NEW MEDIA AS TOOLS FOR EVANGELIZATION: TOWARDS DEVELOPING

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

by

Jacob Dankasa

B.Th., University of Jos, Nigeria, 2004
B.A., Urbanian University , Rome, 1999

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Master of Science

St. Cloud, Minnesota

May, 2010

UMI Number: 1526869

UMI

Dissertation Publishing

UMI 1526869

ProQuest®

This thesis submitted by Jacob Dankasa in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science at St. Cloud State University is hereby approved by the final evaluation committee.

_____
                                    Chairperson

_____

_____

_____
Dean
School of Graduate Studies

NEW MEDIA AS TOOLS FOR EVANGELIZATION: TOWARDS DEVELOPING
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Abstract

This study suggests the audience that needs to be reached in the Catholic Church and that audience's characteristic behavior towards using the tools of the new media in relation to their attendance in and commitment to church activities.

Three hundred and two young Catholics ages 12 to 24 residing at the St. Cloud diocese, Minnesota, U.S.A. responded to the survey. An electronic non-random survey was carried out. The study asked what tools of the new media the Catholic youths use the most and how they use them.

The results revealed a strong involvement by the Catholic youths in the use of the Internet. Eighty-three percent of Catholic youths are likely to use the Internet on a daily basis. The results show that Catholic youths are more likely to be familiar with social network sites than with weblogs, and are likely to be found more on social network sites such as Facebook and YouTube. The most likely activity carried out by this group online is watching video webcast or clips. The results suggest loss of interest on religious issues by Catholic youths. The findings show that more Catholic youths are undecided if they will participate in activities organized online by the church.

This study concluded that although the results do not point to enthusiastic Catholic youths who are ready to participate in all kinds of activities organized by the church online, the findings of this study show that the church has ample opportunities to utilize this new means of social communications to appeal to its younger audience. Of particular interest will be the use of social network sites, especially those that provide visuals and motion.

Future studies may focus on the Church in developing countries to determine how the young are doing in their use of the Internet in an environment of slower technological advancement

_____

Month   Year   Approved by Research Committee:

                                             _____

                                             Lisa Heinrich   Chairperson

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

love you all. I thank Fr. Aaron Kuhn who made access to Campus Ministry of Newman Center possible. To all my friends who in one way or the other assisted and inspired me during the course of my studies, you have a special place in my heart. I say thank you and God bless you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is an important ingredient for the success of any organization. It is necessary for the articulation, explanation, and promotion of a vision in order to set well-defined goals for an organization or establishment (Bangkok, 2008). Where there is effective communication, the tendency for smooth running of activities increases, which brings about better productivity.

The Catholic Church, as a religious organization, has the responsibility of proclaiming the word of God to its members. It derives its mandate from the words of Jesus in the Gospel "go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mark 16:15). The Church carries out this mandate through the process of evangelization, which is "bringing the Good News into all the strata of humanity, and through its influence transforming humanity from within and making it new" (Paul VI, 1975). Evangelization, therefore, means communication of the Good News. In "striving to proclaim the Gospel to all people" (Second Vatican Council, 1966), the Church places importance on its role as teacher of faith. It has a message which must be communicated.

The Catholic Church uses various ways in communicating its message, mostly through the pulpit at the celebration of the Mass, through writings in books and encyclicals, and in some cases through some channels of the media such as TV, radio and newspapers. In any case, the Church has to communicate. The Catholic Church as a religious organization has a huge audience with diverse demographics. The total population of Catholics worldwide is estimated at about 1.147 billion (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, 2007) and it is the goal of the church to reach all its audience.

As a church that aspires to reach all its audience, the Catholic Church, like other Christian churches, has been hit with a decline in church attendance. Studies have shown that there is a decline in the number of those who regularly attend Sunday worship across different denominations (Hadaway & Marler, 1998); this is particularly true among the youth (Campbell, 2004). The Sunday homilies end up in the ears of a fraction of the church's population, who are mostly the older members. Catholic churches in some dioceses of the world have closed or merged together as a result of lost of membership. This retrogression does not suggest a brighter future for the sustenance of the church. It leaves a negative sign on the future of the church as the older members pass away. This trend may eventually lead to closing of churches if preventive measures are not taken.

On the other hand, the media have undoubtedly undergone drastic changes and expansions in recent years, thanks to the modern technological advancement which has brought about changes in methods of information processing and dissemination. The

content traditionally presented through a broadcast is gradually taking the form of a narrowcast (the degree to which a communication technology can create a mediated environment where participants communicate one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many (Kiousis, 2002)) where the older approaches to news are giving way to what is today referred to as "new news," a type of news where audience members become active, not merely passive, recipients of messages. These are the results of the coming into play of the new media. With the growth and impact of new technologies, a lot of options are open for people to engage in communication. There is a gradual shift from "content geared to mass audiences to content tailored for groups or individuals . . . from one-way to interactive media" (Severin & Tankard, 2001). With a computer or even a cell phone, one can access the Internet, television, radio, cable, and publications; make telephone calls, carry out marketing, perform banking transactions, send emails, connect with friends and families, and form virtual groups. Social media such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, and YouTube, just to mention a few, are avenues for discussion, expression, and information circulation. There is a rise in the use of the tools of the new media such as the Internet and other social media by the same demographic group that is not often found in the church, the youth. From the foregoing, it is obvious that most messages presented from the pulpit do not get to all the intended audience. The young audience is a group that the Church cannot afford to ignore because its future resides on their shoulders. This raises a challenge for the church to develop effective communication strategy in an attempt to reach out to this missing audience of the church. Benedict XVI (2009a) addressing the plenary assembly of the Pontifical

Council for Social Communications, asserts: "a genuine revolution is taking place in the realm of social communications of which the Church is ever more responsibly conscious."

Acknowledging this decline in church attendance and the growing rise in the use of the tools of the new media, this study sets to find out more about young people, a very important but diminishing audience of the church, and the kind of new technology they are most likely to be engaged with. A very important ingredient of strategic communication is to determine what your audience knows, their attitudes, feelings and prejudices, then construct your argument for them and deliver it through a channel that reaches them (Bangkok, 2008). This study suggests the audience that needs to be reached in the Catholic Church and that audience's characteristic behavior towards using the tools of the new media in relation to their attendance in and commitment to church activities. The more we know about someone, the more effective we can be in communicating with that person, especially considering that until and unless a message is heard and understood by the receiver, it is just noise (Elway Research Inc., n.d.).

How should the Catholic Church use the tools of the new media to reach its young people? In effect, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Are the youths in the Catholic Church deeply involved in the use of the new media?

2. What are the tools of the new media that are used the most by the Catholic youths?

3. How do they use them?

4. Will the Catholic youths be willing to participate in online activities organized by the Church?

The answers to these questions determine what channels of the new media will be most effective in reaching this audience. This work also suggests effective communication strategies to be developed to get the Church's message across.

The findings of this research have important implications in making a case for the new media as necessary tools for evangelizing efforts, particularly in targeting the youths in the Catholic Church. It provides a road-map for policy makers and teachers of faith in the church to design a strategy towards achieving this goal, namely reaching out to the vast number of the Church's population who are not regular attendants or participants in church services and activities. The results also may provide a guide for youth ministry directors to tailor their messages using the appropriate channels.

Chapter II

LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>The New Media Effect</u>

The media have undergone a lot of changes in recent years (Fiddler, 1997). These changes have led to the coming together of different media in a development referred to as media convergence (Jenkins, 2006). This development results from progression in the development of new technologies. The coming together of digital, computerized, or network information and communication technologies has come to be known as new media (Flew, 2008). The evolution of the new media has altered the way a lot of things are being done and even perceived. At the center of the converging media is the Internet (Atkin, Jeffres, & Neuendorf, 1998).

As uses of the Internet grow, other forms of the old media such as TV, radio, and newspapers are forced to adjust into the world of the new media or suffer decline. In effect, the Internet, a very important tool of the new media, is changing the way communication is carried out. Stating an instance, Wellman (2004) noted that "the pages of *Wired* magazine shrank 25% from 240 pages in September 1996 to 180 pages in September 2001, and yet another 17% to 148 pages in September 2003: a decline of 38% since 1996, (p. 123). With the ongoing rise in new communication technologies, many traditional concepts in mass media communication are being

redefined, reworked, and reinvented (Kiousis, 2002). The new media bring with them a

certain demand for change or adjustment. As the media environment changes around us,

and with the evolution of the new media, questions arise about the meaning, availability

and use of media in daily life (Livingstone & Bovil, 2003). This is not to say that the

old media are being replaced entirely. According to Jenkins (2006), old media are not

being replaced and will not be replaced. Rather, their functions and status are shifted by

the introduction of new technologies.

Uses of the New Media

New media are taking the world to another level. We are witnessing the

evolution of a universal interconnected network of audio, video, and electronic text

communications that will blur the distinction that exists between interpersonal and mass

communication and also between public and private communication (Neuman cited in

Croteau & Hoynes, 2003). Neuman argued that the new media will alter the meaning of

geographic distance, allow for a huge increase in the volume of communication, provide

the possibility of increasing the speed of communication, provide opportunities for

interactive communication, and allow forms of communication that were previously

separate to overlap and interconnect. Caincross (1998) described the impact of the new

media (media convergence) in globalization as a 'death of distance.'

People use the Internet for different purposes. For example, the Internet can be

used either as digital technology for computer-mediated communication with

individuals, or for information retrieval of various types (Hargittai, 2004). In the former,

which is for social uses, Internet use can be viewed as a social action that refers to other people and is conducted and ordered on the basis of the meaning the subject ascribes to it. In the latter, which is an instrumental use, Internet is used as a tool for efficient achievement of personally defined goals such as using search engines and shopping (Petric, 2006).

The power of the new media can be seen in its creation of new spaces for discourse and coordinated action (Bennett, 2003). The advent of the Internet among other things has given rise to sociality, including email, UseNet, instant messaging, and blogging (Heer & Boyd, 2005). A remarkable aspect of the new media is the evolution of social network sites, otherwise known as social media. Social media have drawn a lot of audience to the Internet and have accelerated the appreciation of new technologies. Social network sites are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

There are different reasons why people use the different social network sites; it is not necessarily to meet new people. But as Boyd and Ellison (2007) opined, people use them primarily to communicate with others who are already part of their extended social networks. Rather than reducing social interactions, people's Internet use often supplements their existing communications leading to new forms of social capital (Kartz & Rice, 2002 cited in Hargittai, 2004). Latest statistics have shown that out of the estimated world population of over 6.7 trillion, over 1.6 trillion were users of the

Internet by the end of December 2009. This showed about 362.3% Internet usage

growth from 2000-2008 (Internet Worldstats, 2001-2009). Statistics indicate that

74.1% of Americans were Internet users as of June 2009, according to Nielsen online

(cited on Internet Worldstats, 2001-2009). One out of three United States Internet users,

that is more than 70 million consumers, also accesses the Internet through a mobile

device. In the United Kingdom it is estimated that 1.3 million United Kingdom

residents have come online since 2007 and a similar number will access the web for the

first time between 2008 and 2009 (Internet Worldstats, 2001-2009).

Yet the usage of the new media is not equally distributed among all

demographics. At the same time the usage of the new media is found in different

spheres of life. This review will now turn to look at the demographic that uses the new

media the most and how the new media are applied in different fields of human

endeavor.

New Media Among the Youth

The youths are present in good number in the social network sites such as

Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Friendster, YouTube and a host of others. According to

Boyd (2007), teens often turn to social network sites for entertainment. The number of

young people who use the new technologies is fascinating. This is so because they grow

up with information technology and tend to be open-minded and enthusiastic about it

(Livingstone & Bovil, 2000). In a study carried out by Livingstone and Bovil (2000),

92% of young people feel comfortable using computers and 81% think computers are

exciting. Furthermore, 55% of young people agree that people are left behind if they do not know about the features of the new technologies.

The presence of young people online is global. In Taiwan, for instance, two groups have the highest Internet usage. These are 12- to 15-years-old, which has 98% Internet usage, and 16- to 20-years-old with 95.6% (Lin & Yu, 2008). Ninety-six percent of Singapore youths ages 15 to 24 used the Internet within a year, as against 49% of adults ages 50 to 59 who used the Internet within the same time. The trend goes down when compared to 12% of adults ages 60 and above who said they used the Internet during the same 1-year period (Digital Media Across Asia, 2007). Internet has come to rival the telephone as a medium of conducting personal relationship, with emailing as the most frequently carried out Internet interaction (Bayin, Zhang, & Lin, 2004). Most surveys of technology usage in the U.S. show an escalating presence of youths on the Internet. Pastore (2002), making reference to an AOL national survey of Americans, stated that 81% of teens between the ages of 12 and 17 use the Internet to email friends or relatives, while 70% use it for instant messaging. With older teens (ages 18 to 19) the numbers jump to 91% for emails and 83% for instant messaging. It is estimated that 82% of United States teens ages 12-17 and 43.5% of children ages 3-11 uses the Internet on a monthly basis in 2009.

The young are heavy users of new communication forms such as instant messaging, email, and text messaging, as well as communication-oriented Internet sites such as blogs; social networking such as MySpace and Facebook; and photo and video sharing sites such as YouTube, interactive video games, and virtual reality

environments (Subrahmanyan & Greenfield, 2008). Teens use instant messaging mainly to communicate with offline friends. They use social network sites to keep in contact with their peers from their offline lives, to either make plans with friends whom they see often or to keep in touch with friends whom they see rarely. They also use blogs to share details of everyday happenings in their lives (Subrahmanyan & Greenfield, 2008). A report from the Children's Digital Media Center at Georgetown University stated that more than half of all blogs are run by 13- to-19-year-olds (Berson & Berson, 2006).

Technology has become a daily part of adolescents' lives (Diamanduros, Jenkins, & Downs, 2007). Many studies support the view that the Internet has become a second home to young people. According to Roberts and Fillicino (2006), young people live online today, and to be effective you need to connect with people where they live. Roberts and Foehr (2008) opined that young people devote more time to media than to any other single activity with the exception of sleep. In a survey of undergraduates with the average age of 21 years on the use of technology, Diamanduros et al. (2007) found out that the undergraduates in the sample use technology on an average of 5.63 hours per day compared to 3.70 hours for face-to-face communication. Subrahmanyan, Greenfield, Krant, and Gross (2001), citing Pew Internet and American Life Project, reported that teens who have access to the Internet use it for an average of 3 hours per week, and 51% of teens ages 12-17 go online on a daily basis. According to a report by e-marketer in 2004, the number of pre-teens and teens online in the United States grew steadily from 26.6 million in 2000 to 34.3 million in 2003 (cited in Lin % Yu, 2008). Lin and Yu called the pre-teens and teens of today the first widely 'wired' generation.

There are some (Hightower cited in Wellman, 2004) who have a negative view of some tools of the new media. They argue that over-exposure to virtual networks such as the social media will devalue face-to-face relationships. On the contrary, Livingstone amd Bovil (2000) found out that virtual interaction brings something new to young people's valued dimension of social worlds, without necessarily challenging face-to-face relationships. In the same vein, according to Wellman (2004), in Netville, which is a suburb near Toronto, two thirds of the residents who had always-on, super-fast Internet access knew the names of three times as many neighbors as their unwired counterparts. They also spoke with twice as many, and visited the homes of 1.5 times as many. What the new media have brought about is an increased interactivity (Kiousis, 2002). There is an intertwined relationship between online and offline communities (Wellman, 2004), which shows that the online community is not a totally separate world. Fabian (2008) stated that there are social networking sites built for particular audiences so as to achieve specific goals. He asserted that with each site, a new community emerges that presumably satisfies the community needs that the members of such a site are looking for. This could be sites for musicians, mountain climbers, particular political persuasions, or even religious affiliations. And yet Fabian (2008) believes that the rise in the social networks will not replace the institutions and associations that exist in the real world.

New Media in Society

       The new media are employed in almost every sphere of life. In the realm of politics, new technologies provide information and tools that may extend the role of the public in the social and political arena, which suggests that online discourse may increase political participation and open the way for democratic utopia (Papacharissi, 2002). More and more people are conducting their social life with new media, which has led to the evolving of forms and patterns of organizational behavior online that are familiar to firms, agencies, and groups (Howard, 2002). New media are affecting and changing the way governments across the globe operate. Governments are exploring Web 2.0 technologies (a form of technology that enhances interactivity in information sharing with a user-friendly design) to increase citizen engagement and develop e-democracy. They use it to reach demographics that might not be accessible otherwise. This helps them to capitalize on the power of collaboration across distances and organizations (Dorris, 2007).

       More and more organizations now open themselves to the use of the online tools because of the tools' importance to learning and education. Berson and Berson (2006) noted that schools have developed the idea of blogs and have integrated them into instruction in an attempt to enhance communication and promote more engaged learning. They use blogs to keep parents informed of classroom activities, to engage students in reflective journaling, to enhance students' writing skills and to promote safe and constructive blogging. For Sturgeon (2008), a genuine educational blog is not all about socializing, but about students helping each other get through coursework.

Educational blog helps students frame thought-provoking questions at the end of their blog entries that will invite valuable comments. In education, emerging technology, commonly known as Web 2.0 tools, has also altered the concept of a traditional classroom setting. It offers real opportunity to create a classroom without walls (Barlow, 2008). Brooksgunn and Hirschhorn (2008) hold the view that for educators media technology can be used as a powerful teaching tool; and with the right content, educators can use electronic media to help youths learn and to shape their behaviors in positive directions.

The new media are changing the composition of the workforce. Boddie, Contardo, and Childs (2007) hold that future American workers must continuously adapt to modernizing work environments and embrace innovative technology to improve productivity and efficiency. This is because as digital natives they were raised with new technologies such as iPods, smart phones, Blackberries, ultra-mobile PCs, wikis, blogs, virtual worlds, and communities of practice and will use them as readily as digital immigrants (those who learnt to use digital technologlater in life) use fax and email. To meet with the current trend of change that the new media impose on the workforce, Boddie et al. (2007) advised that to successfully lead their business into the future, both private sector and government agencies must understand the changing workforce in order to develop and implement strategies.

There are different reasons or motives why people across different demographics use the Internet. Some adolescents use it for homework information and playing games (Lin & Yu, 2008). Other people use the Internet for professional

activities such as planning and research (Vanfossen, 2001). More and more faculty

members hold favorable attitudes toward the Internet and incorporate online technology

for instructional purposes (Vodanovich & Piotrowski, 2001). Some who use the Internet

for social activities said friendship, not romance or sex, is the primary goal of their

using the Internet (Knox, Daniels, Strudivant, & Zusman, 2001). Winter (2001)

discussed how the Internet can be used as a successful online delivery channel for

financial services such as Internet banking. The Internet is changing and shaping the

way advertising and marketing are carried out. Cartellieri, Parsons, Rao, and Zeisser

(1997) saw it as one important "standalone' medium for advertising. According to

estimates, the average person "now spends 50% of his or her days in virtual worlds—

and this percentage is growing" (Fabian, 2008. p. 78).

New Media in Evangelization

By evangelization "the church means most fundamentally the proclamation of

the basic Christian message: salvation through Jesus Christ" (Nodar, 2000). The church

has stressed the importance of evangelization in the modern world (Paul VI, 1975), and

the need to develop a whole new approach in proclaiming the Good News of Christ in a

world that has undergone and is still undergoing change (John Paul II, 1991).The

challenges that face the church today call for deeper assessment and appreciation of

new approaches to evangelization. What is happening now is that young people are

confused about morals and not familiar with religious tradition; the global youth culture

has become pluralistic and relativistic, and the reserves of religious tradition are

dwindling (Marty, 1996). Polls report that religion is losing its grip on western society and growing numbers of people are finding the church irrelevant (Duin, 2002). Most people still see religion as important to their lives, yet the rate of church attendance is declining. In 2001, 59% of Americans said religion is very important in their lives, but only 42% said they are in church on Sundays (Duin, 2002).

Telephone surveys from Gallup polls have consistently shown that church attendance is more than 40% in the United States for all denominations (Who Really Attends Church, 1993). But an actual head count by sociologist Kirk Hadaway disputes these results. Hadaway, Marler, and Chaves (1993) reported that only approximately 20% of Protestants and 28 % of Catholics attend church in a given week. One likely reason for the high numbers presented by Gallup polls could stem from a respondents' "social desirability" bias (Reimer, cited in Marty, 1996), which sees church-going as social activity that one has to identify with. A study carried out by Chaves and Cavendish (1994) supported the results of Hadaway, Maler & Chaves (1993). They also found that with the exception of two dioceses, church attendance among Catholics in all Catholic dioceses of the United States runs about 26.7 %. More Catholics in America, for instance, identify themselves as Catholics than actually attend worship or are registered members of the church (Menendez, 1993). In a sense, there are more anonymous Catholics than there are actual church members. The Office of Evangelization, Catholic diocese of Cleveland (n.d.), reported that 40%, which is over 80 million of the United States population, have no church affiliation. This number includes 17 million inactive or alienated Catholics. A survey by the National

Conference of Catholic Bishops in the United States found that one third to one half of registered parishioners who were baptized Catholics are inactive (Office of Evangelization, Catholic Diocese of Cleveland, n.d.).

The challenge for evangelization in the church today is not the 'need' to do it, but 'how' to do it: how to win the soul of the modern age. With this in mind, Pope John Paul II stressed the notion of "New Evangelization" which was popularized in the encyclical of Pope Paul VI "Evangeli Nuntiandi" as a response to the new challenges that the contemporary world creates for the mission of the church (cited in Nodar, 2000). Pope Benedict XVI (2009c) agreed that one of the ways that evangelization can be facilitated in this age and time is through the use of the new media which the new technologies have brought to the world. In his message for the 2009 World Communications Day, Benedict XVI (2009c) exhorted the youth to introduce into the culture of this new environment of communications and information technology the values on which they have built their lives.

The Church over the years has stressed the importance of media in its entire life and ministry. It believes that its task involves employing the means of social communication to announce the good news of salvation, and to teach people how to use the media properly (Second Vatican Council, 1963). The church believes that media, if properly used, will contribute in no small way to the enlargement and enrichment of men's minds and could promote the propagation and consolidation of the kingdom of God (Second Vatican Council, 1963). The Catholic Church strongly believes that along with traditional means such as witness of life, catechetics, personal contact, popular

piety, the liturgy and similar celebrations, the use of media is now essential in evangelization and catechesis. The Second Vatican Council's decree on the means of social communication (1963) stated, "It is the Church's birthright to use and own any of these media which are necessary or useful for the formation of Christians and for pastoral activity." The media of social communications can and should be instruments in the Church's program of re-evangelization and new evangelization in the contemporary world (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 1992).

The Church's views on the media, echoed by the many documents on social communication—Communio et Progressio (Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social Communications, 1992) and Inter Mirifica (Second Vatican Council, 1963)—are appropriated to the Internet as well. The pastoral instruction on the Church and Internet (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002c) restated the church's position when it quotes Communio et Progressio (Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social Communication, 1971), thus: "The Church sees these media as 'gifts of God' which, in accordance with his providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with his plan for their salvation." The document added, "This remains our view, and it is the view we take of the Internet" (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002c). The document from the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 'Ethics in the Internet' (2002), stated, "The Catholic Church, along with other religious bodies, should have a visible, active presence on the Internet and be a partner in the public dialogue about its development." It is the understanding of the Catholic Church that this technology can be a means for solving human problems,

promoting the integral development of persons, and creating a world governed by

justice and peace, love.

Communio et Progressio (Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social

Communication, 1971) pointed out that modern media offer new ways of reaching

people with the message of the Gospel. Pope Paul VI (1976) stated, "The Church would

feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is

daily rendering more perfect" for evangelization. Pope John Paul II (1990) called the

media "the first Areopagus of the modern age," and declared,

> It is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the
> Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into
> the 'new culture' created by modern communications . . . with new languages,
> new technologies and a new psychology.

Doing this is all the more important today, since not only do the media now strongly

influence what people think about life but also to a great extent "human experience

itself is an experience of media" (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, Aetate

Novae, 1992).

The pastoral instruction on the Church and Internet (Pontifical Council for

Social Communications, 2002c) made the point that the Church needs to understand the

Internet in order to communicate effectively with people, most especially young people

who are steeped in the experience of new technology, and also in order to use it well.

Church and Internet further traced the peculiar benefits of the Internet to the Church. It

enunciated that the Internet offers people direct and immediate access to important

religious and spiritual resources, places of worship, the teaching documents of the

Magisterium, the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and the religious wisdom of the ages. It also has a remarkable capacity to overcome distance and isolation, bringing people into contact with like-minded persons of good will who join in virtual communities of faith to encourage and support one another. Through the Internet, the Church can perform an important service to Catholics and non-Catholics alike by the selection and transmission of useful data. The Internet is in a sense a tool that can provide for the Church a means for communicating with particular or target groups such as young people and young adults, the elderly and home-bound, persons living in remote areas, and members of other religious bodies who otherwise may be difficult to reach (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002c). Hence there is a need for the church to enter into the world where the new media has taken the youths.

The church always follows the footsteps of Christ who speaks to the very situation of his people. The pastoral instruction of the church on the means of social communications Communio et Progressio (Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social Communication, 1971) underscored this when it mentions how Christ revealed himself as the perfect communicator; how he preached the divine message without fear or compromise, adjusted to His people's way of talking, and to their patterns of thought. And He spoke out of the predicament of their time. The Church is aware that those who use the means of social communication differ in age and culture. As such, there is a need for instruction and practical experience tailored not merely to the character of each medium but to the needs of each group. Users need instruction and practical experience

if they are to use the media properly. In this vein, projects designed to effect this, especially among the young, should be encouraged and multiplied (Second Vatican Council, 1963).

The Church does not despise the media because of its negative aspects. Pope John Paul II in his message for the 35th World Communication Day (2001) stressed that while the world of social communications "may at times seem at odds with the Christian message, it also offers unique opportunities for proclaiming the saving truth of Christ to the whole human family." He continued:

> [C]onsider . . . the positive capacities of the Internet to carry religious information and teaching beyond all barriers and frontiers. Such a wide audience would have been beyond the wildest imaginings of those who preached the Gospel before us . . . Catholics should not be afraid to throw open the doors of social communications to Christ, so that his Good News may be heard from the housetops of the world.

The decree of the Second Vatican Council (1963) on the instruments of social communications, Inter Mirifica, echoed the church's sentiment thus:

> It would be shameful if by their inactivity Catholics allowed the word of God to be silenced or obstructed by the technical difficulties which these media present and by their admittedly enormous cost . . . . For the main aim of all these is to propagate and defend the truth and to secure the permeation of society by Christian values.

The Church attaches great importance to its role in taking care of the young and making sure that they are not misled; as such, the Church acknowledges the evil that is capable of beclouding the young as they use the Internet (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002b). The Church understands that young people in particular need to be taught not only to be good Christians when they are recipients of messages but

also to be active in using all the aids to communication that lie within the media so as to become true citizens of that age of social communications which has already begun (Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social Communication, 1971). The Church is not only going to be a participant in the activities of the youth on the Internet, but also a teacher to the youth. Teaching about the Internet and the new technology involves much more than ordinary teaching techniques. Therefore, young people need to learn how to function well in the world of cyberspace, make discerning judgments according to sound moral criteria about what they find there, and use the new technology for their integral development and the benefit of others (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002c). This is part of the evangelization goal of the Church.

The Church sees its presence in the media as an opportunity to guide the young; thus, it advises that all its members should make concerted efforts to ensure that the means of communication are put at the service of the multiple forms of the apostolate without delay and as energetically as possible, where and when they are needed. Therefore, projects that are likely to prove harmful should be forestalled, especially in those regions where moral and religious progress would require more urgent intervention (Second Vatican Council, 1963). Pope Benedict XVI (2009b) urged priests to consider the new media as a powerful resource for their ministry in the service of the Word. He expressed these words of encouragement in order to address the challenges stemming from the new digital culture. In a communiqué from the Pontifical Council for Social Communications presenting the theme for the 2010 World Communication Day, Benedict XVI (2009b) was optimistic that if the new media are adequately known

and appreciated, they can offer priests and all pastoral agents a wealth of data and content that previously were difficult to access, and will facilitate ways of collaboration and growth of communion that were unthinkable in the past. The Church reemphasizeD the fact that the virtual reality of cyberspace cannot and should not substitute for real interpersonal community, the incarnational reality of the sacraments and the liturgy, or the immediate and direct proclamation of the Gospel, but it can complement them, attract people to a fuller experience of the life of faith, and enrich the religious lives of users (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002c). As such, it admonishes those at the receiving end of the media, and especially the young, to learn moderation and discipline in their use of them. They should aim to understand fully what they see, hear and read (Second Vatican Council, 1963). The Internet provides an effective technological means of realizing what the church's document on Ethics in Communications (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002a) described as a "two-way" flow of information and views between pastors and faithful. This could lead to freedom of expression that is sensitive to the well being of the community and to the role of the Magisterium that fosters it. This is to encourage responsible public opinion, which is an important expression of the fundamental right of dialogue and information within the Church (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002a).

Those who have the responsibility of teaching young people must not ignore the impact and influence of the new media on the lives of the young. Harmon (2007) stressed that the Internet is here to stay, and certainly it is the first place the young generation will go for information for the rest of their lives. The involvement of the

Church may eventually be the last and best opportunity for them to learn how to evaluate the quality of the information they find there. Educators, both secular and religious, need to play more active roles in the activities of young people online, to serve as guides and content providers for the young. Benedict XVI (2009a) agreed that the new means of communication constitute a challenge for the Church, which is called to proclaim the Gospel to all people of the third millennium. The Church can meet this challenge through the new technology by keeping the content of its message unaltered, but making it comprehensible. In the words of Benedict XVI (2009a) "take up the challenges that these new technologies pose to evangelization."

Research Questions

The review of literature reveals the following:

1. The new media have changed the way communication is carried out.

2. Large portions of the world's population are Internet users.

3. The young, ages 12 to 24, constitute heavy users of the new technologies.

4. The tools of the new media are employed in almost every facet of society.

5. Virtual networks will not replace face-to-face communication but will complement it.

6. There is a decline in church attendance and less inclination to religious tradition, particularly among the young.

7. The Catholic Church has, over the years, encouraged the use of the media in evangelization.

8. The Catholic Church has an ardent interest in the lives and activities of the young.

9. The Catholic Church is positive towards the use of the new media in evangelization.

From the findings of the literature review, this study develops the following questions:

1. Are the youths in the Catholic Church deeply involved in the use of the new media?

2. What are the tools of the new media that are used the most by the Catholic youths?

3. How do Catholic youths use the tools of the new media?

4. Will Catholic youths participate in online activities organized by the church?

Chapter III

METHOD

In order to achieve the goal of this thesis, a survey was carried out. This was an electronic non-random survey that targeted high school and college students ages 12 to 24. Three hundred and two students responded to the survey. The composition of this group is basically young Catholic members residing at the St. Cloud Catholic Diocese, Minnesota, United States of America. This age group was chosen because it falls in the range of those the literature review suggests as the highest users of the new technologies. It is the assumption of this study that this group of people spends much time using the tools of the new media, particularly the Internet. This demographic is also likely not to be regular attendants of the Catholic Sunday worship (Mass); and may also not be too involved in other spiritual exercises in the church. The interest of this research was to find out if Catholic youths belong to the genre of youths who are intensely involved in the use of the tools of the new media and are described as the 'digital generation.' The study finds out what tools they use most and how they use them. For the scope of this study, the use of new technology is centered on the Internet and its uses for social networking, creating blogs and other applications as described in the design instrument.

A questionnaire was designed using the survey software from surveymonkey.com. A link to the survey was posted to the website 'dankasaonline.com' and respondents were directed to the website. Some respondents received the link to the survey through email invitation; these were mostly the college respondents. The website option was carried out with the high school respondents. The school administration of Cathedral High School of St. Cloud Diocese was contacted and provided with the website, while the email addresses of the college students were acquired by contacting the Campus Ministries of Newman Center and College of St. Benedict and St. John's University. The high school administration was informed about the essentials of the research. For the college students, the leaders of the Catholic campus ministries were contacted and informed about the study.

The questions in the design instrument were mostly adapted from the Sample Questions on Computer and Internet from Gallup.com. Explanations were given in the questionnaire about the purpose of the research and how the privacy of respondents will be guaranteed. There were 12 questions in the questionnaire and instructions were provided on how each question should be answered. The questions were closed-ended on a Likert scale.

The first question was: How frequently do you use the Internet? The options were: daily, more than once a day, two to three times a week, once a week, every 2 weeks, and 'other' (the latter gives room to those who have some specifications other than those in the options). The second question was a follow up to the first: On the average, how much time do you spend online each time you log on to the Internet?

There was a range of options: less than 1 hour, 1 to 2 hours, 2 to 3 hours, and more than 3 hours. A respondent was expected to pick one of the provided options. These first two questions were to determine the amount of time Catholic youths spend using the Internet. The answers to these questions were to help determine if Catholic youths spend time on new technologies like other youths of the general public as the literature suggests. This was intended to give an indication of how much importance Catholic youths attach to the Internet.

The third question was: How often do you use the Internet to do the following?: sending and reading email; using instant messaging; playing games; watching video webcast or video clip; 'other' was the last option to give respondent the opportunity to name any that was not mentioned previously. All these were measured along the following variables: frequently, occasionally, rarely, never, and no opinion. The last option was added to allow for a degree of freedom for those who choose not to answer. The answers to this question were to give clues to the kind of activities Catholic youths are more likely to engage in more often when they are online. This was meant to help limit the focus of what activities can be used to target the Catholic youths based on what they enjoy doing online. The fourth question was: How often do you visit your church or parish website for information? The following options were provided: frequently, occasionally, rarely, never and no opinion. This question was to compare the respondents' usage of internet for social activities (as listed in question three) with religious activities.

The next sets of questions that followed were in line with the purpose of the preceding question, namely, to have a focus on where and how to meet the Catholic youths online. The next question was: As you may know, there are social network sites like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter, Hi 5, etc. where people sometimes share their thoughts. How familiar are you with social network sites? The options were: very familiar, somewhat familiar, not sure, not too familiar, and not at all familiar. The respondents were asked in the sixth question to state which social network site they use the most. The following options were given: Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and Twitter. There was an option for 'other' which was to allow respondents to mention any other site that was not listed. A last option 'do not use any' was also listed for those who do not use any social network site.

The seventh question was: If your church community opens a discussion group for youths on the social network site on which you belong, with the aim of sharing with you more about the Church and the Christian teaching, will you join the group if you are invited? Three options were provided here: yes, no, and not sure. This was to help determine how interested the Catholic youths will be if approached with religious materials online.

The eighth question was: As you may know, there are websites known as "blogs" where people sometimes post their thoughts, make comments on issues, and even ask questions. How familiar are you with "blogs"? The options were: very familiar, somewhat familiar, not too familiar, not at all familiar, and no opinion. This question was to further determine other methods of interactions online and how much of

it Catholic youths are familiar with. The next question was a follow up to the preceding one. If your church community opens a blog on the Internet for the youths in your church to learn about the teachings of the church and Christianity, to post their thoughts, make comments on issues, and ask questions on what they do not understand, will you participate? Three options were provided: yes, no, and not sure. The answers to this question were to help determine if using blogs will be a better approach to reach the Catholic youths online.

The next three questions were positioned at the end because of their personal nature. This was to avoid the situation where respondents will feel insecure and refuse to answer other questions if they were placed at the beginning. The first of the three questions was: Which church denomination do you belong to? The options were: Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal, Other, and none. This question was to determine the percentage of Catholics that take part in the study. This is because it is possible to have some who are not Catholics complete the survey. The next question was: In the last month, how many times did you attend the Sunday service or Mass? The options were: once, twice, three times, four times, all the Sundays, and not at all. This question was to determine the rate at which Catholic youths attend Sunday worship. The last question was on the age of the respondents. The question was: how old are you? The options were: 11 and under, 12-24 years, 25-34 years, and 35 years and above. The survey took place between the months of February and March 2010.

Simple descriptive statistics such as frequency count and percentages were used to analyze the data. Results are presented on tables and graphs. Figures in graphs are

provided to bring out the results that this work intends to emphasize. The following

section of this thesis discusses the results of the research and their implications. The

discussion section also suggests possible strategies the Church could use to approach

the youths online based on data from this study. This work ends with a suggestion on

where the interest of future research could be. For the scope of this study, Internet is

used to mean the new media. Wherever the word 'Church' is used it implies the

Catholic Church. The word 'evangelization' is used based on how the Catholic Church

understands it.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Three hundred and two Catholic youths ages 12 to 24 from Cathedral High School, College of St. Benedict and Campus Ministry of the Newman Center in St. Cloud, Minnesota, responded to the survey. Among the respondents, 49% attended the Sunday worship for all Sundays of the month preceding the date of taking the survey (survey was taken between February 22 and March 5). A small number (7%) attended Sunday worship once only within the month, while 12.3% never attended at all (see Table 1).

Table 1

Mass Attendance in Past Month

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Once	7.0	21
Twice	11.3	34
Three Times	12.9	39
Four Times	7.6	23
All Sundays	49.0	148
Not at All	12.3	37

Answered Question	302
Skipped Question	0

When asked how frequently they use the Internet, 83% of the respondents said they use the Internet on a daily basis, 13.7% use it two to three times a week, 3.1% and 0.3% use the Internet once a week and every 2 weeks, respectively (see Table 2 and Figure 1).

Table 2

Rate of Internet Usage by Catholic Youths

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Daily	61.9	182
More Than Once a Day	21.1	62
Two to Three Times a Week	13.7	40
Once a Week	3.1	9
Every Two Weeks	0.3	1
Other	12.3	12
Answered Question		294
Skipped Question		8
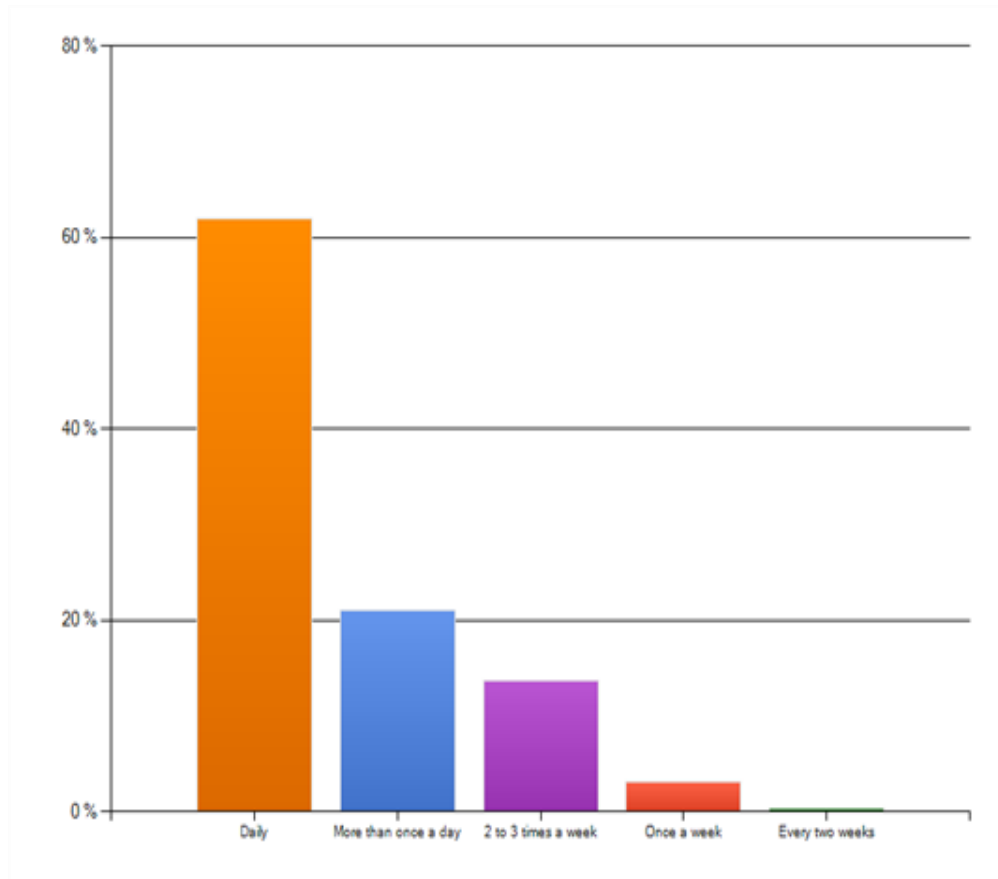
Figure 1

Rate of Internet Usage by Catholic Youths

On the average time they stay online each time they log on to the Internet, 55% reported they spend less than an hour, while 32.1% said they stay 1 to 2 hours each time they go online. Quite a few (5.3%) said they stay 2 to 3 hours and 7.6% stay more than 3 hours (see Table 3 and Figure 2).

Table 3

Time Spent When Logged onto the Internet

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Less Than 1 Hour	55.0	166
1 to 2 Hours	32.1	97
2-3 Hours	5.3	16
More than 3 Hours	7.6	23
Answered Question		302
Skipped Question		0

Figure 2

Time Spent When Logged onto the Internet

Table 4 and Figure 3 give the breakdown of how often Catholic youths use the

Internet to do certain activities. As Table 4 shows, about 45.6% of the respondents
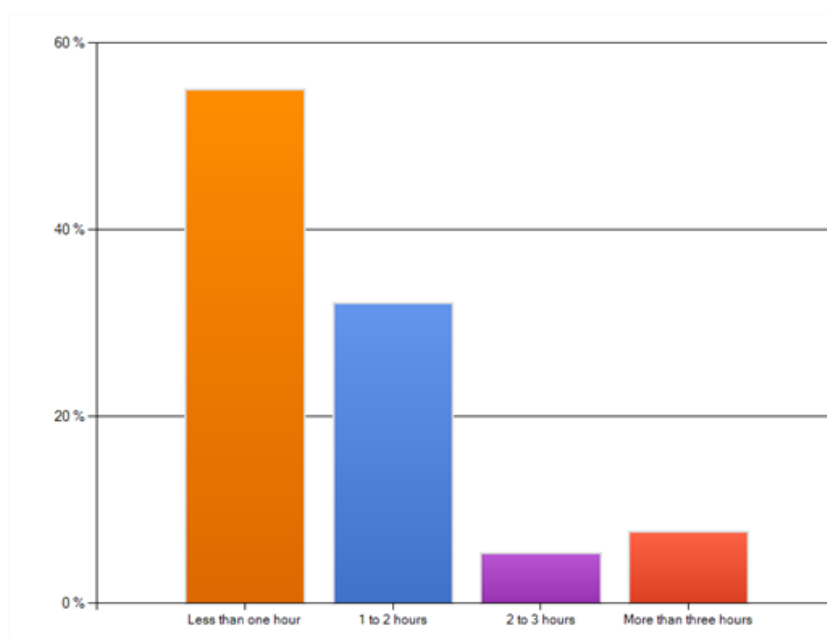
reported they use the Internet to send or receive email either frequently or occasionally,

while 50.4% either rarely or never send or receive email. About 36% said they either

frequently or occasionally use the Internet for instant messaging, while 54.4% either

rarely or never use instant messaging. Those who use the Internet to play games

frequently or occasionally are 37.7%, while 57.8% rarely or never use the Internet for

playing games. However, a larger number (64.7%) of the respondents said they either

frequently or occasionally use the Internet to watch video webcast or clips.

Table 4

Activities Most Frequently Carried Out Online

Answer Options	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	N/A	Rating Average	Response Count
Sending and receiving email	54	58	73	51	10	2.51	246
Using instant messaging	45	45	52	84	24	2.77	250
Playing games	36	66	86	70	12	2.74	270
Watching video web cast or clips	79	99	56	27	14	2.12	275
Other							31
Answered question							297

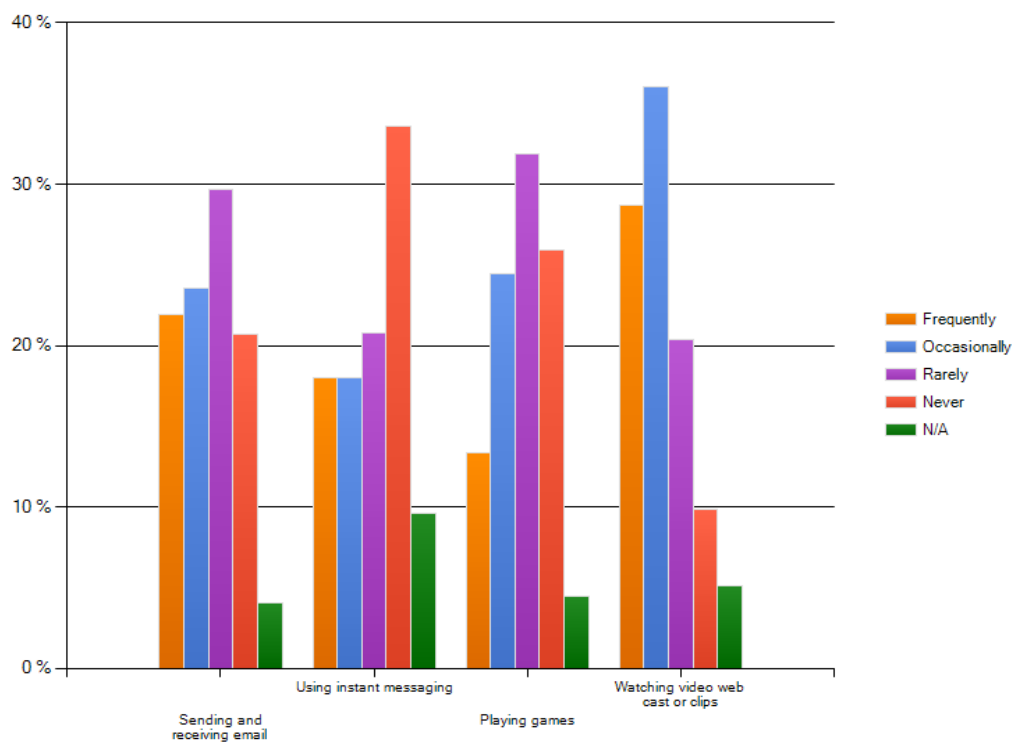| Skipped question	5

Figure 3

Activities Most Frequently Carried Out Online

When asked how often they visit their church or parish website for information, 66% said they never visited their church website. Only 9.4% said they either frequently or occasionally go to their church or parish website for information, while 19.5% rarely do that (see Table 5).

Table 5

Visiting Parish Website for Information

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Frequently	2.0	6
Occasionally	7.4	22
Rarely	19.5	58
Never	66.0	196
No opinion	5.1	15
Answered Question		297
Skipped Question		5

As for how familiar the respondents are with social network sites such as Facebook, MySpace, YouTube and Twitter, 84.1% of the respondents reported they are either very familiar or somewhat familiar with social network sites, while only a few (13.5%) said they are either not too familiar or not at all familiar with social network sites (see Table 6 and Figure 4). Facebook is the most used social network site, with 70.1% of the respondents reporting using it. YouTube follows with 45.9%. MySpace and Twitter got low numbers of 2.7% and 1.4%, respectively (see Table 7 and Figure 5).

Table 6

Familiarity with Social Network Sites

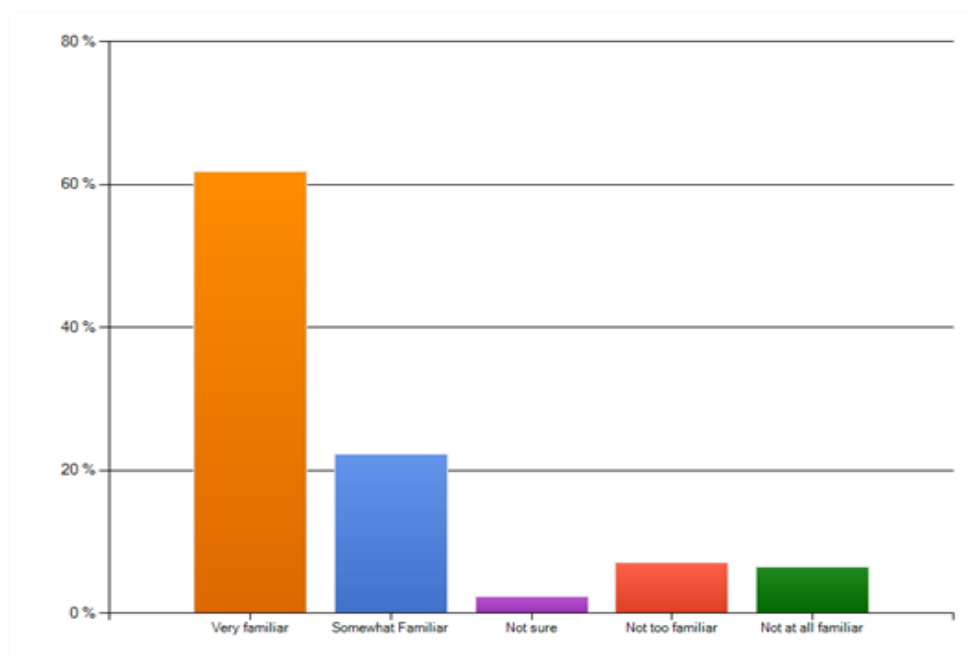| Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Very Familiar	61.8	183
Somewhat Familiar	22.3	66
Not Sure	2.4	7
Not Too Familiar	7.1	21
Not At All Familiar	6.4	19
Answered Question		296
Skipped Question		6

Figure 4

Familiarity with Social Network Sites
Table 7

Most Used Social Network Sites

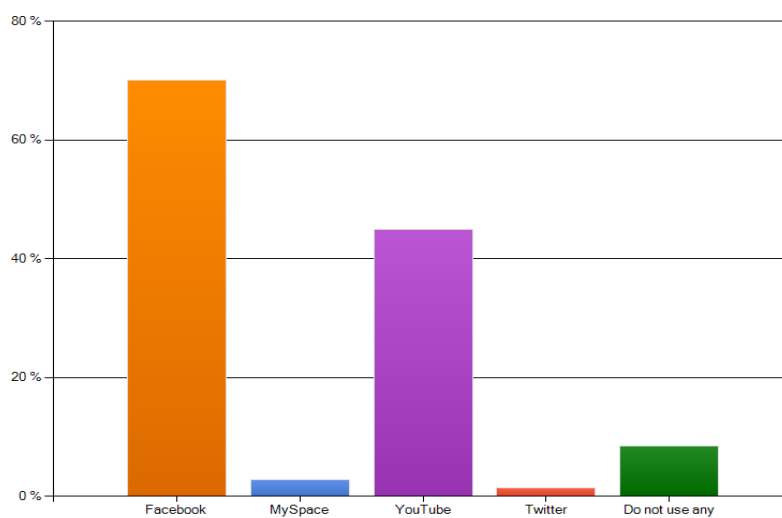| Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Facebook	70.1	206
MySpace	2.7	8
YouTube	44.9	132
Twitter	1.4	4
Do Not Use Any	8.5	25
Other		13
Answered Question		294
Skipped Question		8

Figure 5

Most Used Social Network Sites

Respondents were asked if they would be willing to join a group or be a fan of a

group created by their church community on the social network site to which they

belong with the aim of teaching them more about the Church and religion. Those not

sure if they will join or not are 45.5%, 21.7% said yes, they will participate. But 33.8%

said they will not join the group (see Table 8).

Table 8

Joining a Group Created by the Church on Social Network Site

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Yes	21.7	65
No	33.8	101
Not Sure	44.5	133
Never	66.0	196
Answered Question		299
Skipped Question		3

In order to determine the familiarity of the respondents with "weblogs," they

were asked how familiar they are with "blogs." About half of the respondents (49.9%)

are either not too familiar or not familiar at all with blogs, while 31.8% said they are

somewhat familiar and only 8.4% said they are very familiar with blogs (see Table 9

and Figure 6).

Table 9

Familiarity with Blogs

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Very Familiar	8.4	25
Somewhat Familiar	31.8	95
Not Sure	10.0	30
Not Too Familiar	29.8	89
Not At All Familiar	20.1	60
Answered Question		299
Skipped Question		3
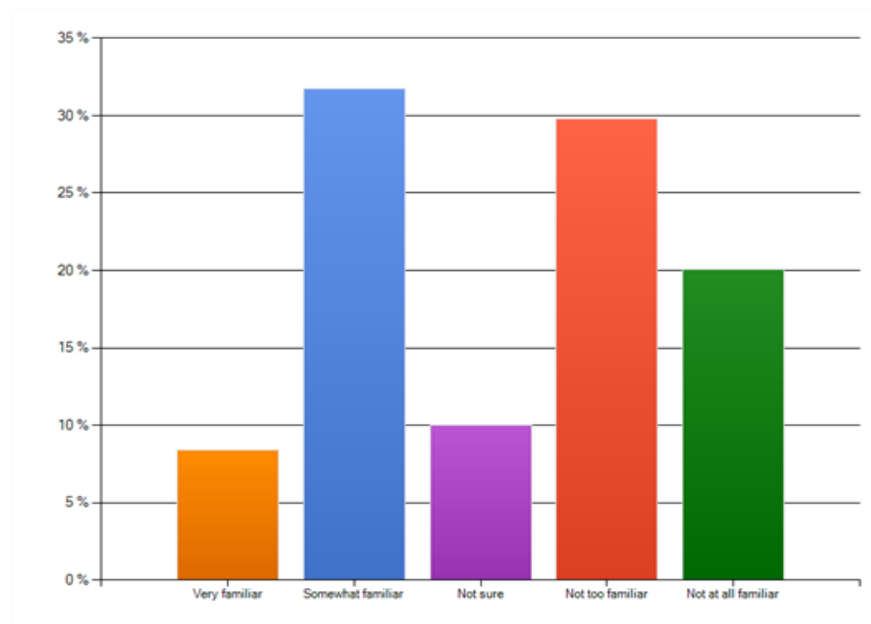
Figure 6

Familiarity with Blogs

Following this lack of familiarity, it is not surprising, then, that when asked if they would participate when invited by their church community to use blog set aside for the youths to learn about teachings of the Church and religion and to ask questions on what they do not understand, almost half of the respondents (49%) said they will not participate, while 41.7% are not sure if they will participate or not. Only 9.3% said they will participate (see Table 10).

Table 10

Would Participate in Using Blogs Created by the Church Online

Answer Options	Response %	Response Count
Yes	9.3	28
No	49.0	147
Not Sure	41.7	125
Answered Question		300
Skipped Question		2

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

Based on a sample survey, this study explored the use of the new media by the Catholic youths in respect to the Internet in order to answer four questions:

1. Are the youths in the Catholic Church deeply involved in the use of the new media?

2. What are the tools of the new media that are used the most by the Catholic youths?

3. How do Catholic youths use the tools of the new media?

4. Will Catholic youths participate in online activities organized by the Church?

This is to provide a guide for the Catholic Church in developing effective strategy on how to use these tools of the new media to reach this group of people.

The results of this study show a strong involvement by the Catholic youths in the use of the Internet. Eighty-three percent of the Catholic youths surveyed are likely to use the Internet on a daily basis. This answers the first question. The findings also show that about 55% of Catholic youths are likely to spend less than an hour each time they log on to the Internet, with about 32% spending 2 to 3 hours. However, this does not say that they have equal level of involvement for the different activities they carry

out online. More time is dedicated to some activities than in others, as the result of the second research question shows. Answering the second question: What are the tools of the new media used the most by the Catholic youths? The results show that the Catholic youths surveyed are more likely to be familiar with social network sites than with weblogs. About 84% of those surveyed said they are either very familiar or somewhat familiar with social network sites. This is against about 40% who are either very familiar or somewhat familiar with weblogs. As to their level of involvement, Catholic youths are more likely to be found on social network sites such as Facebook and YouTube.

Answering the third question, the findings show that the most likely activity to be carried out by this group online is watching video webcast or clips. This is consistent with their choice of Facebook and YouTube as the most used social network sites, presumably in part because they provide more of video and photos. This confirms the claim of Boyd (2007), who holds that young people often turn to social network sites for entertainment. An activity that the Catholic youths participate almost as much as watching video webcasts is sending and receiving emails, with about 46% of the respondents likely to frequently or occasionally engage in this activity. When put side by side with 50% that said they rarely or never send or receive email, the likelihood of this activity being a preference for this demographic is very close to even.

The fourth question is to find out if Catholic youths will participate in online activities organized by the church. The findings show that if the church organizes online activities on social network sites such as Facebook or YouTube, some of the youths

may be indecisive whether to be part of them or not. About 45% of the Catholic youths are not sure if they will participate, while about 22% are likely to participate. It appears highly probable that if activities set up online for the Catholic youths involve some form of visual through video or clips, they stand the chance of those who are indecisive to come on board. However, it is less likely that the Catholic youths will participate in using the blogs created by their church community online. Forty-nine percent of the youths are likely not to participate, while only about 9% are likely to participate. The number of those who are undecided is relatively high also (42%). This lack of interest in participating in blogs could be as a result of the Catholic youths' lack of familiarity with weblogs as reported in the survey. It could also be the effect of loss of interest on religious issues. This could also be associated with a lower desire among the youths to read than to watch video or view photos, especially online. In any case, it is indicative of the fact that the preferred method to approach or attract the youths online is through some form of entertainment-like programs that are presented in video or some form of visual presentation.

Implications to the Church

The results of this study show that more Catholic youths are likely to attend the usual Sunday mass than speculated, at least in the group studied here. About 49% of those surveyed said they attended the Sunday worship for all the Sundays of the month preceding the time of taking the survey. This is contrary to well-spread opinion that a very tiny percentage of the youths go to church. This is also consistent with the findings

of the Gallup polls that church attendance is more than 40% in the United States for all denominations (Who Really Attends Church, 1993). However, this study argues and agrees with Reimer (cited in Marty, 1996) that one likely reason for the high numbers reported in the survey could stem from the respondents' social desirability bias which sees going to church as a social activity which an individual member wants to be identified with. It could also be that since most part of the sample comes from Catholic schools, they are likely to be more active in Church. However, an actual head count such as that carried out by Hadaway et al. (1993) could be a better measure to determine church attendance.

Although the results do not point to enthusiastic Catholic youths who are ready to participate in all kinds of activities organized by the church online, the findings of this study show that the church has ample opportunities to utilize this new means of social communications to appeal to its younger audience. Of particular interest will be the use of social network sites, especially those that provide visuals and motion. There is an indication of lack of interest on religious issues from the Catholic youths. The church has to make its activities online attractive and interesting to the youths. A large number of those who responded to the survey (66%) reported they never visited their parish website. It is likely that some of them do not know about the existence of a parish website or simply that the contents of the website are not attractive enough to this demographic. There should be an effort to draw the youths to the church's website. One way of doing this is to create links to the church website on some of the popular social network sites that the youths use the most such as Facebook and YouTube.

Since we can assume most of the activities the youths are likely to carry out online are watching video and clips, the church could organize some of its activities and programs in video and post them to YouTube or Facebook with a link to the church website. On clicking such videos one is automatically taken to the parish website. Programs such as the Sunday homilies and exciting activities like parish sports can be put in video and posted on the social network sites. Parishes and church communities should have presence on these popular social network sites and their church websites should carry the link "find us on Facebook or YouTube." A lot of things can be taught through video and other forms of visual presentations; this may include making some of the Catholic movies into online games. The church should explore these means.

There should be more interactivity on the church websites. The second most carried out activities reported by the respondents are sending and receiving email. The website of churches should be furnished with a live link that visitors to the site could use to send email to a designated parish official who will offer prompt response to questions and inquiries. Many business websites utilize the tools for live chat to carry out immediate communication with customers who need help or support. The church could take advantage of this online tool for live chat on its websites, where a designated church official will be live to answer questions and concerns of members through live-chat. This could be especially good for young people, who are often shy about asking questions around their peers, particularly sensitive questions.

A site linked to the church website should be dedicated to the youth program with the youth directors making adequate use of it to communicate with the youths and

help draw traffic to the site by designing interactive features and programs. The church should furnish materials needed for this purpose. Parishes may create groups on social network sites such as Facebook and YouTube dedicated to the youths as a forum for interaction with clearly defined goals. Such groups can serve as question-and-answer forums, each with an assigned moderator. This should be accompanied with the creation of Catholic cyber-families to encourage faith-sharing communities through the Internet. People use Facebook, YouTube, MySpace and the like as meeting points for socializing; the Catholic cyber-family could serve as a socio-religious network site to be used as a meeting point for the exchange of religious knowledge, sound Catholic doctrine, faith sharing and the promotion of true family values.

Some dioceses, through the safe environment programs, prohibit the youth and faith formation directors from online contacts with the youths. This is quite an important structure as it helps to regulate and guard against abuse. However, in the light of those people being given the responsibility of the care of the young in the church, a certain amount of trust should be placed in them to use decent and acceptable means to draw the youths to the church. Using the online activities should be considered one of these ways. They should rather be guides and moderators to the young, particularly in shaping their minds on the best use of the Internet, and nowhere is this better taught than on the Internet itself. Those employed for these jobs must be people of conscience with a better understanding of the risk factor. Parents must be brought in to get involved in this venture and work with the church to achieve success. They should encourage the children to share with them areas of interest on their online activities as the children so

will. But care must be taken so that parents' involvement will not scare some of the youths.

Twelve percent of the youths who reported that they are Catholics never attended any of the Sunday masses in the month preceding the survey. This is a worrying development. The mistrust that resulted from church personnel's abuse of children has brought about a certain quiet in this area of ministering to the youths. Experts in this ministry have doubts and fears in committing themselves to working with the youths. The unfortunate cases of child abuse have precipitated some silent restrictions to their holistic approach to this ministry. The church is untiringly working hard to protect and safeguard the young against any kind of abuse through its safe environment program. This is a laudable effort.

Although the Catholic Church in some of its recent documents has addressed the relevance and urgency of engaging the youths and bringing them back to the church using the tools of the new media, it has not done much to address the issue of rekindling the confidence of those who are to carry out this challenge of re-engaging and teaching the young. It sounds contradictory, on the one hand, to set out rules for youth ministers and faith formation directors prohibiting them from engaging in some activities with the youths such as exchanges on the Internet, and on the other hand, wanting the youths to be approached through the new media. The challenge for the church is not to totally prohibit online exchanges, but to change course by reeducating those charged with the responsibility of taking care of the youths, to bring their hearts back to the work, change mentality and to start again with a renewed focus and intention of helping the young

towards spiritual growth, bearing in mind and not waving away the dangers of abuse. Ministering to the youths has been a challenge in recent years. But someone has to do the work! The church must be strict against abuse, forgive itself and move on cautiously.

Some may see the Internet as a tool too mundane for the church to use in its communication or see it as an unguided medium for indecent activities. This study argues that such crews make it even more compelling for the church to be present on the Internet to provide decent space for users. The Internet is not all dirty, after all; the benefits by far outweigh the disadvantages. It is a generational change, and to be relevant the church has to change with it. The Internet, however, is not to replace the face-to-face communication or activities of the church but to complement them.

This study has some limitations, particular in the universality of the results. This is by no means a representative sample of the Catholic youths, bearing in mind its non-random nature; hence, there is a problem with the generalization of the results to Catholic youths universally. An issue to point out is that most developing countries do not have as much Internet penetration as the United States where this study was carried out, which brings up the issue of digital divide which is the imbalance or gap that exist between those with easy access to modern technologies and those that do not. Therefore, it is highly improbable if the research will yield the same results when carried out in some countries where the Internet usage is low compared to more developed countries. Nevertheless, the results of this study will be useful in the developing countries in the nearest future because of the rate at which technology is

growing. The results of this study will serve the Catholic Church as an institution in its planning towards ministering to the youths in the short term for developed countries, and also in the long term for the developing countries.

There are indications that the young are also in the majority of those who use the new media even in developing nations. Future studies may focus on the church in developing countries to determine how the young are doing in their use of the Internet in an environment of slower technological advancement. Also research could explore other demographics in the church, to make comparisons among different ages, ethnicities, parental orientation or some other relevant variables, and see which group would be more likely to be interested in religion first before engaging them with the Internet. This would provide a wider opportunity to using new media for holistic evangelization in the church

REFERENCES

Atkin, D. J., Jeffres, L. W., & Neuendorf, K. A. (1998). Understanding internet adoption as telecommunications behavior. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 42*. Retrieved from http://www.accessmylibrary.com/article-1G1-53462204/understanding-internet-adoption-telecommunications.html

Bangkok. (2008, April 8-10). *Regional workshop on promoting disability data collection through the 2010 population and housing census*. Retrieved from: http://www.unescap.org/stat/disability/census-ws/session5-media.pdf.

Barlow, T. (2008). Web 2.0: Creating a classroom without walls. *Teaching Science, 54*(1), 46.

Baym, N. K., Zhang, Y. B., & Lin, M. (2004). Social interactions across media: Interpersonal communication on the internet, telephone and face-to-face. *New Media and Society, 6*(3), 299-318. Retrieved from http://nms.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/6/3/299.

Benedict XVI. (2009a). *Address to the plenary assembly of the pontifical council for social communications*. Retrieved from http://www.zenit.org/article-27385?l=english

Benedict XVI. (2009b). *Cited in the communiqué from the Pontifical Council for Social Communications announcing the theme for the 44th World Communication Day, 2010*. Retrieved from http://www.zenit.org/article-26998?l=english

Benedict XVI. (2009c). N*ew technologies, new relationships. Promoting a culture of respect, dialogue and friendship. Message for the 43rd world communications day*. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/ communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20090124_43rd-world-communications-day_en.html

Bennett, W. L. (2003) New media power: The internet and global activism. In N. Couldry & J. Curran (Eds.) *Contesting media power: Alternative media power in a networked world* (pp. 17-37). Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Berson, R., & Berson, M. J. (2006). Privileges, privacy and protection of youth bloggers in social studies classroom. *Social Education, 70*(3), 124.

Boddie, W., Contardo, J., & Childs, R. (2007). The future workforce: Here they come: A new generation of professionals are reshaping government workplaces, markedly changing the expectations of individual and organizational behaviors. *The Public Manager, 36*(4), 25.

Boyd, D. (2007). Why youth (heart) social network sites: The role of networked publics in teenage social life. In D. Buckingham (Ed.), *Mac Arthur foundation series on digital learning—youth identity, and digital media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13*, 1. Retrieved from http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol13/issue1/boyd.ellison.html

Brooksgunn, J., & Hirschhorn, E. (2008). Introducing the issue. *The Future of Children, 18*(1), 3-10.

Caincross, J. (1998). *An agent for the duration*. Boston, MA: Little Brown and Co.

Campbell, K. (2004). Young adults missing from the pews. *The Christian Century*, 121.

Cartellieri, C., Parsons, A. J., Rao, V., & Zeisser, M. P. (1997). The real impact of internet advertising. *The McKinsey Quarterly, 3*, 44.

Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), Georgetown University. (2007). *CARA bulletin*. Retrieved from http://www.cara.georgetown.edu/bulletin/index.htm

Chaves, M., & Cavendish, J. C. (1994). More evidence on U.S. Catholic Church attendance. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 33*(4), 376-381.

Church attendance on the decline. (1996). *The Christian Century, 113*(26), 843.

Croteau, D., & Hoynes, W. (2003). *Media society: Industries, images and audiences* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Diamanduros, T., Jenkins, S. J., & Downs, E. (2007). Analysis of technology ownership and selective use among undergraduates. *College Student Journal, 41*, 970.

Digital Media Across Asia. (2007). *Internet and pc usage patterns in Singapore*. Retrieved from http://comm215.wetpaint.com/page/internet+and +pc+usage+patterns

Dorris, M. (2007). Service transformation in government: Better intergovernmental collaboration will be needed to satisfy the citizens of the future. *Public Manager, 36*(4), 29.

Duin, J. (2002). Americans keep faith lose religion: The fact that the majority of Americans aren't in church can be seen in the Sunday traffic jams at malls, movie theatres, and grocery stores. *Insight on the News, 18*, 19, 30.

Dutta-Bergman, M. J. (2004). Complementarity in consumption of news types across traditional and new media. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 48*(1), 41–60.

Elway Research Inc. (n.d.). *Communication strategy*. Retrieved from http://www.elwayresearch.com/communication.html

Fabian, N. (2008). On the demise of associations. *Journal of Environmental Health, 70*, 78.

Fiddler, R. (1997). *Mediamorphosis: Understanding new media*. Newbury Park, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Flew, T. (2008). *New media: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Melbourne: Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Gallup, Inc. (n.d.). *Sample questions on computers and internet*. Retrieved from http://www.gallup.com

Hadaway, C. K., & Marler, P. L. (1998). Did you go to church this week? Behind the poll data. *The Christian Century, 115*, 472-475.

Hadaway, C. K., Marler, P. L., & Chaves, M. (1993). What the polls don't show: A closer look at U.S. church attendance. *American Sociological Review, 58*, 741-752.

Hargittai, E. (2004). Internet access and use in context. *New Media Society, 6*(1), 137. Retrieved from http://nms.sagepub.com/cgi/contents/refs/6/1/137

Harmon, J. C. (2007). Let them use the internet: Why college instructors should encourage student internet use. *College Teaching, 55*(1), 2.

Haward, P. (2002). Network ethnography and the hypermedia organizations: *The New Media, New Organizations, New Methods. New Media and Society, 4*(4), 550-574. Retrieved from http://nms.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/4/4/550

Heer, J., & Boyd, D. (2005, October 23-25). *Vizster: Visualizing online social networks.* IEEE Symposium on Information Visualization (InfoVis 2005), Minneapolis, Minnesota. Retrieved from http://www.danah.org/papers/InfoViz2005.pdf

Internet WorldStats. (2001-2009). Retrieved from http://www.internetworldstats.com.

Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. New York: University Press.

John Paul II. (1991). *Redemptoris missio. On the permanent validity of the church's missionary mandate*. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio_en.html

John Paul II. (2001). *Preach at the house tops: The gospel in the age of global communication. Message for the 35th World Communications Day*. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/ communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20010124_world-communications-day_en.html

John Paul II. (2005). Cited in http://www.drvc.org/office-of-communications.html

Kiousis, S. (2002). Interactivity: A concept explication. *New Media and Society, 4*(3), 355. Retrieved from http://nms.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/4/3/355

Knox, D., Daniels, V., Sturdivant, L., & Zusman, M. E. (2001). College students use of the internet for mate selection. *College Student Journal, 35*(1), 158.

Lin, C., & Yu, S. (2008). Adolescent internet usage in Taiwan: Exploring gender differences. *Adolescence, 43*(170), 317.

Livingstone, S., & Bovil, M. (2000). *Young people, new media.* London: London School of Economics and Political Science. Retrieved from http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/pdf/young_people_report.pdf(24.09 .2003)

Marty, M. E. (1996). Were you there on Sunday? *The Christian Century, 113*(26), 879.

Menendez, A. J. (1993). American Catholics: A social and political portrait. *The Humanist, 53*(5), 17.

Youth and Religion Organization. (n.d.). *National study of youths and religion.* Retrieved from http://www.youthandreligion.org/research/index.html

Nodar, D. (2000). *What are characteristics of the new evangelization*? Retrieved from http://www.christlife.org

Office of Evangelization, Catholic Diocese of Cleveland. (n.d.). *What is Catholic evangelization?* Retrieved from http://dioceseofcleveland.org/parishlife/what_is_catholic_evangelization.htm

Papacharissi, Z. (2002). The virtual sphere: The internet as public sphere. *New Media and Society, 4*(1), 9-27. Retrieved from http://nms.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/4/1/9

Pastore, M. (2002, January 25). *Internet key to communication among the youth*. Retrieved from http://www.clickz.com/961881

Paul VI. (1975). *Evangelii Nuntiandi: The Church's document on evangelization in the modern world*. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html

Petric, G. (2006). Conceptualizing and measuring the social uses of the internet: The case of personal websites. *The Information Society, 22*, 291-301.

Pontifical Commission for the Means of Social Communication. (1971). *Communio et Progressio*. This pastoral instruction applies the Vatican II decree Inter Mirifica. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_23051971_communio_en.html

Pontifical Council for Social Communications. (1992). *Aetatis novae*. This pastoral instruction on social communications commemorates the twentieth anniversary of Communio et Progressio. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_pccs_doc_22021992_aetatis_en.html

Pontifical Council for Social Communications. (2002a). *Ethics in communication*. This document identifies three areas of ethical concern: what is the message content of media, how communicating is done, and who will and will not have access to information by way of the media. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_p ccs_doc_20000530_ethics-communications_en.html

Pontifical Council for Social Communications. (2002b). *Ethics in internet*. A reflection on ethical issues associated with the Internet. It emphasizes the technology's power and opportunities for promoting the common good. Retrieved from http://www.usccb.org/comm/ethicsnet.shtml

Pontifical Council for Social Communications. (2002c). *The church and internet*. This Document is a Companion to 'Ethics in Internet'. Focuses on Online Pastoral Opportunities. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_p ccs_doc_20020228_church-internet_en.html

Roberts, D., & Fillichio, C. (2006). Next generation feds find a new way to network: Youngfeds.org gives young government workers a space to share ideas and learn from the best. *The Public Manager, 35*(4), 67.

Roberts, D. F., & Foehr, U. G. (2008). Trends in media use. *The Future of Children,* 18.

Second Vatican Council. (1963). *Inter mirifica*. This was one of the 16 decrees of the Second Vatican Council on 'the Instrument of Social Communications'. Retrieved from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/pccs/documents/rc_pc_p ccs_doc_04121963_inter-mirifica_en.html

Second Vatican Council. (1966). Decree on the church's missionary activity (Ad Gentes). *AAS, 58*, 967.

Severin, J., & Tankard, J. W. (2001). *Communication theories: Origins, methods, and uses in the mass media* (5th ed.). Indianapolis, IN: Addison Wesley Longman.

Sturgeon, J. (2008). Five don'ts of classroom blogging: Avoiding these pitfalls will help students get the full benefits of online journaling. *The Journal (Technological Horizons in Education), 35*(2), 26.

Subrahmanyan, K., & Greenfield, P. (2008). Online communication and adolescent relationships. *The Future of Children*, 18.

Subramanyan, D., Greenfield, P., Krant, R., & Gross, E. (2001). The impact of computer use on children's and adolescents' development. *Applied Development Psychology, 22*, 7-30.

Vanfossen, P. J. (2001). Degree of internet/www use and barriers to use among secondary social studies teachers. *International Journal of Instructional Media, 28*(1), 57.

Vodanovich, S. J., & Piotrowski, C. (2001). Internet-based instruction: A national survey of psychology faculty. *Journal of Instructional Psychology, 28*(4), 253.

Wellman, B. (2004). The three ages of internet studies: Ten, five and zero years ago. *New Media and Society, 6*(1), 123. Retrieved from http://nms.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/6/1/123

Who Really Attends Church? (1993). *The Christian Century, 110*(25), 848.

Winter, M. (2001). Straight talk about internet banking. *ABA Banking Journal, 93*(12), 77.

APPENDIX

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

1. How frequently do you use the Internet?
    a. Daily
    b. More than once a day
    c. Two to three times a week
    d. Once a week
    e. Every two weeks
    f. Other (specify)

2. On the average, how much time do you stay online each time you log on to the Internet?
    a. Less than 1 hour
    b. 1 to 2 hours
    c. 2 to 3 hours
    d. More than 3 hours

3. How often do you use the Internet to do the following:

	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	No Opinion
a. Sending and receiving email	O	O	O	O	O
b. Using instant messaging	O	O	O	O	O
c. Playing games	O	O	O	O	O
d. Watching video web cast or clips		O	O	O	O O
e. Other (specify)	O	O	O	O	O

4. How often do you visit your church or parish website for information?

Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	No Opinion
O	O	O	O	O

5. As you may know, there are social network sites like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Twitter, etc. where people sometimes share their thoughts. How familiar are you with social network sites.

Very Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Not Familiar	Not Too Sure	Not At All Familiar
O	O	O	O	O

6. Which social network site do you use the most?
    a. Facebook
    b. MySpace
    c. YouTube
    d. Twitter
    e. Other (mention)

f.   Do not use any

7.   If your church community opens a discussion group on the social network site on which you belong with the aim of teaching you more about the church and religion, will you join the group if you are invited?
a) Yes
b) No
c) Not sure

8. As you may know, there are websites known as "blogs" where people sometimes post their thoughts. How familiar are you with blogs?

Very Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Not Familiar	Not Too Sure	Not At All Familiar
O	O	O	O	O

9. If your church community opens a blog in the Internet solely for the youths in your church to learn about teachings of the church and religion, and to ask questions on what they do not understand, will you participate in using the blog?
    a) Yes
    b) No
    c) Not sure

10. Which church denomination do you belong to?
    a) Catholic
    b) Protestant
    c) Pentecostal
    d) Other (specify)_____
    e) None

11. In the last month how many times did you attend the Sunday worship?
    a) Once
    b) Twice
    c) Three times
    d) Four times
    e) All the Sundays
    f) Not at all

12. How old are you?
    a) 11 and under
    b) 12-24
    c) 25-34
    d) 35 and above