

**THE DIVINE REVELATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES FOR
PASTORAL COMMUNICATION**
*A Critical Reflection based on the Vatikan II Constitution on Revelation
“Dei Verbum”*

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ABSTRACT

Komunikasi yang sempurna terwujud dalam Trinitas Ilahi. Komunikasi “intern” itu meluas melalui karya penciptaan dan berkomunikasi dengan makhluk-makhluk yang diciptakan, khususnya manusia. Dalam arus komunikasi itu Allah memperkenalkan Diri, dalam perkataan-perkataan para nabi dan terutama dalam diri Putera-Nya Yesus Kristus. Pernyataan Diri yang dilaksanakan oleh Allah melalui karya-Nya, menjadi sangat konkrit dalam segala yang telah Yesus lakukan bagi kita, serta seluruh penampilan-Nya. Demikian pula Para Rasul Allah harus menjadi komunikator yang diutus untukewartakan kabar gembira dengan perkataan, namun lebih lagi oleh perbuatan.

KEY WORDS:

Revelation, communication, Trinity, creatures

Introduction

The doctrine of revelation arises from the question whether God has revealed Himself and in what way and where did this happen? This inspired me personally to reflect deeply and ponder on how and where the aspects of communication theology come in *based on Dei Verbum*. In this whole document, we can gain a beautiful description of the process of the

Divine communication movement (God who reveals Himself) to reach out to His creatures in the whole of salvation.

1. Revelation Itself

Revelation itself is God communicating Himself to humanity (or to his creatures). However, God stays not in himself but “he goes down” to reach out to human beings and to communicate with them as his partners. This was justified and reflected properly and beautifully in DV:

It pleased God, in His goodness and wisdom God chose to reveal Himself and to make known us the hidden purpose of His will (DV. 2). Many times and in many ways God formerly spoke to the fathers through the prophets. But in these last days God has spoken to us in his Son (DV. 4).

This statement is to certify more some reflections as follows: from the word “reveal” (Latin: *revelare*), means disclosure of what was previously hidden. Revelation includes two things: the act of revelation, which is a process; and what is revealed in the act, which is the content. It is also called “self communication” because no one can reveal God except God himself. And then, through revelation God has disclosed what was *previously hidden* for long ages. St. Paul in his letter to his faithful in Rome stressed it: “Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past” (Rm. 16:25). What does this mean? This means that the Divine communication is prepared in *silence*. Through silence everything was created by God. Besides, God communicates himself personally, which means the Divine communication is *personal*. And from His goodness and wisdom, He reaches out to His creatures, to

live among them, to communicate with them and to make them friends. This means that *God is a communicating God*.

2. The Main Purpose

The main purpose of revelation or God's communication is *God's will*. Dei Verbum states it well as follows:

His will was that people should have *access to the Father through Christ, the word made flesh, in the Holy Spirit*, and thus become sharers in the divine nature (Eph. 2: 18), [DV. 2].

Through this statement actually DV stresses such God's will in the Trinitarian aspect of our faith. It means that we are invited to a relationship with the Triune God (access to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit). In the Trinitarian perspective, God is seen as God communicating in himself. Father, Son and the Holy Spirit are communicating with each other in their Inner Trinitarian movement.¹ The target of God's communication is to relate to us and make us sharers in the divine nature. Why, of course, *our God is a relational God- a community of Three*. Therefore, God desires us to partake in a loving communion with the Trinity. Thus, *revelation is a Trinitarian action which accomplishes our salvation*. And finally through Christ's witness to his Father, through his teaching, preaching, and miracles, we came to believe in our Savior. He was sent to us, to help and to guide us to understand his communion with us and for us to be able to give a proper response to the faith (Cf. CFC. 24).

¹Cf. Franz-Josef Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission: An Introduction to Pastoral and Evangelizing Communication*, 2nd edition (Manila: Logos Publications, Inc., 2009), 26.

3. How The Revelation is Realized

The question now is: How is the revelation realized? Revelation is realized by His DEEDS and WORDS which are intrinsically connected one with another (Cf. DV. 2). This is founded in the whole salvation history or the history of God's communication, which started in the Old Testament and was perfected in the New Testament.

3.1. Revelation in the Old Testament

The whole Old Testament can be understood as a report on God's communication with Israel his people. In this communication, God uses all means and ways of verbal and non-verbal communication available in human culture. And actually it is beautiful to realize how God masters the different ways of communicating to his creatures. He speaks directly to the Israel and the prophets *face to face*, such as in the call of Abraham, which means revelation through the sign of promise (Gen. 12:1-4, DV. 3); He calls Moses into his special service from the burning bush, which means the revelation of God's name and his intention of salvation for his people. (Ex. 3:1-6, DV. 3); He liberates Israel on the dangerous ways such as the victory on the sea, which means a revelation through a mighty historical action; also the assembly of Sinai which means the revelation of his ultimate Goal (covenant relationship between the creator and his creatures) (Ex. 19:3-6, 16-18).

3.2. Revelation in the New Testament

Revelation in the New Testament can be considered as the fulfillment of the promise, realized through Jesus Christ. This is reflected properly in DV: "Many times and in many ways God formerly spoke to

the fathers through the prophets. But in these last days God has spoken to us in His Son” (DV. 4). It is made through a combination of Jesus words in verbal preaching and in deeds. The revelatory words and deeds are exemplified in Jesus *teachings, symbolic actions and miracles*. These revealed the presence of the Kingdom in Jesus person. Through His life, words and deeds, God was revealed and God’s will of salvation was fulfilled (Cf. DV. 4).

In the whole salvation history or in the Divine communication movement *the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the highest point of God’s revelation or communication*. Incarnation is quite significant in revelation, as Dei Verbum states: “It shines forth in Christ, who is himself both the *mediator* and the *sum total of revelation*” (DV. 2).

As mediator, Jesus is the agent; He is the revealer through his part in creation, through his becoming a man, through his hidden public life. And after his resurrection, the risen Christ continued his revelation by sending us his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth (Cf. DV. 4). As the sum total of revelation Jesus is the Word made flesh, the perfect Revealer of his Father through his words and deeds. His incarnation is the total self-giving and self communication of God to us. The identity and will of the Father were made known and fulfilled in His person. His Gospel is the source of all saving truth and moral discipline (Cf. DV. 7).

4. Pastoral Communication Consequences

Based on all this, as a pastoral communicators we are called and sent to concretize God’s communication in our current world as follows:

First, any pastoral communication has to be grounded in God as the perfect Communicator. It is fascinating that God revealed himself as

the perfect Communicator. Through his “incarnation”, he utterly identified himself with those who were to receive his communication and he gave message not only in words but in the whole manner of his life. This is the sign that God is a communicating God. Because God is a communicating God, we must be able to communicate or we must be good communicators in our daily life as God did. But how can this be realized? Good communicators are those who have the qualities of *openness*.² The first quality is *openness to God*. We can improve this first quality by developing a personal experience of God in our spiritual prayer. Those who have no spiritual life are like trees without leaves, tables without food and soldiers without guns. The second quality is openness to one himself. It means that before communicating to the other we personally have to face our own personal reality, we have to reflect first on our own personal needs. Only those who experience and face their own personal reality can communicate to the others. And the third quality is openness to others. It means that, as a pastoral communicator we must dare to sit beside the others, hearing and listening to their experiences, anxieties, distresses and hopes, and sharing with them the faith. And if it is necessary, we should offer them “living water” in order to quench their thirst.

Secondly, any pastoral communication has to follow the ways and methods of God’s Communication. The pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio*³ shares with us some examples in how Jesus in His ways and methods of communication is an example of all pastoral communication as follows: The circumstance of the life of Jesus such as his birth in a

²Cf. Ibid., 34.

³Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social Communication, *Communio et Progressio on the Means of Social Communication*, May 23, 1971.

manger, the hidden years in Nazareth, the 40 days in the desert, his suffering on Calvary and death on the cross and his resurrection; the places where he preached are manifold and almost everywhere; He began speaking to the people about their daily experiences and concerns. He spoke to large and small groups as His audience, and reached out to individuals in a deep personal way; all of Jesus' healings were not only for physical healing but also to re-establish the communication line of the people to God the Father. These ways and methods have to be our own ways to communicate with the others.

Thirdly, any pastoral communication must be *a witness of life*. Jesus is the example of becoming a witness of life through his word and deeds. What Jesus proffered in his words such as teaching, sharing and dialogues, he realized in his deeds. Jesus was not just a good teacher but a good witness as well. Talking about how to be a good witness, Pope Paul VI emphasized it wisely: "Modern man listens more willingly to the witnesses than to the teacher, and if he does listen to the teacher, it is because they are witnesses".⁴ This is the big challenge to all pastoral communicators or even to all leaders in the Church. They are called and sent to become witness in the world through their good words and deeds. Actually many leaders can explain, speak and express many words very well based on the knowledge they have, but in fact, it is hard to make them concrete and accessible in their deeds. In this modern world we need not only "good leaders" but as well "good witnesses". The words that they spread out to the others must be in balance with their good deeds. Because people today prefer to see what to do more than what to hear and what to

⁴Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi, Apostolic Exorthasion on the Evangelization in the Modern world*, December 8, 1975, No. 41.

say. So, the consequence is, good leaders do not tell you what to do but they show you what is done.

Fourthly, to create silence in our daily life. St. Paul tells us: "...and then, through revelation God has disclosed what was previously hidden for long ages" (Rm. 16:25). Actually, any pastoral communication can find its authentic communication only in the silence as God did in his communication with his creatures. Carlo Martin stressed this in his beautiful phrase: "To communicate well does not require many words. A few sincere words born of contemplative detachment are worth more than many words heaped up without reflecting".⁵ We realize that many forms of speeches, dialogues, and sharing are not true ways of communication, because they conceal an inner void: chatter, superficial ranting, exhibitionism, etc. Silence is a precondition for sensing and perceiving reality. Only the silence hears, the one who is not really silent cannot hear. Such a silence means not only "not to disturb" but refers to inner listening power of the soul who, only this way, will finally learn how to speak.

5. Conclusion

Revelation itself is God communicating himself to us as human beings. The main purpose of God's communicating himself is *revealing His good will*. He created human being in his image and likeness in order to make them his partners. As his partners God invited them also to take part in the Trinitarian community and to be sharers of his divine nature.

God's communication is realized by his words and deeds which can be seen in the history of God's communication. In the Old Testament he

⁵Cf. Martini Carlo, *Communicating Christ to the World* (Manila: Claretian Publication, 1999), 39.

communicated himself through Israel as his beloved people and also through selected persons such as the prophets. This communication was to be perfected in the Incarnation of his beloved Son Jesus Christ: “the WORD became flesh and made his dwelling among us (John 1:14). So, Incarnation is the central point of God’s communication. This WORD communicates himself to his creature through *communication ways and means* of Jesus Christ. Thus, as pastoral communicators we are called and sent to continue God’s communication with here and now of all places and times.

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