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A band performs in front of an image of Pope Leo XIV displayed on a large screen during a festival in Risorgimento Square in Rome July 29, 2025, as part of the Jubilee of Digital Missionaries and Catholic Influencers. (CNS/Pablo Esparza)

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Rome — July 30, 2025
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Rome's historic Risorgimento Square, built in the 19th century in honor of the unification of Italy, has always been a gateway to Vatican City with countless pilgrims, tourists, and locals passing through it on their way to St. Peter's Basilica.

The famed square was transformed into an outdoor concert venue July 29 to host a festival marking the close of the Jubilee of Digital Missionaries and Catholic Influencers, which was part of the larger Jubilee of Youth taking place in Rome.

As the Jubilee's opening Mass was concluding nearby in St. Peter's Square, thousands of pilgrims awaited the start of the music festival with songs and dancing. One group of young people from Italy strummed their guitars and bongos while another group from Mexico performed an almost perfectly choreographed line dance.

"I was just talking to a friend and she said, 'How wonderful it is to be young, how wonderful it is to be Catholic,' " said Teresita Gomez Moretto, a 24-year-old Argentine who hailed from Buenos Aires.

"I mean, it's a celebration. It's seeing the unity of the church, the power of the Spirit that is still alive and continues to move and inspire. It's beautiful. It's truly a luxury, an enormous gift," Gomez Moretto told Catholic News Service.

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The Jubilee of Digital Missionaries and Catholic Influencers, which took place July 28-29, centered largely on the call to bear witness to the Gospel in the digital realm. For Moretto, sharing one's faith with others in the digital landscape is both an "opportunity to reach out to others" and a challenge.

"Personally, I experience the challenge in this way: just as I share the things I like and want from my daily life on social media — like my friends, my family, places,

music, art — I also share what interests me most, which is my spiritual life. I share the great love of my life, which is Christ. It seems to me that with great sensitivity and charity, it can be a gateway for others to come into contact with Christ," she said.

For Legionnaire of Christ Br. Mario Ciaston, a 29-year-old Polish seminarian accompanying a group of 50 young people from Monterrey, Mexico, it's important for Catholics, especially young people, to be "proactive missionaries of Christ's love" both online and offline.

"Wherever you are, whether it's on social media or in real life, you have to share that message of what you've experienced with Christ," Ciaston told CNS. "Otherwise, it's useless if it's just for clicks or views; it doesn't help you at all, and it won't help others either."

Noting the theme of the Jubilee Year — "Pilgrims of Hope" — the young seminarian said hope was what the "world desperately needs today" and the sight of young people joyfully celebrating their faith at the festival was a "testimony of the hope we only find in Christ and in his love."

"It's wonderful to see so many young people with faith again, to see that this truly is the church, especially since I feel that the church is increasingly attacked by many outsiders who don't understand its mission and message," he said.



Young people attend a concert in Risorgimento Square in Rome July 29, 2025, during the Jubilee of Digital Missionaries and Catholic Influencers. (CNS/Pablo Esparza)

Reflecting on Pope Leo XIV's call for digital missionaries and Catholic influencers to ensure that the digital culture "remains human," Ciaston told CNS that being human "means being close to people and showing them love and charity."

"I remember once asking a digital missionary about how he transmits the Gospel, and what resonated most with me was his answer: ultimately, the important thing is for you to be a witness to Christ's love," he said.

Among the many digital missionaries attending the festival was Pablo Licheri, an Argentine developer who created Catholic Mass Times, a free mobile app that helps Catholics find nearby churches and up-to-date Mass schedules. Launched in 2014, the app, which is available for iPhone and Android, surpassed 2 million downloads worldwide.

Licheri told CNS that the Jubilee celebration dedicated to missionaries and influencers in the digital space shows that the Catholic Church is not dismissive of the impact of social media and online content but rather "something that the church is taking very seriously."

The success of the Catholic Mass Times app, he added, shows that there is a need, particularly among young Catholics, to use technology as a means of connecting with their faith.

Some young people he met during the Jubilee "have told me, 'Oh, your app saved my life.' They told me about places — sometimes the strangest places or the strangest situations — where they couldn't find a church," Licheri told CNS.

Nevertheless, the Argentine app developer said he took to heart Leo's reminder to digital missionaries and Catholic influencers "that it's not about us, that we don't have to be the stars, and to beware of the pride and vanity of being known, of seeking (fame) because it has nothing do with" faith.

"As Catholic influencers, we have to have a vision of transmitting Jesus and bringing people closer to Jesus," Licheri said. "That's a warning that truly must always be kept very present, because it's the rectitude and intention of doing things to bring people closer to God, and not to make money or for vanity."

This story appears in the **2025 Holy Year** feature series. View the full series.