roman Catholic Church constructs its understanding and use of media (Soukup 1993). Despite the importance of communication and media identified by the Catholic Church (755 documents being produced between 1464 and 1973) there has been little sociological investigation into understanding the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media (Baragli 1973).

Rather than directly informing the understanding of how the Roman Catholic Church constructs its relationship with media, earlier studies have tended to summarize the information using a small sample of documents leading to few tenable conclusions (Jorgenson 1984; Soukup 1993). In part due to the shortcomings of these previous studies a relationship of competition has been a dominant discourse surrounding the relationship between religion and media (Newman

1996). Yet, some scholars, when addressing the Catholic Church specifically, have urged a consideration for a more agent-centered relationship between religion and media. There also emerges a discourse that directly refutes a relationship of competition, while also suggesting "Catholic" beliefs about media. Given these differing perspectives a deeper investigation of how the Roman Catholic Church constructs its relations to media is sorely needed. This study poses, in light of the above discourse, the questions: How does the Roman Catholic Church construct its relationship with media? How does the Roman Catholic Church understand media? What use does the Roman Catholic Church claim to have for media?

Methods

This study employs an ethnographic content analysis following the processes laid out by Altheide (1996) to examine a number of Catholic documents aimed at better understanding how the Catholic Church constructs its relationship with media. Ethnographic content analysis is oriented towards concept development and emergent data analysis allowing for documenting and understanding the communication of meaning and verifying theoretical relationships from the data (Altheide 1996). Furthermore, it is a reflexive and highly interactive method for analyzing documents, helping to understand the process and the array of objects, symbols, and meanings that make up the social reality shared by the Catholic Church and the construction of its relationship with media. "The aim is to be systematic, but not rigid" by allowing the data, placed in loosely defined protocols, to gradually develop enables the researcher to ask open ended questions as the analysis emerges through repeated examination of the content (Altheide 1993, p. 16).

Sampling and Data

The hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church lends itself well to narrowly identifying, within its structure, groups and individuals who are responsible for the intricacies of the daily activities of the Church. Beginning with a single leader, the Pope, responsibility for specific tasks and overseeing of individual dioceses and congregations is dispersed among a myriad of Bishops and Cardinals. The Vatican has created a number of Councils, staffed with high-ranking Bishops and Cardinals, who are tasked with pursing goals of varying degrees. Councils are created for the sole purpose of focusing Catholic resources on issues such as Family, Justice and Peace, Culture, and Inter-Religious Dialogue. Media has been deemed one of these important social entities in which the Church devotes specific attention to through the Pontifical Council of Social Communication (Granfield 1994). This council is tasked to "deal with questions concerning the instruments of social communications, so that also by these means the message of salvation and human progress may serve the growth of civilization and morality" (Apostolic Constitution 1989, Article 169). In carrying out these responsibilities the Council has created a number of instructional documents for Catholics specifically dealing with issues of media as they relate to and affect Catholics and the Roman Catholic Church as it interacts with the broader cultural landscape.

Using theoretically purposive sampling, documents produced by the Pontifical Council of Social Communication between 1963 and 2005 were collected along with documents identified by both Jorgenson (1984) and Soukup (1993). All data was accessed through the Vatican's official website (www.vatican.va). The documents accessed and used as data for this project were as follows: *Inter Mirifica* (1963), *Communio et Progressio* (1971), *An appeal to all contemplative Religious* (1973), *Guide to the training of future priests concerning the*

instruments of social communications (1986), *Pornography and violence in the communications media: a pastoral response* (1989), *Criteria for ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation in communications* (1989), *Aetatis Novae* (1992), *100 Years of Cinema* (1995), *Ethics in Advertising* (1999), *Ethics in Communications* (2000), *Ethics in Internet* (2002), *The Church and the Internet* (2002), *Ethics in Advertising* (2003), *Rapid Development* (2005). Along with these documents, 39 World Communications Day speeches made annually by the pontiff were used as data, also accessed through the Vatican's website.

This time period encompasses the ruling of three popes and a number of technological advances in the communications and media fields which allowed for contextual clarification and comparison between pontiffs.[3] This span of time avoided any complications that the Vatican II Council may have caused as all documents were issued after its dismissal. The important changes which took place during the Vatican II council forever reshaped the direction of the Roman Catholic Church; therefore, the engagement with media pre-Vatican II can be assumed to be viewed differently, yet, of no less importance (see Wilde 2007; O'Malley 2008). Furthermore, there exists a number of undisclosed archival material, held by the Church, that are not accessible for public view, which requires approval from the Vatican for outside individuals to access. Access to this material was not attempted for this study and should be considered a weakness of this study; however, does not detract from the contributions of the data used in this study. Additionally, this study has been guided by prior knowledge of the Catholic Church and its beliefs specific to the researcher.[4]

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[3] Speeches were only given by two popes. Pope John Paul I ruled for only 33 days until his death and did not contribute to this data.

[4] I have, as the author of this study, been influenced by an upbringing in a Catholic home. This experience has given me a better understanding of the structure of the Catholic Church as well as a basic understanding of its practices and beliefs, which is a privilege not accessible to all. This knowledge allowed for an easier navigation and examination of Church documents within a broader Catholic worldview. As basic Catholic beliefs are present

The data was collected and examined for frames, themes, and discourse in line with Altheide's method of ethnographic content analysis. Examining events within frames create a parameter or boundary for discussing particular events. Frames "pertain to the particular perspective one uses to bracket or mark off something as one thing or another;" furthermore, "frames focus on what will be discussed, how it will be discussed, and above all, how it will not be discussed" (Altheide 1996, p. 31). Themes emerge as the recurring typical theses that are found in numerous documents and produce general meanings or "mini-frames". Finally, "discourse refers to the parameters of relevant meaning that one uses to talk about things" and are directly tied to frames, giving the manner in which themes are addressed (Altheide 1996, p. 31). A protocol was constructed to account for frames, themes, and discourse as the data addresses the Roman Catholic Church's use and understanding of media. Beginning with frames and moving into themes and finally discourse, an understanding of the relationship constructed by the Roman Catholic Church with media is pursued through the use of these levels of analysis.

Content Analysis

The data produces a number of interesting projections for how the Roman Catholic Church constructs a relationship with media. As the data was examined to understand how the Roman Catholic Church uses and understands media several clear themes emerged. The Roman Catholic Church constructs its relationship with media in their use of media through the following frames: (1) Media is used as a tool or instrument; (2) Media is used to accomplish the goals of the Church; (3) Media is used by individuals. The Roman Catholic Church further constructs its relationship with media through an understanding of media using the following frames: (1) Media has its own standards; (2) Media is a public resource; (3) Religion in media;

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throughout the data and important for interpretation, successful reading of the data was dependent on understanding the broader faith of the Catholic Church.

and (4) Media as a gift from God. Within each frame a number of themes are evident, which the

Church uses to construct its relationship with media (See Figure 1). Many frames and themes

overlap and inform each other. They are brought together in discourse as the Roman Catholic

Church constructs its relationship with media.

Use of Media by the Roman Catholic Church

The way media is to be used by the Roman Catholic Church directly informs the

construction of its relationship with media. Throughout the data the Church uses a number of

themes within different frames to construct its relationship with media that address specifically

the use of media. The major frames employed by the Church in the use of media are: (1) Media

is used as a tool or instrument; (2) Media is used to accomplish the goals of the Roman Catholic

Church; and (3) Media is used by individuals.

Frame 1: Media is used as a tool or instrument

The first frame that directly informs the way in which the Roman Catholic Church

constructs its relationship with media is: Media used as a tool or instrument. This frame is

constructed through the following themes: (a) Media are inherently neutral but used for good and

evil; and (b) Media can be used to influence an audience.

- *Theme 1.A*: Media are inherently neutral but used for good and evil

Media use is "fundamentally positive" and "encouraging," for the Church. Yet, "the

media do nothing by themselves; they are instruments, tools, and used as people choose to use

them" (Ethics in Communications 2000, Sec 4). Media, used as a tool, "can be used well, and it

can be used badly" (Ethics in Advertising 1999, Sec 9). Additionally, "the means of social

communication are, and will remain only media – that is to say, tools, available for both good

and evil uses," and "it cannot be stressed too often that in themselves the communications media

are only lifeless instruments" (Ethics in Advertising 1999, Sec 27; An Appeal to All Contemplative Religious 1973).

The Roman Catholic Church asks, while recognizing media can be used negatively, for "positive action on the part of all Catholics and especially those engaged in the mass media" (WSCD 1973). The Church notes "that, like so many other good things in creation, [media] are open to misuse; and, still all together, we consider, before God, what measures may be taken to prevent their desecration" (WSCD 1975). While media are "inherently neutral," "the application of communications technology has been a mixed blessing" (Aetatis Novae 1992, Sec 12). Finally, the Church warns, "There is, in fact, no truth, no sacred thing, no moral principle, that cannot be directly or indirectly corroded or contested in the wide-ranging discourse of those communications" (WSCD 1978).

- *Theme 1.B*: Media used to influence an audience

The influential aspect of media use has not evaded the knowledge of the Roman Catholic Church as, "It cannot be denied that [media] can have a considerable influence in 'manipulating' ideas, principles, values, and interpretation in diminishing the critical capacity of large sections of the population" (WSCD 1976). The Church "recognizes the powerful influence…when conscientiously and responsibly used, [media] can exercise on the individual man and on society" (WSCD 1975). Further, "the persuasive force of these new means can be utilized…to form consciences;" as media has "an impact on the psychology of those who use them" (WSCD 1969). Finally, the ability to influence a person's "attitudes, judgments and stances on various questions, as well as allegiances and antagonisms" are noted as primary to the use of media for the Catholic Church (WSCD 1972).

The second frame that is present in the use of media by the Catholic Church is the utilization of media to accomplish the goals of the Church. Three themes inform this frame as the Church constructs its relationship with media, and they are: (a) Media use to evangelize; (b) Media use for social justice and; (c) Media use in communicating the Catholic message.

- *Theme 2.A*: Media used to evangelize

As "Evangelization is an integral part of the mission of the Church" media use is central because, "[the Church] is constrained to fulfill it also in all the ways and by all the means which are available to her to use as she abides among the people of each continent" (WSCD 1974). The Catholic Church is clear that "the latest media of social communication are indispensible means for evangelization" (Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 163). Furthermore, "there is a need to set up the contemporary vehicles of information and allied services along a line of development which will facilitate the diffusion of the Good News" and aims "to identify new strategies for evangelization and catechesis through the application of communications technology and mass communications" (Aetatis Novae 1992, Sec 28)

- *Theme 2.B*: Media used for social justice

Media "are under obligation to respect the good name of upright persons [and] to uphold public decency" (WSCD 1975). The Church warns that "media might be restricted to suit the purposes of non representative groups who would thus impose only a point of view favorable to their own vested interest" and thus be used to hamper social justice (WSCD 1978). Media, for the Roman Catholic Church, "provide some of the most effective means for the cultivation of

that charity among men which is at once the cause and the expression of fellowship" and should be used as such (Communio et Progressio, Sec 12).

- *Theme 2.C*: Media used for communicating a Catholic message

Media should be used as much as possible, in the Church's understanding, because it helps "to make the teaching of Christianity more interesting and effective" (Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 131). The Churches wishes to employ media "to announce the good news of salvation" because "Communications in and by the Church is essentially communication of the Good news of Jesus Christ" (Inter Mirifica 1963, Sec 3; Aetatis Novae 1992, Sec 9). Further, a Catholic press "ought to be established and supported [and] would have for its manifest purpose to form, to consolidate and to promote a public opinion in conformity with the natural law and with Catholic doctrines and directives" (Inter Mirifica 1963l Sec 14). An integral aspect of a pastoral plan for media is "a proposed structure for Church-related social communications" including "public relations, press, radio, television, cinema, cassettes, computer networks, facsimile services and related forms of telecommunications" (Aetatis Novae 1992, Sec 24).

Frame 3: Media is used by individuals

The Roman Catholic Church expresses the role of individuals in the relationship it constructs with media as the basic level of interaction. The individual is the audience in every document, and is addressed as an autonomous actor, directly constructing the relationship between the Church and media. Individuals as users of media are identified through three themes: (a) Communicators of media; (b) Receivers of media; and (c) Catholics use media.

- *Theme 3.A*: Communicators of media

Communicators are "those who actively employ the media," and they "have a duty in conscience to make themselves competent in the art of social communication in order to be effective in their work" (Communio et Progressio, Sec 14). Further, "the proper use of the means of social communication rests on journalists, writers, actors, designers, producers, exhibitors, distributors, operators, sellers, and critics" (Inter Mirifica 1963, Sec 11). According to the Church, communicators, "who wish to excel, need a serious and specialized training in every aspect of their work" (Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 71). If media is to be used as the Church wishes, it "requires sound values and wise choices on the part of individuals" as they produce and communicate media messages (Aetatis Novae 1992, Sec 12). Additionally, the Church reminds "communicators that their employment demands from them love, justice, truth, as well as freedom" (WSCD 1981). Furthermore, the Church should be "responsive to the peculiar working conditions and moral challenges facing communications professionals" (Aetatis Novae 1992, Sec 19).

- *Theme 3.B*: Receivers as consumers of media

The consumption of media, for the Catholic Church is unavoidable for individuals as "human experience itself is an experience in media" (Aetatis Novae 1992, Sec 2). Receivers are essential in the Catholic Church's construction of its relationship with media because "readers and viewers and listeners will always have the deciding word on the future of the communications media, for it is they who decide whether to accept or reject what is offered to them" (WSCD 1976). The individual, in the role of the receiver, directly informs media, in part, because "how often programs are transmitted and how long they should last must be decided upon in light of

popular demand" (Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 151). Additionally, the Church notes, "listeners and viewers will contribute to the betterment of religious programs by making their reactions known" (Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 155).

- *Theme 3.C*: Catholics use media

The Catholic Church makes a point to address their followers in the use of media, specifically. Engagement of media by Catholics "require[s] the arousal of Christian consciences and of all men of good will to action" and they also posit the "training of children, young people and adults in the interpretation of values expressed through the media" (An Appeal to All Contemplative Religious 1973; 100 Years in Cinema 1995, Sec 1). Further, Catholics "must know how to make a good choice when deciding what newspaper or book to buy, what film [to] see, what programs [to] listen to on radio, or view on television; all the time conscious that the choice [made] is a vote cast for the encouragement and support of the publication or program" (WSCD 1978). In using media, Catholics should "exercise discernment, measuring what you receive from the communications media with the yardstick of genuine ethico-religious values, prizing and accepting the positive elements and excluding those which are negative" (WSCD 1978). The Church also affirms "the right of Her members to be allowed access to the use of [media], always showing due respect to the legitimate rights of others" (WSCD 1973). Finally, "ample encouragement should be given to Catholic transmissions which invite listeners and viewers to share in the life of the Church and which convey religious truths" (Inter Mirifica 1953, Sec 14).

Understanding of Media by the Roman Catholic Church

How the Roman Catholic Church understands media directly informs the construction its relationship with media. Specifically, four frames are used in the understanding of media by the

Church: (1) Media has its own standards; (2) Media is a public resource; (3) Religion in media; and (4) Media as a gift from God.

Frame 1: Media has its own standards

Throughout the data the Catholic Church constructs its relationship while recognizing that media has its own standards which the Church must understand and adhere to. The themes addressing, (a) Production and presentation of media; (b) Content of media; and (c) Media progress, are found throughout the data. Each of these are important in understanding the relationship the Catholic Church constructs with media.

- *Theme 1.A*: Production and presentation of media

As the Church addresses its own production and presentation of media "transmissions should excel by technical perfection and by effectiveness," additionally, "sermons and homilies must be adapted to the nature of the medium that is used" (Inter Mirifica 1963, Sec 14; Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 152). Further, the Church recognizes the importance of "well-produced programs" which "create the 'shows' that sustain the various audiovisual media" (WSCD 1972; WSCD 1988).

- *Theme 1.B*: Content of media

Content is a central theme as the Church recognizes "the great challenge of religious witness for those who are in the midst of the public debate is to keep the messages and exchanges authentic and to maintain high standards of quality in the programs and productions" (WSCD 1989). Further, "the Church's practice of communication should be exemplary, reflecting the highest standards of truthfulness, accountability, sensitivity to human rights, and other relevant principles and norms" (Ethics in Communications 2000, Sec 26). The Church also requests that

"the content of the communication be true and-within the limits set by justice and charity-complete" and "in the publication of news, the moral law and the legitimate rights and dignity of man should be upheld" (Inter Mirifica 1963, Sec 5).

- *Theme 1.C*: Media and progress

Media, understood by the Church, is both a sign of the progress of humans and always progressing itself as it addresses "the complexity of the communications phenomenon today" (WSCD 1977). The Church notes, "One of the greatest blessings of our age is the advance of technology and the great progress made in social communications" (WSCD 1973). The inherent progression of media, for the Church, makes it "necessary to concentrate on a rigorous program of scientific research…in order to able to understand the functioning of the media" (Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 184). Media, as "innovations in continuous evolution" "contribute to the pursuit of truth and the speeding up of progress" and "seen as powerful instruments for progress" (Rapid Development 2005. Sec 1; Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 13, 21). Further, "The rapid development of technology in the area of the media is surely one of the signs of progress in today's society" (Rapid Development 2005, Sec 1). In short, the Church understands "media as an outcome of the historical scientific process by which humankind 'advances further and further in the discovery of the resources and values contained in the whole of creation'" (The Church and Internet 2002, Sec 1).

Frame 2: Media is a public resource

Media as it is directly tied to communication among individuals is understood within the frame of media as a public resource. This frame, media as a public resource, addresses thematically (a) Control of media; (b) Access to media; and (c) Responsibility of media.

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- *Theme 2.A*: Control of media

The control of media is an important theme for the Church because they understand that in constructing their relationship with media they must engage with those who own the means of communication. While the Church recognizes the importance of the corporation as media owners, "legislation should be encouraged to provide financial support to initiatives in the use of communications that clearly serve the general good" (Communio et Progressio, Sec 90). "Good of the country and the interests of international cooperation must both be given due consideration; " additionally, "Civil authorities, as well as religious leaders and educators, should play their part too in order that the rich promise of the media be effectively realized for the good of society" (Communio et Progressio, Sec 84, 63). The Church holds that it is the "responsibility of civil authorities…to guarantee the development of social communication for the good of all mankind…without selection or discrimination" (Communio et Progressio, Sec 91).

- *Theme 2.B*: Access to media

The Church states, "It is necessary unequivocally to declare that freedom of speech for individuals and groups must be permitted so long as the common good and public morality be not endangered" (Communio et Progressio 1972, Sec 26). The Church recognizes that "certain problems arise from media policies and structures: for example, the unjust exclusion of some groups and classes from the access of the means of communication" and this must be avoided (Aetatis Novae, Sec 14). Rather, "It is not acceptable that the exercise of the freedom of communication should depend upon wealth, education, or political power. The right to communicate is the right of all" as "it is a public forum where every man may exchange ideas" and necessary if this exchange is to "emerge in a proper manner," (Aetatis Novae, Sec 15;

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Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 24). Furthermore, "one thing which is very much to be desired is that in all countries availability of information from a variety of sources should be permitted as standard" (WSCD 1975).

- *Theme 2.C*: Responsibility of media

The Church notes, "whenever public good is at stake, discretion and discrimination and careful judgment should be used in preparation of news" (Communio et Progressio, Sec 42). Media exist "for the good of everyone and to serve everyone" and there should be a "promotion of culture through the communications media" (Communio et Progressio, Sec 84; WSCD 1976). Further, the Church urges media to "take care to see that there are programs and publications suitable for [every age]" (WSCD 1982). Recipients, according to the Church, "have a right to expect up-to-date briefing, honesty, objective research and presentation, respect for the hierarchy of values and…a truthful image of man, whether as an individual or as part of a determined social context;" additionally, media should not be used for the "purposes of non representative groups who would thus impose only a point of view favorable to their own vested interest" (WSCD 1978).

Frame 3: Religion in Media

The Catholic Church understands that media is separate from religion and that religion can influence media; however, media can also influence religion through the way it is represented by media. Further, the Church understands media as important to its own identity, at least in the sense that it is possible to be misrepresented in media and therefore in public opinion. This frame is includes the themes, (a) Media as secular and; (b) The Roman Catholic Church in media.

- *Theme 3.A*: Media as secular

The Church constructs its relationship understanding media, as such, because "religion is there today in the mainstream of media information," and "naturally asks itself questions regarding the media's attitude to 'religion'" (WSCD 1989, Sec 2, 3). However, Catholics and "people of different religions can render notable service to [media];" and media should give "religion all the space possible in mass communication" because once "open to the religious message, [its] own message gains in quality and interest" (Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 98; WSCD 1989, Sec 7). Additionally, religious participation in media "will help to overcome any tendency within the general public to have a superficial, superstitious or magical understanding of religion" (Criteria for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Cooperation in Communication 1989, Sec 12)

- *Theme 3.B*: The Roman Catholic Church in media

As the Church would like its message portrayed in the media it asks "of all communicators that they show themselves, by their careful adherence to the highest standards of professional ethics and practice, worthy of the opportunity given them to present the message of hope and reconciliation with God in media of every kind an discipline" (WSCD 1989). Furthermore, it is "the right of the Church also that public opinion should know Her as She is, and that it should be given a true picture of Her teaching Her aspirations and Her life," additionally, "Those who represent the Church must be honest and straightforward" (WSCD 1973; Ethics in Communications 2000, Sec 26).

<u>Frame 4: Media is a gift from God</u>

As God is central to the Roman Catholic Church for the creation and existence of the known

and unknown, media is constituted by God and inherently seen as a gift as evident in the

following themes: (a) Media is a part of God's plan; (b) Catholics should engage media; and (c)

Catholics have the right to media.[5]

- *Theme 4.A*: Media is a part of God's plan

Media is seen as part of the "unfolding and realization of a wonderful plan of God's

providence which opens to man's genius ever new ways of achieving his perfection and of

attaining to his final end" (WSCD 1967). The Church "considers these instruments to be not only

products of human genius but also great gifts of God and true signs of the time," (Ethics in

Communications 2000, Sec 4). Media are "'gifts of God' which, in accordance with His

providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with His plan for

their salvation" (Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 2).

- *Theme 4.B*: Catholics should engage media

The Church "feels obliged to preach the gospel. In the same way, it believes that its task

involves employing the means of social communication to announce the good news of salvation,

and to teach men how to use them properly" (Inter Mirifica 1963, Sec 3). Further, the Church

understands media as "powerful instruments for progress," which "provide some of the most

effective means for the cultivation of fellowship" (Communio et Progressio 1971, Sec 11). The

Church has also created a guide that is to be used as supplemental training material for Catholics

to engage media, critically, and individually, which addresses "a common core of fundamental

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[5] See Catechism of the Catholic Church. Liguiro, MO: Liguori Publications, 1984. This frame and the encompassed themes are directly tied to the ontology of the Catholic Church and its members, more so than the others.

questions concerning the personal conduct of receivers, the pastoral use of mass media, and the specialized formation of particular works" (Guide to the Training of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communication 1986, Presentation)

- *Theme 4.C*: Catholics have a right to media

The Church affirms "the right and duty of all men to obey God's law; and the right of Her members to be allowed access to the use of the instruments of communication, always showing due respect to the legitimate rights of others" (WSCD 1975). Furthermore, it is "an inherent right of the Church to have at its disposal and to employ any of these media insofar as they are necessary or useful for the instruction of Christians and all its efforts for the welfare of souls" (Inter Mirifica 1963, Sec 3). Finally, the Church continually "reaffirms its right and duty to be present in [media]," and "will maintain its own social communications establishments, not only to enable it to carry out its primary duty of evangelization, but also so that it may be in a position to continue…in its role as promoter of integral human development" (WSCD 1976).

The Roman Catholic Church's construction of its relationship with media

Media Use	Media Understanding
Frame 1: Media is used as a tool or instrument -Theme: Media are inherently neutral but used for good and evil -Theme: Media used to influence an audience Frame 2: Media is used to accomplish goals of the Church -Theme: Media used to evangelize -Theme: Media used for social justice -Theme: Media used for communicating the Catholic message Frame 3: Media is used by individuals -Theme: Communicators of media -Theme: Receivers as consumers of media -Theme: Catholics use media	Frame 1: Media has its own standards -Theme: Production and presentation of media -Theme: Content of media -Theme: Media and progress Frame 2: Media is a public resource -Theme: Control of media -Theme: Access to media -Theme: Responsibility of media Frame 3: Religion in media -Theme: Media as secular -Theme: The Roman Catholic Church in media Frame 4: Media as a gift from God -Theme: Media is a part of God's plan -Theme: Catholics should engage media -Theme: Catholics have a right to media

Figure 1.

Discourse: Informing in Order to Form

The above frames and themes form a discourse for the construction of the relationship by the Roman Catholic Church with media that is continually evolving. This discourse might be best articulated by the phrase "informing in order to form" (WSCD 1987). The aim, as the data shows, for the Church in constructing its relationship with media is to use media most effectively for its own ends through both understanding media by a critical engagement of individuals, while informing and influencing media with the Church's own ideas and goals. This discourse creates a

dialectical relationship between the Church and media through individuals. As the Church explores the uses for media and understands media better, it can employ media, using its knowledge, while also delegating that individual Catholics and those of the broader audience of the Church's message engage media using the Church's understanding of media to the aims of its uses.

The phrase, "inform in order to form" encompasses the dual tracks of both using and understanding media as the approach the Catholic Church takes when engaging and constructing its relationship with media. Media, for the Church, is used as a tool, by individuals, to pursue the goals of the Catholic Church. Beyond using media, the Catholic Church also has a specific understanding of media. The Church understands media as something outside the Church that abides by non-Catholic standards, and is a public resource. Furthermore, the Church understands media to have the ability to subject religion, and specifically Catholicism, as content for media presentation. Additionally, the Church understands media as directly tied to its core religious ontology. The Catholic Church, as a religious entity, is informed by beliefs and understandings about the world it is embedded in and this is clearly an important facet as the Church constructs its relationship with media. The relationship that is constructed between the Roman Catholic Church and media is specific to the Church's use and understanding of media.

Furthermore, the discourse considers the individual as the most important unit of analysis for the Catholic Church in its relationship with media. The emphasis on agented action is present in every theme so much so that it is through informing the individual that the Church constructs its relationship with media. In constructing the discourse of its relationship with media the Church speaks to individuals, while always speaking of media. It is only through the individual that media can be used and understood in the above frames and themes. As the Catholic Church

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speaks of media it recognizes that media is always removed from the Church. Media, as the Church understands it, exists outside the Church and will continue to do so. It is only through understanding media that the Church may engage media, yet, always through individuals.

The relationship constructed between the Catholic Church and media, in the above discourse shows a nuanced relationship that the Church has constructed over the last half of the twentieth century. This relationship takes place on the level of the individual, between the Church and media, through a development of understanding and using media in specifically Catholic manners, which are inherently tied to the broader belief structure of the Church. The discourse of "informing in order to form" shows a continual engagement of media by the Church that is critically dialectical.

Conclusion

Revisiting quickly the ideas that place religion and media in competition with one another, it can be seen that there exists, at least in the case of the relationship between the Catholic Church and media, a more nuanced relationship that cannot be satisfactorily understood as competitive. While Newman (1996) presents "a genuine competition between religion and [media]" (p. 137), and others contend media is "competing not merely for our attention and dollars, but for our souls" (Kuhns 1969, p. 10), neither of these positions are specifically reflected in the data examined in this study. While media have made possible "new forms of perception and understanding" (Newman 1996, p. 130) the Roman Catholic Church does not understand these new forms as antithetical to their position in relation to media. As shown above, the Catholic Church's relationship with media is driven dialectically through the Church's use and understanding of media. Furthermore, the Church must engage media in line with how it

understands media and its intended uses for media. Rather, the Catholic Church explains its relationship with media as one in which it wishes to "inform in order to form."

Understanding the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and media as such supports a number of previous works and unpacks them for a fuller understanding of how the Church constructs its relationship with media. Much of the prior discourse pertaining to the Catholic Church and media pursued a dialogue of agency in a relationship with media that allows the Church to take up media and use it, rather than compete with it (Coleman and Tomka 1993; Soukup 1993; Coleman 1993). Furthermore, prior work has sought to encourage the Catholic Church to further engage media as an active participant (Budde 1997), while others have urged the Church to better understand media and the role it plays for the Church (Soukup 1993). All of this work is supported in the findings of this study. Additionally, this study moves prior work forward by specifically showing the Church understands and intends to use media within a dialectical relationship.

This study moves forward a discourse for understanding how the Roman Catholic Church constructs its relationship with media. This analysis provides a much needed empirical examination of Catholic documents pertaining to media directed at better understanding the relationship between the Church and media. While much is still to be understood about the relationship between the Catholic Church and media, this analysis provides some detail into what a fuller understanding may include. However, it can be concluded that, just as the Church's understanding of media and the role it plays for Catholics will continue to inform its relationship with media, so too will the progress of media inform the Church's understanding and use of media.

Appendix

Documents*

DOCUMENT TITLE	YEAR
Inter Mirifica	1963
Communio et Progressio	1971
An Appeal to All Contemplative Religious	1973
Guide to the Training of Future Priests Concerning The Instruments of Social Communication	1986
Pornography and Violence in The Communications Media: A Pastoral Response	1989
Criteria for Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Cooperation in Communications	1989
Aetatis Novae	1992
100 Years of Cinema	1995
Ethics in Advertising	1999
Ethics in Communication	2000
The Church and the Internet	2002
Ethics in Internet	2002
Ethics in Advertising	2003
Rapid Development	2005

*Each document can be found by searching the title at the Vatican's website (www.vatican.va)

World Social Communications Day Speeches*

SPEECH TITLE	YEAR	POPE
Church and Social Communication: First World Communication Day	1967	Pope Paul VI
Social Communications and the Development of Nations	1968	Pope Paul VI
Social Communications and the Family	1969	Pope Paul VI
Social Communications and Youth	1970	Pope Paul VI
The role of Communications Media in promoting unity among men	1971	Pope Paul VI
The Media of Social Communications at the Service of Truth	1972	Pope Paul VI
The Mass Media and the Affirmation and Promotion of Spiritual Values	1973	Pope Paul VI
Social Communications and Evangelization in Today's World	1974	Pope Paul VI
The Mass Media and Reconciliation	1975	Pope Paul VI
Social Communications and the Fundamental Rights and Duties of Man	1976	Pope Paul VI
Advertising in the Mass Media: Benefits, Dangers, Responsibilities	1977	Pope Paul VI
The receiver in Social Communications; his expectations, his rights, is duties	1978	Pope Paul VI
Social Communications for the Development of the Child	1979	Pope John Paul II
Social Communications and Family	1980	Pope John Paul II
Social Communications in the Service of Responsible Human Freedom	1981	Pope John Paul II
Social Communications and the Problems of the Elderly	1982	Pope John Paul II
Social Communications and the Promotion of Peace	1983	Pope John Paul II
Social Communication: Instruments of Encounter Between Faith and Culture	1984	Pope John Paul II
Social Communications for a Christian Promotion of Youth	1985	Pope John Paul II

SPEECH TITLE	YEAR	POPE
Social Communications and the Christian Formation of Public Opinion	1986	Pope John Paul II
Social Communications at the Service of Justice and Peace	1987	Pope John Paul II
Social Communications and the Promotion of Solidarity and Fraternity Between Peoples and Nations	1988	Pope John Paul II
Religion in the Mass Media	1989	Pope John Paul II
The Christian Message in a Computer Culture	1990	Pope John Paul II
The Communications Media and the Unity and Progress of the Human Family	1991	Pope John Paul II
The Proclamation of Christ' Message in the Communications Media	1992	Pope John Paul II
Videocassettes and audiocassettes in the formation of culture and of conscience	1993	Pope John Paul II
Television and family: guidelines for good viewing	1994	Pope John Paul II
Cinema: Communicator of Culture and of Values	1995	Pope John Paul II
The Media: Modern Forum for Promoting the Role of Women in Society	1996	Pope John Paul II
Communicating Jesus: The Way, the Truth and the Life	1997	Pope John Paul II
Sustained by the Spirit, communicate hope	1998	Pope John Paul II
Mass media: a friendly companion for those in search of the Father	1999	Pope John Paul II
Proclaiming Christ in the Media at the Dawn of the New Millennium	2000	Pope John Paul II
"Preach from the housetops": The Gospel in the Age of Global Communication	2001	Pope John Paul II
Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel	2002	Pope John Paul II
The Communications Media at the Service of Authentic Peace in the Light of 'Pacem in Terris'	2003	Pope John Paul II
The Media and the Family: A Risk and a Richness	2004	Pope John Paul II
The Communications Media: At the Service of Understanding Among Peoples	2005	Pope John Paul II

*Speeches can be found under the listed speeches for the respective Pope at the Vatican's website (www.vatican.va)

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