



SIGNIS India National Assembly, April 14-16
Gianodaya, New Diocesan Pastoral Centre,
Lidhran, Diocese of Jalandhar, Punjab.

Theme: Whispers of Hope:
Communicating peace, Growing together, Building Futures.



Figure 1 Fr Martin, Prarthana T V, Local Organizer

Inaugural Eucharist Bishop John Sebastian, Jalandhar Diocese

The gospel passage today reminds us that the mission and the message that we need to communicate can come only if we are born from above. And the message to be communicated will go across if we know what we communicate. And that is a challenge for us. In the media apostolate, what we need to communicate is as already said, “go and preach this good news.”

The good news for Christians is, the good news that he is risen and that man is reconciled with God and there is this possibility for everyone to be reconciled and be reborn as children of God. This message is as when Peter proclaimed it and the people requested, “what shall we do?” And he said, it begins first with repentance, repent and believe in the gospel. Unless this happens, our proclamation remains mere broadcasting of various things. And I must acknowledge that we as the church have perhaps not utilized the mandate properly given, properly even now, even today.

We have the vast resources and SIGNIS represents that. The resources which are meant for the spreading of the gospel, the good news. Our media apostolate... sometimes we are ...I am afraid we don't have the proper perspective of what actually our people desire. What do they want? And so we tend to create very often programs which are meant to entertain, but sometimes not clearly giving the message.

The message, if it is lost while we communicate, then the whole purpose is lost. And that is the reason many people will say why the whole of India is not evangelized even after 2000 years. Somewhere we have to acknowledge that throughout the years we have failed to communicate effectively the message of the gospel to the people living around us. Of course, we can also at the same time take credit for the growth that has happened in the media apostolate. That's not something to be shied away, not to be considered as something belonging to the worldly people. But these are all opportunities.



Each World Communications Day, the Holy Father reminds us of this that the media with the vast possibilities and now with artificial intelligence and other facilities that are there, they are not to be seen as threat, but as opportunities. And so, it is for us to make use of these opportunities. But when we make use of these opportunities, our focus should not get diverted. Sometimes the focus would be how to manage this, how to fill 24 hours of the day in the media. And therefore, in

order to fill it, sometimes other programs come in which do not have really the value that people are looking for.

And what really we do for people, what they need is the real proclamation of the good news. And wherever prayers and the proclamation of the good news is broadcast in whatever manner, there are always a large number of people attending to it. The difficulty I understand will be perhaps the funding process. And that is why we have to depend on other people, institutions, and keep in touch with whatever they are doing. But I believe we must always keep the focus on. Then only we will be able to freely reach out to the people.

Today we are living in a situation of fear, I would say. That we today are not able to speak properly as we could speak earlier. There are various other manners in which the good news is prevented from being proclaimed. Institutional restraints, legal restraints. So, they are all coming there, surely you are well aware of the manner in which the activities of those belonging to the Christian faith are under observation and are also being prevented or various things are used to prevent them.

That means in this situation we have to rely on God and God's help. But that will also call for soul searching. And also, the courage with which the apostles replied to the authorities, we must obey God. And what we have seen, what we have experienced, these things we preach to you. And so those in the media, unless they are touched by the Lord and have the experience, they would not be able to communicate what they have not experienced. And that is why the Christian media, Catholic media, definitely has to be rooted in that faith experience, prayer experience, closely connected to the altar, closely connected to the Eucharist. And from there, the protagonist, the Holy Spirit is the one who would help us to come up with new programs, new ideas which would be effective for the listeners, for the viewers. And I am not an expert in the media, so I am speaking this generally.

You all will be reflecting on this in a much more detailed manner in these days. And the experts in this field will be speaking. I wish and pray that our means of communication always remain open for us in India and also for the people abroad, that we are able to communicate the core message of the gospel. And that all the difficulties that are being put forward there is no, that they go away. That will happen only if as in the Acts of the Apostles we hear the community of faithful, they were of one heart and mind. And then prayed together. And when they prayed together, the power of the Holy Spirit fell upon them as it happened on the first day of the Pentecost. And therefore, it is only through this reawakening and re-Pentecost that we will be able to preach the good news and make use of every means at the service of the gospel.

And I wish and pray that all of you dealing in this field are empowered by the Lord to do all that he has in store for us in the year and I wish you once again a fruitful stay here and a fruitful deliberation.

Keynote address

Bishop Vijay Kumar Rayarla of Srikakulam Diocese Chairman Commission for Social Communications & NISCORT

Bishop Vijaykumar began, "Your presence brings fresh energy, creativity, and hope. And we look forward to your active participation in carrying forward the mission of SIGNIS into the future."

We gather here not merely as professionals in media, but as men and women entrusted with a sacred mission, the mission of communicating hope in a world that is often wounded by disease, confusion, and despair. Breathing that crisis, we bring Whispers of hope, communicating peace, growth, growing together, and building futures. It is both deeply poetic and profoundly profound. A whisper may appear gentle and almost unnoticed as it carries a unique power. It does not impose itself, but invites. It does not overwhelm but transforms.



In a world that is increasingly dominated by noise, speed, and reaction, hope often reaches hearts not through loud proclamations, but through quiet, consistent, and authentic witness. As communicators, we are called to become those whispers of hope that touch lives, heal wounds, and inspire trust. In reflecting on our mission, we draw strength and guidance from the message of his holiness, Pope Leo XIV, for the 60th World Day of Social Communications.

That Holy Father offers us a profound vision of communication rooted in the dignity of the human person. He reminds us that cases of voices are sacred because they reveal the uniqueness of each individual and make possible genuine encounter and make calls for genuine encounter. Communication therefore is never merely about transmitting information. It is about entering into relationship. It is about recognizing the other as a person, created in the image and likeness of God. This insight becomes even more significant in the context of our rapidly evolving digital world. We are living in an age marked by extraordinary technological advancements, particularly in artificial intelligence and digital media.

These developments bring immense opportunities, but they also present serious challenges. As the Holy Father cautions, the issue before us is not simply technological, but deeply anthropological, because it concerns the very nature of what it means to be human.

Today, technology has the ability to simulate human voices and faces, to imitate emotions and even phases to manipulate emotions and even to shape perceptions and decisions. While these tools can assist us, they also risk replacing authentic human interaction with artificial experiences. In such a contest, we must ask ourselves whether we are truly fostering relationships or merely generating engagement, whether we are seeking truth or simply reacting to trends, and whether we are growing wisdom or becoming passive consumers of information.

The Holy Father warns us that when we renounce our capacity to think, to create, and to engage deeply, we risk hiding our faces and silencing our voices. This is not only a technological concern, but a spiritual one. Communication that loses its grounding in truth, responsibility, and human dignity, easily becomes a tool of manipulation rather than a means of communion.

As members of SIGNIS, we are called to resist this temptation. Our vocation is not merely to produce content, but to bear witness to truth. We are not simply influencers of opinion, but servants of the gospel. In responding to these challenges, the message of Pope Leo XIII highlights the importance of honesty, transparency, and courage, ensuring that truth is never sacrificed for popularity or profit.

At the same time, we must recognize that no single individual or institution can address these challenges alone. There is a need for collaboration among the church, media professionals, educators, and policy makers so that communication may truly serve the common good. Furthermore, education in media literacy has become essential, enabling people to think critically, discern truth, and use technology responsibly.

Our theme also calls us to communicate peace in a world what is increasingly divided. Peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice, truth, and mutual respect. In a time marked by misinformation, polarization, and digital hostility, the communicator is called to become a bridge builder. Our words must heal rather than wound, unite rather than divide, and enlighten rather than inflame.

In this way, communication becomes a true ministry of reconciliation. The call to grow together invites us to embrace the synodal spirit of the church. Communication within the church must be participatory and rooted in dialogue. It requires not only speaking but also listening, especially to those who are often unheard. When we listen to the poor, the marginalized, the youth, and those on the peripheries, our communication becomes more authentic and more faithful to the gospel. It becomes a reflection of a church that walks together, building futures, as our theme suggests, is an act of hope and responsibility.

The future of the communication is our country will depend on our commitment to ethical practices, the formation of young communicators, the promotion of truth-based journalism, and the responsible use of emerging technologies. We must ensure that technology remains at the service of humanity and does not diminish the dignity of the human person.

SIGNIS therefore is not merely an association, but a vital mission within the church. You are called to bring gospel values into the world of media, to promote dignity and justice, and to defend truth in the digital space. Your work has the power to shape minds, influence cultures and build a more human and compassionate society. At the heart of our reflection stands Jesus Christ, the perfect communicator.

He did not communicate from a distance, but entered into human life. He spoke with compassion, listened with love and gave himself completely. Jesus is not only our message, but also our model. In him communication becomes communion and words become life-giving. Dear brothers and sisters, in a world filled with noise, let us become whispers of hope. In a culture marked by division, let us become voices of peace. In an age of artificial connections, let us bear witness to authentic relationships rooted in truth and love. Let us preserve what is most sacred, the human face, the human voice, the human heart, as Pope Leo XIII reminds us. We need faces and voices to speak for people again. May this National Assembly 2026 renew our commitment, deepen our mission, and strengthen our unity. May we go forth as true communicators of Christ's peace, building a future rooted in truth, love, and justice. Thank you and God bless you all.

Youth, Media, and the Common Good

Mr Percival Holt

Today's youth are not lost, but rather they are overwhelmed. They belong to what can be called a "juggling generation," where they are constantly balancing multiple realities at the same time. They live between the virtual and the real world and try to live both without clear guidance. At the same time, they are caught between system expectations such as career and



success, and a deeper personal calling that includes meaning, purpose, and spirituality. Even though they do not express it in traditional religious language like vocation, there is a silent search within them for truth and for God. They desire to serve, love, and even become missionaries, but they often feel confused about how to do this in practical life.

Media plays a very powerful role in shaping today's youth. Platforms like Netflix, YouTube, and Spotify act as digital formators. At times they influence youth more than traditional preaching because they communicate through stories, music, and visuals that connect deeply with their emotions. While the internet provides endless information, it does not provide wisdom or guidance. This is where the Church has a unique role to offer accompaniment and deeper understanding. Young people today learn about justice, climate change, and dignity largely through media rather than textbooks, which makes media an important tool for formation.

Therefore, the Church must shift its approach from giving warnings about the dangers of the internet and media to providing training that empowers youth. Youth should be taught to use digital tools, including artificial intelligence, for social good such as community outreach and social impact. Instead of giving ready-made answers, media should be used to provoke

thought and curiosity about faith. There is also a need to help youth experience prayer and community even in digital spaces, forming what can be understood as a virtual prayer groups.

A key model suggested by the professor is the mentor-leader model, where youth and elders (especially Priests and religious sisters) collaborate. Youth bring technological skills, creativity, and peer influence, while elders bring wisdom, experience, and spiritual guidance. This collaboration helps bridge the gap between the digital and real world.

When we involve youth in our ministry, the focus should not be on likes or popularity but on meaningful engagement and impact. The Church must connect its digital presence to real-life transformation, including goals like education, peace, and justice. Media tools such as reels, podcasts, and storytelling can be used effectively to communicate faith in a meaningful way. The Church should curate good content, support young creators, and create safe digital spaces where youth can openly share their struggles.

God is already working in the lives of young people. The role of the Church is to accompany them, not control them. Growth requires freedom to make mistakes, but with guidance. It is through accompaniment that a young person is transformed into a disciple. If we see today the situation of youth is on education, career, money, and social status. Many young people are running behind good jobs, high salaries, and positions such as managers, officers, or government officials. Because of this, they delay important life decisions like marriage until they achieve financial stability, own a house, or have sufficient savings. This trend shows how much importance is given to external success and keep them away from the real values of life.

However, this situation is not only the responsibility of the youth. It is also the result of certain mistakes made by society and the Church. In many cases, young people have been pushed either too much towards career success or too much into church activities, without maintaining a proper balance. There has been a tendency to keep youth within church walls, involving them continuously in prayer meetings, novenas, and programs, instead of encouraging them to go out into the world, gain experience, and become independent.

As a result, there are some youth who are deeply involved in ministry but are not interested in working or building a career. They may spend all their time in church activities, while their parents become worried about their future. Some youth even develop an attitude of leaving everything to God without making personal efforts, expecting that opportunities will come without taking practical steps such as applying for jobs or building skills. This reflects an imbalance in the way faith and responsibility are understood.

Another issue is that some youth become so attached to youth ministry that they find it difficult to move on in life. Even after reaching the age for marriage or taking on responsibilities, they experience fear of missing out because they are used to constant programs and activities.

There is also a need to clearly understand the difference between involving youth and giving them full control. While youth should be encouraged to participate and share their ideas, it is not correct to hand over full responsibility without proper formation. In some cases, youth without theological understanding have been given important roles, leading to mistakes, misuse of authority, or even distortion of faith practices. It is also the responsibility of the priests in the church to give them proper motivation and guide.

There have also been situations where youth, without sufficient knowledge, have questioned traditions, misunderstood teachings, or created confusion among others. In some cases, lack of formation has even led to division or conflict within the community. These examples highlight the need for careful guidance and supervision. There is a need for deeper reflection at every level — parish, diocese, and Church leadership. There must be a balance between spiritual life, career, and personal responsibilities. Youth should be formed properly, guided wisely, and given responsibility gradually. True collaboration means walking with them, not abandoning them or over-controlling them.

Only through proper formation, balanced guidance, and responsible involvement can youth grow into mature individuals who contribute both to the Church and to society in which the Priests and sisters play an important role as mentors and guide. (Contributed by Sr Rekha)

Relevant Witness: Communicating Christ in Today’s World *by Fr Nigel Barret*

Fr Nigel Barret highlighted the vocation of Catholic communicators to witness Christ not by loud proclamation, but through “whispers, not shouts,” rooted in truth, love, and courage. This calling is not merely to speak, but to communicate Christ in a way that is meaningful, authentic, and relevant in today’s context. This requires a deep understanding of both the external challenges faced by the Church and the internal realities that need honest reflection.

The situation in India presents serious challenges. Fr. Nigel showed us the statistics how the Church is under increasing scrutiny and pressure. It is often facing accusations such as



“forced conversions.” However, these accusations are largely myths when compared with the demographic reality. Christians form only a small percentage of the population, and their numbers show decline rather than expansion. This itself is a clear proof that the narrative of large-scale conversions is not supported by facts. Historically, Christianity has deep roots in India, dating back to St.

Thomas in 52 AD, and even during British rule, missionary activity was restricted rather than promoted.

Despite these realities, the Church faces a growing crisis of persecution, with increasing attacks recorded over the years. This creates a serious communication challenge: how to respond to fake news, hate speech, and hostility on social media while remaining non-violent

and faithful to Christian values. The response cannot be reactive or aggressive; it must be strategic, truthful, and rooted in peace.

To address these challenges, Father proposed a fact-based counter-narrative as a roadmap. Communicators must publicly and repeatedly debunk false claims through four key areas: the demographic lie, the colonial lie, the myth of social threat, and the truth of ancient roots. Along with this, there is a need for strategic communication that includes creating shareable content, building partnerships, and telling positive stories. These stories should highlight real examples of service and transformation, showing how Christian values contribute to society. The emphasis is on proclaiming truth with love and creativity, rather than confrontation.

However, Fr Nigel said that effective witness cannot happen without internal honesty. There are “skeletons in our closet” that must be addressed. One of the major issues is caste discrimination within the Church, which contradicts the message of the Gospel. This has led to pain, protests, and even people leaving the Church. In addition, problems such as clericalism and sexual abuse scandals have caused deep damage and loss of credibility. These internal wounds weaken the Church’s witness and must be acknowledged openly.

The path forward requires a commitment to reform and transparency. Communicators are called to amplify reforms, tell stories of healing, and engage in honest reporting.

The Beatitudes are a strategic communication plan, which we are called to practice. This includes adopting humility instead of institutional arrogance, standing with victims of persecution and caste injustice, and responding to attacks in a non-violent manner. Communication should focus on peace rather than conflict, and on building unity rather than division. There is also a need to challenge false narratives with fact-based and justice-oriented content, while engaging in dialogue with critics and promoting interfaith understanding.

Another important aspect is internal cleansing, which includes addressing abuse, clericalism, and caste issues within the Church. This must be done through transparent communication about reforms. At the same time, communicators are encouraged to share “whispers of hope” by highlighting stories of harmony, resilience, and faith, especially from communities that have suffered persecution. Even suffering is to be understood as a witness, offering testimonies of hope.

Communicators are encouraged to create one major impactful story, form rapid-response teams to address misinformation, communicate internal reforms transparently, and focus on living on the Beatitude consistently over a period of time. These practical directions will eventually improve the entire system.

In conclusion, being a “relevant witness” means communicating Christ not through power or dominance, but through humility, truth, and love. It requires courage to face external challenges and honesty to address internal weaknesses. Through strategic communication, authentic storytelling, and faithful living, the Church can remain a meaningful presence in today’s world, offering hope, peace, and truth in the midst of confusion and conflict.

Church leaders urge Indian Catholic communicators toward truth
Lissy Maruthanakuzhy

Jalandhar, April 16, 2026: Church leaders have called on Indian Catholic communicators to embrace their mission as “whispers of hope” in a noisy digital age, urging them to prioritize truth, peace, and authentic relationships during the SIGNIS India National Assembly held April 14–15 in Jalandhar, Punjab.



The gathering, themed “Whispers of Hope: Communicating Peace, Growing Together, Building Futures,” brought together bishops, youth leaders, and media professionals to reflect on the role of Catholic communication in a rapidly evolving technological and cultural landscape.

Bishop Vijay Kumar Rayarla of Srikakulam, who serves as Chairman of the Commission for Social Communications and NISCORT, a professional Media College for Journalism and Mass Communication Studies, opened the assembly with a keynote address.

“Your presence brings fresh energy, creativity, and hope. And we look forward to your active participation in carrying forward the mission of SIGNIS into the future,” the bishop said.

He emphasized that communicators are entrusted with a sacred mission: “We are called to become those whispers of hope that touch lives, heal wounds, and inspire trust.”

Bishop Rayarla drew on Pope Leo XIV’s message for the 60th World Day of Social Communications, warning that technology’s ability to simulate voices, faces, and emotions risks replacing authentic human interaction.

“Communication therefore is never merely about transmitting information. It is about entering into relationship,” he said. He urged Catholic communicators to resist manipulation and remain grounded in truth, transparency, and courage.

Percival Holt of the Conference of Catholic Bishops of India (Latin Church) Youth Commission highlighted the challenges facing young people in the digital era.

“Young people are not spiritually indifferent but deeply overwhelmed by academic, social, digital, and existential pressures,” Holt said. He noted that platforms such as YouTube, Netflix, and podcasts have become spaces of catechesis and identity exploration.

Holt called for a shift from warning-based youth engagement to accompaniment and training. “Rather than treating media as a threat, it is a pastoral frontier where young people are already searching for meaning, community, justice, and God,” he said.

He urged the Church to recognize media as a catechetical space, integrate artificial intelligence responsibly, and create hybrid models of community that bridge online and offline life.

Bishop Jose Sebastian Thekkumcherikunnel of Jullundur reminded participants of the centrality of the gospel message. “What we need to communicate is as already said, go and preach this good news,” he said. He acknowledged that the Church has not always fully utilized its resources for evangelization.

“Somewhere we have to acknowledge that throughout the years we have failed to communicate effectively the message of the gospel to the people living around us,” he said.

Bishop Thekkumcherikunnel stressed that Catholic media must remain rooted in faith and prayer. “Unless they are touched by the Lord and have the experience, they would not be able to communicate what they have not experienced,” he said.

He also pointed to institutional and legal restraints that hinder proclamation, urging reliance on God and courage in witness.

Throughout the assembly, speakers underscored the need for collaboration among the Church, educators, policymakers, and media professionals to ensure communication serves the common good. Media literacy was identified as essential for helping people discern truth and use technology responsibly.

The assembly concluded with a call to action: to communicate peace in a divided world, to listen to marginalized voices, and to build futures rooted in justice and dignity. “In a world filled with noise, let us become whispers of hope. In a culture marked by division, let us become voices of peace,” Bishop Rayarla said.

Some participants departing the assembly told Matters India that they were leaving with a clear message — Catholic communicators in India are tasked not only with producing content, but with bearing witness to truth, fostering authentic relationships, and shaping a more compassionate society.



With Contributions from Sr Rekha

