Catholicism is Communication

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Crisis in Communication

With the advent of the Great Information and Communication Technology Revolution, the world has become larger—and smaller. With just a push of a button, people can have fast, cheap, and global access to information, connectivity, entertainment, education, commerce, etc. Many experts say that the Experience Age has already begun. Users do not only create, transmit, or store data to and from the internet, but can modify, actively engage with, and share their life-in-the-moment and virtual journey. Thanks to human genius and God's providence, life has become easier, more convenient, and enjoyable.

Communication is a vital component in God's economy of salvation. Verbal or non-verbal, written, or visual, personal, or mediated communication can serve as privileged means and milieu of divine-human encounter. Language is known as the most sophisticated form or technique of communication. Ideas or thought processes and interactions inevitably occur within the web of language.[1] The whole perceivable world, says Hugh of St. Victor, is like a book written by God's finger.

However, despite its tremendous benefits and potencies, language is a multifaceted human construct and phenomenon. Hence, it is fraught with ambiguities and limitations:

1 David Tracy, *Plurality and Ambiguity: Hermeneutics, Religion, Hope* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 43.

"It is not simply that we are limited in our capacity to use language; language itself is limited."[2] God (or talk of God) is and will always fall short of who God is since, in the words of St. Anselm, He is "a being than which no greater can be conceived." This formidable truth is evident in our efforts and struggles to grasp and articulate the infinite reality of God and the innumerable wonders in his creation and the tremendous scope and depth of our human experiences.

Consequently, with this difficulty in understanding life's realities and mysteries, and more crucially, to communicate and sincerely, meaningfully and responsibly, various conflicts arise—personal, social, cultural, political, religious, etc. When left unresolved, these eventually lead to the breakdown of friendships and alliances, collapse of marital relations and family life, scandals and schisms in communities of faith, violence, aggression, and deep-seated distrust among religions and nations. Not only do we encounter the disparaging effects of turmoil or deadlock in our relationships. Many times we feel this chasm within our self, when our mind and heart, our best intentions and conduct, our most cherished hopes and reality contradict (cf. Rom 7:15; 17-19).

Moreover, we encounter a "crossroads" in the "new culture" of communication in which we inescapably live. In his 2008 World Communications Day Message, Benedict XVI describes the "new culture" as no longer determined by eternal values. It promotes economic materialism and ethical relativism—the "true scourges of our time."

2 Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1999), 28.

These, then, contribute to the gradual disintegration of the Gospel and fundamental human values. Hence, while the Church considers social communication and mass media as marvelous human discoveries and divinely ordained gifts,[3] they are rich in potential for the propagation of faith[4] and integral human development.[5] They also remain a special field of mission that needs to be evangelized, as stressed by John Paul II in his Mission Encyclical.[6]

With all these communication challenges that lurk within, among, and outside us, we ask: is it possible to achieve true and humanizing communication? How can we overcome the widespread misunderstanding and miscommunication and heal this divisive "Babel phenomenon" (cf. Gen 11) in our families, communities, and societies?

Perhaps, a discerning glance at the historical and salvific "communications journey" of humanity, which this paper intends to present, may lead its readers:

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3 Vatican II, *Decree on the Media of Social Communications (Inter Mirifica),* December 4, 1963, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19631204_inter-mirifica_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 1.Henceforth referred to as *IM.*

4 Paul VI, *Apostolic Exhortation In Proclaiming the Gospel (Evangelii Nuntiandi),* December 8, 1975, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html (accessed August 21, 2020), nos. 45-46. Henceforth referred to as *EN.*

5 Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Pastoral Instruction on Social Communciations (Aetatis Novae),* February 22, 1992, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_22021992_aetatis_en.html(accessed August 21, 2020), nos. 7-11. Henceforth referred to as *AN.*

6 John Paull II, *On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate (Redemptoris Missio),* December 7, 1990, Vatican Archive, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 37. Henceforth referred to as *RM.*

1. To reflect on one's message, motives, methods, and means of communication, especially in proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God
2. To rediscover divine purpose and destiny, dignity and beauty in authentic human communication as revealed by Jesus Christ
3. To rekindle one's faith commitment through charity both in word and witness, and one's hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit, who shall bring all our communication capacities—even constraints—to fulfilment.

A Sacred Science and Art

Communication (from Latin *communicare*, which means "to share," "to transmit," "to make common") is the essence of God and human existence. Salvation history presents God, who profoundly, perceptibly, and persistently shares his very being and communicates his gracious will so that human beings may attain a meaningful and fuller life. Bearing albeit imperfectly this trace-mark of God's free and voluntary initiative of self-disclosure, our thoughts, words, and actions, as well as the manifold events of our life both individual and communal, banal and extraordinary, tragic and triumphant, speak of our insatiable need—and capacity—for authentic self-expression and self-actualization, intimacy with others, and lasting faith and friendship with God.

Communication is not simply a systematic body of knowledge dealing with facts and truths, processes, principles, and paradigms. Nor is it merely a creative engagement and expression of human skill or imagination. Nor is it solely concerned with words, images, sounds, gestures, signs, codes, symbols,

rituals, music, arts, theater, popular culture, advertising, and public relations. Nor does it deal with only the means of information transmission (e.g., print, broadcast, internet or social media, etc.), or with the contemporary milieu of communication with its diverse opportunities and challenges. We widely employ its techniques and technologies to convey ideas, influences, feelings, experiences, and to exchange goods and services.

Communication, above all, is "the giving of self in love".[7] It is a sacred gift and a human goal to strive for. It is growing in a genuine relationship with God, with fellow human beings, the cosmos, and creation. It is the mutual sharing of life's meaning, the establishment of fellowship within and among communities of faith, and peoples of different beliefs or traditions yet unified by a commitment to the continuing realization of the Kingdom of God on earth. Communication is presence, witness, mission, and an inevitable pathway to communion. It is "at the heart of what the Church is all about."[8]

Consequently, for Christian theology and communication to be truly faithful to its Catholicity, it needs to discern deeply the prevailing signs and spirit of the times, and dialogue ingeniously and effectively with peoples, cultures, and religions. Catholic Christianity ought to live up to its most profound purpose—love or charity—after God's *kenosis* for all, which is fulfilled in Jesus Christ and proclaimed, celebrated, and witnessed by the Church today, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

7 Vatican II, *Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communications (Communio et Progressio),* May 23, 1971, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_23051971_communio_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 11. Henceforth referred to as *CP.*

8 Avery Dulles, "The Church is Communications" in *Catholic Mind* 69/1256 (Oct 1971): 7.

Cradle of Genuine Personal Communication

All communication begins and finds fulfillment in the Trinity, a communion of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 13:13) completely one with each other, inseparable in their divine substance and their activity.[9] This inner life of God or *agape* among the three divine Persons comes to us as an incessant, intense, and inexhaustible communication (cf. Mt 11:27; Jn 10:30; Jn 10:38; Jn 12:49-50; Jn 14:26; Jn 15:26). *Agape* is a mystery fully revealed in the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery of the Son of God and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The Father "speaks" the Son and generates him, and intimates to him all that he is and he has; the Son "names" the Father ("Abba").[10] The Son offers himself entirely to the Father in obedience, and to humanity—even to his executioners—in faithful love, that they may rightly be called "children of God" (1 Jn 3:1) and thus become "heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ" (Rom 8:17). The Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, is the living bond between the Father and the Son, and the personal fruit of the interchange between the Father who utters and his living Word. The Spirit "breaks open" and makes present the mystery of divine communication to the world through the Church, and at the same time unites the world to the Son and through him to the Father. [11] Consequently, we find in the Trinity the supreme act of free, personal, reciprocal, dialogical, self-effusive, and self-emptying communication.

9 CBCP-ECCE, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Definitive Edition Based on the Latin *Editio Typica* (Manila: ECCCE and Word & Life Publications, 1994), 267. Henceforth referred to as *CCC*.

10 Carlo Martini, *Communicating Christ to the World* (Quezon City: Claretians Publications, 1996), 30.

11 Martini, *Communicating Christ to the World*, 30.

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God's Primordial Act of Self-Communication

The divine and dynamic circle of Love does not remain closed in itself. Trinitarian *circumincessio* leads to *communio*. This inner fellowship overflows and constantly permeates creation, most especially in human beings, who bear no less than their Creator's image and likeness (cf. Gn 1:26; Ps 139:13-14). Human beings are called to dialogue with God and be part of eternal friendship and communion (cf. Jn 6:40; Jn 15:15).

God's revelation in history, though symbolic—an event or encounter both luminous and enigmatic, a mystery beyond human words, wisdom, and worlds—is nonetheless a real communication. God's communication is not merely functional, in which God transmits information about himself. Instead, divine self-manifestation is deeply and wholly *personal.* God communicates himself in word and deed[12], privately and publicly[13], through living signs and symbols (e.g., things such as rainbow, manna, burning bush, and people such as community, strangers, "anawim") and wondrous events (e.g., creation, exodus, theophanies).

God's self-disclosure is also *progressive*. God is the one who initiates the process and respects the freedom and maturity of the recipients (e.g., patriarchs, prophets, religious and political leaders). His plan of salvation finds fulfillment in Jesus Christ (cf. Heb 1:1-2), "the Father's one, perfect, and unsurpassable Word"[14], the "image of the invisible God" (Col

12 Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum),* November 18, 1965, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 2. Henceforth referred to as *DV.*

13 CCC, *nos.* 66-67.

14 *CCC,* no. 65.

1:15) who "fully reveals to man to himself and brings to light his most high calling."[15]

Moreover, God's self-communication is *purposive*. Salvation history draws God and human beings together to a point where there is unity in the divine life (cf. Jn 10:10). However, divine communication does not force or control but invites and bestows "a new spirit and a new heart" (Ez 36:26). Hence, it confers a renewed consciousness and communicative power to its recipients.

Roots of Incommunicability

Nonetheless, God's gift of communication can always be refused and even abused. This happened in our first parents who raised themselves up against God and sought to attain their goals apart from God.[16] Adam and Eve's free and conscious turning away from God was initially prompted by allowing trust in the sincerity of God—manifested in the entire created reality, and in bestowing human freedom and the capacity to exercise this freedom to the fullest—to die in their hearts (cf. CCC 397). Tempted by the serpent, they feared that God was not dealing with them gratuitously and must have a hidden vested interest in cautioning them not to eat the fruit in the middle of the garden (cf. Gen 3:1).[17] Overpowered by their doubt and self-sufficiency, they lost their original closeness to God. Thus, inner turmoil, appetite, and domination, mutual reproach, and cruelty defined their relationships,

15 Vatican II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes),* December 7, 1965, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 22. Henceforth referred to as *GS.*

16 *CCC,* no. 415.

17 Martini, Communicating Christ to the World, 25.

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and eventually, despair and death entered human history (cf. CCC 399-401).

This proclivity, attitude, and worse, this cycle or "culture" of mistrust/distrust continue to pervade human communication. Many are wounded by it and continue to suffer greatly. Everyone needs healing and recovery of integrity, a special gift that can only come from God's Word and Spirit.

Climax of Divine-Human Communication

Despite human beings' alienation from God because of the Fall, God's steadfast communication never ends. Instead, it stretches, overflows, and deepens all the more; "for the Son of God … was not "yes" and "no," but "yes" has been in him (cf. 2 Cor 1:19-20; Rom 5:20). It even pleads, like a persistent lover (cf. Hos). This gracious act of God builds on and permeates human beings' communicative nature.

God's covenant with his people seals a new bond between God and human beings. Israel becomes God's firstborn, called to a particular mission as a "priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6). Through the covenant with Israel, God prepares human beings, now bestowed with a renewed *imago Dei*, for the coming of his Son, in whom he will establish his covenant forever.[18]

The entire Christ-event—Incarnation, proclamation of the Kingdom of God, public ministry, passion, death, and Resurrection—stands in history as the apex of God's communicative presence to human beings and human beings' faith-filled response. As Mediator and Message *par excellence* of the Father, Jesus Christ heals, transforms, and elevates the

18 *CCC,* no. 73.

communication between God and human beings, interrupted and broken by sin, and lays the foundation of communion among human beings.[19]

Yet we may ask: how did Jesus manifest himself as the "Perfect Communicator"[20] when he appeared almost as a "failure" at the end of his earthly life? His communication was often puzzling, ambiguous, and probing. Many of his followers, even his own family and relatives, misunderstood him (cf. Mk 3:21) except for a few who grasped his significance, such as the Roman centurion (cf. Mt 27:54). His core group of disciples whom he became intimate with forsook him and hid in terrible fear (cf. Jn 20:19) that they might suffer the same fate as their master. Condemned as a public criminal, Jesus subsequently endured agonizing communication in his "dark night of the soul" (cf. Lk 22:44; Heb 5:7) and more especially in his ignominious death.

While it may seem that Jesus had encountered failures or failed to some extent in communicating God's message clearly and effectively, we hold on to our principal belief that "he lived, died, and rose to communicate new life for all of us."[21] In his entire life, Jesus fulfilled the ultimate goal of communication, that is, "the giving of self in love".[22] He preached as God instructed him in the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 8:26-28). He sought to live a balanced life of deep prayer and contemplation (cf. Mt 14:23), and dedicated service to the peoples (cf. Mt 9:35). He

19 *CP,* no. 10 and John Paul II, *Apostolic Letter The Rapid Development (Il Rapido Sviluppo),* January 24, 2005, Vatican Archive, http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2005/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20050124_il-rapido-sviluppo.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 6. Henceforth referred to as *IRS.*

20 *CP,* no. 11.

21 Gerald O' Collins and Daniel Kendall, *Focus on Jesus: Essays in Christology and Soteriology* (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1996), 66.

22 *CP,* no. 11.

https://publications.lst.edu/

related in genuine solidarity to a wide range of people (e.g., children, women, religious authorities, Gentiles, common people, outcasts, sinners), fed and dined with them, taught them the values of God's Kingdom and human virtues, and shared to them his intimate encounters and convictions about God. He gave them hope and ushered them to see meaning and fulfillment beyond life's stark realities. He used familiar objects to convey his message (e.g., bread, water, light, seed, vine) and adjusted his approaches according to his audience (e.g., Nicodemus vis-à-vis Samaritan woman). He spoke with authority (cf. Mt 7:29) such that the unclean were cleansed, the mute speak, the sick healed, the sinners forgiven, the dead raised, demons cast out, and storms stilled, etc. He empowered, consoled, challenged, confronted, and converted people to walk in truth, joy, freedom, justice, and peace.[23]

Consequently, in Jesus Christ, "the communication between God and humanity has thus reached its perfection."[24] In the Incarnation of the divine Logos, God has assumed and has spoken totally and unreservedly the language of humankind in all its quirks and baggage save for sin. In Jesus, humanity in turn rejoiced and responded totally and unreservedly to God's loving self-communication, notwithstanding its veils and shadows. In the Resurrection of Jesus, God has revealed the fullness and fecundity of his communicative and cosmic presence to humanity. As the Son of God and Lord of the universe and history, Jesus became obedient unto death. He embraced, conquered, and even transformed death—the nadir of non-communication—to its divine dimensions. Indeed, the silence of death on the Cross has led to the eternally beaming

23 Cornelis Bennema, "Was Jesus an Effective Communicator?" in *Engage* (Jan–Mar 2010): 19-25.
24 *IRS,* no. 5.

word of life in the Resurrection. Thus, humanity can hope to achieve this pledge and path to redemptive communication, which the Son now enjoys with the Father in the Spirit.

God's Community of Salvation

The self-communication of God with its fullest manifestation in the Paschal Mystery brought into being the Church: a community where life, meaning, and love are shared and communicated. At the root of this communion is love, which is not self-seeking (cf. 1 Cor 13:5) but leads the members to "hold everything in common" (Acts 4:32) and to grow in greater charity and service, especially to the poorest.[25] Moreover, this love is expressed in the service of the truth about God's universal pedagogy of salvation. The Church is the mother, teacher of the language, and guardian of the "deposit of faith," the community's wellspring of redemptive communication. Consequently, through communication, the Church is established as a community of faith that constitutes and perfects itself through communication.[26]

Communication in the Church is realized in the common sharing of members of the following perceptible elements: a collection of beliefs and oral proclamation (*kerygma*), cult (*leiturgia*), creed (*didache*), community (*koinonia*), and code of service (*diakonia*). Yet this fellowship in the Church point as well to a mysterious spiritual dimension. Founded in the Word of God, the Church is the "people of God," the "body of Christ," and "temple of the Holy Spirit." As vitally a gift of the

25 CBCP, *Acts and Decrees of the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines* (Pasay, Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2004), nos. 122-36. Henceforth referred to as *PCPII.*

26 Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 363.

https://publications.lst.edu/

Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47), the Church is a sacrament, a sign and instrument both of communion with God and of the unity of humankind.[27] God's grace in and through the Church, then, regenerates the pathways of divine-human communication disrupted by the Fall and restores the possibility of genuine relationships in the name of Jesus Christ. The Church fulfills this enormous task through the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who opens hearts and loosens tongues, and hence, enables believers to proclaim, "Jesus is Lord!" (1 Cor 12:3).

Consequently, the Church is a "vast communications network."[28] Her whole life—origin, nature, mission, and destiny—is a communications process. Communication is crucial to the personal and communitarian witness of faith and "evangelizing presence," to the proclamation of the Word in catechesis and apologetics; to the worship or liturgical life in prayer and contemplation and inculturation; to the works of charity or commitment to social development and human liberation; to the interreligious and ecumenical dialogue, in the effective utilization of mass media, and in the development of a communicative spirituality and the formation of communicators.[29] Moreover, Church communications concern relations between bishops and priests, the hierarchy and laity, the Magisterium and theologians, and the Church and the press. It involves matters on collegiality,

27 Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Lumen Gentium),* November 21, 1964, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 1. Henceforth referred to as *LG.* Cf. *CCC*, nos. 774-775

28 Dulles, "The Church is Communications," 7.

29 Avery Dulles, *Evangelization for the Third Millennium* (New York/Mahwah,NJ: Paulist Press, 2009), 30-42 and James Kroeger, "To Live is to Evangelize: Recent Popes and Integral Evangelization,"

public opinion, authority-dissension, dogmatic and doctrinal enunciations, etc.

Of all the witnesses and communicators in God's community of salvation, Mary stands preeminently for the fundamental reason that God himself freely chose her from all eternity to be the Mother of his Son, Jesus Christ.[30] Hence, she is the Mother of the Church, as Jesus is the Head of the body, which is the Church.[31] Consequently, Mary enjoys this privileged intimacy with Jesus, who is the "Perfect Communicator." Bestowed with God's superabundant grace and the merits of Jesus her Son, Mary freely gave her consent with "the obedience of faith" (Rom 1:5) to be the rightful spouse of the Holy Spirit. She submitted herself entirely as "handmaid" to the redemptive mystery and ministry of Jesus. Hence, she is a model of faith and charity, contemplative respect and receptivity to divine communication, of profound joy and praise to God's fulfilled promises. Mary's *Magnificat* is the "foundation of communicative praxis and anticipation."[32]

Another exemplar of effective Christian proclamation is Saint Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles. As the "saint of universality," he employed dogma, morals, and worship in his Gospel of salvation, evangelized cultures, and founded faith communities. He was radically breaking religious-social-cultural barriers and extending the Church's missionary frontiers "to the ends of the earth." Always seized by the love of God (cf. 2 Cor 5:14), he labored to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples (cf. 1 Cor 9:16, 22-23) with all the efficacious means of social communication available at that time so that God

Landas 16 (2002): 101-104.

30 *CCC,* nos. 492 and 508.

31 Ibid., nos. 963-964 and 973

32 Martini, *Communicating Christ to the World*, 46.

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may be all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15:28). His life was directed and dedicated to Christ so much so that death was gain for him (cf. Phil 1:21): "It is no longer I who lives, but Christ lives on me" (Gal 2:20). He loved God in Christ and loved the mission of proclamation. Hence, he assiduously integrated sanctity and zeal in evangelizing and pastoral communication.

Living Channels of Divine-Human Communication

The Church is replete with various pathways to deepen our communication and sustain our communion with God and others. Contemplative silence—inspired by God's creative silence (cf. Eph 3:8-9; Rom 16:25) and illumined by Mary's faith-filled discernment (cf. Lk 2:19)—is to gaze upon with wonder and gratitude God's power and providence in creation, in the events of our lives, and in the "signs of the times." Silence brings about the purity of heart (cf. Mt 5:8) or clear conscience ready to heed God's lone voice that echoes in the depths of "one's most secret core and sanctuary."[33] Silence is well complemented by deep prayer. It is the capacity to confidently engage in a mature dialogue with the Father as his children.

Attentive listening, learning, and dialogue with the Scriptures—the living account of God's faithful self-manifestation in human history, and the Church's definitive self-portrait, hence, the "soul" of the Church's discernment, preaching and witnessing—enables us to know God's precepts and promises, and the ultimate purpose and meaning of human life. It provides wisdom and guidance for a loving and liberating communication with others and draws us into a

33 *GS,* no. 16.

prayerful union with Jesus, our Way, our Truth, and our Life, in his Church.[34]

The liturgy serves as a powerful medium of divine-human communication. Primarily, it is a celebration of God's ongoing salvific communication to the community of faith. In carrying out the priestly office of Jesus Christ, the Christian community praises and offers a sacrifice to God in the highest solemnity. God, then, sanctifies the faithful through signs perceptible to the senses.[35] The liturgy is a rich communicative event taking place at the heart of the believing and worshiping community through a variety of signs, symbols, sacred objects, invocations, gestures, music, architecture, sacred space, etc. The liturgy holds many functions and implications for building up the people of God, including religious-pastoral, social-cultural, moral-ethical, etc.

The heart and culmination of all liturgies is the Eucharist, the "most perfect and most intimate form of communion between God and humankind possible in this life."[36] While the Word of God, Eucharistic sacrifice, and fellowship are the core communicative elements. In the Eucharist, Jesus' "self-giving in love"[37] becomes an enduring gift to us and the whole world until the end of time. Thus, the Eucharist draws us into the very mission of Jesus, which is the communication of the divine gift of love.[38]

34 ECCE-CBCP, *Catechism for Filipino Catholics* (Manila: Word and Life Publications, 2005), no. 112. Henceforth referred to as *CFC*.

35 Vatican II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium),* December 4, 1963, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 7. Henceforth referred to as *SC*.

36 *CP,* no. 11.

37 Ibid.

38 "Eucharist as Communication," *FABC Papers* 124 (2007)

The other sacraments also make present and communicate God's grace: Baptism (new life in Christ), Confirmation (strength for Christian commitment), Penance and Reconciliation (forgiveness of sins), Anointing of the Sick (integral healing), Holy Orders (sanctification and service), and Matrimony (family life).

Authentic Christian communication also discerns the divine communication that occurs in the history and cultures of all people of goodwill[39] and in non-Christian religions.[40] As they possess the "seeds" or vestiges of the divine Logos as traces of truth and rays of redemption, they, too, are profound channels of God's grace and self-manifestation.

Consummation of Communication

Even though divine self-communication has already culminated in the Paschal Mystery, it is not yet fully realized here on earth. As God's pilgrim community, we are still on the way to our homeland, where "we will see God as he is" (1 Jn 3:2). Divine-human communication remains an ongoing and progressive event, and we fervently anticipate its eventual fulfillment in God's time. However, we are never alone as we oscillate between hope and anxiety. The saints and our departed loved ones who already enjoy the glory of God's fellowship confirm our hope in this beatific communion that awaits us. Their powerful intercession helps us endure our earthly pilgrimage and eventual purification.

39 *CFC*, no. 74

40 Vatican II, *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (Nostra Aetate),* October 28, 1965, Vatican Archive, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html (accessed August 21, 2020), no. 2. Henceforth referred to as *NA*.

The incompleteness of communication here on earth comes from this "already-not yet" reality. Nevertheless, this should not be a cause for hopelessness but a call for deeper humility. In our relationships, there will always be a mysterious threshold that is impossible or even futile to traverse. In our intense desire for truth, clarity, and authenticity in communication, there will always be shadows and pitfalls.[41]

The imperfection of communication is a challenge for greater responsibility. Our ultimate vocation as Christians is to rise above the "muteness of faith" we at times exhibit to witness and proclaim "from the housetops" (cf. Mt 10:27) the truth of the Gospel—the truth that "works through charity"—in the world fragmented continuously by meaninglessness, skepticism, desperation, injustice, oppression, and death.

All these undertakings point to the "cross" of (mis)communication that we have to bear. As people of the Resurrection, we do not despair even though we only perceive life's confounding realities now as "in a mirror, dimly" and "only in part" (cf. 1 Cor 13:12), which at times is even made more blurry (or blinding) by the glitz and glory from present-day media. Jesus' faithful obedience to the Father and his loving embrace of the "cross" of (mis)communication grounds our hope and inspiration.

Catholicism is Communication

Communication is God's loving and personal self-manifestation to humanity. In his creative Silence, redeeming Word, and abiding Presence, God speaks to us, in us, through us, and among us, in manifold and mysterious ways, in our joys and hopes, and in our griefs and anxieties.[42] As men

41 Martini, *Communicating Christ to the World*, 36.
42 *GS*, no. 1

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and women of this age, He is always calling us, individually and communally, to partake in the banquet and beatitude of everlasting communion.

Communication is not only a scientific and secular endeavor. It is also a *locus theologicus*, a crucial context and challenge for theological reflection, ecclesial proclamation, and praxis. A reflective examination on the integral, transcendental, and missionary purpose of communication is needed, then, more than merely focusing on its practical roles and gains.

A truly Catholic/Christian communication today consists not just in preaching Christ but in giving witness to him in word and deed; not only in communicating but in creating spaces, events, or networks for connection and communion. This implies discerning how to live well in the Digital Age, not just possessing or mastering the use of the latest gadgets or technologies.