

# THE COMMUNICATIONS REVOLUTION

A COUPLE OF years ago I was baptising a baby at our usual time for baptisms, Sunday morning around 10.30. One of the godparents, the godmother, was in London, which would not be a problem as a proxy could be arranged. But the family went one better—the whole ceremony was Skyped to London, and the godmother was able to answer personally to the questions via Skype. At the end of the ceremony I concluded, ‘We can now let the folk in London get to bed while the rest of you go and party!’

This is one early experience for me of the new possibilities of world communications that are on offer and which we need to use skilfully and intelligently for building Christian community and telling the Good News.

As I write we are preparing for Pentecost. Pentecost was all about communication. It is presented as the antidote to the disaster of Babel when—as punishment for human arrogance—people lost the ability they had since the creation to ‘speak the same language, with the same vocabulary’ (Gen. 11:1) and God confused their language so that they could no longer understand each other, and they were scattered over the whole face of the earth. The Spirit at Pentecost enabled the apostles to tell the Good News in ways that all peoples could understand.

The new possibilities for communication—the new ‘social networks’—are the product of human ingenuity, but they offer powerful equipment for communicating the Good News. Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI saw very clearly the possibilities and challenges of the new digital age. It is significant that the papal message for this year’s World Communications Day, ‘Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith; New spaces for Evangelization’ was written by Pope Benedict XVI as one of the

last things he wrote before his resignation. And his message was quickly spread around the world on Facebook and Twitter and other social media. Pope Francis, too, has quickly adopted the new means of communication for his messages.

These new means of communication open up a space for more people to become more involved in telling the Good News to the ends of the earth—maximising the possibilities of using the new social networks towards that end would be a challenge they could be expected to delight in.

We are being encouraged to rise to that challenge. As Emeritus Pope Benedict wrote in his message:

As the 2013 World Communications Day draws near, I would like to offer you some reflections on an increasingly important reality regarding the way in which people today communicate among themselves. I wish to consider the development of digital social networks which are helping to create a new ‘agora’, an open public square in which people share ideas, information and opinions, and in which new relationships and forms of community can come into being.

An abundance of resources has been made available for the 47<sup>th</sup> World Day of Communication (12th May 2013) on [www.catholic.org.au](http://www.catholic.org.au), including an eBook: ‘Word Made Flesh and “Shared” Among Us’. As is stated in the Introduction of the eBook: ‘Social networks invite a whole new realm of engagement: with images, ideas, words, media, film, video, cartoons, phrases, tweets, statuses and blogs.’

We are being encouraged to use the new means of communication in our efforts to follow the directive given to us at the end of Mass: ‘Go and announce the Gospel of the Lord’.

—Barry Brundell MSC, Editor