

of information. The truthfulness of information is a foundation for the creation of association among people.

- 944 Christ said of himself: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" (jn 14:6). The Christian, who lives in Christ, is a servant of the Truth. Christian truthfulness has a deeply religious character: to witness to the Truth, to Christ. The eighth commandment demands truthful speech "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour"⁵⁶⁷ (see Ex 20:16). A Christian is responsible for his or her words: "On the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter" (Mt 12:36). Every word must be treated with special reverence, and therefore one ought to avoid idle talk, chatter, calumny, and lies. Every such abuse of words is itself a sin. However, it becomes an even greater evil when it harms a neighbour.
- 945 We live in an information environment created by the mass media. In this setting, we, as Christians, are called to be servants of Truth. the ability to speak the truth and to be faithful to the truth also means being able to keep silent and to maintain confidentiality for the good of one's neighbour.

c. The Defence of One's Honour and Good Name

- 946 For the human individual, one's honour and good name area treasure. Every person is entitled to honour, respect, and the social manifestation of such respect. In the Christian understanding, honour is also the social expression of the dignity of a person created in God's image. One of the tasks of a society is to care for the preservation of its citizens honour and good name.
- 947 A person damages the honour and good name of another both through personal actions as well as through the structures of sin acting in society. Defamation of the good name of another, calumny, gossip, and slander are personal sins against the honour of another. Personal sins also include participation in the sins of another: counselling someone to sin, assisting in sin, defending sin, praising sin, and being silent in the face of sin. By partaking in the sins of others, we also become participants in the social structures of sin: by commanding someone to commit a sin, by provoking someone to sin, by consenting to sin, and by failing to punish it.

⁵⁶⁷ From the prayer book *The Divine Liturgy: An Anthology for Worship*, The Ten Commandments, 9-11.

d. Morality in the Mass Media

- 948 The mass media is a positive characteristic of the contemporary age. Those engaged in social communication are called to build up civil society, to promote unity within society.⁵⁶⁸ In its development, the mass media has become a powerful social force. This places great responsibility on those working in this field as regards the information being disseminated. Information content can unify people, facilitate mutual understanding in society, and heighten social consciousness, or, on the contrary, can deceive and manipulate popular opinion. One should avoid engaging in those methods of providing information that distort the truth, increase the passivity and depressiveness of its recipients, and reduce their capacity to make critical judgments.⁵⁶⁹
- 949 Advertising and various entertainment programs are sometimes directed toward arousing artificial human needs; they engender a consumer mentality and can become a powerful means of spreading ideas contrary to the Christian worldview.⁵⁷⁰ The unscrupulous commercialization of the mass media, the drive for profit, and the creation of various technologies designed to influence and manipulate the public—all of these distort authentic values and human needs, and promote artificial norms and examples of behaviour.
- 950 The positive influence of the mass media on popular opinion and social consciousness is possible only when the activities of those who engage in the mass media are firmly based on moral principles. This means that priority should be given to the dissemination of information and diverse media productions that foster the development of solidarity and peace, and which also form the conscience and a sense of dignity in people.⁵⁷¹

e. Christian Upbringing, Education, and Schooling

- 951 The Christian family is not only the most important environment for receiving the gift of new life, it is also the primary sphere of its development. As a family raises and forms children, it develops and educates

⁵⁶⁸ See PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS, Pastoral Instruction *Communio et progressio* [Unity and Advancement], 1.

⁵⁶⁹ See VATICAN COUNCIL II Decree *Inter mirifica* [Among the Wonders], 11.

⁵⁷⁰ See PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS, Pastoral Instruction *Communio et progressio* [Unity and Advancement], 59-62.

⁵⁷¹ See PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS, Pastoral Instruction *Communio et progressio* [Unity and Advancement], 13-15.