

A CHURCH IN DIALOGUE:
THE ART AND SCIENCE OF
CHURCH COMMUNICATION

*25 years at the School of Church Communications
Pontifical University of the Holy Cross*

Edited by
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INTRODUCTION

“It is not the task of the University to offer what society asks for, but to give what society needs,” said the Dutch computer scientist and university professor Edsger Dijkstra. Every faculty has the mission of educating the students who trust in it, thinking about the challenges and needs of the society in which it finds itself.

The *Pontificia Università della Santa Croce* [Pontifical University of the Holy Cross] seeks to contribute to this social function of every university. Its specific mission is to deepen the intellectual content and anthropological richness of the faith, while at the same time establishing a dialogue with contemporary culture. Our hope is to work to achieve what Pope Francis wants of every university: to become “workshops of dialogue and encounter in the service of truth, justice and the defense of human dignity at every level.”¹

The School of Church Communications fits into this framework, being born in 1996 as the fruit of the insight of a group of professionals: the best message deserves the best communication. The Church has good news to spread and it is worth learning how to communicate it professionally.

This book was written on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the faculty, which will be celebrated in the academic year 2021/22. Although several of its first professors or collaborators have participated in its writing, these pages are not intended to review the brief history of the faculty. Rather, it aims to be a collective reflection on people, themes and events of these years, which can teach us something about the communication of the Church. It has been a time rich in significant events – the Millennium change, the digital revolution,

¹ Francis, “Address of his Holiness Pope Francis to a Delegation of the ‘Villanova University, Philadelphia,’” *Vatican Press*, April 14, 2018, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2018/april/documents/papa-francesco_20180414_universita-villanova.html.

the economic and migratory crises, the global pandemic – which have produced major cultural transformations and veritable tsunamis in the world of communication.

As the reader will be able to see, we have tried to give an informative approach to the text, respecting the style of each author, which is why some chapters have a more historical approach, others more journalistic, more academic or experiential.

The book is divided into three sections. The first, “A change of era,” seeks to offer a general historical framework of these twenty-five years (1996-2021), with special attention to the digital and technological revolution experienced in this period and which has been accelerated by the global pandemic produced by Covid-19 since 2020. In this section, two chapters are devoted to reviewing how institutional communication and journalism have evolved in the period under study.

The second section – the largest – focuses on Church communications, being the central section in the structure of the book. In it, the reader will find three subsections that delve deeper into more specific issues.

The first of these subsections, “Ecclesial context,” seeks to provide a framework for the evolution of the Church’s institutional communication. The initial chapter is introductory and aims to offer a brief historical analysis of what these twenty-five years have meant in the life of the Church and in what circumstances we find ourselves now, on the verge of the first quarter of the twenty-first century. It then offers a perspective on the evolution of communications in the Holy See and a first-hand analysis of the communicative style of the three popes of this period (John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis), carried out by a witness who has worked in Church communications alongside each of them. To close this first section, there is a chapter summarizing the Church’s doctrine on communicative issues.

The second subsection studies the evolution and professionalization of institutional communication over the years. The first chapter, written by one of the people who has been in the faculty since its inception and who has been dean, sets out to explain the nature and relevance of the Church’s institutional communication. It then goes on to explain how communication offices have developed in Church institutions, what the main functions of these departments are and what are the future

prospects open to professionals in the sector. A chapter is dedicated to developing how the presence of the Church on the Internet has grown exponentially in the years analyzed in the book and how to make communication of the faith effective in a digital context. Finally, there is a chapter that analyzes the evolution of the Sala Stampa Vaticana [Holy See Press Office] and the transformation experienced during this period by the different directors, who have each given their personal touch to the position and to the work in the service of journalists.

The third subsection, to conclude this second section, deals with the relationship between governance and communication. The first chapter focuses on the role of communication in relation to the governance of organizations, highlighting what communication can contribute in its work of service to the leaders of organizations. This chapter serves as an introduction to a text that studies a specific case and its communication management: the crisis of abuse. This section closes with a paper that reflects on the loss and recovery of trust in institutions.

The last section, entitled “Church participation in the public conversation,” is introduced by a text that seeks to shed light on how the Church can participate in public debates on controversial issues in societies that do not share her values. The section is divided into two subsections, one dedicated to some of the essential themes of the Christian proposition, such as the fight against poverty, the welcoming of migrants, religious freedom, inter-religious collaboration and the promotion of peace, sustainability and ecology. A chapter is also devoted to one of the issues that most frequently sees conflicts with some of the social values on the rise (gender and family), and a method is proposed that can help Catholics to dialogue with people who have different views. The other section is devoted to reviewing some of the channels through which the Church seeks to enter into dialogue with the world, presenting her message of salvation through religious art, religious journalism, Catholic media and some audiovisual narrative products.

In this book we can glimpse some of the features that will characterize the future of communication, including in the Church. In a globalized and increasingly polarized world, there is a strong need to base communication on attitudes that are very familiar to Catholics: love of truth, respect for the person, an orientation towards dialogue, and the ability to reach an agreement. Precisely when everything seems to be

changing, the value of what remains unchanged becomes clearer. The Church offers a universal message (in time and space), which connects with the deepest desires of the heart.

Communicating the faith and the Christian experience is the task of all the baptized. But it is also true that communication professionals and professors teaching in communication faculties have a special responsibility in this task. Therefore, we hope that this book can contribute by taking stock of the Church's communication in these twenty-five years, reflecting on the lessons learned and showing the challenges that lie on the horizon.

I thank all the authors who wanted to be part of this book and therefore, of a piece of history of the Faculty of Institutional Communication of the University of the Holy Cross. I would also like to thank the university's management team for the trust placed in me as editor of the volume and Juan Manuel Mora, one of those who started the faculty and the one who proposed the making of this book, for his encouragement and support throughout the whole process of this volume.

I would like to end this prologue with a quote that seems to me a key to reading the book. Pope Francis gives it to us in his message for World Communications Day 2022: "It is only by paying attention to whom we listen, to what we listen, and to how we listen that we can grow in the art of communicating, the heart of which is not a theory or a technique, but the 'openness of heart that makes closeness possible.'"²

Gema Bellido

² Francis, "Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 56th World Day of Social Communications," *Vatican Press*, January 24, 2022, <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/20220124-messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html>.

I. A CHANGE OF ERA

Chapter 1

A RETROSPECTIVE LOOK: 1996-2021

Mónica Fuster Cancio

1. INTRODUCTION

Every institution is born and lives in a local, national and international context that is more or less relevant to its daily existence and to the implementation of its mission. Hence the interest in taking a brief but general review of the global picture within which the School of Church Communications developed in its twenty-five years of existence.

It is not the historian's job to study what happened twenty-five years ago, nor to predict what will happen in the next twenty-five years. However, a retrospective look at the linking of causes and consequences (and sometimes ruptures and regressions) of history can help us to better understand today's world.

The study of the last quarter of a century leads the historian to wonder about the sources. Perhaps one of his first reactions will be to shudder at the thought of the enormous amount of documents he will find in his research on this period. Certainly, the archives of the future will have to house powerful computers in which to store the information we generate every day. One of the main tasks of the researcher will be to confirm the reliability of these sources. The publication of confidential documentation through WikiLeaks and Edward Snowden's infiltrations of the American press, as well as the flow of indiscriminate communication classified as "fake news, suggests that the task of sifting through them in order to reconstruct the historical past will not be easy in this regard.

All this indicates that the “Fourth Estate” has come to play, more than ever, a decisive role in the protagonism of certain political, economic, social and cultural events. The historian’s job will be to check whether these events stand the test of time and acquire the status of “historical event”; that is, to discern to what extent a media event had sufficient impact on the development of humanity to reach the level of “historical”.

The “sources” have multiplied and so has their format. Today, it is enough to see the cartoons in the press to know what has happened, and to perceive through the irony of the cartoonist what is the crux of the news. A cartoon can trigger national and international conflicts, as was evidenced by the publications of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. And a photograph can shock to the point of pricking consciences and prompting humanitarian initiatives. This was the case with the image of Aylan Kurdi, the Syrian boy found dead on a Turkish beach in September 2015.

These are snippets of history grasped in a “blink of an eye”: they appeal to freedom of expression, bring to mind the attack on the members of the French publishing house (2015), and speak to us about the complex issue of immigration. Three hot topics of recent years.

New mentalities and streams of thought can also emerge from magazine covers. If in April 1966 *Time* magazine put the question *Is God Dead?* on its cover, in April 2017 the same cover design was used to ask *Is Truth Dead?* Although the second question did not answer a metaphysical conundrum but was used to introduce an interview with Donald Trump, many consequences could be drawn about the cultural *humus* in which we move.

Today’s culture has been characterized as “liquid modernity” (to use Zygmunt Bauman’s expression), an expression that well illustrates the lack of solid values. Relativism would be one of its multiple manifestations.

We live in a paradoxical society where identity has been lost at various levels. This is related to several factors. One of them is the lack of roots (there is a lack of historical consciousness, there is a crisis of the family, inherited beliefs are denied...). On the one hand, uniqueness is sought (with the virtual construction of one’s own image), but on the other hand, this uniqueness is denied (the constructed image does not correspond to the reality of what one is).

The situation we live in reflects well the consequences of the rationalist and enlightened thought with which we are still steeped in: “Let us be content with the things that experience makes known and confirms. Leave metaphysics alone and stick to physics. Only when we do that shall we begin to find out the real facts about nature which, up to now, have eluded us.” (words of the physician Hermann Boerhaave to the Academy of Leiden [1715]) It also shows that we have gone a step further, even attempting to disprove the laws of physics and biology. The power of the will and subjectivism have been imposed. We have entered the era of transhumanism and posthumanism.

2. THE “POSITIVISM” OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

There are those who have strongly affirmed that the twentieth century began in the Balkans, the scene of the First World War (1914-1918), and ended in the Balkans, the scene of the Bosnian War (1992-1995). If we take these parameters, we can say that the stage we now wish to analyze (1996-2021) brings us fully into the twenty-first century.

The nineteenth-century optimism, crowned by the *Belle Époque* (1895-1914), gave way to the pessimism that characterized Western culture after the Great War, which became more severe after World War II (1939-1945). May 68 was but another milestone in the crisis of modern thought that has been carried over to the present day.

The sinking of the British ocean liner Titanic in 1912 has been taken as an icon of the crisis of Western culture, and the words of Paul Valéry in 1919 are illustrative of this image: “The swaying of the ship has been so violent that the best-hung lamps have finally overturned.” (The Crisis of the Mind) In 2009, Millvina Dean died, the last of around 705 survivors in that tragedy. Nevertheless, we are still living in that cultural crisis of modernity, which has come to be called postmodernity, and which has now given way to post-truth.

The technical and scientific progress that took place between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (invention of electricity [1879], the automobile [1886], the cinema [1895], the airplane [1903], etc.) has been repeated in the transition from the twentieth to the twenty-first century, but in an accelerated and exponential manner. The transformations that have taken place in the last twenty-five years, faster than at any other time in history, will surely be a factor in the change of mentality.

Among the technological advances, those in communication stand out: the creation of Hotmail (1996) and Yahoo emails (1997); the development of Windows with its different editions; the founding of Google (1998); the various instant messaging programs such as MSN Messenger (1999), replaced by Skype (2003), which was joined by applications such as WhatsApp Messenger (2009). At the same time, electronic devices have evolved to have numerous applications by which we can access social networks that allow us to be hyperconnected: Facebook (2004), YouTube (2005), Twitter (2006), Instagram (2010), or Tik Tok (2016).

Technology, which makes information accessible and increases knowledge, helping us to be potentially freer, develops at the same time mechanisms of enslavement, either by generating dependence through excessive and uncontrolled use, or because more than ever it allows third-party surveillance over us. The image of “Big Brother,” a character from George Orwell’s novel *1984*, inspired by the totalitarian states of the twentieth century, can now be applied to the monitoring to which we are subjected through social networks.

3. THE TRACES OF THE COLD WAR IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The Cold War, which profoundly characterized the twentieth century, ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the disintegration of the USSR (1991). The clash of cultures was not new on the world scene. Since their formation, the three great civilizations that characterized the Middle Ages (Western, Orthodox and Muslim) have set themselves against each other. In the twentieth century the confrontation was between the West (USA) and the East (USSR); in the twenty-first century between the West and Islam.

The global bipolarism that characterized the period 1945-1989 did not lead to a direct confrontation between the two powers, the US and the USSR, but both were aligned on ideologically opposed sides in numerous peripheral conflicts.

Even areas outside of war, such as sports and space, were fields of competition between the two powers, and to this day these are symbols of power and prestige. It is enough to recall any of the venues of the last Olympic Games: Atlanta (1996), Sydney (2000), Athens (2004), Beijing (2008), London (2012), Rio de Janeiro (2016) and To-

kyo (2021). The space race also continues, although attention is now turned away from the moon and focused on Mars.

Some of the last protagonists of the so-called Cold War have died in these twenty-five years: François Mitterrand (+1996), Ronald Reagan (+2004), John Paul II (+2005), Margaret Thatcher (+2013), Fidel Castro (+2016), Helmut Kohl (+2017), George H. W. Bush (+2018). Lech Wałęsa's return to the Gdansk shipyards in 1996, after four years as president of his country, marks an era that has closed (that of the fall of communism and the establishment of democratic regimes in the countries of Eastern Europe) and that had Poland as a protagonist, which was described and revealed itself during the Cold War as "the weak link in a chain of the countries of real socialism." In 1991, the Warsaw Pact (a military alliance that united the USSR with its satellite countries) was dissolved, while NATO, once its objectives had been redefined, continued to operate. In 1999, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, three former satellites of the Soviet Union, joined NATO.

Although the arms race that marked those years is now under greater control (an example of this has been the START III treaty on nuclear arms reduction signed by the USA and Russia in 2010), the danger of a Third World War has not completely disappeared, especially because of North Korea's nuclear tests and Iran's atomic potential.

Today, Russia remains one of the great powers in which the leadership of Vladimir Putin (president from 1999 to 2008 and from 2012 to the present) is unrivaled. Putin has been shrewdly referred to by the media as the Tsar; and, making a play on words, *The Economist* magazine referred to him on the centenary of the Russian Revolution of 1917 with the title "A tsar is born." Following this image we can say that the new "Russian Empire" continues its process of expansion and territorial domination over neighboring countries such as Ukraine (at war since 2014) and Georgia (Russo-Georgian War of 2008), and over the territory itself (Second Chechen War, 1999-2009).

After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the USSR, the Marxist-Leninist ideology suffered a severe setback. It had already fallen into disrepute due to the intervention of the Soviet Union in Czechoslovakia (1968), which as a consequence, gave rise to Eurocom-

munism. This current united the European communist parties that renounced the dictates of the Soviet communist party. As an alternative, they embraced the multiparty democratic model.

In the twenty-first century, communism has undergone modifications, feeding the ideology of governments and left-wing populist parties that have grown in several countries. Let us cite some of them: Hugo Chavez in Venezuela (president from 1999 to 2013), Evo Morales in Bolivia (president from 2006 to 2019), Alexis Tsipras in Greece (prime minister from 2015 to 2019), and the political party *Podemos* in Spain (founded in 2014).

The crisis of ideologies has also affected the right. As a consequence, conservative nationalist parties such as *Rassemblement National* in France (led by Marine Le-Pen since 2011); *Vox* in Spain (founded in 2013); *Lega Nord* in Italy (born in 1991) or the *Fidesz-Hungarian Civic Union* (founded in 1988) are gaining strength.

One of the last remainders of the Cold War (apart from North Korea and Vietnam) has been the permanence of the Castro regime in Cuba. In 2000, the news of Elián González, the boy found adrift in the ocean, went around the world. The 2001 Pulitzer Prize for photography went to a snapshot that immortalized the moment in which the boy was taken from his Miami relatives to be returned to the custody of his father in Cuba. The media widely covered the case, which was presented as another milestone in the ideological confrontation between the communist island and the country of democracy and freedom.

4. THE NEW WORLD ORDER

A civilization older than the two protagonists of the Cold War has made its appearance on the world scene: China. Among the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) – countries with emerging economies – China, which currently has the world's second largest economy, is more likely than any other to become number one. However, its Achilles heel is its lack of respect for individual rights and freedoms.

The People's Republic of China presents itself as a hybrid power that has demonstrated how its idiosyncrasies have allowed it to combine two contradictory concepts: an authoritarian socialist state and a capitalist economy.

The Asian giant has reincorporated Hong Kong (1997) and Macau (1999), two port enclaves of prime strategic and economic importance, into its sovereignty, and now has its eyes on Taiwan, which it considers part of its sovereignty.

In recent years, capitalism has shown its risks and shortcomings with the financial crisis of 2008, which triggered a major global recession the following year. Despite this, the market economy has favored the emergence of new practices that allow solvency and the growth of the middle class (microfinance), as well as a change of image with the emergence of a “new economy” (2008), based on intangible assets (knowledge, communication, training, innovation, social networks, etc.).

The way of buying and selling has been transformed by the use of the Internet and the online purchase of all kinds of products. At the head of the main e-commerce companies are Amazon (founded in 1994 by Jeff Bezos) and JD.com (founded in 1998 by Liu Qiangdong), two companies that symbolize the dominance of the consumer market by the USA and China.

The twenty-five years we are covering are years of expansion of the European Union, which currently has twenty-seven member states, thirteen of which have joined in the last twenty-five years. In this journey we cannot overlook the exit of the United Kingdom through the process known as Brexit. It began with the favorable vote for Brexit in the 2016 referendum which resulted in the resignation from government of then Prime Minister David Cameron.

The economic reason, one of the criteria that gave rise to the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) and the subsequent EEC (European Economic Community), has been one of the cause of Brexit. In addition to this, other criteria can condition entry into the European Union (as in the case of Turkey) or could lead to its exit (as in the case of Hungary and the government of Viktor Orbán).

While experiencing a process of consolidation of the EU, we are also witnessing a process of weakening of both its roots and confidence in the project. “Euroscepticism” has been a fundamental element of political parties whose proposals put the European project at risk.

5. FEMINISM

In Europe, the role of Germany has been particularly significant. From 2005 to 2021, Germany has linked its destiny to a name, that of Chancellor Angela Merkel. Born in Hamburg (Federal Republic of Germany) but raised in Templin (German Democratic Republic), her personal background gave her a good knowledge of the two Germanys, which experienced their reunification phase in the 1990s.

Merkel is one of many women who have made their appearance on the international political scene. Other women who have had a similar impact, to name but a few, are: Madeleine Albright, US Secretary of State (1997-2001); Mary McAleese, President of Ireland (1997-2011); Tarja Kaarina Halonen, President of Finland (2000-2012); Michelle Bachelet, President of Chile (2006-2010 and 2014-2018); Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, President of Liberia (2006-2018); Cristina Fernandez, President of Argentina (2007-2015); Laura Chinchilla, president of Costa Rica (2010-2014); Dilma Rousseff, president of Brazil (2011-2016); Yingluck Shinawatra, prime minister of Thailand (2011-2014); Park Geun-hye, president of South Korea (2013-2017); Theresa May, prime minister of the United Kingdom (2016-2019); and Aung San Suu Kyi, state counsellor of Myanmar (2016-2021).

Others have reached the presidency of the European Central Bank (Christine Lagarde); the presidency of the European Commission (Ursula von der Leyen); or the presidency of the African Union Commission (Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma).

The *quote rosa* in Italy is an example of how governments strive to give greater representation to women in managerial positions in public or private entities, requiring by law a minimum percentage of female presence. Value judgments aside, the measure is suggestive of the current mentality regarding women.

In other areas – impossible to mention all of them – female presence has grown or has become more visible. This has been one of the achievements of feminism, a movement that since its widespread dissemination in the 1960s, has branched out into various positions that are difficult to reconcile.

At the same time, in this context in which women are becoming more prominent, there has been an increase in cases of femicide, to which the press has become increasingly sensitive and has recently

been giving great visibility. The media have also contributed by publicising the #MeToo movement (expression used in networks since 2006 and generalized in 2017) against sexual harassment and abuse.

6. WARS AND TERRORISM

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the disintegration of the USSR called into question the Marxist paradigm of class struggle. In its place – without forgetting that history is multicausal – we are witnessing widespread racial, tribal or religious hatred: between Christians and Muslims; Jews and Palestinians; Sunnis and Shiites; Kyrgyz and Uzbeks; Burmese and Rohingya; Indians and Dalits; Tamils and Sinhalese; Hutus and Tutsis; Serbs and Bosnians. Some of these clashes have led to civil wars, such as the one in Sri Lanka (1983-2009), and have given rise to genocides (such as that of the Rohingya in Burma and the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Other conflicts have had as their main motive nationalist, territorial, economic, political and/or power factors (sometimes with ethnic or religious undertones as well). This was the case with the Arab-Israeli wars, the Angolan civil war (1975-2002), the first and second Congo wars (1996-1997, 1998-2003), the Ivory Coast civil war (2002-2007, 2010-2011), the Afghanistan war (2001-2021), and the Iraq war (2003-2011).

The year 1991 marked the beginning of the end of apartheid in South Africa. Despite this victory, racism is still present in societies where freedom and democracy have supposedly triumphed. The United States has been the paradigmatic framework in recent years. In a country that has had as president one of African descent – Barack Obama (2009-2017) – there have been racist episodes against African Americans, strongly contested by the American society and with wide international repercussions. An emblematic case has been the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, at the hands of a white police officer (May 2020), which revived “Black Lives Matter”, a black pride movement born years before for similar causes.

The Arab Spring has been the scene of war and death in various countries of North Africa and the Middle East. The name evokes the Prague Spring of 1968, which defied the dictates of the USSR and attempted to establish a “socialism with a human face”. In the case of the Arab countries it has challenged the dictatorial and authoritarian power

of the established regimes. The Prague Spring had as its epilogue the event involving the student Jan Palach (+1969), who burned himself to death in protest against the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia; the Arab Spring had as its prologue the self-immolation of the Tunisian Mohamed Bouazizi (+2010). Bouazizi's death triggered the Jasmine Revolution, which in turn led to the overthrow of the president of Tunisia, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The uprising spread with a domino effect to other Arab countries (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Jordan, Bahrain, Iraq, Sudan, Oman, Mauritania, Djibouti, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Kuwait, Morocco and Western Sahara) changing the political physiognomy of some of them.

Terrorism has been another constant in these years, a manifestation of hatred motivated by religious difference, nationalism or social justice. Different groups have been the protagonists of hundreds of attacks. Some of them operate (or have operated) mainly in national territory: FARC (Colombia), Túpac Amaru (Peru), URNG (Guatemala), ETA (Spain), Shiv Sena (India), Boko Haram (Nigeria); others at the international level such as ISIS or Al Qaeda – which others acting at the national level depend on, as in the case of Al-Shabbaab (Kenya).

The most significant attack of these twenty-five years has been the one directed against the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001, which has conditioned the internal defense and foreign policy of the United States in the following years.

7. IN CONCLUSION

The First and Second World Wars shattered the confidence that scientific and technological progress would lead man to the expected happiness that positivism advocated.

The Covid-19 pandemic has confronted us with a similar situation that makes us wonder to what extent material progress can alleviate our vulnerability and to what extent it is a guarantor of happiness.

The consequences of the pandemic are being felt and are the subject of analysis in various spheres: psychological, sociological, labor, relational, economic... which undoubtedly also point to a change of era.

The brief journey we have made through the twenty-five years in which the School of Church Communications of the *Pontificia Uni-*

versità della Santa Croce [Pontifical University of the Holy Cross] has lived, tells us about the hectic “turn of the century” that coincides with the beginning of the faculty. Although the year 2000 generated great expectation, above all because of the repercussions in the field of information technology that the “Y2K bug” could bring, we can say that the transformations arose at the end of the twentieth century.

The Cold War has long ended, although it has left an indelible mark. It no longer determines the parameters of today’s geopolitics, in which what used to be a bipolar world order between Russia and the US has transformed into a multipolar one, when the BRICS entered the scene.

Wars and terrorism continue to be the protagonists of the international scene, but at the same time there is a growing sensitivity to pacifist and environmental issues. There is also greater attention to minorities, to the peripheries, to diversity, and, in the more developed countries, greater social inclusion is being sought. We are also a society that is more sensitive to certain issues such as climate change, which has mobilized the major powers to sign a package of measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (Kyoto Protocol, 1997-2021).

The Internet (which is starting to be called the “fifth power”) has revolutionized the world of communication, the economy and socialization. It is the gateway to a reality that requires us more than ever to reinforce the roots of our own identity. The School of Church Communications of the *Pontificia Università della Santa Croce* is inserted into this cultural context and it seeks, from its origins and from its rightful place, to face the cultural challenges of this historical period.