Vatican



by Joshua J. McElwee

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Rome — September 29, 2017
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Pope Francis will tackle the issue of so-called "fake news" in his message next year for the annual World Communications Day.

The Vatican said in a statement Sept. 29 the pontiff's message for the 2018 celebration, to be held May 13, will be: "'The truth will set you free:' Fake news and journalism for peace."

"In a context in which the key companies of the social web and the world of institutions and politics have started to confront this phenomenon, the Church too wishes to offer a contribution," said the statement from the Vatican's Secretariat of Communication.

The secretariat said the pope will offer in his message "a reflection on the causes, the logic and the consequences of disinformation in the media" in order to help promote "professional journalism, which always seeks the truth ... peace that promotes understanding between people."

Selection of a theme dedicated to "fake news" may bring the pope's message to the attention of U.S. President Donald Trump, who frequently labels even factual news stories he dislikes as "fake news."

Trump has launched repeated barrages on Twitter especially against CNN, the New York Times and the Washington Post, claiming their factual reporting on his administration amounts to "fake news."

But investigators have said there was a preponderance of actual fake stories distributed though Facebook and online sites during the 2016 election campaign. Recent reports have indicated that some of the fake stories were originally posted on Facebook as advertisements bought by Russian-affiliated companies and entities.

World Communications Day was established by the bishops at the Second Vatican Council as part of their December 1963 document *Inter Mirifica* ("On the Means of Social Communication.") It is held each year on the Sunday preceding Pentecost, when the church celebrates the first disciples' receiving of the Holy Spirit to go forth and spread the Gospel.

The pope's message for the annual day is traditionally released each Jan. 24, the feast day of 16th century St. Francis de Sales, who is the patron of journalists.

Francis also announced the theme of his 2018 message on Twitter, using his numerous accounts in different languages.

[Joshua J. McElwee is NCR Vatican correspondent. His email address is jmcelwee@ncronline.org. Follow him on Twitter: @joshjmac.]

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