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Message of the Holy Father Francis to members of the Catholic Press Association on the occasion of 2020 Virtual Catholic Media Conference

The following is the message sent by the Holy Father Francis to members of the Catholic Press Association on the occasion of the Catholic Media Conference, taking place from 30 June to 2 July 2020 on the theme, "Together While Apart":

Message of the Holy Father

To the Members of the Catholic Press Association

This year, for the first time in its history, the Catholic Press Association is hosting a virtual Catholic Media Conference, due to the current health situation. Before all else, I would like to express my closeness to those who have been affected by the virus and to those who, even at the risk of their lives, have worked and continue to work in assisting our brothers and sisters in need.

The theme you have chosen for this year's Conference – *Together While Apart* – eloquently expresses the sense of togetherness that emerged, paradoxically, from the experience of social distancing imposed by the pandemic. In my Message for last year's World Communications Day, I reflected on how communication enables us to be, as Saint Paul says, "members of one another" (cf. *Eph 4:25*), called to live in communion within an ever expanding network of relationships. Because of the pandemic, all of us have come to appreciate this truth more fully. Indeed, the experience of these past months has shown how essential is the mission of the communications media for bringing people together, shortening distances, providing necessary information, and opening minds and hearts to truth.

It was precisely this realisation that led to the establishment of the first Catholic newspapers in your country and the constant encouragement given them by the Church's pastors. We see this in the case of the Charleston Catholic Miscellany, launched in 1822 by Bishop John England and followed by so many other newspapers and journals. Today, as much as ever, our communities [::] count on newspapers, radio, TV and social media to

share, to communicate, to inform and to unite.

E pluribus unum – the ideal of unity amid diversity, reflected in the motto of the United States, must also inspire the service you offer to the common good. How urgently is this needed today, in an age marked by conflicts and polarisation from which the Catholic community itself is not immune. We need media capable of building bridges, defending life and breaking down the walls, visible and invisible, that prevent sincere dialogue and truthful communication between individuals and communities. We need media that can help people, especially the young, to distinguish good from evil, to develop sound judgments based on a clear and unbiased presentation of the facts, and to understand the importance of working for justice, social concord and respect for our common home. We need men and women of conviction who protect communication from all that would distort it or bend it to other purposes.

I ask you, then, to be united and a sign of unity among yourselves. Media can be large or small, but in the Church these are not the categories that count. In the Church we have all been baptised in the one Spirit and made members of the one body (cf. *1 Cor* 12:13). As in every body, it is often the members who are smallest who, in the end, are those most necessary. So it is with the body of Christ. Each of us, wherever we find ourselves, is called to contribute, through our profession of truth in love, to the Church's growth to full maturity in Christ (cf. *Eph* 4:15).

Communication, we know, is not merely a matter of professional competence. A true communicator dedicates himself or herself completely to the welfare of the others, at every level, from the life of each individual to the life of the entire human family. We cannot truly communicate unless we become personally involved, unless we can personally attest to the truth of the message we convey. All communication has its ultimate source in the life of the triune God, who shares with us the richness of his divine life and calls us in turn to communicate that treasure to others by our unity in the service of his truth.

Dear friends, I cordially invoke upon you and the work of your Conference an outpouring of the Holy Spirit's gifts of wisdom, understanding and good counsel. Only the gaze of the Spirit allows us not to close our eyes to those who suffer and to seek the true good of all. Only with that gaze can we effectively work to overcome the diseases of racism, injustice and indifference that disfigure the face of our common family. Through your dedication and daily work, may you help others to contemplate situations and people with the eyes of the Spirit. Where our world all too readily speaks with adjectives and adverbs, may Christian communicators speak with nouns that acknowledge and advance the quiet claims of truth and promote human dignity. Where the world sees conflicts and divisions, may you look to the suffering and the poor, and give voice to the plea of our brothers and sisters in need of mercy and understanding.

Yesterday the Church celebrated the Solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul. May the spirit of communion with the Bishop of Rome, which has always been a hallmark of the Catholic press in your countries, keep all of you united in faith and resistant to fleeting cultural fads that lack the fragrance of evangelical truth. Let us continue to pray together for reconciliation and peace in our world. I assure you of my support and my prayers for you and your families. And I ask you, please, to remember me in your own prayers.

From the Vatican, 30 June 2020

FRANCIS

