CRISIS COMMUNICATION IN THE CHURCH AND PASTORAL DIMENSIONS

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ABSTRACT: The author presents an understanding of crisis communication in the Church, especially the theological and pastoral method, considering the teachings of Popes John Paul II and Francis, as well as based on the research and experience of foreign theologians. The Church is also potentially a victim of critical issues, especially in times of war, which is why the author will try to deepen the relationship between ecclesiastical institutions and their influence on the worldview of the faithful, underlining communication aspects and relationships with the mass media. Undoubtedly the absolute prerogative of the Church is the announcement of the Good News and the Truth. The rejection of communication and responsibility is not only an escape from real threats, but also a rejection of people who seek God through the voice of the Church. Therefore, the study of crisis communication in the Church, considering social communication and the challenges of war, ethical relativism, the mass media's distorted vision of the Church: this is the task of ecclesiastical educational institutions in the modern world.

Keywords: communication, crisis, method, mass media, dimension, spiritual direction, leader, priest.

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Introduction

Ukrainian society, which is going through a war, is an environment that is threatened by crisis communication. These are not only organizations that have encountered propaganda, a distorted understanding of war and peace, «sacred war», the so-called «special military operation», which are discussed in all mass media, but also institutions and organizations that also occupy a considerable space in the delineation of typologies, such as non-governmental organizations and the Church.

The first area includes government institutions, companies and everything that acts in society: economic, political, social, and industrial development. The second context, that between State and Market, is made up of non-governmental organizations, foundations, cooperatives, non-profit organizations of social utility. They are known as «non-profit», «third sector», «civil economy», «private social», «non-commercial entities». The third environment concerns the Church as a top structure[2].

All organizations, whether multinational or small non-profit, are not immune to a potential emergency. Even the Church is not immune: the abuse of clerics, financial scandals, the scandal of a bishop who marries according to the rite of a sect are all examples that in recent years have characterized the Catholic Church, in some cases compromising its image in the public opinion[3].

> If every institution must design its own communication as a tailor-made suit, the specific traits of the Church as a human organization will have significant consequences in the way in which it will have to foresee and provide for the crises that will inevitably affect it, both on a global level and within detail of a diocese, a religious order or congregation or any ecclesial institution: hospitals, schools, hotels and residences, media, associations, etc[4].

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[2] M. Padula, *Crisis communication, Come comunicare le emergenze,* Torino 2005, 102-104.

[3] S. De La Cierva, *La comunicazione di crisi nella Chiesa,* Torino 2008, 7-8.

[4] L. Paccagnella, *Sociologia della comunicazione,* Bologna 2010, 89-90.

The connection between Crisis Communication and the Church is, therefore, necessary, and inevitable. Although the Church is not just a visible organism, there is also a concrete, organizational, human dimension. Therefore, it is so important to keep in mind what professor Dario Edoardo Viganò[5] says about organizations:

> Businesses and all organizations are increasingly exposed to the winds of crisis. The greater technological risks, the interconnection of large systems, the multiple upheavals that our societies are experiencing, the influence of the media (...) the elimination and even the collapse of ideological, ethical, and strategic references... are all factors that accentuate the weak points and therefore widen the potential field of crises.

Organizations are not only limited to predicting the damage that could result from disasters to prepare emergency exits, but they also deal with the impact that an unexpected event could have on public opinion and the loss of credibility. The Catholic Church, after a scandal, can be shocked by even greater consequences. The Church's action is not limited only to defending a beautiful image of itself and its reputation. The first point is to announce the Good News and the Truth and reconcile men with God and with each other. The eighth commandment is the principle within the Church and its institutions. Jesus himself said: "I am the Truth and the life" (Jn 14:6). He teaches his disciples the unconditional love of the truth and dedicates his harshest words to the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Luke 13:39).

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[5] Dario Edoardo Viganò is a priest specializing in social communication and cinematography; professor of the Pontifical Lateran University; was the prefect of the Secretariat for Communications of the Apostolic See; is a member of the Congregation for the Clergy and the Congregation for Catholic Education (Vatican); is Vice-Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, with special competence for the communication sector. He is the author and editor of publications and articles, including: "Pop-cinema-art. Visual culture, fashion and design in Italian cinema of the 60s and 70s" (2012), "Dear Masters. From Suzanne Beer to Gianni Amelio, directors ask themselves questions about the importance of education" (2011), "Church and advertising. History and analysis of commercials 8x1000" (2011), "Celluloid priest. Nine views of the author" (2011), "Muse learns to type. Man, media and society" (2009), "Church in the times of media" (2008).

In the Church's communication, the moral principle must be accompanied by practical reason, as the President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications is keen to reiterate telling falsehoods is "immoral and foolish. The truth always comes out; perhaps it is already known by those you are speaking to. Not telling the truth is a scandal, a betrayal of trust and a destruction of credibility"[6]. Nor are distortions of the truth acceptable, i.e., when something objectively false is not stated but the truth is distorted by insinuating untrue things or hiding relevant facts. Respecting the truth does not mean being obliged to respond completely to all orders from journalists, customers, staff, etc. There are cases in which it is legitimate and appropriate not to provide all the information requested. The document "Ethics in social communications" explains: "Like other communities and institutions, the Church also sometimes needs, in fact sometimes is obliged, to maintain secrecy and confidentiality. However, this should not be done for the purpose of manipulation and control"[7].

Understanding of the Church,
which is governed by the Lord through people

The Church is not just an organization that functions according to the rules of institutions for which there is a leader (The Pope), a government body (bishops), workers (priests) and clients (public of the faithful)[8]. This would be an exclusively socio-economic observation, reduced to a purely human organization. The Church is much more: its visible part includes the structure, the sociological one; the invisible part includes much more. The definition of the Church was reworked in the Second Vatican Council. The Church is constituted by a hierarchical body and the mystical body of Christ.

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[6] J. T. Fraser, *Il tempo: una presenza sconosciuta,* Milano 1993, 17-22; J. Pieper, *Sull'amore,* Brescia 2012, 31-32.

[7] Paccagnella, *Sociologia della comunicazione* 93.

[8] R. Bonetti, *Famiglia, sorgente di comunione: nuove catechesis su matrimonio e famiglia,* Cinisello Balsamo 2004, 151.

Christ, the one Mediator, established and continually sustains here on earth His holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as an entity with visible delineation through which He communicated truth and grace to all. But the society structured with hierarchical organs and the Mystical Body of Christ, are not to be considered as two realities, nor are the visible assembly and the spiritual community, nor the earthly Church and the Church enriched with heavenly things; rather they form one complex reality which coalesces from a divine and a human element[9].

To be ready to confront possible crises in the Church and in their institutions, the same Crisis Management is needed as in organizations. It must be kept in mind that the Church is a very complex organism, and in the end, it is not entirely dependent on men, but on God.

The Church communicates itself: throughout history it has used all the means available to transmit a message, press, radio, television, art, literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, theatre, cinema... The duty to transmit the Good News it is a commandment of Jesus: «Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature» (Mk 16:15). For the Church, communicating is not only a right but also a duty (see can. 747; can 822).

The Church has communicated itself through three levels: the personal apostolate of all Christians (catechesis, family education, liturgy, school), theological science and the communication of the Church itself (information). Both catechesis and theology are directed at believers, while information is aimed at believers and non-believers.

John Paul II stated in the Encyclical Redemptor Missio:

It is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture" created by modern communications. This is a complex issue, since the "new culture" originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques, and a new psychology[10].

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[9] Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church «Lumen Gentium» (LG) (21 November 1964), 4.
[10] John Paul II, Encyclical «Redemptoris missio» (RM) (7 December 1990), 37.

The information work of the Church could be considered as pre-evangelization since this communication anticipates and prepares the arrival of the message of salvation but is not identified with it nor replaces it[11]. The Church must inform about itself. As John Paul II said: «The Church of our time strives to become a house of glass, transparent and credible, and this is good»[12]. There is not only the supernatural reality, the Church and its institutions are true human societies, which exist and act in the midst of the world. This presence implies a series of rights and duties: legal, political, fiscal, public order, work, ... but also of a communicative nature. In Communio et Progressio it is stated that «the Church is consequently bound in duty to give complete and entirely accurate information to the news agencies so that they, in their turn, can carry out their task»[13]. It declares that the press offices of the dioceses and the episcopal conferences «will furnish the documentary material, the advice and the pastoral assistance that professional communicators may require»[14]. To give continuity to this information flow, he indicates that «every bishop, all episcopal conferences, or bishops' assemblies and the Holy See itself should each have their own official and permanent spokesman or press officer to issue the news and give clear explanations of the documents of the Church so that people can grasp precisely what is intended. These spokesmen will give, in full and without delay, information on the life and work of the Church in that area for which they are responsible»[15].

The pastoral instruction Aetatis novae states that «it requires that Church leaders and pastoral workers respond willingly and prudently to media when requested, while seeking to establish relationships of mutual confidence and respect, based on fundamental common values, with those who are not of our faith»[16].

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[11] A. Briggs / P. Burke, *Storia sociale dei media. Da Gutenberg a Internet,* Bologna 2002, 55-56.

[12] Giovanni Paolo II, Incontro con i membri della Conferenza Episcopale Austriaca (21 giugno 1998), 9.

[13] The Pontifical Council for Social Communications. Pastoral instruction «Communio et progressio» (23 May 1971), 123.

[14] Communio et progressio 171.

[15] Communio et progressio 174.

[16] The Pontifical Council for Social Communications. Pastoral instruction «Aetatis novae» (22 February 1992), 8.

The document «Ethics in Communications» reiterates:

Those who represent the Church must be honest and straightforward in their relations with journalists. Even though the questions they ask are «sometimes embarrassing or disappointing, especially when they in no way correspond to the message we have to get across», one must bear in mind that «these disconcerting questions are often asked by most of our contemporaries». For the Church to speak credibly to people today, those who speak for her must give credible, truthful answers to these seemingly awkward questions[17].

Another element must also be kept in mind: the tension between the Church and the world. Scandals are not always true in the Church, but there are also lies: the Church feels offended by journalists because they write bad news. After all, Jesus himself announces it: « If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you (...). 'No slave is greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you» (Jn 15:18-20). The words of Jesus continue: «If they kept my word, they will also keep yours» (Jn 15:20). The tension between the world and the Church will always be there: Jesus does not eliminate responsibility. However, it is a fact that the Church and its institutions suffer real crises. This might seem contradictory to her nature: the Church will last until the end of history, her means depend only on the will of God and therefore are always effective and «the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it» (Mt 16:18). Instead, there are crises, because the Church is truly in the hands of Christians: «But we hold this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing power may be of God and not from us» (2 Cor 4:7) and the human component is always fallible. One could even say that the Church is always in difficulty, due to internal or external problems: the Gospel is often irreconcilable with earthly interests[18].

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[17] The Pontifical Council for Social Communications. *Ethics in Communications* (4 June 2000), 26.

[18] A. Di Fabio, *Bilancio di competenze e orientamento formative,* Firenze 2002, 42.

Vulnerability in going through a crisis depends on three types of variables:
- the social context of the institution,
- its model of government,
- the specific characteristics of the institution and its institutional culture[19].

The real problems for the Church are the threats to communion with God and with our brothers. If the union in charity is strong, difficulties of any kind will have only a relative importance but will not put any ecclesial institution at risk. The media are no longer witnesses but promoters of ideas and conscious social definers, according to an almost clear agenda but in any case, very influential on the contents of information. The means of communication have importance in the configuration of the social situation.

Recent decades have shown how the media are probably the most effective instance of fighting corruption, scandals, and the falsehoods of the establishment. A journalist's intervention should be the catalyst that turns an accident or disaster into a crisis. Indeed, many think that «without means of communication, or with controlled or censored information, there are no crises to fear»[20].

> The Catholic Church, in its form of complex organization, has not been spared from critical episodes which, in addition to their drama and management problems, have been the subject of widespread media attention, filling pages of newspapers and TV news schedules and becoming to all intents and purposes true and own cases from Crisis Communication Management[21].

The attack on John Paul II on 13 May 1981, the affair of Bishop Milingo's marriage/betrayal in 2001 and the case of the American pedophile priests in 2002 were events swallowed up by the media. Media events are major

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[19] S. De la Cierva, *La comunicazione di crisi nella Chiesa*, 14; B. Sesboüé, *Non abbiate paura! Sguardi sulla Chiesa e sui ministeri oggi,* Brescia 2019, 58-60.

[20] A. Gonzalez Herrero, *Marketing preventivo,* Barcelona 1998, 173; P. A. Soukup, Media, Chiesa e pandemia, *La Civiltà Cattolica, Quaderno 4086, Vol. III,* Milano 2020, 503-512.

[21] M. Padula, *Crisis communication, Come comunicare le emergenze,* Torino 2005, 128.

events covered by the media which gather an enormous audience of spectators who attribute a strong symbolic value to what they see. Media campaigns against the Catholic Church are, however, nothing new. The demonstration of this is the most important scandal of the Church at an international level in recent years: the accusation of pederasty which characterized some American and other priests. The story broke in January 2002 and was on the front pages of newspapers for months. The reasons for this media fury, explains Massimiliano Padula[22], are essentially three:

- for the media coverage of the topic. The media look for stories like this: for their tabloid flavour, for the sacred-sex contrast; for the conflict between the moralizing Catholic Church and the intrinsic immorality of pedophile priests;

- for a direct attack on the Catholic Church. The scandalous affair is used to attack and put the Church in difficulty precisely because of its positions in defense of life and the family, and for the coherence of its teaching on sexual morality which annoys many;

- for a strategic attack on the Catholic Church. This is fully evident in the USA. The case of pedophile priests is exploited and inflated beyond measure for a threefold reason: a) the Catholic Church is attacked in its image to attack its influence within American society, knowing full well that a quarter of Americans are Catholic; b) the Catholic Church is attacked for its positions against war, in favor of human rights, against abortion; c) the Church is attacked to damage its patrimonial consistency: it is hit due to the enormous compensation requested and the collapse of offerings.

The Church must ask itself how to react to these attacks. First, the leaders of the Church, the bishops, must demonstrate that they want to clarify, without hiding anything. The "no comment" rule is to be avoided. The first step is therefore a communication policy that ensures honesty of behaviour, transparency both at the level of internal communication between ecclesiastical leaders and priests, and externally towards public opinion.

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[22] M. Padula, L'ascolto come opportunità sociopastorale. Riflessioni a partire dal Messaggio di Papa Francesco per la 56 Giornata mondiale delle comunicazioni sociali, *Orientamenti pastorali* 5, 2022, 32-40.

Theological and pastoral method

With the pastoral theological method, the idea of a pastoral leader guide is developed (who must know how to act together with theory and practice) with which the entry of the concept of Crisis Management into the Church can be justified. A leader is often necessary, even in Catholic contexts, when it comes to communication[23]. In the pastoral field, a leadership proposal had been developed on the pastoral method. The theological-pastoral method[24] of the Lateran University professor Sergio Lanza is divided into three phases and three dimensions.

1) The phases are as follows:

- analysis and evaluation,
- decision and planning,
- implementation and verification.

2) The dimensions are as follows:

- kairological,
- criteriological,
- operational.

a) Kairological dimension

This dimension takes up the historical, cultural and ecclesial dimension that we are experiencing in this time of postmodernity. In concrete contemporary reality we try to recognize the action of the Holy Spirit. The Church is experiencing a crisis in society, due to the separation between the postmodern world and the Gospel, due to great material progress, which does not correspond

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[23] *Etica nelle Comunicazioni Sociali*, 8; J. E. Grunig, *Public and Relations. Teorie e pratiche delle relazioni pubbliche in un mondo che cambia,* Roma 2017, 68-70.

[24] S. Lanza, *Opus Lateranum*, Città del Vaticano 2012, 46-47; S. Lanza, *Introduzione alla teologia pastorale. 1. Teologia dell'azione ecclesiale,* Brescia 1989, 194-307.

to equal progress in the moral field; for a process of closer collaboration and mutual integration between individuals, classes, nations, towards which, despite a thousand uncertainties, the human family already seems to be moving. «Society tends to differentiate itself into relatively closed systems, each responsible for solving specific problems and needs; no one to the clarification and transmission of the meaning of life»[25]. Sergio Belardinelli, sociologist and theorist of post-industrial society, describes it like this: «We live in a world of markets, communities and individuals; no longer in a world of institutions. The term itself, which was the keystone of classical sociology, is crumbling, so much so practices surpass the rules»[26]. We live a life where there is «dissociation between private life and the life of systems, between symbolic reason and instrumental reason, between market and culture, between technique and value»[27]. Evangelically speaking, it is a question of a situation of «sheep without a shepherd» (Mk 6:33-44).

b) The criteriological dimension

It is a matter of considering the elements of discomfort and developing criteria and objectives to improve ecclesial practice in the most critical way possible, and in our case to make the figure of the priest pastor again in a significant way (both ad intra and extra Ecclesiae). According to Christian spiritual and existential needs, the priest should know how to develop the relationship between human and God and between the individual and the community. On the one hand it is necessary to avoid the «priestly caste» typical of the 1960s and abandon the figure of the all-round priest, on the other kneel before modernity, but resume ecclesial authenticity. Lanza offers some criteria for pastoral ministry:

- no «democratization» of the Church, but a differentiated co-responsibility not only organizationally, but by virtue of the sacred mentality that structures the Church;

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[25] S. Lanza, *La parrocchia in un mondo che cambia,* Roma 2004, 31.

[26] S. Belardinelli / L. Allodi, *Sociologia della cultura,* Milano 2011, 137.

[27] Lanza, *La parrocchia in un mondo che cambia* 32.

- no leveling of tasks, not simple division of responsibilities and fields, but true specificity of ecclesial responsibilities;

- a collaboration that is not limited to the performance of works, but is true responsibility before God and brothers;

- no clericalization of the laity (the mutual secularisation of the clergy is inevitable); instead: «by the sacraments, especially holy Eucharist, that charity toward God and man which is the soul of the apostolate is communicated and nourished»[28].

c) Operational dimension

A first operational task of the priest is the activation and care of an ecclesial lifestyle which is in itself educational towards communion, and therefore inspired and aimed at the esteem and valorisation of people, their knowledge, their service, to their involvement, to their respect, to the appreciation for their work and their concrete life (individual, family, work, illness), to the gratuitousness of relationships and to their re-signification in Christ. All these elements can be considered the expression of a culture of communion, the education of which is the theoretical-practical task of the priest. This task is fundamental to correctly receive the request for synodality, because it is nourished by the inseparable intertwining between the culture of communion and participation structures, which interact with each other in a process that starts from and returns to the concrete practice of the communities. The bodies involved in this aspect are already mentioned in the bishops' documents and are: Presbyteral Council, Pastoral Council, Council for Economic Affairs[29]. The elaboration of the criteria occurs by virtue of an adequate interdisciplinarity: the specific sphere of faith and that of reality (anthropological, historical-cultural) interact according to the figure of reciprocity in an asymmetric dialectic. Asymmetry manifests and respects the pre-eminence and unconditionality of faith; reciprocity says how faith itself, by virtue of the principle of incarnation, not only allows, but requires that the concrete determination of Christian-ecclesial action takes place within historical-cultural coordinates[30].

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[28] *Lumen gentium* 33.

[29] P. Asolan, *Il pastore in una chiesa sinodale. Una ricerca odegetica*, Treviso 2005, 321.

[30] P. Asolan, *Il tacchino induttivista,* Trapani 2009, 26.

Professor Lanza's theological-pastoral method elaborates the concept of leadership of the pastoral guide, as a proposal for the action of pastoral guides in contemporary times. To be able to propose an adequate model of priest for our time, it is necessary to address the theme of leadership in all its aspects: the theological value, the scriptural foundation, the tasks entrusted to him by the reform of the Church initiated by the Second Vatican Council and the subsequent legislation canon law[31]. The socio-cultural context is characterized by the two factors of complexity and change. Modernity abandons traditional social orders, a complex articulation of subsystems, abandons the culture of stability. Traditions are weakened and produce consequences of lability, relegation to the private sector, public attention to procedural and productive areas[32]. The problem of leadership in this situation has also been addressed by the organizational sciences who have developed their methods. These distinguish between management and leadership. Management measures itself with complexity: it organizes all tasks. Leadership is measured by change: it seeks solutions to improve the situation.

Professor Paolo Asolan from the Lateran University makes a military analogy to make people understand the practical importance of the distinction between leadership and managers. In peacetime an army survives with good administration, therefore with good management that makes the complex organization of the military apparatus and personnel work at all hierarchical levels, from the base to the top. At the same time, the military leadership is only concentrated at the top: deals with the objectives and directions to be given to the army, transfers, and tasks. In times of war, however, when actions and strategic moves cannot all be planned and predicted in advance and the complex elements available are only those of one party involved in the conflict, the army requires strong leadership at all levels, that is, decision-making and the ability to intervene by managing news or setbacks even at the lowest level of the military organization[33].

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[31] Asolan, *Il pastore in una chiesa sinodale. Una ricerca odegetica* 345; L. Migliarese, *Come vivere insieme i conflitti familiari,* Padova 1981, 72-73.

[32] M. Gavrila / M. Padula, *Il futuro al centro. Bambini e adolescenti nella scena mediale contemporanea,* Milano 2023, 89-91.

[33] Asolan, *Il pastore in una chiesa sinodale. Una ricerca odegetica* 347.

We must know that war life is not barracks life. We have had the opportunity, on several occasions, to learn, in simple daily life, that there is a notable difference between military service in the barracks and military service during the war. Centuries of generations, in which Christians lived with Christians, had transformed for us (...) the life of the militant Church into barracks life. In numerous environments, regions or professions, faith was considered somewhat hereditary; the definition of a Christian was often confused with that of an "honest man". The non-believer was a sinner of ill will. One could have carried out many great maneuvers, one could have entered high school of strategy without ever having been wounded, knocked down, without having known the danger of death. Where the current times dealt blows to the Christian life, they had no muscles; where it was necessary to know how to fight, we had above all learned to argue. It is this life of faith, atrophied of what it is itself, sometimes burdened with extraneous contributions, which was disconcerted by contemporary atheist circles: this is what made us believe and made others believe that faith, real faith, was not vital where it needed to be announced[34].

In the military environment of Ukraine, we can rethink pastoral leadership: with the cathedral, the Church consciously moved from a barracks situation to a war situation, from a situation of homogeneous Christianity in the world to a modern situation of division. This situation of postmodern complexity forces us to return to the concept of «leader». The analogy with war, which is in the heart of every Ukrainian today, helps us better understand crisis communication. During the war, very clear tasks were set, which today define and outline a new vision of changes, elimination of problems, «transformation of Ukraine». However, the Church is always in a complex context where there are two groups (the earthly/visible community and the spiritual/heavenly community) that form a single composite reality[35].

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[34] M. Delbrel, Noi delle strade, in: P. Asolan, *Il pastore in una chiesa sinodale. Una ricerca odegetica*, 347-348.

[35] *Lumen gentium* 8.

a) Leadership

Many studies have been conducted on leadership. In the end, four major points emerged. The first concerns the fundamental crux of the question of change. The second point concerns the discernment between the function and skills of leadership, between expressing oneself and possessing oneself to orient towards the positive. The third point concerns the continuity and complementarity between managerialism and leadership, between management of the present and guidance of the future. In the fourth point it is fundamental that the connection between leadership and power emerges[36]. The task of leadership is not to plan concrete relationships but to offer a broad strategic plan. The function of leadership is to generate change. After the change it becomes crucial to establish its direction, which is neither programming nor planning. Management develops the capabilities to implement its plan through organizational processes and employees: it therefore creates an organizational structure and a series of functions corresponding to the requirements of the plan, assigns roles to qualified people, shares the plan with the subjects involved, divides and delegates responsibilities for the implementation of the plan, develops systems and devices to monitor implementation[37]. Leaders collect data, look for patterns, connections and correlations that support them in understanding observed phenomena. They set direction not by planning, but by creating the vision and strategies needed to get there. The leader's job is to orient people. A fundamental characteristic of the large organizations of our time is the interdependence between subordinates. Orienting people inevitably involves the ability to relate and exchange with a very large number of individuals. These individuals, the object of the leader's care, can be the managers' direct subordinates, or the bosses and people employed in other sectors of the organization, but also suppliers, political representatives or customers[38]. For a leader, anyone who can contribute to realizing the vision and defining the strategies or constraining their development is relevant. Another great challenge

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[36] G.P. Quaglino, Leadership, in: Asolan, *Il pastore in una Chiesa sinodale* 355.

[37] G. Baggio / M. Padula, *Dalla mondovisione all'endovisione. Pratiche e formati dello spazio televisivo,* Pisa 2017, 67-69.

[38] A. Marcoli, *Passaggi di vita: le crisi che si spingono a crescere,* Milano 2003, 157.

for leadership is credibility: a manager must know how to make people believe in the message or direction he is giving. There are many credibility factors: the path of the person sending the message, the content of the message itself, the reputation of the person communicating it, the emerging coherence between what is declared and what is done. Orienting people facilitates their involvement in quick decisions to be made autonomously. This isn't always easy. To overcome this difficult situation, a process called «empowerment»[39] is carried out, subsidiarity which delegates and gives autonomy to the subjects, giving powers in view of the efficiency of each one.

The leader's task in problem solving is the ability to motivate people. This requires a constant and considerable commitment of energy. Motivation and inspiration give greater energy to people, not so much to push them in the direction established according to the logic of control mechanisms, but to satisfy their fundamental needs, to gain a sense of belonging, recognition, self-esteem, control of one's life and adequacy with respect to one's ideals.

b) The pastoral leadership

The leading pastoral direction, observed under the three kairological, criteriological and operational dimensions, confirms to us that pastoral direction in this way can correspond to the needs of our time, that is, changing the world in which the community finds itself living, developing a plan of broad scope that governs the change and in which the greatest possible number of people can feel existentially understood and interested, create relationships of respectful and profound communication, share ideas, orient people, involve in the plan, take initiatives and share responsibility in its implementation[40]. The kairological dimension, which defines the relationship that indicates the presence of the Spirit in concrete reality, tells us about that pastoral direction in everyday life does not correspond to what people want, and establishes the characteristic task of the leading priest. People are like a flock without a shepherd, but some

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[39] A. Antonietti, *Psicologia dell'apprendimento: processi, strategie e ambienti cognitive,* Brescia 1998, 63; F. Ceretti / M. Padula, *Umanità mediale. Teoria sociale e prospettive educative,* Pisa 2016, 108-109.

[40] Asolan, *Il pastore in una chiesa sinodale. Una ricerca odegetica* 381-382.

shepherds are false because they do not guide people into communion with God and exploit and scandalize their flock. From a criteriological point of view, this consideration includes the magisterium from the point of view that, when dealing with the training of future priests, summarizes the requirements required of the priest according to a grid of four dimensions: human, spiritual, pastoral, intellectual. The operational dimension includes the training of the leading priest, operational in the sense that faith attributes to the free and sovereign action of the Spirit[41].

Crisis management in the Church

In the large field of risk society, in which organisations, with the help of Crisis Management (where there is also the area of crisis communication), seek solutions to survive in unpredictable events, the Church is also present. Just as good Crisis Management helps organizations survive, so this could also be useful in the Church: not to survive and protect its status quo, but to announce the Gospel and Truth, to protect human dignity. In the documents of the Church it is not explicitly about Crisis Management, but it is about managers or leaders, in the end there are also some professors who have studied the topic of crisis in the ecclesiastical sphere. One of these, Santiago de la Cierva[42], has written a Manual on crisis communication in the Church which is aimed at those preparing to manage the communication of dioceses, movements, Catholic non-governmental organizations, episcopal conferences and religious orders. It is not the same Crisis Management as organizations, but the tools (spokesperson, press office...) are identical, the communication principles are identical, the consequences of scandals (the impact) are identical.

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[41] F. Bochicchio, *I formatori: l'educatore. Competenze, tecniche e strumenti per la formazione degli adulti,* Torino 2004, 93-97; L. Meddi, Lo spirito della missione. Ripensare l'orizzonte iniziatico della pastorale, *Catechesi* (2018) 87, 11-13.

[42] Santiago De la Sierva is a professor at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, he studied law in Compostela, receiving a doctorate in philosophy, he is also a journalist and runs the Rome Television Agency "Reports", specializing in the Vatican and the Catholic Church.

The difference in the ecclesial sphere consists in the great sense of human dignity. A great moral sense (justice) and the centrality of the person, and not the organization (the Church), immediately emerges.

> When the conflict involves a member of the institution who has caused harm to a stranger: for example, a nun who has caused harm to a pupil in the diocese's nursery school. In these cases, in addition to the fact that it would be wrong to immediately and automatically take a position in defense of the nun (as if she were more of a "Church" than the child and her family)[43].

Discovering errors and solving them in the right way, communicating in the right way about the communication sciences is typical of Catholic nature. Given the complexity of the Church in some aspects, it can be said that communication, even crisis communication, is essential for the Church.

> The means of social communication can be used to block the community and damage the integral good of people, alienating them, marginalizing them and isolating them or attracting them into negative communities focused on false and destructive values. They can foment hostility and conflict, demonize others and create an us-versus-them mentality, present the low and degrading in a glamorous light, and ignore or diminish the uplifting and ennobling[44].

The Church's approach to the means of social communication is fundamentally positive: It does not only judge and condemn. The means of communication are tools, means used in the way people choose to use them. «What would be more dangerous: suffering a large financial loss in a court of law or long-term damage to credibility and reputation?»[45]. After the first abuses in the United States, the Church had great difficulty in communicating. This concerns the year 2002 and the following. Some perceived the Church,

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[43] De la Cierva, *La comunicazione di crisi nella Chiesa* 63.

[44] *Etica nelle Comunicazioni Sociali*, 13; G. Chiaretti, *Interni familiari: relazioni e legami d'amore,* Milano 2002, 103-104.

[45] J. Caponigro, *The Crisis Counselor,* Chicago 2000, 152.

the leaders, the bishops, as those who do not want to collaborate with the police, and the bishops' conferences as closed and private. Many were not happy with the Church's responses. The leaders of the Church, the bishops, with their attitudes have provoked even more anger. There is no shortage of critical voices in the Catholic Church that point out the mistakes made by Catholics:

> Catholic sexual ethics have been somewhat indifferent to sexual violence and careless towards the structural, gender-related (sexual) violence underlying institutional structures. Both aspects need to be addressed: we need to reflect on them critically and insert them into a new approach to both sexual ethics and the institutional order of the Catholic Church[46].

According to this author, sexual violence is domination over others:

> Sexual violence, as a form of violence, is based on the domination of another, whether individual or collective. It involves the exploitation of an asymmetric relationship and involves the tacit acceptance of harm or even destruction of another person's identity, as occurs in cases of sexual abuse, rape, domestic violence or rape in the context of military conflicts. Sexual violence lacks respect for the other as a moral subject and potentially threatens the moral capacity and well-being of the victim. It perverts the very basis of sexuality, that is, the trust in being recognized in one's own "nudity." Sexual violence is domination over the other[47].

Benedict XVI declared in the conversation with Peter Seewald that «the spiritual situation of the seventies had already begun to emerge in the fifties»[48]. He also says that the underlying problem is sincerity, respect on the part of people and for children, and how to educate young people about celibacy. We live in a time marked by a profound crisis, not only in celibacy but also in marriage. If marriage and celibacy collapse, essential elements of our culture collapse[49].

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[46] H. Haker, Etica sessuale cattolica: una revisione necessaria, *Concilium* 47 (2011) 3, 165.

[47] Haker, *Etica sessuale cattolica: una revisione necessaria* 168-169; N. Reali, *Quale fede per sposarsi in chiesa? Riflessioni teologico-pastorali sul sacramento del matrimonio,* Bologna 2014, 47-49.

[48] Benedetto XVI, *Luce del Mondo,* Città del Vaticano 2010, 63.

[49] J. M. Velasco, *Non credenza ed evangelizzazione. Dalla testimonianza al dialogo*, Assisi 1990, 72; L. Sandrin, *Lo vedi e non passò oltre. Temi di teologia pastorale,* Bologna 2015, 82-84.

The year for priests had a cathartic effect. Even lay people have returned to being grateful for what the priesthood actually is, they have managed to understand it again in its positivity, and precisely through threats and inconveniences. This catharsis is a call to all of us, to the whole of society but of course above all to the Church, to return to recognizing our core values, to recognize the dangers that threaten, which threaten not only priests but profoundly the entire society[50].

Christians live in a risk society, as Ulrich Beck calls it. For Pope Benedict XVI «the awareness of the threat of destruction of the internal moral structure of our society should be a call to purification»[51]. Things have already improved. Today in the United States there is a section within the Catholic Church to protect children and young people. Together with the United States conference of bishops, with the Secretariat of child and youth protection, with national social research (National review board) they examined abuse and carried out scientific research[52]. They carried out an enormous work through which it is demonstrated that abuses are becoming less and less. Taking into account the Ukrainian context, the active activity of the Center for the Dignity of the Child of the Ukrainian Catholic University deserves special attention, which, at the call of the Synod of Bishops of the UGCC and the Head of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church His Beatitude Svyatoslav (Shevchuk), is called to help prevent various manifestations of violence against children and create a sustainable culture respect for the dignity of the child. In this aspect, there is a component of social communication of the UGCC, because we are talking about enlightening, educational and scientific projects to confirm the value and dignity of a human being in society.

According to De la Cierva, there are seven areas to observe and be ready for manage them:

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[50] Benedetto XVI, *Luce del Mondo* 67.

[51] P.F. Lazersfeld / R.K. Merton, *Comunicazione di massa gusto popolare e azione sociale organizzata,* Roma 2020, 139.

[52] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Report on the Implementation of the charter for the protection of children and young people*, Washington 2011, 44.

- Management of potential conflicts
- Risk analysis
- Attention to complaints
- Error corrections
- Uncontrolled rumors and leaks
- Creating and managing consensus during a conflict
- Communication during a negotiation[53].

Important among these are correcting errors, rumors and leaks, and building consensus during a conflict.

Errors and corrections: the media can publish inaccuracies, untrue things, falsehoods. The first observation concerns the normality of criticism. Not everyone necessarily agrees with everything. With critical voices it is appropriate to affirm the duty of the institutional communicator to always defend his institution. Its role is not limited to the pure and simple activity of communicating[54].

Rumors and leaks. There are rumors created and put into circulation intentionally, that is, with the awareness of their falsity. Uncontrolled rumors are one of the best channels for spreading negative information within a social group far from the control of its authorities. The rumors reveal two things: a demand for information and the absence of effective communication from the institution. Where there is an abundance of information there are no rumours. Sociological research reveals that rumors arise and develop from prejudices, from latent problems that have not been adequately addressed[55].

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[53] De la Cierva, *La comunicazione di crisi nella Chiesa* 113-142.

[54] «We need it in the field of media, so that communication does not foment acrimony that exasperates, creates rage and leads to clashes, but helps people peacefully reflect and interpret with a critical yet always respectful spirit, the reality in which they live». Francis, Message for the 57th World Day of Social Communications (24.01.2023), *https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/20230124-messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html*

[55] P. Bastianoni / L. Fruggeri, *Processi di sviluppo e relazioni familiari,* Milano 2005, 122-123.

Building consensus during conflict. It is impossible for an institution to avoid all conflicts. Susskind and Field, representatives of the Harvard Mediation Institute, propose in this sense the mutual benefit approach, a systematic method of seeking consensus that contains experiences and orientations of interest for every type of organization. The six key points of this program are[56]:

- recognize the other party's concerns and attempt to understand them;
- promote the joint collection of information on the facts;
- offer concrete actions to minimize any damage caused and promise that the involuntary damage will be compensated after proving it to be such, instead of saying that nothing will happen or that nothing has happened;
- accept responsibility, admit mistakes and share power;
- always act in an honorable and respectable manner;
- set yourself the goal of building a long-term relationship.

To be a good leader you need to know these basics and fundamentals of communicating between two conflict parties well. The second, very important element of crisis prevention is the crisis plan and manual. Everything that was said for organizations is also valid for the Church and ecclesial institutions. Perhaps for some it might seem inadequate for a diocese to have its own crisis plan, but we must realize not only the advantages of having it, but also the fact that some measures are certainly already foreseen in case of emergency, from emergency exits to insurance for theft or in case of fire, and that it would be contradictory not to prevent the damage that could be suffered from the point of view of public opinion. When crises arrive, the plan will be not only a point of support for the communication manager of the diocese, congregation, hospital, etc., so that he does not have to be forced to improvise, but mainly an instrument of government and control in the hands of the institutional authorities, so that even in the typical chaos of a crisis, everything done within and on behalf of the institution responds to their indications[57]. The third very important element

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[56] L. Susskind / P. Field, *Dealing with an Angry Public,* New York 1996, 3.

[57] De la Cierva, *La comunicazione di crisi nella Chiesa*, 144-146; S. Nicolli, *La casa cantiere di santità,* Roma 2004, 69.

is a crisis committee, the group of people who must resolve the crisis. The advantages of such a unit are allowing the technical capacity and professional experience of the people who compose it to be available and avoiding limitations in times of crisis. In a crisis unit, an almost military discipline is necessary to work quickly, together and with an agile mind[58].

It deals with the problem of how to set up communication when a crisis hits the institution, that is, how to apply to the concrete case what has been seen so far regarding concepts, audiences, and the crisis plan. We study how to set up the institutional response, the elaboration of the message (bringing together the information, formalizing the message, spreading the message), the choice of the spokesperson, the initiative and control of time[59]. The first way to take the initiative is to become a source of information as soon as possible. Reaction speed is a determining factor for effective crisis communication. Every crisis causes an information vacuum[60]. If the institution manages to fill it, the damage limitation will be considerable, as it will earn the esteem of the public which by its nature wants to know. For the public involved, it is unacceptable that the information is suspiciously incomplete, biased, or even false. Furthermore, the institution must intervene in the process of configuring the dispute and its position is part of the news. The institution's comment must be immediate both to deny and to give an opinion or judgement, even if necessarily brief and incomplete[61]. Becoming a source of information then improves the relationship with the public. Another reason to take the initiative is to promote actions that can have an influence during the crisis, without simply providing information on the facts and their possible developments[62].

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[58] M. Ogrizek / M. Gullery, *Communicating in crisis,* New York 1999, 78-80 ; M. Pradère, *De toutes les nations, faites des disciples; pour une évangélisation respectueuse des cultures,* Paris 2009, 94-95.

[59] M. De Beni, *Comunicare: percorsi di formazione per la coppia,* Verona 2004, 163.

[60] E. Scabini / G. Rossi, *Dono e perdono nelle relazioni familiari e sociali,* Milano 2000, 125-128; W. Griswold, *Sociologia della cultura,* Bologna 2016, 135-137.

[61] J. Perez-Soba, *Il bene e la persona nell'agire,* Roma 2002, 94-95; M. Mazzeo, *Bibbia ed educazione. Per una nuova evangelizzazione,* Milano 2011, 78-79.

[62] C. Rocchetta, *Teologia della famiglia. Fondamenti e prospettive,* Bologna 2011, 43.

Conclusion

This article touches upon the question of the characterization of an increasingly structured discipline: crisis communication, and rather concerns the analysis of the church context, which, like all organizations, is potentially a victim of emergencies of various types. Examining the relationship between the Church and the means of social communication, we conclude that the latter are the main tools and medium for the proclamation of the Truth. However, we see that the mass media treat the Church either in a pious way or through a sensational dimension that highlights negative aspects and alleged errors. Therefore, an attempt was made to photograph modern society and, above all, the concept of risk, which, again quoting Ulrich Beck, represents the «human condition» (*conditio humana*). In addition, important studies summarizing the theological communication process were formulated by professors of the Pontifical Lateran University M. Padula, S. Lanza and P. Asolan, who clearly identified the main directions of the Church's activity, placing communication in the center as an expression and an adequate tool for creating a Christian inspired cultural dynamics. The theological-pastoral dimension of communication also includes the communicative management of emergency situations affecting the Church.

Observing the activities of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church during extraordinary events (pandemic, war) through the prism of what the national newspapers wrote, it should be emphasized that where there is no adequate and professional communication, the risk of finally compromising one's image is really great. That is why, in order to cope with the crises that may affect it, the Church must properly use the methods available for communication and its tools. To deal with emergency situations, every organization must use communication as a true strategic lever capable of helping to solve critical problems. This also applies to the Church and all its manifestations.

> «To proclaim and realize this dream of the Lord God, we become artisans and experts in communication and in all those means that can mediate communion and participation, the Gospel embodied in cultures. Because the Word becomes a medium only when it becomes life: by their fruits - in fact - you will know them» (Mt 7:16)[63].

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[63] R. Regni, *Viaggio verso l'altro: comunicazione, relazione, educazione,* Roma 2003, 47-48.