

Pope says Vatican must be on Internet with word, sound, images

POPE-CTV Dec-18-2008 (500 words) xxxi

By Cindy Wooden

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The Vatican media must unite their efforts to provide packages of word, sound and images to proclaim the Gospel to modern Internet users, Pope Benedict XVI said.

"Today the Internet calls for a growing integration of written, audio and visual communications and therefore challenges the media at the service of the Holy See to enlarge and intensify their collaboration," the pope said Dec. 18 during a meeting with employees of the Vatican Television Center.

The meeting marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the center, which is responsible for filming papal events, making documentaries and providing them to Catholic and other television outlets.

Pope Benedict told the employees that, because the Catholic Church cannot allow its message to be outside "the spaces in which numerous young people navigate in search of answers and of meaning for their lives, you must seek ways to spread voices and images of hope in new formats."

The Vatican Television Center has a small staff and limited resources, but the pope asked the employees and members of the administrative council not to be intimidated; "many people, thanks to your work, can feel closer to the heart of the church," he said.

For centuries pilgrims having been coming to Rome each year to see the pope, he said, and "today this desire can be satisfied, at least in part, thanks to radio and television."

The advantage of providing audiovisual images of the pope to television networks around the world is that they reach an audience well beyond the Catholic faithful, he said.

The access gives billions of people "timely information about the life and teaching of the church in today's world at the service of the dignity of the human person, justice, dialogue and peace," the pope said.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, who serves as director of the television center as well as of the Vatican press office and Vatican Radio, said almost every television image of the pope people around the world see is an image filmed by the Vatican Television Center.

"Even if they are watching RAI (in Italy), Bayerische Rundfunk (in Germany) or CNN, we are the origin in almost every case," Father Lombardi said.

Father Lombardi thanked the pope for his graciousness in allowing the Vatican camera operators to shadow his every public move, but he said that being there with the camera rolling "is our job. It is our obligation. We do it with passion and joy."

Pope Benedict said much of the work of the television center involves filming and distributing images from liturgical celebrations at the Vatican.

"The liturgy truly is the summit of the life of the church, a time and place for a deep relationship with God," he said.

Filming the ceremonies requires not only professional expertise, but also a "spiritual harmony" with what is being filmed and with the devotion or desire for the spiritual nourishment of the audience, the pope said.

