

Vatican Organizing a Congress on Catholic TV

To Promote Collaboration and Intercommunication

VATICAN CITY, OCT. 25, 2005 ([Zenit.org](http://www.zenit.org)).- The Holy See is organizing an international congress geared toward those working in the field of Catholic television.

Archbishop John Foley, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, confirmed the news today.

The U.S. prelate said the event will have "much more to do than study the history of the Church's involvement in television, which -- unfortunately -- has been all too limited." No dates have been set for the event.

The congress, he added, will have to answer several questions.

"First, it would help all of us to know about one another -- to exchange our experiences and also to see if we can exchange our productions," the prelate said.

"Second, is it possible to define a role for Catholic television which will complement and not compete with what is done on major public or private television channels?" the Vatican official asked. "We do not want to do harm to those broadcasters who have helped religion in general and the Catholic Church in particular so much over so many years.

"Third, can we establish networks which can share programs of quality but which will not interfere with local programming with a more direct appeal to the audience?"

"Fourth," he continued, "how can satellite channels, direct broadcast television and the Internet be integrated into an overall communications policy for the Church?"

"Fifth, what should be the nature of Catholic television stations or networks? Should they be devotional, service oriented, informational -- or a little bit of everything? Should they be supported through advertising or through direct viewer donations -- or both?"

"Sixth, how can the effectiveness of religious television be measured -- whether on public channels or on Catholic stations? Are we providing a service for all, are we evangelizing or are we 'saving the saved' -- reaching those who are already convinced and providing them with additional spiritual nourishment?"

Madrid to be host

This congress, the preparation for which is already under way, will include the participation of Catholic television stations as well as Catholic producers who offer material for these stations and networks, Archbishop Foley noted.

"We are grateful that the Archdiocese of Madrid has kindly offered to host our congress -- and we are very aware that more Catholics speak Spanish than any other language -- but that the Spanish-speaking of the world are under a type of 'spiritual siege' from fundamentalist Christian sects," he continued.

"Just a few days ago, Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, predicted that, within a few years, there will be no need for telephone or television service independent of the Internet," the archbishop said. "In pondering the future of Catholic television, therefore, we must consider what will be the future of television itself -- and how can we anticipate and not merely react to what will be the reality in communications 10 years from now."