

Pope Francis to unlock app for Pontifical Mission Societies

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Pope Francis was scheduled to help the Pontifical Mission Societies of the United States broaden its reach around the world by unlocking a smartphone app.

During an audience with national directors of pontifical mission societies from around the world, the pope was set to launch the organization's new Missio app from the Vatican on Friday, sending news and content in eight languages.

News and information will be available in English, Spanish, Italian, German, French, Portuguese, Chinese and Arabic from Fides, the Vatican's missionary news agency, and news.va. The app also includes videos from news.va and Catholic News Service.

"The app is a way for the church and our Holy Father to reach the growing number of the world's people who have access to handheld mobile devices, a way to connect as the body of Christ," Oblate Fr. Andrew Small, national director of the Pontifical Mission Societies in the United States, said in a statement.

The app was available for download before the official launch, but remained locked. When the pope activates the app by pushing a button marked "evangelizantur," Latin for "they have been evangelized," users were to be notified.

The app is supported by Apple and Android devices. It can be downloaded for free wherever apps are available.

The introduction of the app comes as the Vatican has increasingly taken advantage of new communication technologies, including a papal Twitter account, @Pontifex. Small said social media helps the church call more people to be followers of Christ, "and if used properly the new media allow for a more intimate relationship between peoples and nations, fostering peace and mutual understanding."

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