

FOUNDATIONS OF COMMUNICATION

Forms of Communication

A 90-minute introductory primer

From human encounter to divine, ecclesial, pastoral, media, and AI communication

LISTEN • UNDERSTAND • WITNESS • DISCERN • COMMUNICATE



FOUNDATIONS
OF
COMMUNICATION
BUILDING COMMUNION IN THE DIGITAL AGE
+
UT COMMUNIONEM AEDIFICEMUS



The 90-Minute Journey

Six questions that open the field of communication



**Why do we
communicate?**



**How does God
communicate?**



**How has the Church
communicated?**



**How should ministers
communicate?**



What forms do we use?



**How does AI change
communication?**



Opening Scenario

The message was sent—but was it communicated?

Scenario

A parish announces an important programme. Young people do not know it is meant for them. Elderly parishioners cannot read the poster. Migrant families do not understand the language. The team says, “But we communicated it everywhere.”

Ask the room

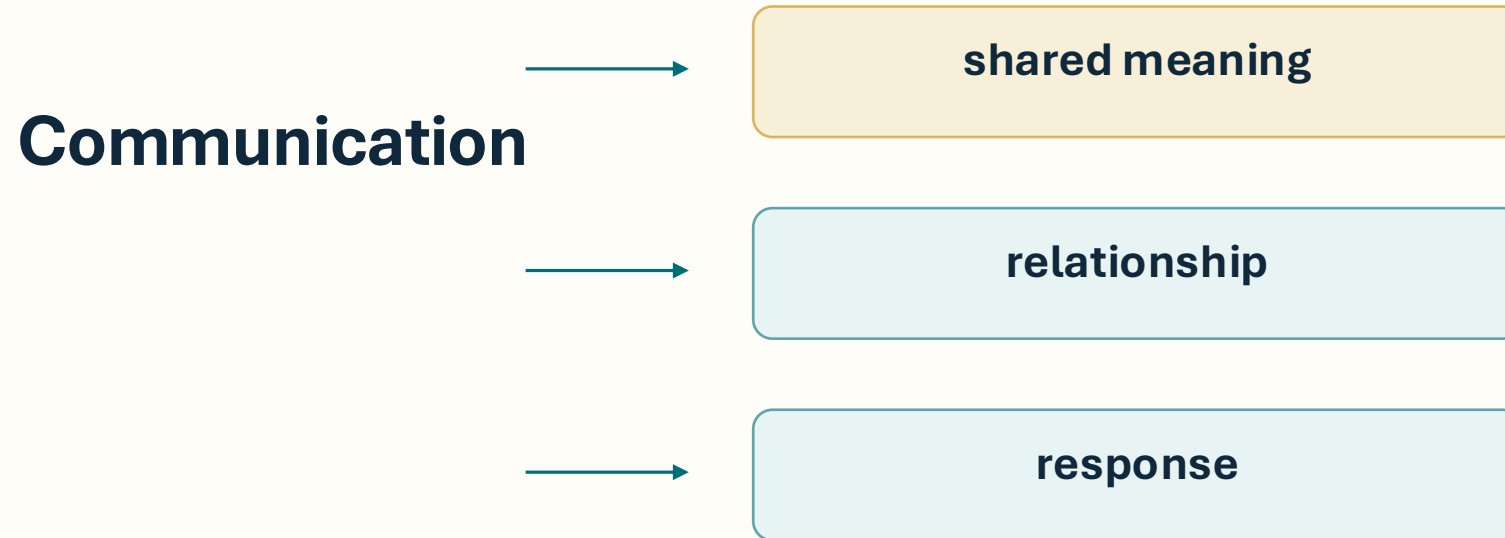
Was the information sent?
Was the meaning received?
Who was excluded?
What feedback was missing?

Transmission is not yet communication.



Communication Is More Than Sending

Communication creates shared meaning, relationship, and response



If meaning is not received, communication is incomplete.

Question 1

Why do human beings communicate?

Communication as a human and relational act





We Communicate Because We Are Relational

Communication expresses who we are and how we belong

- to express identity, thought, feeling, and intention
- to understand and be understood
- to form relationships and communities
- to share memory, faith, culture, and truth
- to coordinate action and resolve conflict
- to create participation, belonging, and communion

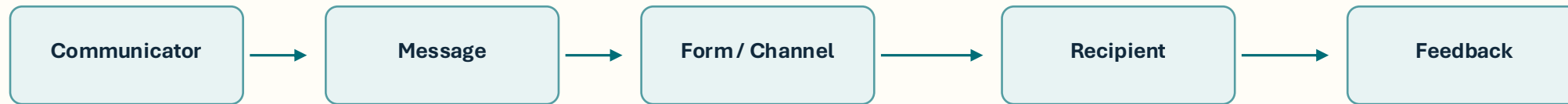
Key insight

We do not merely communicate information. We communicate ourselves through word, tone, gesture, timing, silence, and presence.



The Communication Event

Meaning is shaped by more than the message



Context

culture • relationship • situation • setting • expectations

Noise / Barriers

language • emotion • assumptions • technology • access • distraction

What changes when the words stay the same but the tone changes?

Question 2

How does God communicate?

Revelation as divine self-communication





God Communicates Himself

Revelation is self-gift and invitation into relationship

Creation

History

Covenant

Prophets & Scripture

Word & Deed

Jesus Christ

Holy Spirit & Church

Revelation is not merely information about God; it is God's self-gift.



Jesus: The Perfect Communicator

“The Word became flesh and lived among us”

Communication becomes embodied

In Jesus, God communicates through place, culture, body, relationship, action, silence, suffering, and self-gift.

parables

questions

encounters

meals

gestures

healing

silence

compassion

self-gift

Christian communication joins word, life, presence, relationship, and action.

Question 3

How has the Church communicated?

From proclamation to digital culture





The Church Communicates Through Many Forms

Proclamation, liturgy, symbol, service, witness, community, and media

preaching

liturgy

sacraments

Scripture

symbols

art & music

education

service

print

radio / TV

websites

social media

The Church must discern not only tools, but the cultures those tools create.



A Simple Communication Timeline

Each development brings new opportunities and questions



Which form most shaped the faith of your generation?

Question 4

How should a pastoral minister communicate today?

From speaker to digital shepherd





The Pastoral Communicator

Not only a speaker, but a listener, witness, bridge-builder, and guide

Listener

receives persons

Witness

lives the message

Interpreter

connects faith & culture

Teacher

adapts language

Leader

coordinates gifts

Guardian

protects dignity

Pastoral communication seeks not simply to reach people, but to accompany them.



Five Distinctions for Pastoral Presence

Healthy communication needs clear judgement

Presence

is not

constant availability

Authenticity

is not

sharing everything

Visibility

is not

credibility

Popularity

is not

pastoral fruit

Leadership

is not

doing every technical task

Which distinction is most important for seminarians today?

Question 5

What are the principal forms of communication?

The form shapes how meaning is experienced





Forms of Communication

One event can belong to many forms at the same time

By expression

verbal • non-verbal • visual • aural

By relationship

intrapersonal • interpersonal • group • public • mass • networked

By direction

one-way • two-way • many-to-many

By time

synchronous • asynchronous

By mediation

direct • mediated • multimodal



A. By Human Expression

How meaning is expressed through the human person and media

Verbal

spoken or written words

Non-verbal

gesture, posture, silence

Visual

image, symbol, colour,
layout

Aural

voice, music, tone, rhythm

Before a priest says the first word at the ambo, what is already being communicated?



B. By Number and Relationship

Who is communicating with whom?

Intrapersonal

within oneself

Interpersonal

between persons

Group

small community

Public

larger gathering

Mass

large dispersed audience

Networked

interactive platforms

Which form is most central to priestly formation: public, interpersonal, or intrapersonal?



C–E. Direction, Time and Mediation

How the message moves and how it is received

Direction

one-way
two-way
many-to-many

Time

synchronous
asynchronous

Mediation

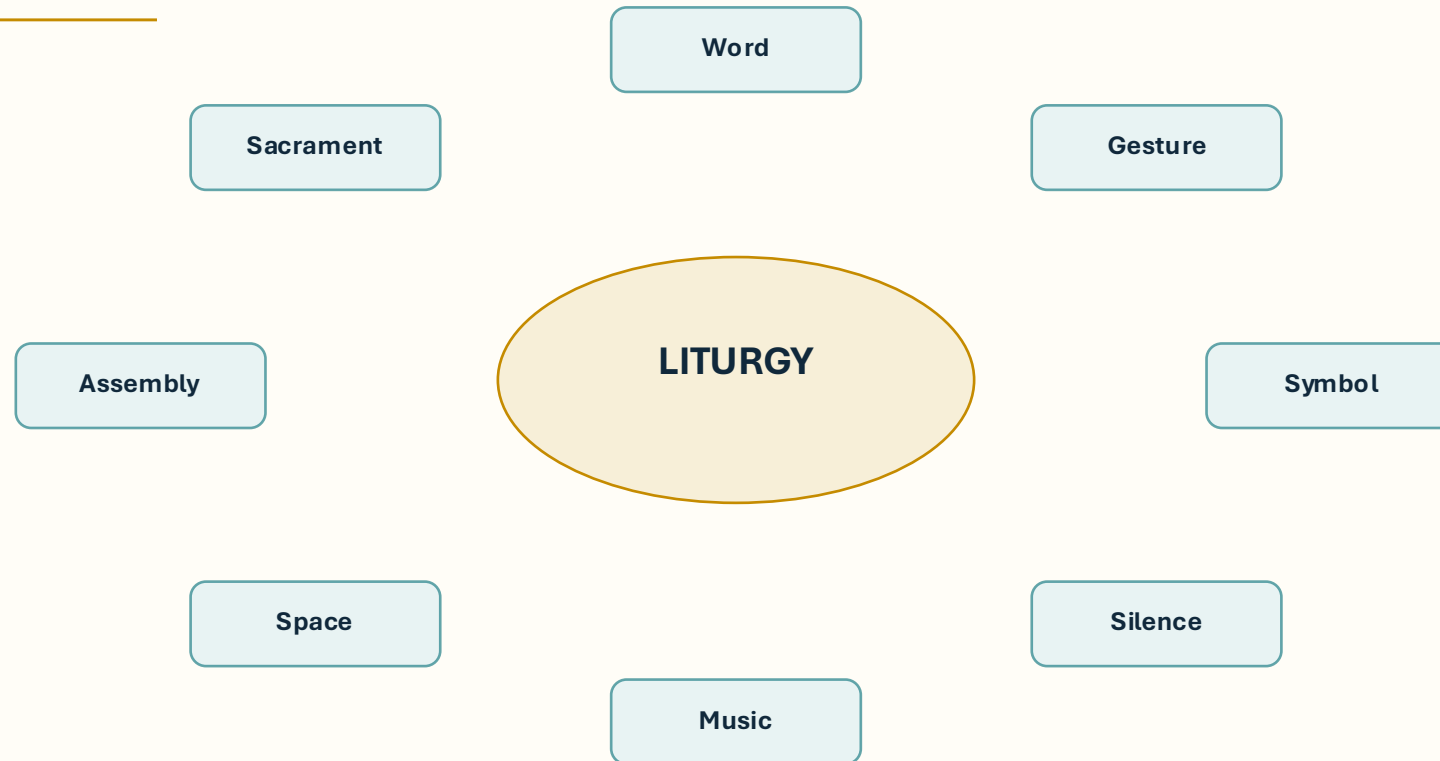
direct
mediated
multimodal

What is gained and what is lost when direct communication becomes mediated?



Liturgy as Multimodal Communication

Word, gesture, symbol, silence, music, space, assembly, and sacrament



The richest communication often combines many forms at once.



Activity: Classify the Communication Event

Work in pairs or small groups

Task

Choose one example and classify it by expression, relationship, direction, time, and mediation.

Examples

- Sunday homily
- parish WhatsApp announcement
- spiritual direction
- televised papal Mass
- silent personal prayer

How does the form shape the meaning?

Question 6

How does AI change communication?

Generation expands capacity, not responsibility





AI Can Assist or Generate

Text, images, music, voices, video, translation, transcription, and summaries

Q6 AI

drafting and outlining

translation and simplification

transcription and subtitles

summarisation and organisation

image, voice, audio, and video generation

format adaptation and accessibility support

But AI does not possess

faith • conscience • pastoral experience • personal
relationship • spiritual discernment • moral
responsibility • ecclesial authority



Six Questions Before Using AI

Responsible communication remains human-led

Question 1

Is it true and verifiable?

Question 3

Is anyone being imitated?

Question 5

Is private information protected?

Question 2

Who reviewed and approved it?

Question 4

Is disclosure needed?

Question 6

Does it strengthen human encounter?

AI may generate communication; it cannot assume pastoral responsibility.



The Six Questions: One Integrated Map

The session in one view

Why?

meaning, relationship, life

God?

self-gift and Incarnation

Church?

witness, symbol, media, community

Minister?

listening and accompaniment

Forms?

expression, relationship, direction, time, mediation

AI?

assistance with human responsibility



Final Reflection

What kind of communicator am I becoming?

I need to listen more carefully when...

I communicate most naturally through...

One form I need to develop is...

One danger I must guard against is...

My communication should help people move toward...

Complete one sentence in your workbook.



Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus, Word made flesh

Teach us to listen before speaking,
to seek truth before visibility,
to protect dignity before impact,
and to use every form and every tool
in the service of communion.

Make our communication clear, compassionate,
credible, attentive, responsible, and human.
Amen.

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Ut Communionem Aedificemus

