

COMMUNICATION THEOLOGY FOR PASTORAL COMMUNICATION AS A NEW APPROACH

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1. Introduction¹

There are many definitions for communication, considered under informational, social, psychological, cultural or anthropological perspective.² There is generally an agreement on its nature, namely, communication is understood as an ongoing process through which human persons express themselves, share meanings with each other so that they come to a commonness.³ Human communication is a dynamic, dialogic, and ongoing process in which people share with each other meanings, using symbols, signs, certain instruments and ways respective to their social and cultural context.

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²Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss. *Theories of Human Communication*, Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2008 (9th edition), 3-7.

³Franz-Josef Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission: An Introduction to Pastoral and Evangelizing Communication*, Manila: Logos, 2009 (3rd edition), 22-24; Judy Pearson and Paul E. Nelson, *An Introduction to Human Communication: Understanding and Sharing*, McGraw-Hill, 2000 (8th edition), 6-7; Larry A. Samovar, Richard E. Porter and Edwin R. McDaniel, *Communication Between Cultures*, Thomson/Wadsworth, 2007 (6th edition), 2-16.

The Church as part of human family, since her very beginning, is concerned with communication in various ways. Generally she has, especially in recent times, shown a positive attitude in the development of human communication as many documents of the Church show.⁴ Basically, the Church recognizes the benefits of the technological inventions and the contribution of modern means of social communication to human development. She also calls for respect for the dignity of the human person and pleads for spreading of the truth in communication. She appeals to deal with the means of communication in a proper way.

An important contribution of the Church to the development of human communication is the introduction of the term “*Social Communication*”. When the preparatory commission for the Vatican II Decree on Social Communication *Inter Mirifica* proposed this term, they said in the *declaratio* that expressions like Mass Media, Media of Diffusion, Audio-Visual Means or anything similar would not sufficiently express what the Church is concerned about. Therefore, they proposed the new term *Social Communication*; this was accepted and promulgated by the Council Fathers.⁵ The idea of “social communication” is a concept of Vatican II which contains also a theological dimension.⁶ The term “social communication” refers to the communication *of* and *in* human society, and thus includes all ways and means of communicating within human society. It covers all communication within human society in the past and leaves the door open for further developments in the future. In this perspective, “social communication” is concerned with human interaction through which human beings express themselves and share meaning in their social and cultural context.

2. Development towards a Communication Theology

The key concept which is used in reflecting on communication theology is the concept of *self-communication* of God. Karl Rahner deserves the credit of drafting this concept to explain the teaching of grace and justification of human beings, especially that the

⁴Among them there are several important documents like the Encyclical *Vigilanti Cura* (by Pope Pius XI, 1939), *Miranda Prorsus* (by Pope Pius XII, 1957), the decree of the second Vatican Council *Inter Mirifica* (1963), the Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* (published by the Pontifical Council for Social Communication, 1971), and *Aetatis Novae* (by Pontifical Council for Social Communication, 1992).

⁵Eilers, *Communicating in Community: An Introduction to Social Communication*, Manila: Logos, 2009 (4th edition), 314-316.

⁶Eilers, *Communicating in Community*, 324-328.

completion of human beings is grounded in divine self-communication. Apparently, other theologians like Friedrich David Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834), Herman Schell (1850-1906) and Romano Guardini (1885-1968) had applied this term before Rahner.⁷ However, Rahner indicates with this term that God communicates himself to human beings as he is. Admittedly we, human beings, as long as we live in the world, can never grasp him in a complete way because of our human limitedness although God fully communicates himself when he reveals himself to human persons.⁸ In the divine self-communication, the giver who himself communicates is likewise the communicated gift. Here, the giver (God) and the divine grace (the self-communication) are the same.⁹ God as love gives himself and therefore, sets, in "efficient causality" as Creator, the human being in existence to whom God's self-communication as grace is given.¹⁰ All this shows that God's self-communication is constitutive for the essence of creation, of the world and not at least of human beings. Rahner's term of God's self-communication plays an important role for communication theology even though he did not explicitly speak of this term as he developed this concept. According to Avery Dulles, Rahner has brought out the communication dimension of theology in his concept.¹¹

From this perspective, Gisbert Greshake, another German theologian, states that "communication is from its origin a decisive theological idea which grounds in the Christian revelation, and which addresses the centre of the Christian perception of God and of the world."¹² God's self-communication explicitly happens in the event of Jesus Christ. Human beings see in the encounter with Christ God himself. Jesus is the self-communication of God. Anyone who comes in touch with his word, his life, his death and resurrection, will be brought into relation with God. According to Greshake, a Christian theological concept of communication has its root in the Trinitarian and Christological realities.¹³

⁷Gerald O'Collins and Edward G. Farrugia (ed.), *A Concise Dictionary of Theology: Revised and Expanded Edition*, Quezon City: Claretian Publication, 2001, 239.

⁸Karl Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens: Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums*, Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder 1984, 123-125.

⁹Karl Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 126.

¹⁰Karl Rahner, *Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 127-130.

¹¹Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*, Dublin: Crossroad, 1992, 21.

¹²Gisberts Greshake, "Der Ursprung der Kommunikationsidee," *Communicatio Socialis. International Zeitschrift für Kommunikation in Religion, Kirche und Gesellschaft*, 35 (2002/1) 6.

¹³Greshake, "Der Ursprung der Kommunikationsidee," 11.

Based on divine revelation, Jürgen Werbick sees communication as a basic category in the perspective of fundamental theology. According to him, revelation, faith, tradition, and Church's practices basically have to be considered as communicative reality.¹⁴ For him the Church is constituted as community of those who are really incorporated in Christ, and through his Spirit building an organic community.¹⁵ Therefore, *Communio* and *Koinonia* are closely connected with communication by which all Church's members - according to divine intention - participate in God's salvation through Christ.¹⁶ Communication is the basic process, *Grundvorgang*, of the Church.¹⁷ The performance and the effectiveness of the communication within the community, however, depend on the communication with Christ and the Holy Spirit who ensures and guides the Church's communicative activities.¹⁸ Further, *martyria*, *leiturgia*, *diakonia* are basic dimensions of Church's communication.¹⁹ Living the faith in all these aspects, the Church shows a new communicative culture to humanity.

From the perspective of God's self-communication, Peter Henrici says that "communication theology cannot be a regional theology of the genitive; it will become essentially the intrinsic structural principle of a whole theological concept."²⁰ Communication is the essence in the relation between God and human beings. The whole revelation and salvation process is considered as communication. This has consequences for communication in pastoral ministry in the world today.

Carlo Martini, a biblical scholar, took up the reflection on communication from biblical perspective. For a pastoral plan of two years for his archdiocese of Milan, he wrote two letters on communication to the members of his archdiocese in order to give them guidelines through the "pastoral journey to communication": the first one is called "Effata, apriti!" (Effata, be open!), and the second one is "Il lembo del Mantello" (the Hem of his Garment). Based on Scriptures, he reflected God's communication in the first letter and gave some theological indications for communication practice. The Trinitarian God is communication. He communicates

¹⁴Jürgen Werbick, "Kommunikation," in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche (LThK)*, ed., Walter Kasper, Freiburg: Herder, 1997, 214f.

¹⁵Jürgen Werbick, *Den Glauben verantworten: Eine Fundamentaltheologie*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 2005 (3rd edition), 770.

¹⁶Jürgen Werbick, *Den Glauben verantworten*, 778-780.

¹⁷Jürgen Werbick, *Den Glauben verantworten*, 797.

¹⁸Jürgen Werbick, *Den Glauben verantworten*, 799-809.

¹⁹Jürgen Werbick, *Den Glauben verantworten*, 810-811.

²⁰Peter Henrici, "Überlegung zu einer Theologie der Kommunikation," *Seminarium*, 4 (1986) 791.

himself to human beings; the incarnation and paschal mystery of Jesus Christ is the summit of God's communication in humanity; because communication is a gift of God, bestowed upon human beings, humans are able to communicate.²¹ With this part of his theological reflection, Martini builds a biblical foundation for communication. Consequently, he gives some proposals for the pastoral practice.²²

Avery Dulles goes another way when he reflects on communication under the ecclesiological perspective. He states that "the Church is communication."²³ The Church realizes herself as "a vast communication network designed to bring men out of their isolation and estrangement and to bring them individually and corporately into communion with God in Christ."²⁴ Studying the Church's documents of Vatican II, he sketches five communication models of this "network": 1. Hierarchical model, 2. Herald model, 3. Sacramental model, 4. Community or Communion model viewed as fellowship of life, charity, and truth, 5. Secular-dialogic model, Church as communication to the whole human family. In his view, theology aims to express and communicate the experience of grace whereby it uses tangible, social, historically transmitted symbols as ways of communicating. The starting point of communication theology is God's self-communication since the Christian God is a communicating God. Further, he states that "theology is at every point concerned with the realities of communication, and especially with symbolic communication."²⁵ Based on this insight, all theological disciplines have a communication dimension since finally they reflect God's communication to human being. Dulles devotes in a chapter on "Theology and Symbolic Communication" special sections to Fundamental and Practical, but also Systematic Theology. According to him, communication theology refers in a special way to fields like Christology, Creation, Grace, Sacraments, Ecclesiology and Eschatology.²⁶

In his *Method in Theology*, Bernard Lonergan counts eight stages through which theology has to pass: (1) research, (2) interpretation,

²¹Carlo Maria Martini, *Effata "Apriti"; Il Lembo del Mantello*, Milano: Centro Ambrosiano di Documentazione e Studi religiosi, 1990, no. 18-38.

²²Martini, *Effata "Apriti"*, 39-81.

²³Avery Dulles, *The Church is Communication*, Rome: Multimedia International, 1972, 6.

²⁴Avery Dulles, "The Church and Communication," in Avery Dulles, *The Reshaping of Catholicism: Current Challenges in the Theology of Church*, San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988, 110.

²⁵Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*, Dublin: Crossroad, 1992, 22.

²⁶Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 22-39.

(3) history, (4) dialectic, (5) foundation, (6) doctrines, (7) systematic, and (8) communications. The final stage is considered as very important for theological reflection to bear fruit. Therefore, doing theology is living communication. Lonergan said that “practical theology is concerned with the effective communication of Christ’s message.”²⁷ This should be *cognitive, constitutive, and effective*.²⁸ Furthermore, church’s theology has to communicate and unite with all other relevant branches of human studies so that the Church will become a “fully conscious process of self-constitution.”²⁹ Thus, theology is ontologically an ongoing communication.

Josef Palakeel stresses the relevance of communication and of a theological pastoral formation for communication. According to him, there exists already an awareness of the importance of communication in ecclesiastical life and activities, both at theoretical and practical level. However, there is not yet a successful attempt at integrating communication within the overall pastoral, theological and missionary context. The reason for this is that there is not “an integrating principle.”³⁰ Parakeel mentions the need of moving “toward a communication theology.” Therefore, areas of interface between theology and communication should be sought in order to develop a more communicative/communication theology and to draw insights from communication.³¹ Parakeel, however, does not elaborate any concept and clear understanding of communication theology.

In reflecting communication under theological perspective, Franz-Josef Eilers makes the issue more clear when he distinguishes *Theology of Communication, Communicative Theology* and *Communication Theology*. For him, theology of communication tries to ‘baptize’ the Mass Media and Mass Communication in order to “bring them into the flock of Christian faith.”³² This kind of theology considers social communication as a theological imperative: God has given us these Media for the apostolate. For this reason, we have to use them for the communication of the message. The Church shows this attitude, for example, in the documents *Inter Mirifica* and *Communio et Progressio* (cf. *IM*, no. 1-2; *CeP*, no. 1-2). While theology of

²⁷ Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971, 362.

²⁸ Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 362-363.

²⁹ Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, 364-365.

³⁰ Joseph Palakeel (ed.), *Towards a Communication Theology*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2003, 10.

³¹ Joseph Palakeel (ed.), *Towards a Communication Theology*, 12.

³² Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission: An Introduction to Pastoral and Evangelizing Communication*, Manila: Logos, 2009 (3rd edition), 19.

communication puts its emphasis on the use of the instruments, communicative theology is concerned with the way of communicating the contents of the faith so that they can be easily understood by people. Therefore, theologians have to use languages and concepts of the people of today to explain and transmit God's redemption. "Such a communicative theology tries to give answers to questions and deep desires of modern people. It uses for example their longing for 'wellness' to show God's goodness to be reflected and incorporated into our lives."³³ Beyond these two approaches, Eilers proposes a deeper understanding of theology and communication in a new perspective. He states, "Communication is not any more a subject to be baptized or to be made understandable or to be seen as part of the 'communicative action' of society but becomes a theological principle in itself which has special repercussions on pastoral theology."³⁴

In this approach, communication must be brought into the centre of theology. The whole of theology is considered now under the perspective of communication. Here, communication becomes a *theological principle* in itself which is called "communication theology" and which is especially important for pastoral and evangelizing communication. Here, God is taken seriously as a *communicating* God and divine revelation and salvation are considered as communication happenings. Having reflected on attempts of several theologians, Eilers presents some basic elements of divine communication: Trinity, Revelation, Incarnation, and the Sending of the Church. For him, the whole of salvation history is history of God's communication.³⁵

From these considerations, we can see an inner dynamic cohesion between theology and communication. Communication is essentially intrinsic within the Christian theology, because:

- The Christian God is a communicating God.
- He communicates himself to human beings in various ways throughout human history.
- His communication will make human beings partners in God's communication and it will perfect human communication.
- In Jesus Christ God's communication reaches its fullness as he has given himself in love to human beings.
- The Church, incorporated in Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit, has to communicate God's message to humanity in its now and here.

³³Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 20.

³⁴Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 21.

³⁵Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 21-32.

Communication theology will reflect the divine communication in all these aspects. It will present God's communication as grammar for any human communication, and especially for the whole of theology. From there, communication theology will show consequences for all Church's practices.

3. Communication Theology

3.1 The Trinity - Source of Life and Communication

The belief in the Triune God is at the heart of Christian faith in which the Christian believes in the revelation and salvation of God, who communicates himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In the name of the Trinitarian God, the Christian is baptized, that is, he enters into the reality of the Trinitarian life.

The Trinitarian reality refers to a dynamic, vivid and personal motion in which the three divine persons share the life with each other. The Christian God is not a static, lonely monad. Rather, God is in himself plural: Life, Love, Communion.³⁶ This is the final reference point for all reality.

Gisbert Greshake, in a concise way, describes the Trinity as follows: "God is those communion in which the three divine persons carry out the one divine life as mutual self-communication in the threefold interaction of love."³⁷ In this compact statement, the communication dimension of God is explicitly to be seen. The divine communion is considered as ongoing "exchange" of unity and plurality and is the primary reality of the divine life. In this perspective, the life of God entails, analogically speaking, different moments of a mutual communication happening according to the respective divine person: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each divine person communicates itself to the other in a specific manner which belongs only to that person. In this way, the moments of self-communication of the three persons form a dynamic reciprocal self-communication in the Trinitarian life.

Greshake calls this mutual sharing "eternal rhythmic of love." Here, each divine person "plays its role" in a communicative process. The Father fully gives himself to the "other" as the Son, in this way he possesses his Godhead as giving love, therefore also receives the being as Father. The Son is receiving and responding love while he himself receives wholly from the Father, and in grateful manner gives

³⁶Gilberts Greshake, *Eine Trinitarische Theologie*, Freiburg: Herder, 1997 (3rd edition), 51-55.

³⁷Gilberts Greshake, *Eine Trinitarische Theologie*, 179.

to him honour. The Spirit is uniting love while he himself receives from the relationship between the Father and the Son as "the Third" and at the same moment glorifies both the other divine persons. Thus, the divine life in the Trinity can be described as a kind of mutual relation FROM and TO: from the self to the other, and in turn from the other to the self. From there, we have a paradigm of this sharing in love: giving/receiving, receiving/giving, and uniting/receiving/returning. In this way, the divine *self*-communication is an ongoing communication of mutual giving and receiving, an interpersonal happening of love.³⁸

This concept is an attempt of theological thinking which tries to explain the divine reality in human language so that we can imagine in an intelligible way when speaking of God. In fact, this concept is not a result of a speculative thinking process the Church has developed in the course of her theological efforts. Rather, the belief in the Trinitarian God is based on the experience of Jesus Christ who reveals God to human beings in and through his life. Through the Son and in the Holy Spirit, God approaches humanity. In this encounter God shows to human beings his innermost nature and allows them to participate in divine life. Carlo M. Martini asserts:

In the Incarnation and in the paschal mystery we come to know the Son whom St. Ignatius of Antioch calls 'the Word proceeding from silence.' It is he in whom the Father (the Silence, the hidden mystery who is the origin of communication) expresses himself and makes himself known. In his whole life, Jesus did not want to do anything else as revealing the Father: 'I have revealed your name to men' (Jn 17:6). As Word proceeding from the Father, Jesus communicates himself to men and women of every age up to today, sending the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can be called "the Encounter": encounter of the Word and of Silence, the encounter of the Triune God with humanity. Through the Holy Spirit, an encounter-with-love mysteriously happens within every one of us, the love which the Father has for us from eternal silence and which he shows to us, in time, in His Son.³⁹

Martini refers to several biblical verses which address the intimate relationship of Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ Especially, the disciples experience and witness the deep relationship between Jesus and God, the Father, as well as the connection with the Holy Spirit when Jesus explains to them God and when they see Jesus prays to God. Numerous biblical passages give evidence to the

³⁸Greshake, *Eine Trinitarische Theologie*, 184-188.

³⁹Martini, *Effata "Apriti"*, no. 25.

⁴⁰Martini, *Effata "Apriti"*, no. 26.

relation between Jesus Christ and his Father, particularly the Evangelist John, for example: "No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn 14:6), "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9), and in other verses like Jn 14: 10, Jn 15: 9, Jn 15: 15; Jn 16:13, 14; Jn 16:15; Jn 17:11; Jn 17: 22, 23, etc.

The Trinitarian dimension of communication can be described with Bernhard Häring's words as follows:

Communication is constitutive in the mystery of God. Each of the three Divine Persons possesses all that is good, all that is true, all that is beautiful, but in the modality of communion and communication. Creation, redemption, and communication arise from this mystery and have as their final purpose to draw us, by his very communication, into communion with God. Creating us in his image and likeness, God makes us sharers of his creative and liberating communication in communion, through communion, and in view of communion.⁴¹

In short, we can say: The Trinitarian life is a *communio* through self-communication; and in turn the Trinitarian life is self-communication in *communio*. The divine self-communication is the ground of created realities. Especially, human beings are able to communicate because God has created them in his own image and likeness (Gen 1:26). From this Trinitarian understanding, being person is unique, relational and communicative. This is not only applicable to God, but also to human beings. The oneness of the person is always related to the distinctiveness of the other. Further, it opens the way to revelation, redemption and salvation of human beings. Karl Rahner describes the divine communication to the "outside" of the Trinity as follows:

Each one of the three divine persons communicates himself to man in gratuitous grace in his own personal particularity and diversity. This Trinitarian communication is the ontological ground of man's life in grace and eventually of the direct vision of the divine persons in eternity.⁴²

Therefore, Avery Dulles asserts: "Christianity is first and foremost the religion of communication."⁴³ All acts of God in creation, revelation, redemption are grounded in the self-communication of God in the Trinity. Dulles also states that "the entire work of creation,

⁴¹Bernard Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ: Moral Theology for Priests and Laity*, Vol. 2, London: St. Paul Publications, 1979, 155.

⁴²Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, New York: Herder and Herder, 1970, 34-35.

⁴³Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System*, Dublin: Crossroad, 1992, 38.

redemption, and sanctification is a prolongation of the inner processions within the Trinity."⁴⁴ One can discover this communicative motion from the innermost nature of God towards human beings in the process of divine revelation and most of all in the Incarnation.

3.2 Dimensions of God's Self-communication in Revelation

The Vatican II's document *Dei Verbum* declares:

Through divine revelation, God chose to show forth and communicate Himself and the eternal decisions of His will regarding the salvation of men. That is to say, He chose to share with them those divine treasures which totally transcend the understanding of the human mind.⁴⁵

From the Trinitarian life, God communicates himself; he creates human beings, addresses himself to them, and opens to them the secrets of his personal life. God's intention is to offer to humans a share in his life. God, the living God, has spoken to humanity in its concrete life and history. This is the fact that dominates the whole process of divine self-communication which is documented in Scriptures.

In the Old Testament God shows himself to Israel. From his free will, God intervenes into the history of Israel. This intervention is conceived under the form of an encounter between God and His chosen people: God speaks and Israel listens and answers. God addresses man; humans, hearing God, answer by faith and obedience. The fact and content of this communication is called revelation. Hence, to consider the way of God's revelation is to consider the dimensions of God's communication. Israel experiences in the encounter with God his sovereign power which changes the course of its history and the individual existence. René Latourelle says that God's "activity is not a brute display of power; it is always incorporated in words."⁴⁶ The power of God's word is the dialogues, the announcements, the explanations, the manifestations of a plan. In the course of revelation in the Old Testament, however, God does not speak to the whole of humanity, but he chooses first of all the people of Israel. This people are intermediaries who transmit His word to others.

From this background, the Old Testament is a testimony of Israel's belief. In this book, Israel communicates to the next generation the

⁴⁴Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 38.

⁴⁵DV, no. 6.

⁴⁶René Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, New York: Alba House, 1967, 21.

experience of God who acts in various communicative ways throughout its history and who asserts his will and his power to save his people. Franz-Josef Eilers states that “the whole Old Testament can be considered as a report on God’s communication with Israel his people.”⁴⁷ There are some fundamental moments of God’s communication in the whole historical development of the Chosen People Israel.

Not without reason, the story of God’s initiative to continue his communicating to humans is presented directly after humanity fails to build a city in order to live with each other and to keep communication among themselves, still more “to make a name” for themselves; the plan is unsuccessful (Gen 11). The story of Babel remains a symbol of miss-communication and misunderstanding among humans because this undertaking is based *only* on human capacity and power. Within the story of humanity (Gen 1-9), God speaks to a concrete person Abram and reveals himself. He communicates his plan for humans, and thus the story between God and Israel, considered in biblical perspective, begins (Gen 12). In a communicative relation to God, Abraham will become father of a great nation and a blessing for them with whom he shares life (Gen 12:1-3). According to Erich Zenger, the election of Abraham and the promise for the land are two constitutive elements of the existence of Israel.⁴⁸

The book of Exodus narrates the history of Israel’s deliverance. The high point is the encounter with God on the Sinai. In this story, God comes in contact with the chosen people through Moses. God appears to Moses, addresses him, and calls him into his special service from the burning bush (Ex 3:2). On the Moses’ story, Franz-Josef Eilers comments that Moses approached the bush probably “more out of curiosity”. Here, “God uses the need and sense for news of human beings to establish relationships and pass on his messages and concerns.”⁴⁹ Israel comes to “know” God primarily when it experiences God’s power which delivers it from the slavery of Egypt; and it progressively deepens its faith in God through many words and deeds which God had fulfilled in its own history.⁵⁰ In this communication, God uses nature (the plagues of Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea) to show his power and his will to liberate Israel and to make it into His chosen people. This deliverance ends up in the theophany on Sinai where God presents himself to his people and seals the alliance with Israel (Ex 19, 1-7). For Carlo Martini, the hour

⁴⁷Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 27.

⁴⁸Erich Zenger, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2008, 70.

⁴⁹Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 27.

⁵⁰DV, no. 14.

of the alliance on Sinai is a “fundamental event” in the communication of God with Israel.⁵¹ In this special relationship, the communicated Divine Word (Decalogue: “Ten Words”) grounds Israel’s existence and makes it into a nation.

God calls Israel out of Egypt, accompanies it through the desert, and now God gathers it and gives His word that grounds and guarantees the new born nation (Ex 20:2-17). This communicative happening is, according to Erich Zenger, the third element of Israel’s existence.⁵² The event on Sinai is the existential significant moment of communicative relation between God and the People Israel in which God makes Israel, as his first-born son, to his communication partner so that it from now on lives in a relationship with God by keeping the covenant. Because of this, Zenger calls the first part of the Bible, commonly identified as the Old Testament, the First Testament.⁵³

Based on this experience, Israel believes in the Word of God. It has creative power: when God communicates his word everything is created. God’s communication has a concrete plan and it is the fundament for every event, happening in the world. God speaks and everything is created. He names created things, and at His call, creation rises out of nothingness. The word of God gives existence and subsistence to the created reality (Gen 1:1 ff; cf. Ps 33:6, 9). God’s words manifest His presence, His majesty, His wisdom (Ps 19:2-5; Job 26:7-14; Prov 8:22-31; Sir 42:15-43; Wis 13:1-9). In other texts of the Old Testament, God communicates himself in escort of natural apparitions: He appears veiled in a cloud (Ex 13:21), burning like a burning fire (Ex 3:2; Gen 15:17), thundering in the tempest (Ex 19:16; Ps 29: 2ff), gentle as a light breeze (1 Kings 19:12 ff). All these show a kind of “non-verbal communication” of God which accompanies and confirms the Divine Word. Moreover, the word of God creates order that gives human life security. According to the source of the priestly tradition in the Old Testament, the universe is an expression of the will of God which, through the stars and the seas, determines the liturgical times, the Sabbath and the feasts (Gen 1:3-8); God’s communication creates order as condition for human life against the chaos that damages life.⁵⁴ Israel has to preserve this life by keeping the order which God has given to it for safeguarding the life. Thereby, God continuously communicates his order from the “meeting tent” as the symbol of divine presence in the midst of Israel

⁵¹Martini, *Effata “Apriti”*, no. 20.

⁵²Zenger, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 71.

⁵³Zenger, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 15.

⁵⁴Zenger, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 157-169.

(Lev 1:1). The whole book Leviticus describes the rules to guarantee the new community.

The communication event on Sinai always remains a central and fundamental moment of God's communication. Just in the time of exile, the remembrance of this event gives new meaning in the new life situation of the Israelites. God used the prophets to comfort and to enlighten Israel in the new situation. His communicating word gave hope to the shattered people who live in exile (Ezek 33:1 ff). Through the prophets, God reminded Israel of its origin where God has made it into a people from its nothingness in Egypt. From the beginning of Israel's history, God always communicates his word and reveals the plan for Israel (45:18-19; 48:16). God holds the poles of history (Isa 41:4; 44:6; 48:12). In the midst of national and religious crisis, Israel now heard the Divine Word which has a dynamic power upon all created reality (Isa 40:26; 45:12; 48:13). God's word shows its dynamism in the history. According to René Latourelle, "Yahweh addresses His word to the prophet. In the prophet this word is an active reality, charged with the very power of a God who communicates."⁵⁵ In the view of Erich Zenger, God communicates himself through the prophets as the one God who concretely intervenes in human history. He reveals himself as the God who commits himself to humanity and world's history.⁵⁶ The "prophetic word is *creator* and *interpreter* of history."⁵⁷ The prophet constantly refers to the communication event on Sinai, either to remind Israel of the faithfulness it owes the covenant, or, during the time of exile, to proclaim a new exodus, a new covenant (Isa 54-55). Based on God's word, he perceives the meaning of events, interprets history from the point of view of God, and makes it known to men and women of his time. Latourelle states that "the precise content of this word (of God) becomes intelligible only through the word of the prophet. Revelation-event and Revelation-word are, as it were, the two faces of the word of God."⁵⁸

According to Israel's belief, God's will expresses itself in the sapiential literature which represents a very ancient tradition in Israel (1 Kings 5:9-14; 10:1-13, 23-25). Sapiential literature enjoys a new popularity in the Persian and Hellenistic times: the existing collections (for example Prov 10:1-22, 16; 25-29) are augmented by numerous creations (Job, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, Wisdom). The

⁵⁵Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 33.

⁵⁶Zenger, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 425.

⁵⁷Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 34.

⁵⁸Latourelle, *Theology of Revelation*, 35.

sapiential literature has to do with human effort for a right knowledge which allows human beings to perceive the all-embracing order, existing in daily life. However, the people of Israel believe that wisdom is grounded in the fear of the Lord (Prov 1:7). There are various forms of communication in wisdom: proverbs, discourses, riddles, poetry, tales, etc. Israel gains its sapiential knowledge through experiences in life among themselves and by intercultural encounter with other neighbouring peoples. These sapiential treasures were soon transformed by Israel into an instrument for communicating the divine message. The same God who gives light to the prophet makes use of human experience to communicate himself to human beings (Prov 2:6; 20:27). At the beginning, this wisdom is simple reflection, positive and realistic, on man's conduct, to help him direct his life with prudence and discretion. In Greek culture, this reflection will take a more speculative trend and change into philosophy. In Israel, the treasure of human experience and wisdom was quickly animated by the breath of Yahweh's religion: Human experience and wisdom were adopted, but interpreted, and transmitted in the light of Israel's faith in Yahweh. Moreover, the experience from which this sapiential reflection is refined frequently belongs to revelation: creation (Sir 43), history which makes known the ways of God (Sir 44-50), the historical books, the Law and the prophets (Sir 39:1 ff).⁵⁹

Looking at communication dimensions in the First (Old) Testament we can see some characteristics:

- God is first the *Initiator* of communication. Based on this human beings are called to enter into an interpersonal communicative happening.
- In the encounter between God and Israel, God is the *one* who shows himself when he will, to whom he will, and because he will. He reveals himself in various forms and ways: like the Lord to his servant, then progressively like the father to his son, like a man with his friend, like a bridegroom with his bride, etc. All these communicative attempts of God aim at inviting and leading Israel to live in the covenant with God as communication partner.
- God communicates himself by His word. The Divine Word that once has called all things into being has continually expressed itself throughout the Israel's history, aiming at re-connecting Israel with God. It constitutes and safeguards the life of men. Hearing the word of God and following it, Israel comes to know Him and His plan.

⁵⁹Zenger, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 329-333; 400-403.

Blessing or curse, life or death is dependent on man's attitude whether s/he accepts or refuses God's word (Deut Chaps. 5 and 6).

- God's communication is not abstract, but his word is spoken concretely, in history and through history. The message of God is always incorporated in history. He uses the way of nature, human experiences and history to communicate his will to human beings. He uses the varieties of personalities (priests, sages and prophets, kings and aristocrats, peasants and shepherds, women and men) to transmit His messages. He chooses diverse ways of communication (theophanies, dreams, consultations, visions, ecstasies, trances, etc.) to make known his plan for Israel. He expresses His will in oracle, exhortation, autobiography, description, hymn, sapiential literature, mediation, etc.). Thus, one may say: "God communicates thus in many ways verbally and non-verbally and finally his communication is presented, preserved and sealed in a book, a means of communication which is the proof of God's communicative action."⁶⁰

- Studying God's communication in biblical perspective, Carlo Martini discovered some criteria for God's self-communication which he considers as basis for any human and Christian communication.⁶¹

1. Divine self-communication is *prepared in silence* and in secrecy of God (cf. Rom 16:25). It is a mystery "which is hidden from ages past in God, who created all things" (Eph 3:9).

2. God's communication to humans is *progressive, cumulative* and *historical*.

3. Divine self-communication realizes itself in a *dialectic way*.

4. Divine Communication *does not reach its fullness here on earth*. One must distinguish between the communication "in via" and the communication "in patria". Divine communication on earth has its values in anticipating in what is to come in the fullness of time when we see God how he is (1 Jn 3:2).

5. Divine self-communication is *personal*. God communicates himself, not something else. Everything God communicates out of himself is a sign and symbol of his will to communicate himself as a supreme gift. At the same time, divine communication is interpersonal. It appeals to the human person who receives this gift. This needs attention, reception, and listening.

6. God's communication finally *assumes all kinds of interpersonal communication*. In his communication God informs about himself and appeals to humans by calling, promising, threatening, admonishing; but all his communication is finally *self-communicating* because what he really wants to communicate is His person.

⁶⁰Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 28.

⁶¹Martini, *Effata "Apriti"*, no. 30ff.

3.3 Dimensions of God's self-communication in the Incarnation

"In the times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets; in these last days, he spoke to us by a Son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe, who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being, who sustains all things by his mighty word" (Heb 1:1-3).

These words in the Letter to the Hebrews may be used as a summary of divine Self-communication in the Incarnation, in the person of Jesus Christ. In Him, God now communicates himself in a very personal way: God, again as initiator, seeks for a "common ground" to communicate himself to human beings. For this reason, "the Word has become flesh" (Jn 1:14). The Son of God becomes a human person among the other.

First of all, it is to note that the circumstances of the life of Jesus Christ as such must already be considered as communication: the simple way of His birth, His hidden years in Nazareth as preparation for His apostolate, His social status as the carpenter's son, the 40 days in the desert, and His passion and death on the Cross, all these show how Jesus Christ did communicate.⁶²

There are some fundamental moments of Jesus' communication:

1. *The Baptism of Jesus – a New Dimension of God's Self-communication*

In this special event, God breaks silence and speaks to men. The baptism of Jesus is a Trinitarian communicative act of God to human beings which characterizes a new exodus: (1) the Father, in a new and singular way, gives his WORD. (2) The Holy Spirit publicly discloses the true Image of God to all those who are present by the baptism act. Jesus is here revealed as a true Servant of God. (3) The Son, when he lines up with other people for the baptism by John and willingly accepts the baptism of repentance, represents the true Image of God's Son as well as the true image of Israel, the "first-born son" (cf. Ex 4:22).⁶³ All these characterize Jesus as the one, who is the "new" communication of God to Israel. At the same time, he himself is, in his being, God's message to human beings: Jesus Christ is the communicator and the communication. All these aspects determine and permeate the whole life of Jesus. They become tangible and visible through the multiform of his activities.

⁶²Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 55.

⁶³Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993, 65-71.

2. *First of all, Jesus Christ appeals to the people of his times as the one who announces and inaugurates the Kingdom of God. He does this through his teaching, his deeds, and most of all through his person.*

Jesus communicates to human beings as the teacher of wisdom par excellence. In the beatitudes, Jesus proclaims the Kingdom of God and declares the essence of its program so that his hearers could memorize, ponder and live by it (Mt 5:1-12; Lk 6:20-26). He uses the disposition of his audience, their values which are grounded in the socio-cultural and religious perception of Israel to explain them and to introduce them the meaning and substance of God's kingdom. He comes not to destroy those values, but to bring it to the fullness (Mt 5:17). The so-called antitheses in Mathew's Gospel prove Jesus' competence and authority as communicator: "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors... But I say to you..." (Mt 5:27-48). He performs his activities of teaching on any occasion and at any place.⁶⁴

While Jesus uses the words to explain the relevance and the content of the message of God's kingdom, his parables and stories of everyday life "visualize" the reality of the Kingdom of God in the perception of his hearers. There is a wide range of human experiences and activities in use for the service of Jesus' teaching: sons leaving home to live elsewhere, travellers beaten and robbed on the lonely road, hidden treasures being discovered, farmers sowing seed, workers hired, women preparing the yeast in the flour, etc.⁶⁵

In addition, the miracles performed by Jesus belong to the same communication as words. They are signs which Jesus uses to attest to the words, and to manifest the Kingdom of God. In his theological reflection on Jesus' miracles, René Latourelle underlines four functions of miracles: (1) communication, (2) revelation, (3) attestation, and (4) liberation and enhancement. First of all, he emphasizes the communicative function of Jesus' miracles. According to him, "they are not simply traces or vestiges of a presence and an action, but express an intention to seek inter-personal communication... Prior to any further specification miracles thus have the function of communicating. They show God's intention of entering into a dialogue of friendship with human beings."⁶⁶ There are many stories like the narratives of the possessed man (Mk 5:20), the leper (Mk 1:45), the blind man at Jericho (Mk 18:52; Lk 18:43), the

⁶⁴Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 55.

⁶⁵Gerald O'Collins and James Kroeger, *Jesus: A Portrait* (Philippine Edition), Manila: Claretian Publications and Jesuit Communications, 2010, 81-110.

⁶⁶René Latourelle, *The Miracles of Jesus and the Theology of Miracles*, New York: Paulist Press, 1988, 294.

deaf man (Mk 7:31-37), etc. These people are separated and isolated. Because of their illness, they lose their communicative ability and possibility. By healing their illness, Jesus re-establishes their communicative ability and gives them the possibility to return into human society and into communion with the Father.⁶⁷

To summarize the way of Jesus' communication in his proclaiming of the Kingdom of God, one might say:

The *means* used by Jesus for His communication cover the whole range of non-verbal and verbal communications of His time and culture. He non-verbally communicates through actions like miracles, healing, touching, writing in the sand, expelling the sellers from the temple, etc. His actions, thus, can be communicating directly or symbolically, expressing a deeper meaning. He verbally communicates in preaching, teaching, dialogue, group sharing like with His disciples and personal contact like with Nicodemus. His preaching uses parables, metaphors, proverbs, storytelling and references to daily life experiences but also plain language.⁶⁸

3. *The Last Supper is the culmination of God's communication which was introduced by the baptism of Jesus and was realized in Jesus' mission. In this intimate scene, God, in and through Jesus Christ, gives himself and reveals himself as a living God whose being is a being for the other.*

In the Last Supper, Jesus uses the special ritual of Israel as a way to communicate God's love in a deeper and new dimension. He takes the place of the housefather in Israel, who reminds his children of the wondrous deliverance of Israel from the Slavery of Egypt; in the Last Supper, Jesus introduces his disciples to a new dimension of God's salvation. What is more, in this deeply touching and wonderful moment Jesus gives himself as the Lamb which saves and frees human beings (Mt 26:26 ff.; Mk 14:22 ff.; Lk 22:19 ff.). He acts, in this point of view, as a friend who shares the intimate life with his friends up to the point of giving himself for the life of his friends (Jn 15:13).

4. *In Jesus' Crucifixion God speaks his "Yes" as an answer to a "No" of human beings who refuses God's invitation to the share in communal and communicative life.*

All the teachings, activities, and the whole life of Jesus aim at the full communion between God and humans. His testament to the disciples reveals this divine will, "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" (Jn 17:21). Jesus communicates a movement "from

⁶⁷René Latourelle, *The Miracles of Jesus*, 297-298.

⁶⁸Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 55.

God to men" in all his activities; he addresses his listeners and tries to bring them the experience of God's love. Based on this, people, as the response, may enter into communication and communion with God. At the same time there is vice versa in his whole life also a movement "from men toward God". He not only introduces people to this way; in a communicative action, he himself goes this way. Moreover, he draws people into this movement. According to Greshake, the movement "from God to men" and "from men toward God" can be seen clearly in the event of the Cross. The Cross is, considered from God's view, the most radical sign that God keeps up his offer to communication and communion even when the world refuses it. The Cross is the kenotic Yes of God to the No of human beings. In fact, God's "Yes" is spoken into the absurd abyss between God and the world, created by a human "No" to divine love and life. At the same time, the Cross is characterized by a movement "from men toward God": it is a sacrifice which Christ as the "son of man" - representing humanity - gives to the Father.⁶⁹ So, we can say that the Cross is a radical gesture of God's love he communicates to human beings, a silent gesture in the power of love.

All these moments of God's communication address the whole life of human beings. In other words, all aspects of the human life are embraced by the presence of a communicating God which is showed in Jesus Christ: from the beginning (baptism) until the end (crucifixion), but passes over in a new life in the Spirit (resurrection) as a new communicative being, a presence in *communio* with the Trinitarian God.

Reflecting on the dimensions of Jesus' communication, we can notice a few characteristics:

The most essential dimension of God's self-communication in the New Testament is the fact that the Eternal Word of God is spoken by God himself - the Son. In this way, God fully communicates his intimate being to humanity. In Jesus Christ, God speaks directly from himself (Jn 1:1-2, 18). The word of God, once passed on, interpreted and pronounced by the prophets, becomes now "flesh" in a person. The high point of the divine self-communication in Jesus Christ is that he gives himself in love to human beings.

According to Greshake, the Incarnation does not aim at instructing human beings that they finally "know" who God is and what this God demands. But, it is in fact an ultimate foundation of

⁶⁹Greshake, *Eine Trinitarische Theologie*, 338-340.

communication. Moreover, in this event, God unconditionally communicates himself to human beings. In his communication, Christ reveals to humans who God is, namely "God is love" (cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16). At the same time, he shows what human beings are: God's children (cf. 1 Jn 3:1), created in God's image and likeness.

In the interplay of communication and communion, Christ is at once the expression and the exegete of God's heart to human beings. He is "the perfect communicator."⁷⁰ Jesus Christ is the central symbol of the Christian religion. Rahner sees in the Incarnation "the absolute symbol of God in the World." This absolute symbol of God is "not merely the presence and revelation of what God is in himself. But He is also the expressive Being (Da-sein) of what – or rather who – God will be, in free grace, to the world, in such a way that this divine attitude, once so expressed, can never be reversed, but is and remains ultimate and unsurpassable."⁷¹

Analyzing Jesus' communication Eilers points out some criteria which can serve as principles for any Christian communication:⁷²

- *Jesus' prayer and relation to his Father* must be considered as the basis of His communication to people.
- In His communication, *Jesus always starts from the life and life experience of His people*. He is recipient-audience oriented but at the same time rooted in His mission from the Father.
- *Jesus' communication is embedded in Scripture*. He shows in His communication how His message and mission are prepared already in the old covenant of Israel.
- Jesus communicates also *through question and answer*.
- *Jesus makes people think and challenges them in different ways of communicating* to be honest in their lives and before God. They are challenged to set the proper priorities in their lives. He bares the masks of human communications and encourages and demands clear decisions (Mt 8:19ff; Lk 14:26f; Mk 10:17). He curses those who do not face reality in their lives and their vocations (cf. Lk 12:56; Mk 8:17f; Mt 23:13).
- Jesus also communicates *in the dialectic way of thesis and antithesis*.
- *Jesus puts people into crisis and confrontation but aims at change and conversion*; it is finally not only a sharing of information but of life.
- Jesus, in His communication, *reminds and admonishes people on their dignity, their duties, their being loved by the Father*.

⁷⁰*Communio et Progressio*, no. 11.

⁷¹Karl Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie*, Bd. IV, Einsiedeln, Zürich, Köln: Benziger Verlag, 1967, 293-294.

⁷²Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 56.

- Jesus *encourages and invites to unity and oneness with God and others*. He restores the communication which is blocked or interrupted by sin.
- *Jesus' communication has an eschatological dimension*: His communication finds its final fulfillment only at the end of time.

3.4 The Holy Spirit as Person-Gift and Agent of Divine Communication

In the story of God's self-communication the Holy Spirit is at work as dynamic communicating power and movement. He is the dynamic and vivid "out-coming movement" of the Triune God which reaches out to the creation, "as an extension of the ineffable communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."⁷³

He takes part in the act of the creation (cf. Gen 1:1). He is present in the creation at the beginning of God's salvific self-communication to the things he creates.⁷⁴

He is active throughout the salvific history of God with his chosen people Israel. He comes upon persons whom God has chosen (Ex 35:31; Judg 14:6; 1 Sam. 10:6, 10; 1 Sam 16:13; 2 Chr 15:1). Through him, man receives the communicative power to speak the word of God (2 Sam 23:2; Ez 11:5). He makes humans able to hear the words of God (Ezek 11:24). He renews the faith of Israel (Ezek 37:1ff.) and makes known the will of God (Mic 3:8). He is also the one who enables Elizabeth, Simeon and Anna to see Jesus as the Messiah (Lk 1:39ff. and 3:25ff.).

He also crucially acts in the Incarnation as Person-love. In this perspective Pope John Paul says in his document *Dominum et Vivificantem*:

It (the Incarnation) was 'brought about' by that Spirit - consubstantial with the Father and the Son - who, in the absolute mystery of the Triune God, is the Person-love, the uncreated gift, who is the eternal source of every gift that comes from God in the order of creation, the direct principle and, in a certain sense, the subject of God's self-communication in the order of grace... For the 'fullness of time' is matched by a particular fullness of the self-communication of the Triune God in the Holy Spirit. 'By the power of the Holy Spirit' the mystery of the 'hypostatic union' is brought about, that is, the union of the divine nature and the human nature, of the divinity and the humanity in the one Person of the Word-Son. When at the moment of the Annunciation Mary utters her 'fiat': 'Be it done unto me according to your word,' she conceives in a virginal way a man, the Son of Man, who is the Son of God. By means of this 'humanization' of the Word-

⁷³*Dominum et Vivificantem*, no. 11.

⁷⁴*Dominum et Vivificantem*, no. 12.

Son the self-communication of God reaches its definitive fullness in the history of creation and salvation.⁷⁵

The Holy Spirit reveals Jesus as the true servant, the true prophet and the Son of God by Jesus' baptism (Mt 3:16ff.; Lk 3:22, 23) (cf. *DV*, no. 15-17). He is present in Jesus' activities for the kingdom of God (Mt 12:28).

Through the Paschal mystery and resurrection of Jesus, the Holy Spirit is given to human beings as a Person-gift from the Father and the Son. At the Last Supper, Jesus speaks to his disciples of this Spirit: "I will send him (the Advocate) to you ... and he will declare to you the things that are coming... He will take from what is mine and declare it to you. Everything that the Father has is mine; for this reason I told you that he will take from what is mine and declare it to you" (cf. Jn 16:7-16). According to Pope John Paul II, "the new, definitive revelation of the Holy Spirit as a Person who is the gift is accomplished at this precise moment."⁷⁶

Pentecost is the fulfilment of Jesus' promise. This event opens the era of the Church. In fact, it is a fundamental moment of the Church's communication. Carlo Martini calls the Pentecost "the Gospel of communication." At Pentecost the Holy Spirit enables the frightened disciples to communicate and open the channels of communication which was interrupted in the event of Babel. God here does "re-establish the possibility of simple and authentic communicating in the name of Jesus."⁷⁷ This is the hour of the Church's birth, the beginning of Church's communication as "sign and instrument" of God's communion in humanity.

3.5 The Church as Image of the Trinity - a Communicative Reality

God's self-communication in the history of Israel aims at making himself known to his Chosen People. His communication enables Israel to enter into the relationship with God in the covenant. Israel lives from the event on Sinai as communication partner of God which has to follow the Decalogue. Living the faith, this people will be saved and witness God's presence in their nation. Moreover, Israel should communicate the presence of God to other nations.

However, the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the fullness of God's communication. God really communicates himself in a very personal way to human beings. He shows his innermost being through the life, work, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Who comes in touch

⁷⁵*Dominum et Vivificantem*, no. 50.

⁷⁶*Dominum et Vivificantem*, no. 23.

⁷⁷Martini, *Effata "Apriti"*, no. 19.

with Jesus, follows him, and lives in personal relationship with him, will personally encounter God (Jn 14:9). Jesus does not only incorporate the disciples into the life with the Trinitarian God, moreover, he demands them to share this life with other people. The document *Ad Gentes* states that the Church is “a universal sacrament of salvation” for the humanity.⁷⁸ She is “missionary by her very nature.” Because of this, the Church is by her very essence communication.⁷⁹ This mission is grounded on the love and self-communication of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁸⁰ Living in communicative communion with Christ and through the Holy Spirit, the Church communicates the Trinitarian reality to humanity. In this perspective, Dulles asserts that “the Church *is* communication.” She realizes herself “a vast communication network designed to bring men out of their isolation and estrangement and to bring them individually and corporately into communion with God in Christ.”⁸¹ She is by her nature the continuation of God’s communication in every time and place.

There are some fundamental aspects of the Church’s communication dimension:

In fundamental theological point of view, Jürgen Werbick considers Church’s communication as standard category. According to him, revelation, faith, tradition and ecclesiastical practices may be considered as basic communicative realities.⁸² The Church’s communication to humanity happens in a dynamic communicative process in which the content of the faith is preserved and shared with the next generation. In this ongoing communication, the Church shapes and keeps her identity, and develops her own institution in the midst of human society. All these are based on God’s communication.⁸³ In this way, the Church realizes herself as new communicative reality in the here and now of every time and space.

The new communicative reality is expressed through *communio/koinonia*. The Church should mirror the communicative essence of God in the midst of the world. Based on this, the Church realizes herself as the continuation of God’s communication to humanity. Through a life of communion with God and among the

⁷⁸AG, no. 1.

⁷⁹AG, no. 2.

⁸⁰AG, no. 2-4.

⁸¹Dulles, “The Church and Communication,” 110.

⁸²Jürgen Werbick, “Kommunikation,” in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (LThK), ed. Walter Kasper, Freiburg: Herder, 1997, 214.

⁸³DV, no. 7.

faithful, the Church testifies to a “new communicative culture.”⁸⁴ The *communio/koinonia* concept follows the paradigm of the Early Christians (cf. Acts 2:42; 4:34ff.) which is grounded in the communion with Christ (cf. 1 Cor 1:4,5), and showed deeply in the Eucharist ((cf. 1 Cor 10:16-21). All these build up the mystical body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor 12).

This spiritual dimension of Church’s communication can be seen in the theology of love by the evangelist John. God is love and one can be part of this love when s/he believes in God and in the Son who God sends to communicate his love. One participates in this love if s/he remains in it (Jn 15:9-10). From there, the Church gains her *communio* and the church as *communio* testifies to the unity of the Triune God (cf. 1 Jn 3:24; 4:15-17; Jn 17:21-24). For this reason, the Church is also called “*communio sanctorum*” in which the faithful think of the gift of God’s self-communication and communicate this gift that guarantees their communion.

Based on the communion/communication with Christ and in the Holy Spirit and the communion/communication among the Church’s members, the Church is considered as a community which remembers, proclaims, interprets, and celebrates the communicating Word of God, but at the same time also as a community which communicates this message to the world. Here, the *kerygmatic* dimension of the Church comes to light. The Church performs this in the three basic ways of communicating: *Martyria*, *Leiturgia*, and *Diakonia*.⁸⁵

When we accept the five communication models of the Church, developed by Dulles,⁸⁶ as communication structure, the concept of *communio/koinonia*, realized in *kerygmatic* form and in the three basic ways *Martyria*, *Leiturgia*, and *Diakonia*, should permeate the entire structure of the Church. In this way the Church is more a communicative reality than institution. She lives in view of communication and communion for the sake of human’s communion with God.

The reciprocal self-communication of God in his innermost mysterious life, his self-communication in human history, presented in the history of Israel, the divine self-communication in the Incarnation, and the continuation of God’s self-communication in and through the Church set up the frame for communication theology.

⁸⁴Jürgen Werbick, *Grundfragen der Ekklesiologie*, Freiburg: Herder, 2009, 121-124.

⁸⁵Jürgen Werbick, *Den Glauben verantworten: Eine Fundamentaltheologie*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien: Herder, 2005 (3rd edition), 810.

⁸⁶Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, Dublin: Crossroad, 1992, 22.

Such a theology is the basis for the Church as communication. Therefore, communication theology primarily concerns itself with the essence of the Church as communication. It less focuses on the use of the communication instruments. For this reason, the whole of theology must be considered under the perspective of communication. As consequences all fundamental aspects of communication, driven from the self-communication of God, must be pervasive in all theological disciplines. Based on the essence of the Church as communication, Christian communicator may shape the inner disposition for communication and deals with the communicative reality of human beings with its potentials of communication, and with the respective situation.

4. Conclusion

God's self-communication is the source of human life and human communication. The divine self-communication shows itself in the Trinity, the revelation, the Incarnation, and embodied in the Church is the grammar of communication theology. Such a theology should be a formation programme in the Church's theological institutes, especially in the priestly formation. Further, communication theology leads to deepening the dimensions of communication in all different theological disciplines in order to fecundate the respective fields of those disciplines. It helps Christian communicators to form disposition in communicating with other people from different social backgrounds, cultures and religions. Based on God's communication, Christians can develop a proper attitude in the process of social communication in order to contribute to the improvement and unity of human society (*CeP*, no. 1). It gives enlightening insights to those who concern themselves with human social communication. In turn, studying communication theology, one will be led to a communicative exchange with other sciences like anthropology, culturology, psychology, sociology, etc... In this way the Church can effectively face the challenges and problems of social communication in the modern world, especially when she will give orientation and direction to young people who are the most affected persons in living under the influence of modern communication.

In Christian understanding one can say: we may miss-communicate, but we cannot not communicate, because human beings are created by a communicating God, in His image and likeness (Gen 1:26). Communication must happen for the sake of human unity among themselves and with God, their constantly communicating God.