

## **COMMUNICATION ETHICS: TOWARD A NEW PHILANTHROPY**

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It is said that human beings are social animals and they cannot live like islands separated from one another. While creating everything on the face of the earth, the Lord himself says, "It is not good for man to be alone" (Gen 2:18). Yes, for our human nature, we cannot live alone; we cannot but always strive to establish relationships with others and only in relation to others, do we realize the fullness of our being and our potentials. Such relations are made possible through communications in words, deeds, thoughts, gestures, signs and symbols. With every act of communication, whether verbal or non-verbal, we interact and share ourselves, our ideas, perspectives, values, likes and dislikes. The response to our communicative act may be passive or non-existent; nonetheless, a particular message is already communicated irrespective of its receptivity, resistance or repudiation.

Today, we live in a world which is marked by immense diversity – diversity of language, culture, civilization, ethnicity, religious beliefs, practices and traditions. Way back in 1997, Samuel P. Huntington, in his famous book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* had envisaged that a clash of civilizations would dominate the future of world politics causing the greatest threat to world peace. According to him, "in this new world the most pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts will not be between social classes, rich and

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poor, or other economically defined groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities. Tribal wars and ethnic conflicts will occur within civilization."<sup>1</sup> He had also envisioned that an international order based on harmonious relationship between civilizations could be the best safeguard against wars in the future. In our context of diversity and the fear of the clash of civilizations, an atmosphere of understanding and mutual trust between different socio-cultural, ethnic and religious groups can be built only through proper communication; and that is the challenge of communication ethics in the age of diversity.

Amidst diversity or even without any diversity, there does not exist any possibility that we do not or cannot communicate with anyone coming in contact with us. Every interaction gives rise to a series of communications. After a comprehensive study of interactional patterns, pathologies and paradoxes in Mental Research Institute based in California, Paul Watzlawick postulated a metacommunicational axiom of the pragmatics of communication: "One cannot *not* communicate."<sup>2</sup> When we encounter someone, we cannot but communicate. We cannot avoid communicating in any encounter because he or she observes and interprets the way we behave, talk, react or look at him or her, what we say and what we do. Apart from that he or she also observes and interprets what we do not say and what we do not do. Even when we do not intend to communicate by showing our passivity or indifference, we do so. On the unconscious level, we express our feelings about others "through subtle, often nonverbal communication. Regardless of whether we aim to communicate and whether others understand our intentions, we continuously unavoidably communicate."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, each act of communication contains in itself a latent potential to establish new relationships depending on the intention of the communicator, content of the message and its effect on the one who receives the message. One of the positive and notable outcomes of the continuum

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 28.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Watzlawick, *Pragmatics of Human Communication. A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967, 48-51: "If it is accepted that all behavior in an interactional situation has message value, i.e., is communication, it follows that no matter how one may try, one cannot *not* communicate. Activity or inactivity, words or silence all have message value: they influence others and these others, in turn, cannot *not* respond to these communications and are thus themselves communicating."

<sup>3</sup>Julia T. Wood, *Interpersonal Communication: Everyday Encounters*, Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2002, 35.

communication is the gradual birth of a new kind of philanthropy; that is, a sense of being related or being interconnected not only to fellow human beings, but also to the *other* beings on the face of the earth. By projecting continuously the growing ecological imbalances, evident in global warming and climate change, the fast developing technologies of communication have successfully created an awareness and a sense of responsibility towards creation despite growing consumerism and individualism. As a result, the communication ethics of our time has to go beyond its primary objective of serving truth, justice and human well being, and move toward a new kind of philanthropy, that is, the general well being of the entire creation.

### **New Tools of Communications: New Challenges**

In his letter, St. James compares the human tongue with fire, which can be used and abused by the persons themselves: "Consider how small a fire can set a huge forest ablaze. The tongue is also a fire. It exists among our members as a world of malice, defiling the whole body and setting the entire course of our lives on fire [...]. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings who are made in the likeness of God" (James 3:5-9). Human tongues or languages are the fundamental means of communications. The fast developing communication technologies have given wings to human tongues. They can easily be used and abused. A few years ago, we were grappling to be in touch with friends and family members who were a few hundreds or thousands of miles away. But the current communication techniques have revolutionized our life. Internet communications and instant messaging have become essential feature of our social life. Far away relationships are nourished by email messages, instant message exchanges, chatting, social networking, and phone calls. Romantic relationships too begin online, and often end online.<sup>4</sup> At times, intimate, uneasy or difficult conversations are mediated by the emotional distance provided by the Internet and other communication tools, which otherwise would be far more difficult when we try to sort out our personal problems, emotions and relations sitting face-to-face. Along with such immense help in establishing and nurturing our social life, the communication tools also have become tools for forgery and cheating causing hurt feelings, heartbreaks and even suicides. One of the challenges faced in the field of current communication is deceit and

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<sup>4</sup>Cf., Amanda Lenhart - et al., "Teenage Life Online: The Rise of the Instant-Message Generation and the Internet's Impact on Friendships and Family Relationships" in Kathleen M. Galvin and P.J. Cooper, *Making Connections: Readings in Relational Communication*, Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company, 2003, 355.

falsehood. Often false identities are used to play with the emotions of the other person, to kill time or to extract money in deceitful manner.

Whether we like it or not, we are continuously bombarded with all sorts of information from every communication tools. We face a daunting task of choosing some useful information and discarding others. Then, the ethical question arises what ought to choose for our social, moral and spiritual growth. John Paul II had rightly observed in his encyclical letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (30 December 1987): “When individuals and communities do not see a rigorous respect for the moral, cultural and spiritual requirements, based on the dignity of the person and on the proper identity of each community, beginning with the family and religious societies, then all the rest – availability of goods, abundance of technical resources applied to daily life, a certain level of material well-being – will prove unsatisfying and in the end contemptible.”<sup>5</sup> Fortunately or unfortunately, all of us have become the creators and consumers of information – real, virtual or potential – defying any frontier, time or space. Amidst the continuous bombardment of news, information, advertisements, publicity and allurements, we do not have time to sit back and reflect, to create and recreate ideas, to look for right orientations and to share them with others. Often we seem to live in a deafening silence by failing to listen to ourselves as well as to others. We become part of cyberculture, which often leads us away from the realities of our life and our grass-root culture. Unfortunately, because of our blindness and inability to choose or discard any information, the message in itself or the content of any message becomes secondary. The message itself is lost in the deafening silence. In such circumstance, it is easy to manipulate information, and manipulation of communication is indeed unethical and dehumanizing. Amidst such conflict situations, the new communication tools challenge us to define new communication ethics which can serve truth and justice, safeguard human dignity, and enhance harmonious relationships.

### **Challenges to Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Relationships**

In the Christian view, the communications media are wonderful instruments at man’s disposal, under God’s Providence, for building closer and more enlightened relationships between individuals and throughout the human family. Indeed, as they develop, the media are capable of fashioning a new language which enables people to know and understand one another more easily, and therefore to work together more readily for the common good.<sup>6</sup> If however they are to

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<sup>5</sup>John Paul II, *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, n. 33.

<sup>6</sup>cf. *Communio et Progressio*, 12.

be effective means of fellowship and genuine human advancement, the media must be a channel and expression of truth, justice and peace, good will and active charity, mutual help, love and communion.<sup>7</sup>

The message of John Paul II for the 25<sup>th</sup> World Communication Day elaborates the task and the challenge of the means of communication to establish intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. The fast growing communication technologies have immense potentialities for establishing a more humane society based on harmonious human relationships through the diffusion of proper and authentic information and knowledge; but along with such possibility, there is a danger of our intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships being destabilized with the improper and indiscreet use of the communication technologies. As the communication technologies become handy, they dominate our daily life, and our relationships tend to become more virtual and mechanical than real. The dominant cyberculture often outpaces our own socio-cultural life; so much so that the loss of any human being close to us seems to become less painful than the breakdown of our communication tools. In fact, in the course of time, they become part of our life, or rather, we become part of the communication tools. Any malfunction of these tools causes fear, and fear of their breakdown takes the form of nightmare. We panic when they get blocked or break down. Without internet, we become handicapped or our life becomes jeopardized. In their absence, silence itself becomes deafening and agonizing. Our virtual life seems to become so vast that it easily crosses the boundaries of time and space. If we ask the contemporary children how many friends do they have; they would respond immediately without even blinking their eyes that they have a few hundreds or thousands of friends in the Facebook or in the Internet. However, in their real life, they seem strangers to their close neighbours, and in some cases, to their own family members. The ever floating information in different forms leave little space to sit and reflect on one's own life, ideas and orientations; and as a result, the interpersonal relationships too become shallow and superficial.

The challenges to intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships are indeed vast and diverse. The tendency to give importance only to those which are attractive and ready-for-sale, downplays the value and dignity of human person. The end results are consumerism and individualism, which in turn, cause the gradual loss of sense of

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<sup>7</sup>John Paul II, Message for the 25<sup>th</sup> World Communications Day: *The Communication Media and the Unity and Progress of Human Family*; cf. *Communio et Progressio*, 12 and 13.

morality and religion. In October 2008, the British Humanist Association led by Hanne Stinson advertized the atheists' propaganda on the London buses, "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life." The Italian city of Genoa advertized its own version on the city buses in Italian, "*Cattiva notizia è che Dio non esiste. Quella buona è che non ne hai bisogno*" (Bad news is that God does not exist. Good news is that you do not need God). Such propaganda is not *against* God; its aim is to have a life properly *without* God. Without God, the source of life and morality, only those relationships would be worthy to establish and nurture which are enjoyable and useful for human life. Such utilitarian ideologies not only change the way we communicate, but transform the communication itself and the sense of morality takes a downturn. Just on the contrary, if communication tools are properly used as the means of spreading information and knowledge, they will definitely give birth to "a new way of learning and thinking, with unprecedented opportunities for establishing relationships and building fellowship."<sup>8</sup> Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, the Director General of UNESCO, has rightly written in the Forward for *Many Voices One World*, generally known as *MacBride Report*:

Communication is at the heart of all social intercourse. Whenever men have come to establish regular relations with one another, the nature of the systems of communication created between them, the forms these have taken and the measure of effectiveness they have attained have largely determined the chances of bringing communities closer together or of making them one, and the prospects for reducing tensions or setting conflicts wherever they have arisen.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, any communication ethics for today faces a great challenge to propose ways and means to promote a sense of harmonious human relationships and interrelatedness.

### **Challenge to Develop a Dual Perspective through Dialogue**

Developing a dual perspective is a challenge to recognize other perspectives without abandoning our own perspectives and taking them into account while communicating. Adapting a dual perspective facilitates new relationships based on mutual

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<sup>8</sup>Benedict XVI, Message for the 45<sup>th</sup> World Communications Day: *Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age*, n. 1.

<sup>9</sup>International Commission for the Study of Communication Problem, *Many Voices, One World: Towards a New More Just and More Efficient World Information and Communication Order*, London: Kogan, 1980, xiii.

understanding and trust. In such atmosphere, there exists a high probability of conflicts being reduced; collaboration being assured; different cultures being mutually enriched, and tolerance of dissent voices being enhanced. Dialogue offers the possibility of developing a dual perspective. Pope Benedict XVI had rightly chosen the theme for the 43<sup>rd</sup> World Communication Day as "New Technologies, New Relationships. Promoting a Culture of Respect, Dialogue and Friendship." Today, when our human society is becoming more individualistic with growing attitude of "use and throw" even in human relationships, it is a great challenge to use the new technologies of communication to establish relationships and to promote a culture of respect, dialogue and friendship. Therefore, developing a dual perspective is a challenge to encourage "men and women to be conscious of their dignity, enter into the thoughts and feelings of others, cultivate a sense of mutual responsibility, and grow in personal freedom, in respect for others' freedom, and in the capacity for dialogue."<sup>10</sup> As the word itself indicates, developing a dual perspective through dialogue is not a one way process. It is a two way process of relating to people who hold different views, opinions and perspectives. Often in a lighter spirit, it is said, "When I speak, it is dialogue, and when you speak, it is monologue." It requires a capacity and will to listen to others and the sensibility to multiple voices. It has immense power and possibility of contributing to the culture of love through the exchange of life and ideas. One has to learn to listen and see the difference without any fear or prejudice.

The capacity to listen to others and to be sensitive to multiple voices is tested in a situation where each act of communication is conditioned by socio-cultural traditions, history, religious beliefs and practices. Multiplicity of languages, cultures and religions has a possibility in itself to create an atmosphere of tolerance and dialogue. It is rightly said, "Because we each view the world through the labels, categories and concepts that are products of our culture, it can be difficult to communicate effectively outside that culture."<sup>11</sup> In a multicultural context, the communication is enriched by variety and diversity of values, perspectives, socio-cultural traditions, religious beliefs, histories and so on. Sharing and exchange of values open the door to welcome new sets of values. The challenge to develop a dual perspective finds its concrete answer only in such diversity of cultures and contexts through dialogue. Amidst diversity and

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<sup>10</sup>Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Communications*, n. 6.

<sup>11</sup>James Neuliep, "The Necessity of Intercultural Communication" in Kathleen M. Galvin and P.J. Cooper, *Making Connections*, 54.

differences, dialogue is characterized by the will to forgive, forget and to reconcile to the new realities of diversity and difference. It is an invitation to accept and appreciate other perspectives which are different from others. When the differences are appreciated, one can expect a good interpersonal communication among the people of different socio-cultural, religious and historical background. It is achieved through critical self-introspection, open sharing and asking questions in an atmosphere of mutual trust and openness. Stereotyping a person or any particular community is a hindrance to dialogue. In the context of multiplicity of language, culture and religion, the respect and acceptance of differences is like the different keys of a piano. Only the difference of the musical keys makes possible a harmonious and melodious music. In any process of dialogue, it is important to listen to the other person. Unless we listen to the other person, we will not understand nor appreciate his or her perspective. The responses of the listener have a direct impact on the direction of any dialogue. In any human communication process, "effective listening is equally as important as clear, articulate speaking. Sensitive, articulate expression of ideas is one half of communication; careful, effective listening is the other. Receiving the message being sent by the other person and accurately assigning meanings to that message are required for understanding and for any real communication to take place."<sup>12</sup> Developing a dual perspective requires an attentive and careful listening to the other.

Today, we face a crisis of communication amidst growing means of communication – crisis of the absence of communication on one side, and the excess of communication on the other side. The absence of communication signifies a lack of will to listen to the other voice, the other perspective different from that of ours. In the vast array of the excess of communication, the core message itself is lost. Nonetheless, the encounter of culture facilitated by the proper use of communication opens the doors to intercultural dialogue and mutual enrichment of values, making it a powerful tool "for education and cultural enrichment, for commercial activity and political participation, for intercultural dialogue and understanding."<sup>13</sup> In today's context, dialogue between the cultures is especially needed to bring about exchange of ideas whether they are verbal or non-verbal,

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<sup>12</sup>Thomas E. Harris and John C. Sherblom, "Listening and Feedback: The Other Half of Communication" in Kathleen M. Galvin and P. J. Cooper, ed., *Making Connections: Readings in Relational Communication*, 122.

<sup>13</sup>Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Internet*, n. 1.



signs, symbols, visions and gestures. One culture must learn from another culture – worldviews, values and traditions. In a way, the continuous encounter of cultures gives rise to the possibility of a fusion of horizons. It has to be kept in mind that communication can become “an instrument or power, a revolutionary weapon, a commercial product, or a means of education; it can serve the ends of either liberation or of oppression, of either the growth of the individual personality or of drilling human being into uniformity.”<sup>14</sup> All depends on how we use or abuse it.

### **Challenge to Define an Appealing Communication Ethics**

Amidst the ever growing communication technologies, the communication ethics faces a monumental challenge at present. According to the International Commission for the Study of Communication Problem, the communication ethics has “to respond to both the rapid globalization of communications and the reassertion of local socio cultural identities. It is caught in the apparently contradictory trends of cultural homogenization and cultural resistance.”<sup>15</sup> What we really need today is a communication ethics based on multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-situational perspectives. Whatever may be the position of the humanists, secularists or atheists, the religious dimension of communication ethics cannot be ignored or left aside. The violent protests in the Muslim world against the publication of the caricatures of Mohammad in Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on 30 September 2005 indicate that the greatest challenge to propose an appealing communication ethics is to strike a balance between the different opposing poles.

The ultimate objective of communication ethics should be directed more toward the etymological meaning of communication. The word communication comes from Latin *communicationem* (nom. *Communicatio*), noun of action from *communicare* which means to share, to participate in, to join, to unite, to create a common space.<sup>16</sup> Every communicative act ought to stimulate fellow human beings to share and to participate in common efforts to enhance well being of human community as well as that of the entire creation.

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<sup>14</sup>International Commission for the Study of Communication Problem, *Many Voices, One World*, 253.

<sup>15</sup>Clifford Christian and Michael Traber, ed., *Communication Ethics and Universal Values*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1997, viii.

<sup>16</sup>Adriano Fabris, *Etica della comunicazione*, Roma: Crocci Editore, 2006, 48-50; see also *Online Etymological Dictionary* <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=communication> (20/09/2011)

Communication must create communion with fellow human beings through which we enter into and participate in others' life, activities and worldviews. Therefore, communication ethics must define ways and means to communicate well which is good, just and appreciated by the society taking into account common aims, common values and common interests.

The ultimate and most efficacious means of communication is love, which is also at the heart of Christian morality. In fact, "love is born in communication, but so is hate, indifference, and boredom. As communication increases, 'sharing' increases."<sup>17</sup> It is also said that love increases when we open our heart and share love with others through our words, actions, behaviour and gestures. Our sharing of love is the greatest means of communicating our life, ideas and perspectives. In the absence of love, the hatred takes the front seat in our life, and then begins the conflict. Actually the conflict begins when we say what we do not mean and we do what we do not intend to do. The communication ethics is based normally on such questions: What and why ought we communicate? How ought we communicate? Where ought we communicate? To whom ought we communicate? Communication ethics must articulate the process of interweaving of social fibre, which unites people under one common goal - human well being and that of the entire creation; and thus, proceed toward articulating a new kind of philanthropy, which is more humane and inclusive of all living beings. Today, the emphasis has to be more on "the process of communication (that is, the exchange of meaning) and on the significance of this process (that is, the social relationships created by communication and the social institutions and context that result from such relationships)."<sup>18</sup> The communication ethics will become more appealing if the process of communication and the significance of that process are both based on love for fellow human beings and for the entire creation. The two fundamental ethical principles enunciated by Pontifical Commission for Social Communications too seem to point towards this aspect of love and concern for the entire human community: "first, the human person and the human community are the end and measure of the use of the media of social communication; communication should be

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<sup>17</sup>H.D. Duncan, "Communicative Bonds as Moral Bonds" in Lee Thayer, ed., *Communication: Ethical and Moral Issues*, New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1980, 73.

<sup>18</sup>Desmond Fisher, "From Concept to Action" in Desmond Fisher, ed., *The Right to Communicate: A New Human Right*, Dublin: Boole Press, 1983, 8; see also Jan Servaes, *Communication for Development: One World, Multiple Cultures*, New Jersey: Hampton Press, 1999, 274.

by persons to persons for the integral development of persons; and the second, the good of persons cannot be realized apart from the common good of the communities to which they belong."<sup>19</sup> Still further, the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications maintains in clear words, "Serving the human person, building up human community grounded in solidarity and justice and love, and speaking the truth about human life and its final fulfilment in God were, are, and will remain at the heart of ethics in the media."<sup>20</sup> These fundamental ethical principles aptly sum up the need of generating a sense of new philanthropy in every communicative act, which takes into account the general goodness and well being of the entire creation.

While defining a new and appealing communication ethics, it is important to take note of two concepts; first, the freedom of expression, and second, the role of constructive criticism. The freedom of expression was regarded as a fundamental ancillary right to all other human rights. Article 19 of the Universal Declaration defined it as the right "to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."<sup>21</sup> Today, the question is often asked, "Freedom of expression – to what extent? The worldwide violent protests of Muslims against the publication of the caricatures of Mohammad in Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on 30 September 2005 raised many serious questions regarding the freedom of expression. Undeterred by the protests in the Islamic world, the cartoons were published in more than 50 other countries to show solidarity with *Jyllands-Posten* and to emphasize the importance of the freedom of speech. Freedom of speech implies expressing one's opinions and views without any fear, threat, intimidation or censorship. However, such freedom ends where it is in conflict with other values or rights. Any freedom should follow the other two important aspects of any moral problem; that is, being fully aware of one's action and taking responsibility for that action."<sup>22</sup> Conscious and

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<sup>19</sup>Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Communications*, nn. 21-22. Taking the words from *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, the Pontifical Commission draws attention to the inner dimensions of a human person: "Everyone deserves the opportunity to grow and flourish in respect to the full range of physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual goods. Individuals have irreducible dignity and importance, and may never be sacrificed to collective interests."

<sup>20</sup>Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Communications*, n. 33.

<sup>21</sup>Sean MacBride, "The Cause of Liberty" in Desmond Fisher and L.S. Harms, ed., *The Right to Communicate: A New Human Right*, xv.

<sup>22</sup>Sergio Bastianel, *Teologia Morale Fondamentale*, Roma: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2003, 5.

responsible freedom suggests that every communicative act should be oriented towards fostering common good, and avoiding evil such as hatred and conflicts. Similarly, from the moral point of view, a constructive criticism could be a touchstone.<sup>23</sup> Constructive criticism creates and sustains, and do not destroy or weaken the social order. Where criticism is free, open, informed, and widely and frequently communicated, values are created and sustained by the resolution of many voices. Such constructive criticisms usually make notable contributions towards creating a more humane social order and foster interpersonal relationships.

An appealing communication ethics should be grounded and founded on truth, honesty and accuracy. Already in 1972, Pope Paul VI, in his message for the World Communication Day, entrusted media of social communications at the service of truth.<sup>24</sup> Accuracy, truthfulness and honesty are essential to the integrity of communication and to the promotion of communication ethics. It is unfortunate that sometimes communication is used to degrade a particular person or community through false and inaccurate information, distortion, intimidation, coercion and violence. This is also done through the expression of intolerance and hatred. Communication ethics must endorse freedom of expression, diversity of caste, creed and culture, difference of opinions, perspectives, religious beliefs and practices, and tolerance of dissent. In a few words, the task of communication ethics has to be the promotion of human dignity, truth, justice and common good, sense of solidarity and communion not only with human beings but also with other life forms of nature.

## Conclusion

The World Association for Christian Communication in its first International Congress in Manila in 1989 has termed communication as "God's unique gift to humankind, through which individuals and

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<sup>23</sup>Cf., H.D. Duncan, "Communicative Bonds as Moral Bonds" in Lee Thayer, ed., *Communication: Ethical and Moral Issues*, 87-88. The author puts forward diverse questions: "Where and when is criticism permitted, respected and sanctioned? In what social relationships (institutions, status groups, age groups, classes, parties, castes, etc.) is criticism used, and to what degree? In what roles does the critic function? What media are open to the critic? What principles of social order are invoked to support criticism?"

<sup>24</sup>Pope Paul VI, Message for the World Communication Day: *The Media of Social Communication at the Service of the Truth*, n. 1: "Given the combined diligence and the combined sincerity of the person who communicates the fact and the person to whom it is communicated, there is a very good guarantee that 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth' will be safely transmitted."

societies can become more truly human. Genuine communication is as essential to the quality of life as food, shelter and healthcare. It is the process of interaction through communicative symbols which creates a cultural environment."<sup>25</sup> We have already discussed how the growth of new and faster communication technique has given rise to new questions and challenges. There is an urgent need of searching for a new understanding of communication ethics which "embraces life as it is lived and simultaneously keeps alive the hope of a more ideal mode of interaction."<sup>26</sup> There is a need of developing the ability and will to listen to others and to develop sensitivity to others' perspective facilitated by creating an environment of openness and respect. New communication ethics has to be founded on mutual respect and understanding of each other despite differences and diversity of languages, cultures, religious beliefs and practices, and traditions. Diversity too could be a blessing in disguise, because it is "not simply an obstacle to overcome. Competent moral decision-making in the postmodern world is dependent upon the narrative richness, exposure of underlying assumptions and values, and critical understanding made possible only when decision makers have access to and have the vision, talent, and insight to hear a wide diversity of voices."<sup>27</sup> Amidst diversity, the discovery and realization of common goals and purposes are possible only through interpersonal and inter-societal interactions.

The responses to the challenges posed by communication ethics are found in the promotion of a moral sense of relationship or belongingness - creation of communion, enhancement of community spirit, and sharing in each others' life and activities through the tools of communication. The real integration comes from heart, that is, in a context of relations in which the whole dimension of human person participates. And the whole dimension of human person authentically comes into play only when the wider dimension of the entire creation is taken into account in which human person's life flourishes and attains fullness of its being. Similarly, interpersonal communion becomes authentic only when there is participation in life activities or a sense of conviviality. The need of the hour is to

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<sup>25</sup>Michael Traber and Kaarle Nordenstreng, ed., *Few Voices, Many Worlds: Towards a Media Reform Movement*, London: World Association for Christian Movement, 1992, 33.

<sup>26</sup>R.C. Arnett, "Communication and Community" in J.M. Makau and R.C. Arnett, ed., *Communication Ethics in an Age of Diversity*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997, 40.

<sup>27</sup>J.M. Makau, "Embracing Diversity in the Classroom" in J.M. Makau and R.C. Arnett, ed., *Communication Ethics in an Age of Diversity*, 63.

work towards the simultaneous realization of justice, openness, harmony, communion and stewardship not only of human society, but also of the entire creation. Therefore, the new communication ethics must be directed towards creating a new kind of philanthropy which includes the well being of every created being.