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Other Information

Dicastery for Communication

Vatican Radio turns 90

Vatican Radio began 90 ago: the voice of the Pope for the entire world. Designed and built by Guglielmo (William) Marconi after being commissioned by Pope Pio XI, the radio station informs and brings the hope of the Gospel and the voice of the Pope to the entire world. In honor of this anniversary, Vatican Radio is launching a new web site as well as a Web Radio.

“We celebrate this historic milestone with gratitude for all that has been done by those who have come before us, and who looked toward the future at the same time. The radio is a medium that has been able to transform itself over time, without ever losing its value or attraction,” remarked the Prefect of the Dicastery for Communication, Paolo Ruffini. “This is the beauty of radio – it enters deep inside of you because you hear a voice. You concentrate on a voice. The radio does not rush. It requires attention. Even today Vatican Radio is moving toward the future while preserving its originality and its identity. These things are in Vatican Radio’s DNA, just as its founder, Pope Pius XI, and the Jesuits, to whom the radio station was entrusted 90 years ago, wanted: service to the Church, the Pope and the human person wherever they may be, no matter what religion or culture they belong to. What we celebrate, therefore, is a story that transpired practically the whole of the 19th century, that resisted fascism and communism, that survived the Second World War and the Cold War; and it is the prospect of a missionary future founded on the gentle power of the spoken and heard word. But it is not only this. It is also the strong roots on which the tree that is Vatican News is growing, the internet site that recounts the Church’s stories and Papal magisterium, of which 250 million pages were read throughout the world in 2020. And it is the project of the web radio that will begin today, that will allow anyone in the world to listen to Vatican Radio in their own language from their own smartphone or computer. Each language a radio, a radio program, a bond that is strengthened with our listeners. Another small step on the journey of the Dicastery for Communication that will see several of its entities celebrate important anniversaries (25 years of the website Vatican.va, December 2020; 160 years of L’Osservatore Romano) looking toward and constructing the future together.”

Vatican Radio turns 90 years old, an important milestone achieved at the height of the Holy See’s

communications reform desired by Pope Francis. Today, the radio station transmits 41 languages (Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Belarusian, Brazilian, Bulgarian, Czech, Chinese, Croatian, English, Esperanto, Ewondo, French, German, Hindi, Italian, Kikongo, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Latin, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Malayalam, Malagasy, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Slovenian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tamil, Tigrinya, Tshiluba, Ukrainian, Hungarian, Vietnamese).

“We are celebrating our 90th anniversary while one of the greatest trials affecting all of humanity is underway due to the Covid-19 pandemic,” says Director Massimiliano Menichetti. “Our mission has always been not to leave anyone alone and to bring the hope of the Christian proclamation, the voice of the Pope and to interpret events in the light of the Gospel. So, this moment challenges us more than ever before. Besides providing the service of television/radio commentaries in several languages, we have created new programs, podcasts, audiobooks, so as to draw near to everyone, to reach every corner of the globe.

In these months, in addition to informing, we have continued to gather and narrate stories of people helping people, of solidarity, web ring spirituality, we show the face of the Church and of every part of society that is building bridges, more often than not silently, those who are helping and including”.

Menichetti also notes how the Papal radio station has changed in the last few years. “The reform the Pope desired”, he says, “projected us toward a new dimension in which we are no longer solely a radio, but an integrated reality still progressing. Vatican Radio’s personnel, who come from 69 nations, were the reason why the Vatican News web portal was born where articles, video, photos, audio, and social media can be found”.

Giacomo Ghisani, Legal Representative of Vatican Radio and a member of the Executive Board of the European Broadcasting Union, underlines that “Vatican Radio is fully inserted within the international community of public service broadcasters, in particular the European Broadcasting Union, of which it is a founding member, and the African Broadcasting Union. Participation in these international broadcasting communities forms part of the mission of the Pope’s Radio. In its service of assisting the Petrine Ministry and promoting connections between the center of Catholicism and the nations of the world, Vatican Radio interacts, collaborates, shares, and engages in discussions with other broadcasters regarding the primary topics and values which inspire its activities, all with the goal of providing correct information at the service of the common good. This vast network of relations is also expressed through the partnerships that Vatican Radio has with many other radio stations—both Catholic and non-Catholic, regional and local—as well as with websites that broadcast the Radio’s language programs, thus allowing it to reach the most remote places with greater effectiveness”.

As of 12 February, the Web Radio will be launched (<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/epg.html>).

It will debut in Italian, French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, German and Armenian. Throughout the year, about 30 live program schedules will be created. This corresponds to the number of languages that can be heard from the Radio’s website, and from the Radio Vaticana App. Vatican Radio today transmits “via satellite, DAB+, digitally, via internet and naturally through Hertzian waves. We must not forget that it is particularly transmitting through short wave that incarnates what Pope Francis emphatically requests: that we reach the world’s peripheries”.
