

COMMENT ON THE THEME  
OF WORLD COMMUNICATIONS  
DAY 2022: LISTEN!



This is probably the first time an exclamation point appears in the title of a Papal Message. This punctuation mark, which came into use around 1300 A.D., thus lends a touch of innovation to World Communications Day 2022. With its vertical rod springing up from a point, it emphasizes the necessity and urgency of the theme's plea.

But it also underscores its content. The exclamation point, as a rule, "has been entirely eliminated from legislative, scientific, and technical texts, since it is associated with emotionality, sentiment, and the expression of subjectivity" (Treccani, 2022). It is the warmth, after the chill of the pandemic, that heats the ink of: "Listen!" It is an encouragement—albeit in the verbal mode of the imperative—to rediscover a fundamental element of the communication process worn-out over time. Indeed, the instantaneousness allowed by digital media finds, in the word *listen*, a limit to its characteristic immediacy.

The waves of "infodemic" that have flooded the information scene, especially as a result of the pandemic, have accentuated



the phenomena of filter bubbles and echo chambers: bubbles on social media, favored by algorithms, where people with the same opinions meet and interact, and spaces in which listening is not necessary because what bounces back is the echo of one's own convictions.

And any contrary idea ends up breaking the algorithmic equilibrium by triggering heated reactions that polarize every comparison. Hearing is not the same as listening because it expresses an intentional choice. This is why the call of Pope Francis, in tune with the synodal path of the Church, cannot help but urge us to start by "looking inward."

In continuity with WCD 2021 (Come and See: Communicating by Encountering People Where and As They Are), the Pope today asks the world of communication to "relearn to listen a lot"—a concrete exercise of the grammar of every true encounter and dialogue to be rediscovered and applied "a lot."



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The pandemic has given an undoubted thrust to digital communication. Now that an "in-present" style of life has been resumed, parishes are the natural places for listening in our pastoral and cultural journey. It is important that communication does not find in the parish reality an end point but instead a bridge leading to every type of dialogue and relationship, starting from listening, if promoted with "courage, and a free and open heart, without prejudice." So that the physical distance imposed by the pandemic does not become social distance.

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