



the other Side of the Moon

Pope Benedict XVI's forceful reminder of the importance of silence in his Message for the 46th World Communications Day should prompt all those who work with communications on a daily basis to reflect more deeply on this subject. The Pope is not inviting people to cultivate a type of silence based on laziness and devoid of meaning, but rather an intensive, constructive and well-filled silence that renders a person more capable of listening to others. "Silence gives rise to even more active communication," he asserts. This communication takes place not as a result of the inordinate desire to draw attention to oneself but as the result of a heart attentive to others. Words can be like rocks and even worse than rocks because rocks crumble to dust while words are stamped in time. We should never forget that behind each item of news—even the most trite—stands a person, with his/her personal life story, dramas, joys and sorrows. Because of this, before writing or speaking we must reflect, think, reason, ponder and remember that every person is the image of God.

In the course of daily life, we are often harassed by the frenzy to be visible, to be the first to arrive. The avalanche of communications runs the risk of overwhelming and darkening our minds and hearts. We believe that we have the whole world at our disposition, since we are convinced that we already know everything and have unveiled every mystery. We ignore the most intimate desires and the most profound feelings of the individuals we encounter. We lose sight of the fact that they are yearning for happiness. Perhaps even they themselves are unaware of this, deafened by the thousands of messages that assail them from all sides. There is never time to pause in the vertiginous navigation that often leads a person off track.

The Pope wisely points out that we need "a kind of 'eco-system' that maintains a just equilibrium between silence, words, images and sounds." We need to return to what is essential, to what is worthwhile in itself, to a better knowledge of self and others. Communicators today have been entrusted with a serious responsibility: to give people a picture of the whole situation, including the parts all too often ignored by the various mass media, which concentrate on speaking to one another and communicating the same limited news.

Speaking about one's own "terrain" could be like speaking about the other side of the moon. Thanks to silence, we are able to listen to those who lives alongside us so as to recount the stories of hope of "the saints of daily life" so dear to John Paul II—a commitment that is both an apostolic agenda and a project of life.