

COMMUNICATION SUNDAY

("Come and See")

Dear Brothers and sisters, on meeting Jesus for the first time Nathaniel asked him the question "where do you live", Jesus answered "come and see". This short answer we could say is part and parcel of all authentic human communication.

In order to really know the truth of a situation we need to go and see it for ourselves, to spend time with people, to listen to their stories and to confront reality, which always in some way surprises us.

The crisis of the publishing industry risks leading to a reportage created in newsrooms, in front of a computer and on social networks, without ever "hitting the streets" or meeting people face to face to research stories or to verify certain situations first hand. For instance the reporting on the 'Jerusalem' situation' at present is always going to be coloured by the person behind the camera – what side of the divide they come from. But journalists generally should not be mere spectators on events they are reporting but should be motivated to go out and see things that otherwise they would not see or know about.

As I said "come and see" were the first words that Jesus spoke to the early disciples when he asked two of them to follow him. Before the apostle, John wrote his gospel, for instance, he was personally present at the events he reports on, which had a big impact on his life and teaching.

That is how the Christian faith begins, and how it is communicated - as direct knowledge, born of experience, and not of hearsay. To report the truth especially in hostile situations also requires courage. We owe a word of gratitude for the courage and commitment of all those journalists and camera operators who often risk their lives in carrying out their

work. Thanks to their efforts, we know, for example, about the hardships endured by persecuted minorities in various parts of the world, damage done to the environment, injustice towards the poor and many wars which would otherwise be overlooked.

Thanks to the mass media we have the opportunity to report what is taking place before our eyes whilst at the same time the risk of misinformation being spread on social media and in print has become evident to everyone. *'Paper never refused ink'* is an old adage you may be familiar with. News and images can easily be manipulated for a number of reasons. It's not about demonizing the internet but rather an incentive to greater discernment and responsibility for contents both sent and received. Nothing, however replaces seeing things at first hand, in person.

The words of Jesus "come and see" which he said to the first apostles are also very relevant for us. The Gospel only comes alive in our day whenever we accept the compelling witness of people whose lives have been changed by their encounter with Jesus. The challenge that awaits us, then is to communicate by encountering people, where they are and as they are.

Prayer

Lord, teach us to move beyond ourselves, and to set out in search of truth. Teach us to go out and see, teach us to listen, not to entertain prejudices or draw hasty conclusions. Teach us to go where no one else will go, to take the time needed to understand, to pay attention to the essentials, not to be distracted by the superfluous, to distinguish deceptive appearances from the truth. Grant us the grace to recognize your dwelling places in our world and the honesty needed to tell others what we have seen.