



COLLEGE OF
PROFESSIONAL
STUDIES

Communication and Theology Conference

Organized by the Division of Mass Communication

September 16 – 19, 2008

St. John's University

Bent Hall, Room 277 A/B

“Communication is from its origin a decisively theological idea based specially in Christian revelation and expresses the center of the Christian understanding of God and world.”

– Gisbert Gresshake, German Theologian

Schedule of Activities

September 16

Breakfast in Bent Hall
9 a.m.

Welcome
9:15 a.m.

Frank Brady, Ph.D.
Chair, Division of Mass Communication

Kathleen Vouté MacDonald, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Professional Studies

Introduction and Summary Presentation of the Papers
9:30 a.m. – Noon

Mass (optional)
St. Thomas More Church
12:10 p.m.

Lunch in Bent Hall
1:15 p.m.

Session 1

Group 1, **Theological and Philosophical Context for Communication**
2 – 5 p.m.

Giuseppe Mazza
Craig Baron
John M. Phelan
Jose Palakeel
Peter Lobo

Dinner
6 p.m.



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September 17

Breakfast in Bent Hall
9 a.m.

Session 2

Group 2, **Methodology of Communicating Theology**
9:15 – 11 a.m.

Phillip Lee
Thomas Bauer
Jacob Srampickal
Jim McDonnell

Open Session

Presenter: James Van Oosting

Topic: **FROM GOD'S LIPS TO MY EARS:** An oral essay on the warranties
of a verbal promise and the guarantees of an incarnational one

11 a.m. – Noon

Mass (optional)

St. Thomas More Church

12:10 p.m.

Lunch in Bent Hall

1:15 p.m.

Session 3

Group 3, **Theology in the Public Square**
2 – 5 p.m.

Robert Badillo
Donn James Tilson
Maria Way
Frances Forde Plude
Peter Feuerherd

Dinner

6 p.m.



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September 18

Breakfast in Bent Hall
9 a.m.

Session 4

Group 4, **Theology Expressed in the Arts**
9:15 – 11 a.m.

Robert Lauder
Damian Armana
Glenn Statile
Eileen D. Crowley
Rose Pacate

Mass (optional)
St. Thomas More Church
12:10 p.m.

Lunch in Bent Hall
1:15 p.m.

Session 5

Group 5, **Finding God in the Visual World**
2 – 5 p.m.

Deborah Greh
Ellen Boegel
Kathryn Shaughnessy
Jean-Pierre Ruiz

Dinner
6 p.m.



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Conference Sessions

1. Theological and Philosophical Context for Communication

- A. G. Mazza: *"Communicate by Listening: Announcement, Consent, Communication"*
- B. Craig Baron: *"The Best of Times and the Worst of Times: Christian Theology in the Media Age"*
- C. John M. Phelan: *"The Shared Urgent Relevance of Communication and Theology Studies"*
- D. Jose Palakeel: *"What has Athens to do with Jerusalem! Implications of transmediatization of Christian Theology from Oral to Written Culture"*
- E. Peter Lobo: *"Inter-Faith Dialogue as Communication in a Multi-Context: A Christian Viewpoint"*

2. Methodology of Communicating Theology

- A. Phillip Lee: *"Toward A Theology of Communication Rights"*
- B. Thomas Bauer: *"Believe to Know and Know to Believe: Communication as a Unit of Difference, Distinction and Assimilation. Good Reasons for a Social Theory of Faith"*
- C. Jacob Srampickal: *"Inter-Religious Dialogue is for Developing Relations, Not Just for Dialogue: A Communications Perspective"*
- D. Jim McDonnell: *"Fabric of Our Lives: Theological Perspectives on the Internet"*

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3. Theology in the Public Square

- A. Robert Badillo: *"From the Unwarranted Limits of Habermas' Communicative Reason to the Open Horizon of Ratzinger's Communicative Logos to Its Grounding via Rielo's Genetic Metaphysics"*
- B. Donn James Tilson: *"The 2006 Olympics and the Shroud of Turin: A Confluence of Town, Robe and Media"*
- C. Maria Way: *"Cartoons and Theology"*
- D. Frances Forde Plude: *"Ecclesiological Dialogue: An Analysis of Pope Benedict's Visit to the U.S."*
- E. Peter Feuerherd: *"Media Images and Male Spirituality"*

4. Theology Expressed in the Arts

- A. Robert Lauder: *"Revelation and Revelations: God and the Movies"*
- B. Damian Armana: *"Hierophany in Nollywood and its Theological Import"*
- C. Glenn Statile: *"Communication, Consecration and the Catholic Novel"*
- D. Eileen D. Crowley: *"Theological Reflection on Communal Co-Creation of Liturgical Media Art"*
- E. Rose Pacatte: *"Lights, Camera...Faith! The National Film Retreat as Pastoral Communication"*

5. Finding God in the Virtual World

- A. Deborah Greh: *"In Search of God in Second Life"*
- B. Kathryn G. Shaugnessy: *"WWW and God"*
- C. Jean-Pierre Ruiz: *"Between Babel and Babble: Bible Scholarship on the Blogosphere"*
- F. Ellen K. Boegel: *"Soundbites and Sermons: Faith-Based Politics in the United States"*

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Participants

Paul Tighe	Pontifical Council of Social Communication, Rome
Tadek Lewicky	Salesianum, Rome
Jose Galvan	Santa Croce, Rome
Giuseppe Mazza	Gregorian University, Rome
Jacob Srampickal	Gregorian University, Rome
Thomas Bauer	University of Vienna, Austria
Regina Polak	University of Vienna, Austria
Maria Way	University of Westminster, UK
Martina Hohns	German Bishop's Conference, Germany
Jim McDonnell	SIGNIS, UK
Jose Palakeel	IMPACT, India
Ana Maria Yevenes	Archdiocese of Santiago, Chile
Peter Lobo	St. Charles Seminary, Nagpur, India
Damian Amana	Nigeria (currently at Gregorian University)
Jack Phelan	Fordham University, NY
Francis D. Coffey	DBQ Program, Toronto, Canada
James Van Oosting	Fordham University, NY
Fran Plude	Notre Dame College, Ohio
Donn Tilson	University of Miami
Eileen Crowley	Catholic Theological Union, Chicago
Angela A. Zukowski	University of Dayton, Ohio
Rose Pacatte	Pauline Center for Media Studies, California
Phillip Lee	World Association of Christian Communication
Lia Petridis	Editor, Die Tageszeitung, Germany
Deborah Greh	St. John's University, NY
Robert Lauder	St. John's University, NY
Glenn Statile	St. John's University, NY
Craig Baron	St. John's University, NY
Patrick Flanagan	St. John's University, NY
Kathryn Shaughnessy	St. John's University, NY
Jean-Pierre Ruiz	St. John's University, NY
Ellen Boegel	St. John's University, NY
Michael Warren	St. John's University, NY
Basilio G. Monteiro	St. John's University, NY

Abstracts

Damian Armana

Hierophany in Nollywood and its Theological Import.

Religion and media interact on many fronts. However, an overt rendezvous for the two is in the act of mediation. Religion can be understood as an experience of mediation. Likewise media usage is an exercise in mediation as much as art.

Every media encourages a different mode of mediation. In his famous dictum, the *media is the message*, Marshal McLuhan had asserted that media extends the sense of man, so that when a new media is installed within the fabric of culture, a new sense ratio is orchestrated.

"Nollywood," as the Nigerian video film industry is popularly called, has not only usurped the stage of popular entertainment in Africa but has become a programming staple establishing itself as the most cherished media of entertainment. Given the visual character of the Video, how does Nollywood negotiate with the popular religious worldview in Nigeria and if theology as Lonergan asserted is reflection on the religious, what is the theological import posed by the hierophany in Nigerian video films?

Robert Badillo

Toward a "World Ethos": From Habermas' Communicative Reason to Ratzinger's Communicative Logos to Rielo's Divine Constitutive Presence.

This paper takes as its point of departure a new alliance between faith and reason which developed within the context of the 2004 debate¹ between two celebrated German intellectuals of our time, the philosopher Jürgen Habermas and the theologian Joseph (then Cardinal) Ratzinger. For his part, Habermas rightly admits the limits of *communicative reason* when conceived as "secular reason," and argues instead in favor of a "postsecular reason," one that is open in public discourse to the religious convictions of faith traditions. Though Ratzinger acknowledges the desirability of a presently non-existent "world ethos," that could serve to unify "post-secular" societies, as Benedict XVI, in his 2006 Regensburg lecture, he upheld the significance of the Christian appropriation, via St. John the Evangelist, of the Greek concept *logos* (reason/word), which came to be understood as creative or *communicative Logos*, the ground for an intelligible understanding of God, the created universe and the human being. Given that this conception of God as creative and communicative is without proper grounding in the metaphysical tradition stemming from Aristotle, this paper, in précis fashion, would like to

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introduce Rielo's divine constitutive presence that may serve as ground for the desired "world ethos."

Craig A. Baron

The Foundations of Christian Theology in the Media Age.

Christianity believes Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Risen Lord and Savior of the world. His life, death, resurrection and ascension are the central events in salvation history and the preeminent sources of divine wisdom. This personal faith-encounter between God and the human being has always been mediated through embodiment, history, tradition, culture, language, sacrament and ritual. Consequently, every generation has tried to read the "signs of the times" and present the Gospel in the most meaningful and effective way it can given the historical/cultural situation of the era. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) has reconfirmed the importance of this endeavor for theology and evangelization and reaffirmed the belief in the presence and action God in the world through the Holy Spirit. However, specifically within the American situation, the advent of postmodernism, shifts in religious practice away from institutional religion, the re-enchantment of the world and the many and diverse forms of new media have drastically altered the situation for the mediation of divine truth. Moreover, the authority of Christianity has been questioned and the individual now negotiates personal meaning according to preference and draws from many varied religious sources in the construction of individual identity. And media has ceased to be just technology or instruments in the dissemination of information, but has become a religious and spiritual resource (sometimes espousing traditional values, sometimes criticizing those values, but always recontextualizing them). The line between the sacred and the profane or faith and culture is blurred today in a way never before seen. This yields challenges and opportunities for Christian faith and theology. This paper explores what this new situation might mean for theological method, revelation/faith and spirituality.

The paper has five parts. First, a brief introduction is provided to the current cultural and religious issues. Second, an analysis is offered of the Second Vatican Council's document *Gaudium et Spes* and its call to read the "signs of the times." Third, an overview is given of the role of media in contemporary society. Fourth, an examination is undertaken of the relationship between media and theology and what it might mean for method, revelation/faith and spirituality. Fifth, a few concluding remarks will be shared about the results of the study especially in terms of the evolving and dynamic relationship between theology and communication.

¹ Ratzinger, Joseph and Jürgen Habermas, *Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, edited with a Foreword by Florian Schuller, translated by Brian McNeil, C.R.V. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006).

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Thomas A. Bauer

Believe to Know and Know to Believe: Communication as the Unit of Difference, Distinction, and Assimilation. Good Reasons for a Social Theory of Faith.

The distinction between a theological concept of truth (as a content of faith – believe to know) and a communicological concept of truth (as a mode of faith – know to believe) could open a constructive perspective of (for) a concept of religious variety and could make it possible to argue that the gift (treasure) of belief is the diversity of faiths. Even if faith and belief (*der Glaube & das Glauben*) according to theological interpretation in Christian religions has to be taken as a grace and as a good given to the individual through God's revelation and given to the community (*ecclesia*) as a memory to keep mystery in mind, faith and belief have a cultural representation about that it is to reflect as it is done in reference to other cultural emanations: as a cultural phenomenon of sociality. Even if faith theologically is interpreted as an enlightenment that cannot be merited, in context of sociological interpretation faith is a merit and communicational good, provided by religious systems, that needs the organization of communication as it needs the communication of organization. The system relates the cultural programming of the society to a universe of spirituality that signifies that beyond knowledge of known (domination, mental ownership) there is a knowledge (notion) of unknown (search). Knowledge on known matter (physics) follows other methods of enlightenment than knowledge on unknown (metaphysics) does. The difference lies between knowledge as a model proof (*Beweismodell*) and knowledge as a model of assuredness (*Wissensmodell, Gewissheit*). Faith is a cultural habit (habitual knowledge) and as such it refers to the experience of contingency and for that (thank God) it opens a hermetically closed system of logics to a universe of diversity and heresy (choice). Faith and belief, in its non-denominated interpretation, is the source of surprise within the frame of construction of reality, while knowledge is the surprise (discover, demystification) of (for) sources. That makes faith a cultural resource of completion of experience of contingency and diversity, generated through constructs of communication. In such a perspective, one notion of God, one faith and one (inclusive/exclusive) community of believers — sociologically spoken — would be a "fascistoid" model (Rokeach 1960: *Open and Closed Mind*) of religion. If faith is the energy of mind (inspiration, search) to overcome the system of (ownership of) knowledge in constructing sense, then religion, as the cultural system of belief, is (could be) the social (communicational) source of heresy and diversity and a (communicational) frame of construction of metaphysical sense of experience of contingency. In that context, it will be necessary to discuss the modes of truth: truth as a model of unity of content (truth of one God) and as a model of the unification of difference.

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Ellen K. Boegel

Soundbites and Sermons: Faith-based politics in the United States.

How do politicians use the language of faith and religion to communicate with voters? How do religious leaders use the language of politics to promote faith-based agendas? This presentation will analyze the 2008 Presidential campaign to answer these questions and determine the impact of religion and faith on politics in a pluralistic, democratic society. Political ads, speeches, debate performances and Web sites will be assessed for religious content. Polling data will be analyzed to determine the impact of religious content on voters. Religious Web sites, public sermons and press releases from faith-based groups will be assessed for political content. Polling data will be analyzed to determine the influence of political communication on adherents and politicians. These communications will be examined for their congruence with the model of faith-based political action described in Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*.

Francis D. Coffey

Doctrine of Scripture, Augustine's Semiotic, and Media.

Augustine's doctrine of scripture is derived from a semiotic, a divine semiotic where the word made flesh is sign of the Eternal Word and Trinity (On Christian Doctrine, I, 13; T. Work, 2002). In Augustine's definition of sign, there is clearly 'a thing which... causes something else to come into the mind as a consequence of itself' (On Christian Doctrine, II, 1) — a dyadic structure — but with careful attention to his theology, one can also identify a third element or relation of the sign which is actually working the correspondence and maintaining continuity between the sign and its object. This third element is developed in some cases as Christ, the Inner Teacher, and developed in other cases as the faith of the Church (Jordan, 191), which has Christ and his place in the history of creation and salvation as its content, its *fides quae*. In this context, then, scripture as the divine word in human words has its theological character from this incarnational semiotic. If Augustine's theology came from a clarification by Ambrose's instruction of the way scripture can be both true and figurative (Confessions, V, 13-14), the undeveloped third relation in the sign as found in scripture leaves much of the richness and complexity of language and the role of the reader outside of his account of the economy of revelation deriving from the Trinity. C.S. Peirce explicitly specified Augustine's latent third relation of the sign (Short, 23). In addition to relations of sign and object, he distinguished the interpretant relation — to state it precisely — *as that which the reality which is being signed directs as the way the sign indicates (would indicate) its object*. Developing the explicitly triadic character of the divine semiotic will help uncover deeper and more extensive significance of Augustine's doctrine of scripture. It will help specify how aspects of creation could be involved in realizing the scripture's meaning. Moreover, it will incorporate modern specifications

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of that human work with Word which is both the sign following from the divine plan and also specifications of that plan, especially in its incarnational character. The performance of the interpretant specified by the reality signed (the scriptural text in this case) is the critical element and relation for this mining of Augustine's doctrine of scripture. The basic question is what habits of feeling, acting and thinking would one need to develop in order to uncover what remains hidden in the scriptural text? Given the scripture's witness to what includes and also transcends existential fact and even thought or symbol, the roles of feeling and aesthetics emerge as pivotal: how can the feeling, quality, real possibility, the *would-be-ness*, which is part of the meaning of the scriptural text, be uncovered? In a word, it is through the iconicity available in the text (cf. Peirce, CP, 4.544; Dewey). Given cinema's and related audiovisual media's capacity to de-existentialize and de-intellectualize their object (Ehrat, 137; 494), they seem particularly well-suited for forefronting the power of scriptural word for that original — even primordial force — of quality that precedes fact and concept in each and everything. In this way, mass media can be a great resource for the Church's proclamation of the scriptural witness to God's Word in our times, not so much as an instrument of broadcast, but as one of providing access to constitutive elements of that Word. The resources that Peirce's specifications help uncover, each reinforce, inform and enrich that role of the Inner Teacher and the Faith of the Church which Augustine forefronts in his doctrine of scripture. Above all, without resorting to any kind of fundamentalism, they clarify the kind of immediacy of God's presence which is provided in scripture.

Eileen D. Crowley

Theological Reflection on Communal Co-Creation of Liturgical Media Art.

Since the early 1990s, I have been reflecting upon the intersection of liturgy and today's media art and technology as it has been introduced into worship settings. Through my research, teaching, articles and books, I have been encouraging churches Catholic and Protestant to take a communal approach to the creation of what I have coined "liturgical media art." From the start, I have been fleshing out the beginnings of a theology for this liturgical phenomenon from a Trinitarian perspective. While theology about communication often deals with the topic as it relates to individual persons or to mass audiences, I have been musing upon God's communication of God's Self within a communal worship context and within a communal creative process, what I call Communal Co-Creation. This process offers the potential to invite people to participate in a spiritual practice that involves the creation of new media as the work of the people *by, for* and *in* the work of the people, i.e., liturgy. For this conference, I shall share these musings and welcome participants building upon them.

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Peter Feuerherd

Male Spirituality in a Media-Saturated World.

On every sociological indication, from church attendance to frequency of prayer, men rate well below women in matters of interest in spirituality. In response, various movements have arisen among American Christians to counteract this trend, some with contrasting agendas. What defines being male? Who defines what is spiritual? And how does this emerging men's spirituality movement compare and contrast with the media image of manhood in a rapidly changing culture?

Deborah Greh

In Search of God in Second Life (avatar).

This discussion will focus on Second life, a created world inhabited by over 13 million people. In January 2008, residents spent over 28 million hours there, so on average about 38,000 residents were logged on at any particular moment; the average age is 33.

With Avatars, Entities with Divine Powers and Celestial Cathedrals available to anyone with a computer, pursuing God in Second life seemed a worthy quest. My search began in May 2008.

Our conversation will include an overview of who inhabits this virtual world, why they are important to consider, how organized religion is responding to this audience as well as observations from my personal journey.

Robert Lauder

Revelation and Revelations: God and the Movies.

Two thousand years ago God's Word entered the womb of a teenage girl and the Word became flesh. The Incarnation continues today in the sense that God is still being spoken and one way that the Word can be communicated is through film. As Pope John Paul in his Letter to Artists pointed out, artists imitate God: *"Through his artistic creativity, man appears more than ever in the image of God, and he accomplishes this task above all in shaping the wondrous material of his own humanity and then exercising creative dominion over the universe which surrounds him. With loving regard, the divine Artist passes on to the human artist a spark of his own surpassing wisdom, calling him to share in his creative power."* The art form of the 20th century, and there's no reason to think that it will not be the art form of the 21st, is film, which combines all the other art forms into one. Movies should be taken very seriously by everyone but especially by the theologians.

Revelation, God's gracious self-gift, comes to us through mediators — through nature, through history, through family and friends, through daily experience and in an ultimate way through God's

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very Word, Jesus Christ. One way that God's revelation can come to us is through art and one art form through which this can happen is film. This paper will make three points: first what makes film an especially important channel through which God's invitation to a love relationship can be communicated to us, second why and how theologians should take film seriously and third some examples of what has been done by the Catholic community with an emphasis on the three films that the Church in this country has produced and some suggestions on what can be done in the future.

Phillip Lee

Toward a Theology of Communication Rights.

This paper seeks to identify 'pointers' toward a theology of communication rights by drawing on the theory and practice of communication for development, the 'capability approach'; and the right to communicate debate. It argues that, if globalization is to have moral validity, it must bring with it an enhanced sense of globalized humanity. As such, we must ask if we are willing to live in a world with disenfranchised people — the 'new slaves' of society. If not, we are obliged by our faith and our common humanity to take responsibility for the world's failings. Unless we work to understand the structures and inadequacies that enable marginalization and oppression to persist and unless we take action to change them, we are complicit with injustice.

Peter Lobo

Inter-faith Dialogue as Communication in a Multi-religious Context: A Christian Viewpoint.

Inter-faith dialogue is rooted in and modeled on the dialogue and communication found in the very life of the three-personed God. The intra-trinitarian life as well as the extra-trinitarian activity of the three-personed God are deeply dialogical and communicative. God's inner life is an eternal dialogue between Father, Son and Holy Spirit so complete and so perfect that the Holy Three have one and the same divine nature, although they are distinct as divine persons. God's outer life, i.e., his relations with the whole world and especially with humans, is a creating and saving dialogue born of God's wisdom, goodness and love. God constantly converses with humans and invites them to share in God's life more deeply. God's self-communication with humans brings them the gift of God's own life and a deeper relationship with God and with their brothers and sisters in love.

God's self-communication in love to humans is to be reflected in the communicative relationship of love (dialogue of love) that humans have with each other. This is a giving and receiving, a sharing and caring relationship that brings growth and development to the human person and the human community and it expresses itself in the human person's relationships with God, fellow-humans and

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the world, i.e, in religion, social institutions and dealings with the physical world, that go to make up human culture. At the heart of human culture is religion. It pervades and affects all the other relationships of humans and human social groups. There is a multiplicity of religions that are born from the core religious experience of a human group and the concrete form they give it in creed, code and cult.

The plurality of religions each with its own specific scriptures, beliefs, customs, practices and celebrations providing its adherents with a distinctive world-view, makes it necessary and imperative for humans to open avenues of communication with believers of other faiths so as to help them to break down prejudices, understand each other better, establish cordial relations with each other, live in harmony and work in a united way for the growth and betterment of the whole human community. Inter-faith dialogue can no longer be optional. It is absolutely necessary for the wellbeing of the human community. In our times it is a necessity for it helps to open the doors to deeper communication, fruitful participation and effective advancement of the human family in peace, love, harmony and brotherhood.

Inter-faith dialogue makes possible effective communication and collaboration among believers of diverse faiths in a multi-religious context.

Giuseppe Mazza

Communicate by listening: Announcement, Consent, Communication.

Our contribution concerns the pertinence of the listening process to faith announcement and mediation. Against the abuses of both an ideological rhetoric of proclamation and of a pretentious editorial magniloquence, a *policy of global listening* could stress the primacy of the listening process as a "communicative gesture" in itself. "Communicating by listening," pastoral announcement gives birth to an effective ministry of acceptance and reciprocity. That also meets the challenge of pairing Christian "absolute" truth claim with the demanding needs of a shared "creation" of meaning. In this sense, theology and communication are urged to converge: faith announcement is always spurred to deal with a listening process as meaningful relational and empathic agreement (*con-sentire*) between interlaced worlds.

Jim McDonnell

The Fabric of Our Lives: Theological Perspectives on the Internet.

This paper is a first attempt to explore how a theology of communication might best integrate and develop reflection on the internet and the problematic areas of the so-called information society. It examines the way in which official church documents on communication have attempted to deal

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with these issues and proposes elements for a broader framework including “media ecology,” information ethics and more active engagement with the broader social and policy debates.

Rose Pacatte

Lights, Camera...Faith!

The National Film Retreat as Pastoral Communication.

At a cocktail party in Washington, DC, in 1999, a priest and a filmmaker had a conversation about their mutual love for cinema and spirituality. The idea of an annual weekend film retreat, open to people of all faiths, especially seekers, grew out of that exchange. The first retreat was held at St. Pius X Retreat House in 2000 and, as they say, the rest is history.

The premise of the retreat is participation, dialogue and community-building, rooted in the shared experience of a slate of films selected according to a theme. The fundamental attitude is one of mutuality and communication through shared praxis that is, “doing” theology publically that transforms into spiritual experience. The retreat is purposefully not preached by one person; the participants “give” the retreat to one another.

The two approaches to the retreat as a communicating spiritual experience that the founders/directors of the National Film Retreat discovered that lend themselves to the film retreat are theological reflection and cinema divina, based on the ancient spiritual practice of *lectio divina*.

This electronic presentation will outline the history of the National Film Retreat, themes, explore select evaluations, track the development and challenges of the applied theological praxis, and initiate an analysis of this pastoral communication project through a lens derived from Lumen Gentium (16), that God is not “remote from those who in shadows and images seek the unknown God, since He gives all people life and breath and all things, and the Savior wills all to be saved ... Whatever good and truth is found among them is considered by the Church to be a preparation for the Gospel and given by Him, who enlightens all people that they may have life.”

Jose Palakeel

What has Athens to do with Jerusalem!

Implications of transmediatization of Christian Theology from Oral to Written Culture.

Tertullian asked in the second century after Christ, “what has Athens to do with Jerusalem?” He was commenting on the progressive Hellenization of Christianity and Christian theology. We know how Athens (Greek thinking and philosophy) has changed the course of theology for ever. There was/is a substantial difference between what was named *oikonomia* by Fathers and *theologia* by the Greek apologists. One major element in this transition is perhaps unnoticed till today.

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Hellenization of Christianity was not just a change in the language, culture and thought system; it meant also a change in medium.

This paper is an enquiry into the origins of Christian theology, from a media perspective. Although we find the presence of a scripture, Judaism was predominantly an oral culture. Jesus was an oral preacher, so were most of the apostles. As the Christian faith moved from the predominantly oral culture of Jerusalem to the literate culture of the Greeks, the theology we know today originated. The core of the question is has the media-change affected theologizing? Today's media studies clearly suggest that the media is not a mere tool of transmission but is integral to communication. In this sense, the change from an oral to literate culture has definitely changed both the method and content of theologizing.

John M. Phelan

The Shared Urgent Relevance of Communication and Theology Studies.

To escape the fate of elaborate trivial pursuits, both theology and communication are urgently called to address the cultural crises of the young century:

- What is the current state of the world-mind as a whole in so far as we can grasp it through international opinion surveys and other technical means?
- What is the condition of the material planet and especially the biosphere in so far as we can measure it?
- What role does theology have in helping us share understanding, experience and hope?
- What role does communication, as a set of interlocking cultural technologies, have in helping us cope with our world and face our lives?

Theology has developed tools to help us construct coherent concepts about the meaning of our own existence and existence itself. Communication is a portmanteau label for the sum of technologies that connect our minds and the sum of critical apprehensions about those technologies. These different fields bear striking affinities in terms of method, purpose and their historical evolutions. Both endeavors are intimately involved in promoting and understanding globalization as the ultimate expression of modernization, the final stages of syncretism, the culminating challenge of harmonizing diversely originated moral codes and ethical values.

Will we become more — or less — human in the coming decades?

How can these fields combine to help us become more human in the coming decades when the material world threatens to turn against our failed stewardship and the darker angels of our spirit are given access to apocalyptic instruments self-destruction?

Although communication studies are often pragmatic and secular, they have a potential to work

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with and within theologies. Although theology is often mired in the parochial visions of the pre-modern village, it has been the pioneer in dealing with diverse cultures and conflicting values. So let us look at the bare essence of both fields, show their affinities and apply their separate strengths to grappling as a common human effort with the challenges facing us and our societies, both secular and sacred.

Frances Forde Plude

Ecclesiological Dialogue: An Analysis of Pope Benedict's Visit to the U.S.

Almost fifteen years ago, in the book *The Church and Communication*, I wrote a chapter reflecting that modern interactive telecommunication technologies were a metaphor for a more dialogical (two-way) ecclesiology. More recently, in an essay in a volume honoring Franz-Josef Eilers, I reflected on the role of dialogue in religion and mediated popular culture. Using these two chapters as a methodological framework, I analyzed the recent visit of Pope Benedict XVI to the United States. Concepts considered include: Häring's reflections on pluralism and a "listening church"; The role of religion in the U.S. public square; The role of interactive media coverage of the Pope's visit: blogs, audio downloads, cell phones, etc.; Communicative scenes where the Pope did not give a speech: meeting with sexual abuse victims and Ground Zero families; the role of audience feedback; and conflicts between genuine communion and bureaucracy/anonymity. The paper concludes with recommendations for effective papal communication.

Jacob Srampickal

*Inter-religious dialogue is for developing relations, not just for "dialogue:"
A Communication Perspective.*

In common parlance inter-religious dialogue is more of a debate aimed at proving whose religion is superior. In fact in earlier days the idea was to win the other religions over to make them accept that catholic religion is the superior and the only and absolute one. After Vatican II the aim of inter-religious dialogue changed to dialogue for appreciation and understanding that lead to respecting other religions, though many catholics don't accept the Vatican II position and remain in the earlier state. This paper argues from a communication point of view that other religions are equally important and absolute and that all religions seek to help humans find God. There are several common elements in all of these. The paper establishes these common elements from Wilbur Schramm's later theories on communication, that the very essence of communication is developing a close knit relations which leads to communion. In Schramm's terminology, interactive communication is for creating better understanding of human conditions based on interpersonal communication.

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The paper argues that members of different religions living in a certain situation need to work together in common areas of interest like literacy and healthcare programs, social development and justice issues, media education, environmental concerns, etc. and thus create an atmosphere of our fraternal and sisterly exchange, rather than developing intellectual dialogue to conceptualize theories of religions.

Kathryn Shaugnessy

WWW and God

Web-2.0 or “participatory-Web” communications rely on 2 technological innovations: XML (eXtensible Markup Language) and RSS (Rich Site Summary, or Really Simple Syndication). The first innovation, XML, allows the content of Web-based-communications to be created and displayed in many different formats, the second, RSS, allows Web-based content to be delivered automatically — via subscription syndication — to many types of communication devices. Alone, either function would offer a radical change in Web-based theological communications — but together they offer revolutionary change for individual and mass communication because information can be created, edited, published and distributed in many formats to many platforms, whether mainframe computer or mobile phone. My short presentation offers a brief explanation of these two technological underpinnings of Web-2.0 — based communication venues, as well as offering some current examples of these communication technologies in action in Web-2.0 theological education and discourse as a springboard for discussion of future uses for theological communication.

Glenn Statile

Communication, Consecration and the Catholic Novel.

The birth of the modern novel as a literary genre might also be said to mark the arrival of what we now commonly refer to as the Catholic novel. The late Catholic mystic, poet and philosopher Fernando Rielo held that Cervantes’ great masterpiece, *Don Quixote*, represented a counter-reformational literary salvo whose main purpose was to reclaim the soul of mysticism that had once so permeated the psyche of Catholic Spain. Like the quixotic knight errant of La Mancha many contemporary theologians might feel as if they are tilting at windmills when they attempt to transmit the doctrines of the Church in the esoteric language of traditional philosophy and theology to the laity of our day.

In this paper, I argue that the so-called Catholic novel is a fitting medium for transmitting the message of the gospel to the modern world. First, I argue that philosophers such as Plato and Hegel were wrong to degrade the theological and philosophical credentials of great art, at least to the

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extent that they did. Next, I attempt to establish a set of conditions which supply the Catholic novel with a legitimate identity. Finally, I explore the specific way in which three great Catholic novels successfully can and continue to communicate and consecrate Christian ideals to a modern audience. These three novels are: *Kristin Lavransdatter*; *Brideshead Revisited* and *Cry, The Beloved Country*.

Donn James Tilson

The 2006 Olympics and the Shroud of Turin: A Confluence of Town, Robe and Media.

The Olympic Games are part spectacle, athletic competition and promotional venue for various commercial, political and other interests. The 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino, Italy, were no exception, offering a mediated splash of sport, Sophia (Loren) and Shroud. This study examines the confluence of the public sector, religious institutions, particularly, the Shroud of Turin Diocesan Commission and the Museum "Della Sindone" and media. Particularly, exclusive global television broadcaster NBC and its U.S. affiliate stations, in organizing and conducting a campaign to attract viewers, spectators, tourists, and pilgrims to their respective shrines using the city's historic connection with the Shroud as a promotional hook. Textual analysis of institutional media, e-mail interviews of key figures and content analysis of media coverage provide insight into campaign strategies, tactics and messages and examine results from an advertising, marketing and public relations perspective. The campaign appears to have been successful in terms of viewership, attendance and other effects and confirms earlier studies of devotional-promotional campaigning in Santiago de Compostela, Spain (Tilson, 2005) and of the U.S. tour of St. Thérèse's relics (Tilson & Chao, 2002).

James Vanoosting

From God's Lips to My Ears: An oral essay on the warranties of a verbal promise and the guarantees of an incarnational one.

Maria Way

Cartoons and Theology.

"Theology is taught by God, teaches of God and leads to God," according to St. Thomas Aquinas, its root means "God-Talk," so when we talk about God, as the Evangelical Alliance (<http://www.eauk.org> – 7.5.08) tell us, but what we are discussing here is probably the academic discipline of theology. Communicating this teaching to "everyman/woman" has in the past been the point at which problems have been caused by the dots and titles. What one person reads or

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understands as theology may be anathema to another's reading and understanding. How difficult, then, is the work of the media producer who has to talk of God, teach about God and hopefully, lead the viewer/listener/reader to God, without causing the sort of problems that have in the past stirred up trouble. This is especially true in a multi-faith world where, despite the fracturing of channels into smaller and smaller units for specialist audiences, the media aim to get the biggest audience possible for their content. This paper will seek to try to analyze how this might be achieved and asks if such programming does actually lead to God.

Ana M. Yévenes

The drama at the fictions: a religious experience?

From the beginning of time, death and pain have been central experiences that impact on the constructions of the cultures and religious *cosmovisions*. In Postmodernity, the tendency is that people try to evade these experiences. Anthony Giddens calls this phenomenon "kidnapping of the experience."

Some popular narratives, in vicarious form, confront the people with death and pain. The reception of these narratives can be a religious experience.

