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Pope Leo XIV gives his homily during Ash Wednesday Mass at the Basilica of Santa Sabina in Rome Feb. 18. In a closed-door dialogue with clergy from the Diocese of Rome Feb. 19, the pope urged priests to not to use artificial intelligence to write their homilies or to seek "likes" on social media platforms like TikTok. (CNS/Lola Gomez)

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Pope Leo XIV has urged priests to not to use artificial intelligence to write their homilies or to seek "likes" on social media platforms like TikTok.

In a question-and-answer session with clergy from the Diocese of Rome, the pope said priests should resist "the temptation to prepare homilies with artificial intelligence."

"Like all the muscles in the body, if we do not use them, if we do not move them, they die. The brain needs to be used, so our intelligence must also be exercised a little so as not to lose this capacity," Leo said in the closed door meeting, according

to a report by Vatican News on Feb. 20.

"To give a true homily is to share faith," and artificial intelligence "will never be able to share faith," the pope added.

Leo has expressed interest in the topic of artificial intelligence and the dignity of work since the first week of his pontificate, telling the College of Cardinals shortly after his election in May that he took his name in honor of Pope Leo XIII, who wrote the social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in the context of the first industrial revolution.

"If we can offer a service that is inculturated in the place, in the parish where we are working," the pope told the priests of the Diocese of Rome. "People want to see your faith, your experience of having known and loved Jesus Christ."

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In his meeting with the clergy of Rome, Pope Leo underlined that with a "life authentically rooted in the Lord," one can offer something different, calling it "an illusion on the internet, on TikTok," to think one is offering oneself and gaining 'likes' and 'followers' in that way.

"It is not you: if we are not transmitting the message of Jesus Christ, perhaps we are mistaken, and we must reflect very carefully and humbly about who we are and what we are doing," the pope said.

He underlined that for a priest "a life of prayer" is fundamental, adding that this means "time spent with the Lord," not "the routine of reciting the breviary as quickly as possible."

The pope's Feb. 19 closed-door dialogue with clergy of the Rome Diocese was introduced by Cardinal Baldo Reina, vicar general of Rome, who presented four priests — representing four age groups -- who were selected to ask the pope a question.

Among them was a young priest ordained by Pope Leo in May. He asked how young priests can support their peers in today's world.

The pope first urged them to keep their "eyes open" to the families from which many young people come from, which often have been through "very serious crises," with absent parents or parents who are "divorced, remarried."

Many young people "have also experienced abandonment," so priests must "know their reality," the pope continued. "Be close to them in this sense, accompany them, but do not be just one of the young," he said, adding that in this regard, "the testimony of the priest" is important, as it offers "a model of life."

The pope also asked priests not to be satisfied with just the young people who continue to come to the parish: "We must organize, think, seek initiatives that can be a form of outreach."

"We must go ourselves, we must invite other young people, go out into the streets with them; perhaps offer different ways," activities such as sports, art and culture, he said.

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Leo encouraged priests to nurture true friendships with one another and to resist the temptation of "i*nvidia clericalis*," or clerical envy.

"Let us not be afraid to knock on another's door, to take the initiative, to say to companions or a group of friends: why don't we meet from time to time to study together, reflect together, have a moment of prayer and then a good lunch? The parish priest with the best cook can invite the others," Leo said.

During the question-and-answer session, Leo also addressed the issue of euthanasia, underlining that priests "must be the first to bear witness to the fact that life has enormous value."

The pope also urged priests to bring Communion and the anointing of the sick to parishioners who are ill.

"Today, with fewer priests and more elderly, it has become: 'Well, let's send the lay people, they will do it, '" he said. "It is a beautiful service that lay people provide … but that does not mean that the priest can stay at home watching things on the internet."