Santa Croce was launched in 1984, but did not attain the status of being a Pontifical University until it added the School of Church Communications in 1996. One of the requirements of being a Pontifical University is to offer four degree programs. The first three schools were Philosophy, Theology, and Canon Law. Why was Church Communications chosen as the fourth school?

One reason can be traced to the influence of the Opus Dei founder, St. Josemaría Escrivá. Nearly 60 years ago, as the first Chancellor of the University of Navarra in Spain, he asked for a journalism program to be created. The university website states that the program reflected the saint’s founding charism: “a tradition in the humanities combined with technological innovation; teaching based on both research and on contact with reality; raising the profile of media-related professions through theoretical and practical research; ongoing relations with the professional and academic world alike, and close contact between students and alumni.”

A second reason was the influence of St. John Paul II, who emerged as the first “media” pope in a time when communications technology (television and computers) were rapidly expanding. Also, according to Fr. José María La Porte, Dean of the School of Church Communications, the Pope’s long-time Director of the Holy See Press Office (1984-1996), Joaquín Navarro-Valls, “encouraged the Church Communications School from the beginning.” (for more see Navarro-Valls article on page 4)

Fr. Laporte explained that a degree in Church Communications is built upon four pillars: 1) a clear understanding of the Church’s identity, 2) the context or cultural environment in which a communicator works, 3) the types of communication, such as public opinion, radio, and television, and 4) how to manage a communications department or office.

While there are a handful of universities who offer a communications degree, they are generally aimed at pastoral or vocational communications. Thus, Santa Croce’s program is unique.

There are currently about 120 students enrolled in Church Communications – 80% of them are priests and religious. The majority are working on their licentiate degrees, while about 20 are in the doctoral program. Graduates frequently return to the dioceses of their home country to serve their bishops in effectively communicating the Church’s message to the faithful.
to the faithful as well as the general public. Fr. LaPorte says the role of this kind of communications expert is “to make the bishop close to the people and the people close to the bishop.”

Fr. José María La Porte, Dean of the School of Church Communication

Licentiate degrees (similar to a Master’s degree in the U.S.) require writing and defending a thesis as well as passing a comprehensive exam. Doctorates in Church Communications likewise require writing and defending a thesis under the supervision and accompanied by a faculty advisor.

Considering the fast-paced spread of information and misinformation in today’s media-saturated society, it is extremely important for the worldwide Church to have media professionals who understand the theological and philosophical basis of Church teachings and can communicate them faithfully.

With its degree programs and special study centers and conferences, Santa Croce provides an essential service for the needs of local dioceses and religious news organizations around the world.

COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH PROJECTS AND CONFERENCES

Center of Research into the Relationship between Family and Mass Media
This international group studies the influence of social media on the family in two ways: first, how the family is presented in the media (fictional portrayals and news) and second, how institutions that promote the family can present a better public image of the family.

Rhetoric and Anthropology
Rhetoric is a multi-dimensional discipline which includes theory and practice, logic, and linguistics. It must also examine the attitudes and intentions of the speaker and receiver. This center seeks to find the balance of these elements in what it means to be authentically human.

The Church and the Media
Santa Croce Communications professors investigate the relationships between the Church and the media, especially the journalistic coverage of faith and values.

Professional International Seminar
Church communications professionals gather every other year to discuss issues of importance to directors of diocesan communication bureaus, non-profits, bishops conferences, and journalists dealing with religious information.

Poetics and Christianity
Addressed to academics and artists from different fields, the aim is to identify in the life of art a source of light in which they can implement their own discipline and expertise.

“The Church Up Close”
Addressed to journalists around the world who cover the Roman Catholic Church, this seminar gives journalists an array of tools to strengthen their coverage about the Pope, the Vatican and faith in general.

News Issues on the Catholic Church
2017 marks the 7th year for this course of eleven 2-hour sessions held on Fridays between March and June. Organized by ISCOM Association and the PUHC communications faculty, this year’s topics included the reorganization of the Curia, ecological themes of Laudato Si, the relation between a global economy and a solidarity economy, and how the Church manages money.

“I love studying communications at Santa Croce. To help me integrate into our field, the communications faculty sent me to the USA for a month-long internship at the Catholic TV Station EWTN in Alabama. I learned so much there! Santa Croce is not only concerned with our education, but also with our spiritual growth. I would say that my dreams are complete, just being here and seeing the beautiful roots of Christianity.”
— Fr. Nicholas Kaliminwa, Zambia

Fr. Nicholas Kaliminwa, Archdiocese of Kasama (Zambia, Africa)
DOSTOEVSKY: LIVING THE MYSTERY


“The Pontifical University of the Holy Cross’s Department of Institutional Communications had the pleasure of offering the seventh international Poetry and Christianity conference in a two-day event entitled “Dostoevsky: Living the Mystery”, which took place at the University on April 27th and 28th, 2017. The conference featured talks, video presentations and a roundtable discussion, providing students, professors, and other participants, an in-depth look at this great Christian author and the influence his work has had on our world. Twenty speakers were present, some even coming from as far as London, Berlin and Moscow, to expand on the theme.

The event was orchestrated by Dr. Federica Bergamino, a literature professor in the Communications Department, who was the President of the Conference and brought together experts from around the world to speak on this author and his relevance in our Christian world today, especially for future Church communicators. “The Conference had a strong impact on the University because it brought together philosophers, scholars, theologians and artists, to reflect on the fruitfulness of an author who gained a relationship with God and who wanted to share this relationship with the world,” said Bergamino. Her goal for the event was that students would delve deeper into and leave with a clearer idea of what this author intended to communicate with his writings.

“Reading and studying Dostoevsky,” she explained, “is to enter into the deepest and most hidden dimensions of humanity; Dostoevsky reveals to mankind the traps and mechanisms in which man becomes more or less aware, and Dostoevsky places the reader into the very conditions that make him realize those choices that can damage his life. This offers him the opportunity to become better and to experience Christ through human mediation. The purpose of this Conference was to show how this author can help the modern day man to escape from a culture of shame, in which the outer world – exteriority and performance – prevails, and to arrive to a culture in which man returns to being in contact with himself, with his interior life and deepest desire.”

Student participants from the Faculty of Communications found the Conference to be particularly informative and inspirational, as it highlighted Dostoevsky as an author who communicated God’s message of hope. Father Joshan Rodrigues, a student from Bombay, currently in his second year of Communications studies, was moved by the Conference, and shared: “it helped me to give words and structure to some emotions which I felt deeply while reading Dostoevsky’s works, but which I was unable to describe with words.” He learned how relevant Dostoevsky is for our times and social context, that “in our current world where nature and absolute principles are made subservient to the individual and his aspirations, Dostoevsky shows us that we can start with the individual, but that his destiny is always the Divine, and without that destination our journey on earth has no meaning.”


“Dostoevsky in Contemporary Film,” Dr. José García, Film Critic, Berlin.

The Conference concluded on Friday at 6 PM with a roundtable discussion, which gave students the opportunity to ask questions and exchange ideas. Like previous Poetry and Christianity Conferences, these two days gave students of Santa Croce a new opportunity of seeing how literature and art are inspiration for reflections on God from various disciplinary perspectives.
Joaquín Navarro-Valls, a great friend of Santa Croce and influential pioneer of Church communications, passed away on July 5th at the age of 81. He was a welcome face at various School of Communications conferences or when dropping in on a communications class. Fr. Jose Maria La Porte, remarked, “he encouraged the Church Communications School from the beginning and was involved as a visiting professor. He was a real gentleman with a profound faith and a serene sense of humor.”

Navarro-Valls was a foreign correspondent for a Spanish newspaper when St. John Paul II offered him the job of director of the Vatican press office. At the young age of 22, he was the first journalist to hold that position, which he continued throughout St. John Paul II’s pontificate and into the first 15 months of Pope Benedict XVI.

Proficient in four languages, Navarro-Valls promoted the use of multiple languages in the Italian-centric press. He is credited with bringing computer technology to the Press Office and giving journalists better access. With degrees in both journalism and medicine (specializing in psychiatry) he was particularly important as a press liaison during the final months of St. John Paul II’s reign.

Navarro-Valls was a member of Opus Dei, dating back to 1970, when he lived in the central headquarters with St. Josemaría Escrivá, the founder of Opus Dei.

Thanks to the advances of digital technology, it seems like everyone is faced with constant confrontation. Many different worlds – cultural, social, and religious – meet each day on social media, without mediation and without filters. Diversity, which in times past was a specific experience in life, has become an ordinary aspect of reality. This is the root of online hostility based on polarization and oppression that regularly pollutes public speech. Thanks to the web, we have become close to one another, but not necessarily “good neighbors.” That is something that we need to work at day by day.

The Happy Dispute is a book born of a necessity, because we must learn to confront one another effectively and courteously. Nearly everyone with a smart phone can be thrown into public debate, discussing crucial issues for our existence, or other topics far removed from our experience. With the help of the best principles of rhetoric, media training, and crisis communication, The Happy Dispute offers a concise guide to learn to support one’s own point of view, and to disagree with others without quarreling. That is the “happy dispute”.

Considering the many confrontations today between the extreme right, extreme left, and everyone in between, these are necessary skills for our communications students as well as the priests who will leave Santa Croce to become arbiters of truth as well as peacemakers in the world.

This humorous advertisement for The Happy Dispute, shows author Bruno Mastroianni being punched. Mastroianni is head of the press office of Opus Dei in Italy and director of the Italian projects of the Associazione Iscom, which promotes communications and training activities for non-profit organizations. He also teaches Media Relations at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome.
Just south of the Mason-Dixon line, separating Maryland from Pennsylvania, is the historic town of Emmitsburg, MD. It is the home of Mount St. Mary’s University and Seminary, the second oldest Catholic seminary in the United States (established 1808). It is also the site of two pilgrimage sites: The National Shrine Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes and the Basilica and Shrine of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. The Civil War battlefields of Gettysburg are just 12 miles away, causing even the casual visitor to consider the ultimate questions of life.

The seminarians at Mount St. Mary’s Seminary, however, are not casually interested in pursuing the ultimate questions of life. They are actively contemplating the truth and beauty of the Catholic faith as aspiring priests. Since 2015, Msgr. Andrew Baker has served as their Rector, guiding them in their vocations, and bringing his considerable training and talents to the position.

Msgr. Baker is an alumnus of Santa Croce, having earned a doctorate in Moral Theology there in 1997. Ordained as a priest in 1991, he first served as a Parochial Vicar in Allentown, Pennsylvania. During the 1990s, he also taught in Catholic high schools and at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Philadelphia. Msgr. Baker returned to Rome in 2001 where he served as an official for the Congregation of Bishops until 2009. In 2006 he was named Chaplain of His Holiness and gained the title of Monsignor.

Mount St. Mary’s Seminary was founded in 1808 - the second oldest seminary in the United States serving bishops from 21 partner dioceses. The seminarians, currently 117, typically spend from four to six years in formation. As rector, Msgr. Baker is focused on forming the minds, hearts, and souls of these future shepherds. He considers Santa Croce to be a model of what he wants for Mount St. Mary’s.

“Priestly formation must be done with the mind and heart of the Church and I encountered both at Santa Croce.”

— Msgr. Andrew Baker

“During my time at Santa Croce I was always struck by the pervasive love of the Church among the professors, the way the entire student body had recourse to the chapel, and the individual care the administration and staff had toward the students. In my role now as rector of a major seminary, I could not have asked for a better preparation and example. Priestly formation must be done with the mind and heart of the Church and I encountered both at Santa Croce.”

The impact of a rector on a seminary is considerable – and we are proud to present Msgr. Baker as another example of Santa Croce’s impact in America.
Paul and Janet Smyczek were both born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In fact, both families attended Blessed Sacrament parish in the south side of the city. Being brought up in the same faith and in the same neighborhood gave them a sense of the importance of maintaining strong connections. Perhaps that played some ironic part in Paul founding Electronic Cable Specialists, Inc. in 1984, and raising a large family with Janet in their home town.

Having strong connections is good for both electronics and families, but being well grounded is equally important. So, when Paul and Janet fell in love they wanted to make sure their marriage was grounded in the Catholic faith. Through the years they have raised ten children, now ranging between the ages of 21 and 36. Seven of their children are now married and the Smyczek family has twelve grandchildren and three more on the way.

Clearly, Paul and Janet have an excellent understanding of the importance of good Christian formation. They feel that one of the most important things that anyone can do for the Church is to help form holy priests. “I believe there is a revival today in the Church,” said Janet, “and I am glad to support Santa Croce so it can continue to have the positive impact that is does now on so many young priests and seminarians.”

Fr. Bob Gahl, a professor at Santa Croce, is another connection the Smyczeks have with the university (see the sidebar about a radio program with Fr. Bob on Relevant Radio). Fr. Bob was in High School in Milwaukee when Paul first met him and they have kept in touch since then.

The Smyczeks have been able to visit Santa Croce in Rome twice in the past ten years and have been very impressed by the tremendous quality of students and professors. Paul believes that “the spirituality and teachings of St. Josemaria, the founder of Opus Dei, are a reason that the graduates of Santa Croce are not only holy priests but also good teachers who connect with the lay people on a personal level.”

“The future of the Catholic Church depends on well-formed priests and I don’t know of any other university who does a better job than Santa Croce in being in accord with the teachings of the Magisterium,” says Paul. He adds, “we support our parish and the archdiocese but we feel that with our contributions to Santa Croce we are helping the whole universal Church in a very effective way.”

We’re glad that Paul and Janet are connected as benefactors of The Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Their endorsement of Santa Croce’s educational/spiritual excellence is high praise.
In addition to giving alms the traditional way by writing a check, there are a couple of other ways to optimize your giving. Other than cash, which is always welcome to fund annual sponsorships for our students, you might find one of these suits your needs:

- **Gifts of Securities**
- **Bequests**
- **Qualified Charitable Distribution from IRA**

We want to be able to fund all deserving seminarians or graduate student priests who are accepted into our programs at Santa Croce, especially those from very poor dioceses who need a full or partial scholarship. All gifts of cash to the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross Foundation are used for the purpose of providing sponsorships. These special gifts also help us well into the future, beyond the year they are received.

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- **Gifts of appreciated securities are deductible at their full value and avoid capital gains tax. Sometimes such a gift will allow for a gift greater than might be possible with cash alone.**
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- **Qualified charitable distribution (QCD), for those who turned age 70-1/2 in 2017 or are older, offers a way to benefit even if you don’t itemize on your tax return. If made by 12/31/2017 it will satisfy your minimum required distribution for this year.**

These gifts may afford special tax advantages for you. If you are interested in making such a planned gift, please contact us. Our Charitable Gift Counselor can work with you to provide any information or assistance you require.

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José Delgado | Pontifical University of the Holy Cross Foundation | P.O. Box 4508 | New York, NY 10163-4508.
FROM ALL THE WORLD TO ALL THE WORLD

Our students are tremendously grateful for the unique opportunity they have to study at Santa Croce. They study with world-renowned thinkers, and they meet friends from every continent – all within an easy stroll of the Vatican, the Pantheon, and the countless other treasures of the Eternal City, and more importantly, all done for the glory of God and the good of His holy Church.

“In studying Communications at Santa Croce, we acquire the skills of handling media technology, but we also learn how public opinion works in relation to the Church and that social communication projects a certain spiritual path, so that each Catholic becomes a living Gospel to spread hope around the world.”
Fr. Gilbert Herrias OSF
Iloilo, Philippines

“Studying communications at Santa Croce helps you to better “package” the message of the Gospel that you are sharing. All of our class material seems to be very relevant to what is going on currently. Our professors are up-to-date on current events, relating class work to what is happening in the Church right now.”
Fr. Joshan Rodrigues,
Archdiocese of Bombay, India

“I came to Rome with the goal of learning how to evangelize and spread the values of the Church in a professional and effective manner. Santa Croce offers students exposure to the world of social communications that prepares us with the skills to implement what we have learned in our diocese.”
Fr. Didier Mokuba Ngankoy
Diocese of Inongo, Congo

Santa Croce’s current student body of 1,600 hail from 75 different countries!

On behalf of all our students, THANK YOU! Your help makes a world of difference!

Students by Location:
- Europe: 45%
- Americas: 10%
- Africa: 10%
- Asia: 33%
- Oceania (less than 1%)

Get to know the students who your financial donations help support.

Our brief e-newsletters introduce you to the people who make up the heart of Santa Croce.
Go to our website to sign up for your free copy, delivered bi-weekly to your email inbox. UniversityHolyCross.org

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