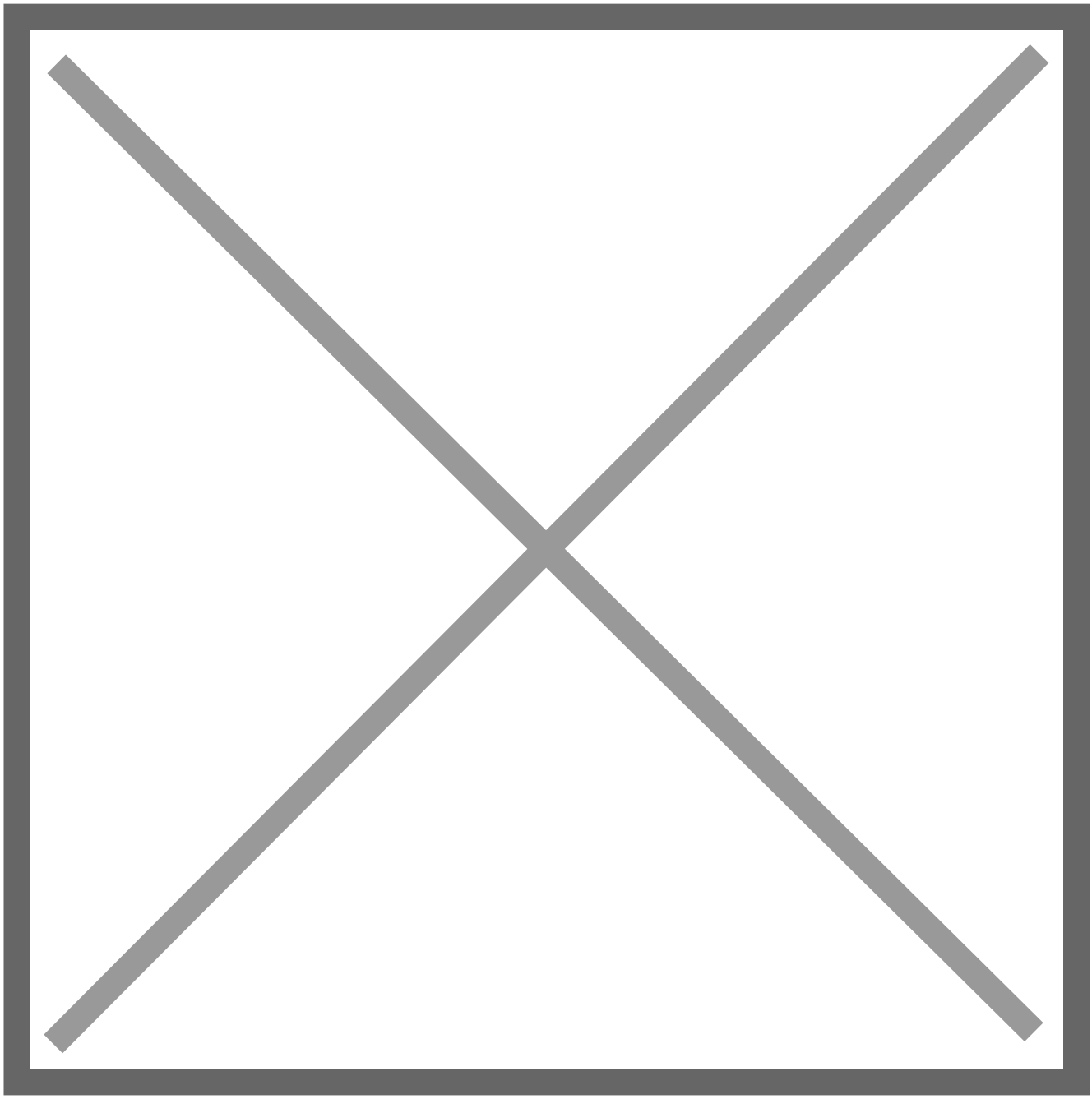
Vatican
News



The sign of the Anti-Fake News center is pictured in Bangkok, Thailand, in this Nov. 1, 2019, file photo. Pope Francis asked members of Signis, a Catholic communicators association, to educate young people and help them understand how social media "become places of toxicity, hate speech and fake news." (CNS photo/Patpicha Tanakasempipat, Reuters)



by Catholic News Service

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Catholic communicators need to use extra care and educational efforts to combat a situation where some media "become places of toxicity, hate speech and fake news," Pope Francis said.

In a message to members of Signis, the World Catholic Association for Communication, the pope told Catholic communicators they have an important role to play "through media education, networking Catholic media and countering lies and misinformation."

The pope's call to the Catholic communicators came in a message to those who will be attending the Signis World Congress in Seoul, South Korea, Aug. 15-18 or participating online. The Vatican released the message July 18.

The theme Signis chose for the gathering is "Peace in the Digital World."

"During the months of lockdown due to the (COVID-19) pandemic, we saw clearly how digital media could bring us together, not only by disseminating essential information but also by bridging the loneliness of isolation and, in many cases, uniting whole families and ecclesial communities in prayer and worship," Francis noted.

But, he said, digital media and, especially, some social media platforms have "raised a number of serious ethical issues that call for wise and discerning judgment on the part of communicators and all those concerned with the authenticity and quality of human relationships."

"Sometimes and in some places, media sites have become places of toxicity, hate speech and fake news," the pope said.

Francis urged Signis and other Catholic media professionals to double their efforts to "assist people, especially young people, to develop a sound critical sense, learning to distinguish truth from falsehood, right from wrong, good from evil, and to appreciate the importance of working for justice, social concord and respect for our common home."

Pointing to his message for World Communications Day 2022, the pope also urged members to remember that listening is "the first and indispensable ingredient of dialogue and good communication."

The "apostolate of listening" belongs to communicators more than anyone else, he said, because "communication is not just a profession, but a service to dialogue and understanding between individuals and larger communities in the pursuit of a serene and peaceful coexistence."

And, the pope said, as the church continues its journey toward a more "synodal church," learning to listen and showing people the value of listening is key.

"It is my hope that, in your communication, you will contribute to this process by assisting the holy and faithful people of God in our commitment to listen to one another, to the Lord's will and to grow in the awareness that we participate in a communion that precedes and includes us," he said. "In this way too, your efforts to foster 'peace in the digital world' will help to create an ever more 'symphonic' church, whose unity is expressed in a harmonious and sacred polyphony."

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