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“THE MEDIA: A NETWORK FOR COMMUNICATION, COMMUNION AND COOPERATION” IS THEME FOR WORLD COMMUNICATION DAY 2006

“The Media: A Network for Communication, Communion and Cooperation” is the theme chosen by Pope Benedict XVI for the XL World Communications Day 2006.

“This first theme chosen by our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, for a World Communications Day”, said Archbishop John P. Foley, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, the department of the Holy See which prepares study materials and liturgical aids on the theme for distribution to bishops’ conferences around the world, “underlines his own appreciation of the ability of the communications media not only to make known needed information but also to promote fruitful cooperation.”

World Communications Day, the only worldwide celebration called for by the Second Vatican Council (“Inter Mirifica”, 1963), is marked in most countries on the Sunday before Pentecost (in 2006, May 28).

The announcement of the theme is customarily made on September 29, the Feast of the Archangel Gabriel, who has been designated as the patron of those who work in radio.

The Holy Father’s message for World Communications Day is traditionally published in conjunction with the Memorial of St. Francis de Sales, patron of writers (January 24), to allow bishops’ conferences, diocesan offices and communications organizations sufficient time to prepare audiovisual and other materials for national and local celebrations. (PCCS)



PHILIPPINES: GRADUATE STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT COMMUNICATIONS FROM POPE JOHN PAUL II

A Bangladeshi nun, two Vietnamese religious, and seven Filipino religious and professionals are currently studying “Church and Public Relations: Case of John Paul II” at the Graduate School of the Dominican-run University of Santo Tomas in Manila. Eight are enrolled in the MA Theology major in Pastoral/Social Communication program developed by FABC-Office of Social Communication, while the other two are Theology students in the Ecclesiastical Faculty of the same university. In separate interviews, the students voiced their appreciation for the example set by John Paul II in dealing with various constituencies or publics. The course requires them to submit public relations and crisis communication plans for their own organizations or communities. Fr. Franz-Josef Eilers, coordinator of the graduate program and FABC-OSC executive secretary, conceived taking the late Holy Father as special focus of the course. The facilitator is Anthony Roman, FABC-OSC staff assistant.

INDIA: RELIGIOUS MAGAZINE LAUNCHED

The Conference of Religious India (CRI) has launched a national magazine of news and views from its headquarters in New Delhi, September 2. The new magazine, called “Religious India,” aims to create communication, connectivity, and consequent communion of persons and concerns, a CRI official said. (SAR NEWS)

BANGLADESH: COMMUNICATION BISHOP INSTALLED NEW ARCHBISHOP OF DHAKA

Archbishop Paulinus Costa, who served for nine years as bishop of Rajshahi and seven years chairman of the Bangladesh bishops’ social communication commission, was appointed fourth archbishop of Dhaka. About 5,500 people including Protestant church leaders attended the installation ceremony at the archbishop’s residence in Dhaka, September 9. In the short reception program that followed, the new archbishop has identified proclamation of Jesus’ message, dialogue and increased laity participation as his top priorities. (UCAN)

INDIA: NOTED WRITER GETS MOTHER TERESA AWARD

Noted writer and actor, Paul Konikkara, was awarded the Blessed Mother Teresa Sevan Mithra Award for his valuable contributions to art, social service and cultural activism. The award was presented at a function at Chennaiappara on September 11. (SAR NEWS)

“KAMATAKI” WINS ECUMENICAL PRIZE IN MONTREAL

The Ecumenical Prize at the 2005 Montreal World Film Festival went to Claude Gagnon’s “Kamataki,” a film that discusses “love achieved when two cultures come together in inner and outer harmony.” It portrays the journey of a young Japanese-Canadian from despair to affirmation of life through the wise teaching of his Japanese culture. “Kamataki” refers to the ancient firing process of Japanese pottery. The Ecumenical Prize aims to promote movies with high artistic merit and laden with ethical, social and spiritual values. The prize is awarded jointly by the Protestant INTERFILM <<http://www.inter-film.org>> and Catholic SIGNIS <www.signis.net> international organizations. (SIGNIS)

INDIA: BIBLE EXHIBITION IN GUJARAT PROVES INTERRELIGIOUS DRAW

The Bible Society of India (BSI) organized a Bible exhibition September 17-19 at its building in Ahmedabad, Gujarat state, some 915 kilometers southwest of New Delhi. Hundreds of people, mostly Hindus, visited the exhibition which featured Bibles written in Sanskrit and the smallest Bible, measuring four by three by two cubic centimeters. The print is so small, a reader needs to use a magnifying glass. An elderly Hindu woman visitor said she saw what a Bible looks like for the first time, and hinted that she would buy one so she could keep along with the "Gita." The "Bhagavad Gita" (song of God) is part of the Hindu Scriptures. A retired Bishop of the Church of North India (CNI) observed that even young people at the exhibition are eager to know more about the Bible and its teachings. (UCAN)

INDIA: VETERAN CHURCH JOURNALIST AND PRIEST DIES

Father John Vallamattam, 74, died on September 19 after protracted health problems. The former president of the International Federation of Catholic Periodicals, a unit of the International Catholic Union of the Press (UCIP), was interred on September 21 by Bishop George Punnakottil of Kothamangalam. The journalist-priest organized the world congress of the Catholic press in New Delhi in 1986, the first such event to be held in Asia. He also served the education commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and was a member of the executive council of the International Federation of Catholic Universities. Fr. Vallamattam is credited with starting three publications. The first he started for his diocese and the second, "Catholic India," for the bishops' conference. "Indian Current," a weekly he began in 1989, is the third. (UCAN)

PHILIPPINES: UCANEWS-PHIL CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

The editorial office of the Union of Catholic Asia News (UCANPHIL) in the Philippines celebrated 20 years of service with Holy Mass and brief reception at the East Asia Pastoral Institute, Quezon City on September 22. The main guest was Manila Auxiliary Bishop Bernardino Cortez, incoming chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Social Communications starting December 1, 2005. Present were UCANews Founder and Executive Director, Father Robert Astorino, mm, and Father James Reuter, sj, director of the National Office of Mass Media. The celebration's theme "UCANPHIL: Witnessing to the Movement of Christ's Spirit in Philippine Communities" was highlighted by a video documentary of UCANews' history and scope of service in Asia. Some 50 guests and staff were received at the occasion.

PLANS UNDERWAY FOR SEMINARIANS' INTERNET CHATROOM

Plans are underway for setting up an Internet chatroom for seminarians in Asia. The Union of Catholic Asia News Executive Director, Maryknoll Father Robert Astorino, is spearheading the project and designing the corresponding websites <<http://www.asia-sem.net>> and <<http://www.asia-sem.org>> The plan is to have a forum where seminarians can log-in and engage in dialogue and discussions with their counterparts throughout the continent. Fr. Astorino envisions the website to assist the further development of seminary formation in Asia, and help support seminarians in their academic as well as spiritual pursuits. Several church organizations, like the FABC-Office of Social Communication, are supporting the initiative.

SIGNIS-ASIA ASSEMBLY TAKES ON RESPONSE TO NATURAL CALAMITIES AS THEME

Catholic broadcasters and filmmakers gathered in Krabi-Thailand for the Signis-Asia Assembly 2005 September 1-6, which had the theme "Christian Communicators Responding to Natural Calamities in Asia." Guests were Bishop George Pimphisan, cssr, chairman for social communications of the Thai bishops' conference, and Bishop Joseph Prathan whose diocese of Surat Thani includes the Tsunami-stricken province, Krabi. The assembly also welcomed the new officers of the organization including Mr. Lawrence John, director of Cahayasuara Communications Centre in Kuala Lumpur, as president; and Divine Word Father Dominic Emmanuel, communications director of New Delhi Archdiocese, as vice-president.

PHILIPPINES: DREAM TV CHANNEL FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) will have its own 24-hour satellite radio and television channel by January 2006. On September 28, Alaminos Bishop Jesus Cabrera, chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Social Communications, signed a memorandum of agreement with Manolo Abellada, president of Multi-Media Systems, granting to the Catholic Church in the Philippines a radio and TV channel on "Dream Satellite," a direct-to-home satellite television and radio company. The service will officially start on January 1, 2006. Until then, church producers will "thoroughly prepare so that on New Year's Day 2006 they will come in strong," says Jesuit Father James Reuter, director of the National Office of Mass Media. The new channel complements Dream Satellite's two other 24-hours Catholic channels: "Divine Mercy TV Channel" from the Philippines, and Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) from the US. (PHILSTAR)

INDIA: VATICAN RADIO-SOUTH ASIA CELEBRATES 40 YEARS

A day-long celebration was held in Tiruchirappalli on September 4 to mark Vatican Radio's 40th year of broadcasting to South Asia. "Humanism in Religions" was the topic of a panel session held in conjunction with the celebration. Jesuit Father Alfie Ben, director of Indian-South Asian desk of Vatican Radio, said that many non-Christian listeners find the station's programs helpful in bringing communal harmony in different environments. He said the Pope's vision of justice, fellowship and love to the world is aired by the radio. "Ours is a Christian radio in as much as we are moved by the person of Jesus Christ. Yet we are no less enriched by the immense spiritual treasures of the Indian subcontinent," he said. Under the instruction of Pope Pius XI, Vatican Radio was started in 1931 by Guglielmo Marconi who discovered radio waves at age 28. (SAR NEWS)

MALAYSIA: MAGAZINE DEVOTES ONE ISSUE ON COMMUNICATION

The August 2005 issue of "Catholic Asian News" magazine was devoted entirely to communication issues including "sexploitation" in the media and the need for media education. Special feature was an interview with Kuala Lumpur Archbishop Murphy Pakiam, chairman of the Episcopal Commission for Social Communications in Malaysia-Singapore-Brunei, on "Press Freedom and the Catholic Media." Catholic Asian News is the monthly publication of Kuala Lumpur Archdiocese. (CANEWS)