Vatican
Pope Francis meets participants in the "Faith Communication in the Digital World" project, sp

Pope Francis meets participants in the "Faith Communication in the Digital World" project, sponsored by the Vatican's Dicastery for Communication, during his general audience at the Vatican June 9, 2021. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Junno Arocho Esteves

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Pope Francis' theme for the next World Communications Day is a call for a peaceful dialogue that allows for uncomfortable truths to be spoken of without resorting to contentious and hostile debate, the Vatican announced.

Speaking the truth "means giving 'a reason for your hope' and doing so gently, using the gift of communication as a bridge and not as a wall," the Vatican said Sept. 29 when it announced the theme of World Communications Day 2023.

Each year, the Vatican and many dioceses mark World Communications Day on the Sunday before Pentecost; in 2023, it will be celebrated May 21. The pope's choice for the theme is: "Speak with the heart: Veritatem facientes in caritate" (Speaking the truth in love).

The Vatican publishes the pope's full message for the occasion Jan. 24, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists.

Also Sept. 29, the Vatican announced several new members for the Dicastery for Communication, including Bishop Valdir José de Castro of Campo Limpo, Brazil, and Italian Archbishop Ivan Maffeis of Perugia-Città delle Pieve.

Francis also appointed new consultors for the dicastery, including U.S. communications expert Helen Osman, president of Signis, the World Catholic Association for Communication, based in Brussels.

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The pope's theme for World Communications Day highlights the need for Christians to "go against the grain" in both ordinary and church life at a time when heated debates often "exacerbate tempers," the Vatican said.

"We must not fear to state that at times uncomfortable truth that finds its foundation in the Gospel, but we must not separate this proclamation from a style of mercy, of sincere participation in the joys and sufferings of people of our time, as the Gospel page that narrates the dialogue between the mysterious wayfarer and the disciples of Emmaus teaches us in a sublime way," the statement said.

In choosing the theme, it said, Francis also wanted to show that in the global conflicts afflicting the world, "nonhostile communication is more necessary than ever."

The world, the Vatican said, needs a communication that is "open to dialogue with the other" and that strives "to dismantle the 'psychosis of war' that lurks in our hearts."

"It is an effort that is required of everyone, but in particular of communication workers called upon to exercise their profession as a mission for building a more just, more fraternal and more human future," the statement said.