

New Evangelization and Technology

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Pope Paul VI *“Our century is characterized by the mass media or means of social communication, and the first proclamation catechesis or the further deepening of faith cannot do without these means.”* Evangelii Nuntiandi, Apostolic Exhortation on Evangelization in the Modern World, #45)

Pope John Paul II *“Do not be afraid of new technologies! These rank ‘among the marvelous things’ – inter mirifica – which God has placed at our disposal to discover, to use, and to make known the truth about our dignity and about our destiny as his children, heirs of the Eternal Kingdom. (The Rapid Development, Apostolic Letter on Media and Communication, #14).*

Pope Benedict VI *“The new media – telecommunications and internet in particular – are changing the very face of communication; perhaps this is a valuable opportunity to reshape it, to make more visible . . . the essential and indispensable elements of the truth about the human person”.* (Message of the World’s Communication Day, #2, 2008)

Introduction

This is the fourth of a series of static conferences on the topic of New Evangelization. Technology being a wide topic, I will confine myself to one type of technology i.e. the new media. The term “new media” in this conference refers to Internet-based media that allow easy, person-to-person communication – including, but not limited to, the so called “social media.”

The *Lineamenta for the 2012 Synod on New Evangelization* takes cognizance of the of the influence of the means of social communications world-wide:

“. . . the means of social communications, which while today providing great possibilities for the Church, also represents one of her challenges. Although these means of social communication, in their initial stages, were limited to the industrialized world, they are now able to influence vast portions of developing countries. Today, no place in the world is beyond reach and, consequently, unaffected by media and digital culture, which is fast becoming the “forum” of public life and social interaction.”¹

The same document while enumerating various benefits of this means of social communications cautions against the risks that go along with its indiscriminate use:

“Undoubtedly, the diffusion of this culture has its benefits, including major access to information; greater opportunities for knowledge, exchange and new forms of solidarity; and the capacity to build an increasingly ‘world culture’ which leads to a common patrimony of values and a greater development of thought and human expression.

These potentialities, however, cannot hide the inherent risks when this kind of culture is taken to an extreme, including a selfish concentration on oneself and personal needs; an overemphasis on the emotive aspects of relations and social bonds; the loss of the objective values of experience, reflection and thought, which are reduced in many cases, to ways of reconfirming one’s individualistic feelings; the progressive alienation of the moral and a mirror for self or simply a spectator to one’s actions; and finally the formation of a culture centered on passing novelties, the present moment and outward appearances, indeed a society which is incapable of remembering the past and no sense of the future. ^{cii}

There will be three parts in this presentation. 1) The Development of Different Mediums of Communication World-Wide; 2) Some Positive Use of the New Media in aid of New Evangelization; and 3) Facing the Risks of the Use of the New Media.

1. The Development of Different Mediums of Communication World-Wide

I had to discern seriously and consult with some Sisters whether I would include in this conference a review of the development over the years of the different mediums of communication world-wide. I decided to present this review after having been advised that most of my readers would be Sisters, who like me grew up with typewriters and have only recently been more computer literate and for whom the New Media is still a strange way of communicating and often regarded as a time-wasting device that needs to be regulated or avoided.

Who of us are familiar with blogs, podcasts/video casts, twitter, Facebook, You Tube, etc.? Although most of us own cell phones, we only use it for texting and have very basic use for it. Many Sisters regard the New Media as suspect or inappropriate and tend to use it, if at all, with caution, ever careful not to waste precious time that could be devoted to more profitable reading, etc.

The introduction of these new ways of communication has become a part of our culture and is here to stay and will continue to be the popular means of communication, especially of the youth, until it is replaced by newer, more efficient ones. So we might as well know about them. It is said that the Philippines is now the “texting capital of the world.” Recently, in a seminar in Singapore, the Philippines was cited as the “social media capital of the world.” Would we be better off ignoring the new media and stand at the periphery of our culture?

For the following section of the statio conference I will quote extensively from Brandon Vogt's The Digital Continentⁱⁱⁱ in order to get a grasp of the universal development of media over the years. It is important to note that the colossal development of the media occurred only after the first 1500 years. It was 450 years after the first fifteen centuries that the staggering growth in leaps and bounds of media followed. And with the new millennium came the exciting introduction of the New Media. We are at a time when we can only guess and gasp to see what more surprises await us.

The Print Medium

“Christianity reveals a God who uses all sorts of media to get his message across, from pillars of fire to bright stars, from burning bushes to a talking donkey. He delivered the Ten Commandments on chiseled rock, painted rainbows to signal his covenant, and used a cross to display his love.

For its first one-and-a-half thousand years, Christianity's dominant form of communication was hand-copied print, with parchments, scrolls, and books transmitting sacred writings. These texts were used in the liturgy and were proclaimed at special religious gatherings. During these early centuries, if Christians wanted to absorb pieces of Scripture, they typically had to find a community that would read them aloud.

The 15th century, however, saw Christianity's first major communication shift. When Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable-type printing press, he influenced not only *what* Christians communicated but *how*. Through Gutenberg's invention, religious texts were quickly produced, copied, and disseminated across the world. This shifted the focus of Christianity from listening to reading, from the community to the individual, and from concrete images to abstract theology.”^{iv}

a) The Advent of Radio and Television

“Roughly 450 years after this radical change, a new technology called “radio” entered the scene. The Catholic Church was one of the first to harness this new medium, with the charismatic Fulton Sheen beginning his weekly *Catholic Hour* in 1930. The show's audience grew quickly, and after two decades four million people tuned in each week to America's most famous evangelist.

In 1951, Sheen was appointed auxiliary bishop of New York and soon moved – along with the Church – to the world's next new technology: television. Sheen's *Life is Worth Living* show continued his radio success, attracting 30 million weekly viewers at its peak.

Throughout history, the Church aptly discerned the power of these past technologies – print, radio, and television – even in light of each medium's disadvantages. But while the Church

recognized the potency of these prior tools, nobody could have foreseen the power of what came next.”^v

b) The Digital Revolution

“The last few decades have witnessed a digital explosion unimaginable 540 years ago, sparked by the advent of the internet and its World Wide Web.

As in earlier times, the Church was quick to adopt these new tools. The Vatican created one of the internet’s earliest sites in 1995, making many church documents available on the Web. The Vatican Webpage modeled the style of most other pages over the next half-decade: static, information repositories featuring one-way communication – from the website to the user.”^{vi}

c) The New Media

“But a second wave of innovation began with the new millennium. The early 21st century introduced the burgeoning New Media, encompassing blogs, social media, text messaging, and other digital tools.

Though the classification is nebulous, New Media has many typical features that distinguish it from its predecessors. New Media usually provides on-demand access to content anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, accomplishing this through the vast interconnectivity of the Web.

But a primary, defining characteristic of all New Media is *dialogue*. While traditional media features static content and one-way flows of information – like the Vatican’s early website – New Media transmits content through connection and conversation. It enables people around the world to share, comment on, and discuss a wide variety of topics. Unlike any of the past technologies, New Media is grounded on interactive community.

- i. One of the first examples of New Media emerged around the turn of the millennium. Blogs – short for “web logs” – were introduced as websites featuring regularly updated entries. In contrast to traditional sites, blogs allowed reader to interact with the original author, forming the social backbone of the digital revolution.
- ii. Blogs helped spark first social network, Friendster, which debuted in 2002. Friendster gathered real-world friends into an online community and became popular fast: in its first three months, the site gained three million users. Friendster was followed a year later by MySpace, which competed with Friendster but sported a more youth-friendly culture.
- iii. In 2004, a new social networking site was launched by students at Harvard University as a way to connect U.S. college students. Facebook, as it was eventually branded, had an appealing exclusivity – you have a college email address to join. This made it especially popular among young adults, who didn’t want to mingle online with

- parents or children. The site gained over 200 million users in its first eight months, eventually opening itself up to the world.
- iv. You Tube was the next major New Media creation. Produced in 2005 and now owned by search-engine giant Google, You Tube is the most popular online video destination. The site receives over two billion views per day, nearly double the prime time audience of all three major television networks combined.
 - v. One year after You Tube, the micro-blogging service Twitter was introduced, inviting users to share “tweets” of 140 characters or less. The site now has over a million users who generate 65 million new tweets each day.

Existing in a world that has dramatically embraced New Media, the Church funds herself at a crossroads. This is the new habitat for the majority of Christians.”^{vii}

The question is, will the Church take up residence there too? And where shall we, the Missionary Benedictine Sisters, locate ourselves?

At the 43rd World Communications Day, Pope Benedict VI encouraged Catholics to boldly enter the “digital continent”. Despite being over 80 years old, Benedict keenly recognizes this digital world for what it is: a ripe mission field for the Church.

Without fear we must set sail on the digital sea, facing into the deep with same passion that has governed the ship of the Church for two thousand years . . . We want to qualify ourselves by living in the digital world with a believer’s heart, helping to give a soul to the Internet’s incessant flow of communication.” (Pope Benedict XVI (2010)

Pope Benedict XVI urges us to join the digital world “without fear”. But the truth is most of us are wary and cautious in using the New Media.

2. Some Positive Use of the New Media in New Evangelization

I clearly remember that in our 14th Priory Chapter 2001 there were some discussions regarding the *use of the internet and email*. There were more questions regarding the *use of cell phones among our sisters e.g.* who may have them, who pay for their load, and how much load may the sisters have per month?

The Priory Chapter of 2001 came out with an endorsement to the communities which read as follows: *The use of the internet and email will be at the discretion of the community. The use of cellular phones shall be regulated.*^{viii}

Nowadays, among our sisters, email and texting are the two means of communication that are most popular. In fact almost everyone has a cell phone, except a few who feel they have no need for it and the sick sisters who are unable to use them. The use of email and cell phones are no longer questioned. Often, whenever sisters are away from the convent and they discover that they

are without their cell phones, they become very restless and annoyed, thinking that they are disconnected.

You probably have heard Sisters say that it is a waste of time to use the Facebook and there is a great danger of indiscretion when Sisters exchange comments about community affairs and post pictures when they are not wearing the habit. And I am sure as you read this conference you would like to know if there is really an advantage to an increased use of New Media within our priory and within the Church.

It is only recently that as a priory we started making use of on-line distribution of the various publications of the priory (the prioress' common letter, the priory newsletter and the quarterly priory bulletin, etc) to our different stations and our sisters overseas. We have found that this method cuts delivery time considerably and is also cost-effective. Likewise, we have reduced the need for hymnbooks during our liturgical celebrations both in the priory and the spirituality center with the use of computers and projectors that can serve as a more efficient guide when a big number of Sisters are gathered for Divine Office and Eucharistic celebration.

I am sure our schools can tell us of the numerous use of media in the classroom setting as well as in the coordination of activities and dissemination of information among the school community.

How I wish I could personally attest to the potency of the New Media in Evangelization. So far I have limited myself to the media that serves me well in my personal communication and service to others. I found the use of email and texting most helpful. Although I do not have a Facebook account, I am able to open Facebook through the help of my sister's password. With this I can follow the whereabouts of my nephews and nieces scattered over various continents. Like most young people they no longer write letters (except for short notes by email) and find the Facebook the most efficient way of getting in touch.

Occasionally, too, I open the blogs of people I know for special topics or would check the podcasts/videocasts on commentaries on the Sunday gospels when I was on sabbatical leave and had no community with whom I could have faith-sharing. And of course, the Internet is most useful to me when I want to read the newspaper online, research on certain topics or look up the side effects of my prescription medicine. In other words my use of the new media has rather been limited to personal interests and needs. I know the Norfolk Priory uses the Facebook for vocation promotion and they make sure that their contacts are updated with monastery news and activities.

I hope in the future our priory can introduce a section on *oblates online* for the sake of our busy alumnae in the corporate world or those who live quite far from our schools where they graduated. I have actually observed a Benedictine monastery in the United States skillfully manage their oblate program with membership scattered over several states. The oblate moderator keeps them posted by email and through their priory bulletin. Reading guides and conferences on liturgical feasts are posted in the priory bulletin which the oblates can access on-

line since the members would not be able to come to the monastery for regular meetings. Retreats, conferences and meetings are scheduled which they can attend according to their convenience, twice a year or more often for those who can.

We heard from the Tutzing priory that some of their aspirants found their way to them through their website. In the Philippines, the Vocation Director of the Jesuits has told us that some of their postulants also came to them after learning about the Society through their website. This is one area where we can utilize our priory website for recruiting new members.

It is said that in the United States those discerning their vocations would rather go to the Internet.

‘Today, when someone researches a particular company, the first place they usually turn to is the Internet. So it should come as no surprise that for many people discerning religious vocations, the Internet plays a big role in their discernment process. A recent survey revealed that 90 percent of those discerning a religious vocation said that their inquiries were aided by the Internet. The same survey showed that a religious community’s website was more essential than vocation directors, parish priests, parents or friends when gathering vocational information. Simply put, the first place many people turn to in their discernment process is not to a spiritual director but to Google.

Why is this? One reason is New Media’s anonymity as mentioned before. It allows users to comfortably explore things they would normally be hesitant to approach. A young woman might be uneasy about visiting a convent or committing to a discernment retreat, but in the comfort of her home she feels free to explore the characteristics of different religious orders.^{ix}

Archbishop Luis Antonio Tagle, in his talk to us during our Priory Chapter last January, encouraged us to maximize our use of media in evangelizing our culture.

“The first point that I would like to share – this is both reality and an opportunity for service – evangelical service – is the renewal of culture, or what they call evangelization of culture.

There is one area too, the media, which we, the Church, have not yet tapped. When we say media, the means of social communications, we are approaching media not just as means of communicating. **The media themselves constitute a new culture.** It is a new culture that is powerfully changing tastes, the second nature of Filipinos. It is a culture of how to transmit ideas, how to behave, how to be who I am. And they use powerful images, compelling messages, catchy tunes. They present idols, and in no time they have changed minds and hearts.”^x

Archbishop Tagle cited his use of media as a way of maximizing his efforts to evangelize our people including the many Filipino overseas migrant workers. This was attested to by the Filipinos whom he met at a stopover in Dubai.

“If I say mass on Sunday in a regular church, I can only reach this number of people. But because of this (new media) and the new culture it has generated, then my reach is immense. One OFW said, “Your show, *The Word Exposed* (which they view via YouTube) takes us back home. *Yung mga kwento nyo sa show*, we can resonate”.

We complain of the quality of media that we have, but we have not done much to enter into that. I have been in the media apostolate for almost 6 years now, by accident *na naman*. *Hindi naman pala ganoon ka-hirap*. We don’t need a bible scholar. We just need someone who will make the Word of God alive. But I have no regrets. Please tap it.

The media apostolate would also give them the space, or maybe we can even give God the space to complete his work. The media is very powerful in touching the minds and hearts, in shaping culture.”^{xi}

From Archbishop Tagle, let us go to Father Jessel Gerard Gonzales, SJ, who uses several social networks and maintains a blog (“If”) as he ministers to young people through the Internet. Gonzales’ use of the new media is an extension of his ministry as chaplain of the University of the Philippines in Diliman and as a professor of the Ateneo de Manila University at the Loyola Heights.

An interview of Fr. Jessel Gerard Gonzales on his use of the new media is worth quoting.

“What are the limitations of ministering online?”

Nothing beats one-on-one, face-to-face reality. However, if there is a problem of time or distance, the next best thing is the Internet. I am on the Internet because I believe if the church is at the service of the people, then we go to where the people are. If my youths are on the Internet, then that is where I will find them. If they cannot go to Mass, they can find my homily and reflections on the Net. They are free, and since the “cyber-world” is a place they meet, I might as well meet them where they are.

How much time on the average do you spend on online ministry?

I am online every day. People can use Yahoo Messenger or they can leave me personal mail on any of the sites. I prefer the [e-mail] messages. ... I have time to reflect and give a fuller answer. I like to give a fuller reflection on the faith and a personal reflection to their question. As long as I am in the office, I am on the Internet. ...

How can you gauge your reach through Internet?

Since I started [faithofacenturion.blogspot.com] in 2005, the site has had 36,141 hits from Asia, the U.S., Europe, Africa and Latin America. There are fewer hits from nations where English is not the language normally used. Some visitors say they print out the homilies. There is a button where people share the homilies with others.

What are your own questions about campus ministry today?

Mine is a campus without boundaries, so the question is how to have campus ministry in cyberspace. How can we be effective in “cyber-evangelization” and provide companionship to a person where the person is, without being threatening? Online interaction isn’t a perfect relationship, but it is better than being alone. Cyberspace and Internet are important to young people, but for me my community Mass is what’s important. So we who meet online must have a gathering event that brings everyone together. The 11 a.m. Mass is when we all can gather together.”^{xii}

Another example I would like to mention is about of the Catholic Church in America as cited by Angela Santana in her thesis entitled “New Media, New Evangelization: The Unique Benefits of New Media and Why the Catholic Church Should Engage Them.”^{xiii} Perhaps we could see if this applies to our local Church as well.

The Catholic Church lags behind in reaching young adults where they are, because we have not embraced New Media as we ought to. This is despite young adults being plugged in, online, and engaged with New Media far more than any generation.

Most individuals in the Church evangelize very little, if at all. But this laissez-faire attitude about spreading the Gospel will no longer suffice. We must reach out, engage and evangelize our young adults or lose them to the secular culture or other non-Catholic groups.

Likewise, the Church is years behind the rest of our society in using New Media, and because young adults are some of the first users of new innovations, we must speed up our use of technology as a Church or we will continue to lose ground.

Some of the trends that we can look for in the near future include increased consumption of videos and social media (especially YouTube, Facebook and Twitter), personalized marketing, and increased use of smart phones and other mobile technologies. These trends will dominate the way the Church either does or does not reach young adults. The changes in our culture are happening at such a dizzying pace that it is a wonder any one of us can keep up. But that is precisely what we must do.”^{xiv}

In the 1980's and the 1990's whenever I went to Sunday Mass in a parish church in the United States, at the end of the Mass the pastor would stand at the door and greet the churchgoers and hand them the Parish Bulletin with the schedule of masses and the activities of the following week. In 1994 to 1999 when I was in Tanzania, at the end of the Sunday Mass, the people would automatically sit down and listen to the announcements of the parish priest for fifteen minutes. These announcements would include the intentions for the daily mass and the church activities the following week. Nowadays, if you go to Sunday Mass in the United States, no parish bulletin is distributed in some parishes. Instead the priest would tell the parishioners to refer to the parish website for the scheduled parish activities the following week as well as other news items.

Pope Benedict VI, Message for the 43rd World Communications Day (2009) “Young people in particular, have grasped the enormous capacity of the New Media to foster connectedness, communication and understanding between individuals and communities, and they are turning to them as means of communicating with existing friends, of meeting new friends, of forming communities and network, of seeking information and news, and of sharing their ideas and opinions.”

3. Facing the Risks of the Use of New Media.

In the 1960's Marshall McLuhan observed that technology shapes culture. He warned against the unintended effects due to each communication tool. We remember his famous dictum that “the medium is the message”. Consequently, “a sermon delivered through radio, through television, through a blog, and through YouTube would be received in drastically different ways. The radio sermon would be listened to with sustained attention, the television sermon would be viewed as entertainment, the blog sermon shallowly skimmed, and the YouTube sermon would speak more emotionally and viscerally than the others”^{xv}

In the previous pages we tried to show how the New Media can strengthen the Church's efforts at evangelization, formation, and communication. To complete this presentation, we shall also present some negative trends in the Church and New Media relationship that can affect the future of the Church and its members.

The first undesirable effect of the New Media is seen in the Internet's contribution to the ease with which pornography is made available in the privacy of homes, offices, Internet cafes, etc. No one can estimate the devastating effect of pornography among the youth and married couples.

Likewise, the ease with which people can post lewd pictures and angry messages in the Facebook or Twitter often bring about unintended damages to reputation and relationships. We know of the recent cases in two schools where students were not allowed to graduate because of unbecoming photos that they posted in the Facebook. As soon as anything is posted in Facebook or Twitter they are for public consumption.

Brandon Vogt in his book “The Church and New Media” names five other significant trends that the Church must face in the digital world, namely, a) Shallower Relationships; b) Information Overload; c) Rise in Narcissism and Pride; d) Online-Relativism and e) Difficulty in Prayer and Contemplation.

a) Shallower Relationships

“New Media tends to cultivate relationships that are a mile wide and an inch deep, reducing relationships to sentence long Facebook comments and 140-character tweets.

More troubling, this shallowness affects offline relationships as well. New Media’s sporadic content makes it difficult to sustain, long, in-depth conversations offline. Its encouragement to “click, go, skim, and tweet” makes it hard to simply “be.” Whether sitting at the bedside of a sick friend, being present to a wife who lost her husband, or listening to the musings of a toddler, “being present” to others – without the need to fix, solve, respond, or check our phone – is difficult in our electronic culture.

Online relationships do provide at least one major upside, however. As children gradually welcome parents into their online world, they reveal problems, friendships, interest and activities like never before. For many parents, the blogs, Facebook notes, and Twitter tweets have essentially pried the lock off their children’s diaries.

Harnessing her expertise, the Church must teach people anew how to have intentional offline connections. One way to cultivate these relationships is through the original Catholic social network; the parish communal gatherings like the Mass, small faith-sharing groups, and service-oriented ministries can all provide depth that is unavailable online.

Second, the Church can help revive the dying art of letter writing, phone calls, and – though many young people will gasp – face to face conversation. Along with Blessed John Paul II, she should remind the world that “electronically mediated relationships can never take the place of direct human contact.

Her voice should be one of the loudest, encouraging people to power down their cell phones and pick up a pen and some paper, for families to close their laptops and sit around the dinner table; and for individuals to stop blogging and instead join a small-group or service project.”^{xvi}

b) Information Overload

“If you read everything there was to read on the internet, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, it would take you 57,000 years to finish. If you wanted to bypass your e-reader and instead read all of that information in paperback form, your printed book would weigh more than 1.2 billion pounds and extend 10,000 feet, cover-to-cover.

As people become crushed beneath this digital avalanche, the Church must continue to echo Jesus’ invitation: “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden,” Jesus says, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Since the beginning, God has offered this rest through the “Sabbath,” the one day during the week when there is no work, no struggle, no overload – only rest.

Just as Christians rest physically one day a week, resting digitally helps remedy information overload. When we turn off our cell phones, close our laptops, and unplug our electronic devices, we become free of the drive to consume, produce, and stay in the loop.

Parishes, youth groups, and young adult ministries would do well to practice a group-wide “digital Sabbath,” encouraging members to communally fast from electronics. Likewise, establishing a regular fast at the diocesan level would be an emphatic promotion of temperance and silence.”^{xvii}

c) Rise in Narcissism and Pride

“One of the biggest complaints regarding New Media is that most of these tools are inherently narcissistic. Facebook – “What’s on your mind?” – and Twitter – “What’s happening?” – encourage users to share their every thought and action with the world. Dozens of tools tempt users toward introspection and pontification, yet barely and promote true other-centeredness.

In addition, these tools engender pride unlike any past technology. Digital “success” can be measured and compared against others online, and online merit can easily be gauged by the number of visits, downloads, “likes,” followers, or view worth, making it easy to think highly of yourself when you have a large online platform.

In light of this online vanity, how does the Church bring about a Copernican revolution of the digital soul? To inject humility into New Media, the Church can promote two potent facets of Catholic spirituality: “serving the poor” and “dying to self.”

The saints provide examples of these two strategies in action. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta staved off pride and narcissism through her radical care for the marginalized. By serving others, she demonstrated how we can turn out inward focus outward, how we can turn away from our own agendas, thoughts, and desires toward those of others.

When it comes to “dying to self,” St. Therese of Lisieux, and her “Little Way” show us that success come not through big things – not through thousands of blog readers or hundreds of downloads – but through small actions done with deep love. Therese and the Church can remind Christians that it’s not about numbers but about how faithful you are in using New Media.”^{xviii}

d) Online Relativism

“Most college professors and high school teachers shun Wikipedia – a communication online encyclopedia – rejecting it as a legitimate source for facts.

A main reason for Wikipedia’s contentious reputation is its communal nature: anybody, anywhere can edit just about any topical entry on the site. This democratic nature of Wikipedia shows profound shift in the way our culture understands truth.

In past ages, objective truth – truth that never changes and applies to everyone, everywhere – found its basis in God and the Church, in our postmodern, Wikipedia world, however, objective truth has mostly fallen out of favor. Now, more than ever, truth and morality are simply defined by majority opinion. If most people agree on the Wikipedia definition for a given topic, then it must be true. Likewise, many New Media users think, “If most of my Facebook friends,

Twitter cohorts, and fellow bloggers support same-sex marriage, torture, and contraception, then those behaviors can't *really* be immoral."

The "digital continent" is dangerously vulnerable to this type of relativism. In New Media spheres, whoever is loudest becomes the authority – your credentials are the number of readers, followers, or listeners that you have.

But the Church has long counseled that while democracy is a valid form of government, it cannot be used when it comes to truth and morals. Reminding New Media users of objective truth, she must help her flock to discern fact from fiction online."^{xi}

e) Difficulty in Prayer and Contemplation

"New Media compels us, in the spirit of Jesus' friend Martha, to juggle "many things" (Lk 10:41). Upon opening our Internet browser, we're quickly swept into a torrent of links, articles, videos, downloads, pictures, and emails. A link within an article bounces us into another site, and the end of one YouTube video suggests another, so we explore the Web without centering our attention for more than a couple of minutes.

In his book *The Shallows*, author Nicholas Carr explains how our digital culture has literally rewired our brains to make us even better at these tasks. The more we multitask and skim, the better we get at those same tasks.

Unfortunately, though, this rewiring shifts brainpower away from other mental spheres. We become incapable of performing tasks we don't regularly practice. Therefore, electronic culture has atrophied our capacity for critical thought, in-depth argument, reason, and logic.

New Media's scattered, unfocused nature clashes most with Christianity's rich practice of prayer and contemplation. In a world where most people take a pass on YouTube videos longer than five minutes or blog posts longer than a few paragraphs, how can the Church encourage people to center themselves in prayer?

As people become more absorbed in digital activity, the Church can urge practices like *lectio divina*, contemplative prayer, and Eucharistic Adoration to answer the Internet's distractions. While these devotions seem inefficient, unproductive, and pointless through the lens of electronic culture, they form the basis of a peaceful life."^{xx}

The New Media with both its positive and negative influence is here to stay. How do we face its challenges?

Discussion Questions:

1. What challenge does the New Media bring to our local Church, our priory and to each one of us?
2. Do you find yourself involved, peripheral or totally out of the digital world? What advantages/ disadvantages do you see in your particular position?
3. Do you feel the need for our priory to regulate (encourage/discourage) the use of New Media in our priory?
4. As a Missionary Benedictine Sister do you see possible links between New Evangelization and New Media in your particular apostolate?

ⁱ The *Lineamenta* for the 2012 Synod of Bishops in Rome on the *New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*, Art. 6

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ “The Digital Continent” pp. 15-22, in *The Church and the New Media* by Brandon Vogt, Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, Indiana 46750, 2011.

^{iv} Ibid, p. 15

^v Ibid, p. 16

^{vi} Ibid, p. 17

^{vii} Ibid, p. 18-19

^{viii} 14th Priory Chapter, *Directions* 2001, p. 250

^{ix} Transcription of the talk of Archbishop Antonio Luis Tagle at the 18th Priory Chapter in Tagaytay of the Missionary Benedictine Sisters of Tutzing, January 9, 2012. (Brandon pp 202-203)

^x Ibid.

^{xi} Catholic Colleges – Universities: ‘If Youth are on line, the Church must go there.’ UCA news, Quezon City, Philippines, November 14, 2008.

^{xii} *New Media, New Evangelization: The Unique Benefits of New Media and Why the Catholic Church Should Engage Them* by Angela M. Santana HONORS THESIS Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Graduation from the Honor’s Program of St. Mary’s University San Antonio, Texas.

^{xiii} Ibid.

^{xiv} Ibid.

^{xv} “To Infinity and Beyond: The Future of the Church and New Media” by Brandon Vogt in *The Church and the New Media* by Brandon Vogt, Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., Huntington, Indiana. 2011. P. 190

^{xvi} Ibid. pp.192-193

^{xvii} Ibid. pp. 193-194

^{xviii} Ibid. pp. 194-195

^{xix} Ibid. p. 196

^{xx} Ibid. pp. 197-198