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**New Evangelization in The Digital World:
A Dominican Approach**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE USED

Acts	The Acts of the Apostles	1 Jn	1 John
Col	Colossians	2 Jn	2 John
1 Cor 1	Corinthians	Lev	Leviticus
2 Cor 2	Corinthians	Lk	Luke
Dt	Deuteronomy	Mk	Mark
Eph	Ephesians	Mt	Matthew
Ex	Exodus	Num	Numbers
Ezel	Ezekiel	1 Pet	1 Peter
Gal	Galatians	2 Pet	2 Peter
Gen	Genesis	Phil	Philippians
Heb	Hebrews	Ps	Psalms
Hos	Hosea	Rev	Revelation
Is	Isaiah	Rom	Romans
Jas	James	1 Th	1 Thessalonians
Jer	Jeremiah	2 Th	2 Thessalonians
Jl	Joel	1 Tim	1 Timothy
Jn	John	2 Tim	2 Timothy

N.B. English texts are quoted from the New American Bible Revised Edition (2011) at uscgb.org; Hebrew texts from Westminster Leningrad Codex, and Greek texts from the Westcott-Hort Edition (1881) at Biblos.com.

OF THE DOCUMENTS OF VATICAN II USED

AA	<i>Apostolicam actuositatem</i> : The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (November 18, 1965)
AG	<i>Ad gentes divinitus</i> : The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (December 7, 1965)
DH	<i>Dignitatis humanae</i> : The Declaration on Religious Liberty (December 7, 1965)

- DV *Dei verbum*: The Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (November 18, 1965)
- GS *Gaudium et spes*: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (December 7, 1965)
- IM *Inter mirifica*: The Decree on the Means of Social Communication (December 4, 1963)
- LG *Lumen gentium*: The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (November 21, 1964)
- NA *Nostra aetate*: The Declaration on the Church's Relations with non-Christian Religions (October 28, 1965)
- PO *Presbyterorum ordinis*: The Decree on the Life and Ministry of Priests (December 7, 1965)
- SC *Sancrosanctum concilium*: The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (December 4, 1963)
- UR *Unitatis redintegratio*: The Decree on Ecumenism (November 21, 1964)

OF OTHER CHURCH DOCUMENTS USED

- AAS *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, the Vatican gazette that carries the original text of the important documents.
- AN *Aetatis Novae*: The Pastoral Instruction on Social Communications, by Pontifical Council for Social Communications (February 22, 1992)
- CCC Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2nd edition.
- CP *Communio et progressio*: The Pastoral Instruction on the Means of Social Communication of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (January 29, 1971)
- EN *Evangelii Nuntiandi*: The Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope Paul VI on Evangelism in the Modern World (December 8, 1975)
- FC *Familiaris Consortio*: The Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II on the Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World.
- PCCS *Pontificium Consilium de Communicationibus Socialibus*: Communication of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications.

OF OFFICIAL DOMINICAN DOCUMENT USED

- LCO *Liber Constitutionum et Ordinationum Ordinis Fratrum Prædicatorum*: The Book of Constitutions and Ordinations of the Brothers of the Order of Preachers (2012)

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INTRODUCTION

The resignation of His Holiness Benedict XVI from the Petrine office in February and the election of the 266th successor of Peter, Pope Francis, in March this year was one of the most important media events that have ever attracted the world's attention. There were more than 5,600 journalists worldwide on 24-hour standby those days to cover and broadcast live almost every move in the Vatican.¹ In addition to traditional mass media, e.g. print and broadcast, new digital media, e.g. internet and mobile devices, with their connectivity through social networks allowed both professionals and amateurs to spread the coverage at one's fingertips just in real time:

On *Facebook*, the top eight most-mentioned terms world-wide were all related to the pope's selection.²

According to the social-media analytics firm *Topsy*, tweets about the Pope reached 15 billion views — more than twice the world's total population... *Twitter* reports that the March 13 announcement generated 130,000 tweets per minute and that it recorded at least 7 million tweets that day on the papal election.³

Unimaginable was that reaching out to all peoples fifty years ago when the Church through her Second Vatican Council's second document *Inter Mirifica* (Among the Wonderful) began to appreciate the importance of the means of social communication. Nowadays, with the ubiquity of new media and digital networks, the Church's communication of the good news of her Lord Jesus Christ seems to be more feasible and refined than ever, regardless of the decline in ministerial vocation.

¹ See VIS, "The Vatican: At Center of World's Focus," *The Vatican Today*, March 12, 2013, <http://www.news.va/en/news/the-vatican-at-center-of-worlds-focus>.

² WSJ Staff, "What Notable People Are Tweeting About the New Pope Francis," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 13, 2013, <http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2013/03/13/what-notable-people-are-tweeting-about-the-new-pope/>.

³ Peter J. Smith, "Habemus @pontifex: Social Media Greet Its Pope," *National Catholic Register*, March 15, 2013, <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/habemus-pontifex-social-media-greets-its-pope/#ixzz2NigZKUc9>. Cf. "White Smoke on Twitter: Social Buzz for the New Pope," *Topsy*, March 13, 2013, <http://about.topsy.com/2013/03/13/social-buzz-for-new-pope/>.

Background and Assumptions

Called by God and inspired by the Spirit to obey Christ, Christians are in fact members of Christ's Body and thus partakers in Christ's mission.⁴ Ultimately Christian vocation means a divine invitation to live in communion with the Head, Jesus the Christ, and so to actualize "the whole Christ" (*Christus totus*)⁵ in the present times, communicating of the good news of God on earth as Jesus used to do (cf. Mk 1:14). Now that we are living in the age of communications revolution, there should be more opportunities as well as possibilities for us Christians to realize our vocation, anywhere, anytime, to anyone, if we are ready to make good use of the crest of the wave – the hyper-connectivity – for the communication of the good news.

This paper assumes that the readers are already familiar with Christian faith and its implications, as well as with certain ideas of new social media (e.g. websites, web logs [blogs], Podcasts, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, smartphone applications) and how they function. Explanation of some technical terms will, however, take place in running text where necessary.

As advanced technologies and the World Wide Web allow people to send and receive information anywhere at the speed of light, yet not extravagant, this suggests that we now live in a global digital culture and our communication activities be confined to no barriers except for those who are restricted. The possible application of this study is, therefore, meant for anyone, to any social and geographical border, as long as they can get online, be connected to a social network and mindfully present there as Christians, and, if wishing, being there in the Dominican way.

⁴ Cf. Rom 12:5; Eph 3:6; Heb 3:14; Jn 20:21; CCC 782-786.

⁵ CCC 795.

Problems and Concerns

Evangelization, or communication of the good news of God to the world, is the vocation⁶, the very nature,⁷ and the duty⁸ of the entire Church and of every Christian. However, amid the vast and profound secularization of today's world, many Christians seem to either forget this noble vocation or find it hard to meet God in such materialistic culture. Facing this crisis, the XIII Ordinary General Synod of Bishops, assembled from 7 to 28 October 2012, called for a "New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith." *What is New Evangelization? What can we within our reach do to respond to this pressing call of the Church?*

Seeing the world digitized at large, from bustling cities to remote villages, Pope Benedict XVI in his message for the 43rd World Communications Day in 2009 termed it a "digital world" and acknowledged the emergence of "the so-call *digital generation*." So convinced of the powerful communication implications of the digital media, the Pope confidently related this latest technology to the task of evangelization and made it the theme of the 47th World Communications Day, "Social Networks: portals of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelization." *Can digital media and social networks help us to live out a new evangelization?*

Nowadays many Christians are using many means of communication; yet it seems that not many relate it to the living of their vocation. While "Communication"

⁶ Cf. Mt 28:19-20; Mk 16:15

⁷ AG 2: "The Church on earth is by its very nature missionary since, according to the plan of the Father, it has its origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit." See also LG 1: "Since the Church, in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men – she here purposes, for the benefit of the faithful and of the whole world, to set forth, as clearly as possible, and in the tradition laid down by earlier Councils, her own nature and universal mission."

⁸ Cf. 1 Cor 9:16

contains in itself an intention to share (Latin: *communicare*) so that all those who share information and life could see things in common with one another and together live in unity (*communis*); Christian communication, all the more, having Christ as a model of the “Perfect Communicator,”⁹ is expected to bring about more life from the Source of Life, which is God, and to foster more unity among humanity, following the pattern of the divine community. As it appears a paradox in our communication era when the more are people engaged online the more are they segregated in life, *can we Christians, according to our vocation, particularly myself a Dominican Brother, make better use of the communication media to live as we are called to be?*

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this thesis is to present a possible response to the Church’s present call for a new evangelization. In the process of reaching the way that is both traditional in approach and fashionable in expression, the thesis provides the readers with a fresh look at Christian vocation from the communication perspective. In the context that there are more and more people spending more time with more new media of communication, the thesis serves as an invitation to those Christians who are daily using new media to interpret that sign of the time in the light of faith, to rediscover the transcendental presence of God in it and to use it mindfully.

Written in the year when the Church marks her fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of *Inter Mirifica* and calls for a new evangelization, the thesis also serves as a constant reminder that practical readiness should always go with well spiritual preparation for fruitful communication of the Word of God, particularly in this modern world. Written from the stance of a specific vocation – the Dominicans’,

⁹ CP 11.

the author would like to demonstrate an approach to the New Evangelization and thus to prove his point that the digital world is a suitable place for the communication of the good news anew.

Significance of the Study

This thesis debuts at the time when the Church is commemorating her first-time attempt to communicate with the modern world over the opening of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council a half century ago, and now initiating another attempt to dialogue with the post-modern world over a new evangelization. It is quite timely to review how the influence of the means of social communication that “extends beyond national frontiers, making individuals citizens of the world”¹⁰ can help to “reinforce the bonds of unity between individuals and effectively promote the harmony of the human family.”¹¹ It is also meaningful to take the opportunity of this Year of Faith (October 11, 2012 – November 24, 2103) and of the twentieth anniversary of the publication of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*¹² to once again reflect on our Christian vocation at the “door of faith.”¹³

The study is even significant to the Dominicans as it brings them back to 1213, when St Dominic and his companions, at Fanjeaux, now Southern France, first discussed the founding of the Order seriously.¹⁴ Also during that same time, in the days of September, after the Catholic victory over the Albigensians gained at Muret,

¹⁰ *IM 22*, in *Vatican Council II*, ed. Austin Flannery O.P., (Pasay, Philippines: Paulines, 2006).

¹¹ Benedict XVI, *Message for the 47th World Communication Day* (January 24, 2013).

¹² See John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Fidei Depositum* (October 11, 1992).

¹³ See Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei* (October 11, 2011).

¹⁴ See William A. Hinnebusch O.P., *The Dominicans: a Short History* (New York: Alba House, 1975), 4.

there appeared in the tradition of the Church an anecdote connecting the prayer of St Dominic with the Rosary.¹⁵ Whether the story is true or *ben trovato*, the history of the Rosary would not be complete without a reference to St Dominic and the way he successfully communicated the Truth to the Cathars. The Rosary since then has been spread worldwide. Definitely the Dominican Province of Our Lady of the Rosary has inherited not only the name from that long tradition, there are much more from the Order's spiritual richness that the revision of them during this very right time would help the Brothers of the Province to better live a new evangelization.

The discussion in this thesis is an endeavor to integrate various disciplines of knowledge that I have studied. The keyword "communication" has been used often to describe the Christian vocation and to find a solution to any evangelization. This is because it has come to the author's attention that, here, in Asia, more specifically in Macao, the significance of communication media in relation to Christian vocation and evangelization has not been appreciated enough by the Catholics. Looking out to what the Protestants, or closer to us in communion – the American Catholics, are doing in the digital world, there are a lot of things for us to learn and opportunities to take part in it within our reach. I hope that my work would give a nudge to someone.

Overview of the Thesis

Having the above ideas in mind, I title my thesis "New Evangelization in the Digital World: a Dominican Approach." I then proceed to discuss the topic in three chapters, each addressing one of the problems as mentioned. First, to lay a foundation for my discussion of the Christian vocation as a communicator of the good news, I

¹⁵ Cf. John Desmond Miller, *Beads and Prayers: the Rosary in History and Devotion* (London: Burns & Oates, 2002), 10-11. See also Catherine Beebe, *Saint Dominic and the Rosary* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 95-97.

present a literature review of the evangelizing nature of the Church, in which the new times demands for a new evangelization; and, as a response to the present call of the Church, I attempt to interpret new media as the sign of the present time. Following that, I form a theological view on the self-presence of God, highlighting key insights and exemplifying them with typical cases of new media pioneers. A sound understanding of God's self-presence as God's self-communication, illuminated by real-life examples, gives flesh to the communication vocation discussed in the literature review and opens more avenues to Christians to live their vocation. At this stage, I look back on my specific vocation as a Dominican and explore in the Order's spiritual tradition for possible ways to live out the Christian vocation in the Dominican way in the digital world – a concrete approach to the New Evangelization. In closing, I recap what have been discussed, giving reflections on the relationship between new evangelization and communication, not only as the art of transmitting Christian faith but also as the art of living out the Christian vocation.

Writing a thesis in a language other than my mother tongue is definitely challenging and taking a lengthy period of time. Owing to the time limit, moreover, there are, inevitably, certain weaknesses in the articulation of my study and limitations on its discussion in depth. Nevertheless, this thesis has been carefully prepared and oriented in the best manner to possibly achieve its aims as a timely response to the Church's calling for a new evangelization. Reference resources used in this thesis include original documents, field observations, online resources, ground libraries and online library databases. In regard to Catholic Church documents, catechism and papal writings, "Vatican: The Holy See" (<http://www.vatican.va/>) was used as the portal to primary resources, unless indicated otherwise. All online resources were accessed and double-checked the last time on June 29, 2013.

CHAPTER I

EVANGELIZATION IN THE PRESENT TIME

In this chapter I am going to review the communication nature of the Christian vocation as revealed in the Bible and refined in Church Documents. I then relate it to the present call of the Church for a new evangelization, studying its challenges and opportunities in the present age. The fact that new digital media boom gives a boon to social communicators will be interpreted as a sign that God invites today's Christians to take up and live anew their vocation as true communicators of the good news.

1.1. The Command of Evangelization

“Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15). This imperative, “proclaim” (Greek: κηρύξατε),¹⁶ implies that there are at least two elements involved: the proclaimer, the message to proclaim and, if the proclaimer unseen or the message beyond one's understanding, the interpreter. Also in this imperative, the “good news” that the Lord Jesus, before ascending into heaven, commanded the Eleven to make known is, in fact, according to Mark, the good news about himself – Christ, the Son of God (see 1:1, τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, υἱοῦ θεοῦ), also the good news of God (see 1:14, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ).¹⁷ This

¹⁶ Conjugated from κηρύσσω, which means I proclaim, I herald, I announce a message publicly and with conviction. For further understanding of κηρύσσω and κήρυξ (the herald), see Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (TDNT), 8th ed., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (1965; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 3:638-714.

¹⁷ The LXX used the plural noun *euangelia*, which is rooted from Hebrew, to express glad tidings – a joyful and important message delivered by designated messenger, e.g. 1 Samuel 31:9. See John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 60.

imperative has directly given the Church and each of the faithful a unique legacy: being a public proclaimer, a convinced communicator of the good news of God.

Jesus Christ was the first communicator of the good news of God's kingdom, also he himself the good news to humanity. What could be better news or more glad tidings than that when “the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Is 9:1)? Jesus, the Word of God become flesh and dwelling among us (see Jn 1:14), is “the light of the world” (Jn 9:5). His life was “the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (Jn 1:4-5). He is the real presence of God's profound love among the human race (cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16; 3:16; Jn 3:16). By participating in the divine life as the eternal Word of God (see Jn 1:1-2) and, at the same time, sharing in the true human life (see Lk 2:21), Jesus is “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15) and “the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6) on earth, leading humanity back to God. He is definitely a living community of both divinity and humanity. His mission into the world was thus nothing more important than being a lively communicator between God and God's creatures.

Jesus' role is unique. He has become a perfect example for those who follow him, imitating his life and succeeding him in communicating the good news of God: “as the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21). Christian vocation is, therefore, a call to experience God through Christ, living as he lived and being sent away to proclaim and share the profound joy of God as he was. It is indeed a vocation to continue Christ's mission on earth, communicating and making known the Word and the loving presence of God among humanity.

The Church is the community of Christians, those who are called (ἐκκλησία) to join in the Body of Christ, heeding his command and becoming communicators of the

good news. Since the coming of the Spirit,¹⁸ the Church has embraced the solemn command of Jesus respectfully and taken up his mission seriously. Saint Paul the Apostle in his first letter to the Corinthians (9:16) put it: “If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it!”¹⁹ The obligation that Paul felt commanded to carry out certainly resulted from his intimate relationship with Christ Jesus, which had thoroughly changed and transformed him, “I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me” (Gal 2:20). This is quite identifiable with the intimacy between Jesus and God the Father, “I am in the Father and the Father is in me” (Jn 14:11). Therefore, just as how Jesus had successfully communicated God the Father to the world, so did Paul with the good news of the risen Lord to “the ends of the earth.”²⁰

Inspired by the good news of Christ, faithful to the Lord’s command and, furthermore, inherited the missionary zeal handed down by great apostles like Saints Peter and Paul, the Church has uninterruptedly endeavored to evangelize the world

¹⁸ See Acts 2:1-41. Filled with the Holy Spirit the Twelve felt ready to proclaim publicly the good news of Christ, beginning with Peter, who boldly called upon the Jews to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, regardless of the religious authorities’ presence in Jerusalem.

¹⁹ Here St Paul, and his followers, coined the Greek aorist middle verb “εὐαγγελίσασθαι”, which was anglicized as “to evangelize”, to express the action of preaching or communicating the good news. Cf. Rom 1:15; 2 Cor 10:16; Gal 1:16; Eph 3:8; Lk 1:19; 4:18, 43; Acts 8:4, 12, 25, 35, 40; 16:10.

According to Avery Dulles S.J., in his lecture given at Our Lady of the Lake Seminary, Illinois, October 21, 1998, the term “to evangelize” goes back to the Old Testament (Septuagint version), in the historical books, in the Psalms, and in Deutero-Isaiah, describing the herald who runs ahead of the people on their return from Babylon to Jerusalem, proclaiming that Yahweh is triumphing over all his enemies and establishing his kingdom (cf. Is 52:7). Though the Catholic Church since her beginning has been involved in evangelization and missionary activity, she was later more ecclesiastical than evangelical. The importance of “gospel” and “evangelical,” which had been already taken over by the Protestants, just re-entered the Catholic Church in the middle of the twentieth century when the teaching of faith began to have the kerygmatic dynamic, one that emphasized the “good news” of the Gospel. Cf. Avery Dulles S.J., “John Paul II and the New Evangelization,” in “New Evangelization in the Third Millennium,” special issue, *Studia Missionalia* 48 (1999): 165-67.

²⁰ See Acts 1:8. Cf. Acts 28:16

and brought peoples to the presence of God. So zealously going into the world (cf. Mk 16:15), yet not belonging to the world (cf. Jn 15:19), the evangelization has been at times a mission preached with the blood of the martyrs. So enthusiastic about making disciples of all nations (cf. Mt 28:19ff) “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8) there were times the evangelizing mission seemingly more geographical, quantitative and Christianizing rather than situational, qualitative and evangelizing.²¹ The unwanted effects have ever been both the challenges and opportunities for the maturity of the Church.

As an earthly institution in certain place and time the evangelizing mission of the Church is inevitably conditioned and challenged by many peripheral factors, which every so often play a decisive role in changing the mission’s direction, its concepts and approaches. If until the beginning of the twentieth century the missionary activity of the Church was understood mainly “for the salvation of the souls,” after the Second Vatican Council the personal encounter with the good news of Christ and the participation in his paschal mystery for the salvation of the unified body-soul have been emphasized.²² If in the past centuries the evangelization was possible because the number of “the poor in spirit” outweighed the skeptic to listen to the good news of the Church, but in today’s world “modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because

²¹ Until Vatican II the Pontifical Congregation in charge of “the transmission and dissemination of the faith” was named “for the Propagation of the Faith” (Propaganda Fidei), now “for the Evangelization of Peoples.” See “The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples,” *The Holy See*, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cevang/documents/rc_con_cevang_20100524_profile_en.html.

²² Cf. *GS* 14; *FC* 11.

they are witnesses.”²³ If, since the first Gutenberg Bible printed in 1450s, the Church with her paper-based evangelization has successfully proclaimed Christ than ever, as the good news could reach individuals and stay with them for long; nowadays the evangelizing mission is, however, challenged by those people who think that they have already got the good news but, in fact, not yet met Christ, become his disciples, belonged to the Church and have been transformed by him.

In our present times, fading and lacking of faith have become an epidemic, obviously seen in many traditionally Christian countries and inevitably affecting the mission lands. How can the communication of the good news be continued once there are more and more people leaving the Church? How can the missionary activity be possible while members of the faithful community are not convinced of the Christian faith and not yet ready to give an explanation to anyone who may ask them for a reason for their hope (see 1 Pet 3:15)? How can the Lord’s command be realized because of these and other challenges? However, being the mystical Body of the Word-became-flesh,²⁴ the Church possesses in herself the capacity to incarnate into human culture. The Church is certainly aware of every change all around; yet, guided by the Holy Spirit, she will still be the visible bride of the invisible Christ.

1.2. The Demand for a New Evangelization

The demand for a new evangelization in the modern times has begun since the Second Vatican Council, being emphasized by Paul VI, crystallized by John Paul II, and now realized by Benedict XVI through a series of specific initiatives. On

²³ EN 41. See also Paul VI, *Allocution aux membres du Conseil des Laïcs* (October 2, 1974): “L’homme contemporain écoute plus volontiers les témoins que les maîtres, ou s’il écoute les maîtres, c’est parce qu’ils sont des témoins.”

²⁴ Cf. 1 Cor 12:12-31; Col 1:18; 2:18-20; Eph 1:22-23; 3:19; 4:13; Jn 1:14.

September 21, 2010, with his Apostolic Letter in the form of Motu Proprio, *Ubicumque et Semper*, Pope Benedict XVI formally created a new *ad hoc* Dicastery (Department) in the Vatican Curia: the “Pontifical Council for Promotion of the New Evangelization.”²⁵ One month later, on October 24, in his homily at the closing of the Special Assembly of the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops, he announced that “Nova evangelizatio ad christianam fidem tradendam” (The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith) would be the theme of the Ordinary General Assembly to take place in 2012. One year later, with another Apostolic Letter, *Porta Fidei*, issued on October 11, 2011, the Holy Father stepped up his determination to make real the New Evangelization by announcing a Year of Faith, from October 11, 2012 to November 24, 2013, so that together with the fruits of the 2012 Synod the whole Church would have “a time of particular reflection and rediscovery of the faith.”²⁶ Having done all of these, Pope Benedict XVI just wanted to complete the pastoral inheritance that he had received from his predecessors – Popes John XXIII, Paul VI and John Paul II – and what he himself also endorsed since being a cardinal²⁷ and mentioned at the start of his ministry as Successor of Peter.²⁸

New evangelization is the call for each Christian faithful to rediscover and deepen their faith, to re-encounter Christ and truly live in his presence, to be re-evangelized and be converted anew, to actively respond to new cultural challenges

²⁵ In Article 1 §2 we read: “The Council pursues its own ends both by encouraging reflection on topics of the new evangelization, and by identifying and promoting suitable ways and means to accomplish it.”

²⁶ No. 4.

²⁷ Cf. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, “Address to Catechists and Religion Teachers *The New Evangelization: Building the Civilization of Love*,” December 12, 2000, *Eternal Word Television Network*, http://www.ewtn.com/new_evangelization/Ratzinger.htm

²⁸ See Benedict XVI, *Porta Fidei*, 2. Cf. Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI on April 24, 2005

and express the joy of knowing God intelligibly. The spirit of new evangelization is, in fact, not new at all. Jesus could be called the first new evangelizer when he actually knew God, intimately lived with God, and perfectly communicated the good news of God to the people in his times and place. Thus, what can be called “new” of today’s new evangelization is about our actual attitude of faith, the language we use and the manner we have to carry it out: “new in its ardor, in its methods, in its expressions.”²⁹

Today, that call for a new evangelization is directed principally at those who,

though baptized, have drifted away from the Church and live without reference to the Christian life... to help these people encounter the Lord, who alone fills our existence with deep meaning and peace; and to favor the rediscovery of the faith, that source of grace which brings joy and hope to personal, family and social life.³⁰

New evangelization is the time for a new encounter with God. In order to communicate the good news to other people the communicator should be first experiencing and convinced of what she or he is going to say and share. Otherwise, she or he cannot speak convincingly as did Jesus, who taught people “as one having authority, and not as their scribes” (Mt 7:29). Experience of an encounter with Christ is, therefore, needed for both the evangelizer to communicate of the good news and the evangelizee to compellingly believe. The 2012 Synod of Bishops agreed on this and put it at the Proposition 26 as follows:

In order to bring to all people the Good News of Jesus, as required by a New Evangelization, all the parishes and their small communities should be living cells, places to promote the personal and communitarian encounter with Christ.

²⁹ John Paul II, *Discurso a la XIX Asamblea del Consejo Episcopal Latino Americano* (Port-au-Prince, March 9, 1983), III: AAS 75 (1983), 778: “no de re-evangelización, pero sí de una evangelización nueva. Nueva en su ardor, en sus métodos, en su expresión.”

³⁰ Benedict XVI, *Homily for the Eucharistic Celebration for the Solemn Inauguration of the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops* (October 7, 2012).

The heart of evangelization is the communication of Christian experience of an encounter with Jesus Christ – the Word of God. Pope Benedict XVI was quite right when he said: “Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction [...]; it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.”³¹ Thus, evangelizing does not simply mean verbally proclaiming or communicating the good news, but also creating “in every place and time the conditions which lead to this encounter between the person and Jesus Christ.”³² The goal of all evangelization is, therefore, not to Christianize the people following a human plan, but rather, rooted from the joy of an intimate relationship with God, “to create the possibility for this encounter, which is, at one and the same time, intimate, personal, public and communal.”³³

*New evangelization is a time to renew one’s conversion to God.*³⁴ The call for a new evangelization starting off with an invitation to renew an encounter with God is also the call to a new conversion. Indeed, a real encounter with God is a real eye-opener that has the power to transform and transcend one’s life. It is a gift of revelation that helps the faithful uniquely experience how noble and lofty is the vocation of becoming “participants in the divine nature” (2 Pet 1:4). “After this

³¹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* on Christian Love (December 25, 2005), 1.

³² XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris* (May 27, 2012), 18.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Cf. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, *Disciples Called to Witness: The New Evangelization* (Washington DC: United Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2012), 10-11&16, <http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/new-evangelization/upload/Disciples-Called-To-Witness-The-New-Evangelization.pdf>

encounter, everything is different as a result of *metanoia*, that is, the state of conversion strongly urged by Jesus himself (cf. Mk 1:15).”³⁵

As a matter of fact, Jesus’ evangelization is fundamentally a call to conversion: “repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15). Repentance, or *metanoia* (μετάνοια) in Greek, involves a change of heart and mind, that is, admitting one’s own wrongness, coming back to God, listening to God’s word, obeying God’s will, seeing things as God sees, and thinking as God thinks. It is quite true that an encounter with the unlimited holiness and perfection of the one true God, like that of St Paul (cf. Acts 9:3-9), would urge one on changing of mind and continuously coming back to God. Yet, it is true too that one’s openness to God, readily believing and trusting in God, like that of St Peter (cf. Mt 16:16-17), would likewise lead them day by day closer to God. In any case, the communicator of the good news should have an experience of conversion, truly and continuously coming back to God and staying ever new in communion with God. “For one cannot share what one does not have in oneself.”³⁶ Also one cannot ask others to believe what one does not live! Without a doubt, “evangelization and the call to holiness and conversion are intricately bound together.”³⁷

New evangelization is a time to communicate the good news anew. The communicators of the good news in the new times are required to use their initiative to “find adequate ways to help the people of our time to hear the living and eternal

³⁵ Ibid., 19.

³⁶ Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue*, ed. & trans. Suzanne Knoffke O.P., Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 157.

³⁷ XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 24.

Word of the Lord.”³⁸ Indeed, the Church needs to be always up to date and, as Pope John XXIII saw it, *aggiornamento* essentially her task.³⁹ The Good Pope’s intention to modernize the Church and to make her truly manifested as the mystical Incarnation of Christ in the present times was clearly expressed in his apostolic constitution *Humanae Salutis*, calling for the twenty-first Ecumenical Council of the Catholic Church in 1962:

This will be a demonstration of the Church, always living and always young, which feels the rhythm of the times and which in every century beautifies herself with new splendor, radiates new light, achieves new conquests, while remaining identical in herself, faithful to the divine image impressed on her countenance by her Spouse, who loves her and protects her, Christ Jesus.”⁴⁰

Thanks to such openness to the Spirit, the Second Vatican Council has successfully made the Church accessible to the world and, with its sixteen important documents, laid a strong foundation for the dynamic of faith in the Church as well as her vital role in the world today.

The modern world is, however, moving too fast. With rapid economic growth, transport and infrastructure improvements, advances in technologies and communications, there emerge serious phenomena of cultural change or radical transformation of culture: new stereotypes of homogeneous visual and instant sub-culture are always ready to attract people than the traditionally profound cultures. This matter of fact has been deeply affecting a person’s perception of self and the

³⁸ Pope Benedict XVI, *Ubicumque et Semper* (September 21, 2010).

³⁹ Cf. John XXIII, *Allocuzione con la quale il Sommo Pontefice annuncia il Sinodo Romano, il Concilio Ecumenico e l’aggiornamento del Codice di diritto Canonico* (January 25, 1959) and Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam* (August 6, 1964), 50.

⁴⁰ John XXIII, *Humanae Salutis* (December 25, 1961), in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott S.J. (Racine, WI: Western Printing and Lithographing, 1966), 706.

world and, consequently, their beliefs in God.⁴¹ Amid the changing circumstances of today's life, faithful communicators of the good news are again encouraged to read "the signs of the times in the world that impacts the ministry of the Church and in the different particular Churches in their proper territories."⁴² In the words of Blessed Pope John Paul II, we need a new evangelization in which the good news is communicated with new ardor, new method and new expression.

1.3. The Sign of the Present Time

"You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time?" (Lk 12:56) Jesus criticized the Pharisees for their lack of faith. Here "the present time" (καιρός) to which Jesus referred is definitely not the ordinary time in chronological order (χρόνος), but rather the extraordinary occasion of an encounter with Christ, in whose kingdom ministry God's key moment of salvation history is present.⁴³ Thus, what Jesus meant to tell the Pharisees is that if they could read the natural signs, they should have been able to use their heart and mind to recognize the transcendental presence of God too. Could these words of Jesus be hermeneutically understood for us today?

There may be no better time to appreciate the presence of God (καιρός) in the times (χρόνος) than at the present time, when the fulfillment of God, according to Mark 1:15, is "virtually present."⁴⁴ The presence of God in the present time may not necessarily be accompanied with a miraculous sign from heaven (see Mt 16:3), for

⁴¹ Cf. XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris*, n. 6

⁴² Id., *Final List of Propositions*, 5.

⁴³ See Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland Murphy, eds., "The Gospel According to Luke," in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (New Delhi: Prentice Hall, 1990), 705.

⁴⁴ John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 2 of *Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 71.

God-self is certainly identified with the time. It would be very challenging yet an opportune time.⁴⁵ The recognition of God in the present time implies both “a total transformation of relationships” (cf. Rom 13:11-13)⁴⁶ and the redemption of the time (cf. Col 4:5; Eph 5:15-16).⁴⁷ God has become human and dwelt among us (cf. Jn 1:14), God is also “the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev 1:8; cf. 22:13), God is always present in the times. Moreover, according to St Paul, Christians has the ability to recognize the opportune time and fulfill its command (cf. Gal 6:10). Can we today with the eye of faith and the talent given be able to interpret the signs of God’s presence in the times and, accordingly, make the most of the time?

In actual fact, *the Church is at all times making the most of the opportunity to live in the presence of God.* Living her evangelizing nature, the Church has considered herself always having “the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.”⁴⁸ This duty has been carried out differently in different times though. The prevalent understanding and practice of it in the life of the Church today is, however, owing to Pope John XXIII when he convoked the Second Vatican Council, urging the Church, while looking for a new Pentecost, to assume “the recommendation of Jesus that one should know how to distinguish the ‘signs of the times’ (Mt 16:3).” Here, the signs of the times that the

⁴⁵ Within the context of this thesis the eschatological concepts of *καιρὸς* related to the end time and judgment are not discussed, rather the future vision of the last days will be seen at the present time when one simply recognizes the signs of God’s presence. For further meanings of *καιρὸς*, see Gerhard Kittel and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, eds., *TDNT*, 8th ed., trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (1965; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1966), 3:455-64.

⁴⁶ See Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, vol. 6 of *Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 398.

⁴⁷ In Greek “ἐξαγοραζόμενοι τὸν καιρὸν” literally means “redeeming the time,” rendered by New Revised Standard Version as “making the most of the time,” by New American Bible as “making the most of the opportunity.”

⁴⁸ *GS* 4; cf. *GS* 44.

Pope wanted to interpret were the signs of a “crisis under way within society” and a “weakening in the inspiration towards the values of the spirit” at that time.⁴⁹

The Second Vatican Council’s attempt to read the signs of the times among the crisis has indeed paved the way for the Church to communicate with the world outside and to move herself forwards. Appeared in several conciliar documents,⁵⁰ the phrase “the signs of the times” and its similar expressions mainly refer to phenomena of the then contemporary world in regard to civil and human rights, freedom, equality, justice and peace. It is, nevertheless, in front of “a number of particularly urgent needs characterizing the present age, needs which go to the roots of the human race,” (*GS* 46) when the People of God, led by the Spirit and motivated by true faith, endeavor to “decipher authentic signs of God’s presence and purpose” (*GS* 11) the eschatological meaning of the extraordinary and opportune time (καιρός) has again manifested.

Indeed, the ability to “hear, distinguish and interpret the many voices of our age” (*GS* 44) and to recognize God’s presence in any social-cultural phenomena would help the Church to make the most of it, continuously renew herself and move closer to communion with God. Because God “wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth” (1 Tim 2:4) and sends the Spirit of truth to guide all to all truth (cf. Jn 16:13), though the Church is living in the time of advanced communications technologies and significant changes the recommendation of Jesus regarding the reading of the signs of the times (cf. Mt 16:3; Lk 12:56) remain unchanged but needed for one’s ongoing conversion to God.

⁴⁹ See John XXIII, *Humanae Salutis* (December 25, 1961), in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott S.J. (Racine, WI: Western Printing and Lithographing, 1966), 703-4.

⁵⁰ See *SC* 43; *UR* 4; *AA* 14; *DH* 15; *PO* 9; *GS* 4.

As the Spirit helped the prophets of old to see the divine plan in the signs of their times, so today the Spirit helps the Church interpret the signs of our times and carry out its prophetic tasks, among which the study, evaluation, and right use of communications technology and the media of social communications are now fundamental.⁵¹

One of the signs tremendously affecting the world's order today is the rise of new, digital media. A research in 2011 indicated that the Britons spent up to twelve hours a day looking at screens, especially among those who regularly “multi-screened,” using several pieces of technology at the same time.⁵² A similar trend also happened in America in 2010 when young people, ages 8 to 18, averaged seven-and-a-half hours a day, seven days a week, engaging with media; that number even jumped up to more than ten hours a day when they were using more than one form of media at a time.⁵³ The figures speak for themselves! A question if posed for us Christians is: how shall we interpret this new sign in the present time?

New digital media and social networks have brought about a new world order, in which more people are leaving their physical world and entering in the virtual one. Advanced web and mobile technologies have allowed two-way communication and been able to include millions of people interacting and staying connected online. New internet-based gadgets, applications and platforms are coming out almost every single day. Ideas and images are so readily available and rapidly sent and received. More barriers are removed, more information shared. More people spend more time in front of screens. Our world becomes digitized. Our culture has been radically redefined.

⁵¹ AN 22.

⁵² Cf. Daily Mail Reporter, “Square-Eyed Britain: We Spend Average of 12 Hours a Day Looking at Screens,” *Daily Mail (London)*, May 27, 2011, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1391417/Square-eyed-Britain-We-spend-average-12-hours-day-looking-screens.html>.

⁵³ Cf. Victoria J. Rideout, Ulla G. Foehr, and Donald F. Roberts, *Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8-to 18-Year-Olds* (CA: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010), <http://kaiserfamilyfoundation.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/8010.pdf>.

SOCIAL MEDIA LANDSCAPE 2013



Source: <http://www.fredcavazza.net/>

Digital social networking has been spreading around the world with incredible speed. The “new *agora*,” so called by Pope Benedict XVI, each also sees its population constantly soaring. A close look at some of them should be worth a think:⁵⁴

⁵⁴ If these virtual communities were countries, they would be ranked among the most populous. Cf. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, “World Population Prospects, the 2010 Revision,” *United Nations*, October 22, 2010, http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Sorting-Tables/tab-sorting_population.htm.

- Facebook, launched in 2004, until March 2013 averaged 665 million daily and 1.11 billion monthly active users.⁵⁵
- Google+, launched in 2011, until December 2012 engaged 343 million active users, overtaking 280 million for YouTube, becoming the second largest social network.⁵⁶
- YouTube, founded in 2005, now boasts over 4 billion hours of video watched each month and 72 hours of video uploaded every minute.⁵⁷
- Twitter, launched in 2006, until March 2013 had well over 200 million active users creating over 400 million Tweets (characters) each day.⁵⁸

Internet usage is noticed sky-rocketing in Asia, making it “one of the fastest-growing social media regions in the world.”⁵⁹ Indeed, according to Internet World Stats, up to June 30, 2012, the internet penetration rates in Hong Kong – 5,329,372 users of the population of 7,153,519 (c74.5%) – and in Macao – 366,510 users of the population of 578,025 (c63.4%) – were among the highest in the world,⁶⁰ making these societies digitally defined and the traditional lifestyles obviously revised.

In a world infused with new media of communication, new generations are born and known as “digital natives.” Older generations, if they want to communicate with the younger, have to adapt themselves and migrate into a totally different world of

⁵⁵ See “Facebook Reports First Quarter 2013 Results,” *Facebook*, <http://investor.fb.com/releasedetail.cfm?ReleaseID=761090>.

⁵⁶ See Anthony Kosner, “Watch Out Facebook, with Google+ at #2 and YouTube at #3,” *Forbes*, January 26, 2013, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/anthonykosner/2013/01/26/watch-out-facebook-with-google-at-2-and-youtube-at-3-google-inc-could-catch-up/>.

⁵⁷ See “Statistics,” *YouTube*, <http://www.youtube.com/yt/press/statistics.html>.

⁵⁸ See “Celebrating #Twitter 7,” *Twitter Blog*, March 21, 2013, <https://blog.twitter.com/2013/celebrating-twitter7>.

⁵⁹ See “Global Trends in Social Media,” *In Asia*, The Asia Foundation, April 10, 2013, <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2013/04/10/global-trends-in-social-media-an-interview-with-blogger-beth-kanter/>.

⁶⁰ See Miniwatts Marketing Group, “Asia Internet Use, Population Data and Facebook Statistics,” *Internet World Stats*, June 30, 2012, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats3.htm#asia>. Cf. “Personal Computer and Internet Penetration,” in *Thematic Household Survey Report No. 50* (Hong Kong: Census and Statistics Department, 2013), 10, 145-47, <http://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B11302502013XXXXB0100.pdf>.

culture, behavior and language. They become “digital immigrants.”⁶¹ New challenges, however, can turn out to be new opportunities for living our same vocation of communication of the good news, if we are able to recognize and interpret the signs of the times, or the *kairos* in the crisis.

New media must be for the New Evangelization. “The Church would feel guilty before the Lord if she did not utilize these powerful means that human skill is daily rendering more perfect.”⁶² This saying of Pope Paul VI still has a strong resonance in the reality of our world today.

As a matter of fact, since the beginning of the modern times the Church has already regarded the signs of communication media as the “gifts of God.”⁶³ No sooner had the Second Vatican Council started than the Church invited her children to “join, without delay and with the greatest effort in a common work, to make effective use of the media of social communication in various apostolic endeavors, as circumstances and conditions demand.”⁶⁴ Two years after the Council the Church could hardly wait to celebrate the first World Communications Day (May 7, 1967). Since then the Church observes such celebration yearly in an attempt to continuously contemplate that sign of the times. The Church sees it “difficult to suggest that Christ’s command was being obeyed unless all the opportunities offered by the modern media to extend to vast numbers of people the announcement of his Good News were being used.”⁶⁵

⁶¹ Cf. Marc Prensky, “Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 1,” *On the Horizon* 9, no. 5 (October 2001): 1-6, <http://www.marcprensky.com/writing/prensky%20-%20digital%20natives,%20digital%20immigrants%20-%20part1.pdf>.

⁶² *EN* 45.

⁶³ Cf. Pius XII, *Miranda Prorsus* (September 8, 1957). Also cf. *CP* 2.

⁶⁴ *IM* 13.

⁶⁵ *CP* 126.

The attitude of the Church towards new media as a whole is positive. It is because the Church realizes that our times 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.”⁶⁶ Moreover, as the digital world fashioned by new media is aptly considered the “first *Areopagus* of the modern age,”⁶⁷ there new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology are available for “the Church’s program of re-evangelization and new evangelization in the contemporary world.”⁶⁸

The new media is definitely the right tool for the communication of the good news with new ardor, new expression and new method. In such new missionary environment today’s Christian faithful are encouraged to “set sail on the digital sea, facing into the deep with the same passion that has governed the ship of the Church for two thousand years.”⁶⁹ There they can conveniently fulfill what the Church taught them roughly fifty years ago: “be fully acquainted with the present condition of the Church in the world” and “hear the voice of the multitudes who cry ‘Help us!’ (cf. Acts 16:9)”⁷⁰ Yet, in order to be able to carry the mission out successfully “it is necessary that convinced Christians be formed, prepared and made capable to transmit faithfully the content of the faith and of Christian morality.”⁷¹

⁶⁶ EN 45

⁶⁷ Cf. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (December 7, 1990), 37c.

⁶⁸ Cf. AN 11.

⁶⁹ Vatican Radio, “Pope Asks Bloggers to Give Internet a Soul,” *Vatican Radio*, April 24, 2010, http://en.radiovaticana.va/storico/2010/04/24/pope_asks_bloggers_to_give_internet_a_soul/en1-374892.

⁷⁰ AG 36.

⁷¹ XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Final List of Propositions*, 18.

CHAPTER II

THE PRESENCE OF GOD IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Christians believe that God is immanent, present in all things by God's essence, "inasmuch as He is present to all as the cause of their being."⁷² As a matter of fact, God's name revealed in Exodus (3:14) – "I am who I am"⁷³ – tells us that God is being in God-self and the presence of God cannot be confined by anyone to any time and space. The presence of God, though invisible, is revealed and communicated via representation of God in Creation, helping those who long for God to recognize God.

The ability to recognize God's presence in the world certainly helps humans to better understand themselves. They know that they are just "little less than a god" (Ps 8:6) because they were created after God's image and likeness (cf. Gen 1:26-27). They know that they are given with certain capacity outweighing all other creatures, for God enables them "to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors."⁷⁴ The challenge is that, are humans ready to recognize the presence of God in their lives, to enter in a relationship with God and to live as they are destined to be?

⁷² ST I-8.3, *New Advent*, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1008.htm>.

⁷³ When Moses asked for God's name, God simply answered: *ehyeh-asher-ehyeh* (Hebrew: אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה), i.e. "I will be what I will be" or "I am that I am." For the name of God is considered ineffable, derived from the root of the name given to Moses (to be) the tetragrammaton YHWH (he who is) was invented and treated as a mysterious name of God. Cf. "Names of G-d: YHVH," *Hebrew for Christians*, http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Names_of_G-d/YHVH/yhvh.html.

⁷⁴ CCC 307

That humanity shares the creative power of God has brought about many wonderful inventions that could even change the course of history. Some of such historic inventions are the “new media” – new forms of social communication, compared with the old ones, which allow on-demand connectivity and interactivity via internet or digital network. New media has shaped the 21st century’s culture and made today’s world become more and more digitized. God who, as dictated by our faith, is present everywhere is, of course, present in the digital world. God is the very author of the authors of any digital devices, at the least!

Yet, how can we possibly “meet” God in it? And, what are the implications of meeting God in the digital world? Right answers to these questions would help us, I suppose, to obtain the profound meanings and significance of new media at the present time, and thus to shed light on their relevance to today’s demand for a new evangelization. I attempt to do so by first reviewing literature on the theological nature of God as self-communication, which I consider identical with God’s presence. From these insights, I will then, relating to our own experience of living in the digital world, discuss the possibilities to “meet” God’s transcendental presence there and to communicate with God via the representation of God in the digital world. How we can respond to God’s invitation, as a direct consequence of meeting God’s presence, to evangelize the digital world and to communicate God to digital citizens is the third point of my discussions in this chapter. On the whole, this chapter is to put into practice the teachings of the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World: scrutinizing the signs of the times (see *GS 4*), hearing the many voices of our age (see *GS 44*), and penetrating the [digital] world with a Christian spirit (see *GS 43*). As such a new evangelization would then be realized.

2.1. God's Presence as God's Self-Communication

God is holy and transcendental. The mystery of God is incomprehensible and beyond the limits of human knowledge. Yet, out of God's overflowing love, God has revealed and communicated God-self to all the creatures so that the finite human beings, out of their infinite yearning for God, can be able to experience the presence of God in their life and thus enter into a relationship with God. Self-communication is, in fact, the nature of God, as Karl Rahner sees it.

God wishes to communicate himself, to pour forth the love which he himself is. This is the first and last of his real plans and hence of his real world, too. Everything else exists so that this one thing might be: the eternal miracle of infinite Love.⁷⁵

Just as love – one of many transcendental characteristics of God (cf. 1 Jn 4: 8, 16) and a quality within human experience – cannot remain alone with itself, it needs to manifest in a relationship, through which it can make known and receive responses; so does God. God has been communicating God-self through the world and everything in it (cf. Acts 17:24), especially by means of humanity, who are given an extraordinary capacity to discern God and to enter in a relationship with God.

And so God makes a creature whom he can love: he creates man. He creates him in such a way that he can receive this Love which is God himself, and that he can and must at the same time accept it for what it is: the ever astounding wonder, the unexpected, the unexacted gift. [...] Thus in this second respect God must so create man that love does not only pour forth free and unexacted, but also so that man as real partner, as one who can accept or reject it, can experience and accept it as the unexacted event and wonder not owed to him, the real man.⁷⁶

God's self-communication is undeniably the result of a loving relationship between the Creator and creature, from which God's presence is realized and

⁷⁵ Karl Rahner S.J., *God, Christ, Mary, and Grace*, U.S. Edition., trans. Cornelius Ernst O.P., vol. 1 of *Theological Investigations* [Schriften zur Theologie] (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1961), 310.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 310-11.

maintained. The self-communication of God is, for Karl Rahner, ontological, transcendental and historical. On the one hand, Christians can transcendently experience the presence of God and accordingly respond to it; on the other hand, that experience of the faith handed down by historical beings requires a right interpretation in the light of the Christian Tradition.⁷⁷ As such, in order to appreciate the presence of God's love in the digital world, which is also the "cause" and "effect" of God's self-communication and relation with humanity, I would begin by building grounds for my discussion based on our Christian beliefs in the mystery (θεολογία) and the works (οἰκονομία) of the Triune God.⁷⁸ A good grasp of God's essence and nature expressed by the act of self-communication would help us to better realize the transcendental presence of God in the present time, particularly in the digital world, and so properly respond to the vocation that God may have for us according to our given resources.

As the Trinity, God's self-communication is first of all communitarian. The Christian belief in God as Three-in-One is as old as Christianity itself. It is "the central mystery of the Christian faith and of Christian life [that] God alone can make it known to us by revealing himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit [-] the Most Holy Trinity."⁷⁹ Though the word "Trinity" is not explicitly mentioned in the Bible, there are some biblical hints leading to Christian doctrine of the Trinity and useful for our studies of the self-communicating nature of Christians' God.

⁷⁷ Cf. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* [Grundkurs des Glaubens: Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums], English., trans. William V. Dych (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), 116-17.

⁷⁸ Cf. CCC 236: "Through the *oikonomia* the *theologia* is revealed to us; but conversely, the *theologia* illuminates the whole *oikonomia*. God's works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works. So it is, analogously, among human persons. A person discloses himself in his actions, and the better we know a person, the better we understand his actions."

⁷⁹ CCC 261

Right in the beginning of the Bible, the three modes of being⁸⁰ – God the Creator without origin, God’s word and the spirit of God – already existed, related and communicated to each other as one. The very first sentence of the Bible reflects the belief in the majesty of divine plurality united in one single God-head: “In the beginning, God (*Elohim*) created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). Here, unique to Hebrew language, the word *Elohim* (אֱלֹהִים), masculine plural form of *El* (אֵל) or of *Eloah* (אֱלֹהַ) – god, is used with the singular verb form *bara* (בָּרָא) – he created.⁸¹ *Elohim* is therefore not rendered as gods, but God – the one true God of Israel. God is internally plural, yet externally single. But, how plural is God? As we continue reading to verse 3, we will see that, while *bara* – the exclusive action of God’s powerful creation – was done by means of God’s word – a voice, “the spirit of God swept over the face of the waters.” God appears at the same time in three creative beings and altogether acts at once. This eternal Trinitarian community of God again manifests its unity in verse 26, “Let *us* make humankind in *our* image, according to *our* likeness,” where the plural personal pronouns of *Elohim* are used. God wants to multiply God-self, still God is present as one and only in one community (cf. Ex 20:3; Dt 6:4).

The perfect communion of the Three indicates an intimate relationship and effective communication within the Trinitarian community. God’s nature is almighty and powerful, yet relational and communicatory. This expresses through another name of God in the second story of creation (cf. Gen 2:7): YHWH (יְהוָה) – he who is,

⁸⁰ I borrow these words from Karl Barth for it is quite suitable in this context, unnecessarily understood for now as the mode of the Father, the mode of the Son and the mode of the Holy Spirit. Cf. Karl Barth, “The Revelation of God,” in *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley, vol. 1, of *Church Dogmatics* (London: T&T Clark Int’l, 2004), 355.

⁸¹ Cf. Horst D. Preuss, “The Appellations of God,” in *The Experience of God*, English., trans. Leo G. Perdue, vol. 1 of *Old Testament Theology* [Theologie des Alten Testaments] (Louisville, KY: T&T Clark, 1995), 146-51.

who exists.⁸² The closeness of God by being ever present and concerned about humanity (cf. Ex 3:14, 16) suggests that God want to establish relationship and stay in communication with those who are aware of God's presence. The inner relational and communicatory nature of God is even clearly stated in the New Testament, not least in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (1:1) – the origin of the Word begins with God; that "whoever has seen me has seen the Father" for "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (14:9-10) discloses how close this interpersonal relationship is; actually, "the Father and I are one" (10:30) and they are Trinity in communion at work, "when the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father, he will testify on my behalf" (15:26).

Trinitarian, immanent, interpersonal and communicatory is the eternal nature of God. These and similar attributes that human beings can contemplate are but few among many profound characteristics of God's self-communication *ad intra*. Yet they are sufficient to serve as explanations why God cannot stay within God-self but needs to flow out, to communicate *ad extra*, and to make God-self ever present in reality, through Creation, physical representation and media. The inner communication of the Trinitarian community to God decides the outer communication of God.

In Himself He does not will to exist for Himself, to exist alone. On the contrary, He is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and therefore alive in His unique being with and for and in another. The unbroken unity of His being, knowledge and will is at the same time an act of deliberation, decision and intercourse. He does not exist in solitude but in fellowship. Therefore what He seeks and creates between Himself and us is in fact nothing else but what He wills and completes and therefore is in Himself.⁸³

⁸² Cf. See footnote 73 in page 26.

⁸³ Karl Barth, "The Reality of God," in *The Doctrine of God*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. T. H. L. Parker and J. L. M. Haire, vol. 2, of *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2000), 275.

God is self-communication definitely (cf. Ex 3:14; Jn 1:1). God's communication manifests itself through all means of representation, viz. through Creation (cf. Ps 136) and through words and deeds of the prophets in the Old Testament (e.g. Moses in Ex 34; Hos 1-3). "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (Gal 4:4), who by his whole life definitively communicated all the loving nature of God flowing from the Trinitarian community and the nature of humanity as God's children (see Gal 4:5-7). That Son of God was the Word made flesh (cf. Jn 1:14), called Emmanuel, which means, "God is with us" (Mt 1:23), which fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah (cf. 7:14). That Son of God was born into a culture, living and growing up like anyone of his contemporaries, "after eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus" (Lk 2:21).

The Word incarnate in Jesus is the highest and unsurpassable point of God's self-communication and presence in the history of salvation. In the person of Jesus God's word of love and life has become fully visible and personal to humanity: "He is the image of the invisible God, [...] for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (Col 1:15-20). In the person of Jesus people can see the exact imprint of God's very being (see Heb 1: 3a) present in their own culture, locale and time. *In the person of Jesus God's self-communication is characterized as inculturation.*

Through His 'incarnation,' He utterly identified Himself with those who were to receive His communication and He gave His message not only in words but in the whole manner of His life. He spoke from within, that is to say, from out of the press of His people. He preached the Divine message without fear or compromise. He adjusted to His people's way of talking and to their patterns of thought, and spoke out of the predicament of their time.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ CP 11.

Though Jesus was the perfect communication medium between God and humanity, God’s self-communication could not be appreciated by his contemporary good will without the divine inspiration of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, existing from the very beginning of the Creation as a wind,⁸⁵ together with God the Father, “from whom all things are,” and God the Son, “through whom all things are,” is one and the same God, “in whom all things are.”⁸⁶ The faith that the Spirit – “the breath of life” (Gen 2: 7) – is acting as the medium “in whom the inscrutable Triune God communicates himself to human beings” has been experienced and proclaimed by the Church since the earliest centuries of Christianity.⁸⁷ For “all scripture is inspired” (θεόπνευστος: God-breathed) (2 Tim 3:16), we can thus find sufficient biblical data proving the inspirational dimension of God’s self-communication to humanity, viz.

- The self-communication and presence of God on earth are possible because of the divine inspiration: “When you send forth *your breath* (רֹּחַ·חַיָּהוּ, רֹחַ), they are created; and you renew the face of the ground” (Ps 104:30);
- The Word incarnate – the inculturation of God’s self-communication in the world – is conceived “from the Holy Spirit” (ἐκ πνεύματός) (Mt 1:20);
- Only “filled with the power of the Spirit” (πνεύματος) could Jesus begin to work and communicate the Word of God to the world (Lk 4:14-15);
- Only “filled with the Holy Spirit” (πνεύματος ἁγίου) could the first disciples in Jerusalem begin to “speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” and go on communicating the Good News of Jesus (Acts 2);

Obviously, without the medium of the Holy Spirit, God’s self-communication *ad extra* would be impossible and, vice versa, human beings without the divine inspiration unable to perceive and receive the Word of God. Admitted the importance

⁸⁵ *Ruach* in Hebrew (רוּחַ) or *Pneuma* in Greek (πνεῦμα) literally means wind, breath, spirit – the principle that animates life – biblically understood as the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity.

⁸⁶ See CCC 258: Council of Constantinople II: Denzinger-Schonmetzer 421.

⁸⁷ See John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem* (May 18, 1986), 1.

of the presence of the Spirit for the mission of the Church, Pope Paul VI treats the issue especially at length in his exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (75):

Evangelization will never be possible without the action of the Holy Spirit... The techniques of evangelization are good, but not even the most perfect ones could substitute the discrete action of the Spirit. Even the most refined preparation of the evangelizer, cannot work without him. Without him the most convincing dialectic is impotent on the spirit of men. Without him, the most elaborate sociologically or psychologically based schemes are revealed as empty and without value.

God out of love and natural mechanism to manifest God-self does not only make revelation in Creation and through the Incarnation, but also send forth the Spirit into it. Whether or not one is inspired to perceive the Revealed, it depends on whether or not one actually exercises his or her innate “image and likeness” of God by working with the Revealing.⁸⁸ As a matter of fact in the course of human history, the collaboration with the Spirit has always inspired people to interpret things correctly and to perform their work perfectly “under the influence of God” (2 Pet 1:21), the Revealer. *The Holy Spirit is indeed the must facilitator of any communication.*

2.2. Meeting God’s Presence in the Digital World

To appreciate the presence of God in the natural world seems easier than to do so in the digital world, for the latter, though no less wonderful, is obviously the fruit of human ingenuity. Nevertheless, Christians, with thoughtful approach and through the lens of faith, can still see God’s presence behind the work of human hands: for them, “men of talent, especially in the present era, have made [the wonderful technological discoveries of media of social communication] with God’s help.”⁸⁹ The

⁸⁸ Karl Barth sees the Trinity as the Revealer, the Revealing and the Revealed. Cf. Karl Barth, “The Word of God as the Criterion of Dogmatics,” in *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, trans. G.W. Bromiley, vol. 1, of *Church Dogmatics* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 172.

⁸⁹ *IM* 1.

Catechism of the Catholic Church (301) clearly affirms that God at every moment “upholds and sustains them in being, enables them to act and brings them to their final end.” Indeed, as discussed earlier in this chapter, God, out of love and desire to self-communicate with humanity, has always aided them with the divine creativity so that humans, with the given capacity and out of the deep desire for communion with each other and ultimately with God,⁹⁰ can endlessly discover new technologies and create new media facilitating their communication on this earthly journey. As God is always present in the medium of humanity, through whose creative activities God has communicated God’s self, definitely is God present in humanity’s communication too, for through whose activities and media of communication, like present-day digital networks, God will have even more media for self-communication.

The digital world, or the world of those using digital gadgets and “smart” devices, offers “a new agora, an open public square,”⁹¹ for meeting with God in a new way. Besides the transcendental experience of God by faith, which similarly takes place anywhere any time, the “physical” meeting with God in the digital world mainly takes place on the screen, where people can conveniently search for God. For the faithful, the findings of God in the digital world would certainly help to deepen their relationship with God. These communication media have greatly enriched their religious lives: “They carry news and information about religious events, ideas, and personalities; they serve as vehicles for evangelization and catechesis. Day in and day out, they provide inspiration, encouragement, and opportunities for worship to persons confined to their homes or to institutions.”⁹² The presence of God in the

⁹⁰ Cf. CCC 30: St Augustine, *Confessions*, I,1,1, <http://newadvent.org/fathers/110101.htm>

⁹¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Message for the 47th World Communications Day* (January 24, 2013).

⁹² Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *Ethics in Communications* (June 4, 2000), 11.

digital world through meaningful activities of the faithful also conveniently offers spiritual seekers certain opportunities to encounter the Truth, the Way, the Life (cf. Jn 14:6) and to be converted. From the perspective of new evangelization, the presence of God in the digital world through images and resources could be so vivid and engaging that non-practice-Christians would be constantly reminded and thus feel called going back to church.

[The Lord] encounters us ever anew, in the men and women who reflect his presence [...] we experience the love of God, we perceive his presence and we thus learn to recognize that presence in our daily lives.⁹³

Meeting God in the digital world, intentionally or accidentally, is both immediacy and uncertainty. It is, however, an extraordinary experience that one could have with the Divinity in the digital age. It could take place anywhere, any time by anyone using a digital gadget. In the eyes of a new evangelization, the meeting of God's presence in the digital world could happen to three groups of media users: those faithful surfing for God and the Truth, those by chance encountering the Way of Christ, and those lapsing inspired to live a new Life in Christ. This means that any possibility may occur to one in the digital world: from googling to encountering the Truth, from blogging to logging into the Way, from chatting online to engaging in Life. Some typical real-life examples will be mentioned as case studies.

As people google for answers to the questions they have, they may encounter God. It is true that the Lord stands at the door and knocks (cf. Rev 3:20) and if we seek the Lord with all our heart and soul we will find him (cf. Dt 4:29); it is seemingly truer and quicker if we do so in the digital world through a search engine, like Google: Simply enter "God" into Google, for instance, within 0.24 second we

⁹³ Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (December 25, 2005), 17.

will have more than 900 million results; or, “Jesus,” in 0.25 second with more than 500 million results.⁹⁴ The digital world is undeniably an ideal resource of information that conveniently facilitates the faithful’s desire to reach the Truth and grow in faith.

It offers people direct and immediate access to important religious and spiritual resources – great libraries and museums and 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 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.⁹⁵

There are a great many official websites providing Church’s teachings and news, theological studies and spiritual reflections, pastoral care and faith activities. Most of them nowadays are user-friendly, accessible through various digital applications and followed on numerous social media, conveniently and effectively helping the faithful to encounter the Truth of God. Some examples of which I have been making use are www.vatican.va, www.newadvent.org, www.ewtn.com.

The digital world is, however, a world also shared by many other free wills, those who are not able to recognize or are even against God. As the faithful are googling for God on the internet, or getting live web feeds of God-relevant information, or opening to comments about this topic, very often they have to encounter unwanted messages challenging their beliefs. Yet, challenges can turn out to be opportunities for Christians to grow in faith. It is the testing of faith in the digital world, the testing that, according to St James, produces endurance helping the faithful to “be mature and complete, lacking in nothing” (1:3-4). In the digital world these challenges may be easily overcome if one takes time to google again for sound

⁹⁴ This experiment was done on June 6, 2013.

⁹⁵ Pontifical Council for Social Communications, *The Church and Internet* (February 22, 2002), 5.

answers from online Catholic apologetics. Called to Communion (<http://www.calledtocommunion.com/>), Catholic Answers (www.Catholic.com), and Word on Fire (www.WordOnFire.org) are among the best informational resources that I have known. Very timely they address the prejudices against Catholic faith and effectively present the Christian Truth.

On a personal level, blogging has now become an online fashion. Blog, or “web log,” is an “interactive website” that allows users to regularly add articles in reverse chronological order. Authoring a blog, maintaining one and adding an article to an existing blog is called “blogging.” Individual articles on a blog are called “blog posts,” “posts,” or “entries.” A person who posts these entries is called “blogger.” RSS, or “rich site summary,” is an application allowing the blog to frequently publish and receive updated works from other blogs or websites.⁹⁶ People use blog to stay connected, to share or express personal opinions, to keep a diary, to make friends or even to promote a brand. All is done just in real time. Logging in a blog also means logging in a digital world of friends and information. There one may meet many others, known and unknown, and discover many new things. Blog in a broader sense also refers to any platform of social media that one can daily “blog.” It is in such platforms as Facebook, Twitter, WordPress and so forth, people, while busy doing their own activities, may happen to meet God through some persons or information, be inspired and engaged to the Way, and finally feel convinced to convert.

Stories of a fateful encounter with God when one is doing something else rather than seeking God are not particularly rare in the salvation history. Moses met God through a burning bush while he was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, and

⁹⁶ Cf. Alex Newson, Deryck Houghton, and Justin Patten, *Blogging and Other Social Media* (Aldershot, Hants, England.: Gower, 2008), 3-16. Also cf. “Blog,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>; “RSS,” <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS>.

became God's partner in the salvation of Israel (cf. Ex 3ff). Saul met God when he was persecuting the Way, and became the great evangelizer Paul (cf. Acts 9:1-9; 22:3-16; 26:2-18). St Augustine of Hippo, Blessed John Henry Newman, Thomas Merton and so on, though living in different times and places they all met the Way on their ordinary ways. These stories also happen in today's digital world. Jennifer Fulwiler, who became Catholic in 2007 after a life of atheism, met the Way leading to the Truth of God when she was blogging and connecting with some Christian bloggers. Now, being a Catholic she joins in with other active Catholics sharing her conversion experience, faith and joy online at Conversion Diary (www.ConversionDiary.com).⁹⁷ The witnesses of those converted to the Way of Christ are the most eloquent testimonies to the vivid presence of God. By sharing such testimonies in the digital world bloggers have transformed their individual conversions into a communal experience and thus helped to deepen the faith of many others. Stories of media users being logged into the Way shared at Why I'm Catholic (www.WhyImCatholic.com) or The Journey Home (<http://www.ewtn.com/tv/live/journeyhome.asp>) are well worth thinking. *When blogging people may be called to log into the Way of Christ.*

It does not take much time and effort for one to meet a sign of God in the digital world. This may happen to those, while chatting online, one day encountering a status line like "I'm praying" or a display image showing a religious picture or icon. Pausing for a moment, one unavoidably thinks of God through such status line or display image. As video calling and chatting are on the rise, especially among the young

⁹⁷ Cf. Jennifer Fulwiler, "Into the Light: Sharing the Spiritual Journey," in *The Church and New Media: Blogging Converts, Online Activists, and Bishops Who Tweet*, ed. Brandon Vogt (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2011), 45-56.

adults and mobile phone users,⁹⁸ one of the easiest ways to profess the faith as well as to remind today's lapsed Catholics of the presence of God is, therefore, to leave such status lines or display images online. Ideally, being open to queries and ready for live chat, like that of personalized marketing, would timely revive the presence of God in the inquirer. Actually, an increase in instant communication is a sign indicating that today's people are even thirstier for communion in life.

The fact that the basic human desire to love and to be loved, and to find meaning and truth – a desire which God himself has placed in the heart of every man and woman – keeps our contemporaries ever open to what Blessed Cardinal Newman called the “kindly light” of faith.⁹⁹

On the outlook for different way to reach out to the students and have them in turn become evangelizers, Cardinal Sean O'Malley cited an example of one priest in his Archdiocese of Boston: “At the beginning of mass, he will tell the students to take out their iPhones and to go to their Facebook and mark on there that they're at Mass and then turn their phones off.” So students had the chance to tell their friends about their faith and the fact that they went to church.¹⁰⁰ The constant reminder of the Catholic faith and the ever lively update of one's faith activities through simple signs in a chat forum of social media as such would certainly help to keep God ever present in the followers participating in those networks. An individual work of a lay initiative that could draw more than 438,000 Likes, i.e. Followers, like The Catholic Church facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/TheCatholicChurch>) is really worthy of note. Many of those inspired a bit more to chat about faith topics may log in the Catholic

⁹⁸ Cf. Elias Shams, “Video Calling and Chatting on the Rise,” *Awesome DC*, October 15, 2010, accessed June 9, 2013, <http://awesomedc.com/2010/10/15/video-calling-and-chatting-on-the-rise/>.

⁹⁹ Benedict XVI, *Message for the 47th World Communications Day*.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Rome Reports, “Cardinal Sean O'Malley: New Evangelization Places Emphasis on the Individual,” *Rome Reports*, November 29, 2012, <http://www.romereports.com/palio/cardinal-sean-omalley-new-evangelization-places-emphasis-on-the-individual-english-8392.html#.UbQss9gXeM0>.

Chat Network (<http://www.ecatholic2000.com/chat/chat.html>) for further answers. The fact that Pontifex Twitter (<https://twitter.com/Pontifex>) has more than 2,500,000 followers now certainly gives a hope that there should be a good number out of those *who are daily chatting online may one day be touched to serve God in their lives.*

2.3. Making God Present in the Digital World

In Romans (10:14) we read: “How can they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach?” Just as the physical world and humanity in it ever need to hear the good news of God (cf. Mk 16:15); so do the digital world and its netizens, for communication without Christ can become communication of cries. As social communication networks are “nourished by aspirations [for communion] rooted in the human heart,”¹⁰¹ the proclamation of Christ and his teachings would serve as the Way, ever reminding people that source of communication begins from the common Truth and the destination of it the common Life. Communication as such will help people to reach the communion to which they aspire; or else it will be blocked by individuals’ selves and the cries of their selfish needs.

Participating in the kingly office of Christ, it is the Christians’ duty today to subdue the current digital technology to make God present in the digital world, thus “making God concretely present in today’s world and presenting the religious wisdom of the past as a treasure which can inspire our efforts to live in the present with dignity while building a better future.”¹⁰² It is quite natural for those who have the good news of the communion to desire to share it by all means. And, in actual fact, “it

¹⁰¹ Benedict XVI, *Message for the 47th World Communications Day*.

¹⁰² Id., *Message for the 44th World Communications Day* (2010); Cf. *Message for the 47th World Communications Day*.

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."¹⁰³

More than twelve years ago, during the sixth extraordinary consistory with Pope John Paul II (May 21-24, 2001), Cardinal William H. Keeler of Baltimore already mentioned the use of modern media for the evangelization, especially the internet which he said "offers a direct channel to millions of people."¹⁰⁴ Today the combination of internet and new media has offered many more channels to a great many more people. Though the communication of the faith to the next generations seems more challenging in the digital world, where there is more and more secularized information daily spreading and influencing a great many people; cutting-edge media like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Podcasts, RSS feeds nevertheless promise a possible outreach to the mass of people across the globe. Therefore, "it would be shameful if by their inactivity Catholics allowed the word of God to be silenced or obstructed."¹⁰⁵

One can say that by simply opening a social networking account and having the good news occupy the digital world sufficiently God's presence could be found there. Yet, Christian vocation does not merely mean being present but present as living witnesses to Christ.¹⁰⁶ In the digital world, after having met Christ, Christians feel commanded to go forth and spread the good news to the digital natives, realizing the great commission of Jesus (see Mt 28:19). However, in order to get the most out of such a new mission they have first to go prepared though.

¹⁰³ *IM* 3, ed. Austin Flannery O.P.

¹⁰⁴ CNS and Staff, "Signs of the Times," *America*, June 4, 2001, http://cf.americamagazine.org/content/article.cfm?article_id=1516

¹⁰⁵ *IM* 17, ed. Austin Flannery O.P.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Message for the 44th World Communications Day* (2010).

Be ready! An attitude of readiness to face the challenges of the times is what St Peter exhorted the followers of Christ (see 1 Pet 3:15). Social media is like a double-edge sword. It could be either a helpful friend or an atrocious master, depending on how ready the users are to treat it. Likewise, Christians can either harness social media to communicate the good news to the digital world or be dominated by it, following “the age-old hedonistic materialism, but to which a ‘technological Prometheanism’ is added.”¹⁰⁷ The latter attitude towards new media is as ever the cause of many terrible moral problems, and against the Christian faith, which proclaims that God is unique and there is nothing comparable to God.¹⁰⁸ As a matter of fact, Christian attitude towards life is shaped by its multidimensional vocation that involves, in any time and place, one’s relationships with God, who is the absolute, and with fellow beings and oneself.¹⁰⁹ Hence, in order to be properly present in the digital world as witnesses to Christ, Christians need to be at least prepared spiritually, ethically and professionally.

No real communication would be possible without the communicator’s being in touch with the source of the message. Jesus was the perfect communicator of God the Father because he had come from the Trinitarian community in which he is one with God the Father and the Spirit – the source of the message. In the same manner, today’s Christians would effectively communicate the good news of God to the digital world and make God present there if only they ever grow in their spiritual life. In other words, as Gerald O’Collins puts it: “The divine self-communication is present and at work when those who are already Christians grow ‘in Christ,’ know more fully

¹⁰⁷ Benedict XVI, *Address to Participants in the Plenary Meeting of the Pontifical Council “Cor Unum”* (January 19, 2013).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. CCC 200-202; Dt 4:39; 6:4-5; Is 45:5, 22.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Mt 22:37-39.

his power in their weakness, and enter more deeply into the life of the Trinity.”¹¹⁰ From the perspective of New Evangelization, “only those who are capable of being spiritually renewed by encountering Jesus Christ and living a life of communion with him [are capable of this mission].”¹¹¹ That the evangelizer is continuously evangelized to evangelize will always bring about new ardor to the evangelization.

No successful communication would take place without the communicator’s being in touch with the destination of the message. Jesus was the perfect communicator of God to humanity because through the incarnation he identified himself fully with humanity – the destination of the message. Following Christ, in order to have the good news take flesh in today’s digital culture,¹¹² Christians should be able to understand and speak the language of the new media.¹¹³ Yet, since human persons are both the end and the means of the use of these new media, certain rules of human conduct, or ways of being, or ethos, ethics are required for the integral development of those very human persons.¹¹⁴ In this present age, when human reasons and actions seem less conforming to the objective truth of what humans are meant to be,¹¹⁵ being ethically present through a new language and expression in the digital world is even significant for the Christian vocation.

¹¹⁰ Gerald O’Collins, *Fundamental Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1981), 100.

¹¹¹ XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, *Instrumentum Laboris*, 158.

¹¹² Cf. CCC 854: John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* (December 7, 1990), 52-54.

¹¹³ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Speaking, Understanding the Language of the New Media*, Vatican Information Service, February 28, 2011, http://www.vis.va/vissolr/index.php?vi=en&dl=c3db7650-f188-61bb-6594-4f1fc0b6ac7f&dl_t=text/xml&dl_a=y&ul=1&ev=1

¹¹⁴ Cf. Fausto B. Gómez, “Definition of Ethics,” *The Journey Continues: Notes on Ethics and Bioethics* (Manila: UST Publishing, 2009), 4. Also cf. *Ethics in Communications* (June 4, 2000), 21.

¹¹⁵ Cf. CP 22. Also cf. Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 85: from Thomas Aquinas, “ethics” is defined as “recta ratio agibilium” (right reason in regard to action).

No sound communication would be realized without the communicator's readiness to go into profession. No matter what one's present vocation is, priests, religious or laypeople once feeling called to publicly serve the Lord and humanity in the field of communications should be "equipped with the proper skills for adapting these media to the objectives of the apostolate."¹¹⁶ According to the Church's instructions, the preparation needed for a professional communicator consists of spiritual, ethical and technical training too.¹¹⁷ While laypeople are expected to possess high caliber of professional skills, priests present in the world of digital communications, of course, "less notable for their media savvy than for their priestly heart, their closeness to Christ."¹¹⁸ The professional use of new media to communicate the good news to the digital world is considered a new method of evangelization.

Go forth and Blog! Pope Benedict XVI's message for the 44th World Communications Day was immediately received and rendered by world's media as the new commandment for priests as such.¹¹⁹ Indeed, the Pope on this occasion has challenged the pastoral ministers to employ "the latest generation of audiovisual resources (images, videos, animated features, blogs, websites)" to serve the purpose of evangelization. Not only encouraging young Catholics "to bring the witness of their faith to the digital world,"¹²⁰ the Pope made history on December 12, 2012 when

¹¹⁶ *IM* 15.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* Also cf. *CP* 71-72; *AN* 18, 28.

¹¹⁸ Benedict XVI, *Message for the 44th World Communications Day* (2010).

¹¹⁹ See Ariel David, "Pope to Priests: Go Forth and Blog," *Guardian*, January 23, 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/feedarticle/8912750>.

¹²⁰ Benedict XVI, *Message for the 43rd World Communications Day* (2009).

he became the first pope using an iPad to tweet the good news of the Lord in exactly 140 characters:

Dear friends. I am pleased to get in touch with you through Twitter. Thank you for your generous response. I bless all of you from my heart.¹²¹

The first papal tweet has intrigued over six million followers and consequently inspired the Church to continue taking advantage of the new media and adapting to new forms of communicating with the faithful and with the world.¹²² After being deactivated during Sede Vacante, the @Pontifex account was reopened by Pope Francis, who now daily sends out messages of hope or fruits of contemplation for his followers' reflection like:

Being a Christian is not just about following commandments: it is about letting Christ take possession of our lives and transform them.¹²³

By going digital via Twitter and other social media (i.e. Facebook, YouTube, applications for iPhone and iPod Touch at <http://www.pope2you.net>) Pope Benedict XVI did put into practice the teachings of the Second Vatican Council: “scrutinizing the signs of the times” (*GS* 4) and “without delay and with the greatest effort in a common work making effective use of the media of social communication in various apostolic endeavors, as circumstances and conditions demand” (*IM* 13). By sailing onto the digital sea, he was not afraid¹²⁴ of communicating the good news with new ardor, expressions and methods. Fondly called by the world's media “the Pope of

¹²¹ Twitter Archive for BXVI, *The Vatican Today*, http://www.news.va/en/twitter_archive

¹²² Cf. Tweeting the Good News, *Zenit (Rome)*, May 9, 2013, www.zenit.org/en/articles/tweeting-the-good-news.

¹²³ Pope Francis@Pontifex (April 10, 2013), <https://twitter.com/Pontifex>

¹²⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, “Pope Asks Bloggers to Give Internet a Soul,” *Vatican Radio*, April 24, 2010; and John Paul II, *Homily for the Inauguration of His Pontificate* (October 22, 1978), 5.

social media,” Pope Benedict XVI has truly set an example to Catholic faithful of making God present in the digital world and thus living out a new evangelization.

Blogging is easy, free and groovy. Anyone, especially the digital natives, can blog and update any contents onto their blog any time – this makes a blog more fascinating than a standard website, which is static and updated rarely. Due to the fact that huge numbers of young people are blogging and networking through the sharing tools conveniently provided in most platforms, the Pope sees this as an evangelization opportunity and urges the well-prepared Catholics to reach out to them. As we all know that technologies should serve people and facilitate their human being; therefore, instead of wasting time surfing the digital sea for friends aimlessly, why do we not be present there mindfully as a Catholic?¹²⁵

Many people are actually discovering, precisely thanks to a contact initially made online, the importance of direct encounters, experiences of community and even pilgrimage, elements which are always important in the journey of faith.¹²⁶

Christians, baptize the Digital World! Pew’s survey of social networking usage reported last year that, among those participating in social networks, sharing views about music and movies is the most popular activity, and about religion almost always the lesser. For example, in China, there are 86% sharing views about music and movies compared to 10% sharing views about religion; in the United States, 63% versus 32%.¹²⁷ Throwing in the fact that a good number of young Catholics today remain loosely connected to the institutional Church, these figures should remind

¹²⁵ Cf. Jesús María Alday, ed., *Conectad@s: Vida Consagrada y Cultura Digital* (Madrid: Publicaciones Claretianas, 2011), 72-73.

¹²⁶ Benedict XVI, *Message for the 47th World Communications Day* (2013).

¹²⁷ Cf. Survey Report, “Social Networking Popular Across Globe,” *Pew Research Global Attitudes Project*, December 12, 2012, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/12/12/social-networking-popular-across-globe/>.

Christians of the deep sigh of Jesus: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few” (Mt 9:37). Thus, well-prepared and well-trained to cope with the new culture in the digital world, Christians should find nowhere else more suitable for them to live out their vocation than there. They do not have to go far and wide, costing no life and not much expense as it happened in the past, to communicate the good news of the Lord. Nowadays, simply blogging in the digital world and being present there as “a glowing point of light in the world, a nucleus of love, a leaven of the whole mass,”¹²⁸ already have they made God present to the virtual community and instilled in it the Christian soul. Otherwise, “in themselves the communications media are only lifeless instruments.”¹²⁹

Christian faithful who passionately love the Church and truly live their vocation, once knowing the strengths and weaknesses of social media as well as identifying the opportunities and threads in its networking community, would not, if they can, merely join in there for fun but for a reason. They will, like Pope Benedict XVI did, be active and thoughtful in the digital world, whether by publishing onto a blog or sharing information via any other social media, ever keeping in mind how to help people to “move from the virtual world of cyberspace to the real world of Christian community.”¹³⁰ With mindful and efficacious initiative, they make Christ visible online and “open the door of virtual reality to show the way towards real life, which touches all of human experiences.”¹³¹ The digital world is baptized as such.

¹²⁸ John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris* (April 11, 1963), 164.

¹²⁹ PCCS, *An Appeal to All Contemplative Religious* (June 3, 1973).

¹³⁰ John Paul II, *Message for the 36th World Communications Day* (2002).

¹³¹ Franz-Josef Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission* (Manila: Logos Publications, 2009), 264.

CHAPTER III

A DOMINICAN APPROACH TO THE NEW EVANGELIZATION

IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Can the eight-hundred-year-old religious ideal of the Dominicans still be relevant in today's digitized world and, at the same time, able to respond to the Church's calling for a new evangelization? In order to have an answer to this question we have to go back to the beginning of the Order of Friars Preachers (Latin: *Ordo Praedicatorum*), the official name of the commonly known "Dominicans," which is coined after the name of the Founder Saint Dominic de Guzmán (c1170 – August 6, 1221). A literature review on the history of the Dominican Order and their constitutions will help us have a good grasp of the Dominican ministry and their main approaches to it, from which we can come up with a definite yes to the all-time relevance of the Dominican ideal. We then go on to explore in more detail how these approaches can help us to actually respond to the New Evangelization, making the most of the new media of communication to reach out to the new generations in the digital world.

Church history tells us that the Dominican Order was born out of St Dominic's ardor to communicate the truth of the good news of the Lord to those who were living in falsehood of faith at that time – the New Manichaeans, or Albigensians, who called themselves *Cathari*, the pure, and mainly settled in Albi.¹³² The story began in 1203 when Dominic was passing through southern France, he met in Toulouse an innkeeper

¹³² See John Laux, *Church History: A Complete History of the Catholic Church to the Present Day* (Illinois: Tan Books, 1989), 350-51, 360-63.

who, like many others in the region, held Albigensian views. Out of his zeal for souls, his knowledge of ten years studying in Palencia and his fruits of almost ten years contemplating in Osma, Dominic spent the whole night reasoning the views and sharing his faith with the innkeeper. As a result, the innkeeper was convinced of the Catholic truth and converted in the next day. For his part, Dominic also started thinking of a specific ministry especially dedicating to communicating the good news of the Lord and the true Catholic faith. Since then, Dominic and his companions, having well interpreted the signs of the times and well prepared to communicate the good news anew, said farewell to the old life as canon regulars and embraced the new life as that of the apostles (cf. Mt 10:7-10) in accordance with the gospel (cf. Acts 2:45; 4:32), closer to the ordinary people and ready to provide them with authentic evangelical food.¹³³

That the Dominicans shared in the office of the bishops to preach the word of God and the ways they approached such a ministry, logically in expression and radically in method, was considered a momentous revolution in the history of the Church at that time. However, if we recall the great command of the Lord to communicate the good news, the meaning of the Word (Λόγος)-became-flesh, and the lives of the first apostles, we will see that the Dominican evangelical ministry as well as their intellectual, spiritual, and material approaches are not new at all. It is, in fact, the communication vocation of every Christian which is incarnated or engaged in the human culture. Pope Honorius III (1216 – 1227) in his Letter to St Dominic and His Companions on January 18, 1221 clearly stated:

He who never ceases to make His church fruitful through new offspring wishes to make these modern times the equal of former days and spread the

¹³³ See William A. Hinnebusch, “The Foundation of the Order,” *The Dominicans: a Short History* (New York: Alba House, 1975).

Catholic faith. So He inspired you with a holy desire to embrace poverty, profess the regular life and commit yourselves to the proclamation of the word of God, preaching everywhere the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹³⁴

Since officially recognized as an Order of life on January 21, 1217, the Dominicans' ministry of communication of the good news of the Lord has been ever radical yet relevant to the contemporary people. It is because the Dominican ideal of life, following in St Dominic's footsteps, entails a regular encounter between the member and the Lord as in "former days" through today's studies and contemplation. It is also because the preaching ministry is so much evident the center of the Dominican life that all other aspects of the life are just adapted for it, and for it any law can even be dispensed, changed or abrogated if deemed necessary.¹³⁵ It is because of this unique convergence of qualities, as long as the Lord's command is still valid and the human quest for the truth of God still exists, we are, according to Archbishop Augustine Di Noia, presently Vice-President of the Pontifical Commission *Ecclesia Dei*, living in the "Dominican moment."¹³⁶ Living as a Dominican is already an act of new evangelization!

According to the Dominican Constitutions, when a person publicly professes to the Order he or she is "dedicated in a new way to the universal Church."¹³⁷ This ever new way of dedication to the Church has been from the very beginning expressed in both intellectual and spiritual efforts to communicate with God so as to genuinely communicate God to others, "following in the footsteps of the Savior, speaking to

¹³⁴ LCO 1§I.

¹³⁵ See Ibid. 1§VI and 276.

¹³⁶ See Augustine Di Noia, "New Vocations in the Province of St. Joseph: Ecclesial, Historical and Cultural Perspectives," *Dominican Province of St Joseph*, June 12, 2010, http://www.op-stjoseph.org/blog/new_vocations_in_the_province_of_saint_joseph_ecclesial_historical_and_cultural_perspectives_2.

¹³⁷ LCO 1§III.

God and of God, among themselves or with their neighbors.”¹³⁸ In the Dominican tradition, there are a few Latin mottos encapsulating their way of life, of which frequently cited are *Veritas* (truth) and *Contemplare et Contemplata Aliis Tradere* (to contemplate and hand on to others the fruits of contemplation).¹³⁹ Applying these mottos into today’s digital world is living anew St Dominic’s evangelical ardor in a new expression and method – a particular response to the New Evangelization.

3.1. *Veritas*: the Dominican Commitment to the Truth in the Digital World

“Faith seeking understanding”¹⁴⁰ was on the rise during the time of St Dominic. Yet it is St Dominic well known for his actively seeking deeper knowledge of God and using it to win people back to God. The Saint himself did spend four years studying the Scriptures in Palencia. This study essentially led him to know the truth of God and that God is the source of truth: “I the Lord speak the truth, I declare what is right” (Is 45:19). It helped him to encounter the whole of God’s grace and truth manifested in the person of Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 1:14). It facilitated his living in the Spirit of truth (cf. Jn 14:15-17), being sanctified in the truth (cf. Jn 17:17) and able to communicate the truth in love (cf. Eph 4:15). Furthermore, though the truth in itself has the power to enlighten people’s mind (cf. Eph 3:9) and set them free from false beliefs (cf. Jn 8:32), the sound higher education had definitely equipped St Dominic with some reasoning skills, helping him to present the truth of God logically and awe-

¹³⁸ Ibid. 1 §II. Also see *Primitive Constitutions of the Order of Friars Preachers* (1216), Part 2, 31, http://www.op.org/sites/www.op.org/files/public/documents/fichier/primitive_consti_en.pdf

¹³⁹ See *ST II-II*, 188, 6.

¹⁴⁰ Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology* (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 36. Cf. *St Anselm: Proslogium; Monologium; An Appendix in Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilon; and Cur Deus Homo*, trans. Sidney Norton Deane (La Salle, IL: Open Court Publishing, 1951), 178, 33: “I pray, O God, to know thee, to love thee, that I may rejoice in thee.”

inspiring. And, as we already know it, St Dominic was able to win the innkeeper back to the true Catholic faith.

St Dominic from his own experience with the innkeeper could have been confirmed and convinced that human beings ever desire for the truth,¹⁴¹ and that communicators of the good news must be intellectually trained in order to arrive at, and to experience of, the truth of the good news,¹⁴² of which God is “truth itself, the sovereign and first truth”¹⁴³ that can quench humanity’s infinite thirst,¹⁴⁴ and thus to be able to communicate the evangelical truth effectively. Obviously, out of one’s love for God, one would want to know more about God; the more one knows God, the more one loves God and the better serves God. This explains why no sooner had the Order been established than St Dominic sent his brothers to the universities of the time. He regarded study as an important way leading people to the truth and “intimately linked study to the ministry of salvation.”¹⁴⁵ For all of these reasons, Dominicans in their intellectual tradition have been embracing a two-fold duty: to diligently study for the truth and “to stimulate people’s desire to know the truth.”¹⁴⁶

In today’s digital era, when new media and social networks become the mainstream culture and permeate every facet of our lives, Dominicans can now have more platforms to exercise their commitment to the service of the good news under

¹⁴¹ Human beings, in fact, created after the image of God, “tends by nature toward the truth.” See CCC 2467.

¹⁴² The use of the capacity of intellect and soul, especially to discern God, is the ultimate response to God’s call to humanity, being God’s image on earth. Cf. CCC 1704-5 and GS 15.

¹⁴³ ST I, 16, 5.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. St Augustine, *The Confessions*, 1,1,1.

¹⁴⁵ LCO 76. Cf. “Prologue,” in *Primitive Constitutions*.

¹⁴⁶ LCO 77 §II.

the aspect of truth than ever before. They can anytime anywhere access to the digital world to study for the truth, to give testimonies to it and to promote communities of truth-lovers.

As discussed in Chapter Two, social media has offered us an incredible opportunity of access to information and knowledge at our fingertips. Such easy access happens vividly, instantly and almost comprehensively. It is not extravagant. It significantly saves the cost of purchasing materials and the time to look for them. It has realized what the Church stated more than forty years ago about the ever growing role of social media in the field of human education:

The means of social communication are used to complement the established ways of teaching. They also give opportunities for further education to adolescents and adults. In places where the educational facilities are inadequate, they can provide religious instruction and basic education and fight illiteracy. They are useful instruments for instructing people in agriculture, medicine, hygiene and many forms of community development. As far as possible, this use of the media for education should have a creative quality and elicit an active response. In this way, the pupil is not only led to knowledge but learns to express himself by using the media.¹⁴⁷

Indeed, with the web 2.0 advances, nowadays people do not only access to, and benefit from, shared knowledge in the digital world, but also interact with online peer-learners or professors and give responses to the received knowledge in forms of e-learning, using Blogs or Skype.¹⁴⁸ In such an e-learning environment Dominicans can casually study for the truth themselves or officially enroll in online distant-learning courses. *Going digital, Dominicans can find the Truth.*

While the digital world offers great opportunities for Dominicans to be well informed and coming to know the truth, its openness also allows equal, if not

¹⁴⁷ CP 48.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Beverly E. Crane, *Using Web 2.0 and Social Networking Tools in the K-12 Classroom* (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, 2012).

overwhelming, challenges and abuses which may divert their attention from the truth and mislead them into falsehood. However, the difficulties can turn out to be opportunities for mature Dominicans to explore the seeds of truth across the border and to be there testifying to the truth.

Following the lead of the Second Vatican Council, the Synod Fathers drew attention to the multiple and diversified action of the Holy Spirit who continually sows the seeds of truth among all peoples, their religions, cultures and philosophies. This means that these religions, cultures and philosophies are capable of helping people, individually and collectively, to work against evil and to serve life and everything that is good.¹⁴⁹

An encounter with someone different than us is really both a challenging and frustrating experience; yet it is the occasion for us to measure how much of the truth we know. While recognizing the seeds of truth in the other ideologies, still not being drawn to them, but smartly using them to perfect their knowledge of truth, Dominicans can now find the digital world an excellent “agora” to give explanations and to testify to the logical truth that they know.¹⁵⁰ *Going digital, Dominicans can give testimonies to the Truth.*

As mentioned earlier, the commitment to the truth naturally impels Dominicans to serve the truth and to help other people to know and love the truth. A well-known Dominican friar, Yves Congar, who typically loved the truth, put it in his “Reflections on Being a Theologian” as follows:

The Order of Friars Preachers is dedicated to the service of the Gospel, especially under its aspect of truth. I’ve consecrated my life to the service of the truth. I’ve loved it and still love it in the way one loves a person. I’ve

¹⁴⁹ John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Asia* (November 6, 1999), 15.

¹⁵⁰ See 1 Pet 3:15. Cf. Robert Barron, “The Virtual Areopagus: Digital Dialogue With the Unchurched,” in *The Church and New Media: Blogging Converts, Online Activists, and Bishops Who Tweet*, ed. Brandon Vogt (Huntington, Ind.: Our Sunday Visitor, 2011), 25-43.

been like that from my very childhood, as if by some instinct and interior need.¹⁵¹

Having seen how the digital world allows like-minded people to form online communities of interests and attract people to follow them, the three recent General Chapters of Dominicans also encouraged their members to take different parts in it. In particular, the Dominican service of the truth in the digital world has been expressed in “long-distance theological training,”¹⁵² like *Domuni* (www.domuni.eu/en/) or *Dominicos* (www.dominicos.org/). Actually, since there are no absolute geographical borders established in the digital world, anyone can serve the truth by forming or joining in and cultivating an online community or forum of truth-lovers.¹⁵³ *Going digital, Dominicans can spread the Truth.*

3.2. *Contemplare: to Contemplate God’s Presence in the Digital World*

The fact that St Dominic was spending the whole night listening to and discussing with the innkeeper suggests that he had been able to meet the presence of God and hear God’s calling through the misled brother. Indeed, St Dominic is well known in the Dominican tradition for his “nine ways of prayer,” in which, during the fifth way – Contemplation, “you would have thought you were looking at a prophet conversing with an angel or with God, now talking, now listening, now thinking quietly about what had been revealed to him.”¹⁵⁴ Blessed Jordan of Saxony (1190 –

¹⁵¹ Anthony Oelrich, *A Church Fully Engaged: Yves Congar's Vision of Ecclesial Authority* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2011), 4.

¹⁵² Order of Preachers, *Acts of the General Chapter* (Crakow: Poland, 2004), 207. Cf. Id., *Acts of the Elective General Chapter* (Rome, 2010), 122-23.

¹⁵³ This conforms to the recommendation of the Order as well as of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary too. Cf. LCO 104 and Province of Our Lady of the Rosary, *Acts of the Chapter* (Hong Kong, 2009), 165.

¹⁵⁴ Simon Tugwell ed., “The Nine Ways of Prayer of St Dominic,” in *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 97-98. Cf. *Primitive Constitutions*, 31 and LCO 1§II.

1237), the immediate successor of St Dominic, bore witness to his predecessor's profound contemplative life as follows: "The daytime he shared with his neighbor, but the night he dedicated to God, for he knew that, in the daytime, God has commanded His mercy, and a canticle to Him in the night."¹⁵⁵

St Dominic's contemplative life is unquestionably a direct result of his love and his know of God. This is quite understandable; for the more one loves and knows the truths of God, the more one wants to stay in communion with God and the better one shares his or her experience with God to the others. St Dominic's contemplation, however, did not simply go straight to the end in the union with God, whom he loved and knew; it involves an evangelical quality, the love for neighbors just as the love for God, the compassion for neighbors just as the compassion of the Lord Jesus. In fact, the word "contemplation" in the early Dominican period "tends to have a much more plain and down-to-earth connotation. Often it can mean little more than a simple act of prayerful attention or prayerful study."¹⁵⁶ As Simon Tugwell could read in the fifth Master of the Order's *Treatise on the Formation of Preachers*, the word "contemplative" that Humbert of Romans (c1200 – 1277) used to require from preachers was meant to say "full of eyes all around" as the strange beings in Ezekiel's vision (see 1:18).¹⁵⁷

The Dominican contemplation in the tradition of the Order, as we have seen, simply begins with the ability to observe things around through the lens of Christian love. This is matching up with the original meaning of "contemplation," in which its

¹⁵⁵ Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus de Principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum*, 105, *Province of Our Lady of the Rosary*, <http://www.holyrosaryprovince.org/2011/media/essencial/libellus.pdf>

¹⁵⁶ Paul Murray, *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality: a Drink Called Happiness* (New York: Burns & Oates, 2007), 14.

¹⁵⁷ See Simon Tugwell, "Introduction," in *Early Dominicans: Selected Writings*, 4-5.

roots from the Latin verb *contemplare* or *contemplari*, consisting of “con” (with) and “templum” (a place for observation), indicate a position from which one can observe. Nowadays, in the time when much of the world could be seen on a screen Dominicans may find it more convenient to practice contemplation and observe God’s presence in the world via helpful windows of the digital world.

Reading online news, Dominicans can contemplate God’s presence in social communities. Besides formally studying the truth of God, Dominicans are also casually looking for the truth of God present among their fellow humanity in daily life. This first of all can be done by observing what are going on in the world as well as in the community from online news, which is usually broadcast up to the minute. Friar Vincent De Couesnongle, the 82nd successor of St Dominic, in his letter to the Order in 1983 showed how he agreed with Karl Barth’s remark that “Theology is made with the Bible and the newspaper”:

Can one proclaim Jesus Christ to men and women if one is ignorant of their aspirations or of the conditions in which they live? Written or spoken, the daily news and all the means of communication which this word evokes, help us to know the mental and spiritual ‘furniture,’ the ‘décor’ of the heart of those we meet. Our dialogue rings true... For preaching, a double contemplation must possess us.¹⁵⁸

Following online blogs, Dominicans can contemplate God’s through individuals. As blogs and social media are becoming mainstream platforms for today’s people to express themselves, joining in a social network Dominicans will be much more convenient than ever before to observe “the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age”¹⁵⁹ and thus will have more materials to contemplate upon as well as to speak with God about the humanity as did St Dominic.

¹⁵⁸ Vincent de Couesnongle, *The Contemplative Dimension of Dominican Life (1983)*, To Praise, to Bless, to Preach: Words of Grace and Truth (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2004), 142.

¹⁵⁹ GS 1.

Just being open to prayer or intention requests (e.g. http://nashvilledominican.org/prayer/Prayer_Intentions), Dominicans can listen easily to “the many voices of our age,” especially of the poor and the afflicted.¹⁶⁰ It is from “the poor in spirit” (Mt 5:3), the least of our brothers and sisters (see Mt 25), nowadays showing up online, Dominicans can meet and communicate with the Word-became-flesh.

Dominicans are convinced that the world in which we live, turbulent and restless, often violent and terrifying, is at the same time the place where the holy comes to light, the place where we encounter and listen to – ‘contemplate’ – God.¹⁶¹

With open eyes and ears, Dominicans can contemplate God’s presence in the digital world. Timothy Radcliffe in 1995 was well relating Felicísimo Martínez’s description of Dominican spirituality as “open-eyed” and Chrys McVey’s comment on Dominic’s compassion to remind all Dominicans that “it is in these places of Calvary that God may be met and a new word of hope discovered.”¹⁶² All Dominicans are called to contemplation with open eyes, both intellectually and spiritually. It is in observing the truth of God and letting the Spirit lead them to meet God among humanity, they will be able to become a good communicator of the good news or a new evangelizer in the new world. According to Paul Murray, Dominicans need first to live in intimacy with the Word so as to carry the Word to the world, and also to learn, like St Dominic, “to drink deep from the well of Gospel truth.”¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ GS 44 and see GS 1.

¹⁶¹ Erik Borgman, *Dominican Spirituality: An Exploration*, trans. John Bowden (London - New York: Continuum, 2001), 29.

¹⁶² Timothy Radcliffe, *The Wellspring of Hope: Study and the Annunciation of the Good News (1995)*, To Praise, to Bless, to Preach: Words of Grace and Truth, 367.

¹⁶³ Paul Murray, *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality: a Drink Called Happiness*, 27.

3.3. *Contemplata Aliis Tradere: to Share the Fruits of Contemplation*

“From the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks” (Mt 12:34). St Dominic, “a man of the Gospel,”¹⁶⁴ could not keep the truths of the good news that he had assiduously studied and contemplated for himself, but wanted to share them with many other people for their salvation. He did it with the innkeeper and among the Albigenses. He wanted to have more like-minded people to join with him in doing so. He founded the Order of Preachers so as to continuously prepare and supply trained communicators of the good news to the Church for the salvation of souls.

The Order of Friars Preachers, founded by St Dominic, ‘is known to have been established, from the beginning, for preaching and the salvation of souls, specifically.’¹⁶⁵

It is quite natural for one to spread the good news that he or she knows and loves, especially when the good news is about the truth of God communicated in creation, among humanity. In the view of Michael Pasquarello, Dominicans are ordered to follow “the grammar of the triune God,” attending to the truth of salvation, reflecting the first truth that has spoken to them and speaking the truth in the Spirit.

The more we are *con*-formed to God by divine wisdom, the more we will know him, and the more we know him, the more we will be drawn to him in love, and the more we are drawn to him in love, the more we will speak and act in union with the incarnate Word, who is both our way and our goal.¹⁶⁶

Having comprehended the truth of God through intellectual study and experienced that truth through prayerful contemplation, Dominicans are compelled and constrained to communicate that truth to many others. “Seed when scattered

¹⁶⁴ Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus de Principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum*, 104.

¹⁶⁵ *LCO* 1§II.

¹⁶⁶ Michael Pasquarello III, *We Speak Because We Have First Been Spoken: a Grammar of the Preaching Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 13.

fructifies, when hoarded, rots,” said St Dominic when he sent the brothers to go on preaching.¹⁶⁷ St Thomas Aquinas later put it, “For even as it is better to enlighten than merely to shine, so is it better to give to others the fruits of one’s contemplation than merely to contemplate.”¹⁶⁸ Just as the Word of God came from the Trinitarian community to the humanity, announcing the good news and setting the way for them to come back to God; Dominicans come out from their contemplation of God to become boon companions of their fellow pilgrims, sharing with them the truth of God and enlightening them with the good news of salvation.

There are many ways to be active yet Dominican in the digital world. However, aligning with the grammar the triune God, also the fact of our relational beings, I would mention three Dominican ways of communication which are feasibly carried out in the social networks and practically attending to the needs of the online community: promoting justice, adding holy joy, and offering spiritual direction.

Promoting Justice, Dominicans offer their fruits of contemplation. Being a Dominican means being an ambassador of Jesus Christ, who “came into the world to testify to the truth” (Jn 18:37). The truth to which Jesus testified by his own life is first of all that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8) and “we are God’s children now” (1 Jn 3:2), we have “one Father in heaven” and we “are all brothers” (Mt 23:8-9). Jesus has linked the truth of human dignity with morality, emphasizing love (cf. Mt 25:31-40) and regarding justice as a gauge of love (cf. Lk 11:42). In the same logic as such, the Dominicans’ traditional pursuit of truth has also compelled them to pursue and promote justice. As a matter of fact, over the course of their nearly 800 year history,

¹⁶⁷ See William A. Hinnebusch, “The Foundation of the Order,” *The Dominicans: a Short History* (New York: Alba House, 1975).

¹⁶⁸ *ST II-II*, 188, 6.

Dominicans have been tirelessly endeavoring to “establish on earth a kingdom of justice, fraternal love and peace.” With the truth intellectually studied, spiritually contemplated and communally experienced, they have been significantly contributing to “the proper ordering of society.”¹⁶⁹ ¹⁷⁰ Today, Dominicans for Justice and Peace have a presence at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva and can be found twenty-four seven at the Dominican Network (<http://un.op.org/>).

Adding holy joy to the digital world, Dominicans testify to their encounter with God. The good news communicated with grim tones and long faces is not convincing. Normally people are not drawn to anything brooding and melancholy; it offers them no faith and no hope to live on. People are often charmed by joy and vivacity. The news of Jesus Christ is called “good” because it lovingly proclaims the ultimate truth of happiness and life. Christians, who believe and live the good news, must be, therefore, men and women of delight and of full life. Joy is the word that Pope Francis has mentioned several times recently. For him, joy is the gift of the Spirit, filling the Christians from within and clearly indicating that they are living in the presence of the Lord.

True joy doesn't come from things, from having, no! It's born from the encounter, from the relation with others. [...] And the joy of the encounter with Him and of His call leads not to closing ourselves but to opening

¹⁶⁹ LCO 131-32.

¹⁷⁰ Some well-known figures pioneering the promotion of justice include the intellectual inputs of Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) and the social participation of Pedro de Córdoba (c1460–1525), Antonio de Montesinos (c1475–1540), Francisco de Vitoria (c1483–1546), and Bartolomé de las Casas (c1484–1566). These and other Dominicans working for justice and peace have indeed restored all things in Christ, laying foundations for modern social justice: “a vision whose horizon is made up of the absolute value of human dignity and inalienable human rights, the values of the essential equality of all human beings, and the common good, which is truly the defense and promotion of the dignity and rights of all humans.” Fausto Gomez, *Promoting Justice, Love, Live* (Manila: UST Publishing, 1998), 120.

ourselves; it leads to service in the Church. Saint Thomas said “bonus est diffusivum sui” – Good diffuses itself. And joy also diffuses itself.¹⁷¹

True joy does not only always appear on the face of the true servant of the Lord; it can even spread and convert the heart of the sinner.¹⁷² St Dominic was reported to have preached by word, by example and by joy: “Because a joyful heart begets a cheerful face, [...] this cheerfulness is what enabled him so easily to win everyone’s affection, for, as soon as they looked at him, they were captivated.”¹⁷³ St Dominic’s manifestation of the joy and the truth of the gospel indeed inspired Thomas Aquinas and many to follow him and to become witnesses of that joy and that truth.¹⁷⁴ Accordingly, Dominicans – followers of St Dominic as communicators of the good news – are now expected to be like the Founder and the early Friars Preachers: speaking of God anywhere to anyone in any possible form of expression through any available method of communication by a profound joy of an encounter with God that they have in themselves.

Offering Spiritual Direction, Dominicans share their experience of conversion.

The Dominicans’ speaking of God can also be expressed online to individuals in form of spiritual direction. In fact, their contemplative life in both sacred and secular worlds has allowed them the quality to bridge the gap between divinity and humanity. Moreover, nowadays, in a world that objective truth seems hardly defined, yet people

¹⁷¹ “Pope Francis Address to Seminarians and Novices (part 1),” *Zenit (Rome)*, July 9, 2013, <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-francis-address-to-seminarians-and-novices-part-1>.

¹⁷² On the recent news of the Church, a typical example of this joy power in our time is Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyễn Văn Thuận. See “Canonization Process of Cardinal van Thuan Goes Forward,” *Rome Reports*, July 9, 2013, <http://www.romereports.com/palio/canonization-process-of-cardinal-van-thuan-goes-forward-first-step-completed-english-10496.html#.Ud-4bqzjE3K>; P. J. Ginés, “13 Años En Una Prisión Comunista, y Convirtió a Sus Guardianes: Van Thuan, Más Cerca de Ser Beato,” *Religion en Libertad (Madrid)*, July 3, 2013, <http://www.religionenlibertad.com/articulo.asp?idarticulo=30038>.

¹⁷³ Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus de Principiis Ordinis Praedicatorum*, 103-4.

¹⁷⁴ See Paul Murray, *The New Wine of Dominican Spirituality: a Drink Called Happiness*, 74.

are restless for the lack of it, the Dominican spirituality immersed in intellectual study and scientific thinking should be the right companion able to facilitate and to direct those who want to grow in communion with God, who is ultimately true and objective.

If we ask what the special Dominican contribution to spirituality is, the answer seems to be that it bears witness that the deepest, although often hidden, yearning of every human person is to enter into the community of truth where alone true love can flourish, the community of the three persons who are truth itself.¹⁷⁵

As Benedict Ashley has studied, Dominicans traditionally consider the “profound acts of faith, hope and love”¹⁷⁶ the evidence of one’s growth in true love of God, of self and of neighbors for God’s sake.¹⁷⁷ The principles for spiritual direction like these, however, cannot be physically observed and kept track in the virtual world, especially when the directees are not loyally following the director’s instructions. Actually, we cannot tell whether the one who accidentally surfs to our blogs or websites and drops there a spiritual question is seeking for spiritual direction, or counseling, or psychotherapy. Anyway, as long as Dominicans accompany the spiritual directees they should disseminate the truth, awake their true identity as God’s image, and provide them with biblical wisdom for a living in harmony with God.¹⁷⁸ In any case, the three principles of St Catherine of Siena for spiritual directors are still relevant today: do not judge, always encourage and support those who are struggling, carry out the duty of fraternal correction (see Mt 18:15-18) when necessary.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Benedict M. Ashley, *Spiritual Direction in the Dominican Tradition* (NY: Paulist, 1995), 56.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 138.

¹⁷⁷ See *Ibid.* 69.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner, eds., *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: a Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2004), 55-77.

¹⁷⁹ See Benedict M. Ashley, “St Catherine of Siena’s Principles of Spiritual Direction,” *Spirituality Today* 33, 1 (March 1981), 47-8.

CONCLUSION

What could we do to respond to the Church's pressing call for a new evangelization? The fact that I am a Dominican Brother and that the world in which we are now living is both rapidly digitized and strongly characterized by new communication media has made me relate the three concerns into one study: Christians, according to their own states of life, if making good use of the new media they have in hand to engage the new culture and give an account of their faith, hope and love already live the New Evangelization. Going digital with the Dominican charism is one of the practical approaches to the issue.

New Evangelization is but the Communication of the Good News Anew

New evangelization is basically an evangelization – the communication of the good news of God to every creature (see Mk 16:15). Jesus was the first communicator of God's good news on earth. He did it perfectly, leaving a perfect model of communication to his followers: not only being in communion with both the source and the destination of the Word, but also identifying himself with the Word and with the audience of that Word (see *CP* 11). Christians are called out and commanded to succeed Jesus in communicating the Word of God, the good news, that they have witnessed in Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth (see Acts 1:8). This is the common vocation and mission that every Christian receives at baptism. The first apostles and many great Christians have faithfully lived this common vocation in their specific vocations and successfully carried out the mission. Yet, most ordinary people, and even many Christians, find it hard to recognize God, and at times tired of doing so, amidst many attractions and distractions of the world. Amidst the onslaught of the

secularized world in the present time, Christians find it much more challenging to encounter Christ, to witness the Word and to live their common vocation and mission.

New evangelization is first of all a call for Christians, especially the lapsed, to rediscover and deepen the faith that they profess. The vocation of communication of the Word of God demands that the communicators themselves have certain personal experience with the Word they are going to communicate, especially nowadays when people prefer witnesses to words (see *EN* 41). Such experience and witnesses could only happen when the Christian faithful actually encounters Christ through assiduous study and contemplation. Certainly, an encounter with Christ, the Word of God and God-self, will make the person change his or her mind and heart and begin an ongoing conversion to the Absolute. On the other hand, one's openness of mind and heart to the Spirit will also lead one to an encounter with God through Christ, the event which definitely changes one's life. In any case, the rediscovery of the Christian faith will help to deepen the Christian's faith and reactivate the Christian faithful's common vocation. Once one has turned back, one will know how to strengthen his or her fellows (see Lk 22:32), doing it anew: new in its ardor, methods and expressions. One will thus learn how to read the signs of the present time in the light of the divine Word (cf. Lk 12:56), making good use of all the means available by the Providence for the communication of the good news.

New evangelization is indeed a time that challenges Christian faithful to read and interpret the signs of the times among the crises so as to make the most of the opportunity to encounter Christ and to bear witness to the Way in a new way (cf. *GS* 4, 44). In our present time, as we are all aware, one of the signs that have brought about drastic changes to our culture and lifestyle is the constant growth of advanced communication technologies, leading to the emergence of new "agora" – an open

public square online. The fact that there are more and more people using new media and entering into the digital world clearly signifies that these new means of communication are the gifts of God, facilitating the communication aspirations rooted in the human heart. Having understood as such in the light of the divine word, the Church encourages the faithful to make the most of this sign of the times on their own initiative to live their communication vocation anew: in the new environment, with new ardor, expressions and methods. Social networks, as Pope Benedict XVI sees it, are portals of truth and faith: new spaces for evangelization. God is there, in the digital world, awaiting the faithful.

Digital World is a New Agora for the New Evangelization

Digital world seen from Christian perspective is the transcendental presence of God's self-communication and loving nature. In fact, God who is out of relational love always goes before humanity, setting ahead loving relationships with them (cf. Dt 31:8). From the beginning of the Bible we read: before entering into relationship with humanity, God prepared the universe and communicated God-self through nature. The harmonious order of nature has spoken of the truth of God: the community of love and intimacy. As God made human beings uniquely following God's image and likeness, they become communicative partners of God and by nature always orientate themselves towards the truth of God. As the Word of God incarnated into human culture, God's self-communication is definitive in the person of Christ, making him the perfect way leading to the truth of God. As the Spirit of God accompanied God's self-communication in the Creation, breathing life to it and making it intelligible, human beings are ever inspired to advance their communication for the truth, capable creating media that helps them to exchange information and to reach the truth, among which are new media and social networks, at the present time digitizing the world.

Digital world extends chances of meeting God to a great many people in a new way. Actually, the immense capacity for data storage, the free communications, the quick and convenient access to information in the digital world allow netizens more opportunities to get in touch with Christian faithful and Christian resources. There are indeed a good number of people having encountered the truth of God while surfing the internet. Many of them have been “logged in” the Way to God when blogging. Many others, after chatting with Christian friends, have been inspired to convert and conduct a new life in Christ.

Digital world is definitely a new “mission land” awaiting the Christian faithful. It is in fact the duty of the faithful to make God present in whatever environment they are. This duty is specially felt constrained by those who are using the new media and have had an experience of meeting God’s presence in the digital world. There, as Pope Benedict XVI observes, unless the good news is communicated it may be absent in the experience of many people. Therefore, making good use of new media to make God ever visible and comprehensible to the digital natives is regarded as a way to live one’s communication vocation. As a matter of fact, there have been many Christians taking part on this Areopagus of the present age, either by blogging or chatting. As such, they have been baptizing the digital world.

Living as a Dominican in the Digital World is a Contribution to the New Evangelization

Dominican charism, founded by St Dominic of nearly 800 years ago, is ever relevant and suitable for one to live a new evangelization, even in the digital world. Following the footsteps of the Savior, Dominicans fundamentally speak to God and of God. Envisioned by St Dominic, Dominicans build their lives on the four pillars of intellectual, spiritual, communal, and ministerial lives. This helps them to exercise the

image of God imprinted in them and makes them exactly the communicators of the good news, modeling on Christ: They encounter the truth of God and live an intimate relationship with God in their contemplative lives, especially by way of study; then, they share the fruits of such encounter and spiritual experience with other people in their apostolic lives. In today's digital age, Dominicans certainly have more channels to live out their communication vocation.

Dominican charism starts with the commitment to the truth (*Veritas*), which is ultimately found in God. As emphasized by St Dominic, study is a way to attain the truth and holiness; it opens one's mind and heart to God and to each other, leading the way to communion with God and paving the way to human hearts. In the digital world, Dominicans can easily find resources and various means of study for the truth. Moreover, in the world of unlimited communications, Dominicans can let themselves be challenged by others and thus explaining better the truth they believe; also there they can together with other truth-lovers build and promote a community of truth. Yet, though firmly believing that truth can be attained with intellectual eye, Dominicans open all eyes to all sides of the truth. In the digital world, they can experience them from social news, individual blogs and personal intentions. All of these are useful materials helping them to contemplate (*contemplare*) the presence of God in life.

Dominican charism compels one to share away the fruits of one's contemplation (*contemplata aliis tradere*) out of one's love for the fellow people. Their intellectual and spiritual lives have to be embodied in their community and ministry. The knowledge they have got from God – the source of truth and life – has to be communicated to those who are struggling to find the Way to the Truth and the Life, especially those living in the rat race of this modern life. Furthermore, as St Dominic did not want the preaching to be locally limited but universally spread, the digital

world again offers Dominicans an ideal environment to live out their communication vocation on a larger scale. By going online, they can share the truth of human dignity and thus promote justice; they can share the profound joy of personal encounter with God and multiply in others that joy from within; they can share their personal spiritual experience and give directions to those in need. There remain, of course, many other ministries to do online to make God ever visible and the good news heard there.

Ever Living the Christian Communication Mindfully: Ever New Evangelization

Communication of the good news is the hard-wired vocation of a Christian. It is an art that requires a good integration of various theological disciplines as well as technical preparations. More importantly, it is an art of living the Christian vocation. Ever living mindfully as a fulltime Christian in today's world is a new evangelization. Ever living mindfully as a fulltime Dominican in today's digital world is a specific response to the New Evangelization. Living mindfully as such, the Christian faithful will ever meet God transcendently present in all things and people, ever recognizing their imperfections and thus continuously repenting and going back to God. Living mindfully as such, the Christian faithful may identify themselves with the good news they are going to communicate and faithfully communicate it with their whole lives. Indeed, the Christian faithful who are mindful of their noble vocation will always be ready to read the signs of the times, promptly respond to God, and effectively make the most of every opportunity to give their account of hope (see 1 Pet 3:15). New media and social networks for them are not only for useful but also for meaningful purposes. Digital world for them is likewise not only for the satisfaction of information, but also for the communion with God and with humanity. Anyone who can use new media and part take in the digital world mindfully as such is living a new evangelization. With little effort, I try myself at https://twitter.com/O_DominiCanis.

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