

16 May 2024, Thursday of the 7th week of Easter

[Acts 22:30-23:6-11; John 17:20-26](#)

Homily

Communication is an essential part of being human, and the social dimension is an integral part of it. Nowadays, not only does communication retain all the importance it has always had in human life, but it has also been taken over by those who wield or want to wield power. Not so many years ago, power in society was in the hands of those who controlled money or 'capital'. Today it is in the hands of those who control communication. It is therefore important to reflect on the meaning of communication in God's plan. Didn't Jesus send his disciples to communicate his message to all nations? What is the meaning of this communication? The biblical texts for today's Eucharist shed some light on this.

In the first reading, we meet Paul almost at the end of his life. In Israel, he had received an excellent education from the best teachers. A Roman citizen, he was also familiar with Greek culture. After his conversion, he tried the techniques of human wisdom to "sell" the message of Christ. In Athens, he became complacent: "Athenians, you are the most religious of men... I saw a statue in your house dedicated to the unknown God" and, quoting the pagan poets, he told them: "This unknown God, I have come to announce to you". But this technique didn't work at all, and Paul returned to the other technique, that of the "foolishness of the cross". In the passage from Acts we have just read, Paul again uses a human method, skilfully playing with the tensions between the Pharisees and Sadducees; but he knows full well that he has already entered into the folly of the cross, which will see him handed over to the Romans and taken to Rome, where he will finally be put to death.

From Paul's experience, we must learn that the message of Christ is not a product that can be "sold". If that were the case, we would have to adapt the Gospel to the laws of the market, i.e. constantly rework the message of Christ so that it corresponds to what people expect and desire, or create great collective phenomena of acceptance of the message, as is done in the electoral conventions of political parties. This is not the way to deal with the Word of God, whether we preach it verbally or through our lives, according to our respective vocations.

Today's Gospel is the most beautiful example of Jesus' communication: his communication with his Father, first of all, in his great prayer at the Last Supper, then shared with his disciples during

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that same meal. These "communications" of Jesus advance around two themes: that of love and that of unity. These two themes are interconnected and inseparable.

The ultimate vocation of all humanity is to be one again in God. The ultimate vocation of Jesus' disciples is to be "one" in love, so that the world will perceive their message and believe. And we all know that there is no love or unity without communication and sharing. This is the purpose of Jesus' prayer for the unity of his disciples. Such unity is not simply conformity to the same structures; it is first and foremost sharing and reciprocity: "you in me and I in you".

This is undoubtedly a very accurate way of discerning constructive forms of communication from destructive ones. The former engender love and unity and come from God. What creates division and perpetuates hatred comes from the power of darkness.

All this is true of our daily communication with one another. But it is also true of the global exchange of communications. Few of us have the opportunity to use mass media communications to shape public opinion - or win an election! But we are all exposed to it. And it is our responsibility to determine their effect on us, by exposing ourselves to them with discernment. This morning's Gospel gives us an infallible criterion for this discernment: Everything that promotes unity, cooperation, understanding and love between individuals, groups and nations comes from God. Everything that creates or sustains divisions, mistrust, fear and confrontation comes from the Power of Darkness.

Just as we must constantly choose between God and Mammon, so we must constantly choose between communication as a form of love and communication as an element of domination.

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