

Praise to Lord

1975: (King's College Year 2<sup>nd</sup>)

ASCENSION PREFACE

Yesterday, because it was Sunday and last Thursday wasn't a holiday for most people, the Feast of the Ascension was celebrated in Catholic churches in HK, and indeed in many other parts of the world too. But the postmodern produces an unfortunate clash — not just, as yesterday, with Plotto's Day, but with another "Day" that has, <sup>over</sup> the past 9 years, been established in the Catholic calendar around the world. And this new one is not a liturgical festival at all. I'm talking about the 'World Communications Day' which has been a result of the discussions and recommendations made by the 2nd Vat. Council in the document it produced on the media of social communications in the modern world. In some countries, and dioceses, this has been successfully introduced, and in HK a few years ago, the "Day" was, once, prepared for and explained and advertised in posters and so on. But I suspect it still remains a dead-letter in many places, and a mystery (not the theological kind) to most people. For myself, I sld. say that the choice of date, the Sunday before Pentecost, seems to me most unsuitable and perhaps an indication of why "World Communications Day" has been so far a bit of a flop. And this is a pity, really, because the idea and intention that started it off was and remains a good and valid one — the interest and concern the Christian community has or sld. have in the human inventions (modern and not-so-modern) that put us in touch with our fellowmen, link us together as human beings in a sharing of experience. Films, newspapers, radio + TV are facts of life today which, however much scholars, pundits and others discuss their influence and effects, do enter into the lives of almost everyone in the world now, one way or another.

And so a Christian understanding, or critique, of modern life must somehow take account of them and their human value and potential in the development of mankind towards its fullness in Christ. A Christian vision of today's world and the meaning of life has to include how we live: besides, at its most basic, communication is a real human need everyone has. What has changed, dramatically, in the ~~past~~ <sup>present</sup> century is the extension and scope of ways of communicating, not merely with each other individually but to vast numbers of people at the same time, in the same way. Even the older forms, print and newspapers, apart altogether from population growths, have hugely increased their circulations within the past 75 years. Our lives are in large measure conditioned just by their presence now. So it is of interest that the means of communicating should be used to fulfill human needs and contribute to the development of human life. It was to draw attention to the human importance of the media (as they're called), and to foster interest and appreciation of the work of the people involved in them that the World Communications Day idea was launched. And each year, sometimes with more success than other times, a statement has been issued concentrating a reflection on some aspect of the media and people's needs and aspirations. This year, for instance, attention has been drawn to the potential and power of the media as a force for reconciliation among men, and asking that whatever is an obstacle to human brotherhood (racism, hate, discrimination and so on) be not diffused widely by the abuse of the fruits of human inventiveness. There's a lot more to it too: but for the moment let's pause to reflect and pray, listening today to a song you may have heard last night in a TV production on the life of Christ (itself a rather rare vision on our TV screens): an Easter song: "They Cast Their Nets." MUSIC - PRAYERS

There's a lot more, as I said, to be said about you and I and the media we're exposed to, and the intentions and integrity and so on of those who decide what we shall read in our newspapers, see on our screens, hear on our radios. The owners, private, public or state, and the controllers of the media, the editors, directors and producers do have a huge responsibility to mankind, to the millions of us who rely on them for news, entertainment, views, information. Their responsibility isn't only to their shareholders, their bosses in the organisation or whatever — and the best of them do appreciate their responsibility. Like us, who complain from time to time about all sorts of things done or not done by the media, they often don't know how best to carry out their heavy responsibility. So today, at least, let's try to understand a little, and to pray for the professional people of all levels who are mostly nameless and unknown to us but to whom we do have a debt. Let us pray that those who carry such great responsibility to society may be both more aware of this aspect of their work, and find inspiration to fulfill it for the greater good, development, peace, truth, justice and harmony of mankind. And not to be too general, let's remember the individuals in HK, including those here with me now at RHK who make it possible for you to listen to me now. Finally, with prayer communicating with God for them & with them, why not also communicate yourself with those who link you with your brother & sisters thro' the newspapers, films, radio & TV.