The Evolution of the Holy See’s Institutions for Order in Media Against the Background of Changes in Its System (1948–2018)

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ABSTRACT

Scientific objective: To characterize the genesis of the institutions of the Holy See in the years 1948–2018, competent in media matters, against the background of changes in the Roman Curia’s system; showing the institutional evolution of the “media department”—from the Papal Commission established ad experimentum by the Council, having the status of an expert and promotional dicastery¹, to the dicastery with rights analogous to the congregation. Research method: Historical and normative analysis based on papal legislation and the literature on the subject. Results and conclusions: The analysis led to the conclusion that a feature of the changes was the systematic raising of the rank of institutions competent in matters of media and their functional and organizational integration. Cognitive value: The paper addresses the problem of tradition and modernization of the constitution of the Holy See’s primary organs, of which the Curia’s reform project initiated by Pope Francis and implemented since 2014 is a key element. This thread is a relatively new and little recognized subject of scientific analysis.

KEYWORDS
Dicastery for Communications, Roman Curia, Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Holy See, Communications

¹ Dicastery (Latin: dicasterium)—a group of supreme governing bodies of the Church, composed of various types of institutions (congregations, tribunals, councils, offices).
The development of civilization, which led to the creation of means of social communication, also resulted in the establishment of institutions of the Holy See, whose task was and is to read the mission of the media in the world in the context of truths of faith and respect for the dignity of a man. These institutions were established more than 70 years ago—their history goes back to the establishment of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Films, instituted by Pius XII in 1948, and comes alive with the establishment of the Dicastery for Communication, instituted by Pope Francis in 2018.

The teaching of the Magisterium of the Church on the issue of social communication began over a century and a half ago. Already in 1840, Pope Gregory XVI, in the Encyclical, *Probe Nostis*, wrote with concern about the world flooded with “pestilential newspapers and pamphlets of little weight, or by seductive speeches” (BM, 1979). Yet, Pius XII discovered the positive power of mass media for the Church, but the changes resulted from the Councils and the era of “media pope,” St. John Paul II, brought a radical change. It is also worth noting that the history of “papal media,” constituting another and separate research thread, dates back to the second half of the 19th century. The first issue of *L’Osservatore Romano*—a semi-official newspaper of the Holy See was published on July 1, 1861, during the pontificate of Bl. Pius IX. The Vatican Radio Station (*Statio Radiophonica Vaticana*) has been in operation since 1931, and has been broadcast in Polish since 1938. The great promoter of the development of modern church media was Pope Pius XI—in 1919–1921 the first Apostolic Nuncio in Warsaw after Poland regained its independence. In the last decades of the 20th century, the media of the Holy See have been enriched with the Vatican Television Center (*Rescript Ex Audientia*, 1983/1998, and professional Internet service 1995/1997).

The Concept of the Holy See
In accordance with the international law, the Holy See means the Roman Pontiff as supreme authority in the Universal Church. According to can. 331 CIC / 1983:

“The bishop of the Roman Church, in whom continues the office given by the Lord uniquely to Peter, the first of the Apostles, and to be transmitted to his successors, is the head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ, and the pastor of the universal Church on earth. By virtue of his office he possesses supreme, full, immediate, and universal ordinary power in the Church, which he is always able to exercise freely.”

The Roman Pontiff exercises its authority voluntarily, without any time limits or conditions. The Pope owns all jurisdiction exercised in ancient times by bishops and metropolitans, by synods and general councils. Nowadays, all this power is exercised by the Pope personally or through subordinate Secretariat of State, congregations, tribunals, councils, and offices referred to as the Roman Curia (*Curia Romana*), and over the State of the Vatican City through the Pontifical Commission, the Governorate, competent tribunals, and other specialized bodies (CIC, can. 360, 361). In its activity, the Holy See identifies itself with the Church (Cardinale, 1963), and it is in relation to the Church what form is in relation to matter. The Holy See is therefore the “legal personification of the Church” (Le Fur, 1930, p. 157). The Holy See enjoys a separate legal and international subjectivity as well as the State of the Vatican City (Jakubowski, 2005).

According to can. 361 CIC / 1983 “the term Apostolic See or Holy See refers not only to the Roman Pontiff but also to the Secretariat of State, the Council for the Public Affairs of the Church, and other institutes of the Roman Curia.” The Roman Curia is, therefore, an institution through which the Roman Pontiff deals with the affairs of the Universal Church and which performs all other tasks on his behalf and his authority (CIC / 1983, can. 360). It is a very
complex organism. Its structure was subject to numerous changes carried out by successive popes, wishing to have at their disposal an efficient instrument enabling them to cope with the huge tasks ahead of them, the number and complexity of which was and is a testimony to the changing times (Sitarz, 2004).

Curia Romana Semper Reformanda
The establishment of the Roman Curia is associated with the pontificate of Sixtus V (the Pope in the years 1585-1590). He established it on the basis of the Apostolic Constitution, *Immensa Aeterni Dei*, of January 22, 1588—in accordance with the guidelines of the Council of Trent—as an organized institution comprising fifteen congregations (Del Re, 1998). In this way, the Pope divided the College of Cardinals into many “colleges” consisting of several cardinals, whose competences covered a specific field or problem. Only during the pontificate of St. Paul VI the appointment of diocesan bishops who did not have a red hat became more and more popular. The formula of the congregation’s activity resembled a government in the secular administration. It should be added that the Roman Curia was then in charge of the Universal Church and it acted as the government of the State of the Church.

Roman Curia in the First Half of the 20th Century (Saint Pius X–Saint John XXIII)
The first 20th-century reform of the Roman Curia was carried out by St. Pius X (the Apostolic Constitution, *Sapienti Consilio*, of June 29, 1908) (AAS I, 1909, 7-19). He set out two main goals—separating the administrative and judicial divisions and precisely delimiting the competence of individual dicasteries. For the first time, a division into dicasteries was introduced: congregations, tribunals, and offices, giving the congregations key importance in church management. The cessation of the Pope’s temporal power meant that public institutions of the State of the Church and Curia dicasteries dealing with state affairs were suspended or survived to a minimal extent, drastically limiting their activities. The Curia still administered the unoccupied area of the proper Vatican City and the temporal patrimony of the Holy See and the State of the Church, which the Italian government did not take over (since 1870, Popes—Blessed Pius IX, Leo XIII, Saint Pius X, and Benedict XV—they called themselves “the prisoners in / of the Vatican”). For this, however, the former state administration apparatus, which was over-dimensional and organizationally complicated, was no longer needed (Jakubowski and Solarczyk, 2002).

After the reorganization of the Curia by Pius X (SC), it included:
- tribunals: Apostolic Penitentiary (*Sacra Poenitentiaria*), Roman Rota (*Sacra Romana Rota*), Apostolic Signatura (*Signatura Apostolica*);
- offices: Chancellery of the Apostles (*Cancellaria Apostolica*), Apostolic Dataria (*Dataria*)
The reform of Saint Pius X was sanctioned and supplemented by the Code of Canon Law (CIC / 1917), promulgated by Benedict XV in 1917 (the so-called Pio-Benedictine Code), and remained unchanged until 1967.

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One of the first signs of the Church’s concern for the emerging mass media was the Encyclical of Pius XI, *Vigilanti Cura*, “on the motion picture” from 1936 (AAS XXVIII, 1936, pp. 249–263). Appreciating the phenomenal values of the new media, the Pope demanded respect for morality.

“Everyone knows what damage is done to the soul by bad motion pictures. They are occasions of sin; they seduce young people along the ways of evil by glorifying the passions; they show life under a false light; they cloud ideals; they destroy pure love, respect for marriage, affection for the family. They are capable also of creating prejudices among individuals and misunderstandings among nations, among social classes, among entire races” (par. 20).

Pius XI noticed that there was no other medium that had such an impact on the mass recipient like motion pictures had. “There is no need to point out the fact that millions of people go to the motion pictures every day; that motion picture theaters are being opened in ever increasing number in civilized and semi-civilized countries; that the motion picture has become the most popular form of diversion which is offered for the leisure hours not only of the rich but of all classes of society” (par. 17). The reason for this is in the very nature of cinema, which is images, as well as sound projected on the screen. “The power of the motion picture consists in this, that it speaks by means of vivid and concrete imagery which the mind takes in with enjoyment and without fatigue. Even the crudest and most primitive minds which have neither the capacity nor the desire to make the efforts necessary for abstraction or deductive reasoning are captivated by the cinema. In place of the effort which reading or listening demands, there is the continued pleasure of a succession of concrete and, so to speak, living pictures” (n. 18). Film art, according to Pius XI, should aim at moral improvement of a man. The Pope recommended that in individual states: “Therefore, it will be necessary that in each country the Bishops set up a permanent national reviewing office in order to be able to promote good motion pictures, classify the others, and bring this judgment to the knowledge of priests and faithful” (par. 39).

In 1948, Pope Pius XII established a new curial body for a period of three years—the Pontifical Commission for Religious Films, which was, let us remind, the first institution of the Holy See in history competent in mass media matters. The task of the Commission was primarily a canonical evaluation (*nihil obstat*) of films on religious or moral subjects. The letter of the Substitute of the Secretariat of State No. 163561 of January 30, 1948, establishing the new body, did not specify, however, the position of the Commission in the institutional structure of the Holy See and its detailed status. On September 17, 1948, the Commission received a statute and a new name—the Pontifical Commission for Educational and Religious Films (Pito, 2003). However, it remained a censorship office par excellence.

In 1952, the Commission was transformed into the Pontifical Commission for Cinematography, and in 1954—the Pontifical Commission for Film, Radio, and Television (AAS XLVI, 1954, pp. 783–784). The Commission, in its new shape, has become a research institution. While in the
basic structure of the Commission sat the senior prelates of the Curia, whose task was to deal with pastoral problems related to the development of modern communication techniques, the extensive college of experts were lay specialists and clergy from different countries of the world divided into three sections (film, radio, television), and issue working groups. The Pontifical Commission actively participated in the preparation and organization of international Catholic Congresses organized annually by the Office Catholique International du Cinéma (OCIC) and, in the radio and television sector, by the Association Catholique Internationale pour la Radio et la Télévision (UNDA).

Another task of the Pontifical Commission for Film, Radio, and Television was to implement the message of the Encyclical, *Miranda Prorsus*, from 1957 in matters related to church discipline in the field of radio, television, and cinema (Del Re, 1995; see Kamiński, 2017; Pokorna-Ignatowicz, 2002, pp. 86-89). Pius XII stated:

“[11.] We have also, as you know, taken steps to set up in the Roman Curia a special Commission, whose task it is to make careful study of the various questions connected with Motion Pictures, Radio and Television which touch on the Catholic Faith and Christian morals. From this Commission, Bishops and all other interested parties can expect to obtain appropriate directives.

[12.] Very often We Ourselves have made use of the modern remarkable inventions by which We can unite the worldwide flock with its Supreme Pastor, so that Our voice, passing in sure and safe flight over the expanse of sea and land and even over the troubled emotions of souls, may reach men’s minds with a healing influence, in accordance with the demands of the task of the supreme apostolate, confided to Us and today extended almost without limit.

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[157.] But since We have firm confidence in the ultimate triumph of God’s cause, We do not doubt that these precepts and instructions of Ours - which We entrust for due execution to the Pontifical Commission for Motion Pictures, Radio and Television - can rouse new enthusiasm for the apostolate in this sphere, which promises such a plenteous and fruitful harvest” (AAS XLIX, 1957, pp. 765–805).

Pius XII also expressed the wish that similar institutions operate in particular churches.

“[78.] With a view to carrying out this task more fittingly and easily, Our predecessor of immortal memory, Pius XI, declared and proclaimed that “it is absolutely essential for Bishops to set up a permanent National Office of supervision whose business it would be to encourage decent films, but to give to others a recognized classification, and then to publish their judgment and make it known to priests and faithful”

[79.] In several countries, the Bishops, with these directives before their eyes, decided to set up Offices of this kind not only for matters connected with Motion Pictures, but also for Radio and Television.

[80.] As We consider, then, the spiritual advantages which can spring from these technical arts, together with the need to protect the integrity of Christian morals which such entertainments can easily endanger, We desire that, in every country, if the Offices referred to do not already exist, they be established without delay; these are to be entrusted to men skilled in the use of these arts, with some priest, chosen by the Bishops, as adviser.”

Pope Saint Jan XXIII in the Apostolic Letter (hereinafter: Motu Proprio), *Boni Pastoris*, gave the Commission new powers in 1959 and changed its name to the Pontifical Commission for Cinematography, Radio, and Television (*Pontificium Consilium Rei Cinematographicae,*
Radiophonicae ac Televisi
cae) and joined the Secretariat of State, which already at that
time had a strategic place among the curial institutions (the decreasing role of the Apostolic
Chancellery). At the same time, he obliged it to cooperate with all the diocese of the Roman
Curia, national and regional conferences of the episcopate and individual bishops (contrariis
quibusvis nihil obstantibus). The Commission was composed of prominent curial officials:
Assessors and Secretaries of the Holy Office, the Consistory, the Congregation for the Oriental
Churches, the Congregation for the Councils, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (the Congregation de Propaganda Fide), the Congregation for Catholic Education, as well as the Substitute of the Secretariat of State, Deputy Secretary General (Cardinal) (AAS LI, 1959, pp. 183-187). A few months later, the Pope brought to life the Vatican Film Library (Filmoteca Vaticana) and approved its statute, entrusting the supervision of
it to the Pontifical Commission (AAS LI, 1959, pp. 875-876).

New impulses appeared during the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). Already in the period
of preparation for the convening of Pope John XXIII, by virtue of Motu Proprio Supernus Dei
Nutu, established a Secretariat dealing with matters concerning modern means of disseminating
thoughts (Secretariatus pariter instituitur quaestionibus omnibus expendendis, quae cum
hodiernis vulgandarum sententiarum rationibus [ut sunt folia typis impressa, radiophonicae et
transmission spectacula etc.] quocum modo connectuntur). The Secretariat operated under the

The media problem was on the agenda of the Council’s main proceedings.

“Let us go back to December 4, 1963. For the
first time in history, the Ecumenical Council devotes
a document to the media—a decree. Inter Mirifica—that is, among the miracles that God has put
in our hands. We must remember that the papal magisterium, which precedes Inter Mirifica, paid
particular attention to the means of social communication of its time. Just think about the radio,
cinema, press. I would like to recall at this point the document of Pius XI Vigilanti Cura from
1936, as well as Miranda Prorsus of Pius XII from 1957. Papal teaching indicates interest in the
development of social communication in this era. Popes appreciated and emphasized its positive
aspects, but also, at the same time, expressed concern over the negative that accompanied the
emergence of new media” (Celli, 2013, p. 9).

In the Inter Mirifica decree on social media for transmitting information (AAS LVI, 1964, pp.
145-157), the Council Fathers, referring to the Pontifical Commission for Cinematography, Radio,
and Television, asked the Pope to “extend the duties and competence of this office to include all
media of social communication, including the press, and that experts from various countries be
named to it, including laymen” (Inter Mirifica, par. 19, note 1). In 1964, therefore, during the
Council, Saint Paul VI, by virtue of Motu Proprio In Fructibus Multis, created the Pontifical
Commission for Social Communications (Pontificium Consilium Instrumentis Communicationis
Socialis Praepositum), directly dependent on the Secretariat of State (Dickes, 2013; AAS LVI,
1964, pp. 289–292). The Commission included, as ordinary ad quinquennium members, cardinals
and bishops presiding in communications committees established at national episcopal conferences
and 36 clergy and secular consultors, as well as the chairmen of three international Catholic
organizations dealing with cinema, radio, television, and the press—OCIP, UNDA, UCIP (Union
Catholique Internationale de la Presse), who became members durante munere.

With regard to the needs of the Catholic religion, the Commission was entrusted with problems
related to cinema, radio, and television, as well as daily and periodical press. The Commission
was also responsible for implementing the directives and standards of the relevant decree of the
Second Vatican Council regarding instruments of social communication. It was also responsible
for preparing appropriate pastoral instruction, which it did in 1971 (Communio et Progressio, AAS LXIII, 1971, pp. 593–656). The Committee supervised the Holy See’s Press Office, which was established in 1966 (the L’Osservatore Romano Information Office operated since 1939), and the Vatican Film Library operating since 1959.

Reform of the Curia During the Pontificate of St. Paul VI (1963–1978)

In accordance with the wishes of the Second Vatican Council, Saint Paul VI reorganized the Curia, adapting its structure and functioning to the post-Conciliar renewal of the Church, the requirements of time, and pastoral needs, announcing on August 15, 1967, the Apostolic Constitution Regimini Ecclesiae Universae (AAS LIX, 1967, pp. 885–928). The Pope more precisely defined the structure, competences, and principles of operation of existing dicasteries and, leaving them functions related to canonical jurisdiction, created new ones to which he entrusted the task of disseminating specific pastoral initiatives in the Church.

The renewed Curia included:

- The Pontifical Secretariat of State—headed by the Cardinal Secretary of State, assisted by a substitute (in fact deputy secretary of state for intra-church affairs) and assessor, and the [Sacred] Council for Public Affairs of the Church—headed by the prefect cardinal (actually deputy secretary of state for external) and undersecretary—in a close functional and personal union relationship (Secretaria Status seu Papalis et Sacrum Consilium pro Publicis Ecclesiae Negotiosis). The Secretariat of State is a dicastery similar in character to the head office of the state and the ministry of foreign affairs, and at the same time is the body coordinating the work of the Roman Curia in the likeness of the office of the head of government. The reformed Secretariat of State included (REU, n. 22): the Latin Letters Office; the Apostolic Letters Office, dealing with sending on less important matters and specific acts of the Cardinal Vicar of the City; the Analysis Office dealing with the procurement and organization of news, magazines, journals, and other materials. After the abolition of the Apostolic Office in 1973, the Secretariat took over its tasks and competences (AAS LXV, 1973, pp. 113–116). Its structure was also reorganized, separating two offices: the Office of Papal Letters, and the Analysis Office;
- congregations: Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (Sacra Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei); Sacred Congregation for Oriental Churches (Sacra Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus); Sacred Congregation for Bishops (Sacra Congregatio pro Episcopis); Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments (Sacra Congregatio de Disciplina Sacramentorum); Sacred Congregation of Rites (Sacra Congregatio Rituum), from 1969—the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship (Sacra Congregatio pro Cultu Divino) (AAS LXI, 1969, pp. 297-305); The Congregation for Divine Worship and the Congregation for Discipline of the Sacraments were combined in 1975 into the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (Sacra Congregatio pro Sacramentis Divinoque Cultu) (AAS LI X, 1967, pp. 417–420); Sacred Congregation for the Clergy (Sacra Congregatio pro Clericis); Sacred Congregation for Secular Orders and Institutes (Sacra Congregatio pro Religiosis et Institutis Saecularibus); Sacred Congregation for Catholic Teaching (Sacra Congregatio pro Institutione Catholica); Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Nations or Propagation of Faith (Sacra Congregatio pro Gentium Evangelizatione seu de Propaganda Fide);
- secretariats: Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity (Secretariatus ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam); Secretariat for Non-Believers (Secretariatus pro non Christianis); Secretariat for Non-Christians (Secretariatus pro non Credentibus);
The Apostolic Constitution Regimini Ecclesiae Universae has maintained the status of the Pontifical Commission for Social Communications (REU, art. 133). In this way, the structure of the Curia became a clear reflection of the diverse image of the Universal Church. In addition, Saint Paul VI appointed diocesan bishops as members of the Curia and took care of the internal coordination of the work of all dicasteries, introducing a system of periodic meetings, during which the cardinals managing individual dicasteries can discuss common problems and consult each other (Jakubowski and Solarczyk, 2002).

An important act completing the reform of the Curia was Motu Proprio Ingravescent Aetat, in which the retirement age for cardinals performing important functions in the dicasteries of the Roman Curia and the Vatican City State was determined (AAS LXII, 1970, p. 811). Also, the General Regulations of the Curia set retirement age for officials of the Curia after reaching the age of 70, and for prelates superiors—retirement at the beginning of the age of 75. The practical effect of these decisions was the rejuvenation (or rather generational change) and internationalization (“deitalianization”) of the Curia. The pope’s radical decisions concerned one-fifth of the state of the College of Cardinals and were met with hostile acceptance by some of the interested parties. One of the dismissed cardinals has spoken in public—Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, a prefect of the Congregation of the Holy Office. Cardinal Ottaviani described the papal decision as an act of contempt for 800 years of tradition and warned that in the future it could weaken papal authority. However, the policy of basic modernization of church structures started by St. Paul VI was not stopped.

Reform of the Curia During the Pontificate of St. John Paul II (1978–2005)

The general renewal of the Roman Curia of St. John Paul II accomplished in 1988, promulgating the Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*—on the 400th anniversary of the announcement of *Immensa Aeterni Dei* by Sixtus V, on the 80th anniversary of *Sapienti Consilio* by Saint Pius X, and the 20th anniversary of *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae* of Saint Paul VI. The reorganization of the structure created in 1967 was aimed at rationalizing and updating it and adapting to the norms of the Code of Canon Law of 1983 (AAS LXXX, 1988, pp. 941–912).

The renewed structure of the Roman Curia included several types of dicasteries that were “formally equal”:

- **Secretariat of State**—central, *nolens volens*, authority of the Church;
- **congregations**—Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (*Congregatio de Doctrina Fidei*), Congregation for the Oriental Churches (*Congregatio pro Ecclesiis Orientalibus*), Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (*Congregatio de Cultu Divino et Disciplina Sacramentorum*), Congregation for the Causes of Saints (*Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum*), Congregation for Bishop, Congregation for Evangelization of Nations (*Congregatio pro Gentium Evangelizatione*), Congregation for Clergy (*Congregatio pro Clericis*), and the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (*Congregatio pro Institutis Vitae Consecratae et Societatibus Vitae Apostolicae*);
- **tribunals**—Apostolic Penitentiary (*Paenitentiaria Apostolica*), Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura (*Supremum Tribunal Signaturae Apostolicae*), Tribunal of the Roman Rota (*Tribunal Rotae Romanae*);
- **offices**—Camera Apostolica, Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See (*Administratio Patrimonii Sedis Apostolicae*), Prefecture of Economic Affairs of the Holy See (*Praefectura Rerum Oeconomicarum Sanctae Sedis*);
- “other institutions of the Curia” (*Cetera Curiae Romanae Instituta*) include the Prefectures for the Pontifical Household, the Office for the Liturgical Celebrations, the Press Office of the Holy See, and the Central Statistical Office of the Catholic Church (REU, Articles 125-128; PB, Articles 180-182).

Congregations, as key, after the Secretariat of State, organs of the administrative center of the Church, are permanent cardinal and episcopal commissions, whose task is to deal with a specific area of church matters in the sense of exercising jurisdiction. The Roman Pontiff plays a leading role in the operation of each congregation through the constitutive aspect, i.e. the establishment of the congregation and appointments; managerial aspects, or indicating priorities in the context of the current needs of the Church and Holy See; procedural aspect, i.e. approving individual stages of proceedings and ending with official decrees. The congregation consists of cardinals
and bishops appointed by the pope as well as senior and lower officials forming the office of the congregation. The system of the congregation resembles the model of a government committee in secular administration. The congregation is headed by a prefect-cardinal, assisted by a secretary and undersecretary. Both of them, just like the prefect-cardinal, are appointed by the pope. The prefect is the superior of the congregation, manages its activities, is responsible for the appointment of individual officials, represents it outside. He presents the current status of the congregation to the Roman Pontiff. The archbishop secretary of the congregation, as superior prelate, shares the prefect’s duties as his direct assistant. He performs administrative functions, manages the work of the congregation, and substantive, participates in plenary and ordinary meetings with voting rights. If necessary, he replaces the prefect-cardinal. The undersecretary assists the secretary. He belongs to the group of Senior Officials. The basic congregation, however, is formed by a body of Cardinals and Bishops, which makes collective decisions on the most important matters. Participation in the congregations of Diocesan Bishops as members significantly improves Church governance. The jurisdiction division is territorial and problematic. Two congregations exercise their jurisdiction over the entire Church (Doctrine of the Faith, Canonization Affairs), others in the diocese of the Latin Rite (Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life), among which missionary diocese (Evangelization of Nations) and non-missionary dioceses (Catholic Education, Bishops, Clergy). One finally embraces with its jurisdiction all and only Eastern rites (Eastern Catholic Churches). Each congregation has a college of consultors—expert specialists in a given field who have an advisory voice (Misztal, 1997, p. 306).

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In the light of the Apostolic Constitution, Pastor Bonus (art. 169–170), the competent authority in matters of media, was the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus), which had the character of a curial dicastery. The first council was established as part of the general renewal of the Roman Curia by St. Paul VI (the Council for the Laity). The number and rank of papal councils increased during the pontificate of St. John Paul II. The Apostolic Constitution, Pastor Bonus, in response to the demands of the Council, established councils dealing with issues bordering strictly church issues and various issues of the modern world. The councils were expert and promotional bodies. Each of them had its own specificity and structure.

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications, operating until 2015, dealt with means of social communication understood as a tool of evangelization and an instrument supporting social progress. The Council, due to its particular interest, acted in consultation with the Secretariat of State. The main task of the Council was to stimulate and properly support the activity of the Church and the faithful in various forms of social communication, contributing to the fact that all means of communication (dailies, other periodicals, radio, television broadcasts and films) were more and more imbued with the human and Christian spirit. It was particularly concerned about the Catholic media so that they really correspond to their own character and task. The Council also strove for the proper spiritual dimension of World Communications Day (Dies Communicationum Socialium). The Vatican Film Library, existing since 1959, operated within the Council.

In 1992, the Council developed a new pastoral instruction, Aetatis Novae, which wrote:

“The first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communications which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a ‘global village’. The means of social communications have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large«(...)”
The power of media either to reinforce or override the traditional reference points of religion, culture, and family underlines the continued relevance of the Council’s words: “If the media are to be correctly employed, it is essential that all who use them know the principles of the moral order and apply them faithfully in this domain” (AAS LXXXIV, 1992, pp. 447-468).

Partial Reform of the Curia During the Pontificate of Pope Francis (Feliciter Regnans)

One of the main threads of the current pontificate is the development of a new model of the structure and functioning of the Roman Curia, which it would be more appropriate to the challenges facing the Church in the third decade of the 21st century (cf. Somavilla Rodriguez, 2014). It is worth noting that Pope Francis continues the changes already initiated by Benedict XVI (Romanko, 2016, p. 101). However, while those carried out during the previous pontificate can be considered “soft,” the current transformation is radical. The agenda of the future reform of the Curia included the following problems: the position of the Secretariat of State, the position of the Cardinal Council advising Pope Francis (Cardinal Advisory Council [Auxiliare Cardinalium Consilium], the Council of Pontifical Advisory [Pontificium Auxiliare Consilium], the Special Cardinal Council [Extraordinarium Cardinalium Consilium], Papal Council [Papale Consilium], etc.), reducing the number of dicasteries and combining their competences, participation of lay people in the management of curial institutions (Viana, 2016, pp. 281–289).

 Undertaking the reform of the Roman Curia, Pope Francis changed the position, structure and scope of activities of many institutions. In the first stage of the reform, in the group of offices of the Holy See, he established:

- (2014) the Council for Economic Affairs of the Holy See (Consilium Rebus Oeconomicius Praepositum)—Motu Proprio Fidelis Dispensator et Prudens (AAS CVI, 2014, pp. 164-165). The document establishing the Council did not explicitly state that it was a diocese of the Roman Curia, but an institution of the Holy See (cf. Romanko, 2016, p. 102; Zalbidea, 2014);
- (2014) the Secretariat for Economic Affairs of the Holy See (Secretaria Sanctae Sedis Rebus Oeconomicis Praeposita), as a body of control and financial supervision over the institutions of the Roman Curia and the State of the Vatican City (the Auditor General reporting directly to the Pope is a separate office)—Motu Proprio Fidelis Dispensator et Prudens;
- (2015) the Secretariat for Communication (Secretaria pro Communicatione), as a body supervising and coordinating the activities of social communication means of the Holy See and the Vatican City State and the relations of these entities with external media—Motu Proprio L’attuale Contesto Comunicativo (AAS CVII, 2015, pp. 591-592).

The name of the last two institutions referred to the type of dicasteries known from the Apostolic Constitution Regimini Ecclesiae Universae, which were not already included in the Apostolic Constitution Pastor Bonus. The formula of the “secretariat,” as in the case of the “dicastery,” does not preclude entrusting their leadership to lay people.

The Secretariat for Communication, replacing the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, also absorbed: The Holy See’s Press Office, Press Service, Vatican Radio, Vatican Television Center, and Vatican Website. Pursuant to the Statute (2016), the goal of integration of all media institutions is to create a coherent communication system allowing to fulfill the evangelizing mission in the modern world. The obligation to cooperate with other curial dicasteries, in particular the Secretariat of State (cf. Kamiński, 2017, p. 46) was also emphasized.

The structure of the Secretariat includes five directorates general: Directorate General (staff were employees of the current Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Press Office of
the Holy See, Vatican Radio and the Vatican Television Center), Publishing Directorate (staff were the current employees of the Vatican Radio and the Vatican Television Center), Directorate of the Holy See’s Press Office (staff were former employees of the Holy See’s Press Office and Vatican Radio), Technical Directorate (staff were present employees of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Vatican Radio, the Vatican Television Center and Vatican Website) and the Theological and Pastoral Directorate (staff were former employees of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Vatican Radio, and the Vatican Website). The secretariat also covers the Vatican Printing House, Photographic Service, *L’Osservatore Romano*, and the Vatican Publishing House. In addition to the prefect (Father Dario Edoardo Viganò), the Secretariat consisted of six cardinals, three archbishops, four bishops, and three lay people (AP, 2017, pp. 1232-1240, 1826-1829).

In the second stage of the reform, Pope Francis established “new” institutions:

• (2016) Dicastery for the Laity, Family, and Life (*Dicasterium pro Laicis, Familia et Vita*), which replaced the Pontifical Council for the Laity and the Pontifical Council for the Family—*Motu Proprio Sedula Mater* (AAS CVIII, 2016, 963) (see Dyduch, 2017);


They received formal status analogous to the congregation and a similar structure. It should be recalled that so far (SC, CIC / 1917, REU, PB) the term “dicastery” meant a whole group of supreme church governing bodies, which consisted of various types of institutions (Secretariat of State, congregations, tribunals, councils, offices; other papal institutions they did not have the status of a curia dictatorial). The “new” organs set up by Pope Francis are recognized in *Annuario Pontificio* as a separate group of institutions, after congregations and before tribunals. However, while the congregation consists of a dozen to almost forty cardinals, in the case of “new dicasteries” this number fluctuates only from four to six. In order to emphasize the fact that they do not exercise canonical jurisdiction (the power of ordination is necessary here), they stopped at the generic name “dicastery.” This does not exclude the possibility that the prefect of the “new dicastery” should be a lay person. It should also be noted that the liquidation of several papal councils is a clear departure from the letter of the *Pastor Bonus* Constitution.

In 2018, Pope Francis finally decided to change the status of the Secretariat for Communication, which was transformed into the Dicastery for Communication (*Dicasterium pro Communicatione*) (Rescript *Ex Audientia*, 27/02/2018). Although the new body retained basically the same structure and tasks, it was included in the second group of institutions of the Holy See (after the congregations and before the tribunals), and the lay person was the prefect (Paolo Ruffini). The Photography Service and the Vatican Publishing House were included in the dicastery, in addition, it is subject to the Vatican Printing House and *L’Osservatore Romano* (AP, 2018, pp. 1194-1197, 1791-1795).

**Summary**

The evolution of the “media department” system, as demonstrated in this paper, proceeded from the formula of a papal commission appointed *ad experimentum* (a body of the secondary importance), by the papal council having the status of an expert and promotional dicastery, to a dicastery with rights analogous to the status of the congregation. In 2015, in place of the current Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Pope Francis established a new type of institution—the
Secretariat for Communication, and from 2018—the Dicastery for Communication. The new structure took over the tasks of all the existing organs of the Holy See competent in media matters. A characteristic feature of the analyzed process was the systematic raising of the rank of an institution competent in media governance matters as well as their functional and institutional integration.

In the near future we should expect the release of the new Apostolic Constitution *Predicate Evangelium* regarding the in-depth reform of the Curia, which has been prepared for a long time by the Council of Cardinals (Commission for the Study of Organizational and Economic Problems of the Holy See). The date of its publication, initially planned for June 2019, was already moved several times by Pope Francis. However, it seems that the system of the Department of Communication will not change radically. It is also worth noting that in December 2019, Pope Benedict XVI established a foundation for Catholic journalism.

**Abbreviations**

AAS—*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

AP—*Annuario Pontificio*.

BM—*Breviarium Missionum*.


OCIC—*Office Catholique International du Cinéma* (now SIGNiS—*Association Catholique Mondiale pour la Communication*).

OCIP—*Association Internationale de la Presse Catholique*.


UCIP—*Union Catholique Internationale de la Presse*.

UNDA—*Association Catholique Internationale pour la Radio, la Télévision et l’Audiovisuel* (now SIGNiS—*Association Catholique Mondiale pour la Communication*).

**Bibliography**

• **Sources**


• **Monographs**


ANNEX
Biographical Notes of the Popes Mentioned in the Text

1831–1846

Gregory XVI, Bartolomeo Alberto (Mauro) Cappellari (September 17, 1765–June 1, 1846)—created a Cardinal Priest of San Callisto (1826) by Leo XII, Prefect of the Congregation for the Propaganda of Faith (1846), Pope Gregory XVI (1831–1846). The last cardinal who, at the time of his election, had no episcopal consecration. In 1832, acting under the influence of a Russian MP in Rome, Grigory Ivanovich Gagarin, he issued the Encyclical Cum Primum condemning the November Uprising as an act of rebellion against legal authority.

1846–1878

Blessed Pius IX, Giovanni Maria Mastai-Ferretti (May 13, 1792–February 7, 1878)—Bishop (1827), Cardinal in pectore (1839), created a Cardinal Priest of Santi Marcellino e Pietro (1840) by Gregory XVI, Pope Pius IX (1846–1878). The longest, after St. Peter, pontificate in church history. The first “Prisoner in / of the Vatican” (1870).

Beatified in 2000 (Pope John Paul II).
1878–1903

**Leo XIII,** Vincenzo Gioacchino Raffaele Luigi Pecci (March 2, 1810–July 20, 1903)—Bishop (1843), created a Cardinal Priest (1853) by Pius IX, Pope Leo XIII (1878–1903). Apostolic Nuncio to Belgium (1843–1846), Camerlengo of the Holy Roman Church (1877). In 1891 he announced the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum.*

1903–1914

**St. Pius X,** Giuseppe Melchiorre Sarto (June 2, 1835–August 20, 1914)—Bishop (1884), Patriarch of Venice (1893), created a Cardinal Priest of San Bernardo alle Terme (1893) by Leon XIII, Pope Pius X (1903–1914). Beatified in 1951 (Pope Pius XII), canonized in 1954 (Pope Pius XII).

1914–1922

**Benedict XV,** Giacomo Giambattista della Chiesa (November 21, 1844–January 22, 1922)—Bishop (1907), created a Cardinal Priest of Santi Quattro Coronati (1914) by St. Pius X, Pope Benedict XV (1914–1922). In the years 1901–1907 a Substitute for the Secretariat of State.

1922–1939

**Pius XI,** Ambrogio Damiano Achille Ratti (May 31, 1857–February 10, 1939)—Bishop (1919), Archbishop Metropolitan of Milan (1921), created a Cardinal Priest of Santi Silvestro e Martino ai Monti (1921) by Benedict XV, elected Pope on February 6, 1922, inauguration of the pontificate: February 12, 1922. In the years 1918–1919 Apostolic Visitor in Poland and Lithuania Archbishop Aleksander Kakowski (December 15, 1919—Cardinal) gave the episcopal sacrament to the future Pope in the Warsaw Cathedral. Co-consecrators were the Przemyśl bishop Józef Sebastian Pelczar (beatified in 1991, canonized in 2003) and Bishop of Kuyavian-Kalisz Stanisław Zdzitowiecki (in 1913 the main consecrator of A. Kakowski). First Sovereign of the Vatican City State.

1939–1958


1958–1963


1963–1978


1978


1978–2005


2005–2013

2013:


Superiors of Institutions Competent in Matters of Social Communication

– Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus socialibus
  1948: Pontifical Commission for Religious Films;
  1952: Pontifical Commission for Cinematography;
  1954: Pontifical Commission for Film, Radio and Television;
  1964: Pontifical Commission for Social Communications (Pontificium Consilium Instrumentis Communicationis Socialis Praepositum);

• Chairman:
  April 23, 1969–September 8, 1971 († November 13, 2004)—Bishop Agostino Ferrari Toniolo—President
  June 27, 2007–March 31, 2016—Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli
  – Secretaria pro Communicatione [29.06.2015]

• Prefect
  – Dicastery for Communication/ Dicasterium pro Communicatione [July 23, 2018]

• Prefect
  July 5, 2018 – ... —Paolo Ruffini

Institutions in the Area of Media and Communication

• 1861—L’Osservatore Romano
• 1931—Radio station Vatican (Radio Vaticana).
• 1939—L’Osservatore Romano Information Office (the office was established de facto on
February 20, 1939, a few days after the Pope’s death (February 10, 1939), and before the successor was chosen (March 2, 1939).

- 1959—Vatican Film Library (*Filmoteca Vaticana*).
- 1966—Press Office of the Holy See (*Sala Stampa della Santa Sede*).
- (1983) 1998—Vatican Television Center (*Centro Televisivo Vaticano*).
- (1995) 1997—Vatican Internet Service (*Servizio Internet Vaticano*).
- 2008—Photographic Documentation Service (*Servizio Fotografico*).
- 2015—Secretariat for Communication.
- 2018—Dicastery for Communications.

**Messages of Paul VI for World Social Funding Communications Days**

- Social Communications as Important Elements of Civilization (1967).
- The Role of Communications Media in Promoting Unity Among Men (1971).
- The Mass Media and Reconciliation (1975).
- Social Communications and the Fundamental Rights and Duties of Man (1976).

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- Social Communications and Family (1980).
- The Proclamation of Christ’s Message in the Communications Media (1992).
• Television and Family: Guidelines for Good Viewing (1994).
• The Media: Modern Forum for Promoting the Role of Women in Society (1996).
• Sustained by the Spirit, Communicate Hope (1998).
• Proclaiming Christ in the Media at the Dawn of the New Millennium (2000).
• Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel (2002).
• The Media and the Family: A Risk and a Richness (2004).
• The Communications Media: At the Service of Understanding Among Peoples (2005).

Messages of Pope Benedict XVI for World Communications Days
• The Media: At the Crossroads Between Self-Promotion and Service. Searching for the Truth in Order to Share It with Others (2008).
• The Priest and Pastoral Ministry in a Digital World: New Media at the Service of the World (2010).
• Truth, Proclamation, and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age (2011).
• Silence and Word: Path of Evangelization (2012).

Messages of Pope Francis for World Communications Days
• Communications at the Service of an Authentic Culture of Encounter (2014).
• Communicating the Family: A Privileged Place of Encounter with the Gift of Love (2015).
• Communication and Mercy: A Fruitful Encounter (2016).
• »Fear Not, for I Am with You« (Is 43:5). Communicating Hope and Trust in Our Time (2017).
• »We Are Members One of Another« (Eph 4:25). From Social Network Communities to the Human Community (2019).