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### **INTER MIRIFICA AFTER 50 YEARS: ORIGIN, DIRECTIONS, CHALLENGES**

*Already during the preparation for the Second Vatican Council a commission on “modern means for the apostolate” was created (November 1959!). The final Communications Commission produced a document with 114 paragraphs, which was discussed in the first session of the Council and approved in the plenary on November 27, 1962, with 2.138 ‘Yes’ votes out of a total of 2.160. The assembly stated that communication is a proper and important subject for a council. It was proposed, however, that the text should be shortened to the essentials for pastoral ministry and another, more professional document published later, which was done in 1971 with the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio*. The shortened and revised version of *Inter Mirifica* was approved, in spite of some protests about the minimalistic approach and lack of sufficient theology of this version, and then published together with the liturgy document on December 4, 1963. Because *Inter Mirifica* was one of the first two documents of the Council it could not benefit from later considerations and stayed somewhat at the fringes of the conciliar process. Considering the situation today the document presents some special challenges like developing the concept of Social Communication it introduced to its full meaning; working on a proper Communication Theology (not Theology of Communication!); developing a proper communication disposition (instead of only skills!); developing a proper spirituality-based communication approach which integrates all activities; going from “media” to “means” and thus respond also to the modern challenges of Internet and social networks.*

#### **I. Origin**

Not even three months after his election as Pope (October 28, 1958) John XXIII surprised everybody when he announced a diocesan

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Synod for Rome and an ecumenical Council for the whole Church on January 25, 1959 at St. Paul's cathedral outside the walls of Rome. Soon after this announcement the first preparations started and there was right from the beginning of the internal commissions in November 1959 a commission "on the means of the apostolate," especially referring to the "new audio-visual techniques" like Cinema, Radio/TV and the Press. One reason for this inclusion of the media right from the beginning was probably the fact that Pope Pius XII had just one year before his death, on September 8, 1957, published *Miranda Prorsus*, an encyclical letter on the electronic media (Radio/TV, Film), which was still fresh in the minds of people. John XXIII himself had referred to this encyclical extensively in his own first encyclical letter *Ad Petri Cathedram* (June 29, 1959) with some 8 paragraphs (11-19) treating among other things the duties of the Press, modern means of Communication and their relation to Truth.

Thus Communication entered already at an early stage into the preparations of Vatican II despite the fact that among the themes solicited from bishops and religious superiors as well as catholic "Institutions of Higher Learning" like universities for discussion themes at the Council only 18 from a total of 2.150 answers referred to Communication, all of them from bishops and superiors, but none from any of the catholic universities (Baragli 1969, 94).

The internal pre-preparatory Commission met twice (November 1959/March 1960) producing a written documentation on the matter. Soon after this on May 30, 1960, the Pope issued the document *Superno Dei Nutu* establishing 10 official commissions for the preparation of different documents to be presented to the council. A secretariat to handle "all questions related to the modern means of social communication, Press, Radio/TV, Film" followed with a document on June 5 of the same year. The members and consultants of this secretariat were appointed, including the chairman in the person of Archbishop Martin O'Connor (former Rector of the North-American College in Rome) and Msgr. Andrea Maria Deskur (later Cardinal) as secretary. It was called the "Secretariat of the Press and Film," different from the earlier "Modern Means of the Apostolate." The members were all either bishops or clergy but came from quite different parts of the world—including one prelate from Manila.<sup>1</sup> This Secretariat had four sessions between November 1960 and October 1961.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For a full list of participants cf. Roegele 1964, footnote 9. The only participant from Asia was Msgr. Giustino Ortiz, Archdiocese of Manila, who only participated in some sessions.

<sup>2</sup> 1: November 13-15, 1960; 2: January 24-27, 1961; 3: April 25-28, 1961; 4: October 12-21, 1961 (this one with work groups on different Media).

All meetings of this secretariat up to the final promulgation of *Inter Mirifica* took place in the Palazzo San Carlo within the Vatican which also after the Council remained for many years the main seat for the Social Communication Office of the Vatican. Only in 2007 it was changed to one of the buildings in the Via Conciliazione!

This Secretariat came up with a document of 114 paragraphs: After an introduction there followed sections on: 1. The Doctrine of the Church (with three subsections), 2. Action and Apostolate of the Church (with two subsections), 3. Ecclesiastical Discipline and Structure (with two subdivisions), 4. Instruments of Communications with chapters on Press, Cinema, Radio/TV and other means like Comics, Discs, Announcement Boards, etc.

The first session of the Council itself started on October 11 and lasted till December 8, 1962. The very first concern of the some 2,600 bishops/participants at the beginning was the final composition of commissions for the preparation of the documents for discussion. The original proposals of the Vatican Curia were mostly rejected and had to be reworked or even substituted by theologians (“Periti”) of the participating bishops. This, however, did not affect the document on Social Communication which was not challenged and actually could be handled already in the first session of the Council.

After a lengthy discussion on liturgy, a subject which was prepared well in advance, followed first a discussion of a document on revelation which was, however, after some time postponed by instruction of Pope John XXIII and to be re-worked and taken up in later sessions. Thus somewhat unexpectedly the document on “The Instruments of Social Communication” came in. It was discussed by the council on November 23, 24 and 26 with 2,153, 2,133 and 2,136 participants respectively being present in the sessions. At the 28<sup>th</sup> general assembly of the Council on November 27, 1962 the document was put to a vote and out of 2,160 Fathers present 2,138 voted in favor of the text with the following provisions:

1. To approve the text in substance and to affirm that the Council should treat a subject of such importance for pastoral ministry.
2. Considering the comments of the different Council Fathers, however, it is proposed to shorten the existing text to the essentials of doctrine and general pastoral directives without losing the essential parts.
3. Everything referring to practice and execution of the teachings should be worked out as a special mandate by groups of experts from various nations.

The proposed revision was placed under the Council Commission 10 (Laity). In fact, however, basically the former Secretariat continued to meet at Palazzo San Carlo in the name of this Commission in five different sessions in 1962 and 1963 to reduce the original text and re-write the new proposal. The special section on the different media which took up more than half of the original document was removed. But also 54 interventions from the floor of the Council as well as an additional 42 comments which were submitted in writing had to be considered. One of these came from the then auxiliary bishop of Krakow, Karol Wojtyła, later Pope John Paul II (Composta 1967, 39f).

The shortened text finally submitted was actually not an extensive presentation of the field any more but rather a pastoral orientation. This re-edited text was then included in the material for the second plenary session of the Council from September 29 to December 4, 1963.

The reception of this “new” text, however, was anything but smooth. A resistance against it built up with the conviction that the proposed text was not sufficient and in the opinion of some had not the quality of a council any more. There were three American journalists who published some critical comments on November 16, 1963 and concluded: “This decree, as it now stands, may one day be cited as a classic example of how the Second Vatican Council failed to come to grips with the world around it.” These comments were also signed by Frs. John Courtney Murray, Jean Daniélou and Jorge Mejía (Baragli 1969, 148, table 23). A similar initiative was taken by a group of some 97 Council fathers mainly from German-speaking countries who asked to postpone the final vote and re-examine the proposed text (Baragli 1969, 153). They distributed leaflets at the entrance of St. Peter’s immediately before the final session on November 25, 1963 with the request to postpone the vote. This was impeded personally by Archbishop Felici, the Secretary of the Council. It seems, however, that this contributed to 503 “No”-votes against 1,788 “Yes”-votes on that day, the highest No-votes for any document in the history of Vatican II. In the final vote, however, immediately before the official publication of the document on December 4, 1963 there were only 175 No-votes.

The Communication document of the Council was called moralistic, ecclesiastic and lacking sufficient respect for the work of lay-people in this field (Composta 1967, 144, cf. also Roegele 1964, 316ff). It was agreed, however, that the subject deserved to be treated by a council. In fact some observers stated that one should be happy that the concern “made it” considering the fact that originally some 70

themes and papers were prepared for submission to the assembly out of which only 13 were finally approved (Composta 1967, 44).

Another criticism of the council document referred to the lack of theological input. This can be partly explained by the fact that the secretariat for the preparation of the text was mainly composed of bishops and priests who were responsible for communication activities but were not really experts in theology. It seems that the theological "push" of the central European bishops in bringing their own theological experts for the preparation of the other Council documents never reached the Communication Secretariat. This was only somewhat rectified seven years later with the publication of the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* which was demanded by the *Inter Mirifica* Council document (no. 23).

## ***II. Position within Vatican II***

The Communication Document *Inter Mirifica* was one of the first two documents of the Second Vatican Council. It was published on December 4, 1963 at the end of the second session of the assembly. This means that the following theological considerations and insights of the Council as reflected in later discussions and documents could not have any influence on the published communication text. Thus the so-called "lack of theology" could not be addressed any more. It means, however, that there is still a need to study the remaining 14 Vatican II documents after *Inter Mirifica* under the perspective of communication and the possibility of bringing in a broader vision of the field. Thus e.g. the document on the Church *Lumen Gentium* or the one on revelation *Dei Verbum* which went through 7 different drafts before it was finally accepted seem to be quite relevant. Revelation is a communication "activity." What does this mean for the communicative life and work of the Church? Along the same lines also the final document which actually evolved from the Council fathers themselves and was not prepared by any of those other preparatory commissions, *Gaudium et Spes*, seems to be of special importance for the social communication work of the church which is imbedded in modern cultures and the life and concerns of people of today. It is not insignificant that this document has e.g. a whole chapter on Culture (nos. 53-62) which is of growing importance in an intercultural world and Communication. But also other texts of the Second Vatican Council present special challenges for pastoral communication like e.g. the ones on priesthood (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*), bishops (*Christus Dominus*) and priestly formation (*Optatam Totius*). The Church in mission (*Ad Gentes*) is sent for communicating the life

and Word of God (Evangelizing Communication)! Priestly and pastoral spirituality is to be communicative spirituality: only a priest, bishop, Christian who is communicative will reach and influence others! The declarations on non-Christian religions (*Nostra Aetate*) and on religious freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*) are essential texts for any inter-religious dialogue and proper human communication and interaction!

Cardinal Franz König (Vienna) recommended to the participants at the World Congress of the Catholic Press in Berlin already in 1968 to go beyond *Inter Mirifica* and read and study especially *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* if they wanted to have a proper insight and approach to social communication in the spirit of Vatican II. Avery Dulles (1988) has developed five models of the communicating Church on the basis of the different Vatican II documents. But beyond this there seems to be hardly any other extensive study along these lines which should be a matter of great interest for the Church and for everybody who is concerned about proper and theologically grounded communication. The pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio* (1971) which was demanded by the Council Fathers in *Inter Mirifica* goes a little bit in this direction and might be considered as complementing some missing parts in the earlier document. But even this is not enough for a deeper and thorough understanding and synthesis of social communication as understood by Vatican II.

### **III. The Role of Pope John XXIII**

In the history of *Inter Mirifica* it is astonishing to see how communication was included right from the beginning of the preparations for the Second Vatican Council. Apparently the pope himself had a special personal interest in this field.

Already Pope John XXIII's predecessor Pope Pius XII had an extensive interest and concern for the different means of communication. He not only made many speeches and addresses to communication people (cf. Eilers 2011, 77-121) but also published important documents with his *Ideal Film* (1955). About a year before his death he published, on September 8, 1957, the encyclical *Miranda Prorsus* which is devoted to the electronic media: Radio, Television, Film. The memory of this last sizeable document of his life was still fresh in the minds of people when he died. In fact some argued that because of this there would be no need for an additional document of the Council. Such a situation could not be ignored by his immediate successor Pope John XXIII who followed on October 28, 1958. In fact John XXIII himself has not only in his first encyclical letter *Ad Petri Ca-*

*thedram* (June 29, 1959) an extensive section on the duties of the press and modern media of communication (nos. 11-18), he also created in the Vatican a “Pontifical Commission for Film, Radio, Television” on February 22, 1959 which, following an *Inter Mirifica* proposal (19), was extended by Pope Paul VI in April 1964 to all means of social communication.

Pope John XXIII also showed his personal and special interest in the proposed Council document on social communication through a personal visit during one of the sessions of the preparatory secretariat. On October 19, 1961 he went to the Palazzo San Carlo within the Vatican, where the secretariat was in session and stayed 1½ hours with the members of the group, discussing among other things the relation between art and morals. One of the participants also later remembered him saying that for him personally the language of the heart would be more important than the one of words (Baragli 1969, 114).

When the final proposal of the Communication document was discussed and voted upon at the Central Committee for the Council on April 3, 1962 the Pope once again devoted a fairly long part of his speech to this document and its concerns specifically. In fact he had personally studied and read the text and written some remarks in the margins of the draft, like e.g. calling the proposal for national communication offices and respective structures “optime” (Baragli 1969, 116; table XVII). On this occasion he also referred to his own announcements (cf. Eilers 2011, 123-133) and the two communication encyclicals of his predecessors Pius XI (*Vigilanti Cura*) and Pius XII (*Miranda Provisus*).

From all this one must conclude that the Council document on Social Communication was of special personal interest to Blessed Pope John XXIII.

#### ***IV. Teachings and Approaches***

Looking at the teachings of the council document it might be good to be aware of the different translations available in English: Usually the translation of Fr. Austin Flannery OP (1975) is used which seems, however, to reflect a less positive approach to the text. Thus he translates e.g. as the purpose of *Inter Mirifica* (no. 2) “that it is the duty to *treat of the main problems* posed by the means of Social Communication” while the official Vatican text reads: “to *treat the principal questions* linked with the media of Social Communication” which sounds more positive. Instead of Flannery’s “*birthright*” of the

Church to use and own these media (3) the Vatican translation talks about “an inherent right of the Church to have at its disposal and to employ any of these Media insofar as they are necessary or useful for the instruction of Christians and all its efforts for the welfare of souls.”

In general *Inter Mirifica* seems to be only an outline on Church and Social Communication because of the document’s reduction from a longer and more extensive text presented originally to the Council. Basically the text underlines the right of the Church to own and use means of communication proper to her ministry (3). In a similar way the moral obligations of the members of the Church as well as those involved in media production are underlined. The right to information is confirmed (5) as well as the role of public opinion (8). Further it is “the responsibility of all Christians, but especially also the ‘pastors of souls,’ Priests and Religious to develop a proper use and support especially for Church related means of communication” (13-17). Many of these things actually had been expressed already in earlier Church documents, but here they receive the authority of a Council.

More important, however, for the future of communication seem to be the following facts, proposals and initiatives which reflect a special, permanent concern of and for the Church:

1. With *Inter Mirifica* it is the first time in the history of the Church that an ecumenical *Council* discussed and published a document on Social Communication and thus underlines this as an essential concern for the Church.
2. The document proposes a central office for Communication in the Vatican and also consequently national *Offices for Social Communication* for Bishops’ Conferences, guided by a commission of bishops and a bishop appointed. The same is proposed for every diocese where the bishop is ultimately responsible for all Church activities in Social Communication, including those of Religious (nos. 21, 20).
3. A *World Day of Communication* is established, the only such initiative taken by the Vatican Council. The day is celebrated annually (since 1967) with a respective theme which the Pope selects and on which he comments with a special message. With this over the years quite a body of Church “teaching” on Social Communication is being built up (no. 18).
4. The publication of a more extensive *Pastoral Instruction* is demanded (no. 23), to be elaborated by a group of experts, which led to the extensive “Pastoral Instruction” *Communio et Pro-*



*gressio* (1971) with 187 paragraphs, a document considered as one of the best even beyond the Catholic Church. It was 20 years later followed by another “Pastoral Instruction,” *Aetatis Novae*, to commemorate and extend the document from 1971 (no. 18).

5. The expression *Social Communication* is introduced for the Vatican II document “*De instrumentis Communicationis Socialis*.” First it was more a collective expression for the different means of communication like Press, Radio etc. but later broadened, going beyond the “instruments,” as the “*Communication of and in human Society*.”
6. The need for proper *formation and training* in use and application of communication in ministry is strongly stressed (13-15), repeated also in *Communio et Progressio* (111) and other documents, but up to now hardly developed in a systematic and integrated way especially in pastoral ministry. The same holds for proper research and academic work by catholic institutions of higher learning and universities (cf. CP 113; 184/185). Social Communication is still seen as a field for some specialists (“hobby”) but not as a common concern touching all areas of human life and society—which was actually confirmed by the Council fathers who considered this field as being worth and important to be discussed as part of an ecumenical Council!

### ***V. Professional Consequences and Follow-up***

*Inter Mirifica* gives clear directions for a proper structure of communication within the national Bishops’ Conferences and also for international cooperation between these on continental and regional levels. This, however, is not yet realized in some places even after 50 years! In a similar way proper *formation programs* in communication as proposed by the document, which should also go beyond simple media use or technical “training” (“how to use...”) (skills!?) are almost nowhere a regular part of priestly and religious formation. Academic studies in pastoral communication and related fields exist only sporadically. The University of Santo Tomas in Manila (UST) with a regular MA and Licenciata program in Communication Theology is probably still an exception.

The development of the *concept of social communication* as a field broader than technology and individual media but as an essential part of any human life and society still needs to be further promoted and developed. It is basic for any Church ministry to develop *commu-*

*nicative persons*, which is essential for the life and growth of Christianity and the Church. Communicative persons are the bringers of “new” Evangelization! An awareness of this communication dimension of pastoral ministries is still very poorly developed among Church leaders and members.

## **VI. Challenges**

From all this there are some more and special challenges coming up for further consideration and developments which should be considered:

### 1. *From Instrumentality (Media) to “Social Communication”*

The official title of the document *Inter Mirifica* is: *Decretum de instrumentis Communicationis Socialis*. At first sight it seems to be a text on the *instruments* (Media) and their use. Fr. Enrico Baragli SJ, one of the authors of the document, spends several pages in his “Alcance de los términos” (1966, 39-72) to explain what this expression “instrumentos” means and justifies its use. In fact the expression has been part of the title of the document right from the beginning of the preparations through the Council till its proclamation in December 1963. Unfortunately it was never really explained and clarified. Only when Pope Paul VI followed the proposal of *Inter Mirifica* to erect with “In fructibus multis” a special Vatican office for communication on April 2, 1964 the “instruments” were dropped from the title and only “Social Communication” remained. According to Fr. Baragli this was done “per comodo di brevità,” just for brevity’s sake, which can rightly be questioned. In his explanation of the different words of this expression he seems to indicate already that the new expression in general terms would open the whole field more to sociology, theology and morals instead of getting stuck with individual means of communication, like Press, Radio, TV or Film. This in fact was one of the strong criticisms of the German Communication scholar Otto B. Roegele already at the end of 1964 in his extensive study of *Inter Mirifica*, where he stated that only the title of the document looked professional but the content not at all. “The concept of social communication,” he wrote, “in sociology, communication science and social philosophy is understood to be one of the top creative elements (‘Vegetationsspitzen’) for research and teaching”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> “Der Begriff der sozialen Kommunikation gehört in Soziologie, Zeitungs- bzw. Publizistikwissenschaft und Sozialphilosophie zu den Vegetationsspitzen von Forschung und Lehre.”

but “unfortunately not much (of this) can be seen in the text of the decree. Instead the ‘communication process’ appears in *Inter Mirifica* in the old understanding of working from top to bottom, or as a monologic approach (‘Hinsage’) which might be fitting for the traditionally organized authoritative society” but “certainly not for today’s society where communication takes place in form of give and take, as ‘dialogue in society’ which is also reflected in the means of communication...” This was written after the final publication of the document in 1964<sup>4</sup> (Roegele 1964, 317f). Thus already at that time communication scholars moved away from individual media to a broader understanding of communication in human society which was—despite the title of the Decree—apparently not fully understood by the Church people involved. Thus the “instrument mentality” continued also in many follow-up documents and the real meaning of “Social Communication” as the communication of and in human society was not much developed.<sup>5</sup> This changed, however, with Pope John Paul II when he in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (1990, no. 37c) talked about a “new culture” created by communications which needs also an answer from the Church. In today’s new world of “social media” and “social networks” the expression “social communication” takes on a new and important meaning as the overall heading for a field

<sup>4</sup> The German communication scholar Walter Hagemann defined already in 1958 communication (“Publizistik”) as the “public sharing of current things from people’s minds” (“Öffentliche Aussage aktueller Bewusstseinsinhalte”) and his successor Henk Prakke talks already in 1964 about communication as “Dialogue of Society.” No word about media or technology but rather human society stays at the core exactly at the time of the Second Vatican Council!

<sup>5</sup> Even after “*Inter Mirifica*” Church documents used the new expression just as a collective word for the different mass media, but not in a broader perspective. Fr. Baragli himself still used the expression “Mass Media” in a long article 10 years after the publication without mentioning “social communication” but commenting in a footnote (no. 30): “In this essay I have preferred to use this term (mass media) instead of the longer and more exact ‘instruments of Social Communication,’ bearing in mind that to many readers this terminology of the decree is not familiar, as it is (or should be) among Catholics” (Baragli 1974). This remark is all the more astonishing as it was, according to Card. Andrea M. Deskur (at the Plenary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication 2004), Baragli who proposed the new expression (“Social Communication”) to the Secretariat for the presentation at the Council. A footnote at the beginning of the official document in the hands of the Council members actually defended the new expression “Social Communication” because words like “mass media,” it said, did not sufficiently reflect the concern of the Church in this field (cf. Eilers 2011, 136ff).

which is finally also recognized by the Church but still needs much more “investment” in research and practice.

2. *From “Instrumentality” to Communication Theology*

Something similar can be said for the theological approach of the document *Inter Mirifica* which seems to be missing to many. Attempts have been made for a “Theology of Communication” to somehow “baptize” the Media and thus place them also into the garden of the Church or reclaim them for her use. In reality, however, communication is to be seen as a theological principle: the whole of theology can be considered under this perspective. Theologians like Martini, Häring, Rahner, Greshake, Dulles, and others have pointed in this direction and developed the field: the Trinitarian God is communication, Father, Son and Holy Spirit communicating with each other, and we are created in this image and likeness. The whole Bible, the First and Second Testament, are books of God’s communication with and of his creatures. The high point of this is the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the master (“perfect communicator”) and “Urbild” of communication. The Church is called not only to use Media but to be herself in everything she does a reflection of God’s communication into the here and now of every time.

3. *From Pastoral Methodology to Disposition*

Over the years there has been quite some literature on how to use the “Media” for pastoral ministry and quite some formation houses and seminaries have had “training” courses on how to properly use these Media. In reality, however, this is very often seen and experienced as a welcome break for students and seminarians in the monotony of their studies, but does not really “form” them. Social communication, however, is rather a challenge for a proper formation of the candidate, an inner disposition and not an outside attitude or a “skill.” It is the communication spirituality which is based on a total openness to God, to self and others which is decisive and forms the foundation to become a communicative person, which is required for anyone in pastoral ministry. Such a disposition is, however, not only needed for seminarians but also for priests, any secretary of a parish and also bishops.

4. *From Structure to Spirit*

The Council document *Inter Mirifica* confirms and describes earlier proposals for national and diocesan communication offices starting with the Vatican itself. These structures are up to now, 50 years later, only partly developed and in place. But also here one has to keep in mind that structures alone do not guarantee

the proper and effective use if they don't have proper programs and especially communicative persons to develop a vision in proper individual situations. It is finally not the structure but the Spirit which moves the Church. In a similar way the Church and her institutions are often identified as and with institutions, but in reality they are supposed to be living communities which presuppose communicative persons. Maybe we are also not concerned enough about proper formation and academic study programs to develop and equip such personalities....

5. *From Isolation to Integration*

In the pre-conciliar preparation for *Inter Mirifica* the group of the secretariat was divided into workgroups according to Media: Press, Radio-TV, Film. The main part of the proposed original document reflected this with more than half of the text devoted to these Media. Already the two encyclical letters on communication before Vatican II were devoted to special media with Pope Pius XI's on film and Pope Pius XII's on electronic media. It was only through the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* which was decreed by the Council that a broader perspective beyond individual media was considered, with communication as a reality of human society. The tendency for individual media, however, continued also after that. Thus almost all exhortations of the popes after synods have a section on communication, but often again referring to individual media or mass media generally as one activity of the Church, instead of integrating the communication dimension into all pastoral and evangelizing activities of the Church. The same holds for our teaching of theology where communication is considered a separate subject but not a dimension of *all* theology, like e.g. the Bible as communication of God to us, or faith as a communicative experience challenging us in the world today as in fundamental theology, or the Church as a community and communicative body (ecclesiology), human and divine communication as norm for behavior (moral theology)....

6. *From Means and Media to Social Communication in Its Full Sense*

After the application of the expression "Social Communication" as collective word for all "Media," the real, full meaning of this as "communication of and in human society" has still to be developed. Almost all communication documents of the Church are still media but not *social* communication oriented, with communication as the essential lifeline of human society which includes e.g. also traditional ways and means of communication like music, dance, theater, storytelling and all forms of oral communication as well as the modern technical means (Internet), which make everybody

their own editor, writer, producer and commentator, reaching all parts of the world in an instant....

The full meaning, value and power of all communication in society ("Social Communication"!) is apparently still to be discovered by the Church and all of us! There is a first indication for this, however, in the approach of *Communio et Progressio*, where after theology the first main part over almost 100 paragraphs talks about the role of communication in human society in general and the contribution of the Catholics to communication is treated extensively only in the third and last part of the document....

#### 7. From "Essentials" of *Inter Mirifica* to Modern Times

The Council document *Inter Mirifica* has been described in negatives many times as e.g. in an editorial of the London *Tablet*, one of the oldest Catholic weeklies in Europe, as "the embarrassingly poor decree on the mass media" because it was one of those made by the Roman Curia and it was apparently not included among those endorsed by the Council fathers who instead "swept almost all of it aside and started again" (October 6, 2012). This does, however, not mean that the Council document is useless, as some people say....

The fact remains that the majority of the Council fathers underlined the importance of the means of communication in the modern world and declared the treatment of social communication by a council as important. This fact is not changed after 50 years but rather challenges us to take up the essentials and place them into a proper theological, but also cultural and social perspective where communication is the lifeline of everything, personal and communal.... In a way we have to repeat the process of "aggiornamento" of the Council into our life today. This might include beside a deeper theological foundation e.g. a review and further development of *Communio et Progressio* approaches in a fresh Christian look on the role of communication in society and culture today and the formation of really communicative persons, a really communicative spirit. No New Evangelization will be possible without that!

#### ABSTRACTS

Schon während der Vorbereitung auf das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil wurde eine Kommission „Medien für das Apostolat heute“ geschaffen (November 1959!). Die endgültige Kommission für Kommunikation legte dann ein Dokument mit 114 Abschnitten vor, das in der ersten Session des Konzils erörtert und in der Vollversammlung am 27. November 1962 mit 2.138 Ja-

von insgesamt 2.160 Stimmen angenommen wurde. Die Versammlung konstatierte, dass Kommunikation ein richtiges und wichtiges Thema für ein Konzil sei. Es wurde jedoch vorgeschlagen, den Text auf die für die Pastoral notwendigen Abschnitte zu verkürzen und später ein weiteres, professionelleres Dokument zu veröffentlichen, was 1971 mit der Pastoralinstruktion *Communio et Progressio* geschah. Die verkürzte und überarbeitete Version von *Inter Mirifica* wurde trotz einiger Proteste wegen des minimalistischen Ansatzes und des Fehlens ausreichender Theologie angenommen und dann zusammen mit dem Liturgiedokument am 4. Dezember 1963 veröffentlicht. Weil *Inter Mirifica* eines der ersten beiden Konzilsdokumente war, konnte es nicht von späteren Überlegungen profitieren und blieb irgendwie am Rand des konziliaren Prozesses. Wenn man die heutige Situation bedenkt, zeigt das Dokument aber schon einige spezielle Herausforderungen auf wie die Entwicklung des von ihm eingeführten Begriffs Soziale Kommunikation zu seiner vollen Bedeutung; das Arbeiten an einer echten Kommunikations-theologie (nicht Theologie der Kommunikation!); die Entwicklung einer wirklichen Bereitschaft zur Kommunikation (statt nur der Fertigkeiten!); die Entwicklung eines auf Spiritualität gegründeten Kommunikationsansatzes, der alle Aktivitäten integriert; den Übergang von „Medien“ zu „Kommunikationsmitteln“ und antwortet auf diese Weise bereits auf die modernen Herausforderungen des Internets und der sozialen Netzwerke.

En las primeras fases de la preparación del Segundo Concilio Vaticano se creó una comisión dedicada a los “medios modernos para el apostolado” (ya en noviembre de 1959!). La Comisión sobre Comunicación final presentó un documento con 114 numerales que se discutió en la primera sesión del Concilio y se aprobó en el plenario el 27 de noviembre de 1962, con 2.138 votos en favor, de un total de 2.160. La asamblea constató que la comunicación es un sujeto apropiado e importante para un concilio. Sin embargo, se propuso que el texto sea recortado a lo esencial para el ministerio pastoral y otro documento, más profesional, se publique más tarde. Esto se realizó en 1971 con la Instrucción Pastoral *Communio et Progressio*. La versión recortada y revisada de *Inter Mirifica* fue aprobada, a pesar de algunas protestas sobre el acercamiento minimalista y la falta de una teología suficiente en esta versión, y fue publicada junto con el documento sobre la liturgia, el 4 diciembre de 1963. Ya que *Inter Mirifica* fue uno de los primeros dos documentos del Concilio, no pudo sacar provecho de las consideraciones más tardías y se quedó algo al margen del proceso conciliar. Si se considera la situación actual, el documento presenta algunos desafíos particulares, como el desarrollo de un concepto de la comunicación social, que fue introducido por el documento, a su sentido pleno; elaborar una teología comunicativa propiamente dicha (¡no una teología de la comunicación!); desarrollar una disposición adecuada para la comunicación (en lugar de aptitudes simplemente); desarrollar un acercamiento adecuado a la comunicación, basado en la espiritualidad, que integre todas las actividades; pasar de los “medios” a las “maneras” para responder de esta manera también a los desafíos modernos de internet y las redes sociales.

Dès la préparation du concile Vatican II, une commission sur « les moyens d’apostolat moderne » avait été créée (novembre 1959 !). La Commission finale sur les communications produisit un document de 114 paragraphes qui fut discuté au cours de la première session du Concile et approuvé en plénière, le 27 novembre 1962, avec 2138 « oui » sur 2160 votes. L’assemblée déclara que la communication est un sujet approprié et important pour un

concile. On proposa cependant que le texte soit raccourci à l'essentiel pour le ministère pastoral et qu'un autre document, plus professionnel, soit publié par la suite, ce qui fut fait en 1971 avec l'instruction pastorale *Communio et Progressio*. La version abrégée et révisée d'*Inter Mirifica* fut approuvée – malgré un certain nombre de protestations concernant l'approche minimaliste et le manque théologique de cette version – et publiée avec le document sur la liturgie, le 4 décembre 1963. Étant donné qu'*Inter Mirifica* fut l'un des deux premiers documents du Concile, il ne put bénéficier de considérations ultérieures et resta plus ou moins à la marge du processus conciliaire. Par rapport à la situation d'aujourd'hui, le document présente quelques défis particuliers comme le développement du concept de communication sociale qu'il a introduit, dans son sens plénier ; la mise en chantier d'une vraie théologie communicative (et non une théologie de la communication !) ; le développement d'une disposition à la communication (au lieu de simples outils !) ; développement d'une approche de la communication basée sur la spiritualité et intégrant toutes les activités ; le passage des « media » aux « moyens » permettant de répondre ainsi aux défis modernes d'Internet et des réseaux sociaux.

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