

On the Means of Social Communication

The papal decree on the Media of Social Communications, *Inter Mirifica*, calls the faithful to a special Apostolate. This apostolate is the duty of every Catholic, specifically the lay person, to participate actively in the "priestly, prophetic and royal office of Christ,"* within a proper field of action. That proper field is that of the "temporal order...where people live, work and recreate."* Are not the media of social communications, such as the television, radio, written press, and the internet, the most powerful tools to carry out the Gospel message directly to "where people live, work and recreate?"

This Media Apostolate is not limited to spreading the Gospel message through the various forms of social communication. It calls all members of the Church to "instruct men in [the] proper use"† of the media. It calls for the fostering of a "good press,"† and the training of critics. It urges the faithful to be "of direct help in the pastoral activity of the Church – to the best of their ability – through their technical, economic, cultural and artistic talents."† As the decree states, "the principal moral responsibility for

for the proper use of the media of social communication falls on the newsmen, writers, actors, designers, producers, displayers, distributors, operators and sellers, as well as the critic and all others who play any part in the production and transmission of mass presentations."† In other words the Apostolate is more than gleaning the good from what is produced in the media, it is a call for owners, producers, and users to "adjust their economic, political or artistic and technical aspects so as never to oppose the common good."†

What responsibility do we have as viewers, readers, listeners, and web-surfers? "All who, of their own free choice, make use of these media of communications...have special obligations."† As users of the media, all must take steps to accustom themselves to moderation and self-control in their regard."†

Indeed this papal decree, *Inter Mirifica*, touches upon much more than the seemingly narrow scope of "media apostolate." The faithful laity are reminded of their obligation to bring the Gospel message to every area of their lives and in a special way, to the "makers" of the media as well as to the users of the media. We are reminded too of the goodness of humanity and the technological advances made by man with regard to