

## **Engaging the Media<sup>17</sup> as Effective Tools for Inter-Religious Dialogue in Multi-Religious Societies: a Catholic Evaluation**

**By Marinus Iwuchukwu**

### **Abstract**

Modern societies are largely pluralistic; consequently, the coexistence of many religions is fast becoming the norm not only in Western or developed societies but globally. The Roman Catholic Church has a mission to reach all people and has some form of foothold even in societies that are heavily dominated by non-Christian religions. The media today have become the most effective way of communicating and, potentially, of building relationships with diverse populations. It is, therefore, important to harness the assets of the media toward sustainable and fruitful inter-religious dialogue. This paper argues that Catholics, and indeed all Christians, should seek the best ways of using the media to promote good neighborliness and peace in modern societies.

### **Introduction**

Religion is of its essence communication. The three monotheistic religions claim to be “revelations:” God speaking to human beings. For Christians, the gospel is the good news that must be spread abroad: in other words, *broadcast*. On a theological level, the central doctrine of Christianity, the Trinity, teaches that the One God exists in three Persons, who “communicate” eternally: the Father “generates” the Son and the Holy Ghost “proceeds” from the Father and the Son (Woodrow 2003, 208). The Catholic Church’s consistent appreciation of the media as important instruments for effective dialogue is reflected in John Paul II’s apostolic letter to media workers on 24 January 2005, the occasion of the celebration of the feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists. Part of that letter reads,

In the communications media the Church finds a precious aid for spreading

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<sup>17</sup> This article applies the use of the term media principally to print and electronic media. Therefore, when reference is made to media workers, it is ordinarily a reference to those who work in either or both print and electronic media. However, where other forms of media are implied by the use of the term media, efforts will be made to specify the type of media intended.

the Gospel and religious values, for promoting dialogue, ecumenical and inter-religious cooperation, and also for defending those solid principles which are indispensable for building a society which respects the dignity of the human person and is attentive to the common good (John Paul 2005, #7).

The quotation above establishes the proper framework for proceeding to look into how effective the media could be in supporting the global efforts of multi-religious dialogue. The current pope, Benedict XVI, in his inaugural homily during his installation, pointedly remarked that one of the primary focuses of his pontificate would be to encourage harmony between Catholics and Christians and non-Christians of the world. While lamenting the disagreements among different peoples of the world regarding certain values, Benedict XVI concludes optimistically, with the hope that God will reunite his scattered people:

We must not be sad! Let us rejoice because of your promise, which does not disappoint, and let us do all we can to pursue the path towards the unity you have promised. Let us remember it in our prayer to the Lord, as we plead with him: yes, Lord, remember your promise. Grant that we may be one flock and one shepherd! Do not allow your net to be torn, help us to be servants of unity! (Zenit 2005).

It is with such fervent hope that the Catholic Church has approached developments in media technology since *Inter Mirifica*<sup>18</sup> of the Second Vatican Council. Hence the need for the Church to work with the media in her mission of evangelizing the world has consistently been emphasized (Flannery 1965, 284-292).

### **Mainstream Media and Religion**

There is ample historical evidence of profound collaborations as well as mutual interdependence of media and religion, especially in the early stages of modern mass media. The print media, historically, have been utilized successfully toward religious evangelization, activities, and education. When radio was invented in early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was effectively and popularly used for broadcasting religious programs and services. Many religious organizations continue to utilize the services and ingenuity of television,

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<sup>18</sup> *Inter Mirifica* is a document of the Second Vatican Council, which is focused on the values of modern media and the relevance of the media to the mission of the Church in the World.

radio, and newspaper to further their missions and activities (Underwood 2002, 19ff; Ellens 1974).

However, with time, Western mainstream media began to advocate and represent voices that had hitherto been either silenced or rejected by religion and became a social watchdog over institutions, government, and organizations that previously reigned unfettered and unchallenged. These developments are some of the major reasons many mainline Christian denominations, including the Catholic Church, became very critical of, as well as distanced themselves from, many mainstream media (Lochte 2005, 98ff; Marty et al. 1963).<sup>19</sup> As a result, the relationship of most Western mainstream media to religion became lackluster at best, acrimonious at worst. One only has to think of the many Hollywood movies that have cast religion, notably Catholicism, in a bad light<sup>20</sup> or media news reports and documentaries that have emphasized the negative dimensions of religion. The master narratives of most Western mainstream media about religion have tended to highlight news and information like the Christian religious affiliation of Timothy McVeigh (the Oklahoma federal building bomber), the Islamic orientation of suicide bombers in the Middle East and other Islamic countries, and the respectively Catholic and Protestant identities of conflicting parties in Northern Ireland. While it is true that the above-mentioned individuals and groups hold religious identities, it is not true that religion is the only driving force behind their heinous actions or socially unacceptable ideologies. Therefore, to blame Christianity for Timothy McVeigh's terrorist action in the bombing of the federal building at Oklahoma City is *non sequitur*. It is, however, sad that people with devious intentions and desires have historically found ways of wrapping religion around their socially and morally unacceptable conducts and ideas.

The media (as a social institution) have redefined themselves in ways that go beyond the traditional concept of mere channels for information, education, and

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<sup>19</sup> The 18<sup>th</sup> century's Enlightenment philosophical assumptions (like freedom of religion and a commitment to objective truth) were the precursors of the ideologies of social criticism and social watchdog mentality later assumed by the media more actively, especially from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is in addition to the objection religious institutions held against the media as corrupting agents of public morality. The establishment of American Family Association (AFA) is one of the end results of the objections to the media's disposition to anti-traditional family values.

<sup>20</sup> The list of such movies stretches wide, including "The Thorn Birds," "Sister Act," "The Confession," etc. There appears to exist some tension between the Catholic Church and mainstream media, especially in Western societies. Here in the United States, some Catholics are of the opinion that mainstream media are out to convict the Church of social evils in both the civic and public courts. This is owing to the intensity and aggression with which the media have published and broadcast issues that paint the church in poor taste, like the crimes of pedophilia leveled against clerics and other church workers.

entertainment. Today's media professionals truly identify themselves as the "Fourth Estate"<sup>21</sup> in the social political context of a democratic society. As a result, some journalists have observed that it would be wrong for the Church to continue to think of the media as her "stooge" (Harries 1997; Heneghan 1997). Harries (1997) and Heneghan (1997) primarily argue that the media today have come to see themselves as the representatives of public opinion or as constituting the public forum. As the unofficial voice of the public, the media has often spoken and advocated for the public historically and continues to do so today. However, Western mainstream media have often been accused of lopsidedly being in favor of the liberal interests of the public. It is equally true, on the other hand, that in the United States the Fox News network has tended to represent the conservative interests of the public. Yet some media outfits, like CNN, would like the public to believe that they represent the diverse interests of the public. It is therefore fair to say that many mainstream media in the West would like to be seen as both representing the voices of the diverse public and the forum for the voices of the public to be heard. The pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio* equally identified the media not only as constituting the forum for the public to express their opinion but also affirmed that by their role in society the media help to formulate public opinions (*Communio et Progressio* 1971, #24-32). According to the document, "The means of social communications are public forums where every man [and woman] may exchange ideas," (*Communio et Progressio* 1971, #24). This document goes on to demand freedom of the press and expression as an indispensable requisite for the formation and maintenance of public opinion: "If public opinion is to be formed in a proper manner, it is necessary that, from the start, the public be given free access both to the sources and channels of information and be allowed freely to express its own views," (*Communio et Progressio* 1971, #33).

Such positive reference to and affirmation of the media by the Catholic Church is a clear departure from the attitude of distancing from and condemnation of the media in the past. Indeed, the media today have strategically placed themselves in the position of claiming responsibility for not only assembling public opinion but also significantly influencing or evoking such opinions. As Matt Cooper observes, "The Church has a voice, like any other, which should be facilitated by the media, but it must also be analyzed and criticized," (Cooper 1997, 43). Today's media often strongly express their independence from any institution or authority. This aspect of the media sometimes

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<sup>21</sup> The Fourth Estate is a concept of journalists standing out in the society as the voice of the people. So although while not constitutionally recognized as such, the media have tended to unofficially represent the voice of the public. Fourth Estate is a concept that was officially introduced into usage in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain by Thomas Carlyle in his 1841 book, *On Heroes and Hero Worship*, in reference to the press.

leaves the Church particularly worried. Even John Paul II acknowledged this concern when he commented that “these media run the risk of manipulating and heavily conditioning, rather than serving people,” (John Paul II 2005).

The media on their part, however, insist that the one authority they serve and represent is the voice of the public (Steinfels 1994).<sup>22</sup> This aspect is well expressed in the operation of the secular media (Woodrow 2003, 218ff). Serving and representing the public has transformed modern media significantly. They are respected and highly recognized by other social structures, including the political and religious institutions. Further on, we have a development where the media have shifted from being a voice of the people to becoming an agenda-setter within society. This development has been credited as part of the gains of a democratic and modern or postmodern society. Agenda setting is a development where the media have tended to crystallize and/or amplify either conservative, moderate, or liberal ideologies on behalf of the public and make them major talking points for political, social, religious, and economic purposes in the society.

Nonetheless, it is also true that the voice or voices the media choose to promote or defend are determined by the interests of forces like sponsors, management, and the dominant philosophy of the media organizations. Andy Pollak (1997) addresses one interest group’s influence when he writes, “It is one of our journalistic articles of faith that we write for a public which has ‘the right to know.’ In fact, I can tell you, as a journalist of twenty-five years’ experience, that we write primarily for our editors. If the ‘sun king’ is pleased with our work, we are content,” (126).

Besides the shift in paradigm of the understanding of the media in the society, media technology continues to grow rapidly. Today’s digital and internet world, which the media have fully incorporated and promoted, have further compounded the problem of keeping track of and using media developments among religious organizations. There is the enormous challenge of catching up, given that the cost associated with technological equipment and upgrading are economically astronomic for an average religious institution.

Whereas previously the information that most religions disseminated to the media was regulated by the religious authorities who determined what the media should know or not know, now that structure is strongly challenged and sometimes ignored by the invasive, independent, and investigative journalism of today’s media. John Paul II, in his 1986 address to the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Commission for Social

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<sup>22</sup> However, there are times when there is great doubt about whether what is called the voice of the people is not really the voice of the newsmakers, gatekeepers, and stereotypes that the media chooses to maintain. A renowned American journalist, Peter Steinfels, in his paper published by *The Working Paper Series*, lends weight to this observation.

Communication, contemplates the dominance and challenge of the media: “It has been said that newspaper columns, radio microphones, and television cameras constitute a pulpit from which modern society draws much of its moral and spiritual orientation,” (John Paul II 1986, #5). Interestingly the present role and dominance of the media in society was already envisaged by *Communio et Progressio* (1971). This is evident in its opening comment: “The constant improvement in the media puts them at the disposal of more and more people who in their daily lives make increasing use of them. More than ever before, the way men [and women] live and think is profoundly affected by the means of communication,” (Communio et Progressio 1971, #1). Further on, in 1991, John Paul II, in his address to the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications, once again hinted at the towering presence and influence of the media in the society in these words:

The fact that the means of social communication have become the chief sources of information and education, of guidance and inspiration, at the level of individual, family and social behavior, invites the members of the Church clearly to recognize their importance (John Paul II 1991, par. 2).

Those words are indeed telling, not only of the importance of the media but also of the Church’s awareness of her need to appropriately use the media in her mission of witnessing in today’s society, regardless of the challenges this may entail. In his last apostolic letter to social communicators (media workers), John Paul II strongly urged them not to be afraid to use the media. He encouraged them to seek to use all the technologies of today’s media morally and responsibly as their Christian faith would suggest (John Paul II 2005, #11-14). It is in the light of a morally responsible Christian faith that the media are indispensable tools for effective inter-religious dialogue. How the media can be used as effective tools for inter-religious dialogue will be explored below.

### **The Demands of Dialogue**

Dialogue is a social imperative for a peaceful society. By extension, dialogue is equally indispensable for peaceful co-existence among peoples of diverse faith affiliations. A document of the Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, *Dialogue and Proclamation*, sets the tone for what to expect of an inter-religious dialogue from the perspective of the Catholic Church. Part of the document reads:

Dialogue requires, on the part of Christians as well as of the followers of other traditions, a balanced attitude. They should be neither ingenuous nor overly critical, but open and receptive. Unselfishness and impartiality, acceptance of possible contradictions ... [t]he will to engage together in commitment to the truth, and the readiness to allow oneself to be transformed by the encounter are other dispositions required (Burrows 1993, 105-106).

The key phrases to consider in the challenging efforts of dialogue include balanced attitude; open and receptive; acceptance of possible contradictions; commitment to the truth; and willingness to entertain transformation through the encounter. These dispositions for dialogue are, according to the document, to be pursued with strong religious conviction and openness to truth (Burrows 1993, 106). They are fundamental for any meaningful inter-religious dialogue.

The role of a strong religious conviction presupposes that parties in dialogue have deep reverence for and affiliation with their own religious faiths (Swidler, Duran, & Firestone 2007; Iwuchukwu 2010, 189f). Accordingly, “persons not belonging to any religious or ideological community could not, of course, engage in inter-religious ... dialogue” (Swidler, Duran, & Firestone 2007, 11). With meaningful religious conviction, people in inter-religious dialogue are able to express the beauty and strength of their faith traditions. Inter-religious dialogue is not a forum for proselytizing but rather for stating and affirming the integrity of one’s faith persuasion (Iwuchukwu 2010, 188-189). Based on such integrity and sincerity of conviction, people in inter-religious dialogue delightfully share the truths of their faiths (Swidler, Duran, & Firestone 2007, 28f). But openness to truth also implies that each person engaged in a dialogue has good listening ears to understand and appreciate the truth coming from his or her partners in the dialogue. Iwuchukwu (2010) describes openness to truth as “a prerequisite of foundational necessity for every successful inter-religious dialogue,” (187).

A close look at the above recommendations for meaningful dialogue suggests equally that the parties involved should have genuine and loving respect for each other. It is in the spirit of such respect that openness to truth will prevail in their discussions. Dialogue is not between a superior and an inferior or between a king and his subjects. It is an exercise engaged in by people who basically understand and accept the equality and dignity of each other. When dialogue is carried out in such a spirit, room is created for the transformation of those engaged in dialogue. The transformation of dialogic partners comes from the attentive, respectful, and open mindset that defines the procedure leading to the interactions.

During his first visit to the United States, Pope Benedict XVI, addressing representatives of other religions gathered with him in Washington, D.C., said,

I therefore invite all religious people to view dialogue not only as a means of enhancing mutual understanding, but also as a way of serving society at large. By bearing witness to those moral truths which they hold in common with all men and women of goodwill, religious groups will exert a positive influence on the wider culture, and inspire neighbors, co-workers and fellow citizens to join in the task of strengthening the ties of solidarity (Benedict XVI 4/17/2008).

Benedict XVI confidently affirms the good in other religions in this statement, a fact that accentuates the necessity of inter-religious dialogue and points to the need for collaboration among the religions in a given society for the common good. In the same address, the pontiff also said that:

the United Nations can count on the results of dialogue between religions, and can draw fruit from the willingness of believers to place their experiences at the service of the common good. Their task is to propose a vision of faith not in terms of intolerance, discrimination and conflict, but in terms of complete respect for truth, coexistence, rights, and reconciliation (Benedict XVI 4/18/2008).

In the light of the acclaimed value and indispensability of inter-religious dialogue for the common good in every society (which includes an end to religious motivated wars and conflicts as well as an end to religious bigotry), maximizing the benefits of the media toward the goals of inter-religious dialogue becomes imperative.

### **How the Church Can Use the Media to Promote Dialogue**

Notwithstanding the fact that the media are fast-growing industries in society, the Catholic Church as a noble religious body has, since *Inter Mirifica* of Vatican II, continued to express her willingness to effectively and adequately use the media to further her goals. Affirming this stance, John Paul II in his 26 January 2005 apostolic letter to social communicators said, “the Church is not only called upon to use the mass media to spread the Gospel but, today more than ever, to integrate the message of salvation into the ‘new culture’ that these powerful means of communication create and amplify,” (John Paul II 2005, #2). The idea here is for the media to be infused with the values and disposition necessary for effective dialogue, which include sincere respect for all faith traditions, non-biased reporting and openness to learn the truth about the different religions in the society (Iwuchukwu 2010, 186-194). The Catholic Church has since *Inter Mirifica* consistently maintained her intention to fully, morally, and responsibly use the media to advance the mission of the Church in the world, which



includes dialogue.<sup>23</sup>

Among the ways that the Church can use the media, especially those within her control to promote dialogue are, first, to consider better funding and support for media establishments run by the Church. The advantages of the Catholic Church having her own media establishments far outweigh the disadvantages.<sup>24</sup> Given the technology available today, the Church should encourage all its agencies, parishes, and organizations to use the internet, radio, television, print media, Wi-Fi devices, etc., to connect with the public. This will help all those extensions of the Catholic Church to truly represent the Church's interests in the media, so that the public gets the right information about the Church and religion at large. When people of other faith traditions are properly informed and enlightened about the Church and its social passions, it helps to minimize bias and tendencies of antagonisms the Church appears to face from peoples of other faith traditions who are ill-informed about the Church. Such enlightenment and better understanding enables people of other faith traditions to be open to engage in religious dialogue with the Church.

Second, reporters or religious correspondents need to be people with some faith orientation who are well educated about religion (Flynn 1997). This helps to ensure accurate, non-biased, and appropriate reporting. Religion is a discipline with very complicated terminologies, ideas, and expressions. Therefore, people reporting or commenting on religion need to have adequate knowledge as well as a faith commitment in order to provide sound reporting. A reporter without a faith commitment does not empirically understand the deeper dimensions and exigencies of a faith-filled life. There are elements of every faith tradition that are more than meets the eyes, which are better appreciated by people who are open to similar or identical experiences. Such believers

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<sup>23</sup> Since publishing *Inter Mirifica* of Vatican II, the Catholic Church continues to maintain the value of the media for mission and evangelization. Therefore, it does not come as a surprise that she will be in favor of actively involving the media in the mission of inter-religious dialogue as well as for evangelization. The document *Dialogue and Proclamation* does not see any conflict or contradiction for the Church to do so. As a matter of fact, the heart of the message of *Dialogue and Proclamation* is to firmly state that the Church has a dual mission to both promote dialogue and evangelize, with the goal of evangelization being to ensure that the good news is proclaimed, and not necessarily for proselytizing, but as her duty of sharing her message of faith. Inter-religious dialogue certainly welcomes people sharing their faith orientations with their dialogic partners (Swidler, Duran, & Firestone 2007).

<sup>24</sup> The Church needs to leave behind the old idea that the only worthwhile church projects are building new churches, hospitals, schools, and facilities to house different charity services. Today, negative media and the Church's seeming lack of positively sustained interest in the media have adversely affected her images as moral authority and spiritual leader, and her services to the society. The media today stands out as the most dominant image-maker. *Aetatis novae* was right in observing that "Reality, for many, is what the media recognize as real; what media do not acknowledge seems of little importance" (See *Aetatis novae*, #1).

must be balanced in their approach and orientation, or, for an example, a fanatical reporter may end up becoming a part of the problem of the Church in the media instead of an asset. Remembering that one of the necessary ingredients for meaningful dialogue is a balanced attitude, a reporter on interfaith dialogue needs also to have a balanced mindset. This helps promote healthy reporting; healthy reporting will enhance the spirit of the dialogue that needs to exist between dialogic partners.

Third, in the spirit of healthy reporting, it is important that the people engaged in dialogue be careful about what they send out in press releases. It is not necessary to invite the media to closed-door forums where dialogue is taking place. Among other considerations, such meetings are often too boring for the media. It suffices to report the conclusions or summaries of such meetings to the media at the end of dialogue meetings.

Fourth, Catholic media organizations need to broaden their professional partnerships to include non-Catholic and non-religious organizations. Operating a media organization with non-Catholic organizations presupposes and invites a broader and more diverse audience and viewers. With sound ethical principles and values typical of Catholic organizations, such partnerships will present a more pragmatic way of ensuring deeper and more effective impact of the teaching of the Church on the products of such partnerships. These partnerships are both evocative and indicative of the dialogue of action recommended by the Church. The recommendation of collaboration through partnership with non-Catholic organizations does not negate the earlier recommendation of supporting and promoting Catholic-owned media institutions. These two can exist simultaneously. While the strictly Catholic-owned media institutions and organizations would focus primarily on outreach to Catholics and potential Catholics, the collaborative efforts with other religious or non-religious organizations would concentrate on working with non-Catholic organizations and religions for the common good of all as well as actively reflecting the Catholic viewpoints on issues of public interest. A good example of such partnership or collaboration is instances of the Vatican press working with secular media to cover the pastoral visits of the pope. Further on, the situation in Haiti after the recent earthquake offers a golden opportunity for many Catholic media organizations to work with both non-Catholic religious media and secular media to respond to the humanitarian needs created by the utter devastation in that country.

## **Conclusion**

This article commenced by acknowledging the increasing influence of the media, especially print and electronic, in society and their development into becoming agenda-setters in matters of public discourse. It also reviewed the growing appreciation in the

Catholic Church for valuing the importance of media in her mission to the world, including inter-religious dialogue. A significant portion of this work has argued and proposed how the media can be used as effective tool for dialogue. As part of the concluding thoughts in this article, it is desirable to focus more closely on one of the demands of dialogue mentioned earlier, namely, the yearning to be transformed by the dialogical activities. A number of theologians define this as conversion, and emphasize that it must be one of the fruits of dialogue. The closest analogy to what this transformation would mean in other disciplines of theology, like those of dogma or pastoral theology, is what Avery Dulles terms “cultural reciprocity” in his analysis of inculturation theology (Dulles 1988, 43-46)<sup>25</sup>. By cultural reciprocity, Dulles (1988) implies that different cultures “can mutually criticize and enrich one another through dialogue,” (44). However, the emphasis in inter-religious dialogue differs from that of inculturation theology. For while in inculturation theology there is an attempt to bring Christ into the different cultures of the world, in inter-religious dialogue, for a Catholic, one of the goals is to see aspects of the other religion or religions that broaden a Christian understands of the Incarnate Christ. In their respective Christological theologies, Jürgen Moltmann (1981, 114-121) and Edward Schillebeeckx (1983) concluded that since Christ is God he would certainly approve of all that is good and valuable in every religion. It is this universal concept of Christ that Hans Urs von Balthasar (1989) describes as “the ‘humanization’ of God” (70ff) in his incarnation theology.

When they open up to truth and listen with sensitive understanding, partners in dialogue, are able to see other valid and valuable ways of understanding the divine and the call to live holy lives. Such openness to truth and the appreciation of it should pass through the different media channels as clearly and unambiguously as possible to the public. If this profound communication of truth is successful in multi-religious societies, the people in such societies will begin to hold and appreciate each other as partners in life’s spiritual journey. Such social conditions of harmony, peace, and understanding are some of the fundamental goals of inter-religious dialogue.

For the media to effectively communicate the gains of a transforming dialogue, the packaging of the information to be passed on to the public is pivotal. This is why media professionals, who report about religion or contribute to matters regarding religion, should be encouraged to be sensitive to issues of faith, ensuring balanced and truthful reporting and commentaries. For greater success in this regard, there will be need for effective collaboration among the different media organizations reporting

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<sup>25</sup> Dulles adopts the definition of inculturation articulated by Reiser (1981), which sees inculturation as “the process of a deep, sympathetic adaptation to and appropriation of a local cultural setting in which the Church finds itself in a way that does not compromise its basic faith in Christ” (Dulles 1988, 37).

news, information, and events of inter-religious dialogue to reasonably agree on the what, when, and how of the message to be passed to the final consumers of the products of the media, the public. There should be some form of verification of information and facts rather than the manipulation of information and facts. In practical terms, this idea calls for some sort of clearinghouse on issues, news, and information affecting religion. Needless to say, some media organizations today like CNN, Fox News, CBS, NBC, PBS, etc., already have in place such outfits. Some of the media organizations mentioned have credible experts to consult and large libraries for checking and vetting facts and information. The use of credible experts as consultants and sizeable sources of recorded information and facts provide the required checking and vetting typical of a clearinghouse. However, still other organizations today are reluctant to invest in such an idea and practice.

Finally, it has become very necessary to educate the public to be selective in their use of the media for specialized information. Issues of religion certainly fall within the purview of specialized information. It is therefore vitally important today, when some gatekeepers in the media have failed and continue to fail to uphold responsible and morally satisfying reporting, that the public know that they have a responsibility to make personal efforts to ascertain the truth of news and information they receive from the media. It is then incumbent, from the standpoint of an obligation of faith, on Christians to support those media that they can count on for accurate and balanced reporting and support such media organizations that serve not only the need for reliable and balanced information but are also assets for promoting inter-religious dialogue in multi-religious societies.

The dialogue among religions must go on if we are to maintain peace and good neighborliness in our pluralist societies. The media are a great asset for achieving these social goals, and all hands must be on deck in working toward these noble goals because everyone has a stake in a peaceful, friendly, and orderly society. It is necessary that mainstream media constructively review their tendency of negativity toward certain religious institutions, and for religious institutions to proactively engage the media in the service of society toward the common good and important social ends, including achieving effective inter-religious dialogue in society.

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