

Thank you. I am grateful to SIGNIS Africa and the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development for organizing and envisioning this conference.

For those who may not be aware, SIGNIS is an organization of Catholic media professionals. And as Father Walter said earlier, our mission statement is to help transform our cultures in the light of the Gospel by promoting human dignity, justice and reconciliation. We do this through the powerful tools of modern media, and we do it best with the power of the Holy Spirit.

This spring the Assembly of Delegates for SIGNIS gave us a mandate which first, intends us to focus on empowering women in their role as communicators, and, secondly, to increase our efforts in the forming of the next generation of Catholic communicators. I see both aspects of SIGNIS's mandate in our conference theme and represented in the flesh here. I am so delighted to see so many young media professionals and -- may I dare say -- so many young women media professionals!

We also know people on the move today are predominantly young people. The results of the tragedies of migration fall disproportionately on women and on those young people who are attempting to find work and to begin and raise a family.

Our mandate as SIGNIS, though, challenges us to go beyond this simple observation. What does this mean to say a disproportionate number of people on the move are young? What does that do to our cultures, our societies, when entire generations have their heart in one place and their minds in another? What does that mean for those whose sense of being human is being formed because they're labeled as the "other"?

Who better to do that storytelling than those whose lives are immediately impacted by the movement of people, because these migrants are their friends, their family, their colleagues.

And likewise, while we still have a majority of policymakers who are men, how urgent is it that we have women telling the stories of women?

Women like our Blessed Mother Mary, who suffered the terrible anxieties and dangers of crossing borders and of being a displaced person. As a mother and a grandmother, I can acutely empathize and imagine the indignities and the terrors mothers and fathers must face as they try to protect their children.

Our challenge as Catholic journalists is to put flesh on the data and the images of people on the move. As Bishop Franzelli said today, we must tell the *stories* of our *sisters and brothers*.

I hope my presence this week is a witness of the solidarity of our SIGNIS members around the world. We are more than 100 organizations strong. We are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, the Indian Ocean islands, the Middle East, North America and the Pacific Islands. Our strength as a network is that we can share the stories of those we interview across our church and around the world as sisters and brothers.

And for those of you here who are not a member of SIGNIS, please, join us in this great adventure!