



# CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE

## World Communications Day

### *Archbishop Stack's Homily*

HEYTHROP COLLEGE CHAPEL, 17 MAY 2013

**The two biggest newsworthy events in the Catholic Church this year were undoubtedly the resignation of Benedict XVI and the election of Pope Francis.**

Despite Vatileaks, anonymous sources, rumour and gossip, nobody managed to get the scoop of the announcement of the Pope's resignation. Who could fail to be moved by his poignant and simple statement on 11 February?

He said "...the strength of mind and body necessary to fulfill the role of Pope has deteriorated in me in the last few months to the extent I have to recognize my incapacity to adequately fulfill the ministry entrusted to me".

They remind me of the words of Jesus to Peter we listened to in this evening's gospel:

"I tell you solemnly,  
When you were young  
You put on your own belt  
And walked where you liked.  
But when you grow old  
You will stretch out your hands  
And somebody else will put a belt around you  
And take you where you would rather not go".

*John 21:15-19*

If John Paul II was the Pope of Hope, and Benedict the Pope of Faith, then Pope Francis will surely be the Pope of Charity. "I want a Church of the poor and for the poor" he has said. His words and gestures have immediately captured the imagination of the world. It is as though people of all religions and none recognize at some level a desire for a return to a simplicity of word and action which has been lost in our complex world.

"A picture paints a thousand words", they say. Which is why the gestures of Pope Francis have made an immediate and universal impact. His bowing low before the crowds in St. Peter's Square after his election. His washing of the feet of young offenders on Maundy Thursday. His wholehearted embrace of the boy suffering from cerebral palsy. Those gestures do not have to be explained in words. They speak of the compassion of Christ and the purpose of the Church. They remind us of the words of St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary".

Words and pictures are the tools of communication. Each have their limitations, not least in an age of twenty four hour news and instant information. We all know that information isn't the same as communication. How to digest and absorb and make judgments and base actions on the information

received. How to hear and write the truth in the midst of so many versions of truth. That is the stuff of communication. The communion of minds and hearts which is at the heart of communion isn't achieved by accident. It demands critical engagement, reflective thought, charitable action. John Henry Newman put it well when he wrote of "Heart speaking Unto Heart".

Elected on 13 March, Inaugurated on 19 March, it is no accident that on 16 March Pope Francis gave one of his first audiences. It was to journalists who had covered the resignation and election. His beautiful words set the scene for the celebration of this Mass marking World Communications Day and for the work that you do.

He said:

"The Church highly values your important work. At your disposal you have the means to hear and give voice to peoples expectations and demands, and to provide for an analysis and interpretation of current events.

Your work calls for careful preparation, sensitivity and experience... It demands particular concern for what is true, good and beautiful.

The Church exists to communicate precisely that Truth, Goodness and Beauty in person. That person is Jesus Christ who is all Truth. (It seeks to communicate..) with all those who seek after truth, those who wish to live by the truth".

**Mt Rev George Stack**

*Archbishop of Cardiff*