

**“Truth, Goodness, and Beauty in Person”
Evangelization and Social Communications
with Pope Francis**

by
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*the inaugural John Cardinal Foley Lecture
Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Overbrook
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Your Excellency, Archbishop Chaput

Bishop Thomas, brother clergy, fellow faculty, eager seminarians, and distinguished guests ...

I'd like to thank all of you for being here this evening as we begin an annual series that pays tribute to a man whose work was instrumental in bringing the pope and the Church to all the world: Cardinal John Patrick Foley.

In particular, I thank Bishop Timothy Senior, the rector of the seminary, for his gracious introduction and his supportive leadership in this new venture.

And kudos to the film crew from Catholic News Service for the documentary you just saw. To conclude our evening, you'll also see a new infomercial created by students from DeSales University. So, if any of you don't enjoy the lecture, at least you can say you were part of the world premiere of two films!

Cardinal Foley was a graduate of this very Seminary, where he also taught Philosophy for seventeen years. He's even better known in this area as editor of *The Catholic Standard & Times*. After nearly twenty years behind that desk, he then moved to the eternal city to direct the work of what is now the Pontifical Council for Social Communications. Under his leadership, that council produced significant documents that brought ethical reflection to bear upon communications, advertising and the then-emerging Internet. However, he's perhaps best known as the proverbial "voice of Christmas" after 25 years of translating the annual papal midnight Mass, a broadcast financed by the Knights of Columbus here in the USA and seen by 400-500 million people around the world. In 2007, Pope Benedict XVI created him a Cardinal and appointed him as Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

The documentary gives a brief biography of Cardinal Foley, so I will skip over those details. But I would like to mention two tributes about Cardinal Foley, one formal and one informal:

The formal accolade comes from Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, the current President of the Pontifical Council, who has spoken on multiple occasions about his predecessor's work. In his view, Cardinal Foley made it possible "to see the face of a church capable of speaking to the world with cordialness and to dialogue with it in maximum openness, without ever putting aside the truth or its own reasons." He added that Cardinal Foley "had the tone of one who ... did not see enemies or adversaries, but men before whom he could make transparent, by way of a friendly welcome, the benevolence of the Lord."¹

The informal praise comes from Fr. Tom Rosica, who directs the Salt & Light Television network and who also works as the English-language liaison for the Holy See Press Office. He once concluded an email to me by saying that Cardinal Foley "would have loved Pope Francis ... and Francis would have loved him."

Now, I certainly believe the formal comment about Cardinal Foley, but I've been wondering about the informal one. I agree with it, of course, but I've been trying to figure out the reasoning behind both parts of Fr. Rosica's assertion.

To see why Pope Francis would have loved Cardinal Foley, all we need to do is recall the comment by John Allen, Jr., the long-time Vatican correspondent, who once claimed that Cardinal Foley was "the nicest guy in the Vatican." What stood out for Allen was the cardinal's ever-present humor, coupled with the honesty, humility, and heart of a pastor,² traits which are likewise evident in our Holy Father.

But to see why Cardinal Foley would have loved Pope Francis – that takes a bit more reflection. Perhaps because Cardinal Foley was a man of great loyalty, he would naturally esteem his boss. Perhaps because they were both Jesuit-educated, he would appreciate another who knew to speak always in three points. Or maybe the pun-loving cardinal would simply enjoy the pope's tongue-in-cheek commentary. Cardinal Foley would often say that working for the Church offers little by way of pay but "the retirement benefits are out of this world,"³ while Pope Francis recently quipped that "both (the faithful) and their ordained ministers suffer because of homilies: the laity from having to listen to them and the clergy from having to preach them!"⁴

Actually, I think their mutual appreciation would run much deeper, and I'd like to explore that in more detail in this inaugural lecture. In deference to both the cardinal and the pope, and as a fellow alumnus of a Jesuit university, I, too, will endeavor to develop this talk in

three points! What I imagine Cardinal Foley would love especially about Pope Francis is his journalistic style, his evangelical message, and his digital discipleship.

1. Journalistic Style

First, both the Cardinal and the Pope share an attitude and an ability that could commonly be called journalistic. Their concern is to bring the Church into direct contact with the world. Through ways at once daring and down-to-earth, ways that are newsworthy by their very normality,⁵ they engage others openly and in doing so exercise a strong influence on the re-formation of our culture.

In his day, Cardinal Foley brought the Church full force into the world of television. In addition to the annual Christmas Mass, this was evident in all that he had to do behind the scenes to make the coverage of Blessed John Paul II's funeral available to the whole world.⁶ He also anticipated the expansive potential of the Internet and managed to obtain the .va domain designation for the Vatican. Whether on-screen or on-line, he saw the real value of journalism, once telling a group of new bishops that "the opportunities offered for the proclamation of the message of Christ and his Church are irretrievable – and so we should be ready to respond not at our convenience but when the media make their requests."⁷ It's no wonder, then, that communications professionals not only respected him as a churchman but also admired him as a colleague.

Pope Francis, too, has been lauded for his effective public relations. He engages the world through forms of speech not typical of papal teaching, such as his brief meditations at daily Mass or his lengthier interviews with journalists, and this led one Church observer to claim that this pope's influence appears inversely proportional to the official character of his words.⁸ In those words, the pope's rhetorical style freely makes use of Socratic questions and imaginative expressions.⁹ Who can forget his references to "airport bishops"¹⁰ or "smarmy priests"¹¹ or "little monster" seminarians¹² or joyless Christians whose faces look like "pickled peppers"¹³?! But because his oratorical candor is suffused with personal authenticity, the pope's words cuts straight to the heart¹⁴ as they illumine for us the way to a deeper understanding of our real purpose in life. And the scores of images we see of him each day make abundantly clear that he practices what he preaches. Indeed, this pope demonstrates the Gospel as much as, if not more than, he interprets it. Put simply, he shows by example how to accompany others, and the multiple accolades he has received from the media¹⁵ suggest that the world has taken notice of this change in the culture of Church communications.

One could say of the pope, as Archbishop Chaput did of Cardinal Foley, that “by the sheer force of his personality, he (draws) people to the faith and to himself.”¹⁶ But there is certainly more to the pope’s popularity than an engaging personality and more to his communication than skillful oratory. His strategy is one of charity not charm, his message one with substance not just style.¹⁷ And this brings us to the second reason why I think Cardinal Foley would love Pope Francis.

2. Evangelical Message

Fluent as they both are in the ways of modern communications, these two prelates clearly give priority to God’s word over those of men and women. The substance of the message they speak is not simply the current news cycle, but the Good News of the Gospel. They are at heart pastors and preachers, and their work remains focused on the Church’s mission of evangelization.

Ad majorem Dei gloriam – “to the greater glory of God” – that is the Jesuit motto both of them learned and embraced. But Cardinal Foley also had another favorite quote, a line from Dante that simply says: “In His [God’s] will is our peace.” His public remarks disclosed an unceasing passion for that divine will, and his personal demeanor suggests that he, himself, experienced that peace. As he once said to those in this very seminary: “whatever task you are given, view it as the Will of God for you – as a means of offering hope to a world in which there is so little hope ... as a way of expressing your faith and of showing your love and the love of Jesus Christ who gave his life for love of us.”¹⁸

Expressing faith as a way of showing the love of Jesus to the world – that is what we mean by evangelization, and it’s precisely what Pope Francis does day in and day out. As he explained in his audience with journalists just three days after the conclave, “the Church exists to communicate precisely this: Truth, Goodness and Beauty ‘in person’.”¹⁹ Let us now consider further each element of that existential triad.

For Pope Francis, the TRUTH is that of the Gospel, that “stream” of faith in God’s gift of redemption²⁰ that we profess as Christians. That gift appears in person, in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It takes the form, still today, of that experience of **mercy** which the pope reminds us is the primary message we preach; education in the faith only comes after the proclamation of the foundational truth of our salvation, and as a consequence of it.²¹ Without first knowing the truth of God’s love for us by cultivating a relationship to the One in whom we believe, catechesis in the dogmatic or moral teaching of the Church will not be heard. And that hardness of hearing holds true even for those of us who already profess to be Christians! Hence, evangelization must be ever “new.”

Once appropriated, the truth implicates each of us in GOODNESS. Love of God – both God’s love for us and ours for God – necessarily leads to love of neighbor. This is the “nearness” to others that Pope Francis unceasingly calls for as the social consequence of our faith. Despite the recent rants of some commentators,²² the pope’s exhortation to befriend the poor does not signal the adoption of Marxist liberalism over and against any “trickle-down” economic policy.²³ Rather, as an evangelist, the pope seeks to cultivate a Christian attitude,²⁴ one based firmly on the inherent dignity of each and every person on the planet. It is, as Elizabeth Tenety calls it,²⁵ a “trickle-down transcendence” that should lead, whenever and wherever possible, to concrete action on behalf of those less fortunate than ourselves. Consider why the pope hugs so many people. It’s not merely for a photo op, but is a simple gesture that enacts the goodness and nearness of which he speaks. And it works. It positively affects the people who receive it and all those who see it. Maybe we should all try to hug more often ... and also do whatever else we can to alleviate the plight of those who suffer.

When that goodness is exercised, persons will know the BEAUTY of which the pope speaks, a beauty experienced and expressed in joy. So prominent a theme in the pope’s speaking, joy is what we receive when we know the truth of God’s merciful love and what we share when we show goodness to those to whom we draw near. No wonder, then, that the beauty of faith, expressed in joy is the focal point of Pope Francis’ first apostolic exhortation. In that document (*Evangelii gaudium*), he speaks of joy – 59 times, *in fact!* – as the antidote to the world’s desolation and anguish (introduction). Joy gives impulse to the missionary paradigm and action of the Church (chapter I). Joy generates the strength by which to face the challenges of being publicly committed to the faith (chapter II). Joy motivates a renewed proclamation of the Gospel (chapter III). Joy is the reality that makes peace possible in a common good for all (chapter IV). Joy reflects the power that comes from and leads to being Spirit-filled (chapter V).

Truth, Goodness, and Beauty – this is the substance of evangelization, the message of mercy and nearness and joy that is the Church’s unending mission to proclaim. That existential triad finds its fullness in the person of Jesus Christ. And today it also comes to expression in His Vicar, Pope Francis. As Kathryn Jean Lopez summarily remarked,

over the last eight months, many (people) — of varied and no creeds — keep taking note of Pope Francis with a hopeful curiosity. They’re inspired. They’re consoled. They’re surprised.

People see him embracing the sick, living humbly and engaging people from all walks of the Church and life. People see a man of joy. And they want something of it, they want to follow.²⁶

The voice of this pope whom people desire to follow is the voice of true joy – a voice that, in continuity with his predecessors, speaks of the interconnection among missionary evangelization and care for the poor and worship of God.²⁷ His is an astonishing voice that longs to be heard because, as Rabbi Eric Yoffie observes, he lives what he speaks and does so in a way that “generates hope among the murk and morass of everyday life, keeping us facing, even in tough times, in the direction of humanity.”²⁸

I would say that the desire to heed his voice, to be part of the “revolution of tenderness” that he has re-ignited²⁹ – that is the real reason why Pope Francis was the “person of the year” in 2013. Still, that designation owes much to modern media, a forum in which this pope’s voice is perfectly well-suited. And this brings us to the third reason why I think Cardinal Foley would love him.

3. Digital Discipleship

Just last month we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of *Inter Mirifica*, the document from the Second Vatican Council that, for the first time ever, championed the media of social communications in the Church. That decree certainly led to much more work for Cardinal Foley, who once mused about our world “as an interconnected globe humming with electronic transmissions – a chattering planet nestled in the provident silence of space.”³⁰ Back here on earth, he maintained “that the means of social communication contribute to determining culture. Not just respecting it, but determining it.”³¹

Though perhaps without intending to do so, Pope Francis is certainly playing a crucial role in determining the Church’s culture of communications. He clearly understands that the digital highway is one of those streets onto which the Church must go out if it is to reach people where they are. And despite the risk of accidents on that street – which we see happen when his words are misunderstood or misappropriated³² – the simple fact is this: Pope Francis continues to enjoy worldwide attention precisely because his words and images are online. There his message is shared with the rapid speed and global reach that social media now make possible. Digital communications may not allow him to demonstrate the poetic flare and philosophical genius of John Paul II, or the academic acumen and theological breadth of Benedict XVI. But they do enable Francis to continue the mission of being “pontifex” – the bridge-builder between the Church and the world.

To his nearly 11 million followers, the word “Pontifex” signals the pope’s handle on Twitter! This and other forms of social media are fast becoming a well-traveled bridge to and from the Vatican. The first successor of Peter to launch a mobile app,³³ Pope Francis has been recognized as the most talked about name on the Internet,³⁴ the most talked about topic on Facebook,³⁵ and the most influential world leader on Twitter,³⁶ where his messages are shared

(“re-tweeted”) every day by nearly 60 million people. That’s high praise for someone who doesn’t even own a smart phone or an iPad! The “pope effect” created by modern media is undeniable; whether or not it will translate the world’s fascination into Church-going participation is something still to be seen.³⁷

But, as Fr. Antonio Spadaro characterizes it, this pope does not simply make use of social networks; he actually *is* one himself.³⁸ In the logic of the digital environment, the pope is “connecting” with others by sharing the Good News and not just broadcasting documents about it. More important than the means is the immediacy of what he communicates. As is evident from his first appearance on the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica,³⁹ and in every public engagement since, this pope turns communication into an event by rendering those in his presence active participants and not merely passive receivers. He asks people to pray with him and for him. He willingly embraces those who manage to elude his security detail in their desire to touch him or to take a “selfie” photo with him. And when those images go viral by way of social media, the world sees and hears the evangelical message in a way to which it is now accustomed and by which it is clearly pleased.

In other words, Pope Francis models for us the way in which communication should serve an authentic culture of encounter. Not surprisingly, that is the theme of his first Message for World Communications Day. Issued just four days ago, for the feast of St. Francis de Sales (*I should note!*), that message reiterates the pope’s deep-seated desire and persistent plea that we be more “neighborly” to one another. After all, the web is not just a jumble of wires and tubes. It’s a network of people – real not virtual human beings – people who seek hope and long for salvation and who should be able, even in cyberspace, to encounter Christ and experience the beauty of our faith. Recalling the parable of the Good Samaritan, Pope Francis teaches us that really “connecting” with people entails more than marketing or messaging. Instead, he says, we need to be available to one another, by means of attentive listening; to be in dialogue with one another, out of respect for differing points of view; and to be personally engaged in the lives of one another, as fellow citizens of the digital world.⁴⁰ That, I would add, is how “friends” become brothers and sisters, how “likes” lead to real relations, and how social communication generates true communion.

The Cardinal Foley Chair

This evening, I hope our encounter here has been authentic and worthwhile. This public lecture series is but one way St. Charles Seminary hopes to be more neighborly as we contribute to the Church’s work in the realm of mass media and social communications.

In the last major document promulgated during Cardinal Foley’s tenure as President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, John Paul II wrote of “the rapid development

of technology in the area of the media” as “one of the signs of progress in today’s society.”⁴¹ Given what has happened since, that may well be the most understated opening sentence of any Church document! “Meteoric” better describes the speed and “revolution” the extent to which social communications have changed our world.

Even without divining the future, the soon-to-be Saint John Paul II recognized that “Communication permeates the essential dimensions of the Church which is called to announce to all the joyful message of salvation. For this reason,” he says, “the Church takes advantage of the opportunities offered by the communications media as pathways providentially given by God to intensify communion and to render more penetrating the proclamation of His word.”⁴² One such pathway, we believe, is this newly established John Cardinal Foley Chair of Homiletics and Social Communications.

Deriving from the teaching of John Paul II’s apostolic letter,⁴³ the mission of the Cardinal Foley Chair includes three particular tasks. The first deals with forming seminarians to become servant leaders in the Church. Their age may suggest that they are already of the generation which is native to the world of new media, but these current digital consumers will quickly be surpassed by the next generation in terms of being thoroughly immersed in, and profoundly affected by, the culture of digital communications. Consequently, both now and even more so in the future, **priestly formation** must attend to this cultural reality.

And the reality is this: the digital world is no longer simply the realm of advanced information technology or specialized means of communication. The paradigm that governs our conception of the media today is no longer that of an instrument or even an environment. Rather, as Archbishop Celli describes it, the media form a “connective tissue” that functions as “the nervous system of our culture.”⁴⁴

As such, social media exercise a decisive impact on how we think about truth, how we relate to others in goodness, and how we share our appreciation of beauty. Archbishop Celli spelled out the implications of this reality to those at the recent Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization when he said: “If the Church is not present in this space, if the Good News is not also proclaimed ‘digitally’, we run the risk of abandoning many persons, for whom this is the world in which they live; this is the forum where they acquire news and information, develop and express their opinions, engage in debate, dialogue and seek answers to their questions.”⁴⁵ Thus, the “virtual” world should no longer be considered a substitute for, or a diversion from, the “real” world, no longer something simply to be turned on and off.⁴⁶ So, too, online relationships should not be considered any less real or less authentic than those developed offline. Why not? Because as Fr. Spadaro points out, life in the digital world is just that: life, which is integral and indivisible, though it is expressed in a variety of ways.⁴⁷

Consequently, the theology of social communications needs to be a formal part of seminary education. I say this not just to try and keep my job! Rather, I make that observation because the communication of the Gospel – as witnessed by his life and as preached by his words – is, and should be, the future priest’s primary task. Speaking at a conference celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of *Inter Mirifica*, Monsignor Paul Tighe, the secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, put it this way: “What seems like a minor argument in a curriculum (filled) with numerous elements, should instead be seen in the broader light of the very finality of formation, in as much as communication touches every dimension of the activity of a priest.”⁴⁸ To highlight this dimension, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops should make room in the *Program of Priestly Formation* for the required study of CyberTheology!

The second task for the Cardinal Foley Chair focuses on **ecclesial participation**, which is to say that we need to enable the faithful to announce Christ in the digital age. That, in fact, was the theme of the recent plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Laity. To the participants in that assembly, the Holy Father stated that “it is indispensable to be present [on the web], always with an evangelical style ... to reawaken the insuppressible questions of the heart about the sense of existence, and to indicate the way that leads to Him who is the answer, the divine Mercy made flesh, the Lord Jesus.”⁴⁹

To be effective, that indispensable presence requires not only technical know-how but, more significantly, a twofold transformation on the cultural level. On the one hand, we need to adopt a different “language,” one more suitable to the new media.⁵⁰ As Archbishop Celli explained to those at the Synod on the New Evangelization, the Church is in the habit of “preaching, teaching and issuing declarations.” But “the style of discourse in the digital forum ... is spontaneous, interactive and participative ... (and) the most effective forms of digital discourse are those that directly engage persons, that seek to respond to their specific questions and that are open to dialogue.” As a result, we have to change from our heavy reliance on written texts to a different mode, “a language,” he says, that is “rooted in the convergence of written word, sound, and images.”⁵¹

On the other hand, that language also needs to find a new voice. We need to move beyond seeing Church communications as simply the priest speaking from the pulpit to a congregation that sits back and, hopefully, listens. Rather, to quote Archbishop Celli once again, “We are obligated to express ourselves in a way that engages and convinces others who, in turn, share our ideas with their friends, ‘followers’ and partners in dialogue.”⁵² We need, in other words, to empower the voice of the laity, especially of young people who know the language of social media so well. As Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI reminded us in his message for the 2011 World Communications Day, those voices, our voices, both native and new, should “witness consistently, in [their] own digital profile and in the way [they]

communicates choices, preferences and judgements that are fully consistent with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically.”⁵³

To facilitate this new witness in a new language, the Cardinal Foley Chair intends to sponsor conferences and/or conduct workshops on various aspects of social communications. I am happy to announce to you that Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, in collaboration with St. Joseph’s University, will be hosting the nationally-known Digital Church Conference on October 18th of this year, and that it will take place in the beautiful Cardinal John Foley Center on the campus of our neighboring university. We are also planning seminars for pastors and parish staff, and are in discussions with Catholic Voices USA to host special editions of their training workshop here at Overbrook.

Finally, the third task of the Cardinal Foley Chair is to engage in **professional dialogue** about the world of social communications. Information today is communicated at an astounding range and speed. And digital communications take a great diversity of forms, along a vast spectrum from mindless entertainment to mindful research. Thus, the need for thoughtful reflection and critical analysis becomes ever more important. As Archbishop Chaput himself once wrote, “Visual and electronic media, today’s dominant media, need a certain kind of content. They thrive on brevity, speed, change, urgency, variety and feelings.” “But,” he noted, “*thinking* requires the opposite. Thinking takes time. It needs silence and the methodical skills of logic.”⁵⁴

How the Cardinal Foley Chair will facilitate such thoughtful and methodical dialogue, I have no idea just yet! But I do know that our thinking will be enhanced by our large advisory committee of professionals in the world of communications. Their work, and all of ours, has only just begun!

Conclusion

But it is time now for this lecture to end. So, let me leave you with an invitation.

The Italian Minister of Public Administration (Giampiero D’Alia) was recently quoted as saying that “the Internet is the largest community in the world after the world.”⁵⁵ He’s right. And to that community Pope Francis has come, as divine Providence would have it, to explain Truth to us, to exhort us to Goodness toward others, and to exude the Beauty of believing. He brings with him an engaging style of social communications that has sparked the revival of evangelization in a tent spanning the entire world. But he cannot do it alone.

It now falls to all of us to be missionary disciples in the digital world, to be an active presence in the new Areopagus of our times,⁵⁶ to be that voice on the local level that will counteract

the drift of so many away from the faith, to be ultimately a living network of person-to-person evangelizers. To do this well, Pope Francis exhorts each of us to re-experience the joy of the Gospel for ourselves. Afterward, with that joy as an impulse, I invite you to “connect” with him ... “follow” him ... “friend” him ... “like” him ... “pin” him ... “post” him ... “snap” him ... “re-tweet” him ... “tag” him ... or somehow “share” him with those in your “circles” in whatever way you communicate, so that others will come to encounter the God who offers us the gift of mercy and the promise of eternal life.

After all, even in the digital world, the best medium to spread the Word is the person who believes it ... and that would be us.

Thank you!

¹ S.E. Mons. CLAUDIO M. CELLI, “Omelia nella Santa Messa nel trigesimo della morte di Sua Eminenza il Signor Card. John P. Foley,” [11 January 2012](#).

² JOHN ALLEN, “The red hat goes to the pastor,” *National Catholic Reporter*, [November 25, 2007](#).

³ As, for example, in his “Intervention at the World Federation of Advertisers on Its 50th Anniversary,” [28 October 2003](#).

⁴ POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, an apostolic exhortation on “The Joy of the Gospel” (24 November 2013), no. 135.

⁵ FR. THOMAS ROSICA offers several popular examples in “The Pope’s secret strength: The freedom to be Francis,” CNN Belief Blog, [22 December 2013](#): “A Pope who abandoned the red shoes – that were never an official part of the papal wardrobe! A Pope who dresses modestly, pays his own lodging bills, drives around Vatican City in a Ford Focus, calls many people on the phone, brings jam sandwiches to on-duty Swiss Guards at his door and invites street people to his birthday breakfast.” A more recent example would be the voice mail message the pope left at a monastery in Spain (*Huffington Post*, [3 January 2014](#)). For a photographic example, see PAUL HARING, “Facing Reality: Popes have ordinary moments, too,” Catholic News Service Blog, [15 January 2014](#).

⁶ The details he explains in his address to a joint meeting of the Catholic Press Association and the Catholic Academy of Communications Arts Professionals, published by Zenit on [May 25, 2005](#).

⁷ “Media: Well Worth the Church’s Effort.” Reported by Zenit on [November 4, 2006](#).

⁸ FRANCIS X. ROCCA, “In interviews, Pope Francis crafts a new genre of papal language,” Catholic News Service, [3 October 2013](#).

⁹ In an insightful article published on [21 April 2013](#) in the Italian newspaper *l’Avvenire*, STEFANIA FALASCA identifies the pope’s use of expressions like “babysitter Church” and “God spray” as a form called *pastiche*, which juxtaposes words from different levels or registers to create an expressionistic effect. She sees in the pope’s colloquial approach to his homilies a “*sermo humilis*” that is at once universal and contemporary.

¹⁰ POPE FRANCIS, Address to a Group of Recently Appointed Bishops Taking Part in a Course Organized by the Congregation for Bishops and by the Congregation for the Eastern Churches, [19 September 2013](#).

¹¹ POPE FRANCIS, “The True Priest and His Relation to Christ” (meditation during daily Mass celebrated in the Casa Santa Marta), [11 January 2014](#).

¹² ANTONIO SPADARO, “‘Wake up the world!’ Conversation with Pope Francis about the Religious Life,” *La Civiltà Cattolica* I ([4 January 2014](#)): 15.

¹³ POPE FRANCIS, “Melancholy is not Christian” (meditation during daily Mass celebrated in the Casa Santa Marta), 10 May 2013.

¹⁴ ANTONIO SPADARO, SJ, *Il disegno di papa Francesco* (Bologna: EMI, 2013), p. 31: “The language of Pope Francis is not speculative, but missionary, attentive to the interlocutor as much as to the message, and which is proffered not in order to be ‘studied’ but to be ‘listened to’, reaching immediately to the listener in a way that draws a reaction.”

¹⁵ Among which are *Time* magazine’s “person of the year” for 2013, mtvU’s “man of the year” for 2013, the “Simple Communication” award from l’Istituto Europeo Terzo Millennio, the “Argil: European Man” award from the European Commission in Italy, and even *Esquire* magazine’s “best dressed man of 2013.”

¹⁶ “Archbishop Charles Chaput on Cardinal John Foley’s Death,” *Catholic Philly*, [12 December 2011](#).

¹⁷ Cf. ANTONIO SPADARO, “‘Internet dono di Dio’ – La comunicazione di Francesco,” *Thinking Pagina* 99, [23 January 2014](#): “What appears clear is that, living with the normalness and naturalness of human relations, he does not put into action a pre-established ‘communicative strategy’; it is in relation, direct and authentic and lacking asymmetry, that the incisiveness and novelty of his transmission of the message lives.”

¹⁸ Homily at a Mass of Thanksgiving in St. Martin’s Chapel on 12 December 2007. *The Brook*, Spring 2012, p.2.

¹⁹ POPE FRANCIS, Audience to Representatives of the Communications Media, [16 March 2013](#). He repeated the same on [14 June 2013](#) in his address to writers of *La Civiltà Cattolica* the Jesuit journal that brought the now-famous papal interview to the world, and in his recent apostolic exhortation on “The Joy of the Gospel” (*Evangelii gaudium*, nn. 167, 257).

²⁰ Cf. POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 5.

²¹ DAVIDE PERILLO, “L’esperienza secondo Francesco: intervista a padre Antonio Spadaro,” *Tracce*, 11 December 2013: “What guides reflection and then action is the awareness that Christ is incarnate. ... This is not an inert objectivity; it is always an objectivity that becomes (a) look, (a) story, (an) experience. The objectivity is Christ. The novelty is the Gospel. This is the point. All the rest comes after. Not because it is less important, but because there is an absolute priority: the announcement. And this Gospel is called to be announced to all, in whatever situation one is found living.”

²² MARIAN TUPY, “Is the Pope Right About the World?” *The Atlantic*, [11 December 2013](#), provides several graphs to support the thesis that “The dystopian world that Francis describes, without citing a single statistic, is at odds with reality.”

²³ See MICHAEL NOVAK’s analysis in “Agreeing with Pope Francis,” *National Review Online*, [7 December 2013](#). In a subsequent interview with ANDREA TORNIELLI, published in *La Stampa* on [16 December 2013](#), Pope Francis makes it clear that “The Marxist ideology is wrong. ... I was not, I repeat, speaking from a technical point of view but according to the Church’s social doctrine. This does not mean being a Marxist.”

²⁴ Cf. PEGGY NOONAN, “Be a Saint, Not a Scrooge,” *The Wall Street Journal*, [6 December 2013](#): “All this has been portrayed as an attack on free-market economic thinking, but it struck me more as an attack on mindless selfishness, greed and go-with-the-flow acceptance of the uprightness of the world. ... I don’t think he’s saying be a leftist but something more revolutionary and fundamental: Be a saint.”

²⁵ ELIZABETH TENETY, “Like Pope Francis? You’ll Love Jesus,” *The Washington Post*, [11 December 2013](#). Cf. Pope Francis, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 205: “I am firmly convinced that openness to the transcendent can bring about a new political and economic mindset which would help to break down the wall of separation between the economy and the common good of society.”

²⁶ KATHRYN JEAN LOPEZ, “Pope Francis a phenomenon by preaching Gospel of Love,” *New York Post*, [30 November 2013](#).

²⁷ Cf. ROBERT BARRON, “Time’s Kantian Wedge,” *Real Clear Religion*, [12 December 2013](#).

²⁸ Rabbi ERIC H. YOFFIE, “The Francis Phenomenon and America’s Yearning for Values, Leadership and God,” *Huffington Post*, [31 December 2013](#).

²⁹ POPE FRANCIS, *Evangelii gaudium*, no. 88: “the Gospel tells us constantly to run the risk of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction. True faith in the incarnate Son of God is inseparable from self-giving, from membership in the community, from service, from reconciliation with others. The Son of God, by becoming flesh, summoned us to the revolution of tenderness.” Cf. “É il tempo della dolcezza: intervista con padre Antonio Spadaro,” *Suono e Silenzio*, [17 January 2014](#): “The tenderness of which Francis speaks ... is the solid tenderness of the gospel that accompanies whoever with a warm embrace and an open spirit. A solid, strong attitude of openness to mercy that is rooted in the solidity of God.”

³⁰ In “Vatican documents about Internet want of ‘digital divide,’” published by Zenit, on [28 February 2002](#).

³¹ DELIA GALLAGHER, “I Cattolici nei media: aperti, onesti, prudenti,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, [11 April 2008](#).

³² Cf. CATHERINE HARMON, “Archbishop Cordileone decries ‘manipulation’ of Pope Francis’ words to support same-sex marriage,” Catholic World Report, [21 November 2013](#); Reuters, “It’s Official: Pope has not abolished sin, says Vatican,” [31 December 2013](#); WILLIAM MCGURN, “What the Pope meant to say,” *New York Post*, [3 January 2014](#); JOHN ALLEN, “Francis ‘manipulated’ both by left and right, confidant says,” *National Catholic Reporter*, [7 January 2013](#); DAVID GIBSON, “Yes, the pope is still Catholic, despite what you heard,” *Religion News Service*, [7 January 2014](#); LUKE COPPEN, “Sorry – but Pope Francis is no liberal,” *The Spectator*, [11 January 2014](#).

³³ RYAN KREAGER, “Pope Francis Launches MISSIO as Church Goes Mobile,” [17 May 2013](#).

³⁴ As reported by the Catholic News Service on [11 November 2013](#).

³⁵ As reported by PBS Newshour on [9 December 2013](#).

³⁶ As reported by the Catholic News Agency on [26 July 2013](#).

³⁷ Cf. ROSS DOUTHAT, “The Promise and Peril of Pope Francis,” in *The New York Times*, [5 October 2013](#) and CECILIA RODRIGUEZ, “The ‘Pope Francis Effect:’ Everyone’s Loving It...So Far,” *Forbes*, [17 November 2013](#). On [25 November 2013](#), the Pew Research Center reported that that has been no clear effect among U.S. Catholics; however, in a commentary posted on the *First Things* blog [the following day](#), DAVID MILLS points out that “With 314 million Americans, the number identifying themselves as Catholics would have to rise by three million to raise the percentage one percent, and that’s three million among the portion of the population countable by surveys.” HADLEY ARKES summarizes the matter well in “Does Francis Have a Teaching Strategy,” *The Catholic Thing*, [17 December 2013](#): “At every turn, we hear of massive numbers coming to St. Peter’s Square, and of Catholics once fallen away now showing up at Mass. But the question is whether people are returning because they see the Church receding from the teaching they had found uncomfortable, or because they have been reminded of the deep powers of forgiveness, of a Church willing to enfold them again with all of their sins, as its unfolds us all.”

³⁸ ANTONIO SPADARO, SJ, “Papa Francesco è un social network,” *Wired.it* blog, [18 November 2013](#). Cf. his *Cyberteologia: Pensare il cristianesimo al tempo della rete* (Vita e Pensiero, 2012).

³⁹ In the online newspaper *L’Indro* on [15 March 2013](#), GIAMPIERO GAMALERI offers a communicative analysis of that appearance following his election in which he claims that the new pope’s discourse anticipates his entire pontificate. In a later article, he admiringly calls Francis “The Pope of ‘OK.’”

⁴⁰ POPE FRANCIS, “Communication at the Service of an Authentic Culture of Encounter,” Message for the 48th World Communications Day, [24 January 2014](#).

⁴¹ JOHN PAUL II, “[The Rapid Development](#)” (apostolic letter to those responsible for communications), 24 January 2005, no. 1.

⁴² JOHN PAUL II, “[The Rapid Development](#)”, no. 6.

⁴³ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, “[The Rapid Development](#)”, no. 2. “Moved by this awareness, the Christian community has taken significant steps in the use of the means of communication for religious information, for evangelization and catechesis, for the formation of pastoral workers in this area, and for the education to a mature responsibility of the users and the recipients of the various communications media.”

⁴⁴ Archbishop CLAUDIO MARIA CELLI, “Presenza cristiana nella Rete. Situazione attuale e prospettive per il future,” speech to the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, [6 December 2013](#): “At the beginning, in the 1960’s, they were thought of as means (McLuhan, 1967), then they became environments (Meyrowitz, 1993). With the advent of digital media, we have a new change of perspective and the Magisterium speaks of inhabitants in this reality, for whom the environment is the Internet and the media can be considered today as connective tissue (Siemens, 2004), the nervous system of our culture by means of which we communicate, produce cultural contents, construct and express our identities, transmit values, (and) relate to each another.”

⁴⁵ Archbishop CLAUDIO MARIA CELLI, Intervento al Sinodo dei Vescovi, [19 October 2012](#).

⁴⁶ As Fr. ANTONIO SPADARO, S.J. put it in a presentation to the recent plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Laity on [5 December 2013](#): “If we need to turn off the cellular in order to rediscover relationships, that does not mean that we are balanced but that we do not know how to live the challenges of our time.”

⁴⁷ FR. ANTONIO SPADARO explains the erroneous dichotomy in an interview with GIULIO LIZZI, “Internet, intreccio tra realtà e tecnologia,” *Corriere del Ticino*, [22 August 2013](#): “This dimension of falsity, which we conveniently attribute to the web, in reality resides already in the falsity that is lived ordinarily in life and that if anything is amplified on the web thanks to the lack of physical contact. There is not a time for digital relations and a time for physical relations: there is life, which is one and is expressed in diverse modes.”

⁴⁸ PAUL TIGHE, “Inter mirifica @50. L’importanza globale del decreto,” Pontifical Council for Social Communications, [5 December 2013](#).

⁴⁹ POPE FRANCIS, “Discourse to the participants in the plenary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity,” [7 December 2013](#).

⁵⁰ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, “Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith, New Spaces for Evangelization,” Message for the 47th World Communications Day, [12 May 2013](#): “The ability to employ the new languages is required, not just to keep up with the times, but precisely in order to enable the infinite richness of the Gospel to find forms of expression capable of reaching the minds and hearts of all.”

⁵¹ CELLI, Sinodo dei Vescovi, [19 October 2012](#).

⁵² CELLI, Sinodo dei Vescovi, [19 October 2012](#).

⁵³ BENEDICT XVI, “Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age,” message for the 45th World Communications Day, [5 June 2011](#).

⁵⁴ Archbishop CHARLES CHAPUT, “News media failing to fulfill its role in our democracy,” Catholic News Agency, [9 July 2009](#).

⁵⁵ In ROBERTO PAGLIALONGA, “Segreti e strategie di un social network chiamato Papa Francesco,” *Formiche*, [8 October 2013](#).

⁵⁶ JOHN PAUL II, *Redemptoris missio* (encyclical letter on the permanent validity of the Church’s missionary mandate), 7 December 1990, no. 37: “The first Areopagus of the modern age is the *world of communications*, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a ‘global village.’ The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large.”