

PRESS RELEASE

30 journalists participate in an international seminar on covering the Catholic Church

The seminar was organized by the School of Church Communications of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross

Rome, September 13, 2010.- A group of 30 journalists from around the world participated in a seminar entitled “The Church Up Close: Covering Catholicism in the Age of Benedict XVI” (September 6-12), organized in Rome by the School of Church Communications at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

First offered in 2008 and designed to provide journalists who write about religion with an array of tools to strengthen their coverage of today’s Roman Catholic Church, the seminar has drawn reporters from such media outlets as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *El País*, *Le Monde*, the *BBC News Website* (UK), *The National Post* (Canada), *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (USA), *The Witness* (South Africa) and *The Record* (Australia).

The one-week English-language program included general presentations about the nature, organization and doctrine of the Church and a wide range of more specific topics: stem cell research and bio-ethical issues; Pope Pius XII and the Jews; Christian minorities around the world; Cardinal Newman’s beatification; the sexual-abuse scandals. The seminar also included visits to the Vatican Museums, the Scavi Vaticani and Subiaco. In his Wednesday audience (September 8), Benedict XVI offered the seminar participants “prayerful good wishes for their work”.

Pope’s upcoming visit to UK

Jack Valero, spokesperson for Cardinal Newman’s Beatification, discussed the program of the upcoming visit of Benedict XVI to the UK (September 16-19) and the controversies surrounding Newman’s beatification. Noting the great interest of the English media in the Pope’s trip, Valero expects positive results from the trip and from the beatification of the 19th-century English convert.

The director of the Press Office of the Holy See, Fr. Federico Lombardi, received the participants in a visit to his office. Insisting that polemics are to be expected in any country with freedom of speech, Lombardi was convinced that Benedict’s words will be well received by English society.

The communication challenges presented by the Vatican were addressed in two sessions with *vaticanisti*. Patricia Thomas (*AP Television*) and John Thavis (*Catholic News Service*) shared their experiences, and Andrea Tornelli (*Il Giornale*) and Paolo Rodari (*Il Foglio*) presented their new book, *Attack on Ratzinger*.

Sexual Abuse in the Church

Mons. Charles Scicluna, Promotor of Justice of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), talked about Church law and the procedures regarding *delicta graviora* (graver crimes), which include sexual abuse committed by priests as well as other canonical delicts regarding the Church’s sacraments such as the profanation of the Eucharist or the disclosing of Confession’s content.

The seminar included a visit to the CDF, in which participants were taught about the history, mission and organization of this dicastery.

Several sessions were dedicated to the Catholic Church's nature, organization and diplomacy. Among the speakers were Mons. Osvaldo Neves, from the Secretariat of State, Mons. Fortunatus Nwachukwu, Head of Protocol of the Holy See, and the Rev. Professors Paul O'Callaghan and Jesús Miñambres, from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Moreover, the participants had the opportunity to hear Cardinal James Stafford, who spoke about "Catholic identity and public life", and Cardinal Peter Kodwo Appiah Turkson, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, on the challenge of poverty in Third World countries.

The Pope's contribution to Economics

Stefano Zamagni, professor of Economics at the University of Bologna, gave a conference entitled "Economic justice and the Church". In his opinion, the last encyclical of Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, offered the new concept of "contributive justice", as a complement to the traditional concepts of commutative and distributive justice in the Church's social doctrine. For Zamagni, current economical problems derive from globalization, and high-tech developments "cannot be resolved just by commutative and distributive justice", but need a contributive justice, in which "each one, being a member of society, should feel morally obliged to contribute to the moral good in proportion to one's possibilities".

Other sessions of the seminar were dedicated to the process of beatification of Pius XII and the relationships between Israel and the Holy See, to the role and challenges of the Vatican Internet Office, to bioethics and stem cell research, to Christian minorities in Muslim countries, to the Church in Africa, to science and theology, and to organizational aspects of the next World Youth Day (Madrid 2011).

The next edition of The Church Up Close seminar will be held in **September 2012**. All the information on the program is available at the website www.church-communication.net

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