



“Using Media Well Together: Co-Responsibility and Church Communications”

(Panelists Brett Robinson; Caroline Murphy, Jennifer Antkowiak, Miriam Díez, and Jesús Colina for Called & Co-Responsible: Summer Seminars for Church Life Renewal, June 10, 2020)

1. Join the Movement!
 - a. Apply to join the first parish/diocesan cohort in the Church Communications Ecology program [here](#):
 - b. [Application Form](#)
2. Theological Foundations of Communication
 - a. “Giving of the self in love” (*Communio et Progressio*)
 - i. “God *said* let there be light, and there was light...” (Genesis 1)
 1. God works with the “media” of time and space
 - ii. “In the beginning was the *Word* and the Word was with God and the Word was God...” (John 1:1)
 1. Christ is *medium* and *message*
 - iii. Trinitarian communication/communion
 1. “I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me”” (John 17:20-21)
 - iv. Made in God’s image and likeness we are called to communicate what (and who) dwells within us by our words and deeds
 1. Speaking the words/ideas/emotions that lie within us is essential to our identity; it is a donation of the self
 2. With God’s help we give ourselves in love through communication
 - b. The Church is a communication environment rooted in the sacraments and a proper ordering of time and space (liturgical)
 - i. “Giving of the self in love” is most evident in the Eucharist
 1. “Christ gave us the most perfect and most intimate form of communion between God and man possible in this life, and, out of this, the deepest possible unity between men” (*Communio et Progressio*)
 2. The Eucharist = medium = message
 - a. Medium - The Word made flesh
 - b. Message - God so loved the world...

3. What does a co-responsible communication ethic look like for the Church?
 - a. 3 essential responsibilities for Catholic communicators (all of us!)
 - i. Understanding our faith
 - ii. Understanding ourselves
 - iii. Understanding our environment
4. Care for the (Media) Environment
 - a. Transmitting information farther and faster to more people is not our primary concern - that has been “solved” technologically
 - i. FB/Twitter stats: <5% follow diocesan/bishop social media accounts
 - b. Church teaching on media/communication
 - i. *Communio et Progressio*, *Inter Mirifica*, ...
 - c. What about *Laudato Si*?
 - i. “Efforts need to be made to help these media become sources of new cultural progress for humanity and not a threat to our deepest riches. True wisdom, as the fruit of self-examination, dialogue and generous encounter between persons, is not acquired by a mere accumulation of data which eventually leads to overload and confusion, a sort of mental **pollution**. Real relationships with others, with all the challenges they entail, now tend to be replaced by a type of internet communication which enables us to choose or eliminate relationships at whim, thus giving rise to a new type of contrived emotion which has more to do with devices and displays than **with other people and with nature.**”
 - d. Environmental (media technology) conditions change behaviors and structures of thought
 - i. “...the culture itself, **prescinding from its content**, arises from the very existence of new ways to communicate with hitherto unknown techniques and vocabulary.” (JPII, *The Rapid Development*)
 - ii. Printing press → Protestant Reformation
 - iii. Catholic schools example
 - e. Usefulness of the environmental analogy for co-responsibility
 - i. A common task of clergy/laity
 - ii. Integral ecology is a Catholic/analogical way of thinking
 - iii. Social/psychological balance is necessary for building strong communities
 1. Understanding media effects strengthens community life
5. Structural Challenges of the Digital Environment
 - a. Information abundance
 - b. New tribalism
 - c. Blurred lines between producer/consumer
 - d. Slow reflection vs. instantaneous reaction
 - e. Different relationship to time/place
 - f. Neurobiological changes
6. The ZOOM Last Supper
 - a. Christ is the perfect communicator/medium
 - b. Medium = Environment

7. Church communications is **different**
 - a. We are not selling something!
 - b. The Church needs to ask different questions
 - i. Pastoral, theological, anthropological, environmental
 - c. Clergy and laity must cooperate in this work
 - d. Begins in the home...
8. Co-responsible Communications Practice in the Home
 - a. Family life and developmental psychology
 - i. Gardeners assess soil (context) -- we begin at the beginning, at the roots, to figure out how best to proceed
 - ii. Church + science recognize that family is the necessary first focus of our efforts
 - iii. Thoughts from JP2 on family, co-responsibility, and the Church
 1. Thus the little domestic Church, like the greater Church, needs to be constantly and intensely evangelized: hence its duty regarding permanent education in the faith...the family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates...the future of evangelization depends in great part on the Church of the home (*Familiaris Consortio*, 51)
 2. “Within the ‘people of life and the people for life,’ the family has a decisive responsibility....Here it is a matter of God’s own love, of which parents are co-workers and as it were interpreters when they transmit life and raise it according to his fatherly plan” (*Evangelium Vitae*, 92)
 3. Looking at [the family] in such a way as to reach its very roots, we must say that the essence and the role of the family are in the final analysis specified by love. Hence the family has as its mission to guard, reveal and communicate love...” (*Familiaris Consortio*, 17).
 4. “The person principally responsible in the diocese for the pastoral care of the family is the Bishop. As father and pastor, he must exercise particular solicitude in this clearly priority sector of pastoral care” (*FC*, 73).
 - iv. Church + family actively working together = co-responsibility. For the child, this is context meets content, soil well prepared for the seed.
 - b. Domestic church and domestic liturgy
 1. Saint John’s Gospel
 - a. “If any man loves me he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our **home** with him”
 - b. Jesus links our love of Him both with self-gift and with the idea of **home**
 - ii. What is the home?
 - a. The sanctuary where we are seen, loved and understood, where and nourished body and soul
 - b. *It is the space in which we receive ourselves through our parents*
 - c. To effectively communicate the Gospel we need to start here
 - iii. Small “L” liturgy: thoughtful, patient, well-considered approach to the environment and action of daily family life (according to *Lumen Gentium*)

- c. The “Self” in self-gift
 - i. In order to give self we must possess self
 - 1. Poor communication results from internal confusion/stress
 - 2. When we have a weak and insecure foundation, we cannot invite others in
 - ii. How to develop self?
 - 1. The beginning: we begin as infants
 - 2. We are *given* ourselves through our parents, the core of our being is gift, not self-creation
 - 3. “Home” is the space where this happens
 - 4. This relationality goes deeper than conscious or instinctive preference, it reaches to cellular level of human beings
- d. Psychological “mirroring”
 - i. Mirroring is the process by which the motor system, with a “neural matching” mechanism, links other-generated facial gestures to self-generated ones (imitation).
 - 2. Can be seen in child/parent dyad and in couples
 - 3. Happens in various social situations
 - ii. Parent/child mirroring in the home
 - 1. Mirror neurons fire when they see another perform an action and when self performs same action
 - 2. Mother/father actions become part of child’s body in same way child’s own action is present to him/herself
 - 3. Teresa of Avila
 - a. Who are you?
 - i. Teresa of Jesus & Jesus of Teresa
 - 4. We become ourselves in relationship
 - a. Descartes was wrong
 - b. We are loved into being, therefore I am
 - c. Through the process of mirroring, the child experiences in his or her flesh this “loving into being”
 - d. Throughout our lives, we long for experience of “home,” and know it again whenever we are seen and mirrored
 - 5. Psych mirroring helps us sense who we are
 - a. If mirroring is lacking, foundation is fractured
 - b. Not being known/mirrored/related is a psychological form of isolation
 - iii. Context/content for communication is the human face
 - 1. Face is representation of the true self
 - 2. It is through meeting of face in gaze is where intimate human connection takes place
 - a. Therese of Lisieux
 - i. Prayer: “I look at Him and He looks at me”
 - ii. How we receive ourselves naturally (through parents) and supernaturally (through Our Lord)

3. *true* “Face Time”
 - a. Not enough face time = adverse outcomes
 - b. Science reveals, just as the Church does, that we need to be intentional about setting up an environment where families can flourish
- e. Inventory: assess problem in current digital environment of home
 - i. True “face time” is superceded by fallen “FaceTime” (digital distraction)
 - ii. Effects of tech on parents
 1. Digital pull us away from first meeting emotional/psych needs of those entrusted to our care
 2. Devices are addictive PRECISELY because they tap into our relational core, our design for relational communication
 - a. Capitalize on the very design and biology that orients us to face-to-face relationship with God and others
 - b. Hijack reward pathways linked to social interaction
 - i. Rewarding social stimuli activate dopaminergic reward pathways
 - ii. We are designed to be delighted by relationship
 - c. Smartphones = unlimited supply of this stimuli
 - iii. Effects of tech on children
 1. Study: baby language acquisition is very quick; we can see what conditions facilitate this and what conditions hinder it
 2. Language acquisition is mediated socially
 - a. “Video deficit” effect
 - b. When gaze shifts from faces to screens, children suffer
 - i. Less able to learn, less able to communicate (language hindrance), less socially adept (impaired ability to recognize/name emotion in self and others), less certain of self, less secure
 3. Implications of negative effect on quality of life as adolescents and beyond is well-studied
 - iv. Take away: tech, without proper *context* (a well-curated environment and intentional guardrails), powerfully and quickly divorces us from reality and impedes, from the earliest stages of development, and from the neurobiological level upward, our human capacity to hear the voice of God and others.
 1. We need to *consciously* elevate face time above FaceTime, orient the entire environment to the person
 - v. Attention and intention as initial remedy
 1. Understand the problem
 2. Intentionally re-arrange
 3. Cultivate habits toward the good
 - a. Attention and link to prayer
 - b. Question: before checking phone or computer, ask: is there a *face* that needs me more right now?

- f. Both the Church and science show we need to attend to this first circle before attempting to evangelize on a greater scale
 - i. The personal, relational environment of first circle then suffuses the atmosphere of the second and third
 - ii. Priests can mirror their parishioners, setting the tone
 - iii. Global media can attend to the human and personal, rather than artificial, one-size-fits all approach
- g. **“How can they meet us face-to-face til we have faces?”** -- C.S. Lewis