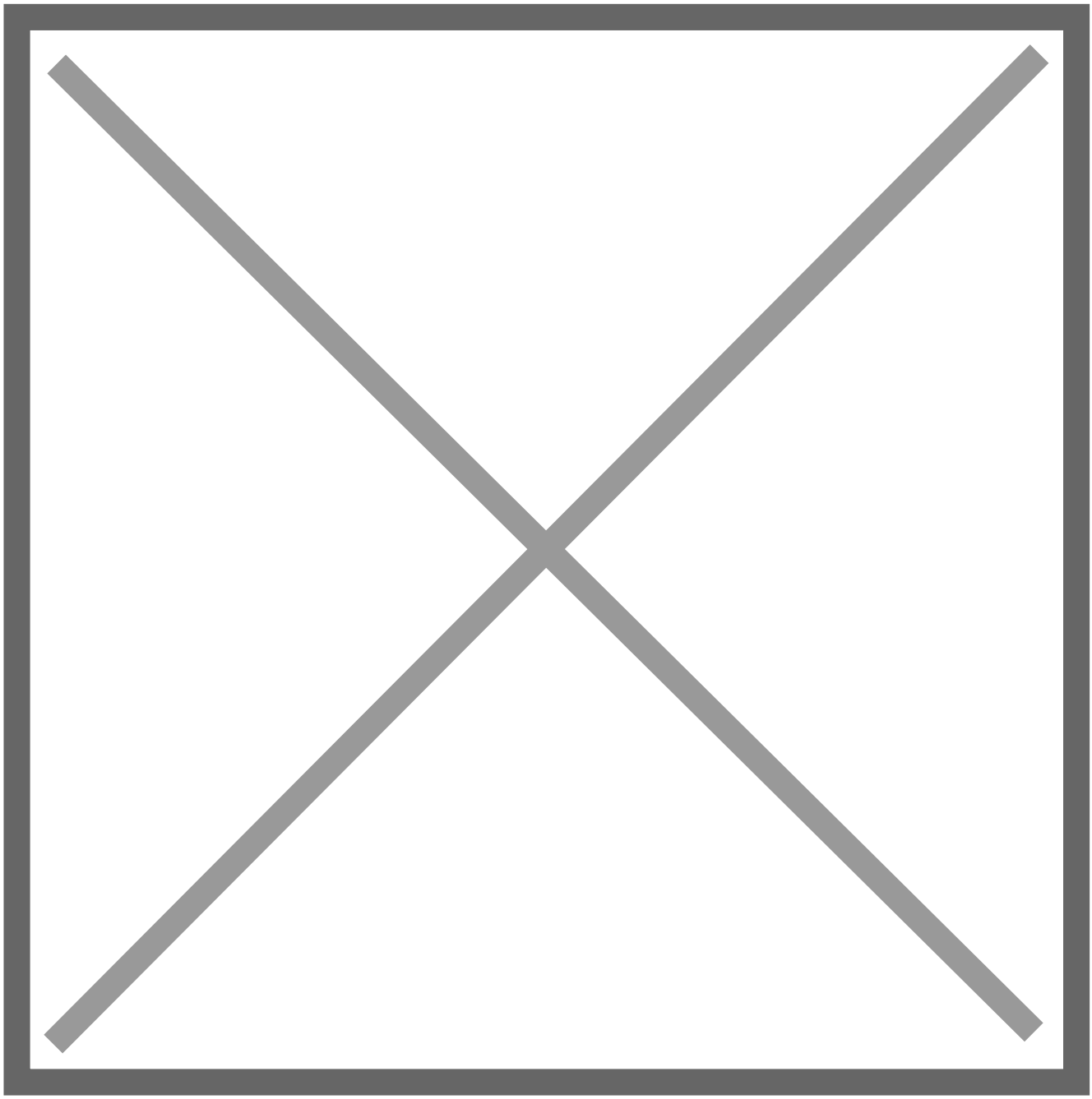
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Francis, the comic strip



Pope Francis greets students and faculty of the Pontifical Latin American College during an audience at the Vatican Nov. 15, 2018. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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The presence of Latin Americans around the world has enriched the Catholic Church with a renewed zeal for the Gospel, Pope Francis said.

Christian communities in northern and central Europe have "benefited" greatly from Latin American devotions such as the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe from Mexico and the feast of Christ of the Miracles, which originated in Colombia, the pope said Nov. 20 to students and faculty of Rome's Pontifical Latin American College.

"The rich cultural mix that made evangelization possible is reproduced again today," he said. "The Latino people meet among themselves and with other people thanks to social mobility" and new forms of communication.

Addressing the college's faculty and staff, the pope reminded them of their calling to sow the seeds of the Gospel "in a generous way, without prejudices" as God sows; he "does not look at the hardness of the ground, nor the presence of rocks or thistles; he does not yank the darnel to not remove from it the good seed of the kingdom."

The students' formation and ministry, he added, must include three concrete actions: opening the door of their hearts and helping others open their hearts to God's love; pitching in and calling others to cooperate for the good of all; and working to heal the world of the great evil that afflicts it and that the pandemic has brought to light.

"Create a space where God and your neighbor can meet," the pope told them.

"Never fail to manifest this availability, this openness," he said. "Never close the door to those who, in the depths of their hearts, long to be able to enter and feel welcome. Think that the Lord is calling you under the garb of that poor man, to sit together at his banquet."

Pope Francis said that the students' continuing formation in Rome is a sign that God has "a plan of love and service for each one of you" and that they are called to be shepherds who "consecrate themselves to the care of the sheep."

"Fight against the throwaway culture, social segregation, distrust and prejudice based on race, culture or faith, so that the feeling of brotherhood prevails over all differences," he said.

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