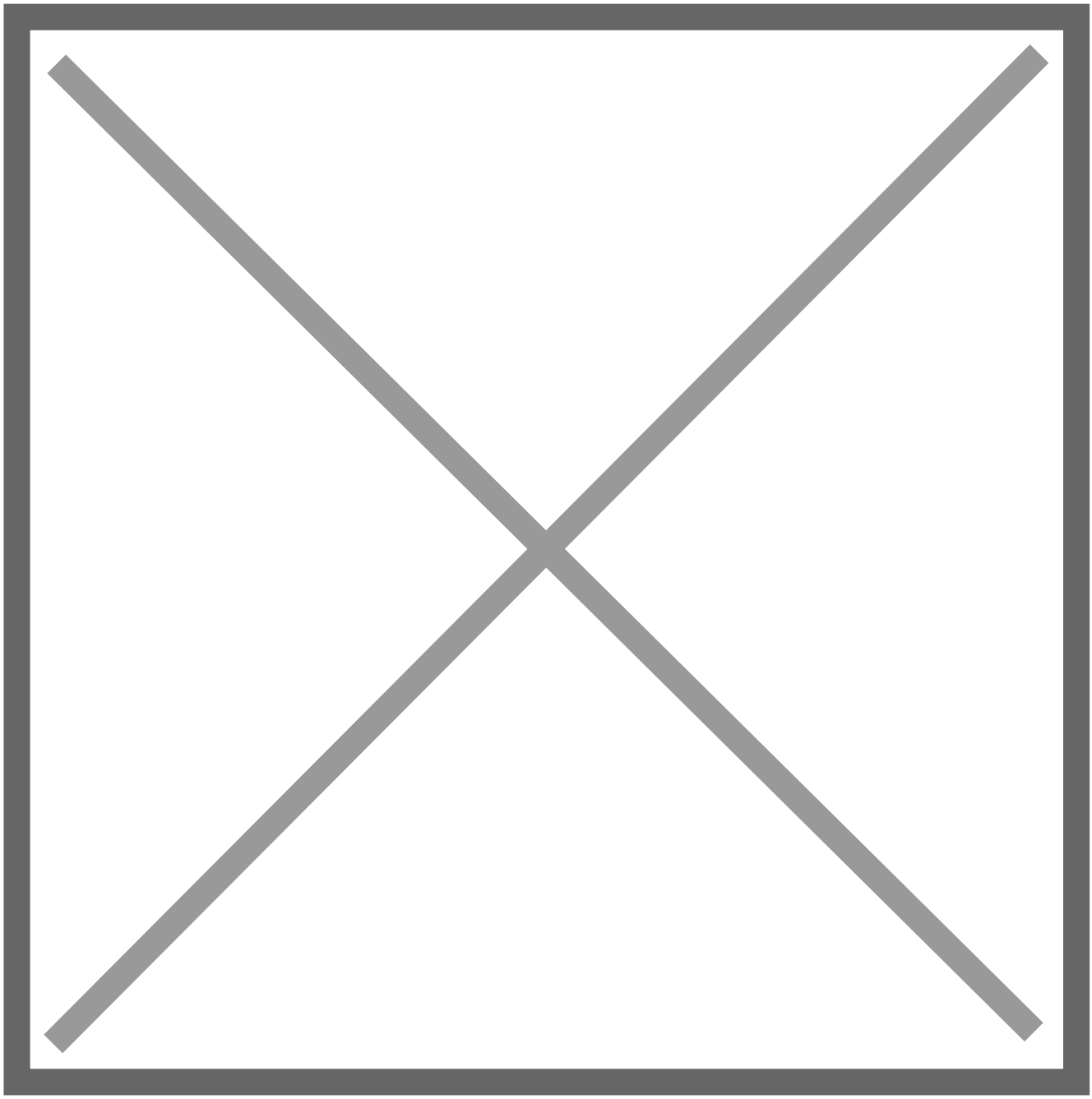
News
Vatican



Pope Francis is pictured in a video for an ad campaign promoting COVID-19 vaccines throughout the Americas. (CNS Screenshot/ courtesy Ad Council)

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Vatican City — August 18, 2021

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When each individual makes a small act of charity, like getting the COVID-19 vaccine, every gesture added together can transform the world, Pope Francis said in a global ad campaign.

"Being vaccinated with vaccines authorized by the competent authorities is an act of love. And contributing to ensure the majority of people are vaccinated is an act of love -- love for oneself, love for one's family and friends, love for all people," he said in a public service announcement released Aug. 18 in Rome.

The video message was part of a global effort by the U.S.-based nonpartisan, nonprofit Ad Council and the COVID Collaborative's "It's Up To You" campaign to increase people's confidence in COVID-19 vaccines by reminding them that the vaccines are safe, effective and save people's lives. The Vatican's Dicastery for Integral Human Development also cooperated with the educational initiative.

The three-minute video in Spanish with English, Spanish and Portuguese subtitles features Francis and six cardinals and archbishops from North and South America. Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, is among them.

The "It's Up To You" campaign has been inviting "trusted messengers" to deliver "fact-based and life-saving information to populations hesitant about the COVID-19 vaccines, helping them to make informed decisions for themselves and their families," it said in a joint news release with the Ad Council.

Lisa Sherman, president and CEO of the Ad Council, said, "The role of trusted messengers to educate and inspire their networks is undeniable."

"We are extremely grateful to [Pope Francis] and the cardinals and archbishops for lending their voices and platforms to help people across the globe feel more confident in the vaccines," particularly to the world's 1.3 billion Catholics, she said in the news release.

It said 72% of the adult population and 67% of Hispanic adults have currently been vaccinated against COVID-19 with at least one dose in the United States.

But COVID-19 cases are on the rise worldwide, especially in North, Central and South America. Some nations are still showing very low rates of individuals who are fully vaccinated, such as Honduras with only 5.5% of the adult population and El Salvador with 30%.

While access to vaccines is a challenge, "confidence in the vaccines also presents a hurdle," the news release said.

In his message, the pope said, "Thanks to God and to the work of many, we now have vaccines to protect us from COVID-19. They grant us the hope of ending the pandemic, but only if they are available to all and if we work together."

Getting inoculated "is an act of love" for oneself, family, friends and all people, he said.

"Love is also social and political" as these individual "small gestures of personal charity" add up, "overflowing" into something universal that is "capable of transforming and improving societies," he said.

"Vaccination is a simple but profound way of promoting the common good and caring for each other, especially the most vulnerable," the pope said.

"I pray to God that everyone may contribute their own small grain of sand, their own small gesture of love; no matter how small, love is always great. Contribute with these small gestures for a better future. God bless you, and thank you," he said.

Also offering messages encouraging vaccination were: Cardinal Carlos Aguiar Retes of Mexico; Cardinal Óscar Rodríguez Maradiaga of Tegucigalpa, Honduras; Cardinal Cláudio Hummes, retired archbishop of São Paulo; Cardinal Gregorio Rosa Chávez,

auxiliary bishop of San Salvador, El Salvador; and Archbishop Miguel Cabrejos Vidarte of Trujillo, Peru.

The campaign encouraged people to go to GetVaccineAnswers.org and DeTiDepende.org for more information and answers to questions about the COVID-19 vaccines.

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