

The Jesuit Communication Project Celebrates 25 Years

Many Catholics still remember the legendary Bishop Sheen, the charismatic New York cleric, who in the early days of television enthralled millions on his weekly US network program “Life is Worth Living”.

Some fifty years later, another TV priest labours in the studio vineyard.

Father John Pungente is at the helm of *Beyond the Screen*, on Bravo! – Canada’s national arts TV channel. Instead of using chalk talk and a plaster statue of the Virgin to help people understand miracles, communism and Freud—the cultural icons of the 50s—he uses movie clips and interviews with directors, stars and writers to help people understand the cultural icons of today—in particular, the big screen entertainments of Hollywood.

As the executive director of the Jesuit Communication Project, based in Toronto, Father Pungente embraces another legacy—that of Catholic Canadian media guru Marshall McLuhan, also based in Toronto, the man who coined the phrase “the medium is the message” in an attempt to explain the singular power of the broadcast media.

Father Pungente, like Bishop Sheen and Marshall McLuhan, is comfortable in front of the cameras, whether he’s being interviewed about the coverage of the 9/11 terrorist attack in Manhattan or explaining the importance of TV’s “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” and “Joan of Arcadia” to the development of teenage growth and spirituality.

But John Pungente is more than a pundit. He is one of the world’s foremost experts on media education. And a key role for him and the Jesuit Communication Project is to provide materials and guidance for teachers and students around the world to promote an increase in media literacy. Like Bishop Sheen and Marshall McLuhan, Father Pungente, as an educator for many years, understands the potential of the media. As John Paul II said in his 1994 address on World Communications day: “It is very useful, . . . sensitizing the students to images and gradually developing their critical attitude towards an idiom that is by now an integral part of our culture; because ‘The application of communications technology has been a mixed blessing, and its use for good purposes requires sound values and wise choices on the part of individuals, the private sector, governments and society as a whole. (*Aetatis Novae* 1992)’ ”

Father Pungente has been with the Project since its start, 25 years ago, in that ominous year 1984, when George Orwell’s dystopian nightmare novel was particularly resonant and many feared communications technology would become an instrument of Big Brother. The Project’s work can be seen as an antidote to Orwell’s dark vision by providing the young with the tools to help them make sense of their mass mediated environment – that’s the purpose of media education. This

work of the Jesuit Communication Project is a wholly relevant way of maintaining the unbroken tradition of Jesuit evangelization.

In The Beginning

While Father Pungente's focus on media education has been a key part of the Project's mandate from the start, the Project's story would make a good movie—plenty of plot twists and at least one major funding crisis. Along the way, many people have made their contributions and left their marks, but it all started in the fall of 1984 when David Eley, SJ, received approval from the Provincial Fr. Bill Ryan, SJ to put together a staff and office space for the Project. One year later, the Jesuit Communication Project was ready to begin its work.

The fledgling Project shared a suite of offices with The Lonergan Institute at 10 St. Mary Street in downtown Toronto. Staff consisted of two Jesuits – David Eley, SJ, a professor of communications who had served as Chair of the Department at Ottawa University and taught at Concordia in Montreal, and John Pungente, SJ, a film teacher and media education specialist. Staff also included United Church minister Des McCalmont who had worked for some twenty five years in the media, and layman Leo Serroul, who had just completed his M. Div from Regis College and who had a background in art and aesthetics. They were soon joined by Adrienne Pereira as Executive Assistant and Treasurer.

The Project was formed, as the first brochure proclaimed, “for the purpose of focusing on the relationship between the faith communities in Canada and the mass media and exploring the opportunities and challenges the media offers in a society where their influence over our lives and culture is so great.”

“A Universal Service to Humankind”

The documents of the 33rd and 34th General Congregations of the Society of Jesus urge the Society to promote the apostolate of social communications - the mass media – to create a shift in awareness, making us realize that the new communications environment is a milieu which reaches and enriches large numbers of people and so permits a more universal service to humankind.

Just as the mass media reach a large number of people, so too does the Jesuit Communication Project aim at reaching as many Canadians as possible: not directly, but by training teachers and other leaders in the community who then touch the minds and hearts of Canadians with whom they work.

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, Paul VI spoke of the need to concentrate our resources on the evangelization not only of peoples but also of cultures. The influence of the communications media is pervasive in today's cultures. To disregard the influence of the media and their potential for evangelization would be both a serious misread of the times and a lost opportunity for spreading the gospel. As John Paul II said on World Communication Day 1983: “The question confronting the Church today is

not any longer whether the man in the street can grasp a religious message but how to employ the communications media so as to let him have the full impact of the gospel message.” At the heart of Jesuit engagement in the communications world is the concept of the Jesuit as evangelizer. We seek to spread the gospel in and through the culture of our time.

While it is not possible to list all the accomplishments and involvement of the Jesuit Communication Project over the past twenty five years, we can list some of the highlights.

1984

Between 1984 and 1988, the Jesuit Communication Project was engaged in communications research, projects, and teaching. In research, the Project began developing a curriculum on Media Studies for the Toronto School of Theology, University of Toronto. In the area of teaching, courses in Media Studies were given to the Jesuit Novices in Guelph, Ontario and to the students at the Toronto School of Theology, University of Toronto. As well two semester courses in Media Studies were offered to students of the Gregorian University in Rome.

- There were three major projects during this time:

1. Working with the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Association of Roman Catholic Communicators in Canada (ARCCC) to develop a national short term and long term plan for social communications in Canada. Throughout 25 years the Jesuit Communication Project has worked with CCCB on a variety of media education projects.

2. Developing a Media Relations File to link church people who are knowledgeable in certain fields with media professionals who are looking for such people for television and radio programs, interviews, articles, background research etc.

3. Promoting the development and implementation of media education in all primary and secondary school systems of Canada. Media education has evolved to become the main focus of the Jesuit Communication Project

The Jesuit Communication Project could not function without the collaboration of others. And it was at this time that the Jesuit Communication Project began its collaboration with the Ontario based Association for Media Literacy. Founded in 1978, the AML is the oldest media education organization in Canada. The Jesuit Communication Project worked closely with AML to ensure that media education became a mandated part of the language arts curriculum in Ontario. The two groups also co-wrote the Ontario Media Literacy Resource Guide for the Ontario department of Education. The Guide became a huge success and was translated into French, Italian, Spanish and Japanese and continues to be used around the world today.

4. Promoting and Sponsoring the Mission: In 1987, Warner Bros. released *The Mission* –a feature film based on 17th century events in the Jesuit missions in Latin America. The Jesuit Communication Project worked with Warner Bros Canada to promote the film and sponsor a number of benefit showings for Jesuit works. The Canadian gala premiere was held in Toronto on November 13 as a benefit for the Jesuit Communication Project, Regis College and the Jesuit Mission Bureau. The Jesuit Communication Project also organized benefit nights around the movie for Jesuits in Regina, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Ottawa, Halifax and St. John's.

In July of 1989 the Jesuit Communication Project underwent its first major change. The Director, David Eley, SJ was assigned to the Communications Department at Concordia University in Montreal, and Des McCalmont, the United Church minister, was called back to his own church. Leo Serroul also went on to other work. The amount of funding provided the Project by the Canadian Jesuits was reduced.

The new Executive Director, John Pungente, SJ made the decision to concentrate the work of the Project in the field of Media Literacy. Adrienne Pereira became the Director's Executive Assistant, and continued her work as Treasurer and Librarian.

Media Education

The Church's has issued many statements about the importance of media education but what exactly is media education?

Media education helps students develop an informed and critical understanding mass media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques. More specifically, it is education which aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organized, and how they construct reality. Media education also aims to provide students with the ability to create media products. Or, very simply, helping people to watch carefully and think critically about the media.

The goal of media education is not only to help people become critical thinkers and viewers but also to give them critical autonomy so that they may take what they have learned and put it into practice in their own lives.

The New Literacy – Guelph – 1st North American ML Conference

“None of you could possibly be as excited as I am.” With these words Rick Shepherd as Chair opened “The New Literacy”, the first North American Conference on Media Education. Rick's excitement was contagious and quickly caught by the 420 participants from 8 of the 10 Canadian provinces, 9 American states and 3 other countries. Two years of careful preparation - by the Association

for Media Literacy with the help of the Jesuit Communication Project - were evident at the three day conference in May 1990 at the University of Guelph.

When planning began organizers hoped to attract about 300 participants. The response was overwhelming. Space limitations necessitated a final count of 420 and over 100 further applicants had to be turned away. Keynote speakers and workshop presenters came from around the world. This conference was of great benefit especially to Ontario English teachers who are required to teach media literacy as part of the curriculum. Not only did they get to hear from some of the world leaders in media literacy but they had a chance to take part in a number of the 60 workshops offered. The conference evaluation forms and letters received after the conference confirmed that this first North American Media Education conference was a success long to be remembered.

A Heart To Understand

To commemorate the 450th Anniversary of the founding of the Society of Jesus (1540) and the 500th Anniversary of the birth of St. Ignatius Loyola (1491), the Upper Canada Province commissioned a video focusing on John English, SJ, and his work teaching people to use the principles of discernment in their lives. John Pungente, SJ, served as the Executive Producer of the video which would follow two lay people making a discernment retreat. Paul Sullivan, at that time a CBC producer, was Producer/Director and Kevin Burns, then a freelance writer, wrote the script. During the week of June 10, the production team filmed the retreat at Ignatius College in Guelph. Released in October, 1990, "A Heart To Understand" was widely distributed, shown on VISION TV and went on to win awards and critical praise.

Constructing Culture

"Amazing! Excellent! Best conference ever! Wonderful! Stimulating! Fabulous! Fantastic! Awesome!" These are comments heard from many of the participants of "Constructing Culture: The Second North American Conference on Media Literacy". Held once again at The University of Guelph – May 1992, the three days of the conference were possibly even more successful than the 1990 conference. At the opening session, the audience broke into applause as John Pungente, SJ, chair of the conference, announced that 473 people from 8 Canadian provinces, 18 US states, and 16 overseas countries - Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bermuda, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Norway, Pakistan, The Philippines, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom - had come together to make this the largest ever gathering of media educators. Working with the Association for Media Literacy, the Jesuit Communication Project organized the conference. John Pungente, SJ, was Chair and Adrienne Pereira was Secretary/Treasurer.

International media educators gave keynotes and workshops, once again providing teachers from across Canada and other countries, the chance to find

the materials and the ways to teach about the media in their classrooms. But words cannot begin to do justice to all that went on during the three days in Guelph. The meeting, greeting, and networking of people; the listening to and agree or disagreeing with workshop and panel presenters; all those media books in one place to look at ; the joy of having three days to do nothing but be totally involved in Media Education - all of this and so much more.

CAMEO

On May 16, 1992, the day after the Guelph Conference ended media educators from across Canada met at the Jesuit Communication Project to form a national association of Canadian media educators. The Canadian Association of Media Education Organizations (CAMEO) was formed during that meeting. The following organizations – with their founding date – made up CAMEO that day. CAME (BC) (1992), AAMA (Alberta 1992), MLS (Saskatchewan 1989), MAML (Manitoba 1990), AML (Ontario 1978), the Jesuit Communication Project (1984), AMEQ (Quebec 1990) and MLNS (Nova Scotia 1992). Other groups later joined CAMEO – MNET (1995), MLNB (New Brunswick 2001), MLNL (Newfoundland and Labrador 2002), CREM (Quebec 2002) and CCA (2003).

John Pungente, SJ is the current president of CAMEO, the umbrella media education organization which speaks for Canadian media educators. Over the years, CAMEO has been involved in questions of copyright, in working with the CRTC and other organizations around the issues of violence in the media, and in organizing the country wide protest which led to the eventual collapse of the Youth News Network which would have brought commercials into the classroom in return for free AV equipment. One of the major accomplishments of CAMEO was reaching the goal of making media education a mandatory part of the Language Arts curriculum at all grade levels across Canada. This goal was attained in 2002. CAMEO members also offer workshops to train media education teachers.

In 2003, John Pungente, SJ, represented CAMEO on the advisory committee chaired by the Canadian Teachers' Federation in conjunction with Erin Research to design and conduct a landmark national survey on Canadian children and the media. Close to 6,000 Canadian children, ages 8-15, from every province took part. The material gathered is proving invaluable in helping parents, teachers and children to look at the media from a media education point of view, showing them how to act in supportive and creative ways so that Canadian children can have the best that media has to offer.

In the survey one important point was made clear – as children get older, they increasingly see the value of studying media in school. Although media education is mandated in all provinces and territories, there is little professional development for teachers or resources attached to this discipline. This is something that the Jesuit Communication Project is working with many others to try and correct.

FCT Anniversary

Founded in 1977, Japan's Forum for Citizens' Television and Media (FCT) has been working to develop media literacy in Japan. 1992 marked not only their 15th Anniversary but also the publication of their Japanese translation of the Ontario Media Literacy Resource Guide. At the conference held to mark the occasion, John Pungente, SJ gave the keynote address. Ten years later, in 2002, he accepted an invitation to again give the keynote address at the celebration of FCT's 25th Anniversary.

The Founding of MNET

In November 1993, the CRTC, under the direction of Keith Spicer, hosted a working session on television violence for parents', education, and broadcasting organizations as well as children advocacy and media education groups. John Pungente attended as Chair of the Jesuit Communication Project and as the delegate for the Association for Media Literacy (AML)

Towards the end of the meeting, Laurier LaPierre, as chair, spoke of the need of practical results from the meeting. John Pungente stated the basic need for a clearinghouse of information from the various groups and suggested that the NFB take on the task. Joan Pennefather, Chair of the NFB graciously agreed. This led to the establishment of a national information clearinghouse, through the National Film Board of Canada, on media violence and initiatives of participating organizations. This clearinghouse grew and became the successful and award winning Media Awareness Network (MNET) – a Canadian organization and Internet site (www.media-awareness.ca). MNET is a world leader in providing an online environment and resources to help educators and students in all areas of media education. John Pungente served on the first board of MNET.

JCP as Phoenix

In 1996, the Jesuit Communication Project became a Phoenix. For over a year, the Jesuit Communication Project had been working to find new sources of funding. The Canadian Jesuits - themselves in a difficult financial situation – had to withdraw financial support from many of the works run by Jesuits including the Jesuit Communication Project. The Ontario government's severe cuts to education put a virtual end to the Jesuit Communication Project work with schools, teachers, and school boards in Ontario.

By the end of 1996, the Jesuit Communication Project had aligned itself with key players and organizations in the world of media and education, both surviving its crisis and extending its scope.

The Alliance for Children and Television (ACT) - an organization founded to increase public awareness of the influence of television and to encourage the positive use of television - offered some of its own office space to the Jesuit Communication Project . A consortium of groups - including CHUM Television, one of Canada's premier broadcasting enterprises and the parent company for Citytv, MuchMusic, Bravo! Space, Star! CLT among other cable and digital stations, The Alliance for Children and Television, Warner Bros. Canada, and Cable in the Classroom - agreed to help fund Jesuit Communication Project through consultancy work, grants, and special projects.

However, in order for this new arrangement to take place, like many organizations, the Jesuit Communication Project itself has had to "downsize". The staff of two became a staff of one. John Pungente, SJ remained, while Adrienne Pereira who had been with the Jesuit Communication Project since 1985 accepted a position as Executive Assistant to the President of Regis College. Adrienne's generosity, talent, wisdom and patience helped shape the Jesuit Communication Project and she continues to act as the Jesuit Communication Project's volunteer treasurer.

Scanning the Movies

Scanning the Movies, Father Pungente's half hour television program, began broadcasting on Bravo! across Canada in September 1997 and ran until 2008. SCANNING THE MOVIES was for anyone with an interest in the movies. It was of special interest to movie buffs as well as those who teach or study the movies.

Movies are a powerful marriage of image and sound, an exciting yet complex means of affecting how we think and feel. Father Pungente sees the show as a way to "read" movies, to discover how they work and how they communicate through the magic of story-telling on the big screen. SCANNING THE MOVIES was about giving audiences new ways of looking. It's about discovery, appreciation, and critical understanding of movies.

Each episode of SCANNING THE MOVIES featured selected clips from the movie as well as interviews with those who made it - directors, actors and writers. The idea was to look at the movie and the themes it explores from a media literacy point of view. A complete study guide for each movie was written by media educator Neil Andersen. The show ran for ten years and produced 80 half hour prime time television shows.

The series was both a critical and popular success. The Toronto *Globe and Mail* wrote that "Pungente's deconstruction of popular movies makes for enlightening and compelling viewing." The Toronto Star called the show "TV's best-kept secret." The show has won a number of international awards .

Scanning Television

Produced by John J. Pungente, SJ and Gary Marcuse, of Face to Face Media in Vancouver, SCANNING TELEVISION, released in 1997, consists of four one hour videocassettes and a teacher's guide. The video cassettes contain forty video excerpts ranging in length from 2 minutes to 12 minutes selected from Citytv's program Media Television, Warner Brothers, The National Film Board, the Ontario Ministry of Health, TVOntario, and YTV. The excerpts were selected from hundreds of hours of television. This kit is designed to help teachers of media literacy by providing material for classroom use.

The videos are organized into five thematic groups:

- Seeing Ourselves: Media and Representation
- Selling Images and Values
- Our Constructed World - Media Environments
- The Global Citizen
- New and Converging Technology

The guide, written by Neil Andersen, has lesson plans for each excerpt and also contains a section defining media literacy and giving the key concepts which underlie each of the lesson plans. Another section helps teachers deal with the sensitive issues that are in some of the videos. Evaluation strategies and subject integration are also dealt with. There is an excellent resource section including books, videos, periodicals, network addresses, Internet resources, and media literacy contacts across Canada and in other countries. Scanning Television proved an immediate success with teachers. The kit also received a Gold Medal at the New York Festivals and a Bronze Plaque at the Columbus International Film and Television Festival.

Working with the CCA

Jesuit Communication Project worked with the Concerned Childrens' Advertisers (CCA) - an organization which draws on the collective resources and skills of the companies and broadcasters who market to children to create and implement initiatives which educate and benefit the children of Canada and their families. Since the founding in 1990, CCA has developed over 35 child-directed television commercials on topics ranging from substance abuse prevention, active living to bullying and self-esteem. In 1997 Jesuit Communication Project worked on the production of the CCA's first media literacy public service announcements - "Smart As You". And, in 2001, the Jesuit Communication Project also helped with the development of the second media literacy advertisement - The House Hippo. Future collaboration with the CCA is planned.

More Than Meets the Eye

It's just hard not to listen to TV – it's spent so much more time raising us than you have.

Bart Simpson to his dad, Homer, on The Simpsons

This quote opens “More Than Meets the Eye: Watching Television, Watching You” written by John Pungente, SJ with writer and journalist, Martin O'Malley in 1999. The book was meant as an entertaining guide to media literacy. There is nothing wrong with television itself, as the authors see it; it's all part of our common culture. The book looked at issues of television violence, TV news and prime time shows, advertising, talk TV, and values.

Summit 2000 - A Forum of Empowerment

From May 13 to 17, 2000 in Toronto some 1,400 delegates - media professionals and media educators - from 55 countries gathered at Summit 2000: Children, Youth and the Media - Beyond the Millennium.

Over the five days - in the midst of 248 presentations by some 400 presenters - the delegates talked, listened, exchanged views on many issues, agreed and disagreed with each other, renewed old friendships and made new ones, explored Toronto, met people for the first time in real time after much e-mail correspondence and came away very satisfied with what they had experienced.

The four organizing groups - The Alliance for Children and Television, The American Center for Children and Media, The Association for Media Literacy (Ontario) and the Jesuit Communication Project - wisely asked Toronto businessman, Joe Pereira to be the Executive Director of the Summit. His organizational skills ensured the success of the Summit. There were a number of sponsors of various portions of Summit 2000. CHUM Television's sponsorship of the media education portion of the Summit again showed their real commitment to media education.

Summit 2000 - for the first time at a conference - brought together those who teach about the media and those who make it. It was remarkable to watch the interaction between the two groups. Sessions were designed to appeal to both groups. The evaluation forms tell us that 81% attended sessions outside their principal professional pillar. Media professionals were amazed at the energy, excitement and interest of the media educators. Media educators noted how willing the media professionals were to listen to media teachers. It all made for very interesting - sometimes heated - discussion. This was a dynamic that the organizers hoped would take place- and it did.

No other media education gathering has had such a wide-ranging representation from media academics, media professionals and media educators. There were papers presented, workshops offered, and panel discussions on almost every conceivable issue regarding media and young people.

According to the evaluation forms, Summit 2000 was a huge success in every area including - opportunity to meet colleagues, deepening or broadening professional knowledge, presenting new ideas/approaches, renewing commitment, variety of sessions, quality of presenters, audience involvement, social opportunities, conference facilities, and conference materials.

The last issue of Clipboard

In March 1986, the Jesuit Communication Project launched CLIPBOARD, a newsletter designed to bring together information about media education from around the world. The first issue featured an article on the state of media education in Canada – it was a very brief article. Over the years, CLIPBOARD helped keep media educators in some 41 countries aware of what was happening in media literacy – articles on conferences, new books, and recent AV material. CLIPBOARD became the place to share with other educators what was happening. After 14 years, a lack of funding forced the Jesuit Communication Project to cease publication of the newsletter. The last issue of CLIPBOARD – Summer/Winter 2000 – covered Summit 2000. There are plans to continue CLIPBOARD in a new form – on the Internet.

CBSC Ontario Panel

The Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) is the self-regulatory body created by Canada's private broadcasters to oversee the administration of industry broadcast Codes. The CBSC also deals with complaints from members of the public about the broadcast industry. There are panels in each area of the country to deal with the complaints. In 2001, Father Pungente, accepted an invitation to join the Ontario panel of the CBSC.

Scanning Television 2

The success of Scanning Television created a demand for another edition using all new video excerpts. Scanning Television 2 – completed in 2002 - is produced by the Jesuit Communication Project and Face to Face Media in collaboration with Harcourt Canada, with assistance from CHUM Television. This new edition of the award-winning, critically acclaimed media education kit includes 51 short videos averaging 6 minutes in length a total of five hours of video clips packaged on two DVDs or four VHS cassettes and a teachers guide written by media educators Neil Andersen and Kathleen Tyner.

Topics explored in the videos include advertising, gender issues, diversity, terrorism, politics, pop culture, movies, the Internet, anti-racism, and many other issues of interest to children, teenagers and adults. While most videos have been selected for grades nine and up, the collection also contains material suitable for elementary and middle school students. The videos and lesson plans

are designed for teachers who are new to the subject, as well as experienced media educators.

Scanning Television 2 examines a wide variety of subjects ranging from the evolution of communications technology and the Internet, to youth advertising, pop culture, culture jamming, international news media, 9-11, and the history of film and television.

And in 2003, working in collaboration with Japan's Forum for Citizens' Television and Media, the Jesuit Communication Project and Face to Face media produced a Japanese language version of Scanning Television 2 which has proved both a critical and popular success.

Finding God in the Dark

John Pungente, SJ and Monty Williams, SJ – a retreat director at Loyola House in Guelph have written “Finding God in the Dark: The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Go To The Movies” published in the fall of 2004 by Novalis.

This book presents the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola using film. For most people, the opportunity to do the full exercises of thirty days is impossible. They have neither the time nor the opportunity. Yet most people crave a spiritual life and a spiritual life that integrates the different elements of their daily lives. This book offers the opportunity to do so without leaving their home or work. It presents a practical way to make the Exercises using contemporary popular film, where watching the film becomes the act of contemplative prayer.

The book is designed to be used by individuals or by groups. Besides daily life, it can be used in retreat, pastoral, academic or parish settings. It can then provide the basis for a television series. Such a broad range is possible because the Exercises of Ignatius focus on the imagination as embodying spirituality. Imagination does not exist in particular contexts - it is the context out of which we live our lives and the context in which the Incarnation occurs – that is where God encounters us, communicates with us, and transforms us.

St. Ignatius had the insight that we all live in imagined worlds, and that our imagination constructs the worlds in which we live, using our experiences, our lived contexts, our hopes, our pains and our joys. In effect we live in a highly selective world, and this world defines what is possible for us. It also defines how we see ourselves and how we interact with others and the contexts in which we find ourselves.

Today the media that shape us are film and television, and television basically utilizes the sensibilities of a culture formed by film. It is film which proposes to us forms of the world and ethical ways of living in the world it creates. When we watch a film we are more than being entertained; we are being formed and

shaped. We expose ourselves to narratives that shape what is possible, and we live out of those possibilities.

The book presents the basic insight that God's own media is the Christ and the Christ incarnates the divine mercy of God in the world. The medium is not only the message and the message but here it becomes, even more radically, the dynamics of the one doing the Exercises. We become the living word of God in our world. For Ignatius this is 'contemplation in action.'

The book won the 2005 Catholic Press Association First Place Award.

Father Monty Williams, SJ is also an Associate of the Jesuit Communication Project and gives of his time to assist in a number of JCP Projects.

Inside Plato's Cave

In 2005, in conjunction with Face to Face Media, the Jesuit Communication Project began work on *INSIDE PLATO'S CAVE*.

In *The Republic*, Plato describes a group of people who have lived in a cave all their lives. They are prisoners, chained in such a way that they can only look straight ahead, facing a blank wall at the back of the cave. Behind them is a half-wall as high as a person. Behind that is a bright fire. People pass back and forth in front of the fire, carrying all sorts of figures of people and animals and various objects held high. These objects cast dancing shadows across the cave, onto the wall here the prisoners see them. Sometimes the carriers speak as they go by, sometimes not. For the prisoners, reality is nothing but these shadows of the objects and the voices that accompany them.

Plato meant this as a parable for his time. And, although it could be, It doesn't have to be a parable for our time. It doesn't have to be about the way we watch television. Not if the ability to distinguish between shadow and substance becomes part of our lives and the lives of those we teach.

Inside Plato's Cave is a 13 module on-line credit course for teachers who will be teaching media literacy at the Grade 8 to 12 level in Canada. Media education is a mandated part of the curriculum across Canada yet there is very little available either as pre-service or in-service training.

Inside Plato's Cave is being developed to meet a clearly defined need for media education for teachers. The project is produced by Face to Face Media, Vancouver and directed by the Jesuit Communication Project, in Toronto - the same team that created the award winning *Scanning Television* series. They are joined by the Virtual Teacher Centre, St. John's, who are providing the technical and instructional design aspects.

The modules have been written by media literacy teachers from across Canada.

The 13 modules are:

- 1: Introduction to Media Education
- 2: Media Literacy and the Curriculum
- 3: Canadian Pop Culture
- 4: The Art of Persuasion
- 5: Media and Values
- 6: Media Language
- 7: The News
- 8: New(er) Technologies
- 9: Ideology and representation
- 10: Audience
- 11: Movies
- 12: Prime Time Television
- 13: Popular Music

In the summer of 2007, the modules were field tests by teachers in Vancouver, London, Toronto, and St. John's. Their response was enthusiastic. At present, negotiations are under way with Canadian universities who wish to offer Inside Plato's Cave.

Regis College Ministry

John Pungente, SJ, teaches a semester course each year at Regis College, Toronto School of Theology, University of Toronto. The course deals with media education and its uses in various ministries.

International Media Literacy Research Forum

May 2008 marked the start of a new international venture by Ofcom – the British telecommunications regulator. The initiative – The International Media Literacy Research Forum – will be run by a steering committee made up of one representative from each of Australia, Britain, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the USA. John Pungente, SJ was invited to represent Canada on the steering committee. John led a delegation of Canadian media educators to the founding conference of the IMLRF in London. The conference organizers posted the presentations on Youtube and John made his first appearance on Youtube giving one of the opening presentations. Future meetings of the group will take place in Hong Kong this fall. There are plans for Canada to host a future meeting in May of 2009.

Beyond the Screen

In May 2008, John Pungente SJ shot the first episode of his new national TV show – *Beyond the Screen* - on the movie *Speed Racer*. Similar to *Scanning the Movies*, the new prime time series takes a media education look at contemporary film. Films are a medium, an art and a business. Each of these elements plays a role. As a medium, films represent ideas through the codes and conventions of sound and moving image. As art, they make personal and cultural statements to their audiences. As businesses, they create work for their creators and profits for their investors.

Each half hour program is accompanied by an on line study guide – written by media educator Neil Andersen - which extends the ideas presented in the episode of *Beyond the Screen*. The guides may be used by teachers, by parents who want to discuss the movie with their children, or by serious viewers who want to think beyond the screen

Concluding Thoughts

For twenty five years, the Jesuit Communication Project has worked to serve as interpreter and guide for people living in this mass mediated world of ours. To help people see what is in the media. To help people watch carefully and think critically. Improving the media literacy of audiences not only benefits society but also encourages media responsibility. We do this because, as the Australian Bishops have told us, it is “ a bounden moral duty” and we also do it because it is fun.

The media are now, arguably, our culture’s primary symbolic system. They will certainly be so throughout the next century. Those who do not understand how the media work, how they construct meanings, how they be used, and how the evidence they present can be weighed and evaluated are, in contemporary cultures, considerably disadvantaged and disempowered.

Len Masterman, British media educator,1997

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Board of Directors:

The Jesuit Communication Project Board of Directors meets twice a year. The Board brings with it a wealth of experience. The present board:

- Paul Sullivan, (Chair), Sullivan Media, Vancouver.
- Bill Addley, SJ, Parish Priest, Toronto.
- Kevin Burns, (Secretary) former commissioning editor, Novalis Press, Ontario.
- Sarah Crawford, former Vice President Public Affairs, CTVglobemedia, Toronto.

- Charles Falzon, President CCI Entertainment, Toronto.
- Adrienne Pereira, (Treasurer), Executive Assistant to the President of Regis College, Toronto.
- John Pungente, SJ, Director, Jesuit Communication Project.
- Monty Williams, SJ, Associate, Jesuit Communication Project, Lecturer at Regis College, Director of the Spiritual Exercises, Toronto.

Publications:

As well as writing articles for periodicals and journals, Father Pungente has co-written the following books:

- 1985: *Getting Started on Media Education*. London: Centre for the Study of Communication and Culture.
- 1988: *Media Literacy - Resource Guide* (co-author) Toronto: Ministry of Education, Government of Ontario.
- 1990: *Meet the Media*. (co-author) Toronto: Globe/Modern Curriculum Press. Text for Grades 7 to 10 students.
- 1999: *More Than Meets the Eye: Watching Television Watching Us*. John J. Pungente, SJ and Martin O'Malley, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1999.
- 2004: *Finding God in The Dark: The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Go To The Movies*. John J. Pungente, S.J. and Geoffrey William, S.J., Ottawa: Novalis, 2004.

Presentations:

Since 1985, John Pungente, SJ has given over 500 media education presentations - these include inservices, workshops, conference presentations, summer schools, night schools, talks to parents, talks to students - in the following countries:

- Across Canada and Australia, and in the USA, Japan, England, Spain, France, Austria, and Poland

Awards won by the Jesuit Communication Project:

2006: Scanning the Movies: Water 2 part special wins the Platinum Remi Award at WorldFest Houston 2006 (The Houston International Film Festival)

2006: Scanning the Movies: Water 2 part special wins third place at the 2006 US International Film and Video Festival in Los Angeles.

2005: Finding God in the Dark wins First Place Catholic Press Association Award in soft cover category.

2004: Scanning Television (2nd Edition) wins Bronze Medal at the New York International Festivals of Film and Video

2003: Scanning the Movies: Matrix Reloaded wins Silver Chris (best in category) at 51st Annual Columbus International Film and Video Festival and is chosen to be shown at the Festival.

2003: Scanning the Movies: Matrix Reloaded wins Gold at Intercom, Chicago International Film Festival

2003: Scanning the Movies wins Special Jury Award at Houston World Fest

2003: Scanning Television (2nd Edition) wins Platinum Medal at Houston World Fest

2001: Canadian media educator of the year, awarded by Magic Lantern Corporation.

1999: Scanning the Movies wins Silver Medal (Education) at 32nd Annual International Film and Video Festival, Chicago, Illinois.

1998: Scanning the Movies wins Gold Medal (Education) at 41st Annual New York International Festivals of Non-Broadcast Media, presented in New York, January 1999..

1996: Scanning Television wins Gold Medal (Education) at 1996 New York International Festivals of Non-Broadcast Media, presented at NATPE in New Orleans.

1996: Scanning Television wins Bronze Medal at the 1996 Madison International Film Festival.

1995: Jessie McCause Award, presented by The National Telemedia Council, Madison, Wisconsin, in recognition of special contribution to the field of media literacy.

1992: A Heart to Understand wins Best Documentary Video Award at 1992 OCIC World Forum for Religious and Educational Videos.

Jesuit Communication Project Library:

The library, visited by researchers and students from around the world, has:

- 4,000 books on various aspects of the media
- 500 videos and DVD's