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Media and the Regulations of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches Current Challenges

Abstract: Today, we cannot imagine a world without media communication at the service of society. At the same time, we can note the changes that media communication is undergoing. Contemporary media communication is too far removed from the very notion of *communio, communicare*. The very notion of “to join together, to make something common, to pass on a message, to consult” is gradually disappearing from the media space, as it does in the term *communio*, that is, “togetherness, communion, a sense of connection.” In our times, the word *communicate* reminds everyone above all of the transmission of information or, more precisely, of news, regardless of ethical or moral principles. That is why the Church, aware of the importance of media communication, demands the right to regulate their use and, in its regulations, calls on professionals in the production and transmission of information to ensure that the use of these means is imbued with the spirit of Christ.

Keywords: means of social communication, the media, virtual reality

Introduction

The media field is one of the areas in which we can note great technical progress, which is constantly advancing. The term mass media or social communication is found in the CCEO regulations in cann. 651–666. The prescriptions of these

canons have in mind the social communication maintained by the press, radio, but, above all, by television. The means of public communication are aimed at the masses and are different from group means of communication aimed at groups or individuals. While drama, opera, etc. are group means of communication, radio, cinema, and the Internet press are mass media. For the latter are effective means of proclaiming the Gospel.¹

The social means of communication, through their influence on individuals and the masses, greatly influence their thinking, feeling, and acting. In this case, we can speak of media culture in a broader sense. Of course, we are not referring here to cultural expressions through the media, but to the impact of the media on society as a whole. The development of new technologies influences science and research and, of course, the environment in which people live. Revolutionary changes, which are not only of a technical nature, have also taken place in communication technologies. It can be said that contemporary society bears, among a number of attributes, the label of information society. This reflects the fact that in all the stages of the development of human civilization we would not find an epoch with such an information expansion. Thus, mass media, especially social networks, have become an integrated part in the structure of the social sphere, but also in the life of the individual. As a result of these changes, people are more frequently exposed to a wealth of information from different parts of the world, which has both positive effects and negative.²

For this reason, the media should be a source of information that helps people stay in touch with the reality of everyday life. It should also be a tool for shaping ethical values and norms in society. Nevertheless, we are witnessing how the mass media distort reality to such an extent that they create a media reality that has a negative impact on the creation of the real reality. Therefore, it goes without saying that the mass media is in itself destined for human development and brings multiple values into the hearts of the people. The problem, however, lies in their proper use. That is why the mass media very often become a means of consciously manipulating public opinion in the interests of a group, an ideology or even an authoritarian power.

Therefore, “the media, both print and electronic, and especially some of them television, can not only be a blessing to life and culture, but can also spread incurable diseases of the spirit.”³ That is why the rules of canon law

¹ Georg Nedungatt, *Путівник по Східному Кодексу: Коментар до Кодексу Канонів Східних Церков*, trans. Ostap Hladky [A Guide to the Code: A Commentary on the Code of the Canons Eastern Churches] (Lviv: Svičado, 2008), 399.

² Gabriel Paľa, “Skreslená mediálna realita ako priestor pre mediáciu,” in *Mediácia—cesta k tvorbe interkultúrnej spoločnosti*, ed. Gabriel Paľa and Emília Halagová (Prešov: University of Prešov, Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology, 2016), 206–207.

³ Gabriel Paľa, *Masmediálna komunikácia* (Prešov: University of Prešov, Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology, 2010), 6.

contain a special call to media representatives to ensure that they are filled with the spirit of Christ in the contemporary media space.⁴

The Church and the Media

Before His ascension, Jesus Christ said to His apostles: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”⁵ And at the ascension Jesus says to his disciples: “But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.”⁶ This is how the Church engages in God’s eternal concern for man: to proclaim “the Gospel to all creation.”⁷

Therefore, the Church by Christ’s ordination is called to bring the abundance of redemption through the proclamation of the Good News. As Pope Paul VI’s Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* No. 9 speaks of it:

As the kernel and centre of His Good News, Christ proclaims salvation, this great gift of God which is liberation from everything that oppresses man but which is above all liberation from sin and the Evil One, in the joy of knowing God and being known by Him, of seeing Him, and of being given over to Him. All of this is begun during the life of Christ and definitively accomplished by His death and resurrection. But it must be patiently carried on during the course of history, in order to be realized fully on the day of the final coming of Christ, whose date is known to no one except the Father.⁸

The command to proclaim the Gospel to all men is the primary and natural duty of the Church. “But the question of how to evangelize is still temporal,

⁴ Cf. George Nedungatt and Damián G Astigueta, “Ecclesiastical Magisterium,” in *Canonica 10. A Guide to the Eastern Code A Commentary on the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches*, ed. George Nedungatt and Georges Ruysen (Rome: Pontificio Instituto Orientale & Valore Italiano, 2020), 573–574. Cf. Nedungatt, *Путівник* [A Guide], 399. Cf. Canon 651 § 2 CCEO.

⁵ Matthew 28:18–20.

⁶ Acts 1:8.

⁷ Cf. Gabriel Paľa, *Masmediálna komunikácia* (Prešov: University of Prešov, Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology, 2010), 104.

⁸ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 9, accessed October 27, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

because the ways of proclaiming the Gospel change according to place, time, and human cultures, thus provoking to some extent our faculties to seek and adapt.”⁹

Our times are characterized by social means of communication, without which the proclamation of the Gospel, catechesis and the further deepening of faith cannot do. If we confront them in the service of the Gospel, they can extend indefinitely the area in which people can listen to the Word of God. Hence the Church today would feel guilty before God if she did not make use of these effective means which human reason is continually perfecting. Therefore, in the life of the Catholic Church, the means of social communication are becoming an indispensable and significant instrument for proclaiming God’s message, becoming a “pulpit” with the widest reach imaginable.¹⁰

The term “media” is nowadays ambiguous. In general, the term is understood as the sum of all mass media: print, auditory, audiovisual, visual and online. The media are a public form of communication. The media are a public form of communication that goes from a single source of information to a large number of recipients.¹¹

The Church has been aware of this fact and has therefore commented on the use of the media through numerous documents of popes, councils, commissions, councils, and ecclesiastical institutions.¹² The first time the Church commented on one of the modern mass media, the press, was in 1832, when Pope Gregory XVI issued the encyclical *Mirari vos* on liberalism and religious indifferentism. The Church at that time had a defensive attitude and moralizing was the main thing because of the period of the French Revolution, and the birth of the political press was occurring. In this encyclical, the Pope accuses the press of lighting torches of resistance everywhere, thus shaking the nation’s duty to be subservient to the government.¹³

The Church’s war against the influence of the “bad press” has not been limited to banning the reading of such books or excommunicating their publishers and readers. In almost every document Pope Pius IX, in addition to condemning the “bad press,” has focused on the organization and rise of the so-called good press. He portrayed it in the 1849 encyclical *Nostis et nobiscum*.¹⁴

⁹ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 40, accessed October 27, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

¹⁰ Cf. Paľa, *Masmediálna komunikácia*, 104–105.

¹¹ Anna Remišová, *Etika médií* (Bratislava: Kalligram, 2010), 19.

¹² Peter Tirpák and Gabriel Paľa, *Tajomstvo spásy vo svetle katechézy* (Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Prešovskej univerzity, 2013), 230.

¹³ Tadeusz Zasępa, Peter Olekšák, and Imrich Gazda, *Etika v žurnalistike* (Ružomberok: Katolícka univerzita, 2009), 92. Cf. Gregory XVI, *Mirari vos*, 17, accessed October 27, 2021, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/greg16/g16mirar.htm>.

¹⁴ Dimitrios Salachas, “De Instrumentis communicationis socialis et in specie de libris,” in *Commento al Codice dei Canonici delle Chiese Orientali*, ed. Pio Vito Pinto (Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2001), 567.

This encyclical resulted in the publication of the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, which was first published in 1861.¹⁵

The rapid advances in technology brought about new ways of communication through the radio, cinema, and, later, television. These again presented a challenge for the Church to consider how to use them to strengthen and disseminate the Catholic faith.¹⁶

Pope Pius XI (1922–1939) addresses film in his encyclical *Vigilanti cura* (1936), in which he discusses the nature and possibilities of positive influence, but also points to the dangers that emanate from bad films.¹⁷ This is the beginning of the incorporation of the press into the apostolic work of the Church. Pope Pius XII (1939–1958) was perhaps the most vocal of all the popes up to that time on the subject of the press. His Apostolic Exhortation on Television *I rapidi progressi* (Rapid Progress) of 1 January 1954 is the first papal document addressed directly to the bishops.¹⁸ The Pope's encyclical *Miranda prorsus* of 8 September 1957 is considered to be the sum of the preconciliar media teaching of the Holy See, in which he took up and developed the ideas of the encyclical *Vigilanti cura*.¹⁹ The encyclical also stresses, in the use of radio, television, and all means of social communication, the necessary preparation of radio listeners and television viewers and all means of mass communication.²⁰

During the brief but groundbreaking pontificate of the next Pope John XXIII (1958–1963), the Second Vatican Council was convened.²¹ During his pontificate, a new phase in the Catholic Church begins.²² One of its first approved documents was the decree on social communication, *Inter mirifica* (1963), which set out the main directions for the future development of the Church's media teaching and marked the beginning of a new stage in the Church's relationship with the means of mass communication.²³

This decree touches on the issue of means of social communication. Its entire content can be divided into four parts: Preface—Introduction, Chapter on the Doctrine of the Church, Chapter on the Pastoral Activity of the Church, and Conclusion. The fact that the Council dealt with this problem testifies to its importance and to the Church's role. This document was the second document

¹⁵ Paľa, *Masmediálna komunikácia*, 93.

¹⁶ Gabriel Paľa, *Globalization & Evangelization & Media* (Boonton: Bartimaeus—Diocesan House of Formation—New Jersey, 2017), 177. Cf. Zasepa, Olekšák, and Gazda, *Etika v žurnalistike*, 93. See also: Paľa, *Masmediálna komunikácia*, 110.

¹⁷ Paľa, *Globalization & Evangelization & Media*, 177. Cf. Zasepa, Olekšák, and Gazda, *Etika v žurnalistike*, 94.

¹⁸ Paľa, *Masmediálna komunikácia*, 110.

¹⁹ Zasepa, Olekšák, and Gazda, *Etika v žurnalistike*, 95.

²⁰ Paľa, *Masmediálna komunikácia*, 110.

²¹ Zasepa, Olekšák, and Gazda, *Etika v žurnalistike*, 96.

²² Paľa, *Globalization & Evangelization & Media*, 180.

²³ Zasepa, Olekšák, and Gazda, *Etika v žurnalistike*, 96.

confirmed by the Council. To be well understood, it must be read in the context of the other documents of the Council: *Gaudium et spes*, *Lumen gentium*, *Presbyterorum ordinis*. It is the first conciliar document in the two-thousand-year history of the Church to deal with the press, radio, and television, which are among the marvelous inventions of technology and which, with God's help in our times, have been created by the genius of man (art. 1). Article 11 stresses the role in society of journalists, writers, directors, publishers, etc. In their hands lies a great moral responsibility, for they have such power that they can manipulate people and lead them to good or evil. The Decree *Inter mirifica* recommends many initiatives to deepen the role of the mass media.²⁴

The confirmation of a new stage in the Church's attitude towards the media was the proclamation by Pope Paul VI (1963–1978) in 1967 of the annual World Day for the Social Media, which is binding on the whole Church. The requirements of the decree *Inter mirifica* were implemented and in 1971 the pastoral instruction *Communio et progressio* was issued, which is still considered the Magna Carta of the Church's media teaching. This Instruction introduced several new impulses into the Church's teaching on the mass media, underlining the importance of information in social development, pointing to the important role of public opinion, laying the foundations of a theology of social communication, and pointing to the need for dialogue within the Church itself and between the Church and the world. The issues of social communication and media ethics are addressed by Paul VI in his encyclical *Evangelium nuntiandi* (1975).²⁵

Pope John Paul II (1978–2005) is described by many authors as a media pope. In the Apostolic Constitution *Sapientia Christiana* (Christian Wisdom) on Studies in Ecclesiastical Universities and Faculties (April 29, 1979), he states that every faculty should also have technical, audiovisual, and other aids to assist didactics, and calls for the establishment of research institutes, scientific laboratories, as well as other aids necessary to achieve these goals. In the Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi tradendae* on Catechesis in our time of 16 October 1978, the Pope again supports the idea of the Decree *Inter mirifica* on the establishment of a day of social means of communication and speaks of the importance of mass media catechesis. The Pope's message for the 19th World Day on May 19, 1985, on the theme "Means of Communication for the Christian Education

²⁴ Paľa, *Globalization & Evangelization & Media*, 180. Cf. Paľa, *Masmediálna komunikácia*, 115–116.

Cf. Paul VI, *Inter Mirifica*, accessed October 27, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19631204_inter-mirifica_en.html.

²⁵ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of His Holiness Pope Paul VI about the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, accessed October 27, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

of Youth” contains the first remarks of the Magisterium on technotronics and a further call for theoretical and practical education in seminaries.

The most recent document issued by Pope John Paul II on social communications is the Apostolic Letter *Rapid Development* of January 24, 2005. It is addressed to those responsible for social communications. In the introduction, he underlines the timeliness of the decree of the SCC *Inter mirifica* by saying, “More than forty years after the publication of this document, it seems most appropriate to return to it and reflect on the challenge posed to the Church by the social means of communication.” He concludes by urging those working in the mass media and especially the faithful active in this important area of society: “Do not be afraid of new technologies! They are among the admirable things—*Inter mirifica*—that God has placed at our disposal so that we can know, use and proclaim the truth, including the truth of our dignity and of the goal that is destined for us as his children and heirs of his eternal kingdom.”²⁶

During the pontificate of John Paul II, another of the Church’s key media documents, *Aetatis novae* (1992), was published, as well as several important documents of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. The pontificate of this Pope was marked by a significant development of information communication technologies, including the advent of the Internet. He has touched on the ethical problems associated with this phenomenon in several of his messages and statements. In his message for the 36th World Day for Social Media, entitled “The Internet: A New Forum for the Proclamation of the Gospel,” the Pope writes: “Like other instruments of communication, the Internet is only a means and not an end in itself.” Then the Pope goes on:

The essential characteristic of the Internet is the provision of an almost endless flow of information, much of which lasts only an instant. In a culture that thrives on such volatile realities, information can easily become more important than values. The Internet offers a wealth of knowledge, but it does not teach values, and if these are overlooked, our very humanity will be stripped away, and man will easily lose sight of his transcendent dignity. [...] The impulse for deeper thought and reflection may be lacking, even though human beings existentially need time and inner peace to reassess and explore life with its mysteries and gradually gain a mature mastery over themselves and the world around them. [...] Moreover, the Internet, as a forum in which everything is in fact permissible and almost nothing is permanent, favors a relativistic way of thinking and sometimes facilitates an escape from personal responsibility and engagement.²⁷

²⁶ John Paul II, *The Rapid Development*, 14, accessed October 27, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2005/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20050124_il-rapido-sviluppo.html.

²⁷ John Paul II, *Message of the Holy Father John Paul II for the 36th World Communications Day—“Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel”* 4, accessed October 27, 2021,

In his encyclical *Laudato si*, the current Pope Francis also appealed to the media and urged them to be responsible so that they do not contribute to the deterioration of the quality of human life and social degradation:

Furthermore, when media and the digital world become omnipresent, their influence can stop people from learning how to live wisely, to think deeply and to love generously. In this context, the great sages of the past run the risk of going unheard amid the noise and distractions of an information overload. 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.

The Pope also stated that:

Today's media do enable us to communicate and to share our knowledge and affections. Yet at times they also shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences. For this reason, we should be concerned that, alongside the exciting possibilities offered by these media, a deep and melancholic dissatisfaction with interpersonal relations, or a harmful sense of isolation, can also arise.²⁸

Also in his message for the 57th World Day of Social Communications, the Holy Father Francis said:

Focus on the expression 'speaking with the heart.' It is the heart that moves us to go, to see and to listen, and it is the heart that impels us to open and kind communication. Having trained ourselves in listening, which requires waiting and being patient, and renouncing the biased assertion of our own opinion, we can enter into the dynamic of dialogue and sharing, which is precisely communication with the heart.²⁹

https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20020122_world-communications-day.html

²⁸ Francis, Encyclical: *Laudati si* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2015), § 47.

²⁹ Francis, *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 57th World Day of Social Communication* (January 24, 2023), accessed January 9, 2024, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/20230124-messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html>.

The Pope continues:

We must not be afraid to proclaim the truth, even if it is sometimes uncomfortable, but we must not do so without love, without heart. Because the program of the Christian—as Benedict XVI wrote—is the heart, that he sees. A heart that reveals the truth of our being with its beating and therefore must be listened to. This leads the listener to tune into the same wavelength to the point that he is able to feel in his own heart the heartbeat of the other. Then the miracle of encounter can take place, making us look at each other with compassion and accept each other’s weaknesses with respect, instead of judging based on talk and sowing discord and division.³⁰

At the same time, the Pope turns to the media: “We also need kind speech in the media, so that communication does not foster resentment, which incites, provokes anger and leads to conflict, but helps people to think calmly and to interpret critically, but always with respect, the reality in which they live.”³¹

The Means of Social Communication and CCEO

In recent years, we have seen several amendments to legislation to meet the current needs of the faithful. But somehow the media sector has been forgotten. The legislation of both codes would need to be amended so that the Church can respond to the current issues that we encounter almost every day in the media sphere, whether it is misinterpretation, manipulation and propaganda, which, especially during the pandemic, have been spread inexplicably, including through social networks. Because we live in a media world that affects not only our knowledge, skills, emotions, but also our identity and worldview. It does this quickly, dynamically, flexibly, on a massive scale. The media world is global, universal, and actionable. It changes quickly, without waiting for those who do not keep up, because it has the latest scientific discoveries and new technologies at its disposal.³²

³⁰ Francis, *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 57th World Day of Social Communication*.

³¹ Francis, *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 57th World Day of Social Communication*.

³² Remišová, *Etika médií*, 29.

The mass media have fundamentally changed the world of culture and have become the main creators of cultural values, for many people they are trusted institutions and the main source of information. What does not appear in the mass media is as if it did not exist. People do not form their opinions based on their own experiences, but on how the media and, nowadays, social networks see them. The media's image of the world has become more credible than our own critical thinking.³³ Under the influence of the flood of information, people are more inclined to accept only that which confirms their own views and does not upset their status quo.³⁴

For this reason, the Church is aware of its responsibility in the media sphere; its reflection of this concern is reflected in the regulations in the CCEO. The very title of this title "Instruments of Social Communication and Specifically Books," which is contained in the regulations of canons 651–666 of the CCEO, affirms the right of the Church to control the instruments of social communication, especially books, and all productions associated with these media when they are contrary to or harmful to faith and morals.³⁵

Self-expression, a fundamental human right, partially accepted in the CCEO, as a Christian right in can. 21. Suffice it to say that the former is not absolute and unlimited, but subject to the control of society, and the latter is regulated by the prescriptions of the canons of the Church, especially with regard to the means of social communication and their use for the needs of the Church, in the prescriptions of canons 651–666 of the CCEO. In these regulations it states:

— In the proclamation of the Gospel, the duty and right of the Church to use the social means of communication and to defend the freedom of the press (can. 651, § 1).³⁶

God has been in constant communication with the world and human beings since his act of creation. The Old Testament gives us an account of the ceaseless communication between God and the nation of Israel. The apostle Paul begins his letter to the Hebrews with a reminder of this communication, which he directed to Jesus: "Many times and in various ways God spoke at one time to the fathers through the prophets. In these last days he has spoken to us in the Son" (Heb 1:1–2). The Church, as the proclaimer of the Gospel, begins her work by proclaiming the Gospel to herself, so that she may retain fresh strength to proclaim it spiritually. In the constant self-reflection of the

³³ Gabriel Paša and Martina Poláková, *Online podoba II* (Prešov: University of Prešov, Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology, 2013), 15.

³⁴ Tadeusz Zasepa, *Médiá v čase globalizácie* (Bratislava: LÚČ, vydavateľské družstvo, 2002), 83.

³⁵ Salachas, *De Instrumentis communicationis socialis*, 537.

³⁶ *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. Latin—English edition* (Washington: Canon Law Society, 1995). Cf. Nedungatt, *Путівник* [A Guide], 399.

Gospel she finds encouragement and inspirational courage in bearing witness to the truth.³⁷

The Church, responsible for proclaiming and transmitting the message of redemption, cannot pass indifferently by the means of mass communication. From the beginning of the dissemination of information through the media, the Church has been interested in these means of social communication. Since its main task is to proclaim the Gospel, it has used various kinds of media to fulfill its mission.³⁸

He is aware that the proclamation of the faith is unthinkable without mass media. Therefore, it lays down rules of canon law to guide the faithful in the proper use of the media. In the regulations of can. 651 § 2 of the CCEO: “All the Christian faithful for their part collaborate in this great mission of the Church, and support and foster the initiatives of this apostolate; moreover, let those especially who are experts in the production and the transmission of communications offer their caring help to the pastoral action of the bishops, and earnestly endeavor to imbue the use of the media with the spirit of Christ.”³⁹

The prescription of this canon is inspired by the Council’s decree *Inter mirifica* 3, which states:

It is, therefore, 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. It is the duty of Pastors to instruct and guide the faithful so that they, with the help of these same media, may further the salvation and perfection of themselves and of the entire human family. In addition, the laity especially must strive to instill a human and Christian spirit into these media, so that they may fully measure up to the great expectations of mankind and to God’s design.⁴⁰

This canon is a further and specific application of the doctrine formulated in can. 595 § 1, according to which: “The Church, to whom Christ the Lord entrusted the deposit of faith so that, assisted by the Holy Spirit, it might reverently safeguard revealed truth, more closely examine it and faithfully proclaim and expound it, has the innate duty and right to preach the gospel to all nations, independent of any human power whatever.”⁴¹

It is clear that the Church uses the various means at her disposal to proclaim Christian doctrine, especially preaching and catechetical teaching and

³⁷ Hebr 1: 1–2.

³⁸ Paľa, *Mediálna problematika v katolíckej náboženskej výchove* (Prešov: University of Prešov, Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology, 2010), 128.

³⁹ *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. Latin-English edition* (Washington: Canon Law Society, 1995). Cf. Nedungatt, *Путівник [A Guide]*, 399.

⁴⁰ Salachas, *De Instrumentis communicationis socialis*, 538.

⁴¹ Can. 595, §1.CCEO.

their dissemination through the press and other means of social communication. It is therefore the Church's natural right to proclaim the message of salvation by means of the instruments of social communication and to teach people the proper way to use them. It is the right of every person to know the truth of the Gospel, and therefore every person has the right to be informed of the truth of the Gospel.⁴²

Already the Second Vatican Council dealt with education in the light of the current problems of the time. Thus, in the document *Garavissimum educationis*, which deals with education, it speaks of the particular importance of education and its influence on social progress. At the same time, circumstances both facilitate and intensify the urgency of the education of the young, as well as the continuing education of adults. Educational and teaching methods are being improved on the basis of new experiences.⁴³

From today's point of view, we see that this conciliar document has a timeless framework, because, as in the past, we have circumstances today that affect education and formation, and at the same time they need to be exploited or paid attention to. In a special way, education concerns the Church, since it is her duty to proclaim to all people the way of salvation. In fulfilling her mission, the Church seeks to use all appropriate means, especially her own. It should also make use of others which have educational and upbringing efficacy and permeate its spirit. Among these are precisely the means of social communication.⁴⁴

Mass media nowadays determines and shapes almost every event of our culture. They influence not only what we think and what we feel, but also how we dream and how we pray. In other words, they shape our vision of the world and our idea of God. Increasingly, we are using means that expand the possibilities of action to such an extent that they can bring about revolutionary changes. It turns out that moral sensitivity to the consequences of influencing people in ways we cannot see is not yet at the level of the achievements of technologies whose consequences we are already beginning to realize. A proper view of the means of communication reveals people's actions as expressions of a particular culture, as the realisation of the human spirit and creative power that co-create the whole culture of humanity.⁴⁵

The use of social communication tools requires the technical, sociological, and cultural knowledge necessary to effectively transmit each message. In addition, there is an urgent need to educate the public on how to use these tools, which today are bombarding them with many different types of production that are not only unpleasant but also detrimental to their dignity. This is why

⁴² Salachas, *De Instrumentis communicationis socialis*, 538.

⁴³ Paľa and Poláková, *Online podoba II*, 151–152.

⁴⁴ Marek Petro, "Influence of Television on Moral Development of Children and Youth," in *Orbis communicationis socialis* (Lublin: Norbertinum, 2007), 72.

⁴⁵ Zasepa, *Médiá v čase globalizácie*, 70.

eparchial bishops must ensure, especially with the help of the institutes that deal with the tools of social communication, that the Christian faithful are instructed in the critical and beneficial use of these tools. The canon stresses that this is much more effective than reprimanding and condemning the wrong.⁴⁶

At the same time, it calls on the bishops to lay down detailed regulations on the use of radio, cinema, and television through the rules of particular law, since this area of communication is undergoing great changes and technical advances.⁴⁷

In addition to the individual eparchial bishops, the Synod of Bishops of the Patriarchal Church, the Major Archdiocesan Church, and the Council of Hierarchs of the Metropolitan Church *sui iuris* have this duty in relation to the faithful entrusted to their care, but especially the Apostolic See to the whole People of God. According to the general principle sanctioned by canon 652, all instruments of social communication that touch on faith or morals must be subject to the vigilance of the pastors. When publications (books, magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, etc.) that touch on faith or morals are concerned, it is required that they be subjected to the judgment of ecclesiastical authority before publication. Clearly, if these writings lead to bad faith or bad morals, they are to be rebuked and not used by the faithful because they compromise the integrity of the faith.⁴⁸

Current Challenges

Nowadays we are witnessing great technical advances in the digital world and the Internet, and we can talk about the globalization of the media. Globalization is one of the most significant changes in recent years. It is not only the subject of sociologists, lawyers, economists, geographers, and politicians, but the word globalization itself is being increasingly heard from the electronic media and is appearing in the press.⁴⁹ Thanks to the technology of information transfer between computers, not only the geographical problem but also the problem of the diversity of systems, national borders, etc., has lost its importance. At any one time, a user has access to information ten meters away from them as well as to information 15,000 km away.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. Latin—English edition* (Washington: Canon Law Society, 1995). Cf. Paľa, *Masmediálna komunikácia*, 120.

⁴⁷ Nedungatt, *Путівник* [A Guide], 400.

⁴⁸ Salachas, *De Instrumentis communicationis socialis*, 539–540.

⁴⁹ Zasepa, *Médiá*, 366.

⁵⁰ Paľa, *Mediálna problematika*, 42.

With the emergence of multinational corporations, multinational monopolies, and mediocracy the global regulation of ethics has taken on particular importance. The global level of media ethics is a matter for the owners, who own the crucial media groups and social networks, dictate the economic conditions for their employees and business partners, and decide the quality of media products and the direction of social networks. The importance of media ethics cannot be explained without an understanding of the interaction between media and society. The media are part of the social system and their nature is social, even if their functioning is determined by technological means. The content of news is primarily a matter of human needs and interests.⁵¹

Globalization also affects the field of culture, especially local cultures that distinguish societies, and the influence that global media has in this field.⁵² A wide range of information can be placed on the Internet on the basis of accessibility for all. Unfortunately, there is also information that is considered harmful by both the Church and society. The Church takes it as her duty to draw attention to such negative aspects of the Internet and encourages responsibility on the part of the creators. The need to respect the dignity of the human person and the prescriptions of canon law, in particular the prescription of can. 653 of the CCEO, which prescribes to particular law to establish more precise norms on the use of radio, television, cinema and similar means regarding what concerns Catholic teaching or morals.⁵³

Although the Code does not speak directly about the Internet, the prescription of Canon 654 of the CCEO, which speaks of any other writings or speeches intended for public publication and disseminated in any way by means of technical inventions. So the rules of law that apply to books also apply to electronic media.⁵⁴

The Internet as a medium has seen tremendous development and has become a global information system. It is now indispensable in the field of work, but also in the field of consumption. It is a powerful medium because it enables the provision of a range of services from individual communication to mass communication. Its economic importance is incalculable. The Internet offers virtually limitless possibilities, and these can sometimes be glamorous but also harmful. New technologies bring not only progress, but also certain threats. A glance into the past makes it possible to discover that, for example, along with television came addiction to the medium, addiction to games,

⁵¹ Remišová, *Etika médií*, 26–27.

⁵² Zasepa, *Médiá v čase globalizácie*, 369.

⁵³ *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. Latin–English edition* (Washington: Canon Law Society, 1995). Cf. Salachas, *De Instrumentis communicationis socialis et in specie de libris*, 540.

⁵⁴ *Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. Latin–English edition* (Washington: Canon Law Society, 1995). Cf. Nedungatt, *[A Guide]*, 400.

addiction to the computer or even addiction to sex, or a morbid imitation of film stars.⁵⁵

In virtual space, too, manipulation and propaganda are widely encountered.

The term manipulation⁵⁶ has a negative ethical connotation as it denotes an action that is ethically wrong and reprehensible. Manipulation is a purposeful activity on the part of an individual or collective subject; its intention is to make the object of manipulation act according to their wishes.⁵⁷ The perfect manipulation is when, without knowing it, you do what I want and still feel good about it. The bottom line is that manipulation cannot be overt, or else, understandably, it ceases to work.⁵⁸ So it is the ways or methods by which the manipulated person is convinced that they are the originator of a behavior, or that they have made a decision or evaluated something, whereas in reality they are just a tool in the hands of the author.⁵⁹

It is important to delimit when media influence takes the form of manipulation. Manipulation is characterized in particular by the following specific conditions. The manipulator consciously pursues their own benefit and does not take into account the needs of the influenced.⁶⁰

The most common forms of manipulation include omission and suppression, lies, incomplete information and its repetition, labeling, transmission of false values, imbalance, framing, and “teaching viewers not to ask why.” We give at least a brief description of these.

— Omission and suppression:

It is the ignoring of certain messages, information and ideas. Omitting a detail of a message, but also the whole message, ignoring the other party’s opinion, etc.

⁵⁵ Zasepa, *Médiá v čase globalizácie*, 353.

⁵⁶ Eva Chudinová, “Media relations—jadro public relations—mediálna manipulácia?” in *Médiá—Moc—Manipulácia*, ed. Eva Chudinová et al. (Bratislava: Paneurópska vysoká škola v Bratislave, 2016), 115. In the media we can encounter several forms of manipulation. Pristašová (2005) lists the following forms: the use of evaluative vocabulary, the use of commentary elements in news reporting, the promotion of the editorial line at the expense of objectivity, covert persuasion—the truth about reality—the concepts are unambiguous and correct—what has been said is true (e.g., election polls—this candidate will win), news ranking, photo selection, interview question ranking, headlines, perex, withholding inconvenient information, publication of unverified information, confusion, news and commentary, deliberate accusations and invectives, use of “experts,” the technique of endorsement.

⁵⁷ Remišová, *Etika médií*, 243.

⁵⁸ Radovan Šoltés, *Propaganda, manipulácia a logické klamy* (Prešov: University of Prešov, Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology, 2017), 102.

⁵⁹ Maciej Howiecki and Tadeusz Zasepa, *Moc a nemoc médií* (Bratislava: Vydavateľstvo Trnavskej univerzity, spoločné pracovisko TU a VEDY, vydavateľstvo SAV, 2003), 35.

⁶⁰ Chudinová, *Media relations*, 116.

— Labelling:

The media pre-label an event, phenomenon or person involved—labelling it with a word or phrase with a pre-defined meaning with a distinct evaluation (positive or negative) that precludes any other interpretation.

— Transmission of false values:

This is the transmission of quasi-objective news, official statements, including lies and fabrications, followed by the production of a series of pseudo-news.

— Imbalance:

Under the principle that both sides should be heard, the media give space only to positive views, not to alternative views.

— Framing (framing of news):

It is the influence of content by means of form: changing the order of the news, by spacing it out, by using a selection of “suitable” (for the manipulator) photographs.⁶¹

One type of social influence that applies the above principles is propaganda. Propaganda is an attempt by an authority, such as a state or party, to persuade as many people as possible. In doing so, it uses procedures to persuade a group to acquiesce and agree. It aims to achieve or maintain political power, often by manipulative means. It thus serves the power elite as well as groups seeking to achieve power. Political propaganda concerns the political sphere, but it can also be present in different social groups and religions.⁶²

In the broadest sense, manipulation means an activity in which the manipulator changes their own will, their own opinion of the objects of manipulation and directs them in a way that they consider advantageous. The difference between manipulation and persuasion can be defined in such a way that persuasion is based on rational persuasion and is often carried out in the interest of the persuaded, whereas manipulation is based on techniques of deception and influence on the subconscious. It is therefore important to understand that some form of persuasion becomes manipulation, and manipulation always hides elements of coercion.⁶³

Thus, the very term propaganda, defined in many ways in the social sciences, can be recognized as: “the art of making people do what they would not do if they had all the data on the subject.”⁶⁴ Or, according to a more recent definition: “Propaganda is a deliberate and systematic effort to shape perception, manipulate thought and immediate behavior with the intention of achieving responses that are consistent with the desired goals of the propaganda.”⁶⁵

⁶¹ Chudinová, *Media relations*, 116. Cf. Howiecki and Zasepa, *Moc a nemoc médií*, 37.

⁶² Šoltés, *Propaganda*, 91.

⁶³ Cf. Howiecki and Zasepa, *Moc a nemoc médií*, 35.

⁶⁴ Howiecki and Zasepa, *Moc a nemoc médií*, 33.

⁶⁵ Howiecki and Zasepa, *Moc a nemoc médií*, 33

The Church and the Internet

In spite of all these negative effects of the Internet, the Church, in the spirit of the pastoral instruction *Comunio et progressio*, takes a positive attitude towards the Internet and calls not only the faithful, but all people, especially the young, to learn to deal well with the world of cyberspace, to be able to critically assess the information they find and to use the new technologies for their own integral development and for the good of others.⁶⁶

The ethical issues of communication via the Internet are also discussed in the document *Ethics and the Internet*, which deals with the overall issue of the Internet, from its possibilities to its recommendations. The proliferation of the Internet has also added a number of ethical issues as well as many other problems. The ethical issues relate to privacy, security and confidentiality, copyright and intellectual property rights, pornography, hate sites and sites spreading slander and defamation under the guise of serious news.⁶⁷

Despite the exceptional features of the Internet, such as the possibility of direct and immediate access, its presence throughout the world, its decentralization, its interactivity, the unlimited possibility of expanding its content, flexibility, great adaptability, it also contains negative features, such as the spread of pornography, excessive individualism, egocentrism, cyber-terrorism, manipulation.

At the same time, there is a great deal of data on how pornography is arrogantly pushed into the media, especially electronic and digital media, and how it is abused. There are authors who, based on research,⁶⁸ point out that children and adolescents are also involved in the production and distribution of pornographic material.⁶⁹ In his post-synodal exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, in Article 41, the Holy Father Francis touched on this problem and expressed concern about the proliferation of pornography and the commercialization of the body, which is also opened up by the use of the Internet in a non-traditional way.⁷⁰

Despite these negative facts, *Ethics and the Internet* rejects the resort to censorship by government elites:⁷¹

⁶⁶ Zasepa, Olekšák, and Gazda, *Etika v žurnalistike*, 109.

⁶⁷ Paľa, *Mediálna problematika v katolíckej náboženskej výchove*, 102.

⁶⁸ Pavel Izrael, Juraj Holdoš, Róbert Ďurka, and Marek Hasák, *Správa z výskumu EU Kids Online IV na Slovensku—Slovenské deti a dospievajúci na internete* (Ružomberok: Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku, 2020), 2123.

⁶⁹ Ján Ďačok, ““Bezpečný sex”? Vedecké, morálne a pastorálne aspekty,” in *Kurz Pre Spovedníkov: Príspevky z prednášok konaných 6–8 Septembra 2016 V Spišskej Kapitule*, ed. Mária Spišiaková and Martin Koleják. (Trnava: Spolok svätého Vojtecha, 2017), 100.

⁷⁰ Francis, *Encyclical, Amoris laetitia* (Trnava: Spolok svätého Vojtecha, 2016), 27.

⁷¹ Zasepa, Olekšák, and Gazda, *Etika v žurnalistike*, 110.

In light of these requirements of the common good, we deplore attempts by public authorities to block access to information—on the Internet or in other media of social communication—because they find it threatening or embarrassing to them, to manipulate the public by propaganda and disinformation, or to impede legitimate freedom of expression and opinion. Authoritarian regimes are by far the worst offenders in this regard; but the problem also exists in liberal democracies, where access to media for political expression often depends on wealth, and politicians and their advisors violate truthfulness and fairness by misrepresenting opponents and shrinking issues to sound-bite dimensions.⁷²

However, the Church's rejection of censorship does not reject regulation. Therefore, the document states: "Regulation of the Internet is desirable, and in principle industry self-regulation is best. The solution to problems arising from unregulated commercialization and privatization does not lie in state control of media but in more regulation according to criteria of public service and in greater public accountability."⁷³

The presence of the Church on the Internet has a very deep meaning. A particular challenge for the Church is the great value of virtual communion. The greatest impact that virtual communities can achieve will not lie in the implementation of advertising on the Internet, but in the new forms of culture that will emerge in virtual communities. These forms will be richer and will serve the people more if the Church and the people of the Church do not get on the Internet.⁷⁴ The Internet should be based on the same understanding of values, rooted in the nature of man. Only then can the Internet be used as a means of building a civilization of love.⁷⁵

Therefore, education for the critical use of the Internet in media education also appears to be a priority in the *Ethics and the Internet* document. There is a need to develop new legal arrangements for the needs of the Internet and its ethical implications. Another conclusion is that the "information gap," which affects the technical and educational as well as the cultural spheres, must be closed in both the public and private sectors.⁷⁶ The conclusions of this document are in line with the prescriptions of can. 653 of the CCEO for the issuance of more precise norms of particular law on the use of the Internet in order to respect Catholic teaching and good morals.

⁷² Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Internet*, accessed October 27, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228_ethics-internet_en.html

⁷³ Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Internet*, accessed October 27, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_20020228_ethics-internet_en.html

⁷⁴ Zasepa, *Médiá v čase globalizácie*, 372.

⁷⁵ Paľa, *Mediálna*, 102.

⁷⁶ Paľa, *Mediálna*, 102.

The very conclusion of the document stresses that the Catholic Church should be present on the Internet and participate in the public debate on its further development. In this way, the Church can ultimately help prosperity and peace, intellectual and ethical development, and mutual understanding between peoples and nations.⁷⁷

In spite of the most varied experiences throughout history and in different cultures, the texts of Holy Scripture are permeated with the conviction that God acts with a power that neither destroys nor condemns, a power that is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God. Even though we have been given spiritual good things to deposit, these do not necessarily transform the world. The Spirit works in them mostly like He does in people. These often inconspicuous spiritual gifts show that real redemption is taking place today. The Holy Spirit gives a new beginning after every human fall, opening up a dimension of humanity that exists outside of one-sided rationalism, opening up a space in which the cause does not find a reason in itself. The Holy Spirit is the gift by which God gives himself to the individual until they reject him. Only he can help humanity to discover the Spirit in nature, in history, in all cultures and religions. Thus the Holy Spirit can be discerned from other forces that obscure his work. Although the Church is not the kingdom of heaven, but only a sinful community, the Holy Spirit is especially at work in it. By permeating all cultures and media, the Holy Spirit can remake them and be a fulcrum for them.⁷⁸

Conclusion

Access to the Internet and to the world's sources of information and the possibility of virtually unlimited communication are an invaluable gift to humanity in proclaiming the Gospel. In addition to the manipulation and negative content found on the Internet, unfair practices such as cybercrime are now coming to the fore. Due to the global aspect and anonymity, more or less dangerous viruses are spreading. Recently, a new phenomenon of collusion has emerged—hackers who use their “art” of obtaining confidential information to the detriment of the victims. All the negative things that we see in the field of the Internet do not destroy the values of this new tool for evangelization and interpersonal communication. Everything depends on the person behind every action—good or bad. Controlling the Internet is complicated at the moment, the interior ministries of several countries are trying to control the Internet, al-

⁷⁷ Paľa, *Mediálna*, 103.

⁷⁸ Zasepa, *Médiá v čase globalizácie*, 71–72.

though they can identify the author of a particular website, the sanctions against that author are very complicated, because the site most often comes from another country or even another continent. For this reason, it is also difficult to apply the CCEO legislation, so that the whole issue rests on the shoulders of the individual, who needs to be adequately formed to make good use of the tool they have been given in their hands. In this issue, in addition to the rules of particular law, the basic rule of natural law should be applied—do good and avoid evil. This must be a boundary setting for the media as to what is allowed and what is not.⁷⁹

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⁷⁹ Cf. Zasepa, *Médiá*, 361–369.

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Jurij Popovič

Médias et dispositions du Code des canons des Eglises orientales

Résumé

Aujourd'hui, nous ne pouvons pas imaginer un monde sans communication médiatique au service de la société. En même temps, nous pouvons constater des changements que subit la communication médiatique. La communication médiatique contemporaine est trop éloignée de la notion même de *communico*, *communicare*. La notion même de *s'associer*, *rendre quelque chose commun*, *transmettre un message*, *cosulter* disparaît progressivement de l'espace médiatique,

tout comme le terme *communio*, c'est-à-dire « collectivité, communauté, sens du lien ». De nos jours, le mot *communiquer* est associé principalement à la transmission d'informations ou plus précisément, de nouvelles, abstraction faite des principes éthiques et moraux. C'est pourquoi l'Église, consciente de l'importance des moyens de communication, revendique le droit d'en réglementer l'usage et, dans ses règlements, appelle les personnes compétentes en matière de création et de transmission d'informations à veiller à ce que l'utilisation de ces moyens soit imprégnée de l'esprit du Christ.

Mots-clés: moyens de communication sociale, médias, réalité virtuelle

Jurij Popovič

Mezzi e disposizioni del Codice dei Canoni delle Chiese Orientali

Sommario

Oggi non possiamo immaginare un mondo senza la comunicazione multimediale al servizio della società. Allo stesso tempo, possiamo notare i cambiamenti che stanno subendo i mezzi di comunicazione. La comunicazione multimediale contemporanea è troppo lontana dal concetto stesso di *communio*, *communicare*. Il concetto stesso di “unire, mettere in comune qualcosa, trasmettere un messaggio, consultare” sta gradualmente scomparendo dallo spazio mediale, così come il termine *communio*, ovvero “comunità, fratellanza, senso di connessione”. Ai nostri giorni la parola “comunicare” è associata principalmente alla trasmissione di informazioni, o più precisamente di messaggi, indipendentemente dai principi etici e morali. Per questo la Chiesa, consapevole dell'importanza della comunicazione multimediale, richiede il diritto di regolamentarne l'uso, e nei suoi regolamenti invita le persone qualificate nella creazione e trasmissione dell'informazione a garantire che l'uso di questi mezzi sia permeato dello spirito di Cristo.

Parole chiave: mezzi di comunicazione sociale, media, realtà virtuale