

THE MEDIA AND THE FAMILY

John Paul Speaks

*Notable quotations from Pope John Paul II and
official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church*



“EXCEPTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES”

The extraordinary growth of the communications media and their increased availability has brought exceptional opportunities for enriching the lives not only of individuals but also of families. At the same time, families today face new challenges arising from the varied and often contradictory messages presented by the mass media.

“WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT”

Wisdom and discernment in the use of the mass media are particularly called for on the part of communications professionals, parents and educators, for their decisions greatly affect children and young people for whom they are responsible, and who are ultimately the future of society.

“UNPRECEDENTED EXPANSION”

Thanks to the unprecedented expansion of the communications market in recent decades, many families throughout the world ... now have access in their homes to immense and varied communications resources. As a result, they enjoy virtually unlimited opportunities for information, education, cultural expansion, and even spiritual growth—opportunities that far exceed those available to most families in earlier times.

“GRAVE HARM”

Yet these same media also have the capacity to do grave harm to families by presenting an inadequate or even deformed outlook on life, on the family, on religion and on morality.

“ELIMINATING THE RISKS”

Conscientious reflection on the ethical dimension of communications should issue in practical initiatives aimed at eliminating the risks to the well-being of the family posed by the media and ensuring that these powerful instruments of communication will remain genuine sources of enrichment. A special responsibility in this regard lies with communicators themselves, with public authorities, and with parents.

“THE STAKES ARE HIGH”

It is not so easy to resist commercial pressures or the demands of conformity to secular ideologies, but that is what responsible communicators must do. The stakes are high, since every attack on the fundamental value of the family is an attack on the true good of humanity.

“GREATLY ENRICHED”

Parents, as the primary and most important educators of their children, are also the first to teach them about the media. They are called to train their offspring in the “moderate, critical watchful and prudent use of the media” in the home (*Familiaris Consortio*, 76). When parents do this consistently and well, family life is greatly enriched.

“REGULATE THE USE OF MEDIA”

Parents also need to regulate the use of media in the home. This would include planning and scheduling media use, strictly limiting the time children devote to media, making entertainment a family experience, putting some media entirely off limits and periodically excluding all of them for the sake of other family activities.

(Source: Message for World Communications Day, issued January 24, 2004)

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