

Pope Francis Rebukes Media for Releasing the Spirit of Fear

Pope Francis has urged global news outlets to “stem the spiral of fear” caused by coverage of the world’s tragedies and scandals.

“I am convinced that we have to break the vicious circle of anxiety and stem the spiral of fear resulting from a constant focus on ‘bad news,’” the pope said in a message Tuesday (Jan. 24).

“This has nothing to do with spreading misinformation that would ignore the tragedy of human suffering, nor is it about a naive optimism blind to the scandal of evil.”

In a powerfully worded message, the pope said he wanted to encourage media professionals to engage in “constructive forms of communication that reject prejudice” and help create a world of “realism and trust.”

The pope’s message came days after President Trump launched a bitter attack on news media over its reporting on the size of his inauguration crowd.

In his message, Francis said he was concerned about the focus on “bad news” that included “wars, terrorism, scandals and all sorts of human failure” by a media industry that thinks good news doesn’t sell and where the “tragedy of human suffering and the mystery of evil” easily become entertainment.

“I ask everyone to offer the people of our time storylines that are at heart ‘good news,’” the pontiff said.

In December, the pope said scandal-mongering media that focused only on muckraking or that spread fake news risked

becoming like those who have a fascination with excrement.

He told the Belgian Catholic weekly *Tertio* that spreading disinformation was “probably the greatest damage that the media can do” and using communications for this rather than to educate the public amounted to a sin. In May, the pope will mark World Communications Day. The theme this year is: “Fear not, for I am with you: communicating hope and trust in our time.” {eo}

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