



The Holy See

**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS POPE FRANCIS
TO MEMBERS OF THE ITALIAN PERIODICAL PRESS UNION (USPI)
AND THE ITALIAN FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC WEEKLIES (FISC)***

*Clementine Hall
Saturday, 16 December 2017*

[Multimedia]

Dear brothers and sisters,

I welcome you, representatives of around three thousand newspapers published or transmitted, both in paper and in digital form, medium and small publishing companies and non-profit organizations and associations, and I thank Don Giorgio Zucchelli for the kind words he addressed to me on your behalf.

You have a task, or rather a mission, among the most important in today's world: to inform correctly, to offer everyone a version of the facts conforming as closely as possible to reality. You are called to make complex problems accessible to a wide audience, so as to enable a mediation between the knowledge available to specialists and the concrete possibility of its broad dissemination.

Your voice, free and responsible, is fundamental for the growth of any society that wishes to be called democratic, so that the continuous exchange of ideas and a profitable debate based on real and correctly reported data can be guaranteed.

In our time, often dominated by the anxiety of speed, by the drive for sensationalism to the detriment of precision and completeness, by the calculated overheating of emotion rather than thoughtful reflection, there is an urgent need for reliable information, with verified data and news, which does not aim to amaze and excite, but rather to make readers develop a healthy critical sense, enabling them to ask themselves appropriate questions and reach justified conclusions.

In this way you one avoids being constantly at the mercy of easy slogans or of extemporaneous information campaigns, which reveal the intention to manipulate reality, opinions and people themselves, often producing a useless “media outcry”.

Small media companies and publishing houses can more easily respond to these needs. They are subject, by their very nature, to healthy limits that help them to generate less massified information, less exposed to the pressure of fashions, as transient as they are intrusive. In fact, it is genetically more linked to its territorial base of reference, closer to the daily life of communities, more anchored to the facts in their essentiality and concreteness. It is a journalism closely connected to local dynamics, to the problems arising from the work of the various categories, to the interests and sensibilities of intermediate groups, which do not easily find channels to be able to adequately express themselves.

Also part of this logic are the diocesan weeklies enrolled in the Italian Federation of Catholic Weeklies (FISC), whose 50th anniversary is celebrated in these days. These can be useful instruments of evangelization, a space where diocesan life can validly be expressed and where the various ecclesial components can easily dialogue and communicate. Working in the diocesan weekly means to “feel” in a special way alongside the local Church, to live close to the people of cities and towns, and above all to interpret events in the light of the Gospel and of the teaching of the Church. These elements are the “compass of their particular way of carrying out journalism, of telling news and expressing opinions.

The diocesan weeklies, integrated with the new forms of digital communication, therefore remain precious and effective instruments, necessitating renewed commitment on the part of pastors, and of the entire Christian community and the benevolent attention of the public authorities.

There is an urgent need for news communicated with serenity, precision and completeness, with a calm language, so as to favour a fruitful reflection; carefully weighted and clear words, which reject the inflation of allusive, strident and ambiguous speech.

It is important that, methodically and with patience, criteria of judgement and information be offered so that the public is able to understand and discern, and is not stunned and disoriented.

Society also needs the right to information to be scrupulously respected, together with that of the dignity of every single human person involved in the information process, so that no one runs the risk of being damaged in the absence of real and circumstantial indications of responsibility. We must not fall prey to the “sins of communication”: disinformation – that is, giving just one side of the argument – slander, which is sensationalistic, or defamation, looking for outdated and old things, and bringing them to light today; they are very grave sins, which damage the heart of the journalist and harm people.

For all these reasons it is therefore desirable that commitment by all in ensuring the existence and vitality of these periodicals is not lacking, and that the employment and dignity of remuneration for all those who work in this field are protected.

At the end of this meeting, I would like to encourage all of you, members of the USPI and the FISC, to continue your work with commitment and trust; and I invite civil society and its institutions to do everything possible to ensure that the media and small publishing industry can carry out its indispensable task, to preside over an authentic pluralism and to give voice to the wealth of the various local communities and their territories.

To those of you present here, and your families, as well as all those who offer their service in your agencies, I impart my blessing and offer my wishes for Christmas, which is now close. Please, do not forget to pray for me. Thank you.

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