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MAXIMUM ILLUD IN COMMUNICATION PERSPECTIVE

While Pope Benedict XV's "Maximum illud" addresses particularly mission, the encyclical can be read also from a communication and media perspective. Such a reading offers many insights into the communicative engagement. The author further expands on the encyclical's resonances in Roman documents on communication throughout the 20th century.

When Pope Benedict XV published his encyclical *Maximum illud* on November 30, 1919, film as a new means of communication was just 25 years "old" and in the process of emerging from a curiosity entertainment at popular festivals to a means of art of its own. Soon after the First World War radio was another means of communication emerging beyond the press, as a popular means, with the "British Broadcasting Corporation" (BBC) foundation 1926 considered as a starting point for regular systems also in other countries. Actually Pope Benedict XV himself had already soon after his election 1914 pointed towards the field of social communication in his first encyclical letter *Ad beatissimi* on unity. There he refers to the reality of "public opinion" within and outside of the church. He further published four documents on preaching and promoted already in 1915 a national organization for the press in Italy. On August 1, 1916, he wrote to a congress in Bogotá, Colombia: "It is without question that catholic journals can offer great help in our times. In fact, the daily experience shows that these papers with their very easy distribution can do much to refute errors and stimulate those who are lazy. One can absolutely not lose the opportunity to edify good people instead of their being deceived by bad publications" (cf. Eilers 2014a, 71 ff.). This idea was repeated again 50 years later by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Evangelii praecones* on mission.

After the First World War it was in a special way the concern of Pope Benedict XV to confirm and develop the mission activities of the

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church worldwide. For this, his encyclical *Maximum illud* is a testimony. The document became a foundation for the mission of the church and is addressed to the heads of mission *dicasteries*. It is considered as an initiative for a renewed mission of the church worldwide. This includes mainly structures and methods needed for mission work at a time when of the modern "media" mainly the press was in the mind of people.

Though not especially listing the "media" at this time, the Pope proposes, however, for the missionaries and their activities dispositions which are needed to share and communicate the faith far beyond Media and technology. Actually these dispositions seem even more important today in a digital world where traditional "media" seem to be losing in favor of a world "*Permanently Online and Permanently Connected*" (POPC) where everybody reaches instantly everywhere becoming a communicator to people and society also for the mission of the church.

Structures

The document describes first the structures of mission and those responsible ("heads") with duties which can easily be compared with any *communication activities* which are usually also—though sometimes indirectly—related to mission activities. Communication in human life and society needs proper structures including proper responsibilities and duties which are reflected in the way communication is done, which means how they are chosen and how they are applied: "If people come ... under diligent rulers, from whose prudence and charity they may benefit in all things, their work will no doubt bear fruit" What the document says about the missionary holds also for the communicator: their role and disposition determines not only the "success" but also the way of communicating and even their means.

Another expression for good communication is also the willingness to share and create common meetings which the document proposes and sees "to be of greatest benefit."

The encyclical further states that the missionary (head of a mission) "does not lock himself up within his own limits" but rather "tries to keep in touch and foster friendship ..."—first with his own companions but also with the people s/he serves which calls for "communicative persons" not only as superiors but also beyond.

Related to a proper communication is also the promotion of the local clergy "who is linked by the bonds of origin, character, feelings

and inclinations" which are far "superior to those of any other means." This can be related not only to *interpersonal communication* but also to a similar, positive attitude to existing *cultures* which determines the way, how, where and with whom we communicate in a given situation. This is especially the field of "intercultural communication"!

Proper training and formation of the indigenous clergy is a special concern of the encyclical which must also include properly adjusted ways and means of communication as reflected not only in teaching, but also in the way we deal with each other, how we celebrate the (Vatican II) liturgy, but also how we share in culturally creative forms and attitudes.

Dispositions

The dispositions which Pope Benedict XV requires in *Maximum illud* should also be the ones of any communicator who wants to be recognized as "minister of a religion which embraces all people who adore God in Spirit and Truth" (Col 3:11), as the document says.

What is required by *Maximum illud* for missionary training can easily also be specified for a proper social communication formation: "While ecclesiastical students, whom God should call, are trained for their apostolic expeditions, they must be by all means initiated into every department of knowledge, profane as well as sacred" which today definitely includes also the field of "Social Communication," and here especially "pastoral and evangelizing communication"!

One requirement for communication is also the ability and proper use of *language*. *Maximum illud* has a special section on so-called "local" languages, demanding a "thorough" and not just a superficial ability for language which after all is a main element in any communication: "The missionary is at the service of all ... and ought to know what power a perfect command of language gives to gain a sympathetic hearing from a crowd."

The importance of *libraries* for study and formation of missionaries is listed under the section of "training," going beyond theology including "every department of knowledge."

Virtues

The "missionary virtues" described under this title in the document qualify at the same time for a proper communicator: "... grant-

ed, therefore that the missionary [and communicator!] be endowed with every quality of head and heart, versed in the sciences, accomplished in every department of culture, but when these accomplishments are not supported by innocence of life, they will be powerless instruments for the conversion of the people—nay more, they may become harmful to himself and to others. Let him, therefore, be an example of humility, obedience, chastity, and especially of piety, prayer and constant union with God: the better united he is with God, the greater will be his share in divine grace and assistance ... It is by these virtues that truth finds an easy access to souls ..."—which can be said in the same way for a Christian communicator!

50 years after Benedict XV Pope *John XXIII*, referring to *Maximum illud* in his 1959 encyclical *Princeps pastorum* on mission, repeats the same concerns in view of the local clergy "to acquire the virtues which are demanded" of them as a strong and "powerful incentive."

While *Maximum illud* does not separately mention the *Media in mission work*, Pope *Pius XII* does so in his mission encyclical *Evangelii praecones* 1951 for the *press* in saying: "An equally useful service is the dissemination of timely publications. It is scarcely necessary for us to dwell at length on this point, for everyone knows how effectively newspapers, magazines and reviews can be employed ... to present truth and virtue in their proper light and thus to impress them on people's minds ... Hence we warmly commend those bishops who interest themselves in the widest distribution of printed works of this sort which have been carefully edited. Though much has already been done in this regard, much remains to be done."

The Vatican II document *Ad gentes*, again, stresses social communication as important for training and formation in mission (Nos. 26, 36).

The now 100-year-old document of Pope Benedict XV on mission presents dispositions and the spirituality needed for proper communication which must be considered as a foundation for more detailed treatments of *Social Communication* in mission encyclicals of the later popes and several Vatican II documents, especially *Inter mirifica*, *Dei verbum*, *Ad gentes* and *Gaudium et spes*.

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ABSTRACTS

Auch wenn sich *Maximum illud* von Benedikt XV. spezifisch der Mission widmet, kann die Enzyklika auch aus einem Kommunikations- und Medienblickwinkel gelesen werden. Eine solche Leseweise bietet viele Einsichten in die Kommunikationsarbeit. Der Autor widmet sich weiter den Anklängen zur Kommunikation, die sich in vatikanischen Dokumenten im ganzen 20. Jahrhundert finden.

Si bien *Maximum illud* de Benedicto XV se dedica a la misión, la encíclica se puede leer también en perspectiva de comunicación y de los medios. Tal relectura ofrece muchas ideas sobre el compromiso comunicativo. El autor amplía el horizonte de la encíclica hacia documentos del Vaticano sobre comunicación a lo largo del siglo XX.

Alors que l'encyclique du pape Benoît XV *Maximum illud* concerne spécialement la mission, elle peut aussi être lue dans une perspective de communication et de médias. Une telle lecture offre de nombreux points de vue sur l'engagement en communication. L'auteur développe ensuite les résonances de l'encyclique avec les documents sur la communication au long du 20^{ème} siècle.

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**MANY FACES, ONE HEART:
A REFLECTION ON THE TWO CATHOLIC COMMUNITIES IN THE
HOLY SPIRIT PARISH IN BERLIN-CHARLOTTENBURG**

Drawing on "Maximum illud's" suggestions in relation to the universality of the church and the importance of local cultures, this reflection is grounded in the concrete experience of an SVD parish in Berlin, Germany. There, communities of different cultural backgrounds and the related religiosities and demands struggle with the challenges of taking seriously their own standing in a particular culture and giving in for the sake of shared celebrations and collaboration. The role of culture, leadership and ecclesiological reflections on pluriform unity are important ingredients for the on-going building up of a Christian community.

Many Faces, one Heart is a known motto which accompanied the missionaries of the Divine Word (SVD), the missionary sisters (Servants of the Holy Spirit, SSps) and the contemplative sisters (Servants of the Holy Spirit of Perpetual Adoration, SSpsAP),¹ in the celebration of the canonisation of their founder, St. Arnold Janssen, in 2003. This theme reflects the international nature of these three religious congregations as well as the current reality of our time, with particular reference to the multicultural city of Berlin, where apparently more than 193 nationalities live.² In this vibrant city of Berlin is situated the Holy Spirit Parish which was established in 1922 by the Missionaries of the Divine Word. Throughout the years this parish served its natural purpose of ministering to the resident Catholics of the area and embraces all people seeking to worship with it. This Catholic community has currently about 4000 faithful who in diverse areas and in various degrees actively participate in the parish life

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¹ In Berlin, the "pink sisters" (SSpsAP) have a convent just across the street near the SVD parish. Since 1992, also the "blue sisters" (SSps) have taken up their ministry in Berlin. See www.steyler-missionsschwes.tern.de

² Berlin 2017: 3,6 million inhabitants, 193 nationalities; for statistics on the population see: Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg: www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de