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Paola Ugaz, a Peruvian journalist who helped expose the abuse committed by leaders of the S

Paola Ugaz, a Peruvian journalist who helped expose the abuse committed by leaders of the Sodalitium Christianae Vitae, gives Pope Leo XIV a stole made of alpaca wool, during the pope's meeting with members of the media May 12, 2025, in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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"Good morning, and thank you for this wonderful reception! They say when they clap at the beginning it doesn't matter much ... if you are still awake at the end, and still want to applaud ... thank you very much!"

With these words, Pope Leo XIV opened his address to more than 3,000 media operators gathered in the Paul VI Hall at the Vatican on Monday (May 12).

The speech underscored the need for journalism in the service of truth and peace. The pope called for a media landscape that bridges divides and rejects the rhetoric of conflict.

The pope invited reporters to use "a different kind of communication, one that does not seek consensus at all costs, does not use aggressive words, does not follow the culture of competition and never separates the search for truth from the love with which we must humbly seek it."

Leo XIV then insisted on the importance of communication that rejects all forms of verbal and visual conflict.

"We must say 'no' to the war of words and images, we must reject the paradigm of war." The appeal, the pope said, is addressed not only to journalists but to every single person called to reflect on the responsibility of language in weaving the threads of social coexistence.

The pontiff also recalled the plight of imprisoned journalists, asking for their release and calling them courageous witnesses to freedom and justice.

Pope Leo XIV greets a man with a laptop depicting the flag of Peru during a meeting at the Pa

Pope Leo XIV greets a man with a laptop depicting the flag of Peru during a meeting at the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican May 12, 2025. Leo met with representatives of the media who covered his election. (OSV News/Vatican Media)

“The suffering of these imprisoned journalists challenges the conscience of nations and the international community, calling on all of us to safeguard the precious gift of free speech and of the press,” he said. The words drew a long applause.

Leo XIV then recalled recent events that have marked the church, from Holy Week to the death of Pope Francis, “which nevertheless took place in the light of Easter,” to the challenges of the conclave.

In those moments, he said, the media knew how to “to recount the beauty of Christ’s love that unites and makes us one people, guided by the Good Shepherd.”

At the end of the meeting, Leo XIV greeted some journalists one-on-one, including celebrity television anchors and reporters such as Lester Holt of NBC News and Terry Moran of ABC News. He also greeted public relations specialists, including Chieko Noguchi, spokeswoman for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Matteo Bruni, the Vatican spokesman.

Leo, whose vocation has taken him to live in Peru where he has dual citizenship, also greeted a Peruvian journalist who gave him a scarf. The pontiff put the colorful scarf around his neck like a priest’s stole and posed with the journalist for a selfie.

Before leaving the Paul VI Hall, Leo XIV also stopped to meet a TV cameraman who showed him a Peruvian flag and exchanged a few words with him.

Franciscan Sr. Veronica Donatella, who provides Italian sign language interpretation for Vatica

Franciscan Sr. Veronica Donatella, who provides Italian sign language interpretation for Vatican Media, applauds Pope Leo XIV using sign language. (CNS/Vatican Media)

In a brief conversatino spoke in Italian, a journalist suggested that the pontiff participate in a charity tennis match for the Pontifical Missionary Works, recalling his passion for the sport.

“Sure is fine,” Leo XIV replied with a smile.

When the journalist joked that "I bring Agassi," the pope replied, "Just don't bring Sinner," ironically alluding to the Italian champion, current top player in the world, and the double meaning of his surname in English. The joke drew laughs.

In his prepared remarks, the pope also urged journalists to "never give in to mediocrity," avoiding stereotypes and cliches in the narrative of Christian life and the Church.

"Today, one of the most important challenges is to promote communication that can bring us out of the Tower of Babel in which we sometimes find ourselves, out of the confusion of loveless languages that are often ideological or partisan," he said.

"Communication is not only the transmission of information, but it is also the creation of a culture of human and digital environments that become spaces for dialogue and discussion."

A girl holds out a drawing she made for Pope Leo XIV, hoping that he will accept it after his m

A girl holds out a drawing she made for Pope Leo XIV, hoping that he will accept it after his meeting with members of the media May 12, 2025, in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican. The flag on the drawing says "peace" and the message at the bottom says, "Hurrah for Pope Leo XIV." (CNS photo/OSV)

Leo XIV's speech also addressed artificial intelligence, which he called an opportunity to be managed with responsibility and discernment so that its potential is truly at the service of humanity.

Finally, the pontiff echoed the words of Pope Francis, recalling the importance of "disarming communication" from all prejudice, rancor, bigotry and hatred.

Sara Costantini, a 24-year-old student journalist from the Luiss School of Journalism in Rome and one of the youngest journalists who attended the meeting, described the event as profoundly significant.

"This is really an important moment. I really felt engaged as a young person. It was a unique emotion. I've been covering all this since Francis was sick in the hospital. Being here today feels like a closure," she said.

Barbara Cisneros, a correspondent for the Mexican TV station Buenas Noticias, expressed admiration for the pope's gesture of gratitude and solidarity with imprisoned journalists around the world.

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This story appears in the **Pope Leo XIV** feature series. View the full series.