

COMMUNICATION ETHICS. THE SACRALITY OF COMMUNICATION

Marian PUIESCU¹, Ștefan FLOREA²

Abstract. *The article represents a religious approach of the development of communication phenomenon, in a century and a millennium when “communicating” is a profound relational and social necessity. Communication is a natural human act, ontologically necessary and practically fundamental, which represents not just the reaction to the immediate necessity, but, especially, an own manner to impart something of its ontology. The novelty of the ethic perspective of the Church takes about the holistic integration of communication, as a sacred act in the process of going deeply into social communion and cohesion, but also talks about going deeply into some ethic principles and about creating an integrative vision on the communication act as a relational, social and sacred act.*

Keywords: Ethic, Sacrality, Communication, Communion

1. Introduction

Called to reveal “the signs of God’s words” [1], the Church considers communication as very important, the main sign of our life, which is the most important gift we received from God, that is why she: “sees in man, in every man, the living image of God himself, image that finds and is called to search for a more profound understanding in Christ, the perfect image of God, God’s man discoverer for humans and of man for himself” [2].

In the third millennium society we can see the special raising of communication, this way of human connection that shows the man as a rational human being.

The Church confesses that the man has been created by God after His image, for an endless resemblance with Him, and the rational ability to communicate is a part of what we call to be ”God’s image”.

Firstly, we must say that act of communication is a profoundly religious one, the Son of God Incarnated is also called Logos, reason, but the term also means communication and relational imparting. [3]

The Church itself is also corpus, where communication is fundamental. In other words between communication and communion is a strong and inseparable connection.

All Church’life is the communication of the Trinity in the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Spirit is imparting the plenitude of the divine life pf Father and Son. God himself

¹ Conf., PhD, Faculty of Theology, University of Valahia-Târgoviște, Romania

² Asist., PhD, Faculty of Theology, University of Valahia-Târgoviște, Romania

acts, in the history of redemption, as a communicating reality, as a communion of Persons (The Holy Trinity), where communication is of perfect value.

The man, being mad after God's image-the Trinity is the profound need for communication, giving love and sacrifice.[4] That is why, communicating is also a human and divine act. The whole biblical universe is sacrifice, love and communicating. Everybody communicates and is communicated, consuming our self in the sacrifice of interpersonal imparting. Communication is a natural human act, that represents not just the reaction to the necessity of the immediate, but more than this a personal way of imparting something from the own ontology.

When it communicates, the human being is imparting something from its being, it lets out of the depths of the soul, a kind of the personal special energy, but sensible, than wears a personal sign. The relationship with the neighbor becomes a real "Jacob's ladder", if we don't see ourselves competing with our neighbor for noting, but we stay close to each other, united if we become aware of the fact that we are a part of the same mystical body of Jesus Christ. [5]

2. The sacred shape of communication

For the human being, communicating is as natural as eating, drinking, or resting, because the act of communicating is a feature of created beings, of course, as the person participates more and more in the relational act, communication becomes more profound, offering, in fact, a way of getting to knowledge, understanding and love.

The Church is a community based on communication that leads to communion, is a communicating event. Jesus Christ himself, the Incarnated Son of God "for us and our redemption", is called by Saint John, the apostle, as "Logos" that is "reason", "word" (cf. John 1,1-14).

Jesus Christ is considered to be "the perfect communicator" [6] who "through incarnation. He became one with those who should have received his message, expressed by words and by whole life total communication is giving the whole of yourself, under the impulse of love; but, Jesus communication is for real spirit and life". [7]

From his perspective, the Christian theology considers communication a sacred act, an act that puts together the human being with this neighbour, with the world and with God. Communication is also a way of expressing the human creativity of expressing the ability to show "God's image" in man. Every man communicates in a personal manner, because the act of communication is full of personal energies, full of that special, ontological and human sign. Communication must be an act of projecting man's dignity and not an humiliating act, because man's dignity is a part of the divine image. [8]

In the beginning of a new century and millennium we can notice the fact that the act of communication has got new forms and because of the human creativity,

because of the technology, communication because a special mark of our time. The world where we live received a specific identity because of communication, because of the development of this act and of means of it.

Communication develops the relationship between people, that is why, communication has to serve the communion, the profound study of the common values of our world.

This is what makes communication a means of imparting the treasure of wisdom, personal variety and knowledge of humanity. It was said, not just by chance, that “the first areopag of our time is the communication world, able to unite the world, making it a global village as they use to say. [9]

The relation between communication and communion comes out better from the etymology of word “communication” which means “becoming participant”, “imparting”, “that is transmitting a content which unites”. [10]

Communication is exteriorizing through words something of the human being, an act that has a strong effect on our society and, this reality is based on words not only the ontological perspective but also from the relational one. [11] Communicating means offering something of the human person, means giving a special part of what a man is.

This is all about those special created energies of a person, energy full of specific identity and guided by the creational difference of the personal alterity.

Communication by specific means can be effective for education and cultural enrichment, for commercial activity and political involvement, but also for dialogue and intercultural understanding. [12]

3. The world – tops of communication

We must specify the fact that the world itself is space, support and means of communication of man with his neighbor and with God. In all His creation God addresses to man, the world was made in order to wait for man's arrival, that is why man was created at the end, after everything was ready to support his existence. Through this world, God talks about Himself, through His works man is endowed with the ability to read, to see and to understand His message.

The world is rational, “suggestive reason”, that is why the rational man can understand this rational world, a world that we must see as a certain language, the means by which man can understand the message that God sends to him, the world getting meaning just as a mystery, as an instrument. “God gave to people the possibility to think and speak because He – though about their reasons and He gave them to them, creating first a plastic covering for their level. In this everything finds its meaning”. [13]

The world is, in this sense, a special language, by which God can be understood, it is the divine messenger who must be apprehended by humanity. Talking about world's rationality we must specify that when we say rationality we understand

"the clear manner in which a person communicates to another person, for the accomplishment and the development of a communion between them." [14]

Because God is Trinity of Persons, is Love, is the space where dialogue takes place, the world, He is the space of love. The divine love created the world out of nothing and the same love shines in it and speaks to the man. Being god's gift to us, love shows itself to the world, it is a love word addressed by God to us and the climax of this love message is represented by Christ.

World's aim, as God's dialogue with us, is to get an answer.

Thus, the world is also our means to communicate with God and nature mediates the answer we address to Him. God communicates with us by world's rational structure, and we, the readers, understand His message "working, as much as possible, in the material creation through which God communicates Himself." [15]

God's gift, His word to us, the world is transformed by man and becomes a sacrifice for gratitude to God, like an Eucharist. Through this we participate, in a certain way in the continuous process of world creation. [16]

Through the Holy Spirit, man can practice his role of creator by activating those "alternative virtualities multiple and passive". [17] Man's role is also to understand nature's reason (*logoi*), as means of practicing his free will. By what the man creates, as created and creative being, the world is offered to God and becomes the substance of sacrifice.

Man receives the gift (the world) of God, acts on the world, impregnates it with his power, makes it human, keeps the love it has from God and offers this love to God, a love impregnated with humanity. But, also by the Holy Spirit, the world is the space of inter-human dialogue. Because in this world, man does good or arms his neighbor, here he can grow or fall spiritually or moral.

At the same time, nature is a gift for all the people, not for one or some, and in order to accomplish his mission in this world man must act together with his neighbors, and not by himself. Then, God offers us his gifts as a tie of interpersonal love, as means of achieving human unity, He communicates with us through this world. The world offered to God must be given to Him by the human community by its right management and by creation within it. But, what matters, is that our gift to Him is well received if it better expresses us the more our world is humanized, but this depends on the direct relation with the level of spirituality of each man and on the profundity of human communion.

Communication, like other human actions and activities, must be guided by some rules that ensures its fidelity to truth, correctness, sincerity, social utility etc., in other words it is guided by a specific ethics. The Church developed and went deeply into the principles formulated by the society, giving them a religious perspective.

But, what can the Church and religion bring new here? The novelty of the ethic perspective of the Church talks, on one hand, about the holistic integration of communication and as a sacred act, in the process of going deeply into social cohesion and communion and, on the other hand, specifying and developing some ethic principles and creating an integrating vision of the communication act, as a social, relational and sacral act.

We can ask the question: what the human and divine space of communication needs as origin and finality, of ethic regulation? Firstly we must mention that man is a created being "good and beautiful" and with the aim of becoming perfect, but, in the course of history happened the sin accident, with its entire dark universe which defalcated the human existential itinerary towards many sense holocaust and labyrinthical deviations from the beautiful and right way of perfection.

Thus, the sin sign and of the existential deviation from reality, it can also be discovered in the act of communication. And instead of becoming always a means of inter-personal communication it can also become a means of spreading not good, beautiful and desirable things, but also of what is bad, dark and repulsive.

As from the man's heart come out good and bad things, the act of communication can also transmit moral values, or can communicate manifestations, acts or bad thoughts. To protect the human being from this negative informational attack, to save the beauty of the divine image in man, the good and the beauty, that exists and must be manifested, in every man, the Church proposes an ethic vision on communication.

The same thing is taken into account by the human society, the state, aiming, at least, at the existence of a space in which at least, minimally, we can have a socially right and effective communication.

4. The Ethics of communication

The human communication must submit to an ethical system that ensures the correctness of communication and its fidelity to its own aim, that is the full manifestation of humanity, respecting its own values.

Communication is a sacred and an ethic act. Because man must communicate values, that is what enriched and enriches him and is useful to the progress of our society and to the common good, that is "the ensemble of social life conditions that allow groups and individuals reach perfection in a plenary and easier way". [18]

Human communication must serve justice, liberty and truth, contributing to the promotion of man's dignity and to his personal building up so that this sacred act also becomes a witness of the spiritual, cultural and social grounds of humanity. Communication supporting man's good, is an important help that man has nowadays, only if it is based on truth, built on justice, fed and animated by love and put to practice under the auspices of liberty. [19]

That is way supporting the communication ethics, the Church does nothing but protect the dignity of the human being, in an epoch in which globalization can be advantage, for man's good, it is used properly.

We need morality in the communication act in order not to alter the human being, his exteriorization and in order not to create false virtual and paralel worlds, that can offer to man a new and treacherous slavery.

Solidarity, co-operation, peace, harmony, virtual respect and love are the main values of communication, from ecclesiastic vision, that must be promoted, sustained and developed, so that communication could really be a binder of humanity and could help the spiritual, cultural and social progress. The danger of communication, far this times man, is that of submitting this field to the consumption era rules, to materialism, to libertinage, to aggressivness and to violence, making of this space blessed by God a *topos* of darkness, of evil and of disunion. Communication is a key element of the world of our time can contribute to the good of our society, bringing relief, offering trust and truth.

The common good of our society can be promoted by a strict communication must firstly consider the fidelity towards truth, he must be aware of the fact that he is transmitting correctly what he has to transmit, without distorting, transforming, reducing or extending the information, so that it doesn't correspond to the transmitter intervention. Taking care of man's dignity, the communicator must pay attention that what he transmits is not immoral, aggressive or to wound the human rights, in other words communication must have public and private utility. This doesn't mean that the private interest is over the public one in the informing act, but we must take into account, in every circumstance, the dignity of the human being.

Communication must have as main aim inter-human relation, the cultural edification, man's own perfection and social effectiveness, so that the mistaken use of communication places it in the immortality area.

The act of communication as a fundamental human act but, also, as means of divine expression is sacred act, this results from the unaffectedness of the phenomenon and from its aim, that is why is an impiety to use this mans, rationally and spiritually, in unjust and not proper to human vocation purposes.

Ethic rules are went to save the sacrality of communication, to protect the dignity of this human and divine act and, in the end to save the dignity of man as a being created after God's image. Communication ethics aim to protect God's creation from falsity, lie, misrepresentation, or from any deficiency which can alter its value. In this way, persons have a huge responsibility, but media is, also, much more responsible because it can have a good or a bad influence upon an impressive number of people. That is why, the act of communication implies a great responsibility being a real Jacob leader or a way to humiliate the human.

The Church proposes, in the communication ethics field, the evangelistic ethics, the Christian morals, that has no other purpose than man's perfection, his salvation, so the Christian ethics of communication is nothing but a practice use of the evangelic spirit, of the Christian doctrine.

Christianism, as a religion based on Word, has a great respect for any word we transmit to the others, outside of us, qualifies, one way or another, that human personality.

The ethic of communication is an ethic of connection, an ethic of the word, an instrument of saving a minimum of social and community functionality. There is no communion without communication, and there is no society without communion, and as man is a political being [20], communion being, communication fundamentally qualifies him, contributing to his placement related to God, the Creator. [21]

Conclusions

The informational society, to develop itself in an useful way to man and society, has to respect a certain ethic code, which can guarantee a minimum of effectiveness and morality. Communication is for Christianism a sacred act, both thanks to the fact that God is Trinity of Person and communication is the base and the promoter of communion and because the man created after God's image, has received communion and communication from the very act of creation, as a natural gift.

Man is a social being (*zoon politikon*), of communion and of interval, mediator between material and spiritual, that is why communicating is for him a natural act, and the salvation or the damnation of man's human dignity stands on communication's fidelity to the truth. In all the universe, communication is fundamental, we could say that is in creation's nature to communicate that is why, both by creation, and by purpose, communication is a sacred act.

Man's redemption or perfection is also based on the quality of the communication act and here we can see the great importance of this natural, created act.

Society proposes a certain ethics, in order to protect the dignity of the human being and the quality of the communication act and the Church is promoting some specific ethic principles which represent a doctrinal exteriorization or a practice way of action for the evangelic principles.

The novelty of Church's vision on communication points to the fact that sees it as a real means of perfection, or redemption that man has and as a sacred act which deserves all our care and attention and implies not just an immediate responsibility, but especially an eschatologic one.

REFERENCES

- [1] N. Mihăiță, *Christian Mision* (Asa, Bucharest, 2001), p.36.
- [2] ***, *Social Doctrine of the Church, Compedium*, (EARCB, Bucharest, 2006), Vol.II, p.70
- [3] O. Clement, Bartolomeu I, *Truth and liberty* (Deisis, Sibiu, 1997), p.61
- [4] V. Lossky, *Mystical Theology of the Oriental Church* (Anastasia, Bucharest, 1933), p. 144.
- [5] Th. Baconski, *Jacob and the Angel* (Humanitas, Bucharest, 1997).
- [6] C. Chinez, *The Sacramentality of Social Communication* (Presă Bună, Iași, 2008), p.15.
- [7] Pontifical Concile for Social Communication, *Communio et Pprogression* (AAS, Vatican, 1971), p.1.
- [8] Irinee of Lyon, *Against of the Heresies* (Cerf, Paris, 1985), col.382-383.
- [9] John Paul II, *Fast Development*, (Presă Bună, Iași, 2005), p.4.
- [10] D. Iannota, *The Communication trough Symbol and Image* (Effata, Cantalupa, Torino, 2004), p.15.
- [11] F. Cereti, *The Communication in Dialogue and Electronic Culture* (Elledici, Torino, 2000), p.27.
- [12] Pontifical Concile for Social Communication, *The Etichs into Internet* (AAS, Vatican, 2002), p.2.
- [13] M. Bielavski, *Father Dumitru Stăniloae. A Philocalic Vision about World* (Deisis, Sibiu, 1999), p.285.
- [14] *Ibidem*, p.351.
- [15] J. Zizioulas, *The Eucharistical Vision of the World and Contemporany Human Being*, Rev. Contacts, **57**, 83 (1967).
- [16] D. Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (EIBMBOR, Bucharest, 1997), Vol.II, p.359.
- [17] J. Breck, *Sacred Gift of the Life* (Patmos, Cluj-Napoca, 2001), p.12.
- [18] ***, *The Vatican II Concile* (EARCB, Bucharest, 1999), p.26.
- [19] ***, *The Enciclics* (EARCB, Bucharest, 2008), p.167.
- [20] J. Breck, *op.cit.*, p.269.
- [21] Ch. Yannaras, *The Liberty of the Ethics* (Anastasia, Bucharest, 2002), p.12.