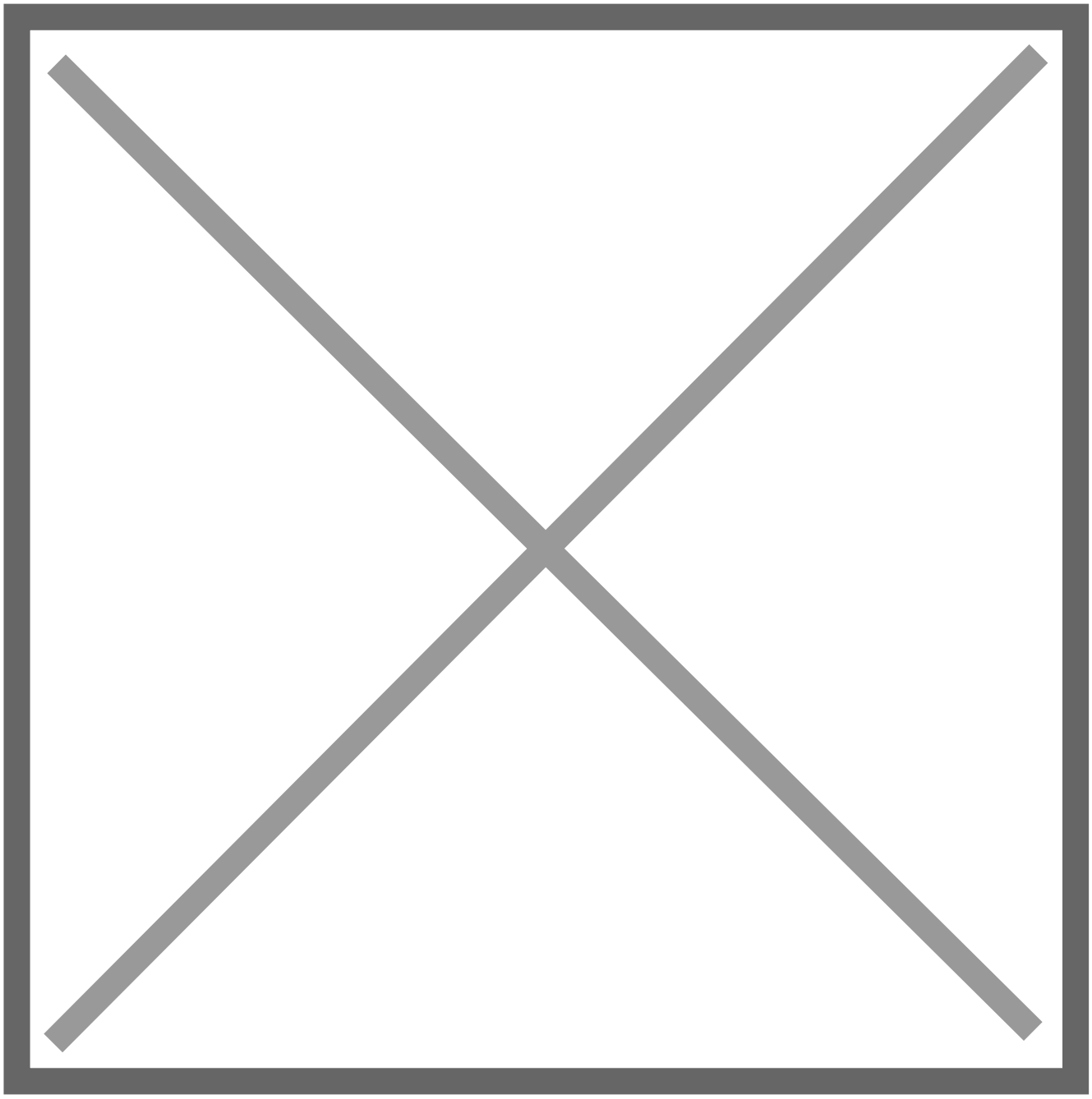
Vatican
Francis, the comic strip



Pope Francis greets the crowd as he leads the Angelus from the window of his studio overlooking St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Oct. 25, 2020. (CNS/Vatican Media)

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The proof of being on a path of conversion and holiness always consists in loving one's neighbor, Pope Francis said.

"As long as there is a brother or sister to whom we close our hearts, we will still be far from being disciples as Jesus asks us," he said before reciting the Angelus prayer with those gathered in St. Peter's Square Oct. 25.

The pope reflected on the day's Gospel reading (Mt 22:34-40) in which Jesus said the greatest commandment was loving the Lord with all one's heart, soul and mind, and the second commandment was loving one's neighbor as oneself.

With this, "Jesus establishes two essential principles for believers of all times," the pope said.

The first is that love — not anxious or contrived obligation — must always be the driving force behind following God's commandments, he said.

"The second fundamental principle is that love must tend together and inseparably toward God and toward one's neighbor," the pope said.

"This is one of the major innovations of Jesus' teachings, and he helps us understand that it is not true love of God if it is not expressed in the love of the other," and, vice versa, it is not true love of the other if it is not rooted in one's relationship with God, he said.

Love for God is expressed most of all in prayer and adoration, Francis said, and love for one's neighbor is expressed by being close to people, listening to them, sharing and caring for others.

"So often we overlook listening to others because it is boring or because it takes up my time," he said; such feelings even arise when someone else needs someone close during times of trial or sorrow.

"However, we always find time to gossip. All the time! We don't have time to comfort the afflicted, but lots of time for gossiping. Be careful!" he said.

Communion is a gift "to be invoked each day, but also a personal commitment so that our life is not left to become enslaved by the idols of the world," he said.

"The proof of our journey of conversion and holiness always consists in love of neighbor," the pope said.

God's mercy "does not allow us to be discouraged, but rather calls us to begin anew each day to live the Gospel consistently," he added.

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