

“Not all that far into *Connected toward Communion* I paused my reading to offer a prayer of thanksgiving for this extraordinary book. In a text that’s blessedly devoid of thick theological or church jargon, Daniella Zsupan-Jerome shows how digital culture supports rather than undermines our human longing for connection. Her clear and thorough analysis of key documents reveals the Vatican’s longstanding commitment to a theology of communications anchored in Christ and transcending particular forms of time- and technology-bound media. I believe *Connected toward Communion* should be required reading for all ministers and church leaders across and beyond denominational boundaries.”

—Meredith Gould, PhD

Author of *The Social Media Gospel: Sharing the Good News in New Ways*

“Professor Zsupan-Jerome does an admirable job in bringing the church’s theology of communication and teaching on communication, largely developed for an era of mass media, to bear on the world of social media. She offers a great resource for those who wish to reflect theologically on communication. *Connected toward Communion* will prove invaluable for students, for media professionals in the church, and for anyone engaging in online religion.”

—Paul A. Soukup, SJ

Professor and Department Head  
Communication Department  
Santa Clara University

“With this gem, Dr. Zsupan-Jerome is filling a lacuna in the literature regarding Catholic digital communications. Her theological review—written in a style accessible to the average reader—provides a concise analysis of the church’s teachings regarding modern social communications, with practical recommendations for digital natives, immigrants, and missionaries. Bishops and academics, pastors and catechists, seminarians and Catholic media professionals, and others will find *Connected toward Communion: The Church and Social Communication in the Digital Age* to be a valuable resource in their ministry.”

—Helen Osman

Secretary of Communications  
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops



# Connected toward Communion

*The Church and Social  
Communication in the Digital Age*

Daniella Zsupan-Jerome



A Michael Glazier Book

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*To all communicators of the Word—  
may the word of God dwell in us richly in the digital age*



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# CHURCH AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION TIMELINE

This timeline, which is not exhaustive, notes some of the key developments in Catholic social communication leading up to the Second Vatican Council and after. It provides a chronological summary of the scope of this study.

- 1948:** Pius XII establishes *ad experimentum* Pontifical Commission for the Study and Ecclesiastical Evaluation of Films on Religious or Moral Subjects.
- 1948 September 17:** *Ad experimentum* commission formalized to become the Pontifical Commission for Educational and Religious Films.
- 1952:** Commission changes to Pontifical Commission for the Cinema.
- 1954:** Commission changes to Pontifical Commission for the Cinema, Radio, and Television.
- 1957 September:** Pius XII issues encyclical *Miranda Prorsus*.
- 1959 February 22:** John XXIII issues *motu proprio Boni Pastoris*, establishes the Pontifical Commission as permanent office.
- 1960 June 6:** John XXIII issues *motu proprio Superno Dei Nutu*, calls for a creation of a preparatory Secretariat for the Press and the Moderation of Shows (SPMS).
- 1962 August:** Secretariat SPMS finalizes and sends out schema "On the Means of Social Communication" to the members of the council. Secretariats reorganized and SPMS subsumed by the Commission for the Lay Apostolate (CLA).

- 1962** November 23–26: The schema on social communication is debated by the Second Vatican Council.
- 1962** December to **1963** June: Subcommission of CLA works on the revision of the schema.
- 1963** November 11: Revised document sent to council members.
- 1963** November 14: Vote on sections of the document. Vote passes.
- 1963** November 16–17: Two petitions circulate calling for a major revision of document.
- 1963** November 25: Vote on document as a whole. Vote passes.
- 1963** December 4: Final and formal vote on the document. Vote passes. Paul VI promulgates the document as conciliar decree *Inter Mirifica*.
- 1964** April 2: Motu proprio *In Fructibus Multis* renames Pontifical Commission for Film, Radio, and Television to Pontifical Commission for Social Communication. New scope to include the press as well as the whole consideration of social communication for the Church. Commission charged with creating pastoral instruction on social communication.
- 1964–1971**: Pontifical Commission and team of expert consultants work on five revisions of pastoral instruction on social communication.
- 1967** May 7: Observation of the first World Communication Day.
- 1971** January 21: Pope Paul VI informally approves pastoral instruction.
- 1971** May 23–24: Pastoral Instruction *Communio et Progressio* published. President of the Commission, Msgr. Martin O'Connor, disseminates document to bishops worldwide, urges implementation.
- 1971** June 3: Cardinal Gordon G. Grey of Edinburgh offers public presentation of *Communio et Progressio*.
- 1977**: Congregation for Catholic Education commissions study on seminary formation in social communication.
- 1986** March 19: Congregation for Catholic Education publishes *Guide to the Training of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communication*.
- 1987**: Plenary Assembly of Pontifical Commission for Social Communication explores the question of adding a commemorative supplement to *Communio et Progressio*.

- 1988 –1992:** Commission and expert consultants work on *Aetatis Novae*.
- 1989** March 1: Pontifical Commission for Social Communication becomes Pontifical Council.
- 1990** January 24: World Communications Day Message addresses “The Christian Message in a Computer Culture,” first among the messages with this specific focus.
- 1992** February 22: *Aetatis Novae*, Pastoral Instruction commemorating twentieth anniversary of *Communio et Progressio* published.
- 1995** December 25: The website [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va) becomes active.
- 2001** January 24: World Communications Day Message addresses digital media in “Preach from the Houselofts: The Gospel in the Age of Global Communication.”
- 2002** February 22: Pontifical Council for Social Communication publishes *Ethics in Internet* and *Church and Internet*.
- 2002** January 24: World Communications Day Message focuses on “The Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel.”
- 2005** January 24: John Paul II offers Apostolic Letter *The Rapid Development*, his last document.
- 2009:** World Communications Day Messages begin to consistently address digital media and digital culture.
- 2012** December: Papal Twitter account @Pontifex launched.
- 2013** January: The Pope App is released.



## PREFACE

In the spirit of evangelization, this study aims to bring good news to all pastoral ministers about the gift and challenge of digital communication. No longer just tools and instruments, the digital media have created a cultural milieu in which how we communicate, gain understanding, and relate to one another is changing. In the midst of these cultural changes, the Church's fundamental evangelizing mission remains the same: the great commission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world. As communication is essential to the Church's identity, the present cultural shift marked by the digital media is of utmost importance as it touches all of the Church's ministerial activity, on a global and local level. From the curial offices of the Vatican to the parish youth minister, we are all thinking about how to help make present the Gospel message in this emerging culture.

To experience a cultural shift is overwhelming, exciting, and challenging. In light of this, the good news this study bears is that of tradition. The Church has thought consistently about the gift and challenge of social communication for decades, beginning a systematic development of a social communication tradition with the Second Vatican Council's document *Inter Mirifica* (the Decree on the Mass Media). In the decades since Vatican II, the Church's reflection continued with the pastoral instructions *Communio et Progressio* and *Aetatis Novae*; shorter documents on Church, internet, and ethics; apostolic letters such as *The Rapid Development*; practical guides on formation; and a long line of World Communications Day messages. In addition to documents, the Church also teaches through practice, especially as digital media have become part and parcel of the practical activity

of the Church today. This study surveys this social communication tradition with an eye toward the formation of the pastoral minister for serving in our digital culture.

True to the ethos of digital culture, this study needs conversation partners to continue the reflection and keep facilitating the dialogue between tradition, culture, and the Church's evangelizing task. One salient area for further exploration is the thematic thrust of the World Communication Day Messages, which have since 1967 sustained the social communications conversation and have more recently assumed the reality of digital culture as a consistent context for reflection; this study offers a summary but sees an opportunity for elaboration.

This study stands on the shoulders of the documents and practices of the Church's social communication tradition, and I am grateful for the invaluable heritage they present for our digital culture. I am also grateful to a network of generous mentors, companions, and colleagues who have encouraged and supported this study: Dr. Tom Ryan, director of the Loyola Institute for Ministry and all of my colleagues there who have helped me balance teaching and work while writing this book; my generous, deep, and passionate students at Loyola who have thought with me; Loyola University New Orleans for supporting my travel to Rome; Helen and John Osman, Fr. Paul Soukup, SJ, and Fr. Antonio Spadaro, SJ, for your mentorship, wisdom, and example; colleagues who have gathered at TheoCom in Santa Clara for your inspiration; and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Communications Committee for inviting me into the conversation.

The final chapter of this book owes its research to my travel to Rome during the spring of 2014, and I am much indebted to the Pontifical Council for Social Communications for their hospitality and generosity in sharing their insights and experiences with digital media: Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, Monsignor Paul Tighe, T. J. Jones, Fr. Ariel Beramendi, Fr. Janvier Yameogo, and all the staff I had the pleasure of meeting there. Thank you also to Greg Burke of the Secretariat of State, Frank Rocca of Catholic News Service, and Fr. Joseph Fowler of the North American College for the opportunity for a conversation while there.

*Hálás köszönet* for the love and support of my family, who were companions, conversation partners, and fellow travelers along the way. For Randy and Fitz, my domestic Church—*deo gratias*.

Finally, I prayerfully express my gratitude to God for bringing this work to completion. I hope for the word of God to dwell in us richly in the digital age.

Daniella Zsupan-Jerome





# INTRODUCTION

*Culture is in a state of constant flux. And if you don't know what is happening today, you are outside of it.*<sup>1</sup> This pithy statement on *Wired* magazine's website sums up the dynamism, excitement, and pressure of our digital culture, a combination that leaves many lay and ordained ministers unsettled or even overwhelmed. How the digital media have saturated our culture is increasingly relevant for all contexts of communication today, including the Church in all of its local and universal manifestations. The gadgets that we and those we serve carry around have connected us in new ways, while distancing us in some others. Ministry professionals may wonder (or stress about) what is the best way to reach congregations, groups, and the people they serve, including those mysterious "digital natives" who are young enough that their world has always included internet-mediated communication. Beyond these, we wonder about how the Church can reach beyond her walls with the help of digital communication to be present to those who have left, who have lost interest, who are perhaps angry, or who have never been interested in the first place. The potential for being present through the digital media to those in and outside of the Church is exciting territory, inviting more and more exploration from those in ministry.

At the same time, exploring the digital media for ministry requires the time, skill set, and resources to do it well. Investing in digital

1. See [wired.com](http://www.wired.com/underwire/2013/08/101signals-culture/), <http://www.wired.com/underwire/2013/08/101signals-culture/>, accessed April 7, 2014.

media ministry is a real commitment. As *Wired* reminds us, these media are part of a culture that is in a constant state of flux. Technologies change, hardware and gadgets need updating and replacement, and establishing a vibrant online presence demands time, regular attention, and flexibility to move on to the next platform, if that is where people are. Sensing this commitment, many ministry professionals get overwhelmed or back away from exploring the digital possibilities of their ministry. As a result, many in ministry are caught in the uneasy place of sensing that we are in the throes of an immense cultural change, but unsure of how to participate in it manageably and effectively toward serving the reign of God.

*Wired* magazine's pithy statement above perpetuates a myth in hinting that what is culturally relevant is also what is most up-to-date. While the digital culture does indeed uphold "the latest" as one of its values, communication overall is a cultural reality that is as old as human relationality itself. It is a concept that involves the bodily, the symbolic, and the artistic, as well as the textual. From a theological point of view, it is a concept that invites us into the very mystery of God who is Father, Son, and Spirit in mutual and self-giving communication, and who communicates with humankind through the movement of revelation throughout history. This revelation culminates in the incarnation of *the Word*, who communicates salvation through his life, death, and resurrection. After him, communication of his good news becomes the Spirit-led task of the Church. This age-old mission to communicate is at the heart of the Church. From this perspective, the digital media are but the latest chapter in the long story of how the Church has gone about expressing this identity and mission to communicate.

This is a steady foundation for those in ministry, one that can alleviate the pressure that comes from being otherwise rooted in the dynamic reality of digital culture itself. As ministers of the Church, the task of communication is integral to the mission at hand. The Church has collective wisdom in this task for exploring the way forward in the digital age. This study invites readers into this reservoir of ecclesial teachings and practices, as it especially pertains to engaging in ministry in the digital age in and through internet-mediated communication. In special focus of this study are the social communication teachings and practices of the Church since the Second Vatican Council.

## Making a Case for Social Communication

On November 24, 1962, during the first session of the Second Vatican Council, Archbishop Rene Louis Marie Stroum of Sens, France, addressed the council members gathered in the nave of St. Peter's Basilica to begin their discussion of the topic of social communication. To make his case about the importance of this topic, Archbishop Stroum offered some numbers: around the world in 1962, there were 8,000 daily newspapers with a circulation of 300 million, 22,000 periodicals with a circulation of 200 million, 2,500 films produced annually seen 17 billion times, 600 broadcasting stations with an audience of 400 million, and 1,000 television stations reaching an audience of 120 million.<sup>2</sup> Tallying this up yields that the print and broadcast media were accessed 18 billion times. In exploring the topic of social communication, the council fathers recognized an increasingly powerful cultural phenomenon whereby the sharing of information was taking place at a massive scale. Being aware that information and ideas shared with a massive audience had the power to shape the mind, and indeed, culture itself, the council elevated in importance this topic, eventually producing and promulgating the decree *Inter Mirifica* as one of the sixteen documents of Vatican II.

Fifty plus years after the promulgation of this conciliar decree, the question of social communication has grown to define the culture of our digital age. As compared to the reach of the mass media in 1962, 2.8 billion people (39 percent of today's global population) access the internet, a social communications medium that was not available to the public at the time of the council.<sup>3</sup> Considering those numbers, along with the continuing reach of print and broadcast media (media one does not access through the internet), social communication is now a cultural force that shapes our day-to-day lives in new and constantly changing ways. Recognizing social communication and all of its innovative technologies as a cultural force does not mean that it is a distinct entity apart from the Church. In fact, since the promulgation

2. Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Mirifica* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 97.

3. Statistic provided for 2013 by the International Telecommunications Union; see <http://www.itu.int>, accessed April 7, 2014.

of *Inter Mirifica*, the past five decades have seen regular attention to the topic of social communication in the forms of ecclesial documents and, more recently, digital communication practices. Papal presence on social media and communication of Church news through mobile media applications are the most recent chapters in the story of how the Church has approached the task and mission of communicating faith in the digital age.

## Communicating Church

As noted above, the task of communication is integral to the Church. To claim then that the Church's thought on social communication stems from *Inter Mirifica* would be viewing the topic through too narrow a lens, both from the theological approach to communication and from the Church's self-understanding of her mission and her task. The Church communicates, both in her identity as the Body of Christ the Word incarnate, and in her task of proclaiming the Good News to all the earth (Mark 16:15). For theologians such as Avery Dulles and Franz-Josef Eilers, this communication comes from the movement at the very heart of the Trinity; it is the dynamic of revelation, it is expressed in fullness in the incarnation of the Word, and it becomes the task of the Church.<sup>4</sup> Since the Spirit empowered those gathered on Pentecost Day in the Upper Room to go and speak of the Gospel to the pilgrims in Jerusalem, the Church has been fundamentally concerned with the communication of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Media for communicating the Good News have also been integral to this evangelizing task: preaching and letter writing brought the message of the Gospel to the early Church, handwritten codices presented and preserved the Word in later centuries, slowly giving way to the printed word. From the perspective of communication, it is a powerful anecdote of history that the first printed volume on Gutenberg's press was a Bible. The twentieth century saw the broad-

4. See Franz-Josef Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 3rd ed. (Manila, Philippines: Logos, 2009); Avery Robert Dulles, "Vatican II and Communications," in *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives Twenty-Five Years After (1962–1987)*, ed. Rene Latourelle, vol. 3 (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), 528–47.

ening of communications media from print to the electronic—radio, television, film—and the Gospel found its unique expression through each of these. From the end of the twentieth century to the beginning of the twenty-first, we have experienced the rise of the digital media. Fruitful engagement with this media will be the next chapter in the Church’s long history of social communication.<sup>5</sup>

When *Inter Mirifica* and the subsequent pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio* (1971) were crafted, the term “social communication” brought to mind broadcast media such as print journalism, television and radio, film, and even theater to some extent. On the twentieth anniversary of *Communio et Progressio*, the pastoral instruction *Aetatis Novae* (1992) is first among these documents to mention computer networks, a medium that will merit its own documents a decade later (*Church and Internet* and *Ethics in Internet*, both published in 2002). In our present day, social communication is a term that continues to imply the traditional broadcast media, but it increasingly bears a closer association with the digital media and internet-mediated communication.<sup>6</sup> For social communication, the significance of the internet also ushers in new assumptions about communication on this massive scale. Social communication through the traditional broadcast media implies a one-to-many model of sharing information: there is a clear source of information and a clear audience who receives it. Social communication through the internet, especially since the advent of Web 2.0 technologies, reshapes this one-to-many

5. The brief overview of various media presented here is incomplete. In addition to media that focus on the verbal, considering the nonverbal, visual, embodied, performative, and ritual expressions of communication rounds out this picture. The history of Christian art presents a variety of other media that communicate the Good News in a spectrum of ways. Theater and performance are also media with a long history in Christian tradition. The liturgy itself has a ritual and symbolic language that communicates the Good News in a particular way. A full treatment of Christian media will thus consider the verbal, visual, embodied, performative, ritual, and sacramental languages of the tradition.

6. Media commentators have noted the gradual decline of print and other broadcast media, measured in advertising revenue, circulation, cumulative audience, and similar standards. Online media, on the other hand, are on a slight and steady rise, especially as many broadcasting outlets are broadening their reach to the digital audiences. See <http://stateofthedia.org/>, accessed April 7, 2014.

model into an interactive web. Internet-mediated communication since the rise of social media and mobile media applications has become a chorus of many voices who coparticipate in the creation, sharing, and dissemination of information. In addition to the grand-scale participation of the author-audience, the internet also grants freedom and flexibility for people to piece the information they gather together according to their own interests and preferences. Mobile media applications (apps) are especially effective in enabling people to glean from the flow of information only what is relevant and interesting to them. In the digital age, the audience has also become author and publisher, as well as agent of what information reaches them.<sup>7</sup>

The full implications of this shift are far from being determined; at best, we can enter into an ongoing dialogue with these cultural developments as they continue to unfold. This study intends to contribute to this ongoing dialogue, especially focusing on the internet as the dominant social communication medium of our digital age. Exploring what is new is at once daunting and exhilarating. From the perspective of theological scholarship, the digital media continue to raise pertinent questions about ontology, epistemology, morality, and ethics: being, knowing, and being together in this digital age. From a pastoral perspective, figuring out how to incorporate social and other digital media into ministerial practice is the lingering question of the day, especially as digital technologies continue to shape the way we communicate into something new. Yet the question is broader: rather than incorporating digital technologies into ministry, the greater challenge is to perceive and understand ministry as embedded in a new culture shaped profoundly by digital communication. For those forging ahead on this ministerial path, this study offers a systematic overview of the Church's approach to the question of social communication. Focusing on the Second Vatican Council and thereafter, this book pauses with each of the key social communication docu-

7. This rhetorical statement intends to illustrate the nature of the social web. Internet data-mining, online advertising methods, and efforts by companies to profile their digital consumer are significant factors that also shape the information we encounter online. For media commentators who warn against these, see, for example, Nicholas Carr, *The Shallows* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2011) and Jaron Lanier, *You Are Not a Gadget* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2010).

ments since the council, and then considers some of the more recent communications practices of the Church. The result is a study that distills some of the key points and positions on the questions of social communication, offering familiar markers for charting the unfamiliar road that lies ahead in the realm of the digital media.

One challenge to approaching digital media studies in a systematic way is that these media are indeed fluid and quickly changing with the advancement of communication technologies. The digital media tell an unfinished story, the narrative of which is at the same time powerfully reshaping how we communicate, including how we approach the finding, evaluating, understanding, and sharing of information. Gaining knowledge and accepting information as authentic, trustworthy, and true is a process that the digital media have radically augmented: knowledge and all of these aspects of it are increasingly participatory, user generated, collaborative, and rooted in the social network.<sup>8</sup> Top-down, single source information now finds (or loses) itself in a cacophony of comments, opinions, perspectives. In the social network, who said it and what they said seems to matter less than how many people converged around the information at hand or participated in the process of sharing that information. Going “viral” is the authentication of a new form of authority, albeit a fleeting one, quickly replaced by the next digital trend.

At the same time, authoritative voices of the traditional kind do remain. As of early 2014, 13 million people follow @Pontifex, the papal Twitter account, clear evidence that who Pope Francis is and what he says still matters. What has changed with the advent of the digital media is how people are able to interact with the information that arrives from traditional sources of authority. Following @Pontifex, one has the choice to appreciate, respect, disagree with, or even debase the papal messages, and to publicly manifest this choice through the sharing of one’s comments connected to each papal tweet. A papal tweet and messages ranging from affirmation to profanity share the same visual space, all making up the overall message on the screen. In the digital culture, our experience and

8. For an overview of participatory culture and the digital media, see Henry Jenkins, et al., *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

understanding of authority is shifting. This shift, as is the case for so much of digital media, is difficult to pin down and to fully define. As the digital communication continues to evolve, perhaps a more useful image for the moment is that of the pendulum, swinging from two opposite ends but remaining in touch with both.

Both remaining in touch with the traditional and welcoming what is new is the blessed challenge of pastoral theology and ministry, especially when it comes to digital culture. Both/ands are often conundrums that force the exploration of how two realities that are seemingly opposite in fact fit together, and for ministry, they are blessed challenges often out of which something truly creative can emerge. Both/ands are also familiar and integral to many of the beliefs and concepts at the heart of Catholic theology: Christ human and divine, the paschal mystery as death and resurrection, the risen Lord as present and absent, sacrament as tangible and transcendent, the Church as local and universal, the people of God as saints and sinners, the Body of Christ as one and many. The Catholic and Christian tradition overall invites a liminal existence, in the tension of the both/and, the already and the not yet. Theologically at least, we know the both/and, and pastorally, the transitional time we are living in our digital culture is a new opportunity for living this theology. The challenge is figuring out how to navigate this particular transition in this particular cultural context, holding both tradition and innovation in hand.

The topic of social communication can be a daunting one for pastoral workers and theological thinkers. By nature difficult to conclusively define but at the same time increasingly pervasive and relevant for our culture, social communication compels many of us to scramble to incorporate digital media practices into our ministries, while not fully exploring why or how to do so faithfully. This tendency is not new: accounts of the discussion of the council fathers in 1962, as they spent two and a half days on the subject, reveal the same tension. Their comments on the subject consistently revealed a sense of the subject's relevance, but they also lacked a systematic approach or a way to synthesize the question. The result of their work, *Inter Mirifica*, was an invitation to think more on the subject. This continued thought and practice is evidenced in the work of the Pontifical Council for Social Communication in documents such as *Communio et Progressio*



(1971), *Aetatis Novae* (1992), *The Church and Internet* (2002), and *Ethics in Internet* (2002).<sup>9</sup> Parallel to these are documents such as the Congregation for Catholic Education's *Guide to the Instruction of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communication* (1986), and John Paul II's *The Rapid Development* (2005), just two examples of the Church's broadening awareness and concern about media and faith. Alongside this whole trajectory is the establishment of World Communication Day and the series of papal messages published for each since 1967 as an ongoing exploration of the question of social communication. Finally, the witness of the Church in digital communication, such as its presence online, in social networking, and through mobile media applications also manifests the Church's ongoing engagement with the question of social communication and reveals the Church's implicit understanding on the topic. The explicit and implicit teaching present in these works and examples offers guidance to the greater Church as well as a foundation out of which to think, explore, and minister as the media of our time continue to evolve.

## Formation for Ministry in the Digital Age

This foundation is, however, neither a synthesis nor a once-and-for-all assessment of digital media from the perspective of faith. What the Church's explicit and implicit teaching on this topic offers instead is a basis for ongoing dialogue and exploration of how the means of social communication continue to shape culture, and how the Church can continue effectively to exercise her fundamental task of evangelization in this changing context. This basis is one of ongoing ambiguity and opportunity, challenge and frustration, marvel and excitement. In addition to existing in this ongoing state of exploration, there are other real and practical challenges to effective social communication for faith: resources, materials, personnel, and technical

9. Between 1992 and 2002, the Pontifical Council for Social Communication worked specifically on the question of ethics: *Ethics in Advertising* (1997), *Ethics in Communication* (2000), and finally, *Ethics in Internet* (2002), a companion to *Church and Internet*. These documents are important but beyond the scope of this present work.

know-how. Given all of these, *Inter Mirifica* called for formation of all lay and ordained ministers “to acquire the competence needed to use the media for the apostolate.”<sup>10</sup> Formation is also the term echoed by the Pontifical Council for Social Communication (PCCS) today as it continues to explore this topic from a practical perspective for the good of the Church. According to Archbishop Claudio Celli, president of the PCCS:

Formation is essential for developing and laying a solid foundation for the Church’s communications ministry. If we are to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ through our personal witness and our professional work in the media, if we want to promote true reconciliation, justice and peace, we must have communicators who are properly formed in Christian values and morals, and not only professionally trained in communication techniques and technology.<sup>11</sup>

Along these lines, this study will use the concept of formation as a specific lens for examining the Church’s teaching about social communication since the Second Vatican Council. In examining key documents and practices since Vatican II, we will especially consider how the explicit and implicit teachings of the Church aim to be formative for personal witness and professional work in the Church. By using this lens, this study will help readers gather what the Church teaches about social communication, as well as offer them practical steps for engaging with the digital media. Such engagement is necessary not only out of practical necessity but also out of the shared mission of the Church to communicate the Good News in word, deed, and witness of life.

What is meant by formation?<sup>12</sup> In a sense, this term is broadly applicable to the nurturing of Christian identity. Formation is part of the language of articulating the task of catechesis, the process by

10. IM 15.

11. Claudio Maria Celli, “Social Communication,” *AFER* 51, no. 3 (September 1, 2009): 188.

12. The concept of formation is broadly applicable for multiple forms and contexts of religious education. For this present study, the focus remains on the nurturing of ministers for service of the Church. For an overview of different approaches to and understanding of formation, see Paul Overend, “Education or

which believers are nurtured toward conversion of mind and heart to Jesus Christ.<sup>13</sup> Likewise, formation also describes the nurturing of those called to the religious or consecrated life, as well as professional ministerial identity, such as toward priesthood and lay ecclesial ministry. For the purpose of this study, formation will imply this latter category, focusing especially on those in professional ministry who seek to integrate effective social communication practices into their work.

The Second Vatican Council treated the question of professional ministerial formation most specifically in *Optatam Totius*, the 1965 decree on the training of priests, and to a lesser extent in *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the 1965 decree on the apostolate of the laity.<sup>14</sup> In the decades since the council, the Church has reflected on such professional formation from a broader ministerial perspective, including priestly formation and the formation of those called to lay ecclesial ministry.<sup>15</sup> The goals and guidance set for both priestly and lay ecclesial ministry formation envision a fourfold approach of edifying the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral capacities of persons called to ministry.<sup>16</sup> These four categories of formation will also help to frame the lens by which this study will examine the formative aspects of the Church's teaching on social communication. In studying the Church's social communications documents and practices, elements that seek to edify the human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral capacities

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Formation? The Issue of Personhood in Learning for Ministry," *Journal of Adult Theological Education* 4, no. 2 (2007): 133–48.

13. See, for instance, *General Directory for Catechesis* (Washington, DC: USCCB Publishing, 1998), 25.

14. In terms of a treatment of formation, *Optatam Totius* provides a more systematic approach, already naming the four elements that John Paul II will later flesh out in *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* acknowledges the need for the training toward the apostolate in more general terms. See AA 28–33.

15. In the United States, two key documents to illustrate this are *The Program of Priestly Formation* (2006) and *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (2005).

16. See John Paul II's 1992 Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, paragraphs 43–59; *Program of Priestly Formation*, 28–84; *Co-Workers*, 33–49. *Optatam Totius* already names the need for spiritual (8–12), intellectual (13–18), and pastoral training (19–20), along with formation toward human maturity (11). *Pastores Dabo Vobis* distills these four toward a systematic plan.

will receive special note. With an eye toward our digital context, the reality of a changing culture of communication shaping all four of these pillars in new ways presents new questions, opportunities, and challenges for ministerial formation today.

A full treatment of each of these four elements is beyond the scope of this work, but they are fleshed out in John Paul II's *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), the post-synodal apostolic exhortation on priestly formation, as well as subsequent priestly and lay ecclesial formation plans, *Program of Priestly Formation* (2006) and *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (2005), both created to guide ministerial formation in the United States. In order to better understand the formative potential of the Church's teaching on social communication, each of the four main pillars of ministerial formation contain key aspects relevant for social communication and for approaching ministry in the digital age. Along these lines, this study proposes a departure from an overly practical understanding of communication perceived solely as a pastoral skill, such as training for how to handle an interview or preside at a televised liturgy. In the cultural shift wrought by digital communication, social communication raises broader questions under all four pillars.

### ***Human Formation***

Human formation aims to develop the minister's capacity to relate to those around them, especially those they serve in their professional context. According to *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, the goal of effective human formation for ministry is for the minister's personality to serve as a bridge for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of humanity.<sup>17</sup> Along these lines, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard* similarly emphasizes human qualities such as character and a healthy and well-balanced personality for the sake of personal growth and ministerial service.<sup>18</sup> Relevant for this study of social communication is the emphasis that Church teaching on human formation places on the minister's capacity to relate to others in terms of community and communion. According to *Pastores Dabo Vobis*:

17. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 43.

18. *Co-Workers*, 36.

This is truly fundamental for a person who is called to be responsible for a community and to be a “man of communion.” This demands that the priest not be arrogant, or quarrelsome, but affable, hospitable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discreet, generous and ready to serve, capable of opening himself to clear and brotherly relationships and of encouraging the same in others, and quick to understand, forgive and console (125) (cf. 1 Tim 3:1-5; Titus 1:7-9). People today are often trapped in situations of standardization and loneliness, especially in large urban centers, and they become ever more appreciative of the value of communion. Today this is one of the most eloquent signs and one of the most effective ways of transmitting the Gospel message.<sup>19</sup>

Communicating to relate with others and bring them toward community and communion is a quality that is highlighted anew by the digital context; according to Msgr. Paul Tighe, the question of formation for communication needs to begin here.<sup>20</sup> Internet-mediated communication paradoxically connects and isolates: we can connect with anyone on the World Wide Web, but our mutual presence is mediated by the tools available to us. Conveying presence online entails a range of options, from textual and asynchronous communication such as e-mail, to audiovisual and synchronous communication, such as live web conferencing. Where our communication falls within this range shapes the presence we convey. As the technologies evolve, our presence can become increasingly media rich yet remain qualitatively different than what we experience with one another face-to-face. Mediated presence poses a key question for formation in the digital age, challenging us to think about how we can maintain relationships, develop new ones, and ensure that we can continue to be available to the people to whom we should be present.<sup>21</sup> Human formation in the digital age thus involves the minister’s capacity to be present to the people he or she serves, with an ecology of options to convey presence. These dynamics of human relationality in the digital context raise new questions for what it means to communicate toward

19. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 43.

20. Paul Tighe, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, personal interview, February 18, 2014.

21. *Ibid.*

community and communion. As this study explores the Church's teachings on social communications, the question of human formation for relating authentically in the digital age will prove critical.

### ***Spiritual Formation***

Spiritual formation is essential to the overall formation of the professional minister; in fact *Pastores Dabo Vobis* considers spiritual formation as the completion of human formation.<sup>22</sup> Along these lines, spiritual formation elevates human relationality to human-divine relationality. It invites the professional minister into its very source: the mystery of the Trinity.<sup>23</sup> While much focus is placed on developing an interiority for ministry, spiritual formation in fact entails community: it assumes that the human person's innate search for God is a search for Christ that is inherited from and nurtured by the Church community. Praying with the word, participating in the liturgy, and engaging in service are essential to this process.<sup>24</sup>

From the perspective of social communication, commitment to spiritual formation calls us to assess the potential of the digital media for facilitating the interior search for God toward the encounter with Christ, ultimately expressed in the context of the worshipping community.<sup>25</sup> Spiritual formation in the digital age challenges us to discern and seek spaces for solitude and silence as part and parcel of our digital culture rather than apart from it, so that our presence to one another can be authentic and manifest God's presence through real relationships.<sup>26</sup> More specifically, it asks whether digital communication practices can image the pattern of human-divine communication that is rooted in the

22. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 45.

23. See *Optatam Totius* 8, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 45.

24. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 46.

25. This approach here aims to be consistent with the articulation of and vision for professional ministry in the Roman Catholic context. The topic of online religion and spirituality as a whole also includes a variety of other assumptions and understandings of how spirituality and Internet-mediated communication intersect, challenge, and/or enhance one another. See Heidi Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005).

26. Paul Tighe, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, personal interview, February 18, 2014.

life of the Trinity. Franz-Josef Eilers notes regarding ministerial formation overall that it necessarily implies a process that “affects the whole person and his/her basic inner disposition.”<sup>27</sup> For social communication toward ministry, according to Eilers, this inner disposition must be capable of the “giving of self in love” in image of the very dynamic of the Trinity that generates the Christian concept of communication.<sup>28</sup> The nurturing of an inner disposition from which the minister authentically gives oneself in love speaks to the spiritual formation pillar most directly. Forming and living out this disposition can be challenging in the digital context, especially in terms of maintaining good ministerial boundaries. In the digital context, the skill of presenting oneself authentically while at the same time maintaining appropriate boundaries is a standard that finds itself in the midst of a whole range of experimentation with self-presentation. From the intentional creation of a profile page to representing oneself through an avatar, the giving of oneself online happens in a host of ways. Similarly, boundaries are tested as personal information becomes simultaneously public when shared online. With this in mind, this study will highlight what the Church’s teaching and practices offer toward the spiritual formation of those engaging in ministry in and through the digital media.

### *Intellectual Formation*

Intellectual formation toward professional ministry aims to enable a greater understanding of the content of faith and the capacity to articulate it truthfully so that others may also grow in understanding as well. Its ultimate hope is “to participate in the light of God’s mind” as it “seeks to acquire wisdom which in turn opens to and is directed toward knowing and adhering to God.”<sup>29</sup> From the perspective of the ecclesial task of communicating faith, intellectual formation is important for the process of revelation, and for the human person’s effective participation in the transmission of the content of faith.

The digital media of social communication offer significant opportunities and challenges for the task of intellectual formation toward

27. Eilers, *Communicating in Ministry and Mission*, 157.

28. *Ibid.*

29. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 51.

ministry. In digital culture, education and the role of the teacher shifts as a whole, from a gatekeeper or dispenser of knowledge to a guide who accompanies the learner and offers a frame of reference or criteria for judging and interpreting content.<sup>30</sup> Teaching as dispensing content no longer dominates; the digital media offer access to information at an unprecedented scale. The sheer quantity of information available is an undeniable gift for learning, research, and other intellectual pursuits, and it broadens the possibility for access beyond the classroom. On the other hand, not all information is the same. It can be challenging to evaluate information online (or its source) as authentic, trustworthy, and true. Teaching as guiding becomes relevant here, as learning to evaluate information online is part of an overall digital media literacy that is necessary for effective social communication. This study will examine the Church's teachings on social communication with an eye toward what these teachings might offer toward greater digital media literacy for ministry.

### ***Pastoral Formation***

Pastoral formation for lay and ordained ministers emerges from practical theology and implies action that is rooted in, grows from, and returns to theological reflection. Pastoral formation envisions the minister in his or her professional role, and thus seeks to enhance the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for this.<sup>31</sup> This professional role is often, in some sense, a role of leadership or a role of collaboration with other professionals toward a common effort in ministry, and above all seeks the building of community. For the priestly ministry, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* offers the biblical image of the good shepherd as the metaphor for the priest's pastoral role.<sup>32</sup> For lay and ordained professional ministers, pastoral formation entails and incorporates more than good leadership and administrative skills. Exercising one's pastoral role is always a public, ecclesial task that represents Christ's own servant leadership in and for the community.

30. Paul Tighe, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, personal interview, February 18, 2014.

31. *Co-Workers*, 49.

32. John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 57.



In terms of social communication, the pastoral aspect of formation offers the opportunity and challenge for ministerial professionals to guide and serve people online. This poses the question of not just whether to be present online, but how to be present in a way that will lead people to encounter Jesus Christ, here represented through how the minister exercises the public and ecclesial role of servant leadership, especially in communication. Integral to this is building community: not only to offer presence to individuals but also to foster relationships in the community by getting others to communicate as well.<sup>33</sup> In addition to relationality on a communal level, exercising the public voice, serving as thought-leader, and exemplifying good digital citizenship practices are some of the practical skills and tasks that fall under this aspect of formation.<sup>34</sup> As practical theology also invites ministers to be reflectively rooted in the revealed Word of God, a challenge for pastoral formation toward an online ministerial presence is how to incorporate a consistent method of critical reflection into their pastoral work online. As Nicholas Carr warns in *The Shallows* (2011), the internet is a medium that scatters the attention, and could in fact hinder deep, sustained, reflective, and creative thought. While Carr's warnings are contested, his observation about the pace and focus (or lack of focus) of our online activities is worth considering.<sup>35</sup> This study proceeds with an eye toward what the Church's teachings on social communication offer for pastoral formation along these lines in the digital context.

### *Do Not Be Afraid*

Each time I begin a new semester of online or hybrid teaching, I encourage students with these scriptural words. Most of my students at the Loyola Institute for Ministry are already either professional

33. Paul Tighe, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, personal interview, February 18, 2014.

34. Elizabeth Drescher describes online ministerial presence through social media such as blogging as "thought-leadership." See Drescher and Anderson. *Click 2 Save: The Digital Ministry Bible* (New York: Morehouse, 2012), 94–95.

35. For a different and more optimistic interpretation of the cognitive effects of internet-mediated communication, see, for instance, Cathy Davidson, *Now You See It* (New York: Penguin, 2012).

ministers or hoping to pursue this path, and many of my assignments require the students to explore the digital media for ministry. Oftentimes, even the students thoroughly versed in the internet and digital media in general are new to both online learning and the exploration of digital media ministry resources. *Do not be afraid* is more than just a generally applicable truth from the wisdom of Scripture. It is a phrase that roots Christian ministers today in the tradition that has preceded them for millennia. It is a phrase that resounds in Scripture dozens of times, from Genesis to Revelation. In the Gospel of John, it is among the risen Lord's parting words as he entrusts his ministry to his followers. And in the popular Catholic theology of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, it is a phrase that Pope John Paul II used over and over again in his messages to the Church and the world. *The Rapid Development*, his last apostolic letter and one that addresses social communication in the digital age, ends by vehemently echoing this phrase. It is tradition, past and present.

Evoking this sense of tradition is intentional. Overwhelmed, daunted, challenged, intrigued, and enthusiastic are just a few ways to describe the complex mind-set of those facing the digital media with a professional ministerial aim for the first time. Reminding these learners of the tradition as a long-standing and sure foundation for what they set out to do is the symbol of my encouragement for them in the beginning of a course. I offer this study to readers in the same spirit. Do not be afraid of this unknown, overwhelming, evolving, dangerous, marvelous, and awesome medium, a medium that, in the words of Paul VI, "human skill is daily rendering more perfect."<sup>36</sup> The wisdom of the tradition, the guidance of the Spirit, and fruitful dialogue between faith and culture will pave the way on this new path.

36. Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 45.

# 1

## BEGINNING THE CONVERSATION

### *Inter Mirifica*: The Decree on the Mass Media (1963)

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As the introduction points out, the story of the Church's teaching on communications did not begin with the conciliar decree *Inter Mirifica*. In fact, the conciliar decree did not even mark the first time the Church offered teaching on the means of social communication in a modern sense; Pope Pius XII's *Miranda Prorsus*, predating the council by six years, is an encyclical similar in focus to *Inter Mirifica*.<sup>1</sup> Yet the consideration of social communication at a conciliar level elevates this topic in importance in such a way that *Inter Mirifica* became a benchmark document for contemporary discussions of Church teaching on social communication. In addition to *Inter Mirifica*'s status as

1. For an overview of the history of the Church' teaching on social communication, see Franz-Josef Eilers, *Communicating Church: Social Communication Documents* (Manila, Philippines: Logos, 2011). For a summary of the Church teaching on the media in the decades leading up to Vatican II, see Matthew E. Bunson, "The History and Development of Post-Conciliar Catholic Social Communications," in *Foundation Theology 2007: Student Essays for Ministry Professionals* (South Bend, IN: Cloverdale, 2007), 206–7. For a bibliographic overview of ecclesial documents and commentaries that touch on the topic of communication, see Paul A. Soukup, *Christian Communication: A Bibliographical Survey*, ed. G. E. Gorman, vol. 14 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), 79–91.

a conciliar decree, the council itself that generated it added to the overall relevance of this document for social communication, and what we may learn from it for our digital culture. Although *Inter Mirifica* predates the clarity the council came to in its later discussion of the Church and the modern world communicated in the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, Bishop Walther Kampe asserts that the decree should still be read in the spirit of *Gaudium et Spes*, a spirit that “entails a positive attitude on the part of the Church towards human activity and achievement,” and a spirit that came eventually to define Vatican II.<sup>2</sup>

The Second Vatican Council’s status as a watershed moment for the Church in the twentieth century has been treated extensively in scholarly literature.<sup>3</sup> Key words to describe the spirit of the council include renewal, reform, aggiornamento (updating), openness, dialogue, and reading the signs of the times. It is significant that the Church entered into conversation regarding the topic of social communication in this spirit. Wisely recognizing the cultural shifts occurring around this topic, the Church began a conversation, seeking to find wisdom moving forward as these new media continued to shape the world.

Along these lines, *Inter Mirifica* is less systematic and instead more engaged in the ongoing observation of the means of social communication, offering moral and pastoral entry points for the voice of faith and beginning a dialogue with this aspect of culture so that humankind may ultimately flourish through its use. This stance, which was much critiqued at the time of the decree’s promulgation for not offering more definitive teaching on communication can be viewed as providential for today’s ecclesial approach toward social communication as it leaves the conversation open to the evolution of the media and the digital culture of communication generated by it.

Andre Ruzzkowski, SJ, names *Inter Mirifica* the most criticized yet least known and understood document of the Second Vatican

2. Walther Kampe, “Communicating with the World: The Decree *Inter Mirifica*,” in *Vatican II Revisited by Those Who Were There* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1986), 200.

3. The bibliography on analyzing the history and legacy of Vatican II is large and continues to grow. For those unfamiliar with this literature, Maureen Sullivan’s *101 Questions and Answers on Vatican II* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002) is a helpful basic introduction.

Council.<sup>4</sup> At the time of its initial reception, Ruskowski notes, many were hoping for and would have appreciated solid doctrinal teaching on the topic of social communication.<sup>5</sup> Given the ongoing fluidity of the means of social communication of our present day, this doctrinal clarity remains desirable for many professional ministers. When it comes to the digital media, it is enticing to imagine a clear path ahead, with definitive answers to questions such as “*how do we understand them and what do we do with them?*” In 1963 Catholics wondered likewise about broadcast media, yet the final version of *Inter Mirifica* resisted too much doctrinal prescriptiveness, frustrating those who recognized the power of the media and sought to know how to approach it faithfully. The problem was, as the council fathers recognized, modern media and the instruments of social communication are a dynamic, global reality that have not yet fully taken form, either in terms of the evolution of the instruments, the way these means have shaped and continue to shape culture, or the emerging scholarship around the topic.

Aware that the means of social communication formed an emerging topic, *Inter Mirifica* thus weighed less on *how do we understand them* and significantly more so on *what do we do with them*. For this reason, the document is predominantly moral and pastoral in its wisdom, focusing on guidelines to shape the practice of communication in the Church and society. At the same time, recognizing that the overall vision of faithful communication still merited doctrinal articulation, *Inter Mirifica* also set up a generative structure for such a practical theology to emerge, as it did so in the 1971 pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio*, the topic of the next chapter. Commentators often treat *Inter Mirifica* and *Communio et Progressio* together, honoring the pastoral instruction as a completion of the conciliar decree. Acknowledging the close association between these two documents, each of them merit a chapter in this study with a special eye toward how they edify the process of professional ministerial formation.

4. Andre Ruskowski, “Decree on the Means of Social Communication: Success or Failure of the Council?,” in *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives: Twenty Five Years After (1962–1987)*, vol. 3, ed. Rene Latourelle (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 550.

5. *Ibid.*, 549.

## History and Context

The Second Vatican Council addressed the topic of social communication over two and a half days from November 23 to November 26, 1962. Compared to other discussions, this treatment was relatively brief. Before the topic of social communication was discussed, the council fathers grappled with the liturgy, then with revelation. After social communication, the topics of Christian unity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Church were next on the agenda. Social communication's place on the agenda was therefore intentional: it was considered a lighter topic, and perceived as a "break" after the heavier discussions of liturgy and revelation, even termed as an "opportunity for relaxation" by Cardinal Cento, the president of the Commission for the Lay Apostolate, which housed the secretariat that prepared the schema for discussion.<sup>6</sup> This perception shaped the attention given to the topic itself, especially as some council fathers peeked ahead at the schema on the Blessed Virgin Mary and on the Church, both distributed at the same time as the discussion on social communication was beginning to unfold.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, as compared to the liturgy, revelation, and the other topics on the agenda, some council fathers wondered about whether social communication was theological enough of a topic to merit a conciliar discussion and a document. Cardinal Cento acknowledged this sentiment in his introduction to the debate. As Xavier Rynne documents, Cento "asked for the good will of the audience in dealing with a matter which though not strictly theological in substance, was still a most important element in the pastoral work of the Church."<sup>8</sup> In the midst of these doubts, distractions, and the desire for an easy discussion, the topic of social communication came before the council fathers.

In order to prepare the council for this discussion, a preparatory secretariat drafted a schema on the topic between 1960 and 1962. Their task was to formulate a doctrine on social communication, including guid-

6. Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Mirifica* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 96.

7. Xavier Rynne, *Letters from Vatican City: Vatican Council II (First Session): Background and Debates* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Company, 1963), 175.

8. *Ibid.*, 176.

ance on forming the conscience for the right use of the media; emphasis on how faith and morals might shape film, radio, and television; and how these might be used to proclaim the Gospel.<sup>9</sup> The resulting draft spanned forty pages and included four main sections dealing with the Church's doctrine, its apostolate, Church discipline and order, and observations on particular media.<sup>10</sup> This document was disseminated to the council members as the discussion on revelation wrapped up on November 21, 1962. On November 24, Cardinal Cento opened the discussion on it and then gave the floor to Archbishop Stourm of Sens who outlined the schema in hand. For two and a half days, fifty-four council fathers gave brief addresses about the topic in response to the schema, while an additional forty-three respondents submitted written feedback.<sup>11</sup> This feedback was registered and returned to the preparatory secretariat to work on a revised draft. Between December of 1962 and June of 1963, the secretariat considered the feedback received from the council and worked on a drastic reduction of the text. A year later, in November of 1963, this revised and much shorter draft was recirculated, voted upon chapter by chapter then as a whole. It gained final approval on December 4, after which Pope Paul VI promulgated the document as the conciliar decree *Inter Mirifica*.

Studying the survey of the addresses given at Vatican II is a fascinating task. It at once reveals how inspired this gathering of the Church was, and also grounds it as an experience that was at the same time completely and fully human. The addresses offered in response to the schema on social communication ranged from the insightful to the worrisome, from the concise to the exploratory, from the constructive to the alarmist.<sup>12</sup> In many ways, this range of comments

9. Karlheinz Schmidthus, "Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication," in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler, vol. 1 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967), 89.

10. For a more specific outline of the schema, see Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Mirifica*, 94–95.

11. Mathijs Lambrigts, "The Discussion of the Modern Media," in *History of Vatican II*, ed. Joseph A. Komonchak and Giuseppe Alberigo, vol. 2 (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 269.

12. For a summary of the main addresses articulated during this debate, see Rynne, *Letters from Vatican City: Vatican Council II (First Session): Background and Debates*, 177–85.

foreshadowed the discussions about the digital media we continue to engage in today.

While it proved to be somewhat of a struggle to maintain the council father's attention around this topic, once the discussion was under way, those who spoke generally appreciated the topic's place on the agenda and recognized its cultural and pastoral importance.<sup>13</sup> Initial feedback from the council members questioned the schema's length, its inward and ecclesial focus, and its overall merit as a topic for conciliar consideration.<sup>14</sup> Forty pages of text with a main focus on the Church missed the mark in some council fathers' assessment. Engaging in dialogue with culture around this topic and emphasizing the role of the laity in a pastoral vision forward were suggested improvements upon the existing approach of the schema.

The ongoing debate raised a variety of issues concerning the media that generally fell into two broad categories: a constructive approach that sought to explore the potential of the instruments of social communication for the Church's missionary mandate to proclaim the Gospel, and a critical approach warning against the harmful effects of the media on Church, culture, and society. In addition to these two broad categories, Kampe also points out two additional seeds planted during the discussion: exploring the Church's own use of communication, and exploring how the Church might support society's communication to promote understanding and cooperation therein.<sup>15</sup> In some ways, these four broad questions continue to frame the discussion around social communication in our digital culture, as the Church today considers the possibilities and risks of internet-mediated communication in and outside of the Church.

Though these larger questions animated the discussion about social communication, the draft was nonetheless approved in substance. When the revised draft returned to the council a year later in November 1963, its reception was surrounded by some tension.

13. For an overview of the comments, including some notable exceptions who critiqued the topic as a whole, see Lamberigts, "The Discussion of the Modern Media," 271ff.

14. Schmidthus, "Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication," 91.

15. Kampe, "Communicating with the World: The Decree" *Inter Mirifica*, 200.



Although the majority vote carried the new draft forward, there were also two minority factions that were unhappy with it to the point of starting petitions to reopen the discussion around the document. One critique challenged the vision set forth by the schema concerning the Church's relation with the press, calling it unrealistic and too prescriptive of how the two should collaborate. The other critique continued to maintain that the topic was not appropriate for an ecumenical council and that the present schema remained still too juridical and focused on the role and authority of the Church.<sup>16</sup> These two petitions garnered some support on the last day of the voting, but not enough to gain a majority. Still, of all the documents of Vatican II, *Inter Mirifica* remains among the ones with the largest number of negative votes in its final vote.<sup>17</sup> As Norman Tanner comments, dissatisfaction with the new text seems to have been widespread, but there was hesitancy around reopening the discussion on it, in lieu of moving forward:

The council authorities were understandably reluctant in these circumstances to go back on the voting and to open up anew the whole decree. . . . Many members of the council shared these hesitations even as they became increasingly aware of both the deficiencies of the document and the importance of the topics it was treating. They did not want the council to get bogged down with the decree when it has so much else to do.<sup>18</sup>

Once the decree was promulgated, it received critical and often negative feedback in its reception, parallel with the concerns about it raised during the discussions of the council.<sup>19</sup> Reviewers were disappointed: it was considered neither an innovative nor creative document, nor one that truly explored the topic of social communication vis-à-vis the modern media. Still, the decree's value in putting the topic on the table and inviting further discussion on it was appreciated by most.

16. For a five-point overview of both critiques, see Schmidthus, "Decree on the Instruments of Social Communication," 92–94.

17. Eilers, *Communicating Church: Social Communication Documents*, 136.

18. Tanner, *The Church and the World: Gaudium et Spes, Inter Mirifica*, 101.

19. *Ibid.*

Franz-Josef Eilers notes a number of additional positive points about the legacy of *Inter Mirifica*.<sup>20</sup> To ensure ongoing conversation about social communication, *Inter Mirifica* established a generative structure: the commemoration of an annual World Day of Communication, a postconciliar pastoral instruction to elaborate on the topic, and a permanent institution for social communication in the Roman Curia, as well as on national and diocesan levels. In addition, as Eilers points out, *Inter Mirifica* introduced the expression “social communication” into the Church’s vocabulary, a broad expression that covers “all ways, means and situations of communications in human societies.”<sup>21</sup> This expression moved the discussion from focusing solely on the media or on the tools and instruments by which communication takes place toward the possibility of considering communication on a macro level and thus in a theological and pastoral sense as well. In this sense, the term is a bridge builder between the evolving cultural realities of communication and the wisdom of the theological tradition that is able to dialogue with it. Eilers also notes that given the increasingly social nature of digital communication today (such as the prevalence of social media and social networking), the term social communication that we inherit from Vatican II was providential for engaging in conversation with digital culture.<sup>22</sup>

With *Inter Mirifica*, the Church became a conversation partner to social communication. It may not have been the most exhaustive or in-depth conversation, but it opened a dialogue that continues to engage the Church and the world today. While this conciliar acknowledgement of the topic was just a silver lining for those disappointed by the document in 1963, today this conversation bears wisdom for engaging in social communication in the digital age. Ongoing dialogue with digital culture and intentional flexibility around pastoral praxis serve professional ministers much more effectively than an overly defined and prescriptive approach, which can quickly become outdated if addressing particular media. Media constantly change, and digital culture engenders a sense of user participation in the creation and sharing of information. For better or worse, a prescriptive

20. Eilers, *Communicating Church: Social Communication Documents*, 136–38.

21. *Ibid.*, 136.

22. *Ibid.*, 138.

approach for social communication today would face and clash with these cultural realities and expectations. A dialogical approach, on the other hand, allows the Church to continue to explore and assess new media for their gifts and limitations, even as these new media change.

A dialogical approach to social communication benefits the Church's fundamental task of evangelization, as the digital culture continues to provide new methods and expressions for proclaiming the Good News. At the same time, the Church's missionary mandate calls into consideration not only the means by which the message of the Gospel is communicated but also the content of the message itself and the Church's responsibility to teach it.<sup>23</sup> As such, dialogue also brings content: wisdom to be shared about communication for the good of culture, society, and humankind. In this regard, *Inter Mirifica* offers some key entry points that bring the tradition into intentional conversation with the cultural realities of social communication.

## Overview of *Inter Mirifica*<sup>24</sup>

*Inter Mirifica* divides into four brief sections: an introduction (1–2), a chapter on doctrinal foundations (3–12), a chapter on pastoral implications (13–22), and a conclusion (23–24). The introduction sets a constructive and positive tone, referring to the “genius of humankind that has produced marvelous technical inventions from creation with God’s help,” and affirms the Church’s interest in this.<sup>25</sup> At the same time, the tone is not overly optimistic: the introduction also alludes to the dangers of social communication; for example, the ways it can be “damaging or contrary to the Creator’s design.”<sup>26</sup> For this reason, the Church enters into conversation with the topic of social communication, looking to offer wisdom and guidance toward “the salvation of Christians and the progress of humankind.”<sup>27</sup>

23. See Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*.

24. Rather than a full summary, the section here is offered as a complement to the document, meant to enrich the reading of the conciliar decree.

25. See IM 1 in the translation provided by Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents* (Northport, NY: Costello, 1996), 539.

26. IM 2.

27. *Ibid.*

The doctrinal foundations of *Inter Mirifica* briefly situate the Church's interest in the topic of social communication in the Church's mandate to proclaim the Gospel. It affirms that the media can contribute to the formation of the faithful and the broader pastoral work of the Church, and within an ecclesial context, it places the responsibility on the pastoral leaders of the Church to guide and show the way how. By contrast, when it comes to the broader cultural reality of the media, the document specifically names the lay faithful as those responsible to "animate the media with a Christian and human spirit."<sup>28</sup> As such, the scope of the document is already wide, encompassing the communication of the Church, as well as the Church's observation about the greater cultural realities of communication. The remainder of the doctrinal foundations are practical: they reinstate the Church's ethical principles on the moral order, the formation of conscience, the common good, justice, and freedom, especially as all of these pertain to the creation, sharing, access to, and dissemination of information through the instruments of social communication. If one is searching for a theology of communication among these doctrinal principles, it is not yet here. Rather, *Inter Mirifica* summarizes the ethical principles of the tradition vis-à-vis a new cultural context. By and large, the principles are directed toward greater society and the use of the media by those who authorize, produce, and receive it.

In chapter 2 of *Inter Mirifica*, the document returns to addressing the Church's own use of social communication. True to the tone of the introduction, the tone here is likewise one of tempered enthusiasm: on the one hand, the document calls all members of the Church to ensure that "the media are utilized in the service of the many works of the apostolate without delay and as energetically as possible." On the other hand, it also calls for the forestallment of any projects likely to prove harmful.<sup>29</sup> The responsibility is on pastoral leaders, but lay faithful who work in the media are also called to bear witness to Christ in their particular roles, as well as in collaboration with the pastoral activity of the Church.<sup>30</sup> Along these lines, the document envisions a wholesome Catholic press, wholesome cinematic entertainment,

28. *Ibid.*, 3.

29. *Ibid.*, 13.

30. *Ibid.*

and decent radio and television programs, as well as the intentional support of Catholic broadcasting stations.<sup>31</sup> The chapter reiterates that priests, religious, and laity should all receive training to actualize this vision. Laypeople in the media ought to receive appropriate Christian formation in the Church's social teaching so as to be able to witness to their faith authentically through their professional roles. Likewise, teachings on the theoretical and practical use of the media should be on the curriculum of Catholic schools, especially as they relate to principles of Christian morality and social thought. The chapter closes with a strong encouragement of ongoing support to maintain and assist the Catholic media, as well as calling for an annual day of social communication in each diocese, the creation of a pontifical office, as well as the establishment of national and diocesan structures to promote the Church's effective use of social communication.

*Inter Mirifica* concludes by calling for a pastoral instruction "to ensure that all the principles and rules of the council on the media may be put into effect."<sup>32</sup> Its final thought is an exhortation to the daughters and sons of the Church as well as all people of good will to seek only the edifying use of the media for the good of humanity, so that the name of the Lord may be glorified through them.<sup>33</sup> A brief but important allusion here connects the media of social communication to other media in the history of the Church, namely, the great masterworks of art that served the Church's evangelizing mission from its beginnings.

Assessing the document as a whole, we may summarize its key points as follows:

- Its tone is one of tempered enthusiasm, clearly urging and promoting the use of the media, while at the same time warning of its dangers.
- It roots the Church's interest in social communication in the Church's own missionary mandate and in the tradition of other media in the past used for this purpose.

31. *Ibid.*, 14.

32. *Ibid.*, 23.

33. *Ibid.*, 24.

- Its vision is threefold: the Church's own use of the media for the apostolate, the Catholic media in service of the Church, and the function of lay faithful imbuing the secular media with a Christian and human spirit.
- Its doctrinal foundations rest on the moral and ethical principles of Catholic social thought.
- It encourages training and formation in the media for priests, religious, and all the faithful. The initiative within the Church is with the pastoral leadership, while in the secular media, it rests with lay Christian media professionals.
- It communicates ongoing commitment to this topic, with the call for a pastoral instruction, an annual day, a pontifical office, and national and diocesan structures.

### ***Forming Ministers***

As ministerial formation toward effective engagement with the media is of special interest to this study, *Inter Mirifica's* vision for formation merits examination. Even though *Inter Mirifica* is among the briefest of documents of Vatican II, its scope is broad, encompassing the Church, the Catholic media, and the secular media, and all the respective roles of lay, religious, and ordained therein. Because of this broad scope, the document did not get too specific about formation, other than the fact that it is necessary, either in terms of media literacy or Catholic social teaching (the latter reflecting the moral and ethical principles the document presents as doctrinal foundations). Along these lines, *Inter Mirifica* mentions formation on several occasions.

In its first chapter, the document notes that the media themselves are of formative value to the Christian faithful. Christians are called to follow the guidance of pastoral leaders in their use and interpretation. The document asserts the importance of the formation of conscience regarding the media and moral and ethical matters. It highlights the need for access to and dissemination of information toward the common good, the right to information and its authenticity, the preservation of human dignity in communication, the right of artful expression toward the moral order, and the need for an edifying rather than harmful representation of evil. The document urges moderation and discipline vis-à-vis media consumption, and

invites the practice of discernment to fully understand the content of the message that reaches one as audience.

To sum up, the concept of formation regarding social communication entails a twofold responsibility: the responsibility of pastoral leaders to help the people they serve access and interpret the media, and the responsibility of all communicators and receivers to form the conscience toward ethically sound communication practices. For pastoral leaders and ministerial professionals, this twofold emphasis in fact is one, as enabling the formation of conscience is part and parcel of ministry, especially in teaching, pastoral counseling, and spiritual direction. To serve accordingly then, pastoral leaders themselves need formation in understanding the media and understanding the moral issues that they highlight in a particular way.

Along these lines, the second chapter of *Inter Mirifica* highlights the formative potential of the Catholic press and other forms of mass media, including theater. It follows this overview of Catholic media with the assertion that “priests, religious and laity should be trained at once to meet the needs described above.”<sup>34</sup> While this directive may seem a bit all encompassing, the focus here is both on media literacy and firm rootedness in Catholic moral tradition so as to make wise and life-giving choices through engagement with them. Following from this, the document outlines technical, doctrinal, and moral formation for lay media professionals, as well as formation suited to both the specific medium and the needs of specific groups exploring its use. The chapter reemphasizes the importance of moral formation in Catholic educational institutions with an eye toward social communication, as well as a clear and concise summary of relevant doctrine in the Catechism.

Putting these references to formation in dialogue with the comprehensive fourfold vision of ministerial formation of *Optatam Totius, Pastores Dabo Vobis*, and the national documents thereafter, one can clearly discern certain aspects of intellectual, human, spiritual, and pastoral formation in *Inter Mirifica*. *Inter Mirifica*'s emphasis on the formation of conscience and rootedness in the Catholic moral tradition encompasses the intellectual understanding of the tradition; the

34. Ibid., 15.

spiritual openness to abide by it; the human sensitivity to respect basic rights, dignity, and the common good; and the pastoral skill to live as a particular community in a specific cultural context. However, the challenge of gaining media literacy as part of formation spans all four of these categories.

Media literacy assumes the ability to accurately and effectively interpret a particular medium and the skill set to successfully communicate and/or receive communication with this medium's help. Media literacy also implies a thorough understanding of one's cultural context, as well as the skill to communicate within this context toward mutual and communal understanding. Taking radio broadcasting as an example, literacy for this medium on the part of the broadcaster takes into account the basic skill set to work comfortably in a studio or with particular equipment, the understanding of nonvisual communication, and the necessary verbal skills to broadcast well, as well as relevant assumptions about audience, such as where the broadcast is heard and what people are likely doing while listening to it (commuting, working, engaging in leisure activities). On the part of the listener, media literacy for the radio involves the skill set to operate a radio and the ability to interpret audio communication that may be live, prerecorded, interactive, or one-way. Awareness of audience also plays a part of the listener's media literacy, as it is significant for interpretation whether a broadcast is on a local, national, or international level.

Formation or training for such comprehensive literacy involves fostering both skills and understanding. Undoubtedly it is important for media literacy to gain the basic technical skills to access particular media or, if needed, to participate in their production. For this type of training, ministry formation need not reinvent the wheel, but may instead fruitfully collaborate with professionals who work and serve in these fields. Gaining understanding of the media and helping others interpret and interact with them in the light of faith, on the other hand, is a growth process that is well situated within the context of ministerial formation. This type of formation calls on a combination of the four areas outlined in the pastoral formation documents of *Optatam Totius* and thereafter.

Media literacy toward understanding implies intellectual formation so that a minister can recognize how communication patterns via a particular medium may conceal or reveal the truth of the content



of faith. The theological foundations of communication itself become important here, as will be fleshed out in the analysis of the pastoral instruction *Communio et Progressio*. For *Inter Mirifica*, the content of faith in focus is the moral wisdom of the tradition, and as such, a suitable intellectual formation toward media literacy invites ministers into the depth of this wisdom so as to be able to identify moral issues and ethical challenges when it comes to a particular medium.

Media literacy toward understanding necessarily assumes human formation. As noted in the introduction, human formation fosters the minister's ability to relate to others, an essential skill in facilitating encounter with Jesus Christ. Human formation is a salient area when it comes to media, as media are rooted in communication—an essentially relational activity. This aspect of ministerial formation thus considers the media and asks what potential they carry for moving participants from communication toward community and ultimately communion. In the Christian tradition, God's self-communication is expressed relationally: in the *person* of Jesus Christ, who is both its mediator and its fullness.<sup>35</sup> As such, the ability to assess media by the standard of how it allows people to form authentic and life-giving relationships is essential to an overall media literacy for ministry. In *Inter Mirifica*, the ongoing emphasis on moral and ethical principles for social communication is ultimately rooted in this principle: how to relate well with one another in a way that is faithful to the example of Christ.

Closely related to human formation is spiritual formation, which moves human relationality into the realm of human-divine relationality. This aspect of formation intersects with media literacy insofar as it helps to bring about discernment regarding how particular media can serve the human search for God and how they enhance or create a context for prayer. For anyone who has been moved by a religious film or by an international broadcast such as Pope Francis's first appearance on the balcony on the night of his election, this potential is clear. The challenge of this aspect of media literacy is where the spiritual message is more subtle or not named in explicitly Christian terms. Ministerial professionals are called here to help others inter-

35. *Dei Verbum*, 2.

pret the message and discern how it illuminates, dialogues with, or hinders the spiritual path of the Christian. If Marshall McLuhan's now-classic adage that "the medium is the message" is correct, then the medium itself that communicates the message also shapes the spiritual potential it carries. Interestingly, the coining of this phrase was contemporary with the publication of *Inter Mirifica*.<sup>36</sup>

Pastoral formation intersects with media literacy significantly, especially when it comes to fostering understanding in the community and for the good of the community. The pastoral aspect of ministerial formation leads to a commitment to ministry in context: its goal is to enable ministers to live out their intellectual, human, and spiritual gifts in a specific cultural and professional setting. Awareness of creation, culture, and the dynamics of social structures, systems, and institutions is essential for this so that the Gospel message may be proclaimed and lived in the most relevant way and in a fashion that people can resonate with it here and now. In a similar fashion, media literacy for understanding is deeply contextual. There is no such thing as a generic communication: language itself already embeds communication in a cultural context. Helping people interpret a particular medium is facilitating awareness of the contextual dynamics of the message that reaches them and how the Christian tradition dialogues with this overall act of communication. For example, the 2004 film *The Passion of the Christ* was well attended in audience and thus generated ample discussion in a variety of cultural, ecclesial, and academic contexts. Part of these discussions was pastoral media literacy in action: highlighting the role of the spirituality of Mel Gibson, the film's writer and director; highlighting a major thematic inspiration behind the film, the medieval tradition of contemplating the passion; and highlighting the similarities and differences between an artistic interpretation of the passion on film and the lived ecclesial, liturgical, and biblical understanding of these events as cherished by Christian communities are just a few examples of how conversations around *The Passion of the Christ* connected context, media literacy, and theology. Media literacy formation for pastoral leaders anticipates conversations like this and empowers ministers to be able to identify

36. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding the Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: Mentor, 1964).

and invite people into these connections. All this is closely related to what *Inter Mirifica* identifies as the pastoral task: the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the apostolate.<sup>37</sup>

## **Legacy for Digital Ministry Formation: We Are All Communicators**

In 1963, the world of social communication implied distinct points within the flow of information: communicators who produced and shared information and a mass audience who received it. Communicators (whether journalists, actors, broadcasting professionals, as well as all those who produced the information shared by these) had great power and perceived authority to shape public opinion and even to identify truth. *Inter Mirifica* recognizes this as it states: “Public opinion exercises enormous influence nowadays over the lives, private or public, of all citizens, of whatever class. It is therefore necessary that all members of society meet the demands of justice and charity in this domain and that they try, through the media, to form and expand sound public opinion.”<sup>38</sup>

While *Inter Mirifica* is an accurate reflection of its day in assuming a difference and interaction between distinct communicators and receivers, it is prophetic in the above-quoted passage. In calling all members of society to honor justice and charity in the forming of public opinion, *Inter Mirifica* speaks in the most relevant terms to digital culture.

Internet-mediated communication, especially after the advent of Web 2.0 technologies and beyond, has shifted the paradigm of social or mass communication. Instead of clear roles differentiating senders and receivers of information, social communication in the digital age implies simultaneous roles of sending *and* receiving information, as well as the increasing and parallel role of producing it. Rather than one to many, the social communication schema of the digital age is many to many. Traditional communicators of perceived authority, such as journalists, broadcasters, and other media professionals, are

37. IM 13–15.

38. *Ibid.*, 8.

still part of this interconnected network, but their voices are joined and rounded out by the comments, feedback, and original contributions of the audience, giving the audience a newfound power to generate attention around particular information. In the digital age, we have all become communicators, with access to the technological skills and the flow of information online. As such, the standards of justice and charity do indeed befall on all members of society, not just on those who are media professionals who normally operate under a code of ethical standards in their work. In a digital culture, if all members of society have some access to shaping public opinion, and yet only the communications professionals abide by certain ethical code to do so, an urgency arises around preserving human dignity and the common good. Cyberbullying and all of its tragic consequences is but one alarming example of why this urgency is relevant and important to consider.

Ministerial formation in the digital age has to take this shared role of communication into account. As traditional voices of authority in media culture have been integrated into a greater choir (or sometimes cacophony) of voices, the ecclesial voice of authority also realizes that it is not alone in speaking about faith in the digital age. Pastoral leaders whom *Inter Mirifica* charged with guiding the faithful about the ethical and fruitful use of the media are now charged with enabling the whole Church, not just as audience, but as faithful communicators who are likely contributing to public opinion, whether on a blog, a social networking profile, or simply through their comments and passing on of information. Faithful interpretation of the media is no longer just about how to make sense of what we receive; it is formation for all to discern regarding how to faithfully take part in and contribute to the flow of information. Offering a voice to all, this participatory digital culture engenders a powerful opportunity to empower all the baptized to take part in their ecclesial mission to evangelize and thus connect with others and share the Good News on an unprecedented scale.

At the same time, this new participatory culture comes with particular challenges, especially those of discerning information as authentic and true. Just as media professionals abide by an ethical code of conduct in their work, the ecclesial voice of the pastoral leader also speaks out of a magisterial structure that frames the content of

faith. This ecclesial structure authenticates the professional voice of the pastoral leader who serves the Word that has been revealed and handed on as the content of faith. But in this digital culture in which we have all become communicators, serious questions arise. What structures are in place to help frame the public voice of faith of the Catholic mom who reflects on her blog about faith and family; the college student who builds his social networking profile around how he is drawn to radical social thought; or the traditionalist who feels passionately about pre-Vatican II liturgy and shares this through regular multimedia uploads? What is the standard by which these different expressions of faith are called to shape the public opinion about the Catholic tradition? Differences in understanding the tradition have existed since the inception of the Church. What has changed with the digital age is that these diverse voices can all become public and even authoritative to some degree.

How can pastoral leaders offer guidance in this shifting context? To simply filter online voices that shape public opinion but do not necessarily abide by an ecclesial or magisterial interpretation of the content of faith does not seem a feasible solution, nor one that has been pursued by the Church: for example, the moderators of the papal twitter account @Pontifex seem intentional in their decision not to filter or block comments that are negative, contrary, or even offensive. Instead, one way the pastoral leader can serve a community is through fostering media literacy that is imbued with an understanding of the tradition so as to enable the community to discern and dialogue with a variety of perspectives mushrooming online. The challenge of coming across digital content and wondering about its source is an experience that most people who have sought information online share. Offering guidance on how to determine any given online source as authentic and true to the content of faith is one aspect of communal formation that is highly relevant for faith in the digital culture. This is also a salient new area for adult faith formation, one that lies outside of the traditional sacramental preparation context.

In addition to simply filtering out content, what also seems unfeasible in a digital culture—one in which we are all communicators—is for a single pastoral leader to bear the responsibility for understanding faith, culture, and the media and interpreting this for a community of people. While pastoral leadership is often a demand-

ing role of service, bearing the sole responsibility for faithful digital media awareness is an undue pressure on individual priests or lay ministers. Given that digital culture is defined by participation, collaboration, and sharing in the public forum, pastoral leadership that approaches digital media literacy as a shared effort may well be a more viable path. Creating an advisory or consultative team that includes the pastoral leader, as well as those who are comfortable with a variety of media and those who minister to key populations within the community, can together bring the theological, technical, and sociocultural expertise of the entire community to the pastoral issues surrounding the digital media. Such a collaborative structure is in line with the vision of Vatican II and the specific recommendations of *Inter Mirifica* that called for curial, national, and diocesan units to focus on social communication. Creating a digital media ministry team follows this line of structuring, whether at the parish level or a similarly local level such as campus ministry, an educational institution, a health-care facility, a spiritual formation facility, or a faith-based service organization.

Envisioning engagement with the digital media as a team effort is a rich inheritance from *Inter Mirifica* for ministerial formation today. One premise of this study is that the constant evolution of new media both thrills and fascinates, but it can also overwhelm and intimidate those who are endeavoring to keep up with it. Pooling wisdom, skill, expertise, and human resources alleviates pressure while also making space for creativity to emerge in the process of discerning how a community's digital presence can serve the apostolate. Likewise, an advisory or consultative team working in concert with a pastoral leader conveys an integral reality of digital culture: many voices matter. Following from this, the pastoral leader's task of guiding people to be faithful communicators themselves resonates more authentically with the participatory cultural reality of our digital age. It is guidance emerging out of communal wisdom toward communal witness of the Good News.