Decree on Mass Media (Inter Mirifica)

Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis)

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On December 4, 1963, the Council passed The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (a major accomplishment, calling for wide-ranging reform), and the Decree on the Mass Media (a minor accomplishment, mostly platitudes).

On October 28, 1965, the Council approved the Declaration of Christian Education, summarizing “best practices.” What is new is that it declares that everyone, children and adults, have a right to education, as a necessary formation to assume their responsibilities for creating a better world in this age, preparing for the Kingdom of God.

Decree on Mass Media (Inter Mirifica)

Chapter I

#1 Among the marvelous inventions of modern technology, Mother Church welcomes ... fresh ways of communicating news, ideas, and directives of all sorts,” which can reach whole masses of people.

#2 Some of these are beneficial, but others can be contrary to the plan of the Creator. Like a mother, she is deeply distressed by the damage they can cause. We must be vigilant.

#5 Society has a right to information that can contribute to the common good, but the information must be objectively true and complete “within limits of justice and charity.”

#6 In communicating art, we must be sure everyone agrees to the absolute primacy of an objective moral law.

#7 In reporting events of moral evil the moral law must be observed strictly, especially if it is a matter that more easily arouses the baser passion of people, wounded as they are by original sin.

#8 Since public opinion exercises an enormous influence on people’s lives today, we should make an effort to shape and spread sound public opinion by use of the media.

#10 Parents must have “constant vigilance that entertainments, periodicals and such, which may be a danger to faith or morals never gain admittance to their homes, and that children do not encounter them elsewhere.”

#11 Journalists, writers, actors, designers, producers, middlemen, distributors operators, sellers, critics and all those involved in the media are responsible to lead people on the right path, especially the young.

#12 Civil authorities have an obligation to safeguard just freedom of communication; and also enforce laws to protect public morality from harm.

Chapter II

#13 All members of the church should support use of the media in the work of the apostolate, and pastors should employ the media as part of their work of preaching.

#14-16 A respectable press should be encouraged, and a Catholic press should promote public opinion in harmony with natural law and Catholic teaching. Catholic radio and television broadcasts are encouraged. The use of the theater can educate the finer feelings and moral sense of audiences. Priests should be trained in the use of the media for apostolic work. The lay apostolate is encouraged to employ the media, for example in various forms of catechesis.

#17 “It would be a disgrace if apathy on the part of the church allowed the work of salvation to be fettered or impeded by the technical difficulties which mass media present and their admittedly enormous costs.

#18 Every bishop should have an annual day of recognition for the faithful to support the work of the media.

#21 - 22 “This synod decrees that national centers for the press, cinema, radio and television are to be set up everywhere to ensure that the faithful form a right conscience in their use of the media, and to foster and regulate the activity of Catholics in this field.” The mass media extends beyond national boundaries, making people citizens of human society as a whole.

#24 This decree is to ensure that the faithful will not suffer harm in their use of the media, but rather be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.
Declaration on Christian Education (Gravissimum Educationis)

“The fundamental rights of human beings, especially children and parents, regarding education are declared and recorded in public documents.” [Sited are: U.N. Universal Declaration of Human Rights; Declaration of the Rights of the Child; and John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, which elaborates on these world-wide declarations.]

This synod affirms the supreme importance of education in contemporary human life. Educating children and continuing education of adults is ever more urgent to facilitate people being more fully aware of their dignity, and of their responsibilities to take an active part in economic and political life.

#1 All people of whatever race, condition and age, have an inalienable right to an education.

#1.1-2-3 “Therefore, with due regard for the progress of knowledge in psychology, education and teaching, children and adolescents must be helped to develop their physical, moral and intellectual gifts harmoniously, and to acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility in improving their own lives by effort and in aiming at true freedom, overcoming obstacles with great courage and perseverance. As they grow older, they should receive sex education of a positive and prudent kind. Let them be trained to share in social life, so that equipped with the necessary skills, they may play an active part in the various groupings of society, ready to converse with others, and be willing to assist in promoting the common good…. stimulated to weigh moral values with a correct conscience, to embrace them with personal commitment, and to know and love God more perfectly.”

#2 All Christians, children of God, have a right to a Christian education, that they may daily become more conscious of the gift of faith they have received. Mindful of their vocation, may they become accustomed to bear witness to the hope that is in them, and to help shape the world in a Christian way. Pastors have a grave obligation to make every effort to ensure that all the faithful may enjoy this Christian education.

#3.1 Parents are the primary principal educators of their children; the family is the first school of values.

#3.2 Civil society, following the principle of subsidiarity, assists parents when their resources are insufficient.

#3.3 The church also assists parents by announcing the way of salvation, communicating the life of Christ. “The church provides its service for all peoples in order to promote the full development of the human person, for the good of earthly society, and for the building of a world which is to be fashioned in a more human way.”

#4 Catechetical instruction promotes active participation in the liturgy and prompts people to apostolic action.

#5 The school is unique, developing the capacity for judging correctly, promoting a sense of values, creating friendly associations among pupils of different backgrounds, a center that integrates families, teachers, and associations of various cultural, civic and religious life. Teachers have a highly important vocation.

#8.1 The Catholic school, in various conditions of the times, educates pupils to promote the good of the earthly city, and prepares them for the service of spreading the kingdom of God; by an exemplary apostolic life they may become the saving leaven of human society. The church must be free to found schools at every grade and level, safeguarding the rights of parents and contributing to the progress of culture itself.

#8.3 Teachers have a critical role in this mission of the church. “The synod declares that the ministry of these teachers is truly called an apostolate, a true service offered to society.”

#9.1 “Certainly the church regards with great affection Catholic schools attended also by non-Catholic pupils.”

#9.3 “The synod earnestly exhorts pastors and all the faithful to omit no sacrifices to help Catholic schools in carrying out their task ever more perfectly, and especially in caring for the needs of those who are poor in temporal goods, or are deprived of the help and affection of a family, or are strangers to the gift of faith.”

#7 Both priests and lay minister to, teach and guide also students in non-Catholic schools.

#10 The church promotes technical and professional schools, and schools of higher learning, and universities. Entrance to them should be easily open to students of greater promise but who are of more slender means. The church will establish Catholic residences and centers for students on public universities.

#12 Cooperation at the diocesan, national and international level is encouraged between Catholic universities and other schools, making various faculties available to all students in joint agreements, for the common good.

What is the impact of this document on the Catholic experience today?

This question is more relevant after this discussion, since the council itself offers very little “new,” but simply rehearses “best practices” that they affirm in the church of 1960. The most they could foresee about the mass media was that there might come a day when every home would have a color TV to sit beside their Radio/Victrola set. They did not envision twitter, nor cell phones that take videos, and send them around the world on Facebook.
One new thing is the dignity they give to teachers in church sponsored education programs:

**#8.3 Teachers have a critical role in this mission of the church. “The ministry of these teachers is truly called an apostolate, a true service offered to society.”**

So, **What is the impact of today’s media on the church’s apostolate?**

Regarding Catholic education, it is ironic that despite this Declaration, the bishops all complain today that a whole generation of “Vatican II Catholics” did not get proper catechesis. I challenge that assertion (having been a religion teacher in a catholic school for several years after Vatican II). But what is the problem? Where do we go from here?

**John XXIII “La Luna”**
(An informal talk he gave to the crowd assembled in St. Peter’s Piazza, the evening of Oct 11, 1962.)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoShzJiwop4#t=67

“Dear sons and daughters, I hear your voices! Mine is just one lone voice, but it sums up the voice of the whole world. And here, all the world is represented tonight. It could even be said that the moon hastens close tonight, that from above, it might watch this spectacle.

We ask for a great day of peace. Yes, of peace! ‘Glory to God, and peace to men of goodwill.’ Let us repeat this wish often. When we can truly say it has spread, that the sweetness of the Lord's peace unites us and takes us in, then let's say: here's the wisdom of what life should've been like ages ago, and the life that awaits us in eternity.

If I asked you, if I could ask of each one of you: where are you from? The children of Rome, especially represented here, would respond: 'Ah, we are the closest of your children, you are the bishop of Rome. Well, then, sons and daughters of Rome, always remember that you really represent 'Roma, caput mundi' [‘Rome, the capital of the world’] which through the design of Providence it has been called to be across the centuries, for the spread of the Truth and of Christian peace.

I want to respond to the respect you've paid me. My own person counts for nothing -- it's a brother who speaks to you, one become a father by the will of our Lord, but all together, fatherhood and brotherhood and God's grace, all of it together. Let us continue to love each other, to love each other so well; to look out for each other when we meet: to welcome whoever comes close to us, and set aside whatever difficulty it might bring.

This morning was a spectacle that not even St Peter's Basilica, over its four centuries of history, has ever been able to witness. We belong to an age in which we are sensitive to the voices from on high, and we want to be faithful and work according to the direction which the blessed Christ has given us. I will finish by giving you the blessing. But together with me I'd love to invite the Madonna, holy and blessed, whose great mystery we recall today; some of you might remember Ephesus and the lit lamps in the basilica there, which I've seen with my own eyes – not back then, but recently – and these recall the proclamation of the dogma of the divine maternity of Mary. This evening, the spectacle you've offered me will remain like that in my memory as it'll be in yours.

Let us give honor to the impressions of this night! Let our feelings always be like the ones we now express before heaven and earth: faith, hope, love – love of God, love of brother, all aided along in the Lord's holy peace for the work of the good.

When you head home, you'll find your kids. Hug and kiss your children and tell them: 'This is the hug and kiss of the Pope.' And when you find them with tears to dry, give them a good word. Give anyone who suffers a word of comfort. Tell them 'The Pope is with us especially in our times of sadness and bitterness.'

And then, all together, may we always come alive -- singing, breathing, even crying -- but always full of trust in Christ, who helps us and hears us, so let us continue along our path.

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. May Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen”