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ARCHBISHOP FOLEY ADDRESSES BUSINESS, ADVERTISING ETHICS

VATICAN CITY, JUL 15, 2004 (VIS) - Yesterday in Loyola, Spain, birthplace of St. Ignatius, founder of the Society of Jesus, Archbishop John Foley gave the homily at a Mass for the meeting of the International Association of Jesuit Business Schools.

In a separate address to the group, he focused on ethics in business and in advertising, noting how difficult both fields can be when people are "seduced" to make decisions that can adversely affect their families, those who have invested money in a company and those who work for it.

The president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications recounted several personal experiences as a youth when he was forced to quit jobs because of unethical behavior on the part of others, saying he mentioned these experiences to let the business school leaders "know I have lived the very ethical dilemmas and challenges in business which some of you perhaps have taught." And he added: "I have always thought, what terrible dilemmas must be faced by married people with children in a tight job market who are asked to do something that is dishonest or, at least, open to ethical discussion - and who are fearful of questioning, of protesting or quitting, because they do not know where the next meal for themselves or their family might come from."

Archbishop Foley mentioned the pontifical council's documents of recent years, in particular "Ethics in Advertising." He noted that advertising can sustain "honest and ethically responsible competition which contributes to economic growth, to the possibility of choice and to authentic human development." It "contributes to wider knowledge, lower prices and, usually, to more jobs" and to "promoting morally healthy activity, e.g., safe driving, and it has even been used effectively for religious purposes." However, he said, there is harm when it leads people to believe that "having is more important than being." He urged those who advertise - be it products, ideas or people - to focus on three principles: Being is better than having; Each person must be treated with respect; Work for the common good."

In concluding remarks, he indicated that "a growing concern in democratic societies is the ethical aspect of political campaigning" which can either "inform about candidates and issues" or "obstruct the democratic process" when high advertising costs attract only wealthy candidates or cause candidates to compromise principles and integrity in their search for funding.

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