

# MEDIA RESOURCE MANUAL 2



missio

Social Communications Commission  
Catholic Bishops Conference  
Papua New Guinea & Solomon Islands  
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# CONTENT

1. Foreword	3
2. World Communication Day 2022	4-5
3. A Biblical View of Communication	6-11
4. Synodal Dimension of Communication	12-16
5. Salesian Dimension of Social Communication	17-35
6. Institutional and Corporate Communication	36-39
7. When pastoral ministry navigates the web	40-45
8. Quiz	46
9. Communication Trivia	47
10. Commitment Card	49
11. Speaking with the Heart	50
12. DBGYFF - Don Bosco Global Youth Film Festival - 2	51

## Prayer

God, to communicate your love to men and women,  
you sent your only Son Jesus Christ into the world  
and made him our Master  
The Way, Truth, and Life.

Grant that the media of Social Communication –  
press, film, radio, television, internet  
and all forms of digital communication –  
may always be used for Your glory and the good of our Common  
Home.

Inspire all people of good will to contribute  
with prayer, action, and offerings,  
so that through these means the Church may  
preach the Gospel to all peoples.  
Amen.

Compiled by **CBC Social Communications Commission 2022**  
Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb, Abigail Seta

# FOREWORD

## Understanding the Spirituality of Communications



Communication forms the fabric of all our relationships. It is communication that enhances the quality of our lives. Science and advancement in technology has changed the landscape of our communication. It has made it possible for us to connect and network with people across the world. “Man’s genius has with God’s help produced marvellous technical inventions to enhance our times” (*Inter Mirifica no.1*).

Technology has opened us up to Eucharistic celebrations, work from home, meetings online, study sessions and a variety of celebrations. The digital world has been our connection to friends, families and loved ones during the isolation of COVID-19. But the pandemic has also erected barriers between us and our family, friends and loved ones. We are losing a human connection as we immerse ourselves in our digital world.

Pope Francis has entitled in the World Communication Day message of 2022 as: “Listening with the ear of the heart.” He reminds us that listening involves more than simply hearing the words spoken. True listening is a foundation of genuine human relationships and is very much needed in our relationship with God as well as all human persons. Quoting St Paul, the Holy Father said that “faith comes through hearing.” He remarked, “listening corresponds to the humble style of God,” who reveals Himself by speaking, and by listening to men and women and recognizing in them His partners in the work of building up the kingdom. Human beings are called ‘to be willing to listen,’ as God calls them to a covenant of love.

Marshal McLuhan speaks about the Medium and the message. In *Understanding Media* (1964), he reminds us that the media affects and permeates society and culture. Highlighting the physical senses as extensions of the body. Technology now permeates our minds and changes our value system. We need to constantly remind ourselves that Communication is not about the gadget, the device, or the equipment but about the **person**, the **message**, the **networking** and above all the **relationship**.

Keeping the above in mind, the Dicastery of Social Communications of the Salesians of Don Bosco, under the direction of Fr Gildásio Mendes dos Santos, stressed the **Spirituality of Communications**. The team dwelt on the Biblical, Synodal, Salesian, Institutional and Youth Pastoral aspects of Communication. It reinforced the idea that communication is the person, the message, the networking, and the relationship. Understanding this reality will bring about a spiritual heritage that will lead to honesty and happiness in our daily lives.

The Salesian Social Communication Commission of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (PGS), in collaboration with the Catholic Bishops Conference of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (CBC PNGSI), considers this vital and has collaborated in the different online ZOOM sessions in 2021 and 2022. This Resource Manual 2 is an effort to share the sessions of 2021. We do hope that opportunities will open itself to compiling the sessions of 2022, and that many more can benefit from the sessions presented.

Thanks to all who have attended and shared the sessions with their communities and groups. Thanks to Abigail Seta, who has done the editing and the layout of the material in this Media Resource Manual-2. Gratitude to Signis, Missio and Caritas Australia for supporting this publication.

Fr Ambrose Pereira sdb  
CBC and PGS Social Communications, 2022

# Listening with the ear of the Heart

## Message for the 56<sup>th</sup> World Communication Day 2022

*Dear brothers and sisters,*

Last year we reflected on the need to “Come and See” in order to discover reality and be able to recount it beginning with experiencing events and meeting people. Continuing in this vein, I would now like to draw attention to another word, “listen”, which is decisive in the grammar of communication and a condition for genuine dialogue.

In fact, we are losing the ability to listen to those in front of us, both in the normal course of everyday relationships and when debating the most important issues of civil life. At the same time, listening is undergoing an important new development in the field of communication and information through the various podcasts and audio messages available that serve to confirm that listening is still essential in human communication. \_

### **Listening with the ear of the heart**

From the pages of Scripture we learn that listening means not only the perception of sound, but is essentially linked to the dialogical relationship between God and humanity. “*Shema’ Israel* - Hear, O Israel” (Dt 6:4), the opening words of the first commandment of the Torah, is continually reiterated in the Bible, to the point that Saint Paul would affirm that “faith comes through listening” (cf. Rom 10:17). The initiative, in fact, is God’s, who speaks to us, and to whom we respond by listening to him. In the end, even this listening comes from his grace, as is the case with the newborn child who responds to the gaze and the voice of his or her mother and father.

Human beings tend to flee the relationship, to turn their back and “close their ears” so they do not have to listen. The refusal to listen often ends up turning into aggression towards the other, as happened to those listening to the deacon Stephen who, covering their ears, all turned on him at once (cf. Acts 7:57). On the one hand, then, God always reveals himself by communicating freely; and on the other hand, man and woman are asked to tune in, to be willing to listen.

This is why Jesus calls his disciples to evaluate the quality of their listening. “Take heed then *how* you hear” (Lk 8:18): this is what he exhorts them to do after recounting the parable of the sower, making it understood that it is not enough simply to listen, but that it is necessary to listen well. Only those who receive the word with an “honest and good” heart and keep it faithfully bear the fruit of life and salvation (cf. Lk 8:15). It is only by paying attention to *whom* we listen, to *what* we listen, and to *how* we listen that we can grow in the art of communicating, the heart of which is not a theory or a technique, but the “openness of heart that makes closeness possible” (cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 171).

The true seat of listening is the heart. Though he was very young, King Solomon proved himself wise because he asked the Lord to grant him a “listening heart” (cf. 1 Kings 3:9). Saint Augustine used to encourage listening with the heart (*corde audire*), to receive words not outwardly through the ears, but spiritually in our hearts: “Do not have your heart in your ears, but your ears in your heart”.

### **Listening as a condition of good communication**

There is a kind of hearing that is not really listening, but its opposite: eavesdropping. In fact, eavesdropping, spying and exploiting others, is an ever-present temptation nowadays in the age of social networks. Rather, what specifically makes communication good and fully human is listening to the person in front of us, face to face, to whom we approach with fair, confident, and honest openness.

Good communication pays attention to the reasons of the other person and tries to grasp the complexity of reality. It is sad when, even in the Church, ideological alignments are formed and listening disappears, leaving sterile opposition in its wake.

In reality, in many dialogues we do not communicate at all. We are simply waiting for the other person to finish speaking in order to impose our point of view. In these situations, as philosopher Abraham Kaplan notes, dialogue is a duologue: a monologue in two voices. In true communication, however, the “I” and the “you” are both “moving out”, reaching out to each other.

Listening is therefore the first indispensable ingredient of dialogue and good communication. Communication does not take place if listening has not taken place, and there is no good journalism without the ability to listen. In order to provide solid, balanced, and complete information, it is necessary to listen for a long time. Listening to several voices, listening to each other, even in the Church, among brothers and

sisters, allows us to exercise the art of discernment, which always appears as the ability to orient ourselves in a symphony of voices.

But why face the exertion of listening? A great diplomat of the Holy See, Cardinal Agostino Casaroli, described that listening always requires the virtue of patience, together with the ability to allow oneself to be surprised by the truth, even if only a fragment of truth, in the person we are listening to.

Accumulated mistrust towards “official information” has also caused an “infodemic”, within which the world of information is increasingly struggling to be credible and transparent. We need to lend an ear and listen profoundly, especially to the social unease heightened by the downturn or cessation of many economic activities.

The reality of forced migration is also a complex issue, and no one has a ready-made prescription for solving it. I repeat that, in order to overcome prejudices about migrants and to melt the hardness of our hearts, we should try to listen to their stories. Give each of them a name and a story. Many good journalists already do this. Let us encourage them! Let us listen to these stories!

### ***Listening to one another in the Church***

In the Church, there is a great need to listen to and to hear one another. “Christians have forgotten that the ministry of listening has been committed to them by him who is himself the great listener and whose work they should share. We should listen with the ears of God that we may speak the word of God” [4]. Thus, the Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminds us that the first service we owe to others in communion consists in listening to them. Whoever does not know how to listen to his brother or sister will soon no longer be able to listen to God either.

The most important task in pastoral activity is the “apostolate of the ear” – to listen before speaking, as the Apostle James exhorts: “Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak” (1:19). Freely giving some of our own time to listen to people is the first act of charity.



### **Prayer for Communicators**

Lord, let the good news of your marvellous deeds fall on every ear,  
and let all tongues rejoice in your wisdom,  
your compassion, your faithfulness,  
and your love.

Make me bold and let me share your Word  
with those you desire to reach.

As my heart overflows with your love,  
speak through me.

Let me proclaim your glory and your majesty,  
and tell of the kindness you have shown your people.

This I ask, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

# A BIBLICAL VIEW OF COMMUNICATION

Fr Gildásio Mendes, SDB, General Councillor for Social Communication, Rome



## 1. AIMS

- *Deepen knowledge of the dynamics of the digital environment, inhabit it and promote its communicative potential in view of Christian proclamation, and imbue its cultures and dynamics with the Gospel (Synod on Youth, no. 145).*
- *Utilise the very wide range and 'grammar' of symbols, sounds, texts, images, interaction, dialogue drawn from biblical texts in drawing up digital pastoral and educational materials in media.*

## 2. SOME PREMISES TO START WITH:

- Communication is an expression of the identity of the human person, their freedom and ability to create and share their ideas and what they communicate, with others.
- Christian communication is based on faith in God, it is founded on the values of the Gospel, the person of Jesus Christ, spirituality.
- In the Word of God the communicator is a co-creator with the Creator, is inspired by and has the Word of God as a source of prayer and a place for the creative experience of communication.
- Evangelisation in today's world requires an understanding of the integral nature of the cultural ecosystem, people's deep need for interpersonal and social relationships, and human and cultural mediation.
- Evangelisation means following a methodology of inculturation and immersion. Identifying the different kinds of people, their culture, their language, their way of communicating, their interests, their worldview, etc.
- Therefore, some values and criteria are fundamental from the perspective of dialogue between communication and other sciences.
- The Church is a visible sign of God's communication through its charismatic and organisational dimension, as a reference of unity and service.
- The Word of God is a rich and profound grammar of symbols, sounds, rhythms, atmospheres, texts, messages, communication in its breadth and complexity for all times and cultures.
- The Bible offers a consistent anthropological, spiritual and artistic, social and historical basis for dialogue with the various communication sciences.
- The individual's involvement in the communicative ecosystem is a continuation of his or her natural vocation for communication in all its dimensions.
- The individual is the centre of communication as someone who takes the lead in creating meanings, symbols, codes, relationships, devices, art, gastronomy, commerce.
- The anthropology of Cyberspace is about analysing discourses, techniques, cultural identities, specific forms of relationships in the virtual universe.
- Method - digital anthropology - human phenomenon - social science - individual - group - community - society.
- The change of mental structure and linguistic system the digital and interactive model.
- Anthropology considers:
  - Network - groups - meeting - historical element - group rituals.
  - Language - relationship codes - belonging - religious rituals.
  - Emotional aspects of relationship - Emoji - symbols.
  - Artistic aspects - music - sounds - images - colours
  - Belonging - brand - products - food - music - nature.
  - Commerce - buying - selling - market - lifestyle - health - love - affection.
  - Rituals of loss: illness, death.
  - Rituals of hope: in each people and culture.
- The new reality of the digital world and the Internet has at the person at the centre, with their freedom, history and culture.
- Inculturation of the Gospel needs to consider that there is no digital or technological culture. It is always the individual who generates culture and creates environments where they organise

and share their rituals, devices, symbols, food, religion, commerce, art, study... thus the Internet is a human cultural environment where these elements of anthropological, social, religious and artistic character appear.

- R. Internet, social networks, smartphone, allow for ample and fast diffusion of information. Considering the complexity and ubiquity of the digital world, these initiatives have their own value, but inculturation involves dialogue, openness, involvement, interactivity, continuity in the process of living the faith and deepening the Christian experience. Communication is experienced as immersion.

### **3. INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF COMMUNICATION IN SOME BIBLICAL TEXTS**

#### **1. FIRST TEXT**

##### **a. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God (Jn 1:1-18)**

The central root of communication is found in God, the Communicator of love and life. Communication is fundamentally the presence of the Divine Person in human history: the Logos is love, relationship, word, encounter.

The anthropological basis of communication: God, through the Word who became Flesh, opens dialogue with the human person and communicates with humanity. Communication is communion, reciprocity, God's interaction with humanity. Therefore, communication is a response of the individual's freedom, of his place in the cultural, social, political, economic and religious world.

The deep God-Jesus relationship. The mystery of communication-communion between God and us was revealed in Jesus Christ. From the covenant of love between us and God comes our vocation to communicate and to dwell in the human-cultural communicative ecosystem.

Communication finds its vital root in the Word of God which is the source of life, inserted in a visible way, in Jesus Christ, in salvation history. Communicating is, for us, a vocation with the goal of realising God's Plan.

The person is created in the image and likeness of God. Communication is the shared mission between God the Creator and the created human person, who becomes a co-creator, a gift to be the subject of communication in the world. Therefore, communication is both vocation and shared mission. Communion is a response of love between the person who communicates and God who inspires it.

Therefore, to build an anthropology that is the basis of digital and virtual communication, it is fundamental to start from this covenant of love and mission between God and ourselves in humanity.

The spiritual, educational and pastoral method of integral communication stems from our response to God's gift of communication. To communicate is not a function, but a response to the gift of being co-creators of the world of communication with God. To inhabit the digital world means to be co-authors/creators of the communicative process. It is not just an ethical task, but a natural response to the gift and vocation to communicate with God in human history.

The incarnation is the basis of the new anthropological model of communication, because it inspires and guides our relationship with God.

Here we have the reference for building integral communication as relationship, interactivity, ubiquity, instantaneity, convergence, human and cultural mediation, immersion, and solidarity.

##### **b. The Word was made flesh**

Jesus, Word incarnate, flesh, is the epiphany of communication. That is, Jesus is the "personal presence" of God. In the Incarnate Word we find the complete vision of communication: this hermeneutic offers us the basis where communication begins and its meaning in the time and space of present and eternal time. Virtual time develops in this dynamic of God and our *kairos*.

From the Flesh of the incarnate Word come tenderness, beauty and hope of communication. On the cross, flesh is a communication of human fragility, of care for the other, for suffering, for creation.

Flesh: anthropological dimension. The word becomes life, food, beauty, poetry, message. The Eucharist is integral communication.

### **3. And dwelt amongst us**

Through the Word made flesh, God enters human history, human time and space. Virtual communication takes place in God's time, in God's space. Communion and redemption.

The incarnate Word teaches us to live in virtual time and space, the "sacrament of presence". To evangelise in the virtual environment is to be a witness of this covenant of love with God.

God's message through the Incarnate Word has its own dynamic for giving vitality, credibility, and relevance to communication as symbol, sign, message, and methodology.

Living in the digital world with the vocation and mission of a common home, a human-cultural ecosystem.

The mission to communicate in the Church - Sacraments - Networks.  
The missionary vocation of communication.

### **4. ...and we have seen his glory**

The Word became flesh, so that we can know God's love. Communication is living love as vocation and service.

The Word became flesh to save us, reconciling us with God. Communication is the call to build solidarity and peace.

The Word became flesh to communicate life, the mystery of the cross. Humility of the Communicator of God.

Mystery of the resurrection. Living communication as joy and hope, as building fraternity.  
The Church, sacrament of God's love for humanity. Witness of unity.

The theology and catechesis of the Church (from the Acts of the Apostles to our days): experience of faith, witness of community, service in unity.

Patristics: elaboration of codexes, concepts, communication networks.

St. Augustine: The Confessions, the first Facebook/Instagram in history.

Encyclopaedia of communication: The Etymologies of St. Isidore of Seville (560-636).

Communication: mystery and mission.

## **SECOND TEXT**

### **The Two Emmaus Communicators**

Starting from Jesus' encounter with the two disciples on their way to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-35), I would like to offer an interpretation and an application for communication today with the theme: IMMERSION, HUMAN MEDIATION, INTERCULTURALITY

This biblical text offers a rich and profound basis of human, cultural, spiritual and pastoral elements for a current contribution to dialogue with communication and evangelisation and formation in our communities.

The Emmaus text offers a profound basis for how to communicate through dialogue, storytelling, symbols and rituals, for the importance of encounter, acceptance, listening, words, sharing, interactivity, mystery, affectivity, communication's immersive setting, the social, political and



religious environment around us, history, memory and so many other things we can apply to communication.

This text has been an enlightening source for our Salesian spirituality and an inspiring reference for the Church's Youth Ministry. The Synod on the Young, which took place in 2018, with the theme "Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment", chose the Emmaus text as the biblical basis for the entire Synodal document.

In this new approach to the Emmaus text, we have defined some themes to be developed and further explored.

- **THE IMMERSIVE SETTING OF JESUS' DIALOGUE WITH THE TWO DISCIPLES**

In this part we present the importance of understanding digital communication and social networks as an immersive setting of human and cultural rituals, from which emerges the need for human beings' interpersonal communication through telling their story; their need to express themselves freely, to be listened to and to dialogue with openness, trust and truth. The dialogue on the journey to Emmaus is an archetype of human communication: human beings, their freedom and creativity to tell their own story based on their experience and reality. We analyse in this part how the word, expressed in this open and trusting narrative, reveals the deep feelings of the person and becomes an affective code for communication. Through the narrated word the person reveals their inner habitat, feelings, desires, fears, hopes and dreams.

- **THE SUBJECTS OF COMMUNICATION ON THE EMMAUS JOURNEY**

In this second part we delve into human mediation as part of communication. Here we interpret how open dialogue opens individuals up to seeing, hearing, feeling, and interacting authentically in such a way that they feel whole in the dialogue, become the subject of communication, express their own inner being and open themselves to the new. Communication is significant when it fosters the expression of the communicator's inner condition. The awareness of being the subject of communication develops from the capacity to recognise the other as a person, the fundamental interlocutor of the relationship.

Human mediation expresses the social identity of each individual. The individual's relationship with technology and information takes place in an environment of respect for the dignity and place of the other in the communicative environment that is interconnected with all people and their community.

- **RITUAL AS A WAY OF COMMUNICATING**

In this third part we describe how narrative, storytelling, encourages the expression of an individual's subjective nature and opens a second door to communication: the sharing of deep experiences through the individual's feelings, pains and deep hopes, ritualised through gestures and celebratory attitudes. Jesus brings about this moment of communication through the ritual of sharing bread, being together, shared gestures, feelings and affections. The place where this ritual of sharing bread is celebrated represents the home that welcomes with human warmth and trust, the habitat of fellowship, our common home. Communication generates relationships of trust as well as rituals. Friendship is an example of a human ritual that is constructed, experienced and celebrated. Care for human beings, for their health and quality of life and for integral ecology are all expressions of ethical communication.

- **THE EXPERIENCE OF MYSTERY AND BEAUTY IN HUMAN RELATIONSHIP**

In this fourth part, we describe aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication, the body expressing its language of pain and hope. The two disciples experience the word that touches the heart, the opening of themselves through the word and the gestures of the ritual of the sharing of bread. As their hearts burn in the ritual celebrated with Jesus, the two Emmaus communicators experience the mystery of God, the divine expressed in the ritual, the beauty of divine human love experienced with Jesus. Human communication touches the person's freedom and call to share responsibility before God, the other, all of creation. To communicate is to be a co-author with God in the ongoing project of the creation of the world. The communicator is the one who collaborates with the project of life and with the hope that was revealed by God in the Word made flesh who dwelt among us. (Jn 1:14).

## • THE EXPERIENCE THAT BECOMES COMMUNICATIVE RESPONSIBILITY

In the fifth part we describe the return of the two disciples, communicators, to Jerusalem (Emmaus represents local communication, Jerusalem represents global communication). In this movement from the local to the global, we highlight the value of interculturality and groups in communication. The internet is an intercultural network. Social networks are places for the expression of the human and cultural rituals of groups, races, ethnic groups, representations of people with their cultures and organisations. Digital communication in social networks opens us up to new geographies for understanding intercultural realities, thus allowing dialogue between peoples and cultures based on identity and collaboration between communities.

## • THE DIGITAL CIRCUMSTANCE AND NEW YOUNG CHRISTIANS

In the sixth part, and in the light of the experience of the two Emmaus communicators, we present the digital circumstance of today's young people, their view of the world, their languages and codes through music, dance, gestures, games, interactions and symbolic creations. Within this scenario of new languages, the way of the ritual of Word and Bread experienced by Jesus and the two Emmaus communicators can become a reference point for how to communicate from within our human situation and its culture. In this way, the biblical text becomes a true pedagogy for how to communicate at the interpersonal-group level in our cultural and networked human ecosystem. The biblical text also offers an immense and rich grammar of communication for the creation, production and broadcasting of information in its written, visual, audio and interactive formats. At the level of educative spirituality, the biblical text offers a wealth of spiritual and aesthetic material for how to experience the mystery of God in human reality. At the level of the community's and group's faith experience, the biblical text nourishes the message of communication that fosters the response to God's call and the vocation of service on behalf of life and of the other, and that fosters missionary commitment and solidarity.

## THIRD TEXT

### Mary, Communicator of God's Love

Among others, *three* great moments of profound and striking communication from the Mother of Jesus.

The *first* is her visit to Saint Elizabeth. Mary goes to her home. She communicates to her, as her greatest gift, her inner richness, her delight in God, her song of joy and exaltation: "The Mighty One has done great things for me" (Lk 1:49).

Mary has a profound experience of God's grace, which gives her the special gift of being the Mother of the Saviour. She tells Elizabeth of the marvels God does in her.

Mary experienced the wonder of God's call and, inwardly, she carried in her heart and soul her deep gratitude because the Lord had done great things in her life.

Mary is the communicator of God's grace, of her free and loving Yes to the One who chose her as his chosen one. She communicates to Elizabeth the wonderful and great news: that she is to be the Mother of Jesus, of the Saviour. The interpersonal communication of Mary with Elizabeth takes place in the encounter of two women deeply caught up in God's love.

Mary stays with Elizabeth. We see in this gesture the communication of the sisterly, serving and caring presence that one has for the other. The communication between Mary and Elizabeth is centred on the great mission of being the Mother of the Saviour.

In the *second* instance, at Cana in Galilee, Mary is the communicator of human relationships, empathy, sensitivity and openness to others. Mary interprets the situation with faith, by going out of herself to others, noticing that the wine had run out: "**When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.'**" (Jn 2:3).



Mary is the communicator sensitive to the feelings of those taking part in the feast. She feels their hearts troubled by the lack of wine, which was part of that sacred ritual. Mary is the communicator who looks into the depths of her Son's eyes, and communicates to Him with maternal trust that "they have no wine".

At Cana, Mary is the communicator who values the group, who knows how to live in community, who participates in its rituals, and joins in the joy of the guests. His communication with Jesus and the guests at the feast is one of loving, active, firm and creative authority: "*His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever he tells you.'*" (Jn 2:5). Mary takes the initiative. She leads. She takes the first step, dialogues, questions, listens and acts to find a solution to the lack of wine. Mary, a communicator of great leadership, has a specific sensitivity for others and an immediate active attitude.

In the *third* instance, in the Upper Room, we see Mary silently present among Jesus' disciples. In the Acts of the Apostles (1:14), Luke mentions Mary's humble presence when they receive the Holy Spirit. Mary is a woman of communion, of integration in the community; she inserts herself among the disciples as woman and Mother of Jesus. Mary interacts, listens, prays, accompanies, participates in the community that is being born. Though Mother of Jesus, she does not place herself above the disciples. She communicates with her friendly and humble presence, with her deep sense of community.

#### 4. Some questions for further study and Sharing

1. How to experience the Word of God and communicate creatively from the inspiration and power of the Word?
2. How can we promote storytelling as a way to listen and enter the hearts of young people?
3. How to create the ritual of dialogue and prayer from the life experience of young people?
4. How can we live the spirituality of communion, silence, union with Jesus in the virtuality, instantaneity, and speed of relationships in the digital world?
5. How to read, pray, and experience a biblical text from within its immersive dimension?
6. Which biblical texts from the Gospel of John and Luke would you choose to make a multimedia production from images, sounds, immersive texts...?
7. How to remain with Him in the absence-presence of virtual communication?
8. How can the Word shared with young people become an experience of ritual, prayer and sacrament?
9. How does the Eucharist unite us spiritually and educationally with our young people in the digital world?
10. How can we transform some images of the psalms into visual and sound art and digitalise them?
11. How to communicate from our intercultural situation in today's world?
12. What are the aspects of the interpersonal and communal communication of Mary, Mother of Jesus?
13. What does the text of the Incarnation of the Word of God in the midst of humanity contribute to virtual communication today?
14. How to utilise the very wide range and 'grammar' of symbols, sounds, texts, images, interaction, dialogue drawn from biblical texts in drawing up digital pastoral and educational materials in media?

#### Some references

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<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/anthropology/people/academic-and-teaching-staff/daniel-miller/digital-and-human-prospectus-digital-anthropology>

4. Variety of texts.  
<https://www.dur.ac.uk/digitaltheology/publications/>

# SYNODAL DIMENSION OF COMMUNICATION



Fr Harris Pakkam sdb, Social Communications, ANS

## 1. Why Synodality today?

• **Context** – we are living during this moment of global pandemic, local and international conflicts, growing impact of climate change, migration, various forms of injustice, racism, violence, persecution, and increasing inequalities across humanity, to name a few. (PD 5)

• **Global Crisis** - has revived our sense that we are all in the same boat, and that **“one person’s problems are the problems of all”** (FT, 32).

• Whole world is looking for **Consensus**

• **Invitation of Pope Francis** - theme that is decisive for its life and mission of the Church: **“It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.”**

• It is equally necessary to **consider the reverberation, within the Church and in its relations with society**, of the fractures caused by reasons of ethnicity, race, caste, or other forms of social stratification or cultural and structural violence, which run through the latter. **These situations have a profound impact on the meaning of the expression “journeying together” and on the concrete possibilities of doing so.** (PD8)

## 2. What is Synodality?

• **‘Synodality’** - indicates the path along which the People of God walk together. It refers also to the Lord Jesus, who presents Himself as **“the way, the truth and the life”** (Jn 14,6).

• It denotes the **particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the Church**, expressing her nature as the People of God journeying together. **Synodality is not simply a working procedure, but the particular form in which the Church lives and operates. It is the modus vivendi et operandi of the Church.**

• Synodality enables the entire People of God to walk forward together, listening to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, to participate in the mission of the Church in the communion (PD 9)

• **This path of walking together is the most effective way of manifesting and putting into practice the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God** (PD, 1).

• **Enlightened by the Word of God and united in prayer, we will be able to discern the processes to seek God’s will and pursue the pathways to which God calls us – towards deeper communion, fuller participation, and greater openness to fulfilling our mission in the world.** (PD 9)

• **Synodality is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people’s hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission** (PD, 32).

• **Synodal Process is a journey of growing authentically towards the communion and mission that God calls the Church to live out in the third millennium.**

## 3. Synodality in Scripture, in Tradition and in History

• “Synod” is an ancient and venerable word in the Tradition of the Church, whose meaning indicates the path along which the People of God walk together.

• The Old Testament shows that God created the human person, man and woman, in his image and likeness as a social being called to **work with Him by moving forward in the sign of communion, by caring for the universe and directing it towards its goal** (Genesis 1,26-28).

• In carrying out His plan, **God convokes leaders and the people** of God.

• Old Testament - **the council of elders/leaders** as an example of synodal procedure.

• **The message of the Prophets** teaches the People of God the need to journey through the hardships of history in faithfulness to the covenant. That is why the Prophets invite them to Conversion of their hearts to God and to justice in their relationships with their neighbours, often the poorest, the oppressed, foreigners, as a tangible witness to God’s mercy ( cf. Jeremiah 37,21; 38,1).

• God achieves the new covenant He has promised in **Jesus of Nazareth**, Messiah and Lord, whose kerygma, life and person reveal that God is a communion of love who, in His grace and mercy, wishes to embrace the whole of humanity in unity.

• **Jesus reaches out to all** - He does not only save people individually but as a people that he gathers together, as the one Shepherd of the entire flock (cf. John 10:16). The ministry of Jesus shows us that no one is excluded from God’s plan of salvation.

• **“May they all be one, Father, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us so that the world may believe it was you who sent me”** (cf. John 17,21).

• **The Acts of the Apostles** document some important moments along the path of the Apostolic Church when the People of God is called as a community to discern the will of the risen Lord. **The Council of Jerusalem** is a fine example of synodal discernment (Acts 15)

- **Saint John Chrysostom** – ‘Synod is the synonym of the Church, writes that the Church is a **‘name standing for ‘walking together’**. He explains that the Church is actually the assembly convoked to give God thanks and glory like a choir, a harmonic reality which holds everything.
- **Cyprian**: Nothing should be done in the local church without the bishop – nihil sine episcopo, it is equally true that nothing should be done without the council of presbyters – nihil sine consilio vestro, and without the consensus of the people – et sine consensus plebis. He further gives life to the principle that the episcopate is one, of which each member has an undivided share in it.
- **Augustine**: While presenting his successor to the see of Hippo, asks people give their consent to appoint the successor.
- **Ambrose**: In his letter to Emperor Theodosius, he says that as emperor consults the generals and ministers in matters of war and administration, so too he is obliged to consult the bishops on matters of faith.
- **Saint Paul VI**, stressed that, in fact, synodality “is an essential dimension of the Church”
- All councils in spirit was an expression of Synodality.

#### 4. Pope Francis and the revival of Synodality

- The leadership of Pope Francis is characterized by his personal growth, he is a pope who listens, discerns, and journeys with the people entrusted to him, and in whom he perceives the voice and work of God’s Spirit building the Church.
- In a time of crisis, and indeed at all times, as Pope Francis observes, “the important thing is not to walk alone, but to rely on each other as brothers and sisters” (EG §33).
- According to Pope Francis, Common discernment is an excellent tool to put synodality into practice. ‘Discernment in common’, at the service of the common good and community building, in which we do not need to fear one another while learning to listen to one another, becomes more difficult in this competitive context
- His understanding of creation in *Laudato Si’* is fundamentally relational in a holistic sense: reality is interconnected and interdependent.
- In him we discover a powerful desire to serve the poor, the outcasts and the forgotten, i.e., those who do not participate in the fruits of caring societies and communities. He wants to listen to their voices, as in them the voice of the Spirit resounds.
- God is eternal newness. He impels us constantly to set out anew, to pass beyond what is familiar, to the fringes and beyond. He takes us to where humanity is most wounded, where men and women, beneath the appearance of a shallow conformity, continue to seek an answer to the question of life’s meaning. God is not afraid! He is fearless! He is always greater than our plans and schemes (GE 135).
- A participatory and co-responsible church is inevitable, and allows us to escape clericalism and to elaborate a new understanding of authority as service in the journey or walking together of the people of God.
- Francis’ use of three verbal images illustrate this decolonizing approach to synodality. First, he speaks of the need for a **sound decentralization** in the church that would reconstitute the relation of the center and the periphery and the exercise of the authority of Rome, the pope, and the curia in relation to particular churches. Second, he uses the image of **an inverted pyramid** to depict a reversal of ways that the papal and the episcopal hierarchy exercise power and authority in relation to people of God from diverse cultures and especially the poor. In this [synodal] Church, as in an inverted pyramid, the top is located beneath the base. (...) the only authority is the authority of service, the only power is the power of the cross.
- And third, he uses the image of a **polyhedron** to reconceive the status of distinctive parts in relation to the unifying whole, and consequently to not assume a normative and standardizing understanding of the whole’s impact on the parts.
- Four motifs in particular have become driving forces in Francis’ approach to synodality.
  - First, for Francis, **conflict is an inevitable ingredient in synodal life**, as in all forms of life, and cannot be overcome through denial, aversion, evasion, or scapegoating. Conflict must be acknowledged as an occasion for the pedagogical and purifying power of God’s grace offered to promote recognition of human dignity, human rights, and the gifts of all sectors of the church and the world in the pilgrimage of life, which leads to a deeper understanding of the self and communal life.
  - Second, Pope Francis uses the Greek word **parrhesia, which means one needs to speak with frankness and courage, to convey the summons to take a stand in the public realm**, encouraging participants to speak out humbly, honestly, and boldly, risking the consequences, when one feels compelled to state how one understands and assesses contested issues in the church and world.
  - Third, synodality for Francis has above all fostered **listening to the sense of all the faithful in the church, which also entails a preferential option to listen to the cries of the poor, to those marginalized in communities; and in addition, to listen for the groans of the damaged earth**. It also entails listening to the voice of the Spirit speaking to the churches through the laments of the suffering and the groans of the damaged earth.

- Fourth, for Francis there will always be **agonistic struggles in the church** as in society. There will always be contested issues. **In synodal deliberation unanimous agreement is uncommon.** Consensus is rarely unanimity and often entails conflict, bold speech, the cries of the poor and the groans of the earth. There will always be dissensus and antinomies in the church as in the world. In order to avoid destructive forms of polarization we must learn how to negotiate dissensus and antinomies and discover ways to realize differentiated and differentiating consensus in the church.

### 5. Three Pillars of Synodality – Communion, Participation & Mission

- **The three vital pillars of Synodality are communion, participation, and mission.** Profoundly interrelated and no hierarchy between them.
- **Communion:**
  - finds its deepest roots in the love and unity of the Trinity.
  - Christ who reconciles us to the Father and unites us with each other in the Holy Spirit. Together, we are inspired by listening to the Word of God, through the living Tradition of the Church, and grounded in the *sensus fidei* that we share.
- **Participation:**
  - Call for the involvement of all who belong to the People of God – laity, consecrated and ordained
  - to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening to one another. This listening creates space for us to hear the Holy Spirit together, and guides our aspirations for the Church of the Third Millennium.
  - Participation – all the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit.
  - In a synodal Church the whole community, in the free and rich diversity of its members, is called together to pray, listen, analyze, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which correspond as closely as possible to God's will (ICT, Syn., 67-68).
  - Ensure the inclusion of those at the margins or who feel excluded.
- **Mission:**
  - The Church exists to evangelize.
  - To witness the love of God in the midst of the whole human family.
  - This Synodal Process has a deep missionary dimension to it.
  - Church to better witness to the Gospel, especially with those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, political, geographical, and existential peripheries of our world.
  - A path through which - fruitfully fulfil her mission of evangelization in the world, as a leaven at the service of the coming of God's kingdom.

### 6. Characteristics of the Synodal Dimension

The unfolding of the Synodal Process in any community must involve:

- **Communal Discernment**  
Create space for the guidance of the Holy Spirit, listen to each other, to discern what God is saying to all of us.  
“to listen to God, so that with him we may hear the cry of his people; to listen to his people until we are in harmony with the will to which God calls us.”  
Discernment is a grace from God, but it requires our human involvement in simple ways: praying, reflecting, paying attention to one's inner disposition, listening and talking to one another in an authentic, meaningful, and welcoming way.
- **Accessibility**  
to ensure that as many people as possible can participate, regardless of location, language, education, socio-economic status, ability/disability, and material resources.
- **Cultural awareness**  
celebrate and embrace the diversity within local communities.
- **Inclusion**  
every effort to involve those who feel excluded or marginalized.
- **Partnership**  
Co-responsible Church.
- **Respect**  
Rights, dignity, and opinion of each participant.
- **Accurate syntheses**  
critical and appreciative perspectives of all responses
- **Transparency**  
Ensuring that processes of invitation, involvement, inclusion, and aggregation of input are clear and well communicated.
- **Fairness**  
Treats each person equally, so that every voice can be duly heard.



- **Genuine Information Sharing**

Authentic info sharing enables to sort out dissensus and helps to arrive at communal discernment through consensus.

- **Cognitive conflict**

There needs to be a certain level of cognitive conflict in the board room. Cognitive conflict is natural, and it is highly improbable that everyone understands the issue at hand in the same way.

## 7. Challenges that threaten Synodality

### 1. Rely on ourselves instead of being led by God.

Synodality is a spiritual process that is led by the Holy Spirit.

Our humble efforts - at the service of God who guides us on our way

### 2. Focus on ourselves and our immediate concerns.

Opportunity to open up, to look around us, to see things from other points of view, and to move out in missionary outreach to the peripheries - Broadening our perspectives

### 3. Focusing on Problems

Challenges are many, fixating on the problems - overwhelmed, discouraged, and cynical. We can miss the light if we focus only on the darkness.

### 4. Focusing only on structures

Call for a renewal and conversion of structures at various levels, in order to foster deeper communion, fuller participation, and more fruitful mission, focus on journeying together and discerning the path forward

### 5. Reluctance to look beyond the visible confines of the Church

Time to dialogue with people from the worlds of economics and science, politics and culture, arts and sport, the media and social initiatives. It will be a time to reflect on ecology and peace, life issues and migration.

### 6. Losing focus of the objectives of the Synodal Process

Main goal - discerning how God calls us to walk forward together

moving forward in a co-responsible way that is open to welcoming God's fruits together over time.

### 7. The temptation of conflict and division

"That they may all be one" (John 17:21), seeds of division bear no fruit

### 8. Parliamentary Approach

synodality - not a 'political battle' to antagonize others, encourage divisive conflicts

### 9. Listen only to those who are already involved in Church activities

Selective listening, ultimately ignores a significant proportion of the People of God.

### 10. Going beyond Prejudices & Ideologies

Without openness to promptings of the Holy Spirit and faith in the People of God, synodality becomes only a cliché.

## 8. Attitudes for being Synodal today

### 1. Spirit of dialogue

Dialogue leads us to newness, willing to change our opinions

### 2. Courage to Speak

must correspond to courage both in speaking and in listening

### 3. Openness to Conversion and change

Abandon attitudes of complacency and comfort

### 4. Time for sharing

speak with authentic courage and honesty (parrhesia) in order to integrate freedom, truth, and charity.

### 5. Spirit of discernment

Conviction that God is at work in the world and to listen to what the Spirit suggests.

### 6. Spirit of listening

By listening, following the example of God himself, who listens to the cry of his people, to open ourselves to listen in an authentic way

### 7. Free from prejudices and stereotypes

freeing our minds and hearts from prejudices and stereotypes that lead us towards ignorance and division.

### 8. Overcome the scourge of clericalism

All are interdependent on one another and share an equal dignity amidst the holy People of God. In the image of Christ, true power is service.

### 9. Cure the virus of self-sufficiency

We are all in the same boat, we need to learn from each other, journey together, and be at the service of one another and build bridges.

### 10. Overcoming ideologies

Avoid the risk of giving greater importance to ideas than to the reality of the life of faith that people live in a concrete way.

### 11. Being Optimistic & Hope-filled

Being faithful to God and serving His People, to be beacons of hope, not prophets of doom.

### 12. Dream for the Future

Create a local process that inspires people, to create a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel

### 13. An innovative outlook

To develop new approaches, with creativity and a certain audacity.

### 14. Being inclusive

A participatory and co-responsible Church, all embracing

### 15. An open mind

Avoid ideological labels and make use of all methodologies that have borne fruit

### 16. Learning from Others

By learning from one another, can better reflect the wonderful multifaceted reality that Christ's Church is meant to be.

### 17. An understanding of "journeying together"

To walk the path that God calls the Church to undertake for the third millennium.

### 18. Spirit of Co-responsibility

Concept of a co-responsible Church, to value and involve the unique role and vocation of each member of the Body of Christ, for the renewal and building up of the whole Church.

### 19. Ecumenical and interreligious dialogue:

To dream together and journey with one another as one human family.

### 20. Understanding "authority" as "service"

Evangelical understanding of authority makes synodality possible. "I have come not to be served but to serve".

## 9. Synodal Conversion, Solidarity & Fraternity

### • Need to experience Synodal Conversion

- Discover that the **Spirit is active in the life of the community, inviting us to new or alternative ways of understanding and interaction** beyond those of our normal social, political, and even ecclesial habits, moving us to **overcome the barriers of mistrust and the hermeneutics of suspicion** which have come to mark the norm of our culture.
- Synodality asks us to **seek the grace and courage to make the Church an authentic community of love**, with an openness to that which is other, a **willingness to serve** rather than rule, and a desire to follow Christ, adhering to His truth, not only for our own salvation but as hope of all women and men, **especially those forgotten, oppressed, and exploited, those 'excluded from the banquet of life.'**
- **Without synodality that is rooted in solidarity, the church ceases to exist.** Solidarity is fundamentally spiritual because of its **rootedness in original human interdependence**, and in that sense, the praxis of synodality constitutes a specific manifestation of that spirituality in the form of a co-responsible and co-participatory commitment in the life and mission of the church. Thus, solidarity is manifest in "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all" *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (SRS §38). Just as in the case of solidarity, synodality is not a matter of 'charity', **but an expression of a just and inclusive ecclesial structure of governance that powerfully speaks to an unjust world.**
- Synodality is a way of realising the gifts of the whole Body of Christ through the service of mission, but it is also a **way of healing the wounds of the Church itself.** Pope Francis teaches that "to walk together is the constitutive way of the Church; the figure that enables us to interpret reality with the eyes and heart of God; the condition for following the Lord Jesus and **being servants of life in this wounded time.**
- The more completely the Church can live a synodal life, the more it can be a sign to all peoples of the **graced 'fraternity' or solidarity that is the ultimate reality of humanity which includes care for 'our common home.'**
- Together with other religions and nations, whatever their governing philosophy and commitments, the Church is **committed to working for the building of 'a common home' in which all have the means to flourish.**
- **Synodality is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission (PD, 32).**
- Synodality, points to the ultimate 'communio' of all creation which cannot happen without the 'communio' of humanity.

1. How can we become Synodal in our Communication?
2. The essence of Synodality is Communion. How can we realize this communion in our life?
3. What are the changes we need to effect in our Organizations/Centres/Communities to become Synodal?
4. What are the main obstacles to Synodality? Can we find some solutions?
5. According to you what are the ten key words that define Synodality?



# SALESIAN DIMENSION OF COMMUNICATION

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## 5 Intuitive Readings of Don Bosco Communicator



### Reading 1: DON BOSCO AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION | Pietro Stella



Great actions, but...is it just that?

Don Bosco's oratory distinguished itself from earlier forms of sociability because it was not based on control and social restraint, but on the spontaneity of the gathering of young people. That is why it was necessary to develop suitable and convergent means to achieve the goal: to make the oratory known to young people, induce them to attend and adhere to them and also, publicize the educational work at all social and religious, public and private levels so that it has the consent and support.

Son of poor farmers, Giovanni Bosco was born on August 16, 1815, on a farm in the mountainous area of Morialdo, a village in the municipality of Castel Nuovo d'Asti (now Castelnuovo Don Bosco) in lower Monferrato near the Turin Hills. He lost his father in 1817, after various family problems he was able to pursue a study career first at Castelnuovo and then at Chieri, where, having finished his studies in the humanities field at the public university, he entered the clerical seminary. After completing his philosophy and theology courses, he was ordained a priest in Turin on June 5, 1841. Initially he stayed there to continue his Pradca training in a kind of pastoral training at the Turin ecclesiastical boarding school led by the theologian Giuseppe Guala and later by Don Giuseppe Cafasso. During these years, Don Bosco developed the deepest ideal motivations and his educational vocation. The motto chosen as priest: "Lord, give me souls, take everything else (Da mihi animas caetera tolle)" immediately translated into anxiety for the spiritual and social salvation of the young people whom he began to approach, accompanying Don Cafasso to the prisons of Turin and standing out in the boarding school as a catechist, he did not limit himself to contact during catechism time, instead he was interested in people, their entertainment and other activities.

#### ***The choice of the young***

In 1844 with the group of young people who had grown fond of him and who accompanied him on vacation, he moved as an assistant chaplain to the northern outskirts of the city to work for the welfare of women founded and financially supported by the Marchioness Giulia Colbert Falletti of Barolo. There, he gave his activity the name of Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales, similar to what another priest almost his age, Don Giovanni Cocchi, had already done since 1840 in the Oratory of the Guardian Angel in the district of Vanchiglia. In 1846, placed by the Marchioness in the alternative: to continue being a full-time chaplain or to move to another place with his young boys, Don Bosco preferred to move out. After some temporary stops, he settled permanently in the extreme northwest of the city, in the meadows of Valdocco, in a house that he first rented and then owned thanks to the financial support of Don Cafasso and others. In Valdocco, Don Bosco explicitly strengthened and developed his own religious and educational program: the salvation of the soul, but for that very reason the insertion or recovery and maturation of young people, especially

those marginalized from the poorest neighborhoods and seasonal migrants who, in those days of capitalist preludes and urbanization, they came from the territory to the city to work or study.

### **The communicative environment of the oratory**

Don Bosco's oratory (as Don Cocchi's) distinguished itself from earlier forms of sociality because it was not based on social control and restriction, but on the spontaneity of the gathering of young people. That is why it was necessary to develop suitable and convergent means to achieve the goal: to make the oratory known to young people, induce them to attend and adhere to them; and also, to publicize the educational work at all social and religious, public and private levels so that it has the consent and support.

In the Valdocco youth oratory, from the beginning, the center and the heart were Don Bosco's cameretta (office and room) and the chapel; these two environments could be considered custodians of a series of messages that Don Bosco addressed to his interlocutors. The young people and adults who entered his office found a poster attached to the wall with the inscription: "Da mihi animas, coetera (sic) tolle", which was not only a motto but also an ejaculation prayer addressed to God. The chapel, later replaced by a larger church, was significantly dedicated to Saint Francis de Sales to indicate, in the explicit explanation given by Don Bosco, his own educational style: not the strict setting, but the gentleness of the educator; and happiness as a manifestation of intimate adherence to divine grace that young people should realize and express. In this way, the theme of the salvation of the soul, of the Augustinian matrices and which was marked by a certain pessimism about the conditions of human nature, was reconciled with a humanism explicitly inspired by Francisco de Sales, as well as by Saint Philip Neri, and related to the teaching of the pedagogues of the Piedmontese school of the XIX century.

As for the young man, Don Bosco had developed a series of principles that, on closer examination, also supported the means and forms to which he entrusted his religious and educational message. The theological presupposition, proper to his ecclesiastical formation, was the thesis that because of sin he was inclined to evil. Therefore, he viewed young people as "growers of plants who would surely incline to evil", if they were not supported by educational work in cooperation with grace. An important psychological assumption in Don Bosco's "system" is that of "youth mobility": young people tire easily and need alternation and entertainment. Given his religious commitment, Don Bosco pays special attention to "practices of piety". These do not have to be long if we do not want to create rejection mechanisms precisely at an early age. These ideas explain Don Bosco's recourse to forms and means that emphasize imaginative capacity. His personal catechesis gives ample space to the narration of sacred and ecclesiastical history. For this he wrote and published two special pamphlets, both also equipped with engravings representing scenes or characters: Ecclesiastical replica for school use (1845) and Sacred history for school use (1847). In the context of the oratory, he resorts to the use of wall posters, as well as simple and small-format brochures (Six Sundays and the Novena of San Luigi Gonzaga, 1846, etc.). Catechesis has as spectacular moments, and in a certain sense culminating, the presentation in dialogic form, in the presence of illustrious personages; among others, Abbot Antonio Rayneri, professor of pedagogy at the University of Turin. Even the metric system, obligatory in the Sardinian states in 1846, becomes an object, in addition to a pamphlet (The metric system reduced to simplicity, 1849), of instruction and spectacle in comic dialogues specially written by Don Bosco and represented by the youth of the oratory.

Consequently, entertainment, parties, music, theatrical performances at carnival or other occasions also play an important role. In the context of the festivities, those of the Immaculate Conception (December 8) and those of S. Luigi Gonzaga (June 21) acquire special relevance, corresponding to the attendance cycle of the majority of seasonal youth and students from outside Turin. Both parties expressed the same message in different variants: the recourse to the heavenly protectors (Mary mother of the believers, Luis protector of youth) and the reference to the oratory as a place of preservation of sin and full expansion of youthful vitality. The feast of San Luis was solemnized with the typical manifestations of youth participation in the patron saint festivities: games, band, lights, fireworks. It had to be deeply impressed by the appeal of the oratory and had in itself the scope of a propitiatory ritual for the period of temporary absence from oratorian life. For the small group of young people who attended the oratory and for those who returned in September-October, Don Bosco gave life to autumn walks that started from Turin and went on foot from one parish to another in Monferrato, with young people performing in front of the villagers with macchiette, with band performances and the devout and edifying attendance of all at the Mass celebrated by Don Bosco. An obligatory stop was the native hill and the house where Don Bosco had spent his childhood: a symbolic journey to the vital origins of a work lived as desired by God and maternally protected by Holy Mary; but also, propaganda carried out in a completely original way.

Around 1846-1847, the youth mass reached 700/800 reales under certain circumstances. Don Bosco arranged to open another oratory in Porta Nuova dedicated to Saint Louis, while the one on the side of the Guardian Angel founded and directed by Don Luigi Cocchi in the Vanchiglia district in an extremely degraded area was in operation since 1840. The young people who attended Don Bosco's two oratories were mainly students from the lower schools of the city, children from the neighborhood who were homeless and unemployed, young people who came from outside Turin for seasonal jobs as boys or

apprentices. The city administration and the wealthy class saw the initiatives of Don Bosco and Don Cocchi, which were part of the fervor of renewed works of education, assistance, and civil promotion as a whole.

1848-1849 was a period of political and social crisis. Patriotic sentiments attracted young people and ended up distracting them from the speakers. The revival could already take place in the following years when Don Bosco was appointed chief director of the three oratories. Young people gradually exceeded one thousand and in certain circumstances they approached two thousand of an urban population that of about 120/140,000 inhabitants, as in the 40s, stood at 200/210,000 in the 60s.

### **The "house" attached to the oratory**

Since 1847 Don Bosco's work in Valdocco has tended to expand and diversify. At first, Don Bosco began to welcome young people who came from outside the city as interns: apprentices looking for work, apprentices, students, clergymen, and priests. His preferences continue to be aimed at the most needy and underprivileged, to whom he supports private charities and charities (Opera della MendicITÀ educati, etc.). Little by little he feels the need to equip his own institution, that is, in what he calls the house attached to the oratory, secondary schools and workshops to learn arts and crafts (shoemaking, bookbinding, carpentry, blacksmithing, typography).

The goals and style of holiday public speaking are consistently and instinctively applied to the experience of boarding school, school, and learning. The environments have various signs of sacredness. The playground and the church of S. Francesco di Sales together with Don Bosco's bedrooms continue to play their role. Recreation and leisure with its apparent chaos do not cease to arouse criticism and concern from people who think correctly. Actually, they are not only a response to a physical and psychic need, but they also want to connote the intimate humanistic and religious inspiration of Don Bosco's educational system. Between one arch and the other of the portico that overlooks the courtyard, Don Bosco made several inscriptions that reminded young people for the most part of the religious message of the oratories. The absence of a particular uniform that distinguished the inmates was a testimony of spontaneity, as well as savings or even poverty and destitution. The educational activity of Don Bosco and his collaborators is facilitated and corroborated by the promotion of youth associations. In the first place, since 1846 the Company of S. Luigi Gonzaga to which gradually join at the boarding school those of the Immaculate Conception, those of the SS. Sacramento and S. Giuseppe (the latter, among the artisans). Among the more mature young people, the Society of Mutual Aid (1850) functioned for some time and a Conference of S. Vincenzo annexed to the Conferences of S. Vincenzo de 'Paul founded in France by Frederick Ozanam and for some time also in force in Turin. In addition, the band's band and choral groups with white voices, tenors and basses existed in less institutionalized forms for interpretations of sacred and profane music.

In Valdocco, the young people in training between 1858 and 1868 went from little more than a hundred to more than 800, constituting the largest gathering of young people in an Italian city. Most of the boys came from the Piedmont region, but there was no shortage of Ligurians, Lombards, Venetians and even boys from Sardinia, from the former kingdom of the Two Sicilies, as well as from North America (mostly children of migrants returning to home) and from North Africa (mostly orphans that missionaries brought to Italy in the prospect of a later Christianization through them). The young students, in turn, become the best vehicle to make Don Bosco's educational work known in practice, validating what he himself makes known through other channels: circulars, wall posters and news of events. oratorians in newspapers and magazines, "Catholic Unity" and "Catholic Civilization".

During this period, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, Don Bosco periodically resorted to charity lotteries to finance extensions and improvements, but also specifically with the aim of further consolidating and mobilizing social consensus. He conveniently involves the youth themselves by sending them to collect items to be awarded and distribute lottery tickets; he deals with newspaper advertising, prints special brochures highlighting the social unity. His list of sponsors (mostly from the high nobility of Turin and the royal house itself), and members of the organizing committee are from the aristocracy but also from the business and commercial bourgeoisie. Finally the analytical list of the prizes places at stake include the name of the donor.

Despite the practical difficulties due to the disciplinary demands of a boarding school, the community made up of inmates ideally harmonized with the festive oratory and allowed Don Bosco to expand his educational message in favor of young people "especially the poorest and most abandoned." The expansion of the residence justified the purchase of land and new construction; and in fact, under pressure from the school education law (the Casati law passed in 1859 and remained as the legislative framework of the Italian school until fascist times), Don Bosco began the ramification of his works outside of Turin by accepting the management of schools and boarding schools.

### ***Don Bosco and the popular press***

The most important printed vehicle that Don Bosco used since March 1853 was the "Catholic Lectures" (= LC), a popular monthly publication that he founded and edited, initially with the support of Mons. Luigi Moreno, Bishop of Ivrea, and that since 1862 he printed on his own at the printing press installed in the Oratory of S. Francesco di Sales. The LC wanted to be a concrete response to the need to spread the "good press" among the people. Already after the critical events of 1848-1849, as a result of the editorial programs that had been outlined by the bishops of the ecclesiastical province of Turin meeting in Villanovetta, a monthly publication entitled "Collection of good books" had been started, among others. It consisted of pocket brochures of about two hundred pages, but the level of the various librettos was altogether not very accessible for the category of peasants and artisans, that is, for the majority of the mostly rural population still linked to the Church and sensitive to religious discourse. By giving space to the pastoral letters of the bishops of the German and Austrian area, who had written "in defense of the Church" against the liberal uprisings of 48, the series also gave the impression of being, if not really unpatriotic, of a conservative and reactionary orientation.

The LC are distinguished from the "Collection of good books" by a more popular style, very careful to avoid themes that may offend patriotic sentiments. Generally, they consisted of stories, brief lives of saints, elementary didactic pamphlets with catechetical imprint, various moralistic and home economics suggestions according to the most common canons of the Piedmontese popular mentality. In 1854-1855 a French edition entitled "Lectures Catholiques" was also published for the francophone areas of the state of Savoy (Savoy, Val d'Aosta, Nice, valleys near the Dauphiné). The Italian edition was more fortunate. Starting with a circulation of around 3,000 copies, it reached around 12,000 in the 1970s. Maintained at very low competitive prices, LCs were distributed through a network consisting essentially of pastors, canons, and a few willing laymen.

In the LC Don Bosco used to place most of his literary production: pamphlets of polemic and petty apologetics, simple hagiographies of popular saints, the life of the popes of the first three centuries, stories modulated by humor and written with a language and carefully simple styling according to models derived more or less directly from the "Bibliothèque bleue" and from similar French and Italian publications of the 18th century or the same period of the 19th century. Through the LC the fame of Don Bosco, a zealous and enterprising priest, expanded and consolidated. At the same time, the circuits for the promotion of his works expanded with the transfer of children to their educational homes, the provision of financial subsidies and the support of public sympathy, although there were also criticisms and disputes within the Catholic team. Don Bosco responded with deeds and skillfully using a short papal praise and letters of support from the bishop.

In times of freedom of the press and civil liberty extended to all religious cults, the messages that the LC addressed to the Catholic population were simple and easily perceptible. The life of the popes of the first three centuries had to recall the idea that in times of post-French revolution, Protestant proselytism, abandonment of religious practice or even faith, it was necessary to bear witness to the very quality of Christians even with martyrdom. One dreamed of remaining "attached" to the Catholic Church, constantly presented by Don Bosco, according to the ecclesiology of the time, as the only "true" and the only "ark of salvation". Like the young Saint Pancrazio, it was necessary to be able to give testimony of faith in the Church and in the Eucharist in the face of martyrdom. Like Saint Martin, one had to be inclined to help the poor, even the strangers, but always portraying Jesus Christ (Don Bosco published the lives of both saints in the LC series).

The didactic stories, biographies and hagiographic profiles centered on Valdocco's oratory were of special importance in the LC. Among these librettos, also distributed in out-of-series copies, the following stand out: The strength of good education (1855), The life of the young Domenico Savio (1859), Michele Magone (1861) and Francesco Besucco (1864). In addition to presenting the exemplary nature of the children who lived and died in a holy way, these writings tended to give the educational environments promoted by Don Bosco the image of places blessed by God, therefore, nurseries of holiness that young people can also reach without renouncing to their own aspirations for life and joy. "Here we make holiness consist in being happy," says Don Bosco to his fourteen-year-old student Domenico Savio, whose biography was reprinted several times and entered the circuits of youth readings in clerical seminaries, colleges and boarding schools, expecting mid - 1900 a certain model of youthful holiness.

### ***The realization of a project: the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians***

In the early 1960s, the influx of young people to the Valdocco boarding school placed Don Bosco in need of providing a larger church than the now relatively crowded one dedicated to Saint Francis de Sales. In this way, a series of achievements that fully characterize both Don Bosco and his work, began. In the first place, Don Bosco combines the needs of the oratory with those of the urban area where it is located between Valdocco and Borgo Dora. To the city authorities and the public, he presents the church construction project in response to the urban development plan for that area, which was also designed by the city administration as intended for industrial and labor development. Therefore, not a church as a response to the mere

particular needs of the oratory or to the institutional needs of the urban parish structure, but a neighborhood church that responds in general to the needs of the population. In addition, Don Bosco perceives the political and religious issues of those years that immediately followed the Second War of Independence. On the one hand, the euphoric political and patriotic climate favored a greater circulation of financial capital in Piedmont; on the other hand, in conservative Catholic areas it was feared that the national unification process would compromise the residual papal status and the Pope's own freedom. Don Bosco endorses the title of *Maria Auxilium christianorum*, which in 1862 was assigned by the Bishop of Spoleto to an image of Mary Most Holy that turned out to be miraculous. But in his use of it, Don Bosco tends to make the political connotation assigned by the bishop disappear in favor of the temporal power of the Pope. In spreading the title *Auxilium christianorum* even outside Piedmont, Don Bosco generally mentions the "assaults" that the Church and the Pope Vicar of Jesus Christ suffer on earth, but then stops to illustrate the role of Saint Mary, born of God to be an effective protector of the Church, the Pope, and all believers. Beyond political lines and conflicts, he gets a son of Vittorio Emanuele II to be present at the laying of the first stone (1865). He also uses lotteries for this job. But in the mid-1960s the turnaround of the economy, the agricultural crisis, the third war of independence, the tax burden decreased the income of public bodies, the aristocracy, and the upper class. Don Bosco is then induced to give way to traditional religious pettiness. Through the press, resorting to the "Catholic Unit" and using LC files, he disseminates the graces obtained through the intercession of Mary SS. invoked under the title that she shows-writes-that she welcomes the Church, the Pope and the faithful in that moment of great need. The sanctuary was solemnly inaugurated in 1868. To better solidify the cult, Don Bosco organized the "Association of the devotees of Mary SS. Help of Christians" (1869). From year to year, May 24, a public holiday in the "month of May", that is, the Marian month, is celebrated in the most solemn way with polyphonic masses and processions through the streets, celebrations that involve the entire community of the oratorio and in particular, the "schola cantorum" and the musical band. Starting in the 1970s, the sanctuary became an outstanding center of Marian devotion with an influx of groups that also come from outside Piedmont, given the renewal and diffusion of the use of the pilgrimage in the most varied sanctuaries in a climate of social organization of Catholics and within the framework of a more intense mobility of the western population.

### **The "society" of Saint Francisco de Sales**

Meanwhile, the expansion of educational works was possible thanks to the fact that between the 50s and 60s Don Bosco was able to solve the problem of collaborators and followers. In the first decade of his oratorical activity, he had associated with priests who volunteered part of their time in one of the three oratories in Turin. It was a precarious situation; in fact, the oratorian leadership suffered from a certain weakness and lack of homogeneity. In the 1950s he tended to depend more and more on the young clergy and laity at his boarding school at Valdocco. Little by little he leads some of them, among the most suitable and loyal, to develop a precise vocation. The members of this initial group of collaborators (Rua, Cagliero, Francesia ...) are invited in the first place to make the private vow of "charity" that will be exercised towards the young people. Then they are induced to take the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience in private and for a limited time (one year or three years). In the mid-1850s Don Bosco laid the foundations for establishing a true religious congregation destined to educate especially the poorest young people. However, the political-social-religious framework was not favorable. Acting in the offensive against the privileged conditions of the clergy inherited from the past, the liberal state in 1848 attacked the Jesuits in Piedmont and then the religious orders in general. The radicals of the liberal left through pamphlets, newspapers and popular shows presented caricatured and negatively the image of the friar and the priest.



Participants working on their newsletters

Therefore, Don Bosco must face many difficulties in pursuing his own goal. When transmitting his own message, he assumes, consequently, different tones, amplitudes and registers according to the interlocutors. Initially, he does not propose to his young boys that they belong to a religious congregation; rather, he invites them to "stay with Don Bosco." Little by little, at the end of the fifties and sixties, "being with Don Bosco" in the language of the oratory is equivalent to entering more or less permanently in the "congregation" or rather in the "society" of Saint Francis de Sales. The term "society" did not hurt the common sensibilities of the time and was also used in canonical language. For this reason, Don Bosco quickly ended up preferring it already in the years 1858-1859. More cautious and less evocative than the old clerical structures is the register that Don Bosco uses to address state authorities and personalities from the secular and anti-clerical world. In the framework of Italian legislation, by that time suppressor of religious corporations, the Salesians presented themselves as citizens who did not renounce what the Statute called "civil rights", setting themselves up as a free association for charitable purposes directed by the priest

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Bosco Giovanni. In the context of ecclesiastical institutions, Don Bosco seeks to make the Salesians a true religious congregation of simple vows and life in common, useful to the dioceses in the field of youth education for both laity and clergy. After the Archbishop of Turin Luigi Fransoni died in exile (1862), he addressed the Holy See; thus, he undertakes the procedures to make his institution a congregation of pontifical right, with all the advantages that would derive then, that is, in times of maximum affirmation of the papal powers in the Catholic Church. In 1864 he obtained the decree of praise to the congregation and in 1869 the final decree of approval. After laborious negotiations in 1874, he also obtained the approval of the Regulations and in 1884 the granting of important privileges that guaranteed him wide freedom of initiative within the internal discipline of his Salesians. After 1871, that is, after the "guarantees" of the Italian state to the Holy See, the political conditions for the institutes in Italy had also become less risky. Therefore, a more favorable element was added to the expansion process.

The squad of the first Salesians allowed Don Bosco to host or open boarding schools, humanistic schools or schools of arts and crafts in Piedmont, Liguria, elsewhere in Italy, France, and Spain. In 1875, leaving for Argentina as a result of the great Italian emigration, the Salesians of Don Bosco began the American adventure by opening colleges of humanities or arts and crafts and undertaking missionary expeditions among the Indians. The missionary epic, duly publicized, helped to broaden sympathy for Don Bosco's work and to strengthen the mechanisms for attracting both young students and Salesians.

### ***Sisters, but with an original lifestyle***

In these same years Don Bosco developed the idea of extending educational work to girls according to the style to which the festive oratories and boarding schools that he directed and managed gave testimony. The first approaches in this sense took place in the mid-1960s. In 1872 the first group of women dedicated to the education of young girls made their religious vows in Mornese (Diocese of Acqui, province of Alessandria) and assumed the title of Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. In 1876 the new congregation was approved by the Bishop of Acqui and, in the meantime, it began to expand, placing itself mostly in the wake of the Salesians. In turn, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians with their lifestyle, not closed behind bars, but animators of education and entertainment, serve to spread a relatively innovative image of a religious among traditional popular circles.

### ***World expansion***

The world expansion of Don Bosco's work began in the 1970s. Those same years correspond to the organization in Italy of the Opera dei Congressi, whose purpose was the coordination of all Catholic social works within a vision of contrast between "real Italy", seen as faithful to the Church, and the "legal Italy" politically hegemonized by liberalism and anticlericalism; more or less explicit is the plan to rebuild a Christian society inspired in many respects by a myth of medieval society in Europe. Don Bosco by temperament does not suffer from situations that do not correspond to what he sees as his specific vocation; by instinct or intuition he remains, therefore, outside the organizational apparatus of the Opera dei Congressi. Rather he intends to organize a network of converging forces in support of his work centered on the activity of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Dell'Opera dei Congressi adopts certain objectives and certain appeals, it also calls for unity: for unity for the future, it is necessary to cooperate and coordinate the disaggregated forces to more effectively achieve the goals set. In 1874-1876 he made these ideas concrete by organizing the Union of Salesian Cooperators.

### ***The Salesian Bulletin***

As a body of information and coordination, it launched in 1877 the publication of a monthly that, from an editorial bulletin ("Bibliophile Catholic"), was transformed into a "Salesian Bulletin" (= BS). From the beginning, the BS has a frame of fixed columns: news about individual Salesian houses, information about the conferences of cooperators held in various cities, animated stories of missionary activity among the Indians, reports of thanks obtained through the intercession of María Help of Christians, list of deceased cooperators, bibliographic notes.

The Salesian Bulletin does not claim to be an organization reserved for the circle of members of the Union of Cooperators. From the beginning it has been widely distributed free of charge. It is an innovation in the field of periodicals, the example of which was followed shortly after by Bartolo Longo in Pompeii and by other promoters of Catholic work. The results are largely positive. The rouge of Salesian cooperation expands; Requests for educational and missionary works come to Don Bosco from various countries in Europe and America. The practice of lotteries is almost completely abandoned, because large and small offers are widely mobilized through the Salesian Bulletin which, channeled to Turin, are certainly invested in missionary expeditions or in the support of Salesian houses installed, presses and on land of first evangelization. Recurring payments in French, Spanish and German will soon be added to the Italian SB. In this way, more extensive, differentiated, and detailed information is obtained. Among other things, the SB creates the favorable climate to arouse, while Don Bosco is still alive, the recruitment of Salesians in countries such as Germany, Poland, Hungary, where the holy educator from Turin is promoted as an ideal prototype of Christian action the apogee of times.



Despite his advanced age and the wear and tear of intense activity, Don Bosco in the last years of his life continues to undertake journeys with the intention of being a reminder and encouragement himself. In 1883 he traveled to France and Austria; in 1886 he went to Spain in Barcelona; in 1887 he went to Rome for the last time. He died exhausted in Valdocco on January 31, 1888. His funeral drew a large crowd. The news of his death, also reported by leading newspapers in several languages, rebounded around the world, also contributing to give a greater boost to the dynamism that the holy educator had been able to impart to his works.

### **Don Bosco's legacy**

Upon his death, he left behind a rich and composed network of social media intended essentially for popular education and youth education. Some of his expressions are emblematic. Referring to typographic techniques, he affirms that in these things he wants to be on the vanguard of progress. In search of economic means, he has an effective joke: he would have liked the fountain in the courtyard of the oratory to drive out the marenghi[1]. Referring to religious purposes, pastoral sensitivity, and necessary initiative, he says that he is willing to take his hat off even in front of the devil if it could serve to save a soul.

In conclusion, Don Bosco, placing himself in the context of an average ecclesiastical culture in Piedmont in the mid-nineteenth century, reveals himself as a skillful mediator between the working class and the upper classes, between political conflicts and spiritual tribulations in the processes of youth education and religious formation. He has precise and well-established goals, he has his own educational style; he uses a wide range of means capable of mobilizing social areas, economic resources, support, and consensus, he has inventiveness and intuition, flexibility, and opportunity.

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## Reading 2: A DREAM AT 9 YEARS OLD - DON BOSCO



### Salesian communication originated in a dream

When Juan turns nine, something extraordinary happens. To this little boy, (...) God speaks. He communicates with him through a mysterious language, made of images and words: through a dream. This direct contact with God will accompany, warn and guide him throughout his life. It will leave him first in disbelief, then surprised and sometimes shaky.

#### THE SITUATION

Being attentive to reality is a fundamental characteristic of our identity as "MISSIONARIES OF THE YOUNG", as members of the Salesian Family, as communicators. Our environment is the field of John's dream. Where he sees boys who fight, we see the current reality of young people, with its lights and shadows. There, we discover the place that young people occupy (sometimes assigned by the same society), as well as the way in which they interact with him.

#### THE REACTION

Our Salesian communication avoids contemplating a "primary" response to the needs of young people. Don Bosco, in relating the dream, humbly indicates his reaction, because he wants us to learn something important: WE CANNOT COMMUNICATE FROM FEAR. Don Bosco understood from a young age what is written in 1Jn 4:18: In love there is no place for fear: on the contrary, perfect love eliminates fear, because fear is a punishment, and the one who fears has not reached the fullness of love.

#### THE ENCOUNTER

Dialogue with the Lord is the starting point of our communication task. WE MEET the Lord TO COMMUNICATE with the young people. We found Him and then we know we were sent to the young. A variation may occur. In fact, John first throws himself on the group and TRIES TO COMMUNICATE WITH VIOLENCE, and then he meets the Lord and knows that THE WAY TO COMMUNICATE IS WITH MEEKNESS AND PATIENCE. But, in one way or another, whenever we communicate for the good of young people, we do it from the same person: Jesus Christ.

#### THE DIALOGUE

The dream dialogue tells us about a QUEST. John is not content with making reckless judgments, without discernment. In his dialogue with the Lord, he CONFRONTS HIMSELF WITH THE REALITY. Without ignoring his limits and his poverty, he recognizes that THERE ARE THINGS THAT SEEM IMPOSSIBLE. And then, with each question and answer, he discovers that the Enlightened Character offers him A MASTER AND SOME TOOLS to start changing the reality of the environment and, above all, to know himself and change his own path.



## THE REVELATION

It is curious that, in the dream, Jesus is never mentioned as the character who talks with John. But, at this point in history, we all know that He is the SON OF THE ONE WHOM JOHN WELCOMES THREE TIMES A DAY, AS MAMA MARGARET TAUGHT HIM. Salesian communication has this moment of revelation. An "epiphany" of God in the heart of the young person. We don't know why, we don't know how, but if he is announcing in everyday life, he reveals himself when he wants to and at the moment when we least think. Sometimes it is instantaneous, sometimes the years pass and what is sown, sooner or later, blooms.

## THE CHALLENGE

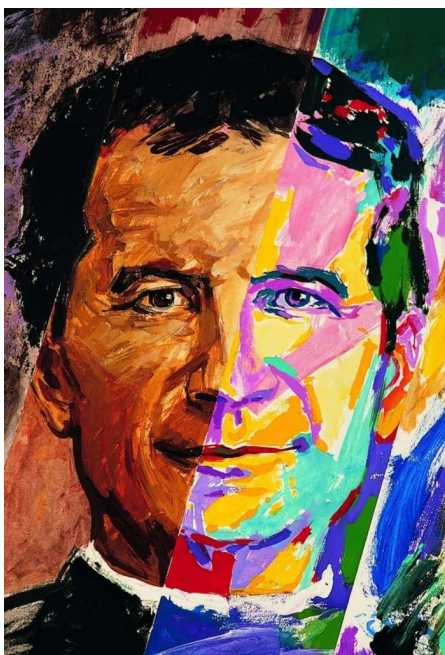
Communication requires preparation. It is the challenge that implies to announce Jesus Christ to young people. Knowing, discovering, learning, experimenting, starting over, renewing styles, schemes, modes. It's a great job. We need a MASTER. Don Bosco knew that with Mary in the Salesian house, the path to holiness was assured for his children. She, as a MOTHER, seeks only to bring us closer to Jesus. Thus, communication becomes a daily exercise of the Salesian mission, in the DAILY CHALLENGE TO ACCOMPANY A TRANSFORMATION, of wolves into lambs.

## THE MIRACLE

If the challenge is to accompany the transformation of wolves into lambs, here communication enables us and disposes us to be WITNESSES OF A MIRACLE. That encounter and revelation that John was able to experience in the first moments of this dream is the same thing that young people experience when God intervenes in their lives. At the end of the dream, between John Bosco's tears and the Lady's promise that he would understand everything at the right time, the lambs make a sort of feast around the protagonists of the dream. And if these characters are Jesus and Mary, we can speak here of the MIRACLE OF THE COMMUNITY THAT CELEBRATES, THAT MAKES THE EUCHARIST. Communication, to become true, can only be made by the community, to build it, to sustain it and to celebrate it as a sacrament.

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## Reading 3: COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES US | DON EGIDIO VIGANÓ



### A reality that we cannot ignore

Don Bosco used Social Communication as a sector of activity that allowed him to carry out his educational project. With Social Communication, used in various forms and levels, he favored the human and Christian promotion of poor and working-class youth, and also supported missionary activity.

### LETTER OF THE RECTOR MAJOR DON EGIDIO VIGANÓ (302)

#### «THE CHALLENGE OF THE MEDIA»

#### *Don Bosco, man of the media*

**Don Bosco** allowed his life to be invaded by the media of his times, from their simplest to their most developed forms. He was ever ready to "tune in" and then "transmit" to others.

He was a **good receiver**, keen to know what was going on in the world, an avid reader, a booklover - and he had a retentive memory.

He was also a **good communicator**. He began from his earliest years to use the simplest means of communication, relating to his playmates what he had read, repeating the parish priest's sermons, and reading popular books to grown-ups as they gathered in the warmth of, the stable during the winter season. In later years he was to invent for his boys the medium of the "Goodnight" as a friendly occasion for passing on family news.

Don Bosco was also an **author**, his first book being written when he was twenty-nine years of age. (This is remarkable when we remember that the young country boy from the Becchi had made a notably belated arrival at Chieri to finish his much interrupted elementary schooling at fifteen' years of age!) He soon became a versatile writer, graduating from newspaper articles to books, biography, history, hagiography, drama, popular science, religion and the then fashionable apologetics. He had a preference for a practical narrative style.

Don Bosco was a **prolific writer**. The recent facsimile edition of his published works fills 37 large volumes, and his writings number in all 1174. He was well-read and much in demand. Many of his books were reprinted and he was also responsible for quite a series of best-sellers.

For his spiritual family he **initiated his Salesian** information circulars. In 1867, when his helpers numbered 44 and had not yet received the approbation of the Holy See, he had his circular letters triplicated and sent regularly to the three houses of the Congregation. They developed into today's Acts of the Superior Council. A decade later Don Bosco transformed his bibliography news-sheet into the Salesian Bulletin so that his Co-operators and friends could keep abreast of Salesian activities throughout the world.

The saint's very modern interests and energies soon graduated **from writing to publishing**. His publishing establishment ran the whole gamut from the manufacture of paper to the finished book (he had acquired a paper mill at Mathi Torinese). He organized a pool of authors, arranged for type-setting, printing and publishing houses to be set up, and even devised a circulation network.

At 34 years of age **he ventured into journalism**. In 1849 he undersigned 61 issues of Amico della Gioventù, giornale politico-religioso; it ran for eight months. The new rage of the day was to **market book series** and Don Bosco seized on the concept for his publishing establishment, organized his own various series and sold hundreds of thousands of copies. La Biblioteca della Gioventù was a series of 204 volumes and topped the million mark; the Catholic Readings series exceeded 2,000,000 titles during the saint's lifetime, and in its first half-century reached 9,200,000.

Our Founder also had great success with **periodicals such** as the already-mentioned Catholic Readings and the Salesian Bulletin. The latter was printed in three languages during his lifetime (and nine while Don Rua was Superior General). The Catholic Readings had much in common with the modern pocket booklet: small periodic editions at low cost, available over the counter or by subscription. Don Bosco certainly was well ahead of his times. But what really counts is that **he made use of the media as a means for achieving his educative project**, using the various forms for the Christian and human development of the young in need, the masses and the missions.

**For the young** he wrote school texts (Bible History, Church History and History of Italy), prayer books (such as the Giovane Provveduto), formative books (biographies of many outstanding students and many simple pamphlets on spiritual matters), and books for recreation and the stage. It was for the young that he had ventured into journalism with his Amico della Gioventù.

**For the general public**. At 31 years of age Don Bosco had already written for the man on the land his Oenology in Italy. Three years later his Decimal System appeared for artisans and country people. Indeed there followed a veritable flood of books for the general public, ranging from sacred to secular, from his Recreational Readings series to his Series for Workers and the popular almanac Galantuomo.

It was natural in Don Bosco to attract followers and so it was only to be expected that **his sons should follow in his footsteps**. Many of his early Salesians were writers, or at least found time amidst their multiple labors to produce some worthwhile volume. Among those who could be ranked as more or less full-time writers were Lemoyne (his biographer), Bonetti (editor of the Salesian Bulletin), Barberis, Francesia, Trione and Cerruti.

Don Bosco saw a **special place in the media for his Salesian brothers**. For an activity with so many lay aspects, this work was eminently suitable for his lay confreres. They became his directors in printing and book-binding establishments, bookshops and publishing houses - in varying degrees of importance. Some were writers too. The media proved a fitting vocational achievement for them.

Thanks to an organized and combined effort, the Salesian press found its way into many places with its serene message of the Gospel and social development.

### **There is much to learn from this general picture.**

Don Bosco was a man of the media- which in practice meant the printed word in those times. He took the situation in hand and tamed the media into docile and efficient instruments for the realization of his apostolic plans.

In the face of this attitude and the constant and daring activities of our Father, two queries spring to mind:

**Why and how did he commit himself to this task?** These are challenging questions.

**The why** sheds light on our mission. **The how** is a spur to our spirit of initiative in dealing with modern situations.

Of particular significance in this regard is Don Bosco's circular sent to the houses on the Feast of St Joseph 1885 just before he left for France. In it he dilates on the spread of good literature and refers to this apostolate in the following statements. "The spreading of good books is one of the most effective means of sustaining the kingdom of Christ in so many souls." "It is **one of the principal aims of our Congregation.**" "I beg and implore you not to neglect this most important aspect of our mission." "This was one of the main tasks given to me by God, and you know I felt duty bound to throw myself indefatigably into this apostolate despite my many other commitments." "Rest assured, my dear sons, that if you too are diligent in this apostolate, the Lord will shower his choicest blessings on you and your boys."

Don Bosco's reasons (the why) for his commitment to the media are quite clear - and more relevant today than ever. We are dealing with "a most important aspect of our mission".

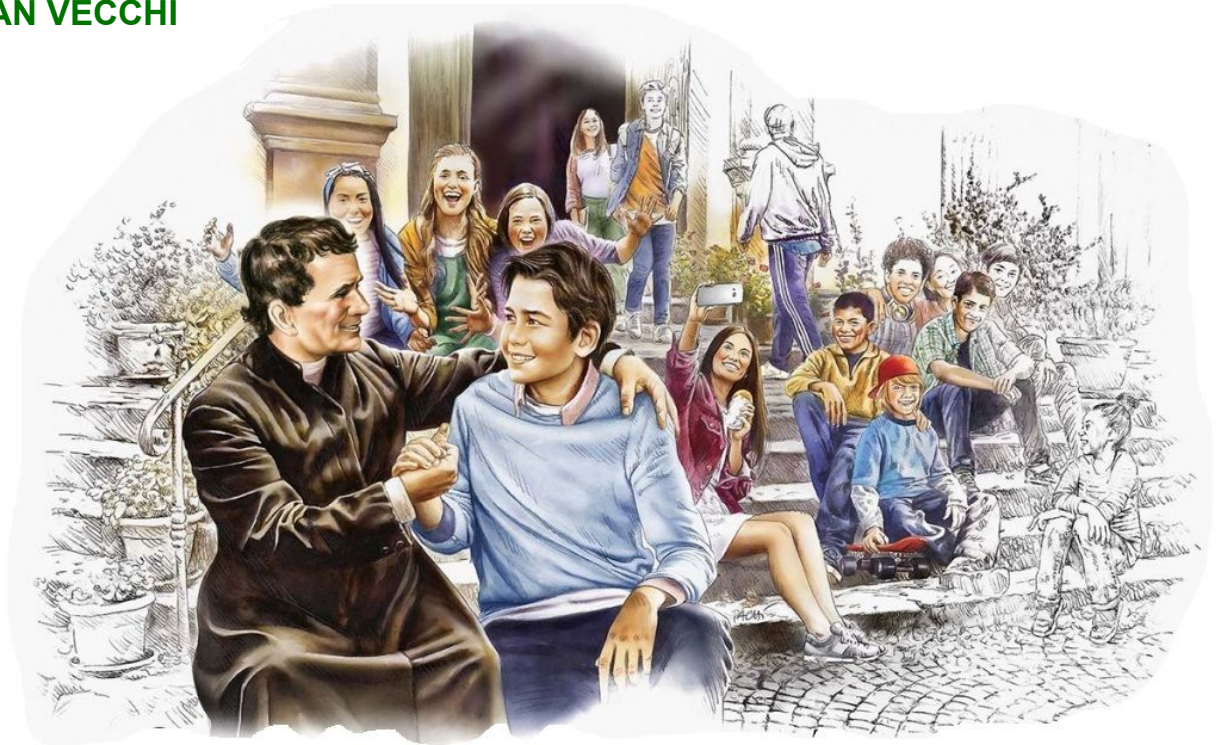
Our Founder's methods (the how) are specifically linked to the printed word, in keeping with what was possible in his day.

The circumstances of Don Bosco's activities obviously do not mirror our situation today. We are faced with the dizzy heights of achievement of the modern manipulators of culture. The printed word is still of great importance, but is only a restricted area of our modern media. **By today's standards the ways and means available to Don Bosco were limited indeed. The printed word could be viewed as a kind of introduction, quite adequate in Don Bosco's time; but we today must review and widen the horizons according to the new demands of our modern means. It is important that we apply ourselves with the same dedication, daring, intelligence and constancy as did Don Bosco.**

To achieve this we must cultivate that **flexibility of mind that characterized his spirit of initiative.**

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## Reading 4: SOCIAL COMMUNICATION IN THE SALESIAN MISSION DON JUAN VECCHI



### Communication that evangelizes and educates

Communication that evangelizes and educates

The current translation of his thought (that of Don Bosco) is found in the Constitutions which, precisely referring to him, place communication (...) as a great possibility for education and evangelization and as a generating center of culture.

#### COMMUNICATION IN THE SALESIAN MISSION:

***They were astonished beyond measure! "He has done all things well; he even makes the deaf hear and the dumb speak".***

## LETTERS OF THE RECTOR MAJOR - JUAN VECCHI

Social communication fills the whole world and determines the form of human coexistence. It is of close interest therefore to the vocation of the Salesian as a disciple of Christ and, in a still more pressing manner, as one who works with the mentality of an educator in the field of advancement and evangelization.

With conviction and mental satisfaction we call ourselves sons of a Saint who was able to listen to the many voices coming from the young people and culture of his time; and he succeeded in communicating by body language, by word, and by the very structure he had created. The latter, in fact, became a specific "message" because it expressed very clearly the purpose and spirit of his mission.

In this he referred back to the spirituality of St Francis de Sales, who is now the Patron of Catholic journalists because of his ability at speaking and writing on the Christian life in a manner that could be understood by small and great, the educated and the simple, church people and those far from any kind of religion.

### 1. Let us get on the air ...and with the Charism

I have briefly recalled Don Bosco's experience. We could recount his story as a communicator, identify the parameters of his communication, or comment on his projects. The present-day translation of his thought we find in **the Constitutions which, by reference back to him, place communication in the perspective we spoke of earlier: as a great possibility for education and evangelization and as a central point for culture.**

The relevant article of the Constitutions reads literally:

***"We work in the social communication sector. This is a significant field of activity which constitutes one of the apostolic priorities of the salesian mission.***

***Our Founder had an instinctive grasp of the value of this means of mass education, which creates culture and puts before the public models of Christian living; he showed great originality in the apostolic undertakings which he initiated to defend and sustain the faith of the people.***

***Following his example we utilize as God's gift the great possibilities which social communication offers us for education and evangelization". (Const. 43)***

The indication was present in the first draft of the Constitutions prepared by Don Bosco for presentation to the Holy See. Even at that time the obligation of being involved in social communication was recognized as an important part of our apostolate.

**The typical areas of the mission entrusted to the Salesians, education, evangelization and social communication, are to be mutually linked together,** and to reach practical decisions in harmony with the charism they must also refer to those to whom our mission is primarily addressed and to the services we want to offer them.

From one point of view these clarifications help in considering social communication not simply as a collection of instruments or material means to be adopted or as an autonomous activity, albeit within the charism. **Rather do they invest the entire salesian presence, committed to education and evangelization both through specific works and equally through other forms of activity which influence popular culture and through the promotion of adequate social forms.**

On the other hand, the same constitutional indications circumscribe, guide and finalize the many possibilities, modes and fields of social communication to the objectives of our mission, freeing it from the risk of getting lost among other messages and initiatives.

**In this way communication becomes understood as the "main highway" for the realization of the different areas of the mission,** and consequently as a necessary qualification forming part of the identity of the salesian educator, pastor, evangelizer and vocations promoter. **He realizes this aspect of his mission "particularly by means of social communication",** says art.6 of the Constitutions in line with Don Bosco's circular letter of 19 March 1885:

***"I beg and beseech you therefore not to neglect this most important part of our mission. Begin it not only among the youngsters entrusted by Providence to your care, but make yourselves its apostles by word and example and through the spreading of good books".***

Don Bosco would be even more insistent today. He would be again in the vanguard of progress, bringing influence to bear on the criteria underlying the use of the new technical instruments and drawing on them for the spreading of his own educative and cultural projects. (...)

### Interpersonal communication

As educators we are concerned in the first place with interpersonal communication between adult and young person, between laity and religious, between those rich in experience and those taking their first steps in life, between all those who have gifts to share. (...)

The preventive system, it has been said, depends for its educative efficacy mainly on the direct face-to-face meeting. It is a meeting of trust, of friendship. If the youngster is to give his confidence, the educator too must give spontaneously what he himself is living. The family spirit fosters encounters for mutual growth: all the way from the playground to times set aside for dialogue. There are all sorts of aspects to interpersonal communication. (...)

For the religious community (...) I add two observations. The new tone and new situation of fraternal life encourage us to create in our communities space and opportunity for conversation. (...)

The second observation is to emphasize the importance of careful and interested listening in interpersonal communication. Let others speak! (...)

### Social communication

Social communication goes beyond the interpersonal kind. It projects us into the world of technology which allow us to reach simultaneously with the same message a large number of people and to establish contacts and linkages without boundaries. In this sense it is a 'new' phenomenon and in its own setting continues to come up with innovations which present us with challenges. (...)

**Three aspects** need to be seriously examined by our educative and religious communities. The first is **the new relationship between the means and the message**. (...) A news item, an event, a message take on different characteristics according to the instrument by which they are received. (...)

The wider the range of intervention, the more attractive the manner of presentation, the more distant the interlocutor, the more "incontrovertible" the communication becomes.

There is a second aspect which concerns us very closely. **Our communities, the works and activities to which we give rise like every institution become part of a much wider system of communication, within which they are compared and interact**. They seem silent physical realities; but in fact they are sending out messages even before we have put pen to paper or taken a microphone to say who we are or talk about ourselves. (...)

A material building speaks through its sober appearance and good taste; the kind of youngster prevailing in a work is already saying something; so is the program and educational style; the environment, experienced directly or known by other means, is already speaking. (...)

Finally **we must cultivate and exploit the service to communion**. (...) Much is said indeed and many are reached through social communication, but the interpretations given of important facts and aspects of life are often distracting and contradictory. Hence the need of directing towards unity whatever good is to be found in it. How can we be educators and evangelizers in a global village of these dimensions? (...)

The problem consists not simply in the use of instruments, but in the ability to express ourselves adequately through them. (...)

### Change of mentality

(...) There are some words of Don Bosco which can help us to understand the significance of all this, so that the salesian presence, in its effort to make itself visible or give an account of itself, may not be reduced to a simple veneer or be obsessed with self-presentation.

***"Our times call for action. The world has become materialistic, and so we have to go out of our way to make known the good we are doing.. Even if we were to work miracles by praying day and night in solitude, the world would neither notice it nor believe it. The world has to see for itself"***

These are somewhat bold words, with a directness that rather takes us aback. They make us look in a different way at the very organization of community life and apostolic action. It is indispensable to think of our presence, the community and salesian work in "network" form, intercommunicating like a transmitter.



The GC24 has pointed to new openings in this same sense.

The first concerns **the lay collaborators**. (...) It is not possible to speak of collaboration and of shared responsibility unless there is reciprocity and integration of views and experiences, and this leads necessarily to a different vision of salesian activity, and to new ways of intervention. This change of mentality and of operational model has a name: the educative community. It is not something purely technical, a new structure; it is specifically a reality of internal and external communication. It is not reduced to expressing well-organized contents with verbal clarity and correct positioning in time. It is before all else a capacity of relationship, of real information which is pertinent and opportune, of vital sharing, of a common choice of educative and pastoral criteria. (...)

A second setting in which a change of mentality is needed is **the context in which we are called upon to work**: the wider territory in which the salesian work is situated as a centre of aggregation.

The rediscovery of this function prompts us to broaden the dialogue to include educational, social and religious institutions working in the same area. Encounter with them is the acid test of what we are capable of communicating outside the religious community and our closest collaborators. (...)

The EPC becomes significant in the neighbourhood, and hence carries an intelligible message, when it is able to bring together all who are interested in educational and cultural initiatives (...)

We can also refer to a third opening towards which the same GC24 propels us: it is **the scope created by modern technology**, which can build relationships, provide a self-image and begin an effective dialogue with interlocutors who are invisible but none the less real. (...)

Whether we are aware of it or not, we are part of a great network which envelops us. We could remain outside it, or we could become inserted in it by offering, in this field too, the gifts we have as educators and evangelizers. (...)

But if we want the world of communications to be changed for the better by the leaven of the Gospel we must feel challenged to intervene and interact with those who descend into the streets and areopagi "to speak and debate".

### **Conditions for communication**

(...) For it to be positive and efficacious in this connection, the community has to pay heed to other conditions: from a personal standpoint, but still more from **an institutional point of view it relies on authenticity and transparency**. (...)

The matter is not only a moral one. It belongs to the universe of communication: to be present we must be perceptible; to be efficacious we must be authentic, i.e. communicate experiences and convictions which we feel and live at a deep level. (...)



A relaxed moment with their animators

**The danger lies in losing the sense of difference between the necessary and the superfluous, between the important and the ephemeral.** Since everything is subject to consumption, everything can become the object of exchange. And in this "everything" even authenticity and transparency can end up. "Attractive fiction" takes the place of truth and sincerity when it comes to selling something; obsessive audience seeking becomes the norm instead of attempts to generate convergence and a responsible reply. (...)

Authenticity and transparency are not therefore an unattainable utopia. They are criteria for the evaluation of what is offered for the building of communion and responsibility. In other words they are a measure of whether the will to communicate is true and whether the intentions behind it are in line with ethics and love. They therefore represent the commitment of the believer who wants to enter into rapport with others.

### **The need of the moment: becoming qualified**

(...) We may note that while technology is developing with extreme rapidity, the development of individual skill, of how to use the new techniques is rather slow and erratic. (...)

What is to be done then? The only useful road ahead is through **formation**. The new literacy, i.e. the ability to read and write in the culture of the media, affects everyone, and in so far as concerns the faith it affects all believers. How much more then should it be of interest to educators and evangelizers! (...)

### **Learning to read and evaluate is the first step.**

One cannot be exposed to the communicational bombardment without the necessary antibodies and the key to its interpretation, so as not to be ingenuously taken in; so as not to see only through the eyes of others and judge through their heads. One cannot remain even a passive recipient at a time when interactivity has become generalized and every citizen has the right and possibility of expressing his opinion at once on whatever is offered him. (...)

I am thinking of the influence that could be exerted by educative communities in defending the rights of the weak and the values of local cultures, if they were able to insert themselves in communication circles with correct evaluations of events that take place, and with suitable proposals for objectives to be realized. A permanent function of "communication" with the world outside, even at moderate expense, is in no way superfluous or marginal for an educative community.

The second level of formation involves those **who have particular responsibilities in the animation of the social communication in the area.**

This is not yet specialist level, but that of educative and pastoral workers who must enter the communication network with a professional approach and in line with their mission. It is of concern therefore to provincial animators of social communication, religious and educative communities.

It is a matter of knowing, in the first place, the real and effective influences which the new informational technologies and the media exert on the educative processes of individuals and groups. (...)

The new model emphasizes that **the media are not only "means"; they imply a culture, a philosophy of life, an ethic which re-reads and re-evaluates values, a spirituality which requires a synthesis of human and Christian life under new aspects.** (...)

The third level of formation is for **specialists in social communication.** It is of interest directly to provincial communities and by reflection to local communities as well. (...)

When I look back at our recent history, I have to acknowledge the great part the Salesians have played in the growth of ecclesial sensitivity in respect of pastoral work for the young.

Will it be possible to start up a similar process in regard to social communication? Is it not the case here too of needy youngsters who have to be followed up in their development, or of working-class people who need support in their efforts at advancement?

***"Communication is the dimension of the spirit in which we raise ourselves above our biological constitution and our bondage to nature. It has therefore a fundamental function for the development of our understanding of ourselves and of the world".***

### **A communal competence**

(...) Learning how to put together a message for it to be efficacious is part of the pastoral task. Otherwise the community risks just beating the air. It is not enough to have treasures; we have to know how to use them. If they remained hidden and could not be passed on to others they would be like stagnant funds.

Often the objectives fixed for themselves by the religious and educative communities are not attained because the forms of communication have not homed in clearly on the nucleus of the message (...) It is true that not all of us are called to be specialists in social communication; **but we are all obliged to be good communicators.** (...)

### **3. Practical guidelines Community commitments**

**Today social communication is the greatest fact in socialization and education.** It is a school without limits of time and space where information can be found, together with modes of action, guidelines for thought and practical solutions of the problems presented by life. It must be considered therefore as a field of interventions for us Salesians, attentive as we always are to the educative dimension. (...)

### **Education to the use of the media**

(...) **It is not sufficient to equip the community, juvenile or adult, with instruments – even of a sophisticated kind – to bring about an increase in communion.** It is not the simple connection with national or international networks that ensures an adequate diffusion of knowledge and increased rapport, but the measured and reasonable use of such possibilities. **Educative guidance is no less desirable for**

adults too. (...)

Let us not be content with facile criticism of what we receive from the mass media. Rather let us follow, decisively and systematically, a process of preparation of young people and adults towards a responsibility and knowledge of the media corresponding to their stage of growth.

### **Applying the new technologies to teaching**

When here I speak of teaching, I include everything of an educational and pastoral nature realized in a salesian foundation: interpersonal relationships of friendship, of other roles or of priestly ministry; formal teaching in schools, group discussions, evangelical suggestions through preaching; an ordinary or extraordinary moment of celebration, be it cultural or religious.

**Nowadays it is necessary to adopt perspectives of a global communication, asking ourselves how we can be efficacious in what we are offering.** The community needs to verify the consistency between its verbal language, the message it wants to communicate, and the meaning it actually and unintentionally conveys. It is not enough just to decide on the content; we have to study also the references, the manner in which the content is presented, and the context in which it is to have its effect. The new media technologies serve precisely to centre and improve the elaboration of the content chosen.

What is needed here is a change in the personal and communal way of working that may cost us something. But it will be to the advantage of those to whom our mission is directed and of the values we want to present. (...)

### **Develop all the communicative potentiality of individuals.**

Salesian education has given to civil society many past-pupils who have distinguished themselves in the field of social communication. It would be difficult to present a complete list of names and communication sectors where they are to be found and the roles they have. (...)

All this is a sign that **many young people have found in our midst the space and support for the development of abilities which would otherwise have remained hidden.** It would be indeed a great loss if this richness of our educative tradition were ever to fade!

**And so let us have confidence in the young! In the areopagus of communication they are present on a massive scale.** They feel a pressing need to accept diversity, to make contact with those of a different culture or sensitivity, to communicate their experiences, to animate encounters. They grow up already equipped with more than one language. They show a surprising ability at becoming at home in new technologies and languages. This cannot be other than a source of satisfaction; and precisely because of this ability they have, we must have trust and confidence in them. (...)

### **Helping the new poor classes.**

**There is a new kind of poverty in the world: that of those who are excluded from the information circuits.** The inequality is already evident, and sociologists and educators foresee that it will become ever greater.

There are the rich who have access to all the channels of communication with the possibility of adding to their culture and further increasing their good fortune. This protects them from unpleasant surprises, because they can update themselves in everything and even anticipate difficulties, risks and conflicts.

Then there are those who are at a disadvantage because they are kept on the margin of a sufficient and useful communication. **They do not have the necessary instruments, or they do not know how to use them successfully; they do not have the necessary elbow-room or the necessary competence to enter into dialogue with others. And so they are exposed to manipulation. There is even talk of a new kind of illiteracy.** (...)

### **Inserting media competence into the educative project.**

(...) **To prepare people to use suitable instruments to enable them to exercise their own freedom, and live in a more complete form the demands of society, is a direct part of the responsibility of an institution which claims to be educational in its purpose.** To ask for the insertion of communication in the educative and pastoral project after considering the various aspects, possibilities and risks, means nothing other than asking the salesian and educative communities to acquire and offer the necessary skills with respect to the culture in which we are inserted and the society in which we have to live. (...)

In connection with media competence today, I think it indispensable to add a few words about **the latest informational revolution: the Internet.**

This great network is extending farther and farther and we too are caught up in it. We are learning how to use it; and we must learn also to appreciate its usefulness and try not to be trapped in it; above all we must



be able to give guidance to children and young people who run the risk of getting lost in its labyrinths and reaching sites which will certainly be of no help to their growth.

Ours is a great educative task with respect to an area which is virtual, true enough, but which can have serious reflections on the real life of children and young people; there is also a task regarding its use from a cultural and ethical standpoint with its regulation and responsibilities, from which we cannot stand aside and which we can in fact promote.

The Internet makes knowledge available, creates direct contacts and offers ample space for communication and the sending of messages. We cannot remain aloof from its possibilities; but we must adopt proper attitudes in its regard and be able to assess the influence it has on practical life and on our educational activity.

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### Reading 5: WITH THE COURAGE OF DON BOSCO IN THE NEW FRONTIERS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION - DON PASCUAL CHÁVEZ VILLANUEVA



**The great challenges facing the new century**

A sanctity that is not witnessed, visible and legible would be of little use. (...) listening to God is authentic if it is transformed into witness, because every annunciation carries a vocation that must be lived and a mission that must be fulfilled.

#### **AGC390 RM Letter**

#### **“WITH THE COURAGE OF DON BOSCO ON THE NEW FRONTIERS OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATION”**

(...) **holiness would be of little use if it did not provide visible and intelligible witness.** A consecrated Salesian life would be well nigh useless if it could not be communicated and proposed to others. Even Don Bosco's experience of contact with Christ would become irrelevant were it not known and made public. And finally, **hearing God's word is authentic only if it becomes transformed into witness, because every proclamation brings with it a vocation to be lived and a mission to be fulfilled.** (...)

## 1. HISTORICAL APPROACH

### Appreciation of our past history

(...) In this process carried out by the Congregation towards the reaffirmation of what our Father Don Bosco had prophetically proclaimed and achieved, we cannot forget two documents which have made a notable contribution to the enrichment and positive realisation of the course that has been followed: they are two contributions on social communication by Fr Viganò and by Fr Vecchi.

On the occasion of the centenary of the foundation of the Salesian Bulletin in 1977, the then Rector Major **Fr Luigi Ricceri** had written **a letter on the significance and importance of Salesian information: Family news**. In it he recalled the need for commitment in the field of information and in everything connected with social communication. Assiduity about spreading family news serves to foster the sense of belonging, of “feeling the joy of being sons of Don Bosco”, and of making known things that are done in order to create a positive image and, as Don Bosco expressed it, increase the number of the benefactors of humanity. But it is especially **the letter of Fr Viganò and that of Fr Vecchi** on social communication which have given **impetus, depth and structural unity to reflection and implementation** in this field. In the meantime the GC23 and GC24 have also made significant contributions in this connection.

### A new mentality

Fr Egidio Viganò's letter of 1981, *Social communication challenges us*,<sup>[1]</sup> interprets the significance of the long reflection made by the GC21 and is a strong recommendation to Salesian activity in the field of social communication. **Fr Viganò invites the Salesians to change their mentality in this regard. We cannot give it its true value unless we fully accept the new reality; we cannot consider it only as something from which we must defend ourselves; we must know it, and moreover assign to it its proper importance.** We must become ever more knowledgeable about it; we have to recognise social communication as a massive educative factor that moulds mentalities and creates culture. **Our mission of education and evangelisation is necessarily rooted in the area of culture and consequently we must be alive to the cultural transformation now in progress**, so as to be able to provide a significant presence that allows us to spread our ideals and values. (...)

### Some challenges from an institutional point of view

(...) **The challenge of the means of social communication.** From what we have said so far it is evident that in the means of **social communication we use we show what we are**. The Congregation must be present in this world of the media. **It is a question of our becoming accustomed** to the use of the instruments; but also of **reflecting on the sort of communication model we are using** to bring about growth in the Congregation itself and its communication. The risk at present is that we may focus our attention too much on the use of the instruments and their effectiveness and not concentrate sufficiently on our ability to communicate and create communication, and on what we actually communicate. It is our zeal for the mission that reveals what we are and what we are communicating. It seems to me that Don Bosco, with all the zeal he had for needy youngsters, succeeded in inventing and working out ways of gathering people together and of communication that worked well. Where is our own zeal at the present day? Where is our heart focused? What are our real interests? What are we putting all our efforts into? (...)



## 3. PRACTICAL GUIDELINES

### 3.1. A change of strategy

#### 3.2.3. Guidelines for the formation of Salesians in Social Communication

There is no Salesian community or educative and pastoral community more communicative than one that bears witness to the following of Christ in the service of the young and the poor. And so the testimony of Christ and his gospel is the fundamental message of all communication. If this is missing, no amount of theory, no technique or means of communication can make up for it. Don Bosco's faithfulness to poor youngsters demands of us that we communicate by our witness, sharing and total dedication to the mission “to our last breath”. Precisely for this reason Don Bosco never neglected any language, means or instrument, traditional or newly discovered, that he could use to proclaim the good news to the young and people in general so that they could

become upright citizens and good Christians. When we read the description Fr Egidio Viganò gives of Don Bosco as a brilliant social communicator, we are taken aback (cf. AGC 302, pp. 8-12). Our own fidelity to Don Bosco and to the young prompts us to be transparent witnesses, and hence good social communicators, by developing our natural gifts through the help of a good formation.

As long ago as 1981 Fr Egidio Viganò presented a synthetic proposal of formation in social communication for Salesians at three levels: a general basic level, a higher level for workers in educational and pastoral work, and a still higher level for the preparation of specialists (cf. AGC 302). In the year 2000 Fr Vecchi took up this proposal again in the letter I have already mentioned and spoke of the urgent need for qualification: “The only useful road ahead is through formation. The new literacy, that is, the ability to read and write in the culture of the media, affects everyone, and in so far as it concerns the faith it affects all believers. How much more then should it be of interest to educators and evangelisers!” (AGC 370, p. 23). (...)

#### 4 – Conclusion

I end this letter on the Birthday of St John the Baptist, “than whom no greater man was ever born of woman” (Mt 11, 11), the man of austerity and the essential, frank in word and open to innovation, lover of truth and authenticity, strong and transparent in his testimony. His was the “voice crying in the wilderness”, proclaiming the coming of the Word. He was the teacher who introduced to his disciples the Lamb of God present in their midst. What a wonderful icon for the communicator!

This was the day on which Don Bosco used to celebrate his name-day – a true family feast for the youngsters, the Salesians, cooperators and past-pupils who vied with one another in expressing their love and gratitude to their “father”. Here was the man who had well understood that it was not enough to do good, but that this had to be known; that education is a question of the heart, and so it is not sufficient to love, but that the others have to feel that they are loved. This is the Salesian language of communication.

And we too gather around him today as his children and thank him for what he has meant in the life of each and everyone of us; that without him our lives would have had no meaning from the moment we made our own his experience of faith, his plan of life, and his passion for the salvation of the young. Our affection is naturally accompanied by a renewed commitment to be faithful to him, to his charism, to his mission, to his choices like that of the “spreading of good books” for the service of the Church and society; and to be faithful also to the young people of today, so strongly influenced by the modern means of social communication, so sensitive to new languages, and in such great need of competent guides and educators.

It would benefit us immensely if we read the letter of Don Bosco and in the light and thruster this twofold fidelity, we find the courage to take our place on the new frontiers of Social Communications.



Film Festival at Vision City



# INSTITUTIONAL AND CORPORATE COMMUNICATION



Fabrizio Vignati, Lay person, North Italy

## Information – Dialogue – Relationship

### What is communication?

Communication is a process of exchange between two subjects (A and B) which unfolds on three distinct but complimentary levels.

- **Information:** the sender A *says* something to the receiver B (A B)  
*Shannon-Weaver (1949)/Jakobson (1963)*
- **Dialogue** (Interactive exchange): the sender A *says* something to the receiver B and *listens to* their *feedback* (A – B)  
*Watzlawick (1967)*
- **Relationship:** the sender A *behaves* in some way with the receiver B A/B  
*Watzlawick (1967)*

### Corporation as an “Open System”

- The notion of corporation can be traced back to the concept of system. The unitary set of interrelated and complementary components oriented towards achieving a specific goal.

- The possibility of combining capital and labour in various ways and of pursuing the same final situations starting from different production combinations, provides the company with the character of equifinality; the ability of the company to know how to achieve a final result (a long-term goal) starting from different initial conditions and operating in different ways.

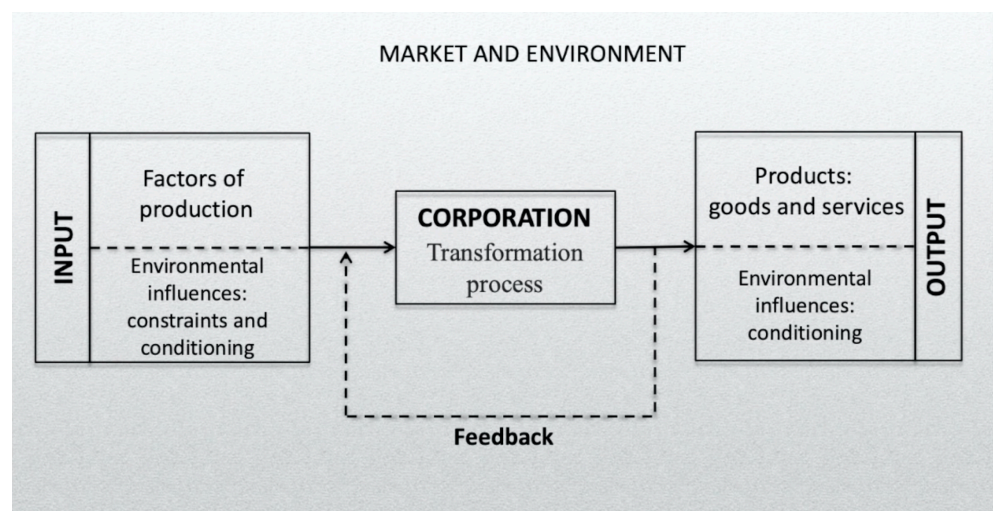
- To survive and develop, the business system engages constantly in exchanges with outside; thus, it can be defined as an “open” system.

This model is a basic model that allows us to explain how the human interpersonal communication works. From the human interpersonal communication to the corporate communication, there is not a great gap because companies/organisations are open systems.

### The business system and the environment

#### The company as an open system: relationships and information

As an open system, the company operates and interacts continuously with its environment. It receives legitimacy on the basis of the relationships that it is able to activate with the other entities and establishes with them an important process of information exchange. The latter is essentially due to the strong interest in the company's work and state of health by all those who have some



interest in it, i.e., its stakeholders.

### Stakeholder

Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives.

The subjects with whom the company must have a relationship in carrying out its economic activity.

### Primary and secondary stakeholders

Stakeholders can be divided into:

- Primary stakeholders: the groups without whose continuous participation the company could not survive

*Shareholders, investors, employees, customers, suppliers, local communities and the state*

- Secondary stakeholders: the groups who influence or are influenced by the company, but who are not engaged in transactions with it and are not essential for its survival.

*Opinion groups, the media, political groups, trade and consumers associations, or in general all those have the ability to mobilise public opinion for or against a company's actions and results by a company, even causing serious damage to it.*

### Stakeholders or publics/influencers

It depends on the different degree of awareness of those who interact with the company.

- **Stakeholders:** bearing – etymologically – an interest (stake) in the organization, they are aware of having the right to interact with the company
- **Publics or influencers:** they are those particular stakeholders who, while having an issue in common with the organization, are unaware of their role – and perhaps not even particularly in it; the company still considers them strategic and selects them from time to time to achieve its communicative goals.

Corporate communication is therefore the main relationship tool with stakeholders. Communication as stakeholder engagement.

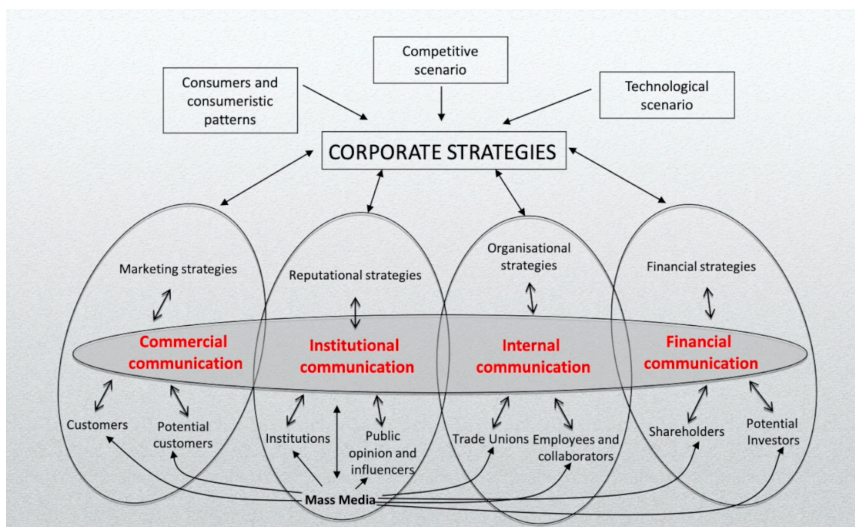
### Corporate communication sectors

1. **Institutional Communication (all stakeholders):** general social consensus (*visibility* – in the short term – and *reputation* – in the long term).

As it is addressed to all stakeholders and concerned with the company's communication in its entirety, the institutional sector is placed at a higher level than the other three and plays a role as a link between them.

To convey the image and the reputation of the company, institutional communication must communicate corporate vision, mission and values to external publics through the determination of corporate identity: the unique and unrepeatable articulation of what the company is, what it does and how it acts.

### Focus: Corporate Reputation



Corporate reputation is the set of perceptions and opinions that the main stakeholders of an organization have conjured up on the basis of its characteristics and behaviour over time:

- a. By coming into direct contact with it;
- b. Through the (direct and explicit) communication activity of the organization
- c. Through the relationship network in which they take part

### Focus: Reputation and visibility

- Image/visibility is based on external and superficial aspects and – in a short-term perspective – it can be dealt with through propaganda or spin doctoring campaigns

- Reputation, on the other hand, is based on consistent, deep and consolidated aspects, with particular reference to the behaviours adopted by the company. Characterised by a long-term perspective, it is formed only over time. Reputation can of course be lost, but it cannot be rapidly improved through “make-up operations” implemented with traditional communication tools. However, it can be managed and even improved through corporate communication and public relationships with internal and external stakeholders (relationships are, in fact, much more consistent and incisive than communication alone).

**2. Commercial or product communication (existing and potential customers):** social consensus of the market (product recognition (brand) – in the short term – and customer loyalty – in the long term.

- The area of commercial/product communication is normally the most developed in the company, as it represents the tool for achieving the objectives of the marketing plan.
- The actions implemented by commercial or product communication – i.e., advertising, sales promotion and sponsorship – have an impact on company performance in terms of effectiveness.

**3. Organizational or internal communication (employees and collaborators):** internal social consensus (engagement/sharing – in the short term – and efficiency /sense of belonging – in the long term.

It is a type of communication that becomes an increasingly strategic component of corporate governance: extension and integration of inward and outward communications, definition of a common language for all those who participate in the life of the company or have relationship with it, reference to distinctive values, etc.

Nowadays, a company with a strong identity and values shared with its employees and collaborators is widely recognized as more valuable than a company without these characteristics – or, in any case, than an organization where culture is able to implement appreciable actions and behaviours.

**4. Economic/financial communication** (shareholders, institutions and regulators, institutional/retail and potential investors, mass media, financial analysts and rating agencies) social consensus of the business community (keep the interest high in listed titles – in the short term – and attract new investors and retain existing ones – in the long run).

Financial communication (or Financial PR) is a business process typical of corporate communication – one which is ruled by the organisations top management and crosses its public relations, finance and accounting functions. It is made up of all the informative (on the company’s structural, equity, financial and income assets), dialogic and relational activities that the company transparently plans and implements with regards to its financial stakeholders (shareholders, institutions and regulators, institutional/retail and potential investors, mass media, financial analysts and rating agencies). (Alfiero-Vignati).

### The communication system of the company

- The four different sectors of communication – so far presented individually – are parts of a whole: the “communication system” through which the company conveys information to its stakeholders in a bidirectional and circular perspective.
- To manage properly the communication process, it is also necessary – from an organizational point of view as well – to have some corporate functions responsible for ensuring coordination between the different types of communication.

### Communication from an organizational point of view

#### Communication sectors and corporate functions

- The coordination among the different sectors of communication is usually carried out by the top management (Board of Directors and CEO), who is responsible for establishing communication guidelines, checking and approving the most sensitive and relevant documents (e.g., the business plan) as well as participating directly in some presentation meetings to specific audiences (such as the business community).
- Specialized corporate communication functions (media relations, web and social media management, public affairs, advertising, internal communication, investor relations, etc.) are activated for specific communication activities, from time to time in close collaboration with the other corporate functions (marketing, human resources managements, administration and control, finance, etc.).

#### The roles of the communication professional

- **Operational:** To prepare means of communication for the organization (and its members) in order to help the organization formulate its communications. This role is concerned with services and is aimed at the execution of the communication plans developed by others.

- **Educational:** to help all the members of the organization to become communicatively competent, in order to respond to societal demands. This role is concerned with the mentality and behaviour of the organizations members and aimed at internal public groups.
- **Managerial:** to develop plans to communicate and maintain relationships with public groups, in order to gain public trust and/or mutual understanding. This role is concerned with commercial and other (internal/ external) public groups and with public opinion as a whole, and it is aimed at the execution of the organizational mission and strategies.
- **Reflective:** to analyze changing standards, values and standpoints in society and discuss these with members of the organization, in order to adjust the standards and values/standpoints of the organization accordingly. This role is concerned with organizational standards, values and views, and it is aimed at the development of the mission and organizational strategies.

### Integration, specialization and orchestration

The relationship among the different sectors of corporate communication is increasingly characterized by:

1. **Sector/function integration** (unique coordination, frequent use of teamwork, continuous exchange of information);
2. **Skill specialization** (specific knowledge of the different techniques and specialized tools of each sector/function).

“Communication orchestration is the prerequisite to obtain truly effective communication and to further emphasize a strong and consistent positioning” (Giampaolo Fabris).



# YOUTH MINISTRY AND COMMUNICATION

DON MIGUEL ÁNGEL GARCÍA MORCUENDE, General Councillor for Youth



*"Among the new forms of mass communication, nowadays we need to recognize the increased role of the internet, which represents a new forum for making the Gospel heard. Yet we also need to be aware that the virtual world will never be able to replace the real world, and that evangelization will be able to make use of the virtual world offered by the new media in order to create meaningful relationships only if it is able to offer the personal contact which remains indispensable. In the world of the internet, which enables billions of images to appear on millions of screens throughout the world, the face of Christ needs to be seen and his voice heard, for 'if there is no room for Christ, there is no room for man'" (Benedict XVI, Ex. Ap. Verbum Domini, n. 113).*

## 1. Collaboration and networking dynamics

Salesians, like the rest of the globalized world, are immersed in a process of increasing interconnectedness, and are visible especially in the last forty years. But this dynamic of collaboration and networking is not only the fruit of globalization and technology, but also **the consequence of our reflection on our educative-pastoral mission and our awareness of being a worldwide charismatic family at the service of young people.**

Our mission and structures have grown progressively: educative-pastoral action is increasingly conceptualized by General Chapters and Rector Majors define apostolic priorities for the entire Congregation. There is recognition of the need to create networks at the provincial, national, regional, and congregational levels (schools, TVETs, Social Works, SYM, NGOs, etc.) to take full advantage of the opportunities given to us by being an international institution. This dynamic of collaboration emphasizes *unity in action, the ability to act at different levels (local, provincial, regional or global), and lastly, greater visibility to coordinate efforts and responses.*



We can express the relationship between communication and youth ministry in many different ways and aspects. But I choose a particular focus, an approach that investigates the intelligence and thinking of faith in the time of the net, or, **how to understand pastoral care in the digital today from the perspective of the medial youth context.**

## 2. Media Generation: a prerequisite for Salesian Youth Ministry action in the Digital World

Communication is one of the fundamental forms of cultural construction, a process of socialization, a constitutive dimension of daily life. Wherever there is an encounter, a contact or only the conscious perception of the presence of another, there is communication. The exponential increase in the spaces of interaction produced by digital culture and the ever-increasing sophistication of technology have further **pushed us towards an educative-pastoral paradigm shift.**

In fact, a great challenge, already accepted by the Church and taken up by the Congregation, is evangelization in and through the virtual world. We can now fully understand how the action of the Church and the congregation can be innervated and act effectively in the contemporary digital world. This challenge means an ongoing effort to understand what virtuality is and how the message of the Gospel is transmitted through it. In order to understand what youth ministry is in the digital realm, how it is done, and why it needs to be practiced, it becomes helpful to **convince ourselves that society, the Church, and the Congregation are now medial:** without media, they risk finding themselves incomplete; media, particularly social media, have become a "necessary" condition for communication. Therefore, remaining indifferent to digital culture, not considering it as a supporting element of evangelization, will not allow pastoral, social and institutional communication to be fully activated.

For many, the technology approach is purely instrumental, and its treatment is limited to a dialogue about tools and new methodologies. In this forum, we are not so much interested in this revolution from the point of view of digital technology that has driven us to change the way we think, learn and manage knowledge. Instead, for us, there is a very relevant educative-pastoral dimension: information and communication technologies are **generators of connectivity among young people and facilitators of evangelization.** Benedict XVI mentions a fundamental binomial for the task of evangelization through social networks: the encounter and the communicative process.



### 3. Two paradigms, two educative-pastoral perspectives

In order to elaborate a reflection on the link between pastoral ministry and communication, it is necessary to clarify some paradigms that are still in place. What is that promotes the reception of technologies, languages and logics of the digital in the educative-pastoral praxis? and therefore the sacred is relevant in the digital world of the internet, social media and social networks; or, vice versa, what is that thinks it is necessary to create "a defensive structure" against the logics of **social networks**.

[1] If communicating the Gospel is not an accessory, fashionable or "luxury" issue, but rather a gift, a goal to be reached, we Salesians *cannot be indifferent to the lives of young people, intertwined with digital environments*.

In this society kneaded with communication, the net, it has been said many times, is an opportunity and a help (we have seen it recently, in the months of the *lockdown*), but, it is also true that among its meshes, **one can run into many dangers**. In this sense, in the new constellation of communicative practices we can point out some that are particularly dangerous:

- » *sexting* (the sending of sexually explicit audio, video, and photographic content of one's own and/or third parties, i.e., friends, girlfriends, etc.);
- » camgirls (young girls who through the webcam offer photos, videos or live images with a sexual background in exchange for gifts, money, phone charges);
- » *trolling* (virtual jammers who appropriate people's profiles to distort, mock, offend and other identities);
- » hate speech (language of hatred and intolerance toward a person or group);
- » *fake news* and others (fraud, misleading video games, false advertising, etc.)

In addition, young people risk falling victim not to the models of behaviour or consumption proposed by the media, but to adults (in the case of online child pornography) or other minors (as in cyber-bullying).

However, we would like to emphasize that **the problem is not the media, if not the people who choose to behave badly. The media are the projection of the human and not vice versa**. Technological devices are not autonomous causes of formative processes; they are the mediators of human intentionality. *Hikikomori*, for example, exist, but their hermitage is certainly not the fault of a video game or a chat room.

Therefore, this fact implies an adjustment of educative measures. The focus shifts from critical thinking to responsibility: **it is no longer enough to educate a person who is attentive and critical, it is necessary to educate a person who is responsible**, both when navigating content and when producing their own. Therefore, it is necessary to pave the paths of education, of wide-ranging prevention, of competence, of accompaniment, and of the right age.

[2] However, we do not want to stop there from the point of view of risks. In fact, we can fall into the opposite temptation: to **remain stuck only on the fears and problems of the Net and fail to activate effective pastoral actions in the digital world**. To overcome this situation, therefore, two reflections must be considered:

- » First of all, in order to understand what this "media generation" is, it is necessary to **go beyond the "old" media definitions** (by McLuhan, de Kerckhove, Bauman), not to erase them but to renew them, if we want to understand the right link between young people and the media. Therefore, **if we want to do pastoral work in digital media, we need to overcome deterministic and technicist definitions, stop using old theories to describe new realities, abandon the tendency to read digital media with the mass media logic of the 1990s, that is, the DETERMINISTIC PARADIGM**.

According to this paradigm, **the user is always and everywhere determined** (negatively influenced) by the media. According to this view, the media is an autonomous (malevolent) subject with its own intentionality and capacity for action that is intended to modify our ways of thinking and acting. The purpose is to "influence, teach, train, cultivate the mind and character of our youth". So, communication has not so much potential as many pitfalls and it is up to the educator to simply prevent its use. Devices always cause people to tend to isolate themselves and, as a result, social ties loosen to the point of dissolution.

- » Secondly, this paradigm points out that the media are also a tool for "vertical" learning: **"from those who know to those who don't know"**, i.e. a means for a substantially informative, unidirectional ('top down') communication, a



complementary platform for dissemination rather than a space for conversation and listening.

[3] Instead we face the HUMANISTIC PARADIGM: **media are sociocultural practices and projections of the human**. Sharing, participation, storytelling, representation are in fact, some of the pillars on which the human and social structure of the network rests. Thus, all that deterministic cloak that, from McLuhan onwards, had theorized them as instruments endowed with intentionality disappears.

The media are (no longer) a tool to be used or an environment to be inhabited; **they are (increasingly) an experience to be accompanied**. Only by experiencing them can we try to understand their profound essence and thus also analyse their social repercussions, "pastoral opportunities" and educative perspectives. We need to distinguish three modes of educative approach to the media:

- » the first one, to **educate WITH the media**, means to "use" the media (instrumental approach), so it takes a digital education, technical skills, mediation;
- » second, **educate ON** media, "understand" media, have a critical approach, know semiotics, interpret on grammar;
- » the third, to **educate IN the** media, that is, to "inhabit" the media (humanist approach) which means interaction, respect for rules, participation, active citizenship, action, project, responsibility, testimony.

In this last case, therefore, we do not only want to reflect on the media as a tool, object, environment, educative-pastoral fabric; but to reflect **on the person of young people in his development as a media being**. A society in which the media - Pope Francis has repeatedly reiterated - should not be factors of "mental pollution" or "dispersive noise," but concrete opportunities for "a new cultural development of humanity" (Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 47).

#### 4. The anthropological primacy of digital communication at the service of the person of the young.

[1] We are convinced that **in order to act pastorally we need to rediscover and bring to light the anthropological (and therefore also spiritual) primacy that reorients our Salesian proposal, that is, the SEPP**. In the same way, if the media (especially digital media), more than mere tools, are now a system fully integrated with our natural (and communicative) environment, we need to rediscover here, too, what are **the dimensions of growth** for the person of our young people.

The media activate paths of identification, helping to build values and symbolic categories to give unity and meaning to their lives. They represent, therefore, a reality where it is possible to acquire useful knowledge to foster real processes of integration, participation and relationship with the surrounding world. In short, if adequately considered, they are a "space" **of confrontation and growth** in which young people can exercise and realize new dimensions of social participation and personal enrichment.

This implies that every educative-pastoral action in the digital world must be able to count on educators who are well acquainted with the framework of values that inspires the formative goals it aims at. It will be fundamental to "take care of the young" and to activate an "ad personam" accompaniment.

[2] In a nutshell, at least **three relevant anthropological features of this digital turn can be** identified:

a.- The first is *portability*, i.e., the miniaturization of computer applications and the convergence of different technologies towards digital is producing a new generation of mobile devices that function as true multimedia powerhouses to be **"always and in any case connected"**. Today, a smartphone is a telephone, a television, an Internet access point, a camera, a video camera, an MP3 player: this is the phenomenon of *multitasking*, the possibility of being "multi-processing", i.e., being present and acting simultaneously on several digital platforms.

b.- But the second characteristic is educationally more important for us: *interactivity*. The flow of communication is no longer unidirectional, young people are both spectators and authors: YouTube is the new model of "television" brought about by this system logic. They are no longer passive users of the network but active and reactive producers of content. But when we talk about media, in a certain sense we are talking about ourselves, they are the **"projection" of the human being**, they reflect human action, they are understood as "spaces" where the real protagonist is the person with his creativity, freedom of research, expressive originality: this is the second characteristic. We are the media !

Pastoral ministry in the digital world should not be intense as a sort of advertising logic, of "religious messaging" (transmitting religious information or sharing resources) and is not structured with noticeboard, shop window logics, but is determined first of all by the logic of the **'culture of encounter'** (physical and digital). It is necessary to assume the conviction that every young person, when he or she accesses his or her *social* profile, is not entering a parallel world and is not living a virtual experience, but **is about to connect truly with other young people who really - in a digital way - exist as people**. It's about

understanding the logic of proximity (in social you always meet up with another who even if we don't see is real). The digital environment is not virtual at all, but as real as any other environment in which relationships between people take shape. Thanks to the media, one can weave relationships, one can keep them alive. Sometimes, friendship is nourished by small daily communicative gestures: a tweet, a WhatsApp, etc.. Being connected becomes an almost vital necessity. **It makes us feel part of others.**

At the same time, Pope Francis also grasps the risks of a digital hyper-connection that instead of expanding this compass of relationships shrinks them to the risk of isolation, of a relational "sclerosis." This reflection is reflected, for example, in the book by the American psychologist Sherry Turkle: "Together but Alone. Why we expect more and more from technology and less and less from others".

Therefore, **our focus is not on objects (the media), but on a real human relationship.** In conclusion: digital communication is a precious opportunity for new possibilities of presence between young people and their world, to witness, to announce and to express the beauty of faith, the gospel: the Person of Jesus Christ. The communicative process between people is the essence of social networking. This is also the essence of evangelization: realizing that communication intertwined with the concrete lives and actuality of people.

c.- The third characteristic is that the network has a **strong affective dimension.** The fact of not seeing and not feeling each other directly, or of not making visual contact, lowers shyness and inhibitions, so often in the net communication high levels of confidence and intimacy are reached and sometimes of seductiveness, just because the other person can be a stranger and as such, freely imagined and idealized. Even, if a young person is too emotionally involved in a chat, he/she can easily "forget" the recommendation on the protection of his/her privacy and decide, on the contrary, to reveal his/her identity and make him/herself available for an encounter that is not always healthy. As we have seen *hate (hate speech), revenge (revenge porri), provocation (trolling) are there and we must be careful.*

*But it is also true that they experience* positive emotions such as happiness or enthusiasm (the *likes*) or negative ones (the sad faces) that **represent a part of the emotional sampling** of our youth. Examples are the daily *stories* or *selfies* on social networks, with which we decide to represent ourselves, or the micro-clips of photos or videos (with images that say good morning or good night or a sacred image) that people send to all their contacts without a particular rational motive. We inform ourselves, we relate, we learn, we feel online.

More than ever, today, the use of the Internet presupposes an affective, emotional, and relational dimension for our young people. Howard Gardner and Katie Davis in their essay "Generation App" identify in three fundamental nuclei the paths of education of the youngest (path of the three "I's"): formation of *identity* that is diffused in multiple social networks, the ability to have *intimate* relationships and the faculties of *imagination*. Clearly, intimacy and imagination are the place of the encounter with God (=relationship).

## **5. A "friendly hand" for the transmission of the Gospel** ***Integrating the Good News into the new culture of young people***

Pastoral ministry must not limit itself to usage of the media to spread the Gospel: the challenge is to **succeed in "integrating" the good news "into the new culture" of communication**, which prefers narration and communication through images and expressions that link the idea of communication to discourse about God.

It is **not enough to open a social profile or a social page and fill it with content; it is necessary to understand the what, the how and the why of communicating with young people.** Yes, we need pastoral workers trained in media assets, dynamics and digital languages. But in order to make our pastoral communicative action effective, we need to capture the attention, recover the aesthetic-affective dimension of the proclamation of the Gospel, the symbolic capacity and narrative style of faith in tune with the lived experience of young people; indeed, give traditional symbols new meanings that are closer to the daily life of young people.

For those of us involved in Christian initiation, we need to move from "alphabetic logics" to "symbolic compressions." This transformation should play well because the very language of faith has always passed through symbols: the candle, the white vestment, the Easter candle, the liturgical colors.

*Example: Storytelling*

Storytelling is a fine art that has its roots in the oldest traditions: we love to listen and tell stories. It can be considered a great method for pastoral ministry. Through stories, educators can communicate in an engaging way, using narratives, metaphors, words suitable for engaging young people, for stimulating their emotions and imagination. **The autobiographical element in storytelling is critical.**

For this reason, one of the added values of storytelling in the pastoral setting is the element of *fascination*. And this derives from several factors: the degree of personal involvement that a narrative approach offers; the fact that it offers easier access to abstract and complex concepts; the ease with which the story can be memorized on a cognitive level; the opportunity that a story can generate other stories and the exchange, comparison, research, other points of view. There is a need to **move from the pastoral ministry of ideas to the pastoral ministry of storytelling**.

Just like Jesus who, in his dialogues, made ample use of stories (*parables*), creating memory (*depositum fidei*), involving the listener (*evangelization*) and succeeding in making those stories (*announcement*) generate others.

Communication, then, not only offers education and evangelization tools, but above all **methods of interaction that more effectively facilitate content and meaning** from which pastoral ministry can (and should) benefit. Therefore, do not fall into the temptation of thinking that the effectiveness of "digital pastoral ministry" with young people depends on instrumental efficiency and the functionalism of reducing educative-pastoral communication to a series of devices to be used.

## **6. Practical applications**

### ***Salesian Youth Ministry and digital dynamics***

If the pilgrimage is still valid to reach or visit holy or sacred places, the internet and social networks offer the possibility of **a continuous and permanent pilgrimage** to sacred places and texts in the same place where young people live. In this way, young people no longer go in search of the sacred, but the sacred is to be in their context, at any time and even in their intimate spaces, through technological mediation and internet access.

In fact, it is not taken for granted that, even if it has true and positive content (the Gospel!), communication always succeeds in being incisive. This requires monitoring one's own communicative mission in pastoral ministry. There are four dynamics to know in order not to fail:

**[1] First, convince yourself that when you choose to open a Facebook page or create a Twitter account, you can't expect to use them in the same way.** Therefore, not considering the communicative mechanisms of *social networks* is equivalent to not knowing how to use the "medium" that you have in your hands, not to take advantage, therefore, of its communicative potential.

The social networking universe is essentially divided into five major categories: *profile sites*, the best known being Facebook; *filesharing sites*, such as Flickr or YouTube (User Generated Content); *virtual worlds*, including Second Life; *instant messaging*, such as WhatsApp; *microblogging*, such as Twitter; *hybrids*, such as Tik Tok.

But in the field of evangelization, **we must not fall into the trap of *snackability***, that is, the ability to enjoy content on the web without any difficulty in a superficial way. Like a snack, they can be consumed anytime and anywhere, without particular attention to their form, meaning and possible problematic aspects. Often this content is created in such a way that it attracts the attention of the user and becomes viral.

[2] Unfortunately, it often seems that pastoral communication is reduced to **journalistic models**, where the criterion is not the beauty of the news and its relevance to young people. At times the richness of the Christian proposal is expressed with dry words or abstract words, but not with words or images that will flow from the hearts of those who have been called to comment on them, words that will speak first of all to those who have thought of them and will then be shared, reflected upon. For example, a pastoral page that is not graphically edited risks remaining an old message. Or the danger of offering fragmented religious information: this is the case with the dissemination of biblical quotations or passages that can be understood "on a literal level" without reaching interpretations .

[3] - Do not confuse evangelical action with the search for "followers" or "**star evangelizers**" fascinated by the screen or the web.

[4] We must always be attentive to a correct distinction between **being professionals** and having a **business mentality**. It is evident that we must be professionals, organized, serious: professionals in communication, professionals in youth ministry... but with an evangelical mentality, not a business mentality. Perhaps it is appropriate, then, not to use the word "professionals", which recalls a profession (ours is a vocation), and to prefer the term "experts", which refers to experience, to the witness of life.

## Reputation and the dynamics of witnessing

**Reputation** is one of the necessary conditions to be able to act in digital contexts; precisely, it consists in the "shared perception" that subjects have (and make) about the image of the institution or one of its services and can be derived from the discourses that, in the network, are made by the users involved. In other words, what *we are online is seen 'on life'*. Reputation is a "communicatively" pastoral category because it corresponds - in its digital form - to the **dynamics of witness**. Interactions must be oriented toward achieving a pastoral goal (taking care of young people and leading them toward human and spiritual growth); users must perceive themselves as part of the reality of the EPC, the province or the congregation; it also becomes necessary to maintain a level of communication that is respectful and dignified, as well as institutional (communication with and in social networks is a serious matter).



If we look at the Internet as a "network of people and not of wires," then - Francis exhorts - "access to digital networks entails a responsibility for the other, which we do not see but is real, has its own dignity that must be respected." As if to say that the profile or the account cannot be a mask that we put on to "play" with the other. The great challenge for the Christian at the time of social media is to transform one's social profile into a **space of authentic and credible witness**. The person must always prevail over the role. Therefore, enhance the human aspect of communication over the technological one.

### *The clear will to recognize a space in the dialogue in the Province*

The last focus is clearly the desire to recognize a space in the **dialogue between the youth ministry delegate and the social communication delegate** for reflection on the role and educative-pastoral significance of the media, to accompany young people in the acquisition of a critical awareness that must become a mental habit. This awareness must be transformed into responsibility in daily life. This dialogue should be concretized in the presence of communication *in the elaboration and realization of the SEPP*.

Pastoral ministry in the digital world and ecclesial communication as a whole require planning, organization and coordination. **In conclusion, the current context obliges us to design every pastoral action within SEPP, including action in the field of communication. Communication like pastoral ministry is not an improvised practice. It requires study, sensitivity, and specific cultural competence.**

This dialogue requires that the one who is responsible for social communication at the provincial level, "in all that pertains to the education of young people, work within the youth ministry team," as proposed in GC23, 259.



# QUIZ

## Activity 1 - Multiple Choice

- 1. Don Bosco was also an *author*, his first book being written when he was:**
  - a. Thirty years olds
  - b. Twenty-eight years old
  - c. Twenty-nine years old
- 2. What is the World Communication Day theme for 2022?**
  - a. Listening with the Ear of the Heart
  - b. Come and See
  - c. Speaking with Truth in Love
- 3. From the pages of Scripture, we learn that listening means not only the perception of sound, but is essentially linked to the dialogical relationship between:**
  - a. Man and woman
  - b. God and humanity
  - c. Brother and sister
- 4. The Internet makes knowledge available, creates direct contacts and offers ample space for communication and the sending of:**
  - a. Words
  - b. Channels
  - c. Messages

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## Let's talk about **SYNODALITY**

*Instruction:* Short answer questions

### Activity 2 - Short Answers

1. What is Synodality?

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2. According to Pope Francis, what is an excellent tool to put synodality into practice?

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3. What are the three verbal images that Pope Francis uses to illustrate the decolonizing approach to synodality? Explain each.

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4. What are the three vital pillars of Synodality?

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5. List three characteristics of the Synodal Dimension.

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6. Give two challenges that threaten synodality. Explain these challenges in your own words.

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# Communication Trivia

## Activity 1: Biblical View of Communication

**Instruction:** This quiz is based on the Biblical View of Communication. After reading and understanding each session, fill in the blanks below with the suitable words.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ is an expression of the identity of the human person, their freedom and ability to create and share their ideas and what they \_\_\_\_\_, with others.
2. Communication finds its vital root in the \_\_\_\_\_ which is the \_\_\_\_\_, inserted in a visible way, in \_\_\_\_\_, in salvation history. Communicating is, for us, a vocation with the goal of realising \_\_\_\_\_.
3. To communicate is not a function, but a \_\_\_\_\_ to the gift of being co-creators of the world of communication with God. To inhabit the \_\_\_\_\_ means to be \_\_\_\_\_ of the communicative process.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ touches the person's freedom and call to share responsibility before God, the other, all of creation.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ in social networks opens us up to new geographies for understanding intercultural realities, thus allowing dialogue between peoples and cultures based on identity and collaboration between communities.

**Answers:** 1. Communication, communicate | 2. Word of God, source of life, Jesus Christ, God's Plan | 3. response, digital world, co-authors/creators | 4. Human communication | 5. Digital Communication

## Activity 2: Corporate Communication

**Instruction:** Match the vocabulary to the definitions.

### Information | Publics or influencers | Communication Dialogue | Relationship | Stakeholder

- a. A process of exchange between two subjects (A and B) which unfolds on three distinct but complimentary levels. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. The sender A says something to the receiver B. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. The sender A says something to the receiver B and listens to their feedback.  
\_\_\_\_\_
- d. The sender A behaves in some way with the receiver B. \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives. \_\_\_\_\_
- f. They are those particular stakeholders who, while having an issue in common with the organization, are unaware of their role – and perhaps not even particularly in it; the company still considers them strategic and selects them from time to time to achieve its communicative goals.  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Communication Trivia

## Activity 3: Salesian Dimension of Communication

**Instruction:** This quiz is based on the Salesian Dimension of Communication. After reading and understanding the session, fill in the blanks below with the suitable words.

1. In Valdocco, the young people in training between 1858 and 1869 went from little more than a hundred to more than \_\_\_\_\_, constituting the largest gathering of young people in an Italian city.
2. Don Bosco conveniently involves the \_\_\_\_\_ themselves by sending them to collect items to be awarded and distribute \_\_\_\_\_; he deals with \_\_\_\_\_, and prints special brochures highlighting \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Since \_\_\_\_\_ was the \_\_\_\_\_, a popular monthly publication that he founded and edited, initially with the support of Mons. Luigi Moreno, Bishop of Ivrea, and that since 1862 he printed on his own at the \_\_\_\_\_ installed in the \_\_\_\_\_ of S. Francesco di Sales.
4. Among these librettos, also distributed in out-of-series copies, the following stand out: The strength of \_\_\_\_\_ (1855), The life of the young \_\_\_\_\_ (1859), \_\_\_\_\_ (1861) and \_\_\_\_\_ (1864).
5. In the 1960s, Don Bosco presented the church not merely for the particular needs of the oratory or the \_\_\_\_\_ of the urban parish structure, but a \_\_\_\_\_ church that responds in general to the needs of the population.
6. In 1877 the monthly publication, from an editorial bulletin ("Bibliophile Catholic"), was transformed into a "\_\_\_\_\_ (= BS).
7. The BS has a frame of fixed columns: news about individual Salesian houses, information about the conferences of cooperators held in various cities, animated stories of \_\_\_\_\_ among the Indians, reports of thanks obtained through the \_\_\_\_\_ of María Help of Christians, list of deceased cooperators, bibliographic notes.
8. The Salesian Bulletin does not claim to be an organization reserved for the circle of members of the Union of Cooperators. From the beginning it has been widely distributed \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Upon his death, he left behind a rich and composed network of \_\_\_\_\_ intended essentially for popular education and \_\_\_\_\_. Some of his expressions are emblematic. Referring to typographic techniques, he affirms that in these things he wants to be on the \_\_\_\_\_ of progress.
10. He has precise and well-established goals, he has his own \_\_\_\_\_; he uses a wide range of means capable of mobilizing social areas, \_\_\_\_\_, support, and consensus, he has \_\_\_\_\_ and intuition, \_\_\_\_\_, and opportunity.

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**Answers:** 1. 1868, 800 | 2. Youth, lottery tickets, newspaper advertising, social unity. | 3. March 1853, "Catholic Lectures" (= LC), printing press, Oratory | 4. good education, Domenico Savio, Michele Magone, Francesco Besusso | 5. institutional needs, neighborhood | 6. Salesian Bulletin | 7. missionary activity, intercession, | 8. free of charge | 9. social media, youth education, vanguard | 10. educational style, economic resources, inventiveness, flexibility



# COMMITMENT CARD

## **A commitment for you.**

Below is a commitment card for you as a Communicator and what you will do to spread the Good News through the

### **My commitment as a Communicator:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### **My commitment using Digital Media:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Archbishop Fermin Emilio Sosa Rodríguez, Apostolic Nuncio addressing the audience at the Film Festival**



# Speaking with the heart

## Speaking the Truth with Love (Eph 4:15)

- ANS

The 57th World Communications Day, celebrated on 21st May 2023, has as its theme: 'Speaking the Truth with Love' "*Veritatem facientes in caritate* (Eph. 4:15)." We have reflected on: 'Come and See' and 'Listen' and now we dwell on: 'Speaking the Truth, from the heart with Love'. We should not be afraid of proclaiming the truth, even if it is uncomfortable, but we should always do so with charity. Pope Benedict XVI reminds us that the Christian program is a heart that sees. The miracle of encounter can take place, when we look at one another with compassion, welcoming our frailties with respect rather than judging by hearsay and sowing discord and division. Christ warns us that every tree is known by its fruit (cf. Lk 6:44): "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil man out of his evil treasure produces evil; for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" (v.45). Only by listening and speaking with a pure heart can we discern the spirit in our complicated world.

“  
Kindness  
is the  
genuine  
antidote  
to cruelty.  
”



ANS

### ‘Cordiality – A Powerful Weapon for Communication’

Revolutionize the world with cordiality, tenderness and gentleness. The words of the father of gentleness, St. Francis de Sales, ring in our ears: “A spoon full of honey gathers more flies than a barrel full of vinegar”; and the saying from the book of Proverbs (25:15), “a soft tongue will break a bone”, all affirm the power of cordiality. Today more than ever, speaking with the heart is essential to foster a culture of peace, allowing for dialogue and reconciliation.

Pope Francis makes it very clear that this choice should spring from genuine concern for others. He exhorts the communicators to create a revolution with the communication of the heart, and convey the ‘gentle strength of love’. Today, in the dramatic context of global conflicts that we are experiencing, the affirmation of non-hostile communication becomes indispensable, and this cordiality can touch even the most hardened hearts. It does not mean, we compromise on everything, rather we proclaim the truth with charity and gentleness.

### ‘Speaking with the Heart’ – the Core of the Synodal Process

The verbs ‘to listen’, ‘to share’, ‘to hear’, and ‘to respect’ mirror the underlying principles of Synodality. Pope Francis affirms this in an emphatic way: Listening without prejudice, attentively and openly, enables speaking according to God’s style, nurtured by closeness, compassion and tenderness. We have a pressing need in the Church for communication that kindles hearts, that is balm on wounds and that shines light on the journey of our brothers and sisters. He says, “ I dream of an ecclesial communication that knows how to let itself be guided by the Holy Spirit, gentle and at the same time, prophetic, that knows how to find new ways and means for the wonderful proclamation it is called to deliver in the third millennium”.

### Become Revolutionaries who Speak with the Heart

Go with your heart and you are sure to face victory. The language of the heart can overcome all barriers and destroy all enemies. The Arabic proverb: “Throw your heart out before you, and run to it”, clearly states that if each one is charged with this sensitivity, readiness and understanding to seek and offer the truth in charity, it becomes the key to transform the other person. ‘Speaking with the heart’ is a strategic choice, an intervention designed to mobilize others and transform others.

Saint John Henry Newman’s conviction was, “In order to speak well, it is enough to love well”. Quoting him, Pope Francis explains that true communication is not a strategy, marketing campaign, or manipulation of any kind. Rather true communication, as Newman put it so well, is about who we are, “a reflection of the soul.” It is all about how we love one another. Love is the essence of true communication. Speaking with the heart is essentially feeling for the other and feeling with the other. Perhaps, if this is the echo of the heart in every man and woman, the revolution of cordiality will certainly heal the world, cure humanity of all its woes and transform the world, restoring peace and harmony.

# DBGYFF - 2

## Don Bosco Global Youth Film Festival

### 1. CONTESTANT PROFILE

Contestant from any part of the Salesian world can participate. They should belong to any one of the institutions of the Salesian Family, be it school, college, technical school, social centers, hostels, youth centres, oratories, parish etc. Every contestant has to get his/her work validated from the person in charge or delegated from that institution for this purpose.

### 2. CONTESTANT AGE LIMITS

As DBGYFF is a youth film festival, only youth between the age of 14 and 25 may submit their films. The DBGYFF is a youth film festival, therefore, contestants, as defined in Article 1 above, aged between 14 (with the provision that minors must provide the necessary express authorization from the adult exercising parental responsibility) and 25 (on 1 January 2023) may submit their films. The contestants will be classified into two age groups. Category 1: Juniors - from the age of 14 to 19 and Category 2: Seniors - from the age of 20 to 25. The contestants will be classified into two age groups. Category 1: Juniors - from the age of 14 to 19 and Category 2: Seniors - from the age of 20 to 25.

### 3. LIMITS FOR THE PRODUCTION DATE OF THE FILM

All submitted films must have been created after January 1, 2022 and should not have been screened or exhibited online. Films completed before before January 2022 will not be admitted to the festival.

### 4. THEME

All films must be based on the theme "Love builds Peace and Solidarity". All films that speak about young people as ambassadors of love, constructing peace and solidarity among all peoples are welcome.

### 5. GENRE

The festival accepts all kinds of films except those showing cruelty to humans and animals, nudity and gory content. Films with discriminatory content or references to political movements are not allowed.

### 6. LANGUAGE

The short film can be in any language, but should be subtitled in English.

### 7. LENGTH AND CATEGORIES

Films must not exceed the indicated length, 5 minutes including end credits. DBGYFF 2023 welcomes all film entries in any preferred genre.

### 8. SUBMISSION OF SEVERAL FILMS

A contestant may present only one film at the festival. Each work must be submitted individually and accompanied by its own completed online registration form. Multiple entries by the same individual is not permitted. Multiple individuals from the same institute may compete with their own entries.

### 9. DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

The last date for registration and submission of the short film for DBGYFF 2023 is **Monday, 31 July 2023**.

### 10. AWARDS & RECOGNITION

The list of awards for the DBGYFF, include Global Bests, Regional Bests and Local Bests.

- The Ten Global Bests are awarded to the best overall among all the seven regions, based equally on the two categories of the participants (5 Juniors + 5 seniors) and they will be awarded a €2,000.00 (two thousand Euros) respectively.
- The 70 Regional Bests are the awards given for the best 10 entries of the seven regions. Each award will contain a cash prize of Euro 1,000.00 (one thousand Euros) respectively.
- The 100 Local Bests are the prizes awarded to encourage the participation from every province. For every 100 entries that come for the festival from a province, five films are shortlisted by the province local team and 100 Euros will be given to each of those five entries.

**DON BOSCO GLOBAL YOUTH FILM FESTIVAL**  
13,14 OCTOBER 2023

**THEME: LOVE BUILDS PEACE & SOLIDARITY**

**Prizes & Awards**  
10 Global Bests | 70 Regional Bests | 100 Local Bests

**Who can submit?**  
Anyone above 14 & under 25

**LAST DATE for submission**  
31 JULY 2023

SCAN HERE for more info  
dbgyff.com





missio

Social Communications Commission  
Catholic Bishops Conference  
Papua New Guinea & Solomon Islands  
2022