

With the subject indicated in the title (*Media criticism of the reform of the Pontifical Academy for Life. An analysis of communication management and the case of the tweet of 12.09.2020*), I intend to focus on the activity of the Pontifical Academy for Life (PAV), renewed by Pope Francis in 2016, and considered the most advanced expression of the new sensibility promoted by Pope Francis regarding the issues of Bioethics and summarized in the term Global Bioethics.

The activity of the Dicastery takes place in a highly polarized ecclesial context, in which the existence of a "parallel magisterium" is assumed with the aim of discrediting the reigning Pope. This is because of the economic interests defended by conservative ecclesial sectors and financial policies that are concerned by a Church siding with the poor and denouncing the indiscriminate exploitation of the environment and natural resources.

The general context in which this ecclesial dynamic takes place is characterized by "information disorder" and storytelling that presents a clearly dichotomous reality. On the one hand, a Church faithful to Tradition and Magisterium; on the other hand, a Church led by the reigning Pope who departs from that same Tradition and Magisterium. However, the underlying economic interests are always ignored.

The Pontifical Academy for Life has been subjected to attacks and manipulations in recent years, which have had as their object specific stances or statements on sensitive and controversial issues in regard to bioethics. In this sense, manipulation or deliberate misinterpretation are nothing new. Propaganda and manipulation are two sides of the same coin, when they are intended to attract approval towards one or another political and social field. When they affect the Church - especially in these years - we have to ask ourselves what political or economic interests are at stake. As is well known, in the 1970s, the Latin American Church's commitment to Liberation Theology was instrumentalized and attacked. A Church for the poor was inconvenient for the world of financial and business interests linked to the United States, a country that had developed at that time a complex strategy to advance its interests in a geographical area considered strategic.

Today the Church Pope Francis speaks of is pro-poor, "outgoing", for and in the real and existential "suburbs"; above all, it is a Church that preaches the necessary environmental sustainability, opposed to the indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources.

In this complex scenario, the Pontifical Academy for Life presents itself as the Dicastery in which Pope Francis' approaches, aimed at welding together the ethics of life and the ethics of the environment, as part of a single approach called Global Bioethics, are most clearly displayed.

In the course of this work, it will be highlighted how, behind the stances and attacks against the Pontifical Academy, there is a deliberate intention of manipulation for propaganda purposes, in order to discredit the Pope through constant criticism of the activity of the Dicastery. Above all, an attempt will be made to consider the weight and importance of social media as actors to be taken into account in any external communication that seeks to enter into dialogue or at least contact with a wider audience. Without forgetting that it is a portion of reality and not the whole of reality. But keeping in mind that debates on social media usually spread - sooner or later - to the rest of the media.

From the point of view of theoretical investigation, the focus will be on "information disorder" as a peculiar characteristic of the communicative landscape involving social media and their

dissemination. The case study under consideration, the Pontifical Academy for Life's tweet of September 12, 2020, is intended to show how social media themselves enter the field. And from there I will move on to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the external communication of the Pav, which has had a specific Press and External Communication Office since October 1, 2017. Finally, at the conclusion of the present work, there will be some guidelines on how the Pontifical Academy should manage communication in the current global digital communication context.

The present Thesis is divided into four parts and nine chapters.

In Part One, the first chapter describes the Pontifical Academy for Life, its institutional tasks, from its founding in 1994 by St. John Paul II to Pope Francis. Pope Francis has made changes in the structure of the Dicastery and expanded its areas of study. These changes were much criticized by conservative church groups who perceived them as a "betrayal" of the original mission.

The second chapter outlines the communication that the Pontifical Academy for Life has started since 2017, the year in which it established a Press and External Communication Office. The chapter stresses the main critical issues for the years 2017-2021, showing reasons and methods of the attacks the Pontifical Academy is subjected to.

Part Two outlines the theoretical framework used in this Thesis.

The third chapter outlines communication theories that can help understand the new communication scenario that has arisen with the advent of social media, which play a major part in creating a favorable or unfavorable context for someone or something, depending on relevant economic interests. Disinformation strategies acting through social media highlight the need for a solid multidisciplinary theoretical approach - halfway between sociology and communication psychology - to deal with the complexity of current situations. The theory of reference is "constructivism" that is, the analysis of the specific narrative that is presented by those with an interest in manipulating reality.

The fourth chapter focuses on the issue of "information disorder," as realized through software and communication techniques, in order to present a narrative of reality corresponding to the economic and political interests of certain power or pressure groups.

Part Three is about the case study.

The fifth chapter presents the case study, namely the tweet of September 12, 2020. The chapter reconstructs the background, the context, the development of that tweet, and the methodology that is used to study its effects.

The sixth chapter presents the qualitative analysis that was carried out in relation to the tweet under study. The seventh chapter presents the results of the quantitative analysis on the tweet in question.

The seventh chapter focuses on the institution's response in the face of the reactions triggered by that tweet.

Part Four sums up the work done and concludes the analysis of the communication strategy of the Pontifical Academy for Life, illustrating its critical issues and showing that the drafting and

implementation of a Communication Plan is necessary, as it is the main way to position themselves in a new and conscious way within today's communication scenario.

The present study is completed by three Appendices, in which the summary and internal assessment document of the work done in the year 2017-2018 is reproduced. Then there is a December 2018 audio file between Archbishop Paglia and some journalists. Finally, comments on the September 12, 2020 tweet are reproduced, divided by language (Italian, English, Spanish).

Methodologically, this research is divided into two parts.

The first part adopts a critical-analytical method, referring to the official documents of the Pontifical Academy for Life to outline its purpose and content and show the main criticisms received.

In the second part, different theoretical approaches are used. Within the framework of a more general complexity theory, the prominence of constructivist theories (social construction of reality) is shown, as well as the importance of a dialogue between cognitivism and the communication sciences to appropriately address the situation of "information disorder" that affects communication via social media in many politically, socially, and ecclesiastically polarized situations - which involve PAV as well.

The second part presents a case study, considering a specific tweet from the Pontifical Academy for Life. I am talking about the tweet published on September 12, 2020, on the occasion of young Willy Monteiro's funeral, who was brutally killed by a gang in Colleferro, a town in the lower Lazio region of Italy, when he had intervened to defend a friend from an attack outside a nightclub. The killing of the young black man sparked deep emotions in Italy, and on the day of his funeral the Pontifical Academy for Life tweeted a photoshopped image of Michelangelo's Pietà, in which Christ is depicted with black skin. The text of the tweet read, in English, "this image is worth more than a speech". The tweet was interpreted politically by conservative North American sites as an endorsement in favor of the Black Lives Matter movement and sparked debate, with insults, in Italian, English, and Spanish. Within a few days, the tweet reached 199,911 thousand views (29.05.2021) and is well suited to qualitative and quantitative analysis.

Through the tools available on Twitter, a quantitative analysis of the effects of the tweet in question is presented, with complete statistics on views, retweets, comments and engagements. These tools are supplemented by an analysis tool available online such as Botometer.

Then a qualitative analysis is carried out, through the text analysis software T-lab, to which the comments and responses received in Italian, English and Spanish were submitted. The qualitative analysis is supplemented by the criteria developed for linguistic analysis applied to political debate.

The final chapter presents an overall assessment of the communication strategy in recent years, and - in relation to social media presence - highlights the importance of a specific Communication Plan and the criteria according to which it must be developed and implemented as an appropriate tool for the current situation.

(Original Text: Italian. Translation by Leonardo Stefanucci)