



Pope Francis greets members of several groups of Italian Catholic journalists and media professionals in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Nov. 23, 2023. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

Cindy Wooden

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An important part of the mission of Catholic media is to forgo the shocking, sensational or superficial when such stories present the people involved as less than human and unworthy of respect, Pope Francis said.

"You have a vocation to remind us, in a simple and understandable style, that beyond the news and scoops, there are always feelings, stories, flesh and blood people to be respected as if they were your own relatives," the pope said Nov. 23 with members of several Italian Catholic media groups.

"We see from the sad news of these days, from the terrible news of violence against women, how urgent it is to educate for respect and care: to form men capable of healthy relationships," the pope told members of the Italian Federation of Catholic Weeklies, the Italian Periodical Press Union, the Corallo Association and the AIART Media Citizens Association.

"To communicate is to form people. To communicate is to form society," he told those involved in print, television, radio and digital communications. "Do not abandon the path of education: it will take you far!"

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Francis also asked the Catholic communications professionals to advocate for measures that protect people's privacy and protect weaker members of society -- especially children, the elderly and people with disabilities -- "from the intrusiveness of the digital world and the seductions of provocative and polemical communication."

"Please," he said, "do this fearlessly, like David against Goliath: with a small slingshot he brought down the giant. Do not just play defensively but, remaining 'small inside,' think big, because you are called to a great task: to protect, through words and images, the dignity of people, especially the dignity of the small and the poor, God's favorites."

Citing the example of Blessed Carlo Acutis, who knew the dangers of media but also knew how to use it to promote the faith, Francis urged the communicators to be creative and willing to take risks to promote Christian values.

"Go against the grain," he urged them. "Speak about fraternity in an individualistic world; about peace in a world at war; about attention to the poor in an intolerant and indifferent world. But this can be done credibly only if you first bear witness to what you say."