

Pastoral Letter on World Communication Day

Dear Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,

Thy Kingdom Come!

The world communication Sunday is celebrated every year on third Sunday of November. Of all times the communication technology has developed to a high pedestal during our times. Needless to say it is an easy and fast means of evangelization. Indeed very effective too. How many of us are really using it for evangelization and relentlessly also asking oneself the question of its misuse, over use, addiction and indifference to it. The Second Vatican Council's decree on the means of social communication *Inter Mirifica* states: "The Church, our mother, knows that if these media are properly used they can be of considerable benefit to mankind. They contribute greatly to the enlargement and enrichment of men's minds and to the propagation and consolidation of the kingdom of God. But the Church also knows that man can use them in ways that are contrary to the Creator's design and damaging to himself. Indeed, she grieves with a mother's sorrow at the harm all too often inflicted on society by their misuse" (#2). A discernment between *use* and *misuse* of social media is relevant question to be reflected seriously and sincerely.

Pope Francis in his 53rd world communication day message invited everyone a switch over from 'social net work communication to the human community' (2019 message). He stated that, "a reflection on foundation and importance of our being-in-relation and to re-discover, in the vast array of challenges of the current communication context, the desire of the human person who does not want to be left isolated and alone." Indeed it is the crux of the problem today. Formation of communities in communion of hearts is the need of the hour. The experience today is that the inaccurate use of communication media has brought to existence 'islands' or 'division' among people, even among missionaries. Though distance is 'too short', the division is distanced too much, sometimes it has created irreparable conflicts and disturbances in human relations!

Pope Benedict XVI in his 45th world communication day message in the year 2011 warns everyone against search of 'friends' in digital media forgetting the challenge to be authentic and faithful, and not to give into the illusion of constructing an artificial public profile for oneself. One should not forget that in the dynamic inherent in the social networks demonstrate that a person is always involved in what he or she communicates. A person centered communication has been sidelined and a matter centered communication not only disregard the person who is the communicator and the drive force of the message but also restrict to enjoyment and self-centered in the communication process. As a result the horizon of effective communication in the realm of evangelization in communicating the message of Christ is not focused adequately and our primary mission is adversely affected. I am afraid to state that even we, the missionaries too have sometimes become victims of such misgivings!

In this context I suggest a thorough examination of content, frequency, style and the genuineness of our communications through social media. Whether it is Whatsapp, Instagram, Facebook etc. our communication mode, model and module is to be examined. The purpose, the priorities and the pursuance of the use of these means of social communication requires serious reflection by

missionaries who think that it is not proper or not up to the standard of expectation. Overuse and improper use need to be curtailed and adapt ideal use of it for a better and effective communication. A sense of “waste of time” involved or not properly using it for evangelization need serious examination of conscience is my opinion. While one recognizes all the positive effects of social media one should not over look its negative influences in the society. On the one hand we appreciate the fast communication and the great effects of the social media in human relations, family ties, general knowledge, entertainment, spiritual enrichment, new pedagogies in learning etc. on the other hand it also badly affect immature love affairs, indecent human relations, selfish attitudes, isolation, family conflicts, disinterest in academics, financial frauds, suicidal tendencies, extravagant lifestyle etc. Self-centered character, certain physical ailments like eye pain, back and neck ache, emotional imbalance, inferiority complexes etc. are the other side effects commonly noticed by the ‘improper’ use of social media or electronic gadgets. These are but a few pitfalls in the use of social media because of its use in improper ways. A proper discernment in its use has become a dire need. *Inter Mirifica* exhorts: “It is the Church’s birthright to use and own any of these media which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and for pastoral activity. Pastors of souls have the task of instructing and directing the faithful how to use these media in a way that will ensure their own salvation and perfection and that of all mankind” (#3). A responsible use of these modern means of communication is going to assist humanity for greater good and better human relations.

If the media are to be correctly employed, it is essential that all who use them know the principles of the moral order and apply them faithfully in this domain. They should also take into account the circumstances in which the content is communicated – the purpose, that is to say, the people, the place, the time etc. It is also essential that all those involved should form a correct conscience on the use of the media especially with regard to certain issues which are particularly controversial today. The recipients of social media, do so of their own free choice must necessarily avoid whatever might be a cause or occasion spiritual harm to themselves or might be source of danger to others through bad example (IM #9).

So Church desires that all the members of the Church should make a concerted efforts to ensure that the social media are put at the service of the multiple forms of the apostolate without delay and as energetically as possible, where and when they are needed. Ultimately what is of paramount importance is the use of social media for the good of humanity at large. Church sees great scope of evangelization – a personal interaction and, fast and effective means of communication. Let each one of us ‘self-warn’ of its improper and wrong use and focus on optimum use as where and when required. We shall focus not to do away with it but do use it responsibly.

May God bless you all.



Yours devotedly in Christ,

†Ephrem Nariculam

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