

ADVERTISING IN THE PASTORAL INSTRUCTION

"COMMUNIO ET PROGRESSIO"

(NOS. 59-62)

59. The importance of advertising is steadily on the increase in modern society. It makes its presence felt everywhere; its influence is unavoidable. It offers real social benefits. It tells buyers of the goods and services available. It thus encourages the widest distribution of products and, in doing this, it helps industry to develop and benefit the population. All this is to the good so long as there is respect for the buyer's liberty of choice, even though in trying to sell some particular objects appeal is made to a person's basic need. Advertising too must respect the truth, taking into account accepted advertising conventions.

60. If harmful or utterly useless goods are touted to the public, if false assertions are made about the goods for sale, if less admirable human tendencies are exploited, those responsible for such advertising harm society and forfeit their good name and credibility. More than this, unremitting pressure to buy articles of luxury can arouse false wants that hurt both individuals and families by making them ignore what they really need. And those forms of advertising which without shame, exploit the sexual instincts simply to make money or which seek to penetrate into the sub-conscious recesses of the mind in a way that threatens the freedom of the individual, those forms of advertising must be shunned. It is therefore desirable that advertisers make definite rules for themselves lest their sales methods affront human dignity or harm the community.

61. It is true that a judicious use of advertising can stimulate developing countries to improve their standard of living. But serious harm can be done them if advertising and commercial pressure become so irresponsible that communities that seek to rise from poverty to a reasonable standard of living are persuaded to seek this progress by satisfying wants that have been created artificially. The result of this is that they waste their resources and neglect their real needs and genuine development falls behind.

62. In fact the vast sums of money spent in advertising threaten the very foundations of the mass media. People can get the impression that the instruments of communication exist solely to stimulate men's appetites so that these can be satisfied later by the acquisition of the things that have been advertised. Moreover, because of economic demands and pressures, the essential freedom of the media is at stake. Since advertising revenue is vital for these media, only those can ultimately survive which receive the greatest share of advertising outlays. Consequently, the door is open for monopolies to develop in the media which may impede the right to receive and give information and inhibit the exchange of views within the community. A variety of independent means of social communication must therefore be carefully safeguarded even if this requires legislative action. This will ensure that there is an equitable distribution of advertising revenue among the most deserving media of communication and prevent the lion's share from going to those that are already the most powerful.

THE POPE SPEAKS

On 26 March Pope Paul VI received the Archbishops and Bishops of the central region of France, in the framework of the canonical visits "ad limina Apostolorum". The following are excerpts from his address:

PRIESTLY MINISTRY

We understand that you are more and more concerned by the question of new vocations to the priesthood. You must give the problem your serious attention, but not to the extent of becoming paralysed or of being induced to concentrate your looks and your hopes on impossible or illusory solutions. This difficulty is not universal in the Church, thank God, and it should rather be considered a temporary and superable one. It is necessary, therefore, to look for everything that can be done to solve the situation, according to the ways that have been established or confirmed by the Church as a whole.