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**PAPAL HOUSEHOLD THEOLOGIAN:
JOHN PAUL II FORMULATED
A "THEOLOGY OF COMMUNICATION"**

Claim made during new Vatican book release presentation and symposium

ROMA—During the launch of a new book from Vatican publisher Libreria Editrice Vaticana (LEV) today, retired papal theologian Georges Marie Martin Cardinal Cottier, OP, and others asserted that during the course of his 26-year pontificate, John Paul II developed a "theology of communication."

Joined by renowned journalist Joanna Bogle, educator Sr. Marie Gannon, FMA, and author Dr. Christine Mugridge at the official release of Dr. Mugridge and Prof. Gannon's *John Paul II: Development of a Theology of Communications*, Cardinal Cottier and the others discussed how this pedagogy had the potential to impact not only ecclesial communications but communications in the media and beyond. The participants agreed that while the seeds of such a theology have always existed throughout Church history, its development only began to bear fruit during Pope John Paul II's pontificate.

All also concurred that as the world becomes ever more secularized, expanding this development will be crucial if the Church is to succeed in its mission of evangelization.

Cardinal Cottier noted that when it came to communication in any form, the late Holy Father was always very concerned to acknowledge the role of Jesus Christ, Who not only created words but was Himself the Word.

In her presentation, Mrs. Bogle noted how communication is "a gift from God" in that it is words that "somehow get us to God."

"For Catholics, word and action, Scripture and sacrament, go together," she said, "and in a sense one flows from one another." While she lamented the decline in all forms of communication, and admitted that even the Church has not been immune from its effects, "the Church still holds out to us the exciting recognition that we haven't yet fulfilled – or even begun to fulfill – all of mankind's great potential for creativity, wisdom, and beauty" in this regard. And this is precisely because that potential is ultimately born out of Christ, Who "is brought to the world again and again" as the Word made flesh.

“There is indeed a theology of communication,” she concluded, and “I am not sure we have really grasped its fullness yet.”

Dr. Mugridge concurred and noted that the late Pontiff was very keen to emphasize that there was a difference between a study of theology *and* communications versus a theology *of* communications. She also explained how, while the Pope never called it such, a theology of communications clearly did develop over the course of his pontificate.

Prof. Gannon observed how she particularly appreciated Pope Wojtyła’s work in this area because it drew on both secular communications as well as the Church’s Magisterium before, during, and after the Second Vatican Council. “This was possible,” she said, “because parallel criteria for principles and methodology in both the ecclesial and the secular field were used for the analysis of material from both fields that are apropos for speaking of a theology of communication.”

The round table was moderated by Libreria Editrice Vaticana (LEV) Director Don Giuseppe Costa, SDB, and took place at the offices of Vatican Radio.

It was announced at the event that Catholic Word, an American consortium of over a dozen publishers such as Ignatius Press and Ascension Press, will distribute *John Paul II: Development of a Theology of Communications* in the English-speaking world. This is the first work distributed by Catholic Word on behalf of LEV.

Catholic Word President Carolyn Klika expressed the great hope this new teaching holds for the entire Church. “The Theology of Communication can assist every bishop and parish priest in more effectively reaching his faithful, every teacher in connecting with students, every media outlet in conveying their message, and even impact every human relationship. We are grateful for the opportunity to make this timely and critical title available to the English-speaking world.”