

# Shhh: Pope asks communicators to reflect on value of silence

VATICAN CITY – Pope Benedict XVI is asking media professionals and viewers, listeners and readers to set aside a bit of time for silence.

Announcing that the pope had chosen “Silence and Word: Path of Evangelization” as the theme for World Communications Day 2012, the Vatican acknowledged it initially might appear strange to ask professional wordsmiths to focus on silence, but it said silence is essential for really processing the words people hear or read.

The Catholic celebration of World Communications Day is marked in most dioceses on the Sunday before Pentecost, which in 2012 will be May 20. A papal message for the occasion usually is released on the feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron of writers, Jan. 24.

The Pontifical Council for Social Communications, which coordinates the observance, said that in the pope’s thinking, “silence is not presented simply as an antidote to the constant and unstoppable flow of information that characterizes society today, but rather as a factor that is necessary for its integration.”

Silence, the council said, favors discernment and reflection.

Particularly when talking about the word of God, silence is an indispensable part of welcoming the message the word is communicating, it said.

The pontifical council said the pope wanted to associate the theme of World Communications Day 2012 with preparations for the world Synod of Bishops, which will focus on “the new evangelization for the transmission of the Christian faith” when it meets in October 2012.