

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Help us to recognize the evil latent in a communication that does not build communion.

Help us to remove the venom from our judgements.

Help us to speak about others as our brothers and sisters.

You are faithful and trustworthy; may our words be seeds of goodness for the world:

where there is shouting, let us practise listening;

where there is confusion, let us inspire harmony;

where there is ambiguity, let us bring clarity;

where there is exclusion, let us offer solidarity;

where there is sensationalism, let us use sobriety;

where there is superficiality, let us raise real questions;

where there is prejudice, let us awaken trust;

where there is hostility, let us bring respect;

where there is falsehood, let us bring truth.

Amen.

Pope Francis

# COMMUNICATING THE MISSION GLOBALLY

Communications Manual  
for Institutes  
of Women Religious

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## Communications Manual for Institutes of Women Religious



**This manual was created thanks in part to contributions  
from the United States Embassy to the Holy See.**



**U.S. Embassy to the Holy See**

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Learn more <https://support.google.com/a/answer/3035792?hl=en>

## INTRODUCTION

The manual that you are leafing through is a dream that has become reality. We have been working as communicators for institutes of women religious for many years; some of us have achieved a special degree in communication, but many just learned by doing. To strengthen our communication skills, we have read books to understand and interpret the modern world, participated in conferences, and taken online courses. After all that, we still had the impression that something was lacking.

This manual is not an essay or an academic treatise about communication; there are plenty of those on the market, published in many languages.

We have dreamed of a very concrete tool for those who communicate on behalf of women religious and their ministries.

Why just for women? Actually, many of the tips and guidelines in this manual work just as well for religious institutes of men, but we decided to give a specific focus to women. This is because we think that women have a specific style to offer the digital world. The intent is not to exclude men, but to present a specific feminine face.

This manual aims to offer a description of the key role of communication in religious life, providing a set of applications, programs, and platforms to facilitate communicators' tasks.

As we meet other communicators for religious life, we notice that we all face similar challenges, ask the same questions, endure similar failures, and celebrate parallel successes. This manual aims to support our work, offer concrete examples to solve problems, and guide us to be more effective in the ministry of communication.

We try to nurture a culture of communication within religious institutes, mainly among superiors general and the members of general councils.

This manual is an ongoing and shared project. Over time it will grow and evolve to incorporate new strategies and emerging technologies, as well as insights communicated by fresh voices.



We want to thank all the sisters and lay people who made this dream possible. We attempted to write a list of contributors; as with any project, however, many more people have inspired, encouraged, animated, and opened new paths for this work to come to life. Some of you are far away, others not with us anymore. We want to thank all of you.



A special thank you to Uta Siemens, from the US Embassy to the Holy See, whose love and respect for religious life made this manual possible.

*Patrizia Morgante and Nick Schafer*  
*Editors*

It was no easy task to create a manual able to meet the many communications needs of congregations: every entity has its own pace along this path. Some will find the content here obvious, others may find it too challenging, and for others still it will be ideal. What we can say is that every group will be able to find something that applies to them, because even the most advanced congregations in this arena will not have thought of everything, precisely because of the complexity of communications and the speed of change.



## LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS



The web is an immense space where everyone can produce knowledge and share their expertise without any copyright claim.

Consider the Wikipedia experience, which has by now become a style, a method for creating spaces in which to share news and understanding. This manual is a wiki space in which people have generously contributed their expertise in the service of the religious life.

Anna Sánchez Boira, MHSFN  
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Monique Tarabeh, RGS

Thanks to all of you!



## HOW TO BENEFIT FROM THIS MANUAL

### Communicating the Mission Globally: A Continuous Process



The Communications Manual for Institutes of Women Religious has been produced in both printed and digital formats. The printed version can serve as a valuable, ready-to-hand guide. The same is true of the digital version, which has the added benefit of being continuously updated. The digital manual can be found on the website of Communicators for Women Religious: [c4wr.org](http://c4wr.org).

Everything you find in this manual can be used, reproduced, and shared; we ask only that you be sure to cite the source so that others can learn from the manual. The table of contents offers just the list of main subjects, but each chapter has extras, special sections, and links that might be exactly what you're looking for.

In its digital form, the text will be updated and expanded over time.

If you find data that's incorrect or information that needs to be updated, please let us know. Write to us at [comunicazione@uisg.org](mailto:comunicazione@uisg.org).

Thanks!

### A Cooperative and Collaborative Space

The internet has infinite space; it can be a place where people can share their knowledge generously and make it available to others, who in turn can learn from the knowledge of those who contributed before them.

Think of Wikipedia. The criticism of this cooperative and collaborative internet model is that its information is not always reliable. If we experience it wisely and with awareness, it can be a space of and for:

- Solidarity, collaboration, and cooperation
- Shared learning
- Multiple understandings
- Intercultural sensitivity
- Midday thought (that defocuses from our point of view)
- Profound listening to the peripheries and to injustices
- Transgenerationalism and transculturalism



## TESTIMONY FROM A COMMUNICATOR

### **What is the most significant challenge you face in your work?**

The most significant challenge I've had to face since I've had this mission has been trying to fill each of my sisters with this motivation to evangelize, to communicate, and to be witnesses, giving a presence in the digital world its due importance. Another challenge is a shortage of time to locate and manage the information and audiovisual material.

### **What would help you tackle this challenge better?**

Right now, the contributions from the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) have been very helpful because they provide very significant information and materials that make it easier for me to face obstacles and learn with other nuns around the world. I feel a very fraternal and enriching fellowship.

### **What is the most important thing you've learned in your work?**

Every detail is learning, every piece of information you add is continuing to embody the reality of my religious institution or the Church in general, because we all are the Church. My work helps me to stay humanly and spiritually alert to reality, keeping up to date with important news about my congregation and our country.

### **Can you share an example of good practice in this area with us?**

- Creating our web page, and from there meeting with people from other countries with whom we build solidarity through prayer.
- Maintaining carefully administered social networks to spread the word about our charism, mission, and spirituality.

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## INTERVIEW WITH A SUPERIOR GENERAL

### **Do you consider the work of communicator as a mission?**

Yes. The communicator serves as a spokesperson for the congregation. She highlights the mission, vision, and values of the congregation. She creates networks and collaborates with other institutes. She makes use of available social media. She identifies the signs of the times and helps channel resources towards emerging issues. She facilitates a paradigm shift in the operations of the institutions. She keeps the congregation informed about what is happening in the community and in the Church.

### **Which is the most meaningful challenge that you experience as a communicator?**

The art of storytelling, which in the past was used to teach about moral and other issues, is dying. Storytelling called for attentive listening, responding, and the improvement of communication skills.

Challenges to communication:

- Poor communication skills caused by failure to read and failure to listen (sometimes resulting from a lot of time spent on the phone) and poor observation skills.
- Exposure to channels of information that are not credible, as well as inappropriate use of social media leading to failure to get the whole story.
- Using the wrong platform to disseminate information.
- Failing to properly consider ethical issues.

### **What would help you to face this challenge?**

- Training in communication skills.
- Creating awareness of the importance of good communication.
- Acquiring audiovisual materials.

### **If you could, would you invest some resources in a communications office for your congregation?**

It is paramount to invest some resources in a communications office. We need audiovisual materials and trained personnel.



Illumina Katsukunya, LCBL  
Little Children of Our Blessed Lady  
Harare, Zimbabwe



## COMMUNICATING TO BUILD A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

For those who deal with social communication, reality is a privileged place to get insights and creative ideas for their work. It's like a construction site which is always active. A few days ago, while at table in a restaurant with some friends, I heard a little boy scream as he ran towards his parents with one hand on his forehead and an object in the other. I immediately assumed that he had fallen and hurt himself and that he was hiding the wound with his hand. When he got to his mother, the boy, still crying, shouted: "My cell phone glass broke!"



I can imagine the smile breaking out on your face with a mixture of hilarity and worry at the same time; that's what happened to my friends and me: we were speechless.

I started with this anecdote for two reasons:

- When we want to communicate something, the best way is to tell a story (#storytelling): it helps the reader to empathize and awakens not only the cognitive but also the affective and physical dimensions; reactions are triggered by sympathy and/or empathy. Who, better than sisters, can tell stories today that show how a charism is incarnated in a context?
- So that we may reflect together: we adults used our cultural and generational categories to interpret the scene that took place before our eyes (the child running to his parents). Reality left us dumbfounded; it surprised us as we were unprepared to understand. Young people are born into and grow up in a digital culture; we are unprepared to accept their way of living in the world. So, it is almost natural for us to judge them without recalling that, as teenagers, we provoked the same reactions in adults. The challenge that faces us is typical of the "liquid society," which "concerns not the clash between two different visions of life, but two different visions that coexist without meeting."

### Thumbs or Index Fingers?

When we type on the keyboard of our smartphone, do we use our thumbs or the index finger? The answer to this simple question represents the generational gap between those who perceive the keyboard as an extension of their hands and those who, as adults, consider it an object whose use requires an effort.

The relationship between the world of the young and digital media is a subject of reflection that has just emerged from the journey towards the Synod of Bishops

on “Young People, the Faith and Vocational Discernment” (#Synod2018) and challenges us directly in female religious life. For young people (15 – 29 years), the digital world is like a prosthesis of their body and mind, but they don’t feel that it is a foreign component. For us adults, it is difficult to sense this, but we need to listen and talk together about what it implies: how do people become mature in the digital world? What values nourish them? How can women religious engage in the mission in the digital world?

We also experience the difference in generations in the way that media is used in religious communities. Formators often find themselves unprepared to inhabit this new world with wisdom and to make it into a part of the formative process. The challenge is how to teach the right way to use the media and how to use the digital media for formation.

Should people in formation be allowed to use personal cell phones and tablets? No single answer covers all situations. The important thing is to start a dialogue and shared discernment in order to understand the diverse positions and, above all, the different interpretative worlds. We, who are no longer young, have learned to live with digital technology after years in the analogical (linear) world, and so it is easy to perceive a separation between offline and online—even if this crack is gradually disappearing.

In my humble opinion, “prohibiting” is not a fruitful approach that will lead to the maturation of the person’s capacity to discern and make decisions. This also applies to new generations. We need to stimulate a sense of living digitally with responsibility in order to form conscientious digital citizens.

When referring to those in formation, it is likely that we are talking about people who have grown up in a digital world, where there is no separation but rather a single fluid onlife (online life) mechanism.

The digital world of the young is indeed oriented to creating and nurturing social relationships, but people also settle there to live a daily life made of apps, electronic travel tickets, thematic forums, online purchases, booking for medical consultations, weather forecasts, e-books, music, TV on demand, and movies.

The women who ask to enter the congregations are women inserted in this century, with typical needs and dreams for their futures. These same women look for a congregation on Google by inserting keywords. Few enter because they have attended our schools or because of our witness of faith in daily parish life or in the field.

### **An Increasingly Digital Religious Life**

Even if we are not “digital natives,” is it possible to live outside the digital world today? And if it is not possible, how can we do this? How can we live in the digital world





as religious? What does digitality ask us to learn as leaders of an institute that is inserted in the twenty-first century?

Today, there is a vast ecclesial space in the digital world. How are we as a congregation present there? Do we have a clear digital identity? What does our site say about us? What do we post on social media to tell the inhabitants of the digital world about the beauty that continues to flow from our charism? Are we consciously present as the digital world evolves around us?

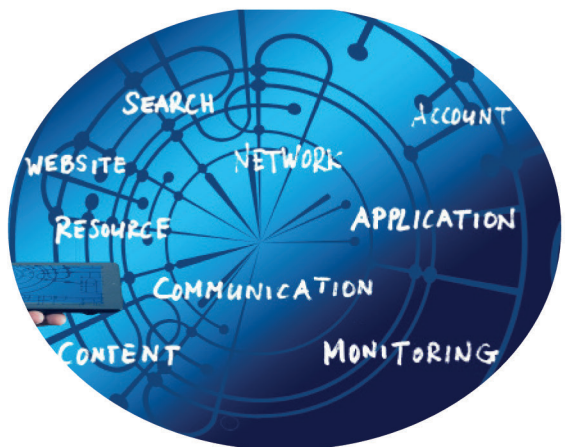
There is a thirst for beauty and truth in the digital world. Who better than a sister to respond to this thirst, letting herself be reached and then answering? We may just have to learn to do that differently. The network does not correspond to the vertical and hierarchical logic typical of the religious world. We must learn to be one among many, but without ever renouncing our evangelical word; without being intrusive, moralistic, or judging. The network cuts us off if we want to impose ourselves; it simply does not follow us. Credibility is not obvious; we must earn it. If we want to stay inside, we must accept and stimulate authentic confrontation.

If our answers do not satisfy us, this means that we are invited, as leaders and women religious, to develop a culture of communication within ourselves, in our congregation, and in the ecclesial and secular worlds.

### What Does It Mean for a Congregation to Develop a Culture of Communication?

I am going to attempt to say something about this without pretending to be exhaustive, because the topic represents a complex challenge that we nevertheless must not fail to take up.

Communication today is a mission in itself; at the same time, it is a transversal task of the congregation's mission. It would be good for every institute to have a sister (or a lay person) in charge of communication (internal and external), even if she should indeed not be turned into a proxy for the communicator. It is the entire congregation that communicates, while the leadership team is responsible for the institutional identity of a congregation and must work on the content and the style of communication with the communication manager.



I often hear people define the web as a series of communication tools, but it is, rather, a set of real anthropological spaces where life flows, with its rules and its languages. To explain this basic concept, I always use an example: would you go to a party at an embassy wearing a swimsuit? Every place has its social



rules and creates its own languages and dynamics. That applies to digital spaces, too. I think I understand a certain fear among superiors with regard to the new media; they distrust the press—including the Catholic media—and have a lack of interest that, unfortunately, leads to pastoral invisibility. All have a right to their personal opinions, but in our roles as leaders or formators, it is our duty to know and understand the digital world, to be aware of its virtues and its dark side. The network must be a space of responsibility and education.

Returning to the press: we will never change its image of sisters if we fail to build a good relationship with journalists, Catholic and secular. If we do not say who we are, they will do so without knowing us. If we leave blank spaces, the press will fill them, thus contributing to that dangerous flow of fake news about which Pope Francis warns us. What we previously did only in the parish and on the town square, we must now also do in the digital world.

How do we feel and what do we feel when we have a good experience? What do we do when our hearts burst with joy? I usually share it with someone; I feel the visceral need to tell about it. This is communication! It is the passion that we feel surging inside and that pushes us to want to tell about what is beautiful— even when that beauty comes from the ashes of pain.



Now, if there is a specific religious mission in digital world, it is precisely this: giving a voice, an image, a sound, a face to that beauty which is discretely born in those places where everyone sees only suffering and violence; becoming a digital voice that brings good news; creating a space for listening on the web so that others may share. If we women take care of life, we will spontaneously care for what circulates on the web; it is no less true, it is only lived in another environment.

### **The Communication Office of the Congregation**

One objection that I often hear is that professionally prepared people are needed to do all of this! We are few, and we have no resources! I understand the complexities, and I have to cope with them too. These days, it is certainly true that investment is necessary if we want to produce high-quality communication, but I am not convinced that economic resources constitute the only obstacle. It is, first, necessary to realize that if “communicating the mission well” is a priority, a way to achieve it will be found. It is not necessary to do many things; it is better to do just a few things but to do them well, balancing tools and spaces for intra-congregation communication with those for external communication. We can use external professionals or train sisters who will be charged with the mission of caring for the institute’s digital and communicative identity.

We asked some communicators working for religious life what difficulties they encountered in their work and what they would ask of leadership to facilitate their tasks. Some of their answers can help us better understand their perspective:



- People think that communicating well just means having a website—but then it is not updated.
- Little time is spent sharing content.
- Leadership does not delegate to the communication manager; mistrust prevails.
- Poor attitude toward and lack of understanding of communication prevails.
- Few resources are invested.
- A clear division of tasks between leadership and the communications office is needed.
- There is a need to learn to share information.
- There is a need to accept that being visible does not mean lacking humility.

### #FormationOnline #Formation

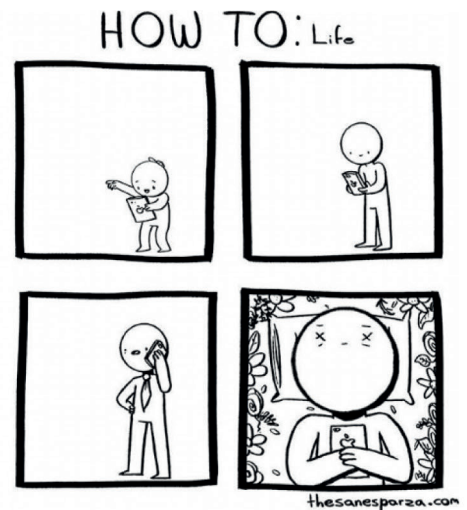
*In the 2016–2020 strategic plan drawn up by UISG, communication was seen as essential. During these past years—almost three now—the communication office has tried to improve communication with the members and between them, with the awareness that improving the superiors’ access to information facilitates their mission of governance and makes them feel more supported and accompanied. Much remains to be done, but, in the wake of the most recent UISG Plenary Assembly, which was held in May 2019, we have fresh ideas.*

*The aspect that, in my view, is important to underline here is the priority given, since the end of 2016, to the formation of communicators and to the sensitization of leadership teams to the theme “Communicating the Mission.” We have done this and continue to do it through courses, seminars, and webinars. Another tool that will come out shortly is a communication manual for female religious life, a flexible tool for immediate use by those who carry out this delicate and exciting mission in the congregations.*

*At the end of the course “Communicating the Mission,” held in October 2017, we asked each of the participants to share one thing that she brought with her and one thing she wanted to get rid of after what she had learned.*

*Sr. Giovanna, a superior general, writes: “I would like to take with me only the awareness of the importance of communication, an awareness that arouses enthusiasm, the desire to engage in it, the urgency to do so, by sharing....But I would like to leave behind in this room all pessimism, discouragement, disappointment, and pettiness. In short, even if you are small, you can start and do something!”*

*This is also what I wish for myself and for each of you. Go on; you can do it!*





## SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNICATION

*Whether you are a lay person or a vowed religious, working as a communicator for a congregation of Catholic sisters is more than just a job—it is a ministry. There is a spiritual aspect to the work that is not only relevant, but essential. Sr. Annmarie Sanders, communications director for the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, has shared her thoughtful insights on the spirituality of communications with CWR members at the organization's annual conferences. The following has been adapted from one of Sr. Annmarie's presentations.*

### The Potential of the Creative Communicator By Annmarie Sanders, IHM

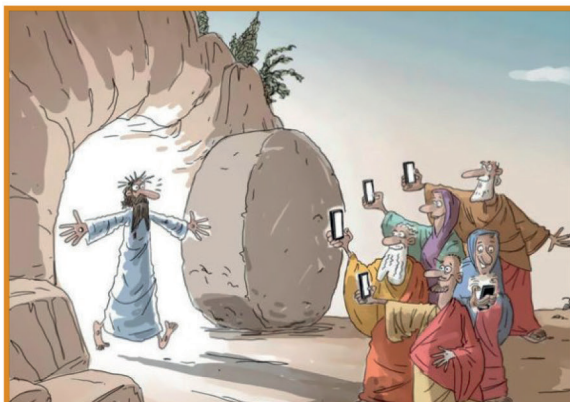
Communicators for congregations are called to clearly and powerfully proclaim what is happening among women religious. This call requires discipline, it exacts a commitment to actions, it demands heightened awareness of the beauty of life around us and its potential to expand and deepen.

As communicators, you already know the power and potential of the arts. You already know you have creativity running through your veins. You already know you have potential to make a difference through the way you choose to communicate through everything you create for others to see.

First, as communicators you already have trained yourself to see in ways that may significantly differ from others. John O'Donohue observed, "The graced eye can glimpse beauty anywhere, for beauty does not reserve itself for special elite moments or instances; it does not wait for perfection but is present already secretly in everything." You have the graced eye to see beauty within the members of your communities, to see meaning in their works, to see value in their presence. As communicators you are compelled to speak of this beauty, reflect it back to your members, and share it with others beyond your members.

Second, as communicators you know how to behold your subject. If you want to enter into the lives of others in order to communicate their story, then you already know the importance of holding others with reverence, of seeing each person as sacred. You know how to hold another up so that others behold that person with the same kind of reverence and awe.

And third, you know the unlimited benefits of telling another's story. Anais Nin said, "We write to taste life



© Twitter.com: ellecappa



twice.” Have you experienced this when writing for the congregation for which you work? Have you seen how writing the story of your sisters can also be an invitation to go more deeply into their stories, to miss nothing, and to know awe as you hand on to your readers the depth and mystery of human life?

You can help women religious behold our lives with awe. You can help us value our hopes and dreams. You can help us believe in the depth and mystery of this unique way of life.

### Nurturing Creativity

Drawing on the wisdom of John O’Donohue, Matthew Fox, and others, I would like to suggest some ways of being in the world that can nurture the innate creativity within us.

- 1. Learn to be at home with solitude.** To be creative, we must also be at home with a healthy aloneness or solitude. Loneliness, solitude, and some separation from the larger community naturally accompany creativity. We must welcome, not shun, being alone.
- 2. Willingly enter the dark.** The artist in us needs to learn and relearn to dwell in the dark and to be at home there. It has been said, and I am sure you have experienced this, we can often see in the dark that to which the light blinds us.
- 3. Study and learn.** Study connects our personal emotions and personal story to the bigger story of others. Study grows the soul and the heart by growing the mind. Learning can be one of the most spiritual, mystical, and prayerful experiences in which we engage. You may want to initiate the practice of asking yourself at the end of each day these questions:

Users of media must become people of mystical culture; instead of simply reacting to stories, they can exercise an awareness of media.





- What have I learned today?
- Who has learned something from me?
- Is what I am learning contributing to the beauty of the world?

- 4. Look to the natural world for lessons in creativity.** Continually drink in the creativity of the universe and its compulsion to give birth everywhere. This can be a particularly powerful resource when the human world is resisting creativity or trying to control it.
- 5. Call on the muses.** Call on your ancestors, the communion of saints, the communion of beauty-makers, truth-tellers, and artists. The muses—those beings, living and dead—long to accompany us in our creativity.
- 6. Associate with other creative people.** Clarissa Pinkola Estés writes, “Creativity is not a solitary movement. That is its power. Whatever is touched by it, whoever hears it, senses it, knows it, is fed. That is why beholding someone else’s creative word, image or idea fills us up, inspires us to our own creative work.”

“

Our Trinitarian God is a communion of love and wanted to communicate with us that He is letting us take part in His life. He was made flesh to live with us, by our side, in our intimacy... and help us to live in the intimacy of the Trinity. Working from this reality, communication is a crucial part of our lives, as a means to grow as people and as communities, to nourish the communion. That is why the work a communicator does is an important mission, which beyond just information must tend toward communion.

Amelia Encarnación, RA  
Apostolado del Sagrado Corazón de

”

- 7. Develop a spiritual practice.** Thich Nhat Hanh defines meditation as “stopping, calming and looking deeply.” Meditation empties the mind so that fullness can occur, newness can enter, God’s Spirit can flow.
- 8. Be vulnerable.** The most creative people are often highly sensitive—which can be a burden and a blessing. Vulnerability is a necessary part of the creative person’s lifestyle. As Matthew Fox observes, creative persons “*must wear a thin veil between themselves and life itself in order to represent life and report back on it. Artists dance closely with life’s heartbreaks and dangers in order to tell the truth about them.*”
- 9. Deepen a sense of gratitude.** Matthew Fox shares that many times when he sits down to write at his computer a simple prayer comes to mind: “*Bless us, O Lord, and these thy gifts which we are about to*



receive through Christ Our Lord. Amen.” This grace before the meal of creativity becomes a kind of prelude to his creative work. Like the food we consume, the graces we receive before a creative act come from the universe and its Maker. Why not utter a prayer of gratitude, a grace before the feast of writing, taking photographs, or laying out a publication?

- 10. Develop a contented heart.** When we can befriend the darkness and the brightness of our lives, a surer tranquility descends. Here, remarks John O'Donohue, *“we gain the courage to search out where the real thresholds in life are, the vital frontiers, the parts of our life that we have not yet experienced. We awaken our passion to live and are no longer afraid of the unknown, for even the darkest night has a core of twilight.... We learn to befriend our complexity and see the dance of opposition within us not as a negative or destructive thing, but as an invitation to a creative adventure.”*

### How Much Time Should One Spend Online?

This question responds to an outdated framework that separates the online from the offline. We must learn to perceive digital presence as a fluid process of ongoing connection, even when we're not surfing.

We can speak of a balanced digital diet. It's a bit like the Mediterranean diet: a little of all foods in a balanced daily amount.

In religious life, communication must be accompanied by moments of silence and prayer. Today we are immersed in a continuous bombardment of data and information.

How can we manage this ceaseless flow of information?

- Adopt mindfulness: make priorities and respect them; don't read everything, choosing rather that which truly interests you and comes from reliable sources; avoid news that you know or suspect to be false.
- Don't wait too long to reply to an email because you'll forget. Google allows you to organize email into primary, forums, and promotions.
- Organize your day to be less disorganized: one time to read email, another for social media, another to read a document that requires your attention (Buddhists use the bell; we can use an alarm if we want to set specific times and not get stuck on the web).
- Get up from your desk every 45 minutes to walk (this helps new ideas arrive) and do some exercise with your body, talk to someone, or make a phone call.

## DIGITAL CULTURE TODAY: TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

Today we are immersed in digital culture and we are not turning back from this process. We can decide not to use all its possibilities, but everyone is responsible for understanding it in depth because it is our present reality. The goal is to become responsible and aware digital citizens. Understanding digital culture is not a task solely for people who work in communications. It is the congregation that communicates as a living system.

The duty to understand the digital becomes even more imperative when we are responsible for educating and training others. I am not referring only to school settings and informal education. A religious community is an educational community, both in initial religious training, and through the course of ongoing training: girls are raised on digital, but often they don't know the risks and are unaware of the "pre-digital;" understanding this increases our powers of discernment and care in inhabiting the web (which is already heading for Web 4.0, or the Internet of Everything).

Current digital culture is not born from nothing; it was preceded by other fundamental communications revolutions that have changed history:

- The invention of writing
- Gutenberg's press
- Electronics

Some scholars support the idea that there is a continuum between these nodal shifts, a linear evolutionary process. Others say that the passage from one revolution to another is discontinuous with the past, and- in some way, supplants it. In my opinion, both positions offer interesting starting points for thought. Looking carefully at reality, no medium has completely replaced its predecessor; just as digital will not take the place of written text, it will press it to change itself and adapt.

Think of how the world of classical journalism underwent a seismic shift with the spread of social media, with faster and more interlinked spaces than any other traditional channel (radio, TV, daily newspapers, websites). And yet we still need competent and professional journalists, people who

### **Superiors general are prepared to invest in communication**

We asked some superiors general whether they would be interested in investing in communication if given the chance. No one interviewed said no. Here are a few of their answers.

*I'm prepared to invest in communication because...*

“

*Communicating is living, living is communicating.*

*It's one way to communicate God's love...it is achieved through a life lived giving of oneself.*

*You can't not communicate, so we must learn to do so well in order to create communion.*

*It helps us maintain contact with multiple people and share events, stories, and hopes with them; and because it helps us evangelize in a world that still feels a need for absolutes.*

”





adapt to live alongside citizen journalism and put their professionalism to use at the service of in-depth analysis and the accuracy of their sources.

The analog arena to which we were accustomed, as the word itself implies, is the world of the connections among phenomena, among entities that are transformed. The analog world was the caretaker of time, space, and tradition. The digital world is the preeminent world of numbers, the apotheosis of mathematics, that with the codes 0 and 1 can tell the story of the world. It's the space where you can turn to machines for a range of operations.

This is our present, and our future will have even more far-reaching features of this kind. Artificial intelligence and augmented reality are spoken of as options that already inhabit our world.

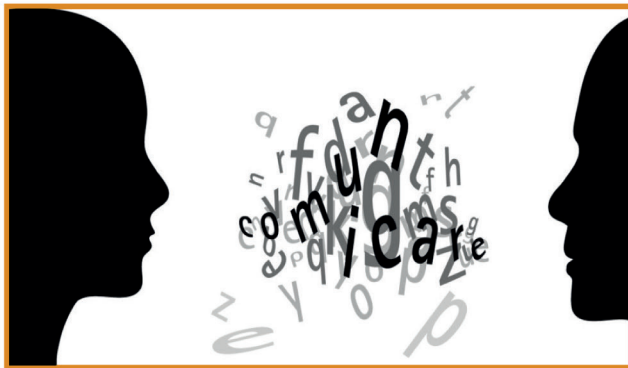
### What Are the Characteristics of the Digital World?

The material nature typical of the world before the internet is being transformed into an increasingly sizable **immateriality** that is nevertheless real. What we see

is not all that exists. We cannot see the software in a computer, but without it we can do nothing. It exists, yet it is impalpable. Tangibility is the result we obtain thanks to a program we cannot see.

**Virtuality:** we are accustomed to contrasting the real and the virtual. But are we certain that the virtual is not real? Think of when we meet someone with whom we chat on Facebook: can we say that

the previous virtual relationship does not exist? That all the information shared has not helped us advance in our knowledge and changed us? Today the virtual is a real, logical space, made of relationships and connections, exchanges and sharing, mutual and collaborative learning. "Virtual" is derived from the Latin "virtus" (faculty, power). This tells us that it should not be contrasted with the real, but is the present to a higher power, not a potential reality.



“

*The digital road is the fast lane for the future. So that in telling about God you immediately reach the hearts and minds of all.*

*Evangelize, assist, illuminate, console.*

*I'm prepared to invest in communication because...*

*It's about answering a call from our current reality, and we need to get help managing the complexity of the world of communication, which must be understood as a space for talking about God in dialogue with others.*

”



## Right to Information

Every human being has the right to obtain true information about the world rather than manipulated news as often happens today (fake news). Information is a cultural tool for influencing opinions, and it is in the hands of powerful economic-financial empires. Just like traditional analog information, the web is not neutral.

This phenomenon is not new, but the vast potential of the internet makes a citizen's task to interpret reality objectively even more difficult, because this reality is taking on increasingly complex forms (where we must assess and keep in mind many variables at once) that change quickly and unpredictably (fluid society).

**How do we read and discuss world and local news in religious communities? Do we access multiple sources of information or do we always read the same papers? Do we create opportunities for comparison and discussion to create a dialogue about what's happening in the world?**

The digital divide is not just the difference in availability and access to the internet in various countries around the world; it also implies the level of access to information and to data that today represents a great deal of power. Knowledge, understanding, and being informed can influence the development of a population and its survival.

**Do we think we can stay out of this process that's unfolding around us?**

Is the web **democratic and neutral**? It's democratic because it's horizontal, not pyramidal; it encourages collaboration and cooperation. The web is a source of fake news and the antidotes to fake news. An internet connection and a device to connect with it are all you need to access the same information anywhere in the world (this is only partly true, given that in certain countries some platforms



are censored, creating national social search engines that are easier to control). The phenomenon of "filter bubbles" reminds us that in some digital spaces, like Facebook, we are surrounded by real bubbles; we surf inside them, believing ourselves to be free. Instead, the algorithms lead us to spaces where there are others like us, who think the way we do, who reflect a reassuring image of ourselves back to us. The web in this bubble is not an intercultural space where we learn to live with differences and manage confrontation. The hate speech cases remind us that the virtual



arena can facilitate unrestrained expressions of rage and hate; some cases can rise to the level of cyberbullying. The web is not neutral, because when we don't pay, we are the products. How are companies that offer free digital services economically sustainable? When we surf, we leave traces, and we say who we are and what we want in our every click; companies, through their mega computers and sophisticated and relentlessly updated algorithms, monitor us and profile us. They provide precious data and information about our tastes and consumption options to companies. Through these profiles they can customize the ads on our social profiles. Thus, the web is anything but neutral. We are the products, and our data is today's most valuable currency.

These new options for communications and information have expanded the possibilities to do harm, to hurt people, to steal money and information, and to commit criminal acts (crime, mafia, pedophilia, abuse of various kinds, fraud). Psychologically speaking, there are more forms of addiction, such as inability to turn off our smartphones, obsessively checking notifications, internet addiction, online pornography, and gambling. All these phenomena already existed



in humanity, aided in their development by the ease and speed of digital communication.

Digital reality also creates ethical and moral problems and questions. Without blocking ourselves into rigid positions, it's always important to ask ourselves what human being the web gives back to us. What

#### Questions for personal and community reflection:

Would you add any aspect that describes this current moment in your opinion?

How has digital culture changed your life? And that of your community?

What aspect do you feel you'd like to emphasize more than the digital?

What characteristic worries you most?

anthropology is emerging? If machines can recreate the mechanisms of our brains and do better than we can, who are we? Who are we becoming? What places do mystery, the spirit, and our souls occupy in this new scenario? And art and poetry? Can a person be truly happy and realize the complexity of his or her creatural nature in a world of intelligent machines?

This brief reflection will help us to understand that we must understand the digital world, not only technically, not only by those who work in communications, but by everyone, because this world is our reality.

**A Suggestion for Helping Young People Detoxify from the Web**

Suggest physical activity and outdoor sports to let them experience something besides just the digital dimension. If as adults we begin to judge young people who use their phones a lot, we're losing before we begin. We have to keep up a conversation and be creative in offering alternatives; not in opposition, but as a continuum, because while they're doing other things, they'll want to post photos to their social networks for their friends.



“ It’s the language of today. Otherwise you’ll be left out. There are many beautiful things that we risk not knowing, not understanding.

As a congregation, we can come together and share values with each other. Use accessible methods that reach people, especially young people, to care for the lives and well-being of all of us.

I’m prepared to invest in communication because...

Communication can change your life for the better.

”



## COMMUNICATIONS IN THE RELIGIOUS WORLD

Religious institutions are organizations that are immersed in a specific culture of a time and a place. The culture of our time is digital, and religious life must come to grips with this reality, to take advantage of the good it offers and learn to manage its risks and deviations.

While they don't deal with communications directly, superiors and leadership teams must be aware of how the digital space works, and the implications that it has for the mission and life of the institution. It's a good idea to create spaces for reflection for all of the sisters on the use of social media and various digital spaces, launch processes for understanding in the community, and include digital culture in training. Train through the web and use the web to train. Social spaces are not tools to be used,



### **Making a Home on the Web...Making Community in the Digital**

Nuns must accept the challenge of being creators of their own content and take on the responsibility and the joy, in my opinion, of offering a narrative of the world that differs from the prevailing view; a narrative that nourishes life, that promotes it and respects it in its various forms, that denounces the suffering of the many for the benefit of the few, and that heralds sisterhood and brotherhood in the face of so much violence.

Nuns can learn and teach how to “make a home on the web, make community in the digital.” Home sends us back to warmth, to feeling at ease, surrounded by love and respect; community makes us feel one within a circle that supports, nourishes, and helps grow. Neither home nor community exclude conflict, but they provide a space for growth in humanization, to be human and ever more humane.

Making a home online means caring for relationships, being careful with language, not being indifferent, facilitating connections and building bridges, and taking diversity as a given for living together and living well. It's including and preferring “and” over “or” in your approach; it's making out a third way when everyone else has seized upon just two that separate. Making a home online is helping make the web become a place that nourishes life and lets it flow to reach everyone.



but anthropological spaces to be inhabited. How are we in them as a congregation? What image of us comes out online? Are we caring for our online identity as we care for the other aspects of our non-virtual life?

Out of curiosity, I invite you to Google your congregation and see what results turn up in the top five (most people don't go any further down): if you have a website or a Facebook/Twitter page, these may well be the top results. Other references may be on Wikipedia, or from other sites with initiatives you've been involved in. This is your digital identity. If you don't help develop it, the web and its algorithms will write it for you. Is that what you want, knowing that today anyone who wants to know something about you will search the web for your contact information?



Religious life doesn't sell a product, but aims to share evangelical values, and thus make itself an agent for interior and social transformation, of existential change. But to do this, it must learn a few "marketing" rules to reach its goal, which is to bring the good news to even those who are farthest away.

Communication in the Catholic Church is taking giant steps, trying to make sense of all the various platforms through which the Vatican has spoken so far, with the aim of offering a single, integrated digital platform, organized into different languages and communications channels. It is an attempt to increase value and provide support. It's also true, though, that religious life, both male and female, is often the most noticeable omission in official Church communications. Each institution, therefore, has a dual responsibility: toward its own charism and toward religious life, as a unique charism that joins the thousands of women and men who give their lives for the vocation.

Communication, both internal and external, is a mission, worthy like every other in the institution. At the same time, it's a mission that crosses boundaries because it's the institution that communicates and speaks about itself; every sister must



assume the responsibility to be an individual and at the same time a member of a broader entity. We live in a time of multiple identities, where it is difficult to separate between personal and public, and where managing these various identities can prove challenging. That's why it is the congregation's duty to train all sisters.

Communicating for the religious world means communicating to create communion, relationships, and encounters. Communication, through its spaces and its vehicles, informs, spurs to action, and reveals.

Who better than a woman in religious life to have something beautiful and important to say? Nuns are often in places where no one wants to go; they sow hope in the ashes of war and violence, and they do it with passion and that generative style that typifies women. If this beauty is not recounted, it is lost. Declining to tell the world what we do to make this world more livable for everyone is not humility; it is an omission that prevents the good from circulating. Communication helps good and beauty circulate. I think there is also a specifically female way of inhabiting the web: women are naturally inclined to relationships, to the network, to circularity, to creating space, to sharing in order to grow, to generativity, to building bridges.

“

*In God's plan, human communication is an essential way to live communion. A human being, the image and likeness of the Creator, is able to express and share the true, the good, the beautiful. She is able to recount her own experience and the world, and thus to build memory and understanding of events.*

”

Pope Francis

Best Practices

The Internet Can Bring Young and Old Together

A young nun who lives in a community largely inhabited by nuns who are much older has decided to use her WhatsApp as a tool for communicating among the family members of the senior nuns and the nuns themselves. The relatives send photos of grandchildren to the young nun, who then shows them to the older women, who don't use smartphones. This simple idea allowed the older nuns to feel less lonely and lowered the wall of distrust toward new technologies. For the young nun, it significantly increased her ministry workload, but she seems content to provide this community service!

The web operates on precisely these pillars, so for a religious woman it's a fertile space, precious to inhabit, to carry this beauty the world needs to mend rifts, break down barriers, and nourish the soul.

**A few questions for understanding the role communication plays in the congregation:**

Is someone in charge of communications for your institution? If not, why not?

What digital spaces do you use for communications among the sisters?

What answers have you received from readers?

Would you say that you're using the right channels?

What digital spaces do you employ for external communications?

How do you communicate your identity and your charism?

What indicators alert you that you're using the right language and the right methods?

Do you have stable relationships with the press? Do they contact you? Do you contact them? If not, why not?

Are you willing to invest economic resources to improve your communications?

What is the first aspect you'd like to improve?

“

*The public square was once the place for an area to come together; a place for meeting and exchange, even in conflict and difficulties. Today the web is a complex new anthropological public square, in which religious life can have a place with wisdom and creative intelligence.*

”

*I'm prepared to invest in communication because...*





## THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP AND THE MISSION OF THE INSTITUTE'S COMMUNICATIONS

**The entire congregation communicates, not just those in charge of coordinating communications.**

The leadership team is primarily responsible for the congregation's communications policy, language, and content; it also chooses the spaces to occupy, the identity it presents to the world, and how to interact with the press.

However, it is not the leadership team's job to create the communications policies and strategic communications plan for the institute; this is the main responsibility of the communications office or the communications director. The leadership team and the communications office must work in close contact and with a spirit of mutual trust and respect.

We asked some communicators in the service of religious life to name the greatest difficulties that they encounter in their work. Here are a few answers that we feel are starting points for further reflection for leadership at various levels:

- The leadership team has no idea what communication is for religious life.
- There is never enough time to talk about the type of content and the identity we want our congregation to have abroad.
- When we talk about communication we think only of websites and not of the rest of the social spaces that today are more important than a well-made website.
- There is little confidence in the communications office. Sometimes delegation of responsibilities wins out, at other times rigid control.



There are tasks that specifically pertain to the leadership team including communication with other levels of the administration: regional, provincial, local. The congregational body is ONE. The different levels of leadership must initiate an understanding and a mutual reflection on what the communications policies will be (style, language, priority content, vision, and mission to present to the world)—policies with which the congregation as a whole will move.

Some congregations are creating actual style policies or procedures that all members must follow on social media, when using photos, or when choosing the type of campaigns to support (especially those on political issues or hot topics

of the day). These are procedures that concern each member, because while each must have a certain freedom in their own personal profile, they must also keep in mind that they belong to an institute, and people can confuse a member's position with that of the institute.

## Best Practices

I will share an example: a sister in a congregation posted lots of photos of vacations or relaxing times with her sisters to her Facebook profile. There is nothing wrong with that in itself, especially because Facebook is social media that prompts you to show your face, meaning to share what we do and who we are, not just as an institute but above all as people. The congregation had received financing for one of its missions, and because of these photos, it was contacted by the foundation that had bestowed the money, asking for explanations about the prevalence of posts linked to recreational spaces over those about what the sisters do in their mission.

*What can we learn from this example? When we inhabit the digital world, our choices on social media create a digital identity that leads people to build an idea of who we are—often a stereotypical idea, but one that influences the choices and relationship they have with us, at the personal level, but also at the level of the congregation as a whole.*

In a digital reality, the distinction between what is public and what is private is becoming increasingly thin: it is like living in an eternal present, in a constant bombardment of stimuli, sounds (sometimes just noise), and data; time is a very scarce resource online, so people tend to take a superficial approach when reading content; this does not aid discernment or in-depth understanding. The pope has displayed serious concern about the spread of fake news poisoning the communication spaces that are a gift of God.

What do we need to recognize and corral fake news? Undoubtedly attention and training, using the internet itself as an antidote. Searching the web to see if a story is a hoax will ensure that we don't share fake news and help to disseminate it.

Here are some of the tasks that seem important to use for communications management—we don't claim that the list is exhaustive:

“

*Our congregation has already invested, and has trained a sister with a degree in communications strategies.... But we still have a long way to go to be embodied in our time.*

*I am called as a sister to carry an evangelical message that today's world needs to hear.*

*I am prepared to invest in communication because...*

”



1. Study the culture of today's digital communications (which does not mean becoming users of social media, but taking responsibility for understanding the risks and resources of the web from the viewpoint of leaders).
2. Stimulate internal communication, not only between leadership and the congregation, but also among individual members.
3. Make sure that no one feels excluded from communication, in particular older sisters or those with fewer chances to connect (slow internet, little electricity, older technology).
4. Carefully select the person who will manage communications for the institute. If you do not have sisters who are equipped for this, you cannot choose a sister simply because she is free and does not have other things to do. Would you send a sister with lots of good will but no nursing or medical skills to one of your hospitals? The same criteria should apply to communications. Incompetence can result in a great deal of damage. If you do not have internal staff, consider whether it is worth hiring outside personnel who will act under your supervision.
5. Shorten the digital gap within your congregation.
6. Monitor the congregation's branding: how do I share my charism in a twenty-first century digital society?
7. Be open and alert in relationships with the press, both Catholic and non-Catholic.
8. Represent the congregation (or delegate people trained to do so) in congregational places and events.
9. Promote training initiatives for the sisters.
10. Train about media and train using media.



“

*We have understood the importance of using social media. Ongoing training is needed for the sisters so they can use social media maturely.*

*Those who do not communicate die and the Gospel is the seed of life that seeks communicators.*

*I am prepared to invest in communication because...*

”



All these tasks can be done in collaboration with the communications office in a dynamic of ongoing mutual listening, respect for positions and skills, and conscious discernment.

The role of the administration is especially important and delicate in situations that we define as crises. The way we manage the communications aspect is crucial. Refer to the chapter on *Crisis Communications for Congregations of Women Religious* on page 97.

One day, a superior general was asked what she would do if an article were published accusing a sister of having expressed a position contrary to Church teaching. She answered, "Nothing, we remain silent."

It is true that there is no correct recipe for how to behave, because much also depends on the history of the congregation, the culture, and the time when the incident occurs. But in general, on the web, silence can be interpreted according to various positions and the argument each individual wishes to make. Journalists who are not very fond of the Church see confirmation of their contempt; others will take the opportunity to blindly defend the sisters; still others think they can speak in their place.



“

*Our communications have a profound evangelizing meaning. The goal of the congregation's communications is to convey a faithful, credible, and complete image, because it must be at the service of the institute and the values it wishes to convey. A religious institute's communications cannot be only written words, but should reveal a shared and updated corporate identity. I am certain that our educational charism still has value and can speak to today's world.*

*We must professionalize the way we communicate; we must not turn our backs on the new technologies that are producing a change in the models of communication and in human relations, but instead dedicate resources to it. Saint Teresa communicated with the pores of her skin.*

Asunción Codes, STJ  
Compañía de Santa Teresa de Jesús

”



Below are some excerpts of interviews conducted with superiors general and communicators in female religious life. We are aware that *communication* is a word open to many interpretations; it reflects the complexity it carries within it. From the answers, we can see that some congregations experience communications more as a space inside their institute, while others see it as exposure to the outside, and others still in an interpersonal context.

**Do you consider your communications work to be a mission?**

Yes. It is important to communicate who I am and what missionary sisters do in the world. Often, sisters work in silence with people at various levels. They make important contributions to help the poor and to assist them in rising out of poverty.

Yes, because it allows us to nourish communion and to get people involved.

Yes. Otherwise how would it be possible to reach people?

Yes. Especially now when young people and families use these tools.

Yes, because it helps us live and make more fluid our communication about the mission as managers and promoters of our own sisters; it also gives us access to the information and training that is so necessary.

**If it were possible for you, would you invest resources in your congregation's communications?**

Right now, we have an International Office for Development that is also in charge of communications for the missions and with our donors and partners.

It is not possible for us to invest resources because most of us are retired and have no income.

It is a necessary option right now.



## THE OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS: TASKS AND EXPERTISE

In the United States, 80% of communicators who work in female religious life are laypeople. On other continents the percentage is considerably lower. Most are religious, and often do not even have a specific mandate as communicators. The task of handling the website and the congregation's newsletter is often tacked on to other jobs inside the institute. This means that the person will be unable to do any of the jobs well. Communications is not perceived as a mission of its own, but as an option.

Why does this happen? These are the reasons, in our opinion:

- There is no culture of communication, no sense that today's communication is a mission in itself, a crossover ministry serving the mission and the charism of the entire institute.
- There is a lack of awareness that you evangelize in the digital galaxy just as in a parish or in a village.
- The number of active sisters is decreasing so that the few able to do the job are overloaded.
- In some areas, distrust prevents institutes from requesting help from external professionals or hiring laypeople.
- There is a lack of economic resources.

What else would you add?

At the other extreme, we have situations in which the communicator is expected to know how to do everything: understanding all the languages in the congregation, possessing a range of technical skills (from graphics to making videos), being able to deal with the press and other entities in the Church, being creative, and if a layperson, also knowing the world of religious life. Reading some job descriptions, I realize they are looking for wonder women more than normal people.



What options does a congregation have if it wants to invest in communication?

- Train and assign one or more sisters to this task, choosing a coordinator and councilor who serve as the connection with the general council.
- Hire one or more lay professionals, coordinated by a sister or by one of those lay professionals.
- Externalize the more technical aspects and appoint someone (religious or lay) to update and manage ordinary internal and external communication.

Which of these three options feels closest to you?



The question then is how to select an external professional. Some considerations to help you in your search:

- Do you want to invest in someone just for your congregation or can you share someone with another congregation? With the men's branch? With other branches of the same family sharing the charism?
- How much can you invest economically? Part time or full time?
- Before starting the process, talk to your accountant to find out what options you have for the types of contracts permitted under national law.
- Prepare a job description for distribution to invite people to submit a profile. Elements of a job description: what tasks the person will be expected to perform, what skills are required (technical, human, linguistic), what you're offering (part time or full time, workplace; do not specify compensation at this point), who they will work with, and how they will work with them.
- From the applications you receive, select those best suited to the position and call only these for an interview, or call all of them (I recommend the first option).
- Prepare a form for the candidate to fill out: a series of bullet points (taken from the job description), and an assessment scale (from 1 to 10); leave space for an explanation.

Once you have selected the right person, provide them with the information they need to do their job well. Over time, gaps in their skills may become apparent; assess whether to invest in staff training. Training comes at a price but is the best investment. The individual can even pay for her own training, but if the congregation invests in her, it is an important sign of professional recognition.



Working in communications for religious life is not the same as doing so for a for-profit company or an NGO. The human and social skills for the person you choose are essential: she can learn the technical skills, but the human skills take more effort. She will need discretion, an inner level-headedness, and an ability to evaluate experiences and find the positive; she will also need to know how to work as part of a team, encouraging participation from the bottom up, and to understand how to

recognize both her own limits and the role of the leadership team.

The role of the communicator is to facilitate the processes of communication, relations, and communion. Those who coordinate communications in an institute can and must rely on assistance from inside and outside the congregation, whether it's voluntary or remunerated. They must be aware of their skills and weaknesses and organize communications so that they become strengths.

Managing communications is much more complex today than simply managing a press office that handles relationships with journalists. Handling communications requires new skills, and academic departments are gearing up to prepare competent and flexible professionals who can adapt to an increasingly variable and swift flow of communications.

### **The Vatican Dicastery for Communication**

[ [www.comunicazione.va](http://www.comunicazione.va) ]

As early as the 2000s, there was talk of shaking up the organizational chart at Vatican Communications, but it was Pope Benedict XVI who signed the Motu Proprio that launched the process of reunifying the various communications areas of the Roman Curia, which at that time were completely autonomous and separate from each other. We are talking about nine entities with a total of 650 employees. Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis subsequently, understood that an integrated identity was needed and that all Vatican communications must speak with one voice.

The nine incorporated entities are:

- Vatican Television Center
- Vatican Publishing House
- L'Osservatore Romano [Vatican daily newspaper]
- Pontifical Council for Social Communications
- Vatican Radio
- Holy See Press Office
- Photographic Service
- Vatican Internet Service
- Tipografia Vaticana [Vatican Printing House]

The Communications Secretariat is the largest dicasterate with a prefect, a secretary's office, and five directors per area.

The Vatican website says: "On 27 June 2015, Pope Francis established the Secretariat for Communication in his Apostolic Letter, issued Motu Proprio, on the current context of communications. The new Dicastery of the Roman Curia has the task of overall restructuring, reorganization and consolidation of 'all of the realities that in various ways up to the present have dealt with communications' in order to 'better respond to the needs of the mission of the Church.' It is in this light that the Holy See's communications system is being reevaluated. Through this restructuring the Apostolic See can refer to the Secretariat as the single point of reference for communication, which has become increasingly complex and interdependent, reflecting the current media reality."

**What challenges does this pose for global religious life? Are we prepared to take part in this new process? How visible is religious life in the institutional communications of the Catholic Church? What image do people have of religious life in the Church?**



It is advisable that the person in charge of communications be someone who knows how to build bridges, occupies the web with awareness, and is creative but organized, flexible but assertive.

Investing resources, both financial and of other types, is a strategic approach that gives communications a presence in a global world without turning away from specific and evangelical values.

“

**The communicators say:**

**What is the most significant challenge you face in your work?**

- Communicating clearly and effectively.
- Working internationally with different time zones and cultures.
- Doing jobs for the general council, like formatting a Word document, which take time and resources away from my job as a communicator.

**What would help you tackle this challenge better?**

- Learning to identify the audience with whom you are communicating and understanding its characteristics (age, interests, opinions, and experiences).
- Receiving sufficient training on cultural differences, so that we can learn how to appreciate and manage them.
- Clarifying roles.

**What is the most important thing you have learned in your work?**

- When we get feedback from our recipients who feel understood and accepted in their concerns, and that my communication not only helps them but in turn helps them to communicate.
- Good and careful communications can have a positive impact on the world.

**Can you share an example of a good practice in this area with us?**

- This is a challenge for people whose mother tongue is English; so much is dependent on translations.
- It is important to write simply and clearly, thus helping people who do not speak English as their mother tongue to gain a better understanding and potentially making the use of an automatic translator easier.

”

When we talk about the communications office of a congregation, we run the risk of scaring smaller institutes with fewer resources. Every communications office can be different; what is most important is the intention of the congregation as a whole, and of its leadership in particular, to recognize a missionary space for communications.

An awareness, then, of recognizing communications as a mission of its own, and the intention to manage cross-cultural communications for the mission and the charism.



The communications office can be different for every congregation, according to its needs and opportunities. It is better to do a little and to do it well than to do nothing or to do a lot badly. When we say “office,” we are not referring just to a physical organized space: this can mean the position or mandate assigned to one or more people (lay or religious).

In an ideal world, the communications office will have available:

- Technical resources (a computer suitable to the job, a reflex camera, a digital recorder, a video camera, a webcam, computer speakers, etc.)
- Computer resources (software with current licenses for graphics, video, image management, online meeting platforms, document editing, etc.)
- Human resources (competent staff, collaborations and consulting as needed, volunteers, a support network)
- Financial resources
- Training and continuing education for staff

Within this ideal framework, each institution can assign priority to one aspect over another, but the other crucial aspects remain:

- Having a culture of communications and awareness of the key role that communications play today for the mission.
- Giving a clear mandate to the person who will fill this role, leaving her a margin of action and autonomy, based on trust and discretion.

Let us try to list a few tasks for the communications office, still thinking of an ideal world! The communications office is there to serve the sisters, so if the means it uses, although technically perfect, nevertheless fail to meet the needs of the members and do not do a good job of external communication, they should be reviewed and recipients of your communication should be listened to.

- Update the website.
- Post to social media with an attitude of listening and positive interaction.
- Write press releases and monitor your relationship with the press.
- Creatively stimulate internal communication.

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*It is important that this new way of evangelizing arises from a profound life of communion with God and with the other sisters, and is built on evangelical criteria.*

”

*It is an additional opportunity to convey the beauty of our life in a language that is understandable to the people of today.*

*I am prepared to invest in communication because...*

- Take care of communications—always answer emails or messages on social media, and do so in a timely fashion; follow comments on social media; listen to the sisters, even when they have criticisms; create questionnaires of all kinds to measure the effectiveness of your communications.
- Write newsletters.
- Promote communications training for members.
- Make sure that the congregation communicates with one voice.

## INTERVIEW

### **What are the biggest challenges you face in your job as a communicator?**

- Lack of electricity.
- I am self-taught, and I know very little about technology; maybe I am too old to learn new things, but we do not have anyone else in the congregation with digital skills.
- We use mostly emails, newsletters, and Skype. There is a lot to communicate and it is difficult to keep up with everything. You need to select carefully what you need to communicate.
- It is important to listen to the people with whom we want to communicate.

### **What would help in facing communications challenges?**

Resources and training.

### **Overloaded by the Web? Organize Your Agenda**

People who work in communications offices can feel oppressed and overloaded with things to do. We know how certain tasks take time and attention. Sometimes we do not realize how long it takes to create a poster for a meeting (graphics, content, circulation...). Sometimes we have very clear ideas and the result is immediate; other times we must wait for the right time for the idea to mature.

Some practical advice:

- Organize your weekly agenda, alternating days set aside for meetings, for writing, for thinking. To do too many activities of different types in a single period of time can be distracting; everyone needs to find her own rhythm and balance.
- Organize your daily agenda with several tasks that you can realistically achieve (otherwise you may feel frustrated and grow tired of managing these emotions).

# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR THE INSTITUTE

## The Basics

**Strategic:** one could argue that a *strategy* is the same thing as a *plan*. To create a plan is also to choose the best ways to use communications to further the institute's mission. However, the word emphasizes choosing between various options while taking into consideration the resources available to the institute.

**Communication:** this word covers a lot. Here the focus is on communications coming from the institute and includes the visual entity, website, social media, newsletters, letters, brochures, and so on. Audiences can be internal, such as members of the institute, or external, those not closely related to the institute, such as donors; they can be primary and secondary. Knowing your audience determines your communication strategies.

**Plan:** planning takes time. However, without it, we can waste time and resources on activities that do not further the mission of the institute. A communication plan focuses efforts; communications are well thought out and have purpose. Included in the plan are budget needs, time constraints, and indicators of success.

**Institute:** the communication plan is a tool to help further the mission of the institute. Therefore the vision and goals of the communication plan must agree with the

mission of the institute and its ministries.

## Process: Research

Research is the foundation upon which the plan is built. It also helps generate interest and a sense of ownership among those whom you contact. You need to know:

- What is the primary mission of the institute? This usually comes from its constitution.
- What is the result you want to achieve with a communication plan? What is the vision? This aligns with the mission of the institute.
- What is working well now? What are the strengths?
- What are the weaknesses?
- What are the obstacles or challenges?
- What opportunities are present?
- Who are the key audiences? Who do you want to hear your message?
- What are other organizations that are similar to yours doing?

You can collect this information through:

- Surveys (SurveyMonkey is an online resource).
- Interviews with people doing communications work now, with those who have wide knowledge of the organization, etc.

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*I am prepared to invest in communication because...*

*It is important that this new way of evangelizing arises from a profound life of communion with God and with the other sisters, and is built on evangelical criteria.*

*It is an additional opportunity to convey the beauty of our life in a language that is understandable to the people of today.*

”





- Focus groups, made up for example of sisters, sisters of other congregations doing something similar, lay people who work with you, etc.
- A review of key documents, such as the constitution of the institute, other documents guiding the life and work of the institute, etc.

### Analysis

What are the main findings? What conclusions can be drawn? What recommendations can be made?

### Parts of the Plan

*Vision:* this is the future result that you want to achieve.

*Goals:* these are abstract and big picture. They describe what the institute hopes to accomplish and why this is important. They can be short term (a year), long term (more than a year), or ongoing.

*Objectives:* an objective is a specific approach or strategy that can be taken to achieve the goal. It can be measured.

*Action Steps:* these are the methods or steps taken to achieve the desired objectives. Each action step includes:

- Person/group responsible: the person or group that has authority and for moving the step forward.
- Timeline: the completion dates for implementing the step.
- Resources/budget requirements: the resources (personnel, money, etc.) that are needed to implement the step.
- Evaluation: a concrete and measurable indication that the action step has been accomplished or is being implemented.

## Best Practices

If you are working in a global context, you are also working with many languages and cultures. This has implications for the plan.

- It will take time to create. Many people will be working in a language that is not their mother tongue and in concepts that are not part of their culture. Dialogue and discussion are critical to creating a plan that can be accepted by all.
- Keep the language of the plan simple! Long, complex sentences are difficult to understand in English. Imagine how much more difficult it is when working in a second language. Simple, clear goals and action steps will promote understanding, acceptance, and implementation.

If you choose to do the work using resources within the congregation, consider hiring a facilitator to assist committees in moving through the process, as in the first case study on page 42. Alternatively, you can hire a firm skilled in the process of strategic planning, as in the second case study on page 45.

## Case Study I: Congregational Communication Plan

**Context:** this congregation consists of about 2,500 women religious who minister in 30 countries on five continents, working in ten languages. They are organized into administrative units called “provinces,” each with a provincial council. The general council lives and works in Rome. The congregation is multilingual and multicultural. In several parts of the congregation, the average age is rising, and vocations are few. In other parts, membership is younger and increasing. Overall numbers are growing smaller, yet the desire to carry forward the mission and vision of the foundress remains strong. The world is changing rapidly with developments in technology and communications media. This provides both challenges and opportunities. Given these realities in the congregation and the world today, the sisters have discerned that the congregation is at a new vocational moment.

**Response:** to embrace this new vocational moment, the general chapter committed to creating a congregational communication plan as an essential tool to support new ways of thinking and working collaboratively in order to further God’s mission. The focus appears to be essentially internal. However, there are clear implications for external communication and an emphasis upon the unity of the congregation across the world.

**Vision:** in 2011, the general council called together 40 sisters and lay colleagues from across the congregation to participate in a think tank. The goal was to tap their wisdom, expertise, and especially their dreams and visions for the congregation in the future.

**Research:** next, the general council appointed seven English-speaking sisters and lay colleagues from various parts of the congregation to form a communication committee. Each member brought expertise, as well as various perspectives and life experiences to the group. One, a general councilor, served as the contact with the general council. These women built on the outcomes of the think tanks; they did research into the needs of the various parts of the congregation. Two surveys were designed and translated into each of the languages. One was sent to provincial leadership. The other was sent over Christmas to all the sisters in the congregation, in both electronic and printed formats. The response rate was an incredible 54%! The entire congregation was participating in the project. The committee’s research also included interviews with selected leaders, staff, and translators throughout

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*It opens the congregation to understanding the complexity of today’s world.*

*I believe that our charism is a gift to be conveyed to the world today.*

*Give it visibility. Open to the world a more real vision of religious life, of what it is and what it does.*

*I am prepared to invest in communication because...*

”



the international congregation. They reviewed data summarizing the complexity, challenges, and costs (financial and personnel) of congregational translation, and they reviewed a summary of language use by several international congregations of men and of women in Rome.

**Analysis:** the committee summarized their findings, drew conclusions and made recommendations to the general council.

**Affirmation:** the general council brought this to the next general chapter. The chapter affirmed the work of the committee and called the congregation to support the development and implementation of a congregational communication plan. Again, the entire congregation, as represented at the general chapter, was part of the process.



**Making the Plan:** the new general council moved the work forward by appointing eight sisters and lay colleagues to form an international commission to write the congregational communication plan. Several members had previously been on the committee that did the research. Once again, a general councilor was a member of the

commission and served as contact to the rest of the general council. Over the course of many months, the commission met in person, often with the aid of a facilitator, and by video conference. The plan was presented to the general council.

**Plan:** the plan consisted of three sections: language, networking, and technology, each with a single goal. For each goal, two to three objectives were chosen to move towards the goal. Part of the work included creating two teams (technology and communication) each with a contact in each province to work together to implement the plan. The plan included worksheets, one for each section, where for each action step there was an indication of the person(s) responsible, a timeline, the anticipated budget and resources needed, and a way to evaluate progress.

**Implementation:** the plan is now being implemented. It is a living document. Adjustments have been made whenever a timeline milestone proved unrealistic.

“

Nothing exists nor can anything be built without communication...for a present and future with a richness of presence and qualifications for religious life.

I have come to see that communication is the anthropological space in which people communicate themselves. To know and to be known.

”

I am prepared to invest in communication because...





At least one objective was already in place before the plan was finalized. It remains in the plan because it is a strategy that helps implement the goal. The development of a common visual identity was one of the first action steps implemented. In the beginning, the habit had been the common visual identity. However, over the years, each part of the congregation responded to world and cultural changes in their different contexts so that today parts of

the congregation wear habits and other parts do not. A pin was designed in the 1970s to help sisters who did not wear a habit to be recognized as members of the congregation. Sisters who did not wear the habit did not use the pin. Variations of the pin design had crept into usage over the years. With the advent of various forms of online presence, it has become increasingly important to have a common visual identity to indicate members of the congregation when they are online.

A professional designer refreshed the established symbol so that it works well online and in print. The congregational communications and technology teams collaborated in giving input and educating their province staff and sisters. The refreshed symbol is now in almost universal use. The designer also developed style guidelines including a broad color palette. The goal was to give each province flexibility for developing their look within their cultural environment and still remain true to the congregational visual identity.

**Evaluation:** each year, the status of the implementation of the plan is reported. The section worksheets form the base; a section was added to record indicators of implementation. Each province has the opportunity to review the plan and add how they have implemented the action step. This keeps the plan and the movement forward in view. This is a new endeavor for the congregation. Building a network of communications and technology contacts across many time zones and cultural expectations is a challenge. Overall, there is commitment to the implementation across the congregation because it helps further the larger goal within it: to think and act collaboratively as one congregation.



## Case Study II: A Religious Organization's Communications Plan

**Context:** at the time of this project, this non-profit, professional organization consisted of 180 members representing 140 congregations. The organization is the only one of its kind serving communicators for women religious. The members realized that they were in a unique position to assist the unfolding future of women religious and advance the mission of Catholic sisters. They were ready to embark on a project that included the creation of a strategic plan that would provide them with the clear direction to move forward and expand their reach, empowering their organization to grow in its influence in the promotion of women religious. The work of the organization, at the time, was carried out by a 12-member board of directors, a three-person executive team, and liaisons to various conferences and committees. It also employed a part-time coordinator.

**Response:** the organization's executive team recommended that they apply for a grant that would allow them to hire a professional firm to work with them to identify where capacity building would be effective and develop that into a strategic direction to grow the organization. The board of directors approved the executive team's recommendation, and the information was shared with the full membership. The next steps were:

1. The executive team appointed an ad hoc committee to move forward with this endeavor.
2. The ad hoc committee wrote the grant and made the application.
3. The organization received a grant to conduct an extensive evaluation of the organization, identify where capacity building would be effective, and develop that into a strategic direction to grow the organization and its impact.
4. The ad hoc committee wrote an RFP (request for proposals) outlining their project and needs and sent it to prospective consulting companies.
5. The organization hired a professional consultant to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the organization and help the organization develop a strategic plan.

**Vision:** before the strategic plan was created, the organization began a comprehensive evaluation in order to ensure that they were moving forward in a way that would establish a strong foundation for growth in the organization. They stipulated that all strategies recommended to them must ensure that the organization and its members would be able to do more to promote and raise awareness of women religious than they currently were able to do. The strategic plan would provide methods for them to provide more support and services for their own members while expanding the scope of what they could do for all congregations and women religious served by the members of the organization.

**Research and Process:** the board of directors conducted their own "dreams and visioning" session, focusing on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) for their organization; they shared the results with the consultant. The



consultant then met with the full board of directors in person during two extended board meetings—at the beginning and conclusion of the process.

The consultant worked closely with the ad hoc committee for this project and provided regular updates to that committee. All the organization's members were offered the opportunity to engage in the process so that the board and consultant could draw on the wisdom and lived experiences of professional communicators. These opportunities for engagement included three focus groups in areas where there are large concentrations of members, two videoconferences, an online survey to reach those unable to attend focus groups or videoconferences, and individual interviews. All work was carried out over four months. Questions and discussion topics for the focus groups, videoconferences, online survey, and individual interviews covered the following general areas:

- How deep is member involvement with the organization?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the organization?
- What could the organization provide that would be of value to members and their work with their individual congregations?
- What vision do members have for the organization and what hopes do they have for what it will achieve over the next three years?
- What resources are needed to strengthen the organization and help it achieve its goals?
- What new activities or programs could the organization engage in or provide to support its mission?
- If members had one dream for the future of the organization, what would it be?
- What funding is needed and how can it be raised?

**Analysis:** the consultant provided monthly reports and updates to the ad hoc committee, which, in turn, reported to the full board of directors during their monthly videoconferences. Updates were shared with members via the organization's e-mail list. The consultant summarized his findings, drew conclusions, wrote the first draft of the strategic plan, and presented the recommendations to the board during a three-day, in-person, board meeting four months after the study began. The consultant's presentation also included a draft of a strategic plan that was the result of an evaluation of the data collected to date, a review of the organization's previous strategic plan, and the consultant's judgment about the growth and long-term stability of the organization. During the meeting, the board began a line-by-line review of the plan with the consultant and took time for an extended period of silent prayer and reflection before beginning work on refinements and revisions. The board continued to refine the plan over the next few months. They then developed a process for explaining and sharing it with all the members.

**Parts of the Plan:** integral to the plan was the vision, which challenged the will of the organization. The vision is the guiding principle that focuses everything that the organization does. The steps to achieving the vision are outlined in the enlarged mission of the organization and the strategic initiatives that follow. The mission statement consisted of three components necessary to achieve the





organization's vision. The components of the mission statement made explicit ideas heard in interviews, survey, and focus groups.


The plan itself has three focus areas, each with unique goals, objectives, and action steps:

- *Membership Services*: to provide members with the communication tools necessary to promote understanding of women religious, enhance their image, and advance their mission.
- *Leader and Resource to Organizations*: to lead, providing direction and resources, in the area of communications for organizations serving women religious.
- *Media and Outreach to the Public*: to be a resource for and inform media and the wider public about the diversity and changing role of women religious in the twenty-first century.

**Affirmation:** the outcome—a new strategic plan that grows the capacity of the organization and expands its impact in the promotion of women religious—was presented in a special session to the full membership during the annual fall conference. Representatives from the consulting firm also participated in the presentation. The entire membership continued to be part of the process and were given extensive time to review the plan and ask questions before being asked to show their affirmation of the plan during the meeting.

**Implementation:** the board appointed a Strategic Plan Implementation Committee to oversee implementation and progress on the plan for the first two years. Their first action was to apply for and secure a new three-year grant to fund the new endeavors in the strategic plan, including the hiring of a new full-time director for the organization and securing a location for the organization's first office. With the new staff in place and the plan underway, the board eventually was able to assume responsibility for overseeing implementation, and the committee was then disbanded.

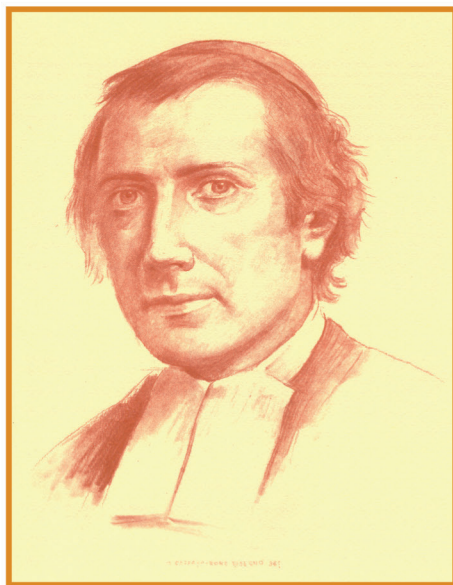
**Evaluation:** because the implementation of the plan is heavily dependent on funding from a subsequent grant, the board of directors submits a comprehensive evaluation to the grantor each year. This progress report includes detailed status updates for each objective listed in the grant application, the activities carried out related to each objective and, where applicable, quantitative figures of outputs and outcomes for each objective. The objectives in the grant application mirror those in the strategic plan. The evaluation also includes a budget report for each objective. These objectives in the grant application mirror the ones in the strategic plan. The evaluation also includes a budget report.



As the two case studies illustrate, each organization approaches the planning process differently. However, the main ingredients remain the same: a vision that aligns with the mission and goals of the institute, research, measurable goals, concrete action steps, evaluation, adjustment as needed, and appropriate resources (money, time, and personnel).

### Case Study III: Communications Management for the Canonization of a La Salle Brother

In March 2016, I was appointed Director of Communications at the Generalate of the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Schools in Rome. Almost since I was installed, I was aware that Pope Francis would canonize Brother Salomone Leclercq on October 16, 2016, along with six other blessed souls. A martyr of the French Revolution, he died at just 46, on September 2, 1792, killed by the sword along with other prisoners, mostly priests, diocesans, and monks. He was tortured for having refused to give his oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy promulgated on July 12, 1790, because it would have distanced him from loyalty to the Catholic Church and the pope, as wished by his Founder St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle.



Many priests and monks fled, fearing they would be arrested and killed, but not he; he remained loyal to his mandate and his calling.

Beatified on October 17, 1926 by Pius XI along with 191 other victims of the massacres of September 1792, he became the first martyr of the Brothers of Christian Schools. A man—a martyr—first blessed and then a saint, to be imagined in a historic context very different from our own, that of the French Revolution. He was certainly not a well-known figure, but in the period immediately preceding his canonization and preparations for it, we sought to learn about him and appreciate him through the letters he wrote to his relatives, through the profound devotion to teaching the youngest children—to which he dedicated himself after just a year of novitiate, eventually teaching a good 130 students—and through the martyrdom he suffered.

Even the Brothers of Christian Schools confessed they knew little about him. His letters corrected history's opinion of him, revealing a sensible and upright person: "I am not worthy of suffering for Him, because I have not yet experienced any pain, while there are many confessors of Jesus Christ who suffer," he wrote to one of his sisters on the day of his capture, August 15, 1792.

#### The Miracle

María Alejandra Hernández was born on June 19, 2002. Because of her mother's drug addiction, she was taken into care, along with two sisters and a brother, in the Maria Goretti home founded by Monsignor Rafael Febres-Cordero in the rural area of Sabaneta di El Hatillo in the mountains of north-central Venezuela, a few





miles from Caracas. When she was five years old, on September 6, 2007, while playing with other children, some unidentified animal bit her on the left foot. At the time, no great importance was attached to it, because it was thought to be the bite of a large insect (Bachaco trinitario, common in the area). The next day, the hematoma had spread to her entire limb, she had bruising on her skin, and was bleeding from her gums and nose. She was rushed to the emergency unit in the Santa Sofia Clinic in Caracas. Working from the well-founded suspicion that it was a bite from a venomous snake of the Bothrops genus, common in the area, doctors administered the maximum dose possible of polyvalent snakebite serum in the hopes of limiting permanent damage. This is the only possible treatment, but its effectiveness depends on the timing, and it was administered 52 hours after the incident. Preparations were underway to amputate the leg to avoid further, much more serious, complications. Meanwhile, in the little church of Sabaneta, the sisters, the children and the locals prayed before the statue of Blessed Brother Salomone, who is venerated there. Suddenly things changed for the better. María's condition returned to normal and the amputation was not necessary. In fact, on September 11, she was discharged from the hospital completely cured. Later clinical examinations showed her physical condition to be normal and free of consequences, and the leg was restored to full functionality.



The diocesan process in Caracas started on January 19, 2011, on orders from Monsignor Rafael Febres-Cordero, and finished on September 29. On March 3, 2016, the Consulta Medica declared the case to be scientifically unexplainable.

On April 5, the theologians expressed a positive judgment. On May 3, the Cardinals and Bishops gave their judgment. On May 10, Pope Francis proclaimed the decree for canonization. On June 20, the consistory prior to canonization was celebrated,

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*It is a value that helps a person enter into communion with others, and to truly communicate what helps us grow in every sense.*

*The strategic areas for living the Gospel today are training, economics, and communication.*

”

*I am prepared to invest in communication because...*



as is customary. The canonization was held October 16 in St. Peter's Square.

### The Media Challenge

This is where the "media challenge" began. I started thinking about how I could make a canonization interesting in the eyes of the international press (especially given the fact that we were talking about someone who lived in the late eighteenth century) and at the same time promote awareness of the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Schools. There were a good seven canonizations that same day, all more contemporary than Brother Salomone's.

The idea was to stage a brief but meaningful promotional video, a press review, and a show dedicated to him in the Generalate of the Brothers of Christian Schools. Images, photographic reproductions, historical sketches, and excerpts of his writings, with pieces from Rousseau, Voltaire, and La Chalotais (General Procurer of the Breton Parliament and opponent of the free public schools desired by the Brothers of Christian Schools), would combine to make Brother Salomone more familiar.

The idea took shape. I contacted a professional journalist, who in turn collaborated with a trusted video operator. We imagined a press kit that could contain the history of Salomone, his personal and religious training, and the principal events of the French Revolution. We would also cite works in conflict territories where today's LaSallians work, showing that the same hostilities that Salomone encountered centuries ago are still present in many areas of the world.

We started right away with the video. A parallel between the ancient and modern as much as possible, overlapping and in perfect harmony at the same time. Images in sepia tone recounting the "ancient," with perfect color images depicting the present.

Salomone was a teacher first and foremost, a martyr, who cared deeply about young people. That is what we want to convey: imagining him at school helping his students in trouble. His 130 students, from the most disadvantaged social classes of the late 1700s, following the ideas of St. Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, founder of the Brothers of Christian Schools. We imagine him suffering and alone at the time of his martyrdom. While all the Christian symbols burned around him, and religious institutions were closed one after the other, he continued to proclaim his love for Christ and never recanted his faith. In doing so, he also did not betray "his" boys, to whom he had given himself so fully.

At the end of the video (which is available in four languages), is a parallel with the contemporary reality of the teaching brother, thoughtful, level-headed, loved by his students. A point of reference amongst the troubles of the day, Salomone seems more modern already. Victory! The video is a hit: simple, short, moving, with perfect music hinting at the poetry of the story and of his humanity.

We also needed a press kit. Laura (the journalist I contacted) suggested what we could do. The keystone was to translate it into three languages from the original



Italian and then deliver all of it to the Vatican press office, visit the journalism agencies, and contact Vatican radio. News of the canonization spread like wildfire. In the end, the press coverage surprised even me. Osservatore Romano and Avvenire each gave us a half page.

We decided to make the show, still up at the Generalate, available as a puzzle to be pieced together. We loaded the images and the captions selected for the exhibition (in four languages) to Google Drive, snapped photos at our exhibit, and that was it. Twenty or so schools around the world asked if they could get the materials to set up the exhibit themselves. This ingenious idea was conceived by exhibit curator Fr. Diego Munoz, Coordinating Secretary of the Lasallian Research and Resources Service.

Fr. Salomone was brought to life; invigorated, he practically breathed again, rescued from the forgotten byways of the terrible morass that was the French Revolution. He was French and performed a miracle in Venezuela—a sign of the universality of faith. The story in its entirety still speaks strongly to us of his love for children, the universality of the Church, and the relativity of time in the plans of God.



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*It helps us maintain contact with multiple people and share events, stories, and hopes with them, because it helps us evangelize in a world that still feels a need for absolutes.*

*I am prepared to invest in communication because...*

*It is a value that helps a person enter into communion with others, and to truly communicate what helps us grow in every sense.*

”

**What is the most significant challenge you face in your work?**

Even if I am not the person directly responsible for “communications action” for my congregation, I have some experience in this field and I take courses in communication. I think that the most significant challenge is being able to reach others... communication is an opportunity for interaction that involves all the members of the institute.

**What would help you tackle this challenge better?**

It is important to recognize the role of communications, not just by the person doing the job of communications, but by all the people who are members of the institute; especially those who are tasked with interacting with others to promote the identity (the mission) of the congregation. In my opinion, it is important to give the job of communications its due place, and one way to start is to include it systematically and prominently by training, because even communication must be learned and applied.

**What is the most important thing you have learned in your work?**

That communication is a process that starts with small initiatives that build a bridge to reawakening a passion to communicate. We think of our daily interactions, not just in the use of media. Communicating is bringing the other into what I know, what I have; communicating opens the door for an encounter with the other.

**Can you share an example of a good practice in this area with us?**

Communication requires openness to be able to see what you have and what you do not have, being willing to learn, to change, and in many cases to invest resources and time. For my congregation, I think that the first step was to recognize that we need to give communications its place, that we need to find communication strategies that help us promote our mission, using the communications tools that we have available, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

Sofia Henao Guerrero, FSM  
Suore Francescane Ancelle di Maria  
Rome



## THE IMPORTANCE OF AN UP-TO-DATE WEBSITE



In the new media of communication, the Church has found a valuable tool for spreading the Gospel and religious values, for promoting dialogue and ecumenical and interreligious cooperation, and also for affirming the basic principles that pertain to it, so crucial in building a society that respects the dignity of humankind and that is mindful of the common good. The Church uses them to provide information about itself and to expand the channels of evangelization, of catechesis, and learning, considering their use to be a response to the Lord's commandment: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all

creation" (Mark 16:15).

Unlike other media, the web is accessible at any time and from anywhere in the world if internet access is available, offering everyone the chance to create a page, provide information, or promote this or that event or group. This is the challenge for someone who has taken vows, in a religious congregation that operates in the world of the internet: to have the internet convey the image and convey the charism. It is about pursuing the evangelical path, taking it to this immaterial continent, not only to give rise to vocations, but even more simply to ensure that the Word of God circulates more fluidly and transparently, preoccupying ourselves with continuing to be among the people.

### Then why create a web page?

In the first place, so that the people can enter into communication with the congregation as a whole; a web page is the best tool for reaching the multiple objectives of the communications plan that a congregation has created it its desire to make its charism discernible and to be recognized through those flows of communication and interaction typical of the digital world that can sometimes be soulless.

Having a presence on the web means making the voice of the Church heard; it can no longer ignore this protean ocean that is the web and explain how it is different from the rest and at the same time stress its universality.

Here are a few (excellent) reasons why a congregation must be online. **Your website represents an evangelizing advantage! It bears witness.**

- It shows an accessible community, available to everyone, everywhere.
- It facilitates dialogue and the spread of information!
- It helps us better understand today's world and its youth!
- It helps us reach young people wherever they are!

### What are the quality criteria for a website?

Creating a quality website requires putting together the following conditions, aimed at meeting the objectives for which the website was designed.

- **Useful:** useful for the congregation itself, to learn and be informed. For the sisters, a site is a means for sharing their presence with one another, to convey a part of their mission, and to write about the daily realities of their missionary experience.
- **Vital:** to let people know that the General Curia has an active life, posting online letters or communications from the superior general, making clear the vitality of the congregation to people who visit the site.
- **Usable and Compatible:** this means having a site that is practical, functional, and accessible, reaching out to the user's computer skills, equipment, or surfing abilities. Sisters or young people in countries far distant from each other will have the same ability—by smartphones—to visit the website and understand to what extent the congregation is able to live in the present, with the chance to take part in it and share its existence.
- **Visible:** to be effective, a website must be visible, meaning accessible to the largest number of web surfers who did not know about it before. Therefore, we need to gain visibility in search engines and with social tools. This makes a presence for the site a necessity on social media. Social networks today are a world into which young people project themselves and share their daily lives, so a congregation's digital space must not simply exist, but must also create a link with this world. Social networks today generate viewing, listening, and a significant volume of sales. When building a communications website today, it is crucial to pair it with tools that are actually effective and widespread, like Facebook or Twitter, or otherwise identify other tools that match the objectives you have made your priorities.
- **Up to Date:** a website that is not updated frequently does not attract visitors, and does not get good references from search engines, which tend to ignore it. Today's internet is a space that is constantly evolving, so the important thing is to find a balance between updating the website and its content's basic stability.
- **Attractive:** the potential to attract, meaning the graphic appearance of a website, is the main factor in connecting to virtual visitors and gaining their loyalty so they come back to visit the site! There is an aesthetic, a design for virtual spaces.



### **What message should a religious congregation's website express?**

A congregation's website should express the fullness of its commitment, showcase the spirituality and charism of the whole "family" and convey its dynamism!

### **What content to include? What to say?**

The written content for a website must respond to both the needs and restrictions of the means it is using. Writing must be concise, quickly understandable, dynamic, and interactive!

Even if the message conveyed by your web presence can be congregational and informative:

- Its mission is still to attract visitors and say something about the truth of the congregation.
- It should make the message easy to understand, using clear, coherent and complete information; its text and quotes should persuade people visiting the site that this congregation is a reliable source, and it should elicit interest thanks to the diversity of content.
- The content must always answer these questions: What (what it is saying, what content)? Who (recipients, visitors)? How (form, formatting, design)? When (the site is vital in the sense that it reflects the life of the community at a given time)? Why (never lose sight of the congregation's objectives within the broader ecclesiastical reality)?

### **Here are a few rules to follow when preparing text for the web:**

- Use brief (four to ten words long), unique, and appealing titles on each page.
- Create clear content that the broader public can understand.
- Use a catchy introduction of about 50 words. The first few lines of must provide part of the answer to make the reader want to continue.
- Use a paragraph structure that provides a good informational hierarchy from the general idea to the details, and not vice versa.
- Use strong and lively text that is fluid and easy to read.
- Use short sentences (fewer than 20 words when possible) that are free of typos.
- Express one idea in each sentence. Cover one subject per article/page.
- Use the key word or expression from the beginning of the article.
- Create unique text (avoid duplicate content).
- An article (or page) must contain a minimum of 300 words.

The content of the text must match its visual impact and must be coordinated with a multi-media approach: that is, the option of including videos, photos, colorful frames, a complete website layout, architecture that evolves with technology as it becomes available, and that is offered "turnkey" or is handled by a webmaster. You can also consider including YouTube videos that depict the congregation's vision and are helpful in conveying a spiritual message.

This requires a full awareness that the evangelical message can be contradicted by an enormous quantity of images; it is important that a wealth of multimedia



content does not end up masking the very essence of a religious community’s presence in the world.

This means successfully appreciating spiritual references without getting trapped in virtual and technical intricacies.

The challenge is to adapt the web’s technology to convey universal and permanent values—as the Church’s values have always been—without distorting them.



“

*I believe in it and I think that today it is crucial.*

*This is how young people will approach, they are children of a digital age.*

*It can reach your congregation and the world.*

*It helps us to tell the story of the beauty we have received and that we give back to make the sisters more responsible for communications, as well as to communicate more among ourselves and with others.*

”

*I am prepared to invest in communication because...*

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN UP-TO-DATE WEBSITE



## Is it better to have an outside company create our site or do everything with the congregation's resources?

It depends. Does your congregation have competent staff with technical skills (HTML language, WordPress skills, graphics) or in communications? If so, perhaps you do not need to invest money in using an outside company. But if the answer is no, and you intend to make a site that truly meets today's communications needs, it is wise to contact a professional agency or a freelance webmaster.

We will recommend a few steps, and then you can adapt this "algorithm" to your situation:

- Talk with other congregations that have already taken this step and listen to their experience, understanding what worked and what did not work.
- Clarify amongst yourselves what you are looking for and what you need: a clear question is the first step in looking for the right answer.
- Identify the sister in your institute who will monitor the process; if she has communications skills that is ideal, because she might be the person who will monitor the work of the outside person or company.
- Ask for at least three quotes for the service you want.

Hiring an outside company to make a responsive and modern site does not mean giving the technician carte blanche. The company must be monitored continuously by someone in the congregation, with skills in communications for religious life, who will then take over updating the site and managing its connected social media. From the experience of various congregations, we have learned that leaving the field completely open to the company is unsatisfactory and you run the risk of getting a nice site that nobody can update or develop.

To help choose:

- Consider what you want the site to communicate and contain.
- Consider whether it is an institute's site for the congregation on the international level. If so, consider which documents it should contain so that the congregation's identity is clear.
- Ask the business for a graphic proposal according to one of our menu and content ideas.
- Ask for training on how to update the site once it has been created.
- Ask for a quote for annual support for structural site maintenance (program updates, addition of specific plug-ins depending on needs that may arise through use of the site, possible viruses or bugs, etc.).

## NEWS AS A MULTIMEDIA SPACE

**How do you publish news so that it will be read in a setting in which two resources are very scarce: the public's time and attention span?**

In the age of Web 1.0, websites appeared as shop windows in which you presented your organization. Try to think back to how website menus were organized: they had lots of options, with many branches and subcategories. Today, when time has become a very scarce resource, the home page plays a vital role and the menu must be visible so that it is instantly available to the visitor.

Today's digital world is more cross-linked, complex, interactive, and interconnected. As a result, the main menu tends to be very streamlined; each macro item can also include others but should be visible at first glance to avoid being too distracting (remember that time and attention are scarce resources?).

A home page that contains too much information or too many details is difficult to visit. A clean site helps a person feel at home without causing too much input overload anxiety. The home page has a spot for contacts and social media, so we can share the news we are reading. Sometimes there are also forums or blogs.

**What are the most frequent menu items on the websites of congregations today? Let us make a list: who we are, where we are, vision/mission/charism, media, news, downloads. Would you add any others?**

We needed this introduction in order to say that the news section is crucial: anything that is not static content is news. Static content changes less frequently, and will provide congregational news (history, foundation, mission). All we need to decide if the website is managed and updated is the date of the most recent news item.

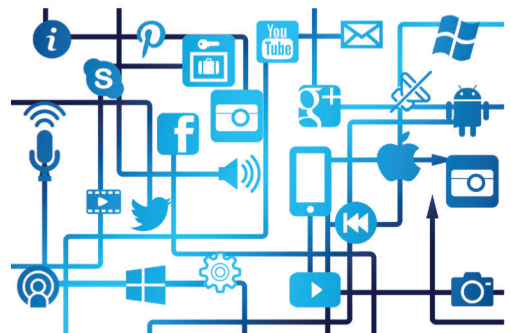
News must be:

1. Clear
2. Identifiable in time and space
3. Multimedia

**Why are some news items read more than others? How can we interest people and make it easier to read a news item?**

I'll try to answer that:

- If you do not do a good job promoting news through social media and your newsletter, it is unlikely that the news will get read.





- If the news is text only, it will be weak. News items that incorporate compelling graphics, photos, and video are more likely to attract more people resulting in more search engine results.

Even if we are not digital natives, we are influenced by the culture in which we live, and when preparing the news we need to be aware that:

- Ours is a largely multimedia culture (images, video, sounds...).
- We do not have much time to read what interests us and search for the information we need.
- Space on the digital web is infinite; it is a limitless resource. We risk getting lost while looking for what we need or what interests us.
- News on the internet is not read as if it were in a newspaper or magazine. We expect a complete experience that involves all the senses and ranges from the rational to the emotional, from the intellectual to the more active. If you want your news to get read, you have got to “sell it” successfully with social media and your newsletter, but you also have to package it properly. Prepare it so it will keep the reader from leaving your page.

As communicators, we have to do the job for our users: if I have an infinite space (the digital web) and they do not have much time, I make sure that my news is complete and that they will find what they are searching for. In practical terms, I organize and structure the news like a multimedia space, so users will find all the information they need to understand, the links they need to learn more, and various languages to satisfy all their human dimensions.

Try to think of some news that you published recently. Go back and look at it with new eyes. Try to see what you could have done differently.

### Are Our Communications Intercultural?

Interculturalism in an institute is a delicate and complex process that can even be painful at times. This is reflected in your communication style. It will not be a variety of colors and languages that will make your communication intercultural. A lot depends on the position we take in what we say, and in the spaces we set aside for the various voices and ways to interpret and experience life. Communication in our social spaces must be simple and immediate, and often this can lead us to reduce complexity and simplify diversity. Interculturalism is a round-trip process; it is a movement that includes and constantly moves the center; it is an awareness that we are not alone. For a congregation with strong roots in the country where it was founded, it can be difficult to give voice to those who are still perceived as “peripheral” to the mother house. The geopolitics of religious life is changing in the early twenty-first century: this new global panorama cannot be ignored, not even (and above all!) in internal and external communications for a religious institute.

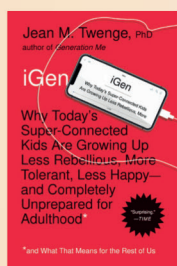
Let us try to design some multimedia news:

- **Title:** use key words and use few articles or prepositions.
- **Author:** some sisters are reluctant to put their names on their articles, and we understand, because sometimes their lives and the safety of their communities are at risk. Wherever possible we invite you to use their name because it makes the news human and shows that there is a real person behind it.

### Book

*iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy--and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood--and What That Means for the Rest of Us*

**Author: Jean M. Twenge PhD**



With generational divides wider than ever, parents, educators, and employers have an urgent need to understand today's rising generation of teens and young adults.

Born in the mid-1990s up to the mid-2000s, iGen is the first generation to spend their entire adolescence in the age of the smartphone. With social media and texting replacing other activities, iGen spends less time with their friends in person—perhaps contributing to their unprecedented levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness.

But technology is not the only thing that makes iGen distinct from every generation before them; they are also different in how they spend their time, how they behave, and in their attitudes toward religion, sexuality, and politics. They socialize in completely new ways, reject once sacred social taboos, and want different things from their lives and careers. More than previous generations, they are obsessed with safety, focused on tolerance, and have no patience for inequality.

With the first members of iGen just graduating from college, we all need to understand them: friends and family need to look out for them; businesses must figure out how to recruit them and sell to them; colleges and universities must know how to educate and guide them. And members of iGen also need to understand themselves as they communicate with their elders and explain their views to their older peers. Because where iGen goes, so goes our nation—and the world.

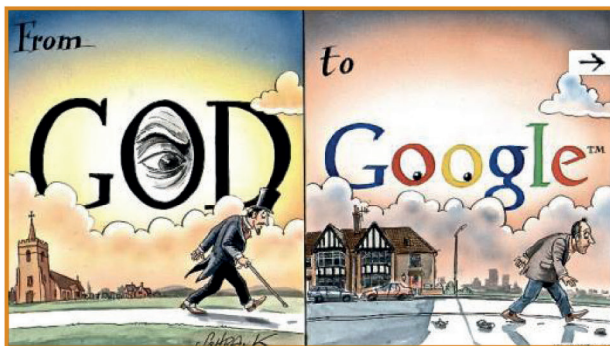
- **Date:** enables the reader to identify timely content.
- **Subtitle:** identifies they will read in the article. Repeating keywords in the title helps with SEO—Search Engine Optimization.
- **Photos:** consider including a photo gallery if possible.
- **Videos:** embed from a YouTube channel. It is a good idea to include the URL of a video previously loaded to YouTube or another platform directly from the article. That way anyone who wants to see the video can simply click it, and will not need to open another tab. Remember that your readers have little time, and often may be reading on a cell phone.



- **Links to other websites:** enable the reader to learn more about the subject or explain certain information or concepts included in the article that you are unable to explain in the space available. This way, if the person does not know something, and decides to follow the link you provided and is happy with your suggestion, they can easily use the back button to return to your website. One important rule is to write about what you know well and link to the rest. We cannot all be experts about everything, but our job is to select sites that can give correct, in-depth information to our time-strapped readers).
- **Buttons for sharing the news:** ask readers to share news on social media and WhatsApp. This is the most rudimentary call to action we can use in our news. Some others are: learn more, donate, take part in an online or in-person event, leave a comment, adopt a behavior, or take some action in favor of a cause, etc.
- **Include Facebook or Twitter posts:** integrate social media posts that say something important about the purpose of the article, or a story of all the tweets exchanged if it is a specific event. You can copy the URL and embed the post in the article from these social media. Doing this satisfies the criteria of news as a multimedia space: it offers dynamic, readable text, from various stimuli, and links the news to the rest of the web.

#### Two Issues Worth Thinking About:

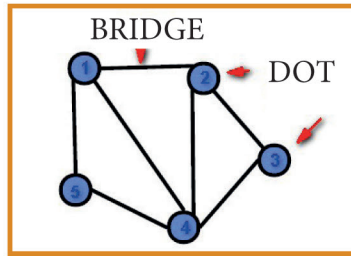
1. How can you reconcile the hierarchical structure typical of religious life with the horizontal way the digital web is typically organized?
2. Are we continuing to utilize the web with the monolithic logic of Web 1.0? How can we move from unidirectional communications to a mutual conversation among equals, where everybody has equal dignity as well as the right to be heard and to speak; equality does not mean squashing diversity into a flattened uniformity.





From this we can see that a piece of news is not just news: it becomes a multimedia space that has meaning, a multifactorial system. As human persons, we think and feel in a network (neurons, synapses, interactions); we are subjects with sense, and therefore we seek the meaning in what we read. We have multiple senses, and we must involve all of them for news to make a lasting impression and for people to want to share and circulate it.

This image helps us understand how our news becomes part of a broader web of news, through nodes and links. If our news is sound, others will link to us in turn, and this is how the web is fed.



### Our News Cannot Be a Mass Message

Every news item speaks to a specific audience, to a small segment of a potentially broader audience. If I am writing for my sisters, I will use a certain language.

If I publish news intended for people who are not familiar with our institute but who are interested in a specific mission, I will use less ecclesiastical, more open language, avoiding acronyms or overly technical expressions. Our eyes today are more accustomed to reading less and doing so more quickly.

The characteristics of the printed page are to be linear, have criteria regarding front-page news and secondary news, arrive after the event, and cannot be updated. Thomas Pettitt speaks of the Gutenberg Parenthesis: how the digital web is the more natural world for a human being to think and conceptualize the world; therefore we began with a rudimentary form of the web (before printing) and have arrived at an articulated form of the web, following the parenthesis of printing.

What can we make of this interpretation?

The digital world overcomes the limits of the printed page (it has others: it seems to live in an eternal present of privacy, fact checking, credibility), because it can occupy infinite space, it can create infinite links between different pieces of news as well as between the past and present, and a single piece of news can be updated in real time at any event, even using a smart phone.



## MAKING A BROCHURE

### Brochure

- Is a document that typically represents an organization, an institution, or a company. For example, a leaflet with two or three sides serving as advertising for services, products, and announcements or to present events and projects.
- Includes the press materials for the organization.
- Portrays the type of company or institution, using a specific design depending on the goal.
- Represents the institute's image.
- Normally uses three communications functions. Which function(s) will be emphasized is dependent on the specific goals of the brochure.

**Informative Function:** the usual way to provide information about the institution or its concrete aspects (type of work, mission, specific projects, etc.).

**Advertising Function:** this type of marketing is an excellent way to promote and publicize services in an appealing way.

**Identifying Function:** this function helps us automatically recognize the institution and gives it prestige and credibility. Good graphics make it possible to unify characteristics even in different brochures.

### First Steps

- Formulate the goal.
- Identify the primary function.
- Define your audience.
- Choose the right format to convey your message.
- Choose the type of paper for printing (photographic, weight in grams, gloss).

### Suggestions

- Consider other brochures, poster types, and invitations from other institutes.
- Use templates.
- Collect material and text before you begin defining your brochure.

### Basic Elements

1. Draft text of suitable length in an appropriate style. Express clear, concise ideas.
2. Look for the images and graphics that will be used (pay attention to file quality):
  - Use photographs or drawings or a combination of the two.
  - Use original images or images available on the internet.
  - Retouch or provide backgrounds for images as necessary.

Use a design that is appropriate for both content and the audience:

- ## Suggestions

- Aim to spark interest in your readers, organize information so it makes logical sense to look at and to read, use graphics to call attention to the principal aspects, and introduce an element of surprise.





## MANAGING PHOTOS AND IMAGES

“

*Photos present us with wars, earthquakes, and all the atrocities committed in the world. They are a mass of violent images, day after day, whose effect is to anesthetize us rather than to terrorize us. In our society...individualism has replaced essence with appearance, the original with the copy, the reality with the image. Reality is reduced to a visual element, an object of pure contemplation....*

*A capitalist society needs a culture based on images; they serve to stimulate supply and demand, to anesthetize, to distract the less fortunate from societal problems: problems of class, race, and sex. Images are used to reinforce the dominant ideology and social change indicates a change of images.*

Marga Clark

”

Images—photography and illustrations—are powerful means of communication. We live in a visual world where images have become our leading method of expression, used most commonly for their impact, “reading,” interpretation, beauty, etc.

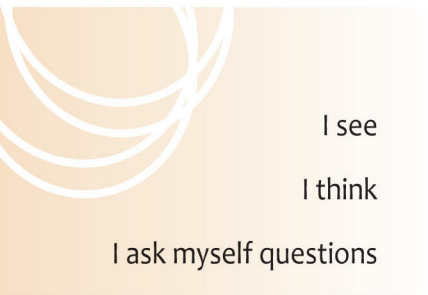
- Always remember that the congregation’s signature is on the project.
- If you are in doubt, it is better not to publish.
- Cultures have different criteria for evaluating aesthetics. Not everyone will like everything.
- Images must be of good quality. Sharpness and clarity are crucial elements.
- Keep in mind the overall framework surrounding the image.
- The image must be consistent, and any retouching must be done carefully.
- As far as possible, prepare material that belongs to you.

We are all able to see what an image shows, but not all of us can interpret what an image suggests. When capturing a “slice” of space-time and thus creating an image, the elements that we have isolated lose their context, and therefore their original meaning. They take on a new meaning, one the observer interprets.

Photography can be read on two levels:

- That which is represented (what it shows).
- That which is connoted (what it suggests).

For a few decades now, images have become a key resource in communications. Images stimulate us, move us, they touch us, sometimes in ways that exceed words themselves. Nevertheless, an image (photograph, illustration, or its components)



I see

I think

I ask myself questions

has its own code; it obeys certain rules, and they must be followed to one extent or another. Let us proceed in order:

### Universality and Subjectivity

An image can serve as a fuse for a true explosion of sensation and feeling. In order to interpret a photograph, we must strive to understand:

- What the image represents.
- What it expresses.
- What is happening.
- What question we are answering.

### Facets of Photography

1. Graphic reportage: aiming to capture aspects of the outside world as they appear to our eyes and in advertising.
2. Artistic photography: intended to be expressive and interpretive, to produce impressions, emotions, feelings.
3. Manipulation of photographs: consistently impersonal and abstract, with more formal and general goals.

“

*When used to capture personal experience, photography reveals positive aspects: it develops a visual sensibility and stimulates a visual interpretation of reality.*

Michael Freeman

”

### Narrative Photography

In order to do reportage, you need relatively few resources besides imagination. You must tell stories. Connect the camera to your feelings.

- Photography is a language, and its foundation is the story in images of what we are trying to say.
- Think creatively. Nothing, or nearly nothing, is random: you have a common thread.
- The photographer does not capture complete images, but rather strives to convey feelings solicited by the images.

### Taking Photos

1. Find a still, stable position: a human tripod.
2. Bring your camera! How many times have we left it at home? That is the joy of cell phones.
3. Check your batteries and charge before you start.



## Photos with Your Phone

- Taking photos with cell phone or smartphone is a hugely popular option. Before buying a new cell or smartphone, some people research the quality of the images. In many cases, their phone is their only camera.
- Thanks to miniaturization technologies, every new cell or smartphone delivers better cameras, better performance, and new applications.
- The same rules, laws of composition, technique, and so on apply to photography with your phone.
- To be a photographer, it is very important to have a sensitivity and a photographic eye to reach your audience and convey emotions. Clearly, we are not talking about professional photography, but it is still photography from a creative and artistic point of view.

The art is not in the quality of the tool, but in the sensitivity of the person using it, in knowing how to see and capture a moment and an emotion.

There is no single perfect camera, but a device suited to the needs of an individual.



## Advice

- Make the most of light.
- Get close to the object in which you are interested.
- Work on the idea: in photography, the message we want to convey to the observer is central. Work on the image and the message through the arrangement of the elements in the shot.
- Use smartphone apps for fixes and improvements.
- Keep your lens clean.
- Try to find a stable position.

## Camera Phones: Advantages and Disadvantages

### Advantages

- Size: smaller size takes up less space.
- Availability: you always have it with you.
- Speed: you do not have to adjust parameters and the auto options work well.
- All in one: you can edit your photos using that same smartphone.
- Apps: there are tons of photo editing apps that are free and easy to use.
- Ease of use: you do not need a technical apprenticeship, just visual skill or an understanding of composition.
- Incognito: it is easy to take photos without anyone noticing. This can be a useful approach, but it must be used responsibly.

Remember that the true creator of photography is not the camera.

IT IS YOU!



## Disadvantages

- Quality: undoubtedly, the quality of the photographs is not the best despite the plentiful megapixels that smartphone cameras offer.
- Price: the more expensive the phone, the better the camera!

## Optimization

Compression is a technique that allows you to reduce file size to make it easier to transfer or store the file on any device. Two techniques:

- Reduce the number of colors used in the image.
- Compress the image data to take up less space.

## File Types

### BMP: Bitmap

- Does not suffer a loss of quality. It is suitable for saving images for editing.
- Advantage: saves an enormous amount of information in each image.
- Disadvantage: the file takes up a lot of space.

### GIF: Graphics Interchange Format

- Designed to compress digital images.
- Allows up to 256 colors (8-bit depth).
- Permits a smaller range of colors and allows you to optimize storage space.
- No information is lost in compression.
- Allows progressive loading, transparent backgrounds, and animation.
- Advantage: suitable for publishing drawings on the web.
- Disadvantage: not recommended for quality photos.

### JPEG/JPG: Joint Photographic Experts Group

- Allows a range of 16 million colors.
- Is the most common format for publishing images on the web.
- Risk of quality loss every time a file is viewed or edited.
- Allows progressive loading and reduction of storage space for archives.
- Does not allow transparent backgrounds or animation.
- Advantage: ideal for publishing photos on the web, adapting sizes, and compressing files.
- Disadvantage: not suitable for original files or for large-size files.



## **PNG: Portable Network Graphic**

- Serves as an alternative to GIF.
- Supports 24-bit colors.
- No information is lost in compression.
- Allows progressive loading and transparent backgrounds.
- Does not allow animation.
- Advantage: can expand the number of colors beyond 256.
- Disadvantage: the files are very large.

## **TIFF/TIF: Tagged Image File Format**

- Organizes images of excellent quality.
- Uses color depths from 1 to 32 bits.
- Suitable for editing or for print.
- Advantage: ideal for archiving original files and updates.
- Disadvantage: the files are very large.

## **Web**

- Smaller size image files to make download and display easier.
- The size of a graphic archive is determined by the sizes of its images, their resolution, the number of colors, and their formats (JPG, GIF, PNG).
- The size of a graphic archive is determined by the sizes of its images, their resolution, the number of colors, and their formats (JPG, GIF, PNG).
- Creates and saves images at a resolution no greater than 72 dpi. If the image is printed, select a resolution from 200 to 300 dpi.
- Use a graphics program to define the size of the image.
- Display the originals of the preferred images in BMP, TIFF, or JPG format without compression. Create a copy in GIF (PNG) or JPG, with sizes, resolution, and colors for the web.

## **Suggestions**

- GIF images are better for drawings, graphics, and logos.
- JPG images are better suited for photos or shades of color; they accept 24-bit colors and the compression delivers a brighter image that takes up less space.
- Do NOT insert images in a page using the copy/paste function; they lose quality.
- To reduce the size of the graphic file, there are certain parameters you can change:
  - Convert the graphic file format.
  - Reduce the color palette.
  - Reduce the image size (height and width).

## **Graphics Programs**

- Adobe Photoshop (licensed)
- Adobe Illustrator (licensed)
- PaintShop Pro (licensed)
- CorelDRAW (licensed)
- GIMP (free)

“

*The eye selects, rejects, organizes, discriminates, associates, classifies, analyzes, constructs.*

Nelson Goodman

”

## Online Image Editing Programs

Both free and paid versions (which provide more features) of these programs are available.

### **Skitch** [ [www.evernote.com/intl/en/products/skitch](http://www.evernote.com/intl/en/products/skitch) ]

A tool for annotating and publishing images that is designed for communicating quickly and concisely by making use of text, shapes and drawings. It integrates with Evernote and is available both for desktop computer (PC and Mac) and mobile devices (Android, IOS, Windows 8).

### **Canva** [ [www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com) ]

An essential and easy-to-use web tool for creating posters, images for blogs, banners for Facebook or Twitter, infographics, or e-books. Canva's library of images, icons, fonts, filters, and tutorials enable the user to develop creative and appealing designs.

### **PicMonkey** [ [www.picmonkey.com](http://www.picmonkey.com) ]

A web application similar to Skitch, but with more tools for retouching photos with Instagram-style effects, text, texture, photo frames, and fonts. It integrates with Dropbox and Onedrive so you can easily view images on the cloud.



### **Adobe Photoshop Express** [ <https://www.photoshop.com/products/photoshopexpress> ]

An Adobe application that's useful for mobile and tablet devices. View, classify, and sort images into folders at a speed that is proportional to the file size.

### **PicResize** [ [www.picresize.com](http://www.picresize.com) ]

It is important that the file size of an image linked to a web page be as small as possible—though of sufficient quality—so that the image loads quickly. PicResize allows you to reduce the size of an image by half while still maintaining quality.

## Photos of People: Image Rights

Every time we take a photo of a person, we have to consider protecting the right to the images as well as the right to privacy (personal and familial) of the person photographed, along with the photographer's right to information and expression.

The right to protect one's image is defined by the constitutional court of each country as "the right to identify the information generated by representing the personal physical characteristics of the individual in question that may be shared publicly," which can "prevent the attainment, reproduction, or publication of one's image by unauthorized third parties, whatever its purpose, informational,





commercial, scientific, cultural etc., prosecuting whosoever takes it and circulates it.”

The law considers capturing, reproducing, and publishing photographs, films or any other method of capturing an image of a person in places or moments of his/her private life, or even outside of these, to be illegitimate interference. Notwithstanding the right to personal images, it is not forbidden to shoot images, reproduce them, and publish them when the person photographed holds a public office or possesses fame deriving from the exercise of a profession, or when the image itself is taken during a public act or in a public place. We must take particular care when the person photographed is a minor. Written consent from the minor’s parents or guardians must be obtained in advance.

### **Photographs of Works Protected by Copyright**

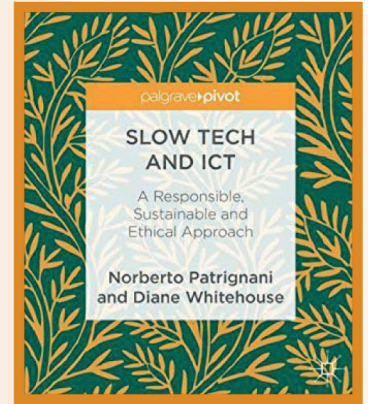
Works protected by copyright include books, photographs, animated images, and works of art. Copyright gives the creator of a work the exclusive right to reproduce the work. Therefore you need his or her permission in advance in order to make use of the work. We recommend getting consent from the copyright holder in writing. In addition to reproduction, activities that require permission include online publication and public display. Permission must be requested in order to publish a work generically subject to copyright, unless it is created by a scientific or cultural public institution, if it is intended to be informative, if there is no specific ban, or if the work is displayed in a public place.

## Book

### ***Slow Tech and ICT: A Responsible, Sustainable and Ethical Approach***

**Authors: Norberto Patrignani and Diane Whitehouse**

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, time is in psychosocial shortage. This is despite the fact that, in today's net era, people have access to technology that can offer them more time than ever and free them from paid work—both the repetitive and physically heavy work that dominated during periods of industrialism and also more and more mental work.



Why did this wonderful technology, called information and communication technology (ICT), not increase the quality of life and provide people with lots of free time to enjoy life and care about nature—comparable to the Greek golden era? The main title of this book, *Slow Tech and ICT*, is indeed provocative and hits the nail on the head. Why go for slow technology when speed is what is wanted from machines? What happens when the purpose of all research and development is to develop faster, smaller, cheaper products and services through the interaction and convergence of permanently new components?

The authors undertake an impressive analysis of this challenge. They also point out a potential direction to take and develop a new roadmap to achieve desirable societal and human goals. The keywords, good, clean, and fair, which are directly linked with Slow Tech, are pearls in a chain that we all should wear around our necks. These Slow Tech guidelines are applicable to all countries. They involve values that we all have to care about, independent of where we are located and at what stage we are in the digital transformation.

Just by taking a quick look at the book's preface, we are straight away curious to learn more about the Slow Tech philosophy.

Gunilla Bradley,  
Royal Institute of Technology  
Stockholm, Sweden  
Summer 2017



## SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE MISSION

What is a post? It is anything published to the internet, be it text, video, or an image. This can be a long-form story that includes many images on your WordPress website or a single image with no caption on Instagram. The idea is to reshape a single story or an aspect of that story to fit across many platforms.

Why do we post? Keep the answer to this essential question in mind when you make a post. Let it be the guide behind your content.

Build name recognition: in everything you publish, remember that it is one more drop in the bucket towards building name recognition around your organization. You will want the content to reflect the value and charism of the organization. It is also important that the content comes across as professional. If it is not to the standards of your department you may be better off not sharing content with the world.

### **Calls to Action**

- Donate
- Volunteer
- Join mailing list
- Follow social media
- Reconnect alumni
- Attend event
- Pray
- Become a sister
- Become an associate
- Visit campus
- Come to Mass
- Act for social justice
- Retreat
- Benefit from a ministry

### **Calls to Action**

What is it that you want the end user to do next? Perhaps it is only to see the message, recognize the name behind the message and leave it at that. Other times, your goal may be to motivate the user to act—make a donation, volunteer, explore their vocation, or pray for the cause you are writing about. There are many possibilities here, but if the call to action is not clear and easily accomplished for the user, then you are not accomplishing your goal in making the post.

### **Tools**

Think about the tools you will need to do the work and find those that will help in keeping a stream of content flowing from your organization. Find the platforms that work best for you and use them regularly.

A regular email newsletter can be very effective in pushing out your message to your





supporters. Regular posts to social media show that your organization is up-to-date and active whenever a supporter decides to come to you.

**Methods**

Tell stories. Try to visit ministry sites and meet the people who have benefited from sisters’ work. Tell the story from their point of view. Illustrate a positive change that has occurred in their lives due to the efforts of the sisters. In your designing efforts, keep the layout simple and professional. Keep a unified look and feel. If the photo quality or any other part of the content does not meet your standards, it may be best to pass on sharing it with a wide audience.



**Make It Look Professional...  
Or Don't Do It**

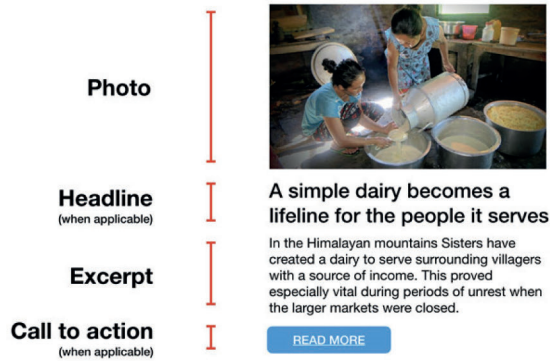
Try to create a workflow that moves you from one platform to the next with ease. Think about your approach. Use a single story across all platforms. Go from a print appeal to a blog post, to an email newsletter, and finally to social media. Stagger the release of the story on all these platforms, or release all at once for bigger impact on special events or timely news.



Make it look professional



Or don't do it



## Anatomy of a Post

You should be able to present every story or post in this simplest of formats. A single featured photo followed by a headline, then an excerpt, followed by a call to action. The photo is almost always mandatory. The headline is usually present except on social media where you will instead build the headline into the excerpt. An excerpt should be about the length of a tweet and should encapsulate the entire story. The call to action will take the reader to more photos, the long form version of the story, a donation page, a video, or any other defined call to action.

“

*Creativity is just connecting things. When you ask creative people how they did something, they feel a little guilty, because they didn't really do it, they just saw something. It seemed obvious to them after a while. That's because they were able to connect experiences they've had and synthesize new things.*

”

Alex Pentland,  
*Social Physics: How Good Ideas Spread - The Lessons from a New Science*

Content that inspires involvement ↓

Appeal letter/event ↓

Featured in magazine ↓

Featured on website ↓

Public email ↓

Web post ↓

Internal email ↓

Twitter ↓

Facebook ↓

Other social media

This format makes a top-down approach easier. You can take this post and work it into print materials. The post can then be part of an email. Because it is short and communicates your message upfront and to the point, the reader won't get bogged down and can act according to their interest in the story. This type of format can be a teaser on your website with a call to action to read more in a long-form blog post. Then finally you also have all the elements needed for a Twitter post or an Instagram post.

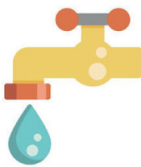
Internal messages can be treated in the same fashion and are usually relegated to carefully segmented emails or password protected posts on a website. Remember to feature your best content at the forefront and let stories that are less relevant or interesting move down behind featured content more quickly.

## Recycle

- Splice video
- Share multiple blurbs of story
- Share story multiple times

After a great story has moved its way through all your platforms and is no longer at the forefront, bring it back and recycle the content. Present it in a different way, with a new featured photo or a new excerpt.

## Be consistent



Recycling content and keeping it moving through all your platforms will help you create a steady stream of great content. Many who did not see your message the first go-around will have another opportunity to catch it.

A new medium introduces not only a new way of expressing ourselves, but also new forms of awareness: new ways of reflecting on who we are and how we relate to others.





Here is an example of a story moving through many platforms.



## Live event

Inspired for a life of service

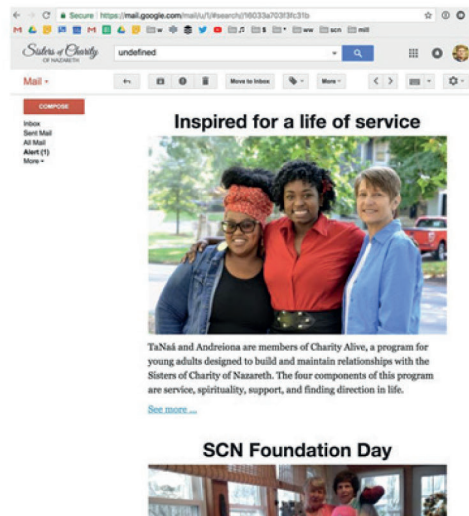


## Magazine

Featured Story

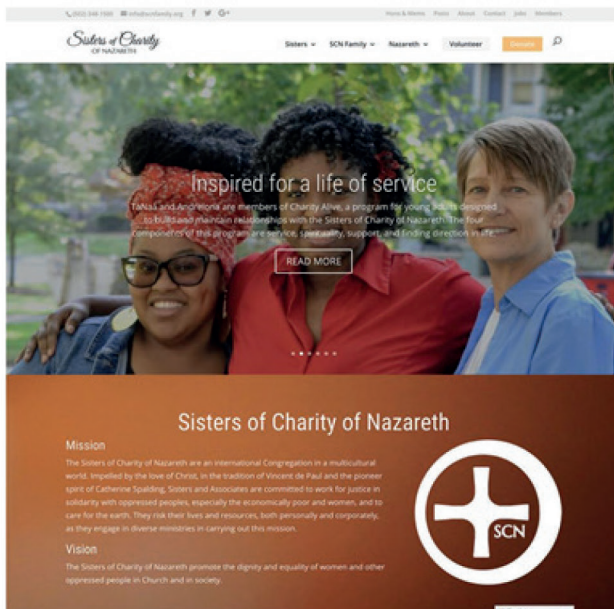
## Email

Public and Internal



## Featured on website

### Inspired for a life of service



Her wish is "to be ready for another adventure and look to doing God's will in whatever capacity I'm called upon, all for the sake of the mission and the charity charism."



#### Associates make recommitment

Dec 8, 2017 | 1 Comment  
Associates and Sisters attended the three year recommitment of Brad Hilgert and Andy Meyer at Nazareth Home in Louisville on the Solemnity of The Immaculate Conception. It was wonderful to celebrate this

Our Faith group that meets at Nazareth on the third Sunday of each month in the meeting room behind the front desk in O'Connell Hall had dinner at Old Talbott Tavern after Mass December 10. We rejoiced that we had time together before Christmas. At the dinner we named our group "Followers of Catherine".



#### Sister Anne Elizabeth Elampalathottiyil: An Interview

Dec 7, 2017 | 6 Comments



#### Inspired for a life of service

Dec 7, 2017 | 8 Comments  
Tahaa and Andreionia are members of Charity Alive, a program for young adults designed to build and maintain relationships with the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth. The four components of this program are service, spirituality, support, and finding direction in life.



## Posted on website

### Inspired for a life of service



# Best Practices

Sisters of Charity of Nazareth is with Nancy Gerth and 4 others at Sisters of Charity of Nazareth. Published by Patsy O'Toole (7) · November 10 at 12:53pm · Nazareth ·

TaNaá Davis and Andreiona Williams speak about their meaningful relationship with the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth at #JoinTheJourney, held in Louisville, Kentucky, on Nov. 8, 2017



2,689 people reached

Boost Post

931 Views

Like Comment Share

Sue Beeler, Frances Zambie Kummer and 61 others

Top Comments

13 Shares



Sisters of Charity @sconfamily · Nov 7

Some of the smiling faces of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth who look forward to seeing guests at tomorrow's Join the Journey luncheon.



jean west and Sister Luke Boianski

1

2

16



Sisters of Charity @sconfamily · Nov 15

"TaNaá and I have been friends since the 6th grade. We went to the same high school & graduated college together. We've been through a lot together. Now, one of the most meaningful things in our lives is our relationship with the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth." #JoinTheJourney



1

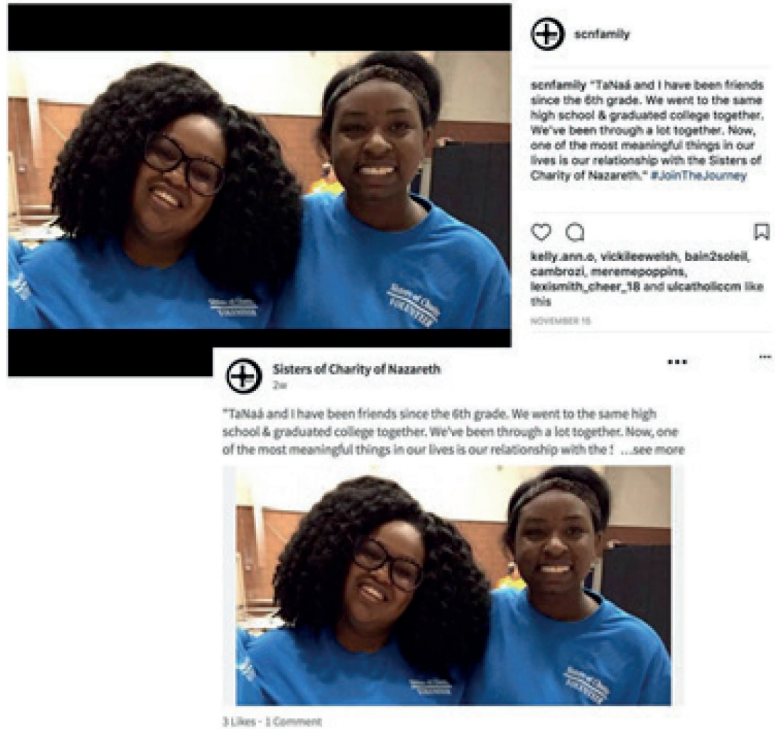
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3

SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THE MISSION







“

What is a community?

Communities are groups of people who, for a specific subject, share a specialty, a role, a passion, an interest, a worry, or a series of problems. The members of the community grow their understanding of the subject by interacting continuously, asking and answering questions, sharing information, reusing good ideas, solving problems for others, and developing new and better ways of doing things.

Stan Garfield

”



## INSTITUTIONAL NEWSLETTERS

Before the advent of the digital, the printed newsletter was one of the few internal and external communications tools for the congregation. Every institute, often without being aware of it, prepared its communications plan with intelligence and a real desire to keep all sisters informed—especially sisters in places difficult to reach—about what was happening in the congregation. The newsletter also became a training tool when more formal opportunities were scarce.

Today, with digital spaces that do not have space constraints, the role of the newsletter has changed. Whether it be printed or digital only, it has become one of the spaces for the institute's global communications plan. The newsletter cannot exist on its own but must be integrated with other communication spaces (website, social networks, magazine...).

A few possibilities adopted by some congregations:

- Create a newsletter for the sisters in the institute (printed, by email only, or downloadable from the website) published in multiple languages by the communications office in the generalate house (or by the general secretary's office or the webmaster), with articles, information, and events from the provinces.
- Publish a specific newsletter for donors, the charismatic family, and associates.
- Produce a magazine or newsletter (monthly, quarterly, etc.) which aims to inform, train, and evangelize on how to convey the charism outside the institute.

The tool we want to talk about here is the newsletter that will be sent online using a special program. Its content can follow the same criteria as paper newsletters or magazines.

First, clearly identify the newsletter's objectives and audience. If they are "my" sisters, I can use a certain more "internal" language (perhaps using acronyms or abbreviations) and I will select the content according to the goal. If I want all the sisters to participate in an event, I will highlight this information using graphic techniques. If I want an important training article to be read, I will select a good photo and a quote from the article to catch their attention.

If the newsletter is intended for an audience sent outside the institute, I cannot assume that everyone will understand our charismatic language, so I will avoid acronyms and abbreviations. I will choose news that is less internal to the congregation and that may be of more inter-congregational interest.

In addition, if my audience is laypeople or young people, I need to consider using appealing images and photos (avoid photos with too many elements, as the pace of digital does not give us time to digest too many details) that are not necessarily

religious (visit the site of the Italian Province of Jesuits and note the images they have selected). I should also consider using videos and text with questions (see, for example, Good Practice in Communications for #Synod2018).


If we do not pay attention to these areas, our information will not be read, despite all our hard work.

Create a newsletter to:

- Create, with the help of social media, a community that follows us.
- Provide information.
- Help people learn about us.
- Raise funds.
- Promote evangelical values.

### **Creating a Newsletter**

If you go to Google and enter “newsletter programs,” you will get a variety of options. In addition, you will find sites that also offer comments on those programs and links to forums for reading about the problems users have encountered while using specific platforms.



In Italian, for example, there is the portal of a young man named Salvatore Aranzulla, who does a very valuable job. He offers a series of pros and cons for each program he suggests. Naturally, if a site says things that are not true or are too biased, its credibility will suffer to the point that it will no longer appear in the first five or six Google results (those are the ones that users see most). In this sense, the web works to demote people who do not do their jobs well.

What we find in these types of sites is called “content curation,” which means searching out the various options, testing them, listening to others who use them, and publishing the results of their analyses. If content curators did not do this, we would have to do it ourselves. Since time is a scarce resource, we look for reliable people who curate content in our language for the various things we need.

Let us go back to newsletter platforms. There are some that are completely free, with the option to get the pro version (for a fee, but with varying pricing plans). The pro version offers a series of options and tools that the free version does not include. If you are not familiar with the program, you can start by testing the use of the free version.

### **Professional Newsletter Programs: Advantages**

- Using the same graphic style and layout helps create a brand for your newsletter that more people will want to open and read.
- Visually, they are more attractive graphically and easier to read.





- Inserting embedded content by simply copying the URL so that it opens directly saves time for the user by accessing the content without too many steps.
- Creating statistical reports with key information helps organize our work better (who opens the newsletter, what they read, what time of the day reading peaks, from which countries are they reading, and who never opens it).
- People can subscribe to the newsletter on their own from our site as the program offers the option to include a subscription box in the HTML language for our site.
- Newsletters can be customized so that the person receives it addressed with his or her name.
- Prevents our email from ending up in the spam folder automatically (that can happen when we send many identical messages to a lot of people—note that after 500 emails with the same subject line, Google makes you wait 24 hours to send other emails)

A disadvantage of these platforms is that, with intelligent providers like Google, if the recipient never opens our newsletter, Google's algorithm moves it to the spam folder or makes it less visible to save the user time.

Statistical reports also let us get in contact with people who decide to unsubscribe from our newsletter and ask them why. Or, we can write to people who never open it, find out why, and provide better service.



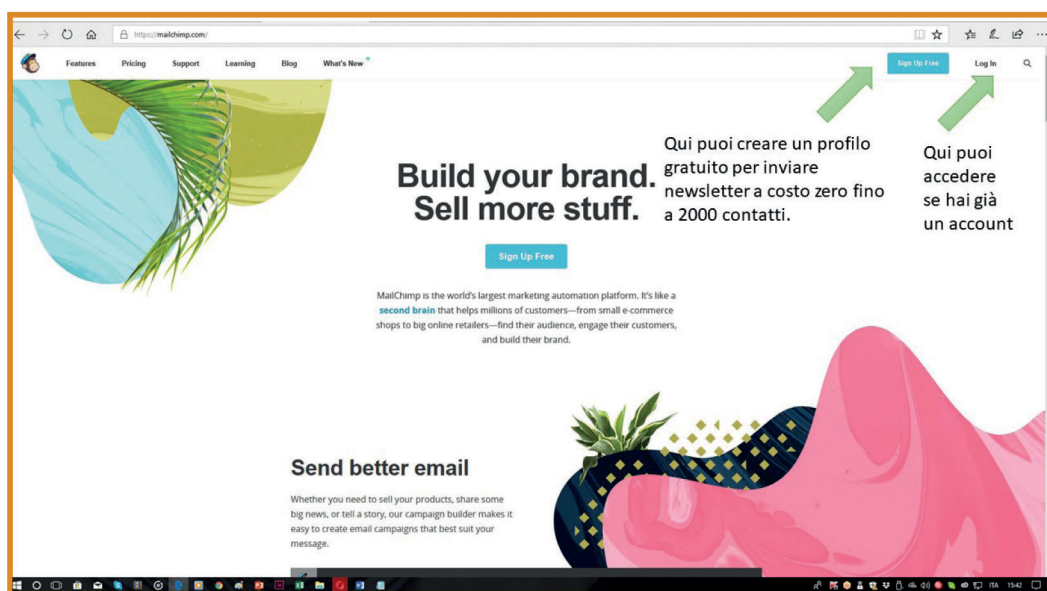
## E-newsletters or Online Newsletters: the Mailchimp Platform

Every platform asks us to create a profile in order to use it, even in the free version. It is a good idea to fill out the profile, including your congregation's logo and all the necessary information; some of them will be used later in the newsletter, like the street address, contacts, website, social media, etc.

The next step is to create the layout of our newsletter: there are various models offered to us. Deciding how to organize the content of our newsletter is important for readability.

So, a few questions to get a clearer picture: which content will the newsletter publish? Is it mostly news or articles to read? Will it have themed sections, or do we prefer the blog model (one below another)?

Once we have made these decisions, we can choose the model that is best for our content. We can always change the layout, especially if we have special editions of the newsletter (important congregational events, special occasions, meetings,



chapters). Generally, it is best to keep the same format for a while, to generate a habit that helps grow loyalty. The less effort it takes for people to recognize us, the more likely it is that they will read our newsletter.

You can set up a template where the first window at the top contains your congregation's identity: logo and name.

When we use professional programs for newsletters, we cannot attach a PDF, unless we intervene in the HTML. The simplest thing is to load the document on our website, or to a free cloud space (Google Drive, DropBox, iCloud), and just include a link in the newsletter.

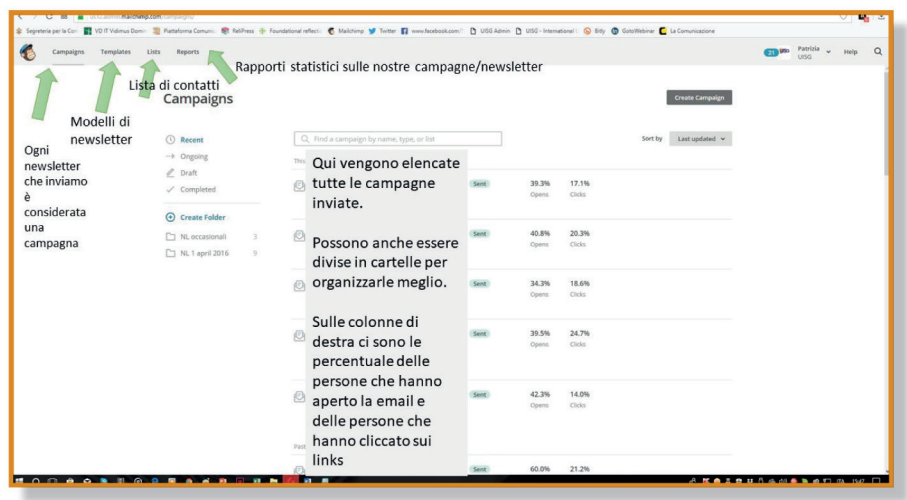
For news or articles we want to publish in the newsletter, it is best to select a striking photo or image (so, one with few elements and details, excellent quality, well framed), use a clear title, and then choose a catchy phrase from the document or the news and place it below the photo. At the bottom of the text, add “Read More” or include a link to an external window (on our site or the cloud) to read the rest of the news item or article.

In most cases, this is simple to do in a newsletter program, because we can simply take the window we need and fill the spaces with photos and text. The windows are usually set up and ready, so we just choose the ones you want.

As we mentioned among the advantages, we can insert the URLs or the HTML string for embedded content (Facebook or Twitter posts, or videos on YouTube or other compatible platforms). We can also include questionnaires in the newsletter itself using a simple Google form.

This more dynamic content makes the newsletter more interactive, varied, and multi-channel.

*Mailchimp window after log in*



It is a good idea to prepare our content first, selecting the photos we intend to publish.

All these platforms are responsive. We can see our final newsletter in a preview window on our cell phone, computer, or tablet before we send it to our recipients.



The first few times, I recommend sending a test to our own address to make sure everything works, that the links are correct, and that no information is missing.

At the bottom of the newsletter, the platform asks us to include essential information, like our contact info, links to our social media and website, the Unsubscribe button, and a phrase that tells the recipient why they are receiving our newsletter. This demonstrates responsibility and transparency on our part.

## Contacts

The contact lists can be created separately (provincial, local superiors, bursars...), or we can import or enter all the contacts into a single list and add categories that make it possible to create segments in the full list, in case we want to send the newsletter to just a portion of our contacts.

For example, say I create a list with the sisters in my congregation; in addition to the name, email, country, and other information, I also enter other categories, like language, position, or something else. If I need to send a newsletter to the local superiors who speak English, I will apply these two filters, and the program lets me send it just to those who meet my criteria (local superiors who speak English).

There are various ways to import contacts into our lists:

- Importing contacts from an Excel list (copy and paste).
- Importing a contacts file from programs like Gmail or another compatible program.
- Entering contacts one at a time.
- Using automatic entry by creating a "Subscribe to our newsletter" space on your website so that contacts will be added to the selected list automatically.



“

*Technologies as users interacting with other technologies as prompts, through other in-between technologies: this is another way of describing hyper history as the stage of human development.*

”

*Luciano Floridi,  
The Fourth Revolution:  
How the Infosphere Is Reshaping Human Reality*



### What do we have to think about before starting a newsletter?

*"How beautiful are the feet of the messenger of good news."*

—Romans 10:15

*"May you not be afraid of the questions that press upon your mind and heart. May you welcome the questions and wait patiently for the day when they will have their answers."*

—Joyce Rupp

A good newsletter needs good content that meets the expectations of the reader and "shares the Good News." Given good content, a successful newsletter design generates interest and maintains readability through consistency, clutter-busting, and contrast.

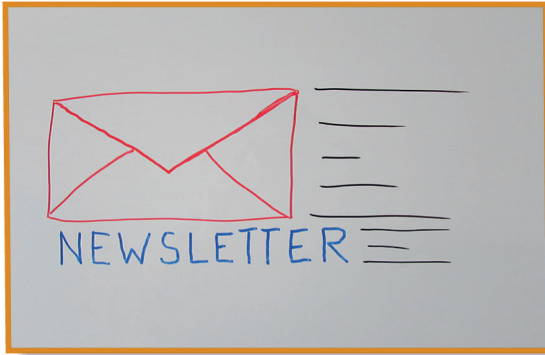


Even with newsletters, first impressions are important. Before you start to design, identify the intended audience and decide which type of image the newsletter should project for that audience—formal or casual.

Look at existing newsletters in other congregations to identify what works and what doesn't about them. Templates are a new designer's best friend. A well-designed template has you on your way to a good design from the very beginning. The software you are using to design the newsletter (InDesign, Illustrator, Word, Publisher, Pages, Power Point) may include a collection of templates. If not, newsletter templates are available online.

Whether you are designing a newsletter for print or for electronic distribution, adhering to certain basic principles can help you design it. Use these basic guidelines when you construct your publication:

1. Printable newsletters: PDF
2. A few questions before starting a newsletter
3. Tips
4. An example from the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd



### 1. Printable Newsletters: PDF

Since it's so easy to ignore e-mail newsletters, print newsletters stand out as the more successful of the two in terms of response rate. Print newsletters simply have more influence. Plus, they are portable, meaning they are likely to make it to the "reading room." Print newsletters need more preparation but have more influence and tend to generate a better response rate.

### 2. A Few Questions Before Starting

#### **How often do you plan to send out your newsletter?**

Determine the frequency: before you commit to a frequency, whether it's monthly or annually, make sure you have enough time and people to keep your promise. Consistency of contact helps you earn the trust of your readers and establish the long-term viability of your newsletter.

#### **Who is your audience?**

Know your audience: even if it is an internal newsletter for a congregation, do not overlook the importance of understanding their essential points, their motives, and what they are interested in. If you can speak to them in their language, your internal communication efforts will become a whole lot easier.

#### **What is your newsletter content?**

A successful content plan will clearly define the purpose of your newsletter and everything that will appear in it. A good way to kick off this step is to host a brainstorming meeting with people who will be contributing to the newsletter directly as well as those who have a vested interest in its success.

#### **How do you organize your newsletter tasks?**

Break up tasks and assign them to specific point persons. Make sure each person is aware of your requirements and include that person's name alongside his/her tasks in your project schedule.

### 3. Tips

The content of a newsletter is important but so too is the presentation. A good design is integral to the success of a newsletter and it is also a great way of being unique and standing out from the rest. Use corporate designs that can be seen clearly and that adapt to different devices so that the reader can identify your brand at a glance. All the software packages mentioned at the beginning of this article include a collection of templates. If you do not like the templates your package offers, newsletter templates are available online, some of them free.





## Key steps:

1. Decide on the design.
2. Keep your articles short and simple.
3. Pay attention to the header.
4. Build your angle with a quote.
5. Use an image to create interest.
6. Finish your article with a call to action.
7. Proofread.
8. Translate if necessary.

## Do not forget to:

- Include the issue number and date.
- Mention the source and author of the article.
- Mention the source of the photos.
- Invite people to visit your platforms by adding hyperlinks.

### 4. Example: Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd

The Good Shepherd Newsletter is a bimonthly, general newsletter for the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. The articles, from 74 countries, share vision and mission. The newsletter is translated into, and published in, six languages.



Newsletter created with **Publisher**  
Saved as PDF.  
Published on website.



Newsletter created with **Word**  
Saved as PDF,  
Published on website.

## ONLINE MEETING PLATFORMS

Developments in technology attempt to respond to changes in global society, fulfilling new needs as they emerge. Mobility has increased significantly in recent decades: the cost of air travel has come down, favoring more frequent trips for study and tourism, and the perception of an ever-smaller world (thanks to the internet) moves millions of people continuously.

This has led to the rise of new communications and connections. We can consider, for example, migrants and their need to stay in contact with their families back home at a sustainable price. Even national telephone companies have introduced "global" options or special prices for countries with the greatest influx. In Europe, for example, roaming charges recently disappeared, so you can call cell numbers in any country of the European Union at the same national rate. For personal conversations or small groups, you can also use WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger.

The digital world also provides religious life with various platforms for holding online meetings with members scattered around the world, allowing each to stay at home. The oldest and best-known is Skype, a program that, once you have installed it on your computer and opened a profile, allows you to call other Skype users around the world. This program has made it possible for many congregations to meet more often, for free, and continues to do so. Over time, Skype has offered more options: you can buy credit to call cell phones and land lines around the world at a price that is more competitive than traditional national telephone companies. You can send documents and chat. You can invite multiple people to the conversation at the same time and share your screen.



Other programs have also arisen, offering a range of advanced options and specializing more in online meetings and simple, telephone-like conversations. These new platforms do not even need to be installed on your computer; simply open a profile with a password and download an application that allows the program to run. The platforms for online meetings have a basic monthly or annual fee. They offer a trial period (depending on the platform, from one week to one month of free trial) after which you need a subscription. The cost is sustainable, and each company offers different options: you can pay only when you use it or sign up for a monthly or annual subscription. The most convenient option is the annual subscription.

Be aware: when you sign up for annual subscriptions on a platform, they frequently use auto renewal because they have asked for credit card details. If you do not



intend to renew, set an alert on your cell phone or on Google calendar to cancel the renewal a few days before the deadline.

Online meetings cannot and must not replace visits to communities and meetings in person. They are an added opportunity to feel part of a congregational family or facilitate collaboration with other congregations. You can consider a blend of approaches, including some visits on-site and others online.

Online meetings can help you:

- Maintain a vibrant relationship with your sisters.
- Intervene in difficult situations without needing to travel.
- Hold online meetings of leadership, secretaries, and bursars.
- Talk directly with a community (you can connect the computer to a projector so the whole community can watch the meeting).
- Hold personal interviews or provide spiritual guidance.
- Hold interviews with sisters in training.
- Keep tabs on special local events.
- Hold a training meeting (both speakers and attendees can join remotely).
- Update communities on specific issues rather than sending a letter.
- Involve older sisters.
- Strengthen collaboration among congregations and other Church entities.

Do you have other options to add? Have you used online meetings for other purposes? What are they?

These and other platforms, like YouTube, also allow streaming, which means broadcasting online at the same time a meeting is being held in a physical location. Streaming requires a few more advanced technical considerations than using a simple platform like Zoom or GoToMeeting for a meeting. Anyone can do the latter without any particular technical preparation.

Are you familiar with any of these platforms? Have you ever used them? Have you ever heard of BlueJeans, Zoom, GoToMeeting, join.me, or Webex?

How can a subscription to an online meeting platform for a congregation be useful?

### **Advantages**

- Cuts travel costs.
- Build more frequent, closer, and stronger intra-congregational bonds.
- Requires minimal technical skills.
- Subscription costs are sustainable.
- You can even connect with your smartphone.
- Platforms are available in multiple languages (English is the most common).

### **Disadvantages**

- You need an internet connection, and therefore reliable electricity.
- There is not yet a platform that delivers simultaneous translation.



- You need to find a time that is convenient for all participants, some of whom may be in different time zones.

What steps must be taken to subscribe to an online meeting platform?

1. Make a list of your needs and what you expect from the platform: do you want to have just meetings or also training sessions? How many people do you want to be connected at once? How many times do you anticipate using them each year? How do you want people to connect: only by computer or also by cell phone? Do you want to use the platform for multiple meetings concurrently? Do you want to record your meetings? Audio and/or video? Do you need tutoring?
2. Search Google to see what options exist (search for 'online meeting programs'): the sites for some of these platforms will appear. I recommend that you look through the results you are offered to find a table comparing the various options available (like this link: <https://www.capterra.com/web-conferencing-software/compare/>).
3. Carefully read the options that each platform offers you. In most cases, you will be able to access forums where you can learn from users who have used the program and who have shared its strengths and weaknesses. You can also read reviews to get a clearer picture.
4. Choose two, or at most three, platforms that best meet your list of needs (by reading about the potential of each of the programs, you will recognize other things you might need, and you will add to your initial list).
5. Try out the two or three platforms you have chosen by opening a trial account on each of them (I recommend that you open a Gmail account strictly for managing online meeting platforms rather than cluttering up your institute email).
6. Get comfortable with the various tools available to you and run some tests with some of your sisters in various parts of the world.
7. Only when all of this is done do we suggest moving on to a subscription to the option you have chosen. Select the one that makes you feel most comfortable.

The various platforms differ from one another in the services they offer and the tools made available to the administrator. In addition, the cost changes depending on the options you choose. For example, GoToMeeting is suited for meetings and conferences, but less so for training sessions.

GoToWebinar is from the same company but is better suited for webinars. Participants can listen and contribute through chat or by voice (audio only, meaning their faces are not shown). Speakers and administrators can show their faces, share the screen, and chat with all participants. Purchasing GoToWebinar for a maximum of 100 participants (plus administrator) costs around \$600 per year. With the same subscription you can also use GoToMeeting for a maximum of 25 participants (plus administrator). In GoToMeeting, participants can share both audio and video, but there is a maximum of nine video stations at any one time.



GoToWebinar offers many features that are useful for webinars:

- Speakers and participants use different entrances.
- Webinar sign-ups are done directly on the platform after you set up the online sign-up sheet.
- The program automatically sends participants information and links to connect on the day of the webinar.
- GoToWebinar can also send emails after a webinar (for evaluation or more information) or the day before a webinar to remind participants of the appointment.
- You can set up surveys to be sent during the webinar and share the results with all participants (surveys are useful precisely because interactions on GoToWebinar are more limited).
- You can send documents during the webinar.
- Webinars can be recorded automatically, so you do not have to remember to start the recording yourself.
- You can schedule just one webinar or a series (if, for example, you wanted to hold a course).

“

*The biggest challenge in communications is when you need to communicate urgent questions and the people you are addressing are not able to use the technology.*

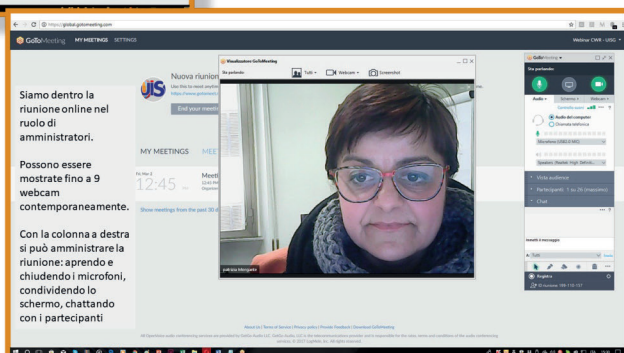
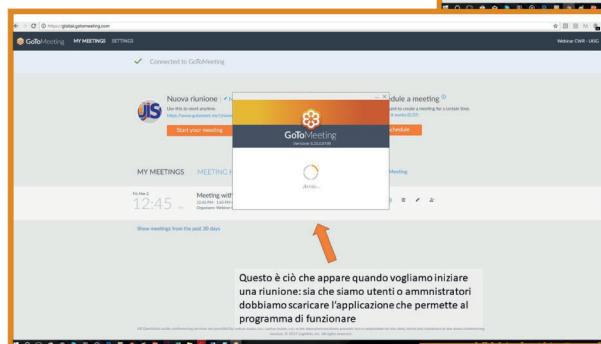
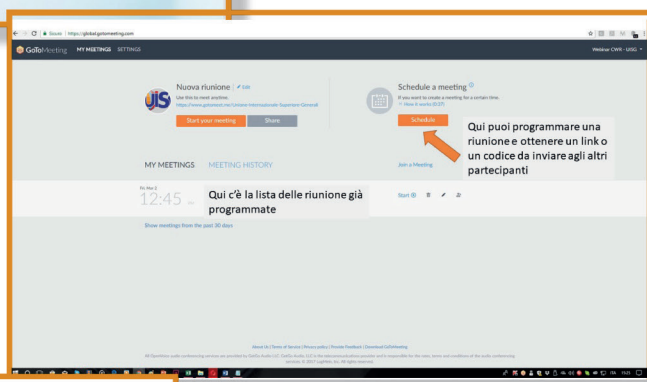
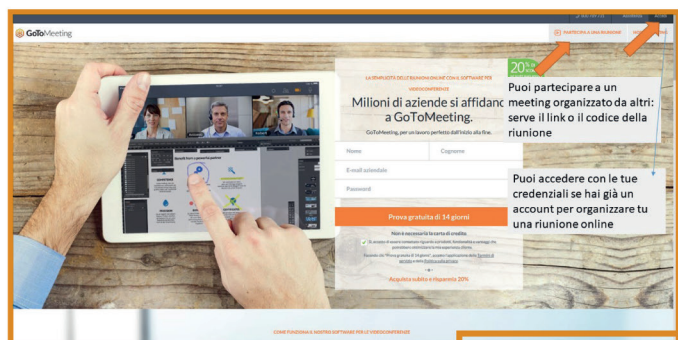
*Try to encourage them to practice the basics. Urge them to install Skype for communicating. I renewed my Skype for communicating to make it easier to communicate on various levels. In Oceania, the distances are enormous, and communicating is harder.*

*We try to do what we can to make communicating easier, and sometimes we even use postal mail, which can take two weeks to arrive.*

”

Nanise Degei, SOLN  
Superior General  
Sisters of Our Lady of Nazareth, Fiji

The enormous advantage of these platforms is that, with minimal effort and basic technical knowledge, we can achieve amazing results, especially for our sisters in places where it is hard to access training and education.



ONLINE MEETING PLATFORMS





## ONLINE TRAINING: DIGITAL OPTIONS

We saw in the previous chapter how easy it is to organize an online course with a simple platform for online meetings or webinars (GoToMeeting or GoToWebinar).

However, we also have some other options:

1. There are completely free e-learning platforms (like Moodle).
2. You can record podcasts (audio in MP3 format, quick to download even in places where the connection is slow or not very reliable) about specific subjects, upload them to a platform like SoundCloud, and then send the link so sisters can download them when they have a connection and listen offline, either alone or with the community. You can provide forms for answering questions or guide activities that the community can do together to discuss what they have just heard.
3. You can organize courses using YouTube or Vimeo: you record video lessons and upload them to one of the two video platforms (not public, but private—only the people who have the link can see them) and then people can watch at their convenience. Then you can use a folder on Dropbox or Google Drive that you share with participants to upload quizzes to fill out or other documents to support the video lessons. You can add online sessions to the course, where all participants can meet and talk with the course tutor (for these meetings you can use GoToMeeting or the other platforms we discussed earlier).

### E-Learning Options

For religious institutes, e-learning offers a wide array of possibilities and opportunities for training:

- Online training as part of initial training: sisters in training can take part in courses with other sisters in training in other areas.
- Sharing the training created in various modes: videos, audio, text.
- Enriching the entire institution with best practices and materials.
- Generating a sense of belonging.
- Offering an introduction to training and intercultural dialogue.
- Holding remote lessons with experts from your congregation or others.
- Creating your own material for study and reflection (capitular members, training, meetings).
- Enjoying easy access.

### Moodle [ <https://moodle.org> ]

Moodle is a system for creating and managing online courses. It is software that is structured to help educators create high-quality online courses and online learning systems also known as Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs).

The word Moodle is an acronym for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. One of Moodle's main characteristics compared to other systems is that it is based on social-constructionist pedagogy, in which communication plays

an important role in the process of building knowledge. The goal is to generate an enriching and complete learning experience. Moodle is an open-source program and is free software. This is one of its strengths. It means that from the beginning, its creator published it with a GNU license, so you can use it without paying.

An institute that installs Moodle is authorized to copy it, use it, and edit it. Right now, it is the most popular platform in the university system, used largely to reinforce a course of study, particularly courses primarily designed to be taken online.

What are the other advantages of Moodle?

**For Administrators:**

- The system is constantly developed and updated.
- You do not have to worry about licenses.
- The platform (logo of your institute, colors, images) is customizable.
- Different access profiles can be created (administrator, tutors, students, guests).
- Data can be imported and exported in SCORM format.

**For Educators:**

- The system can be adapted to the number of students.
- The system allows for the creation of virtual courses and virtual learning environments.
- Digital supplements for in-person courses are available.
- A variety of evaluation and qualification methods are available.
- The system is accessible and compatible with any web browser, regardless of the operating system used.

**Schoology** [ [www.schoology.com](http://www.schoology.com) ]

An alternative to Moodle that is comprehensive and easy to manage. It can be used to upload multimedia lessons, create exams, organize debates, and improve communication among teachers, alumni, and parents. It is easy to use and interacts smoothly with applications like Evernote and Vimeo.

**Edmodo** [ [www.edmodo.com/classrooms](http://www.edmodo.com/classrooms) ]

A network that facilitates communication among teachers, students, alumni, and parents, by sharing messages, documents, and web pages. Edmodo also provides the ability to offer classroom activities, launch surveys, and manage calendars.



## CRISIS COMMUNICATION FOR CONGREGATIONS OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS

During times of crisis, women religious turn to prayer for strength and guidance. In communicating internally with our members or externally with media representatives, we look to our mission, the heart of all of we say and do. Your mission should be at the core of what and how you communicate. What moves your mission—care and compassion—should be inherent in your key messages.

No organization is immune to crisis. A crisis is any situation that threatens the health, welfare, and safety of individuals as well as the reputation of an organization and/or its members. How your community responds before, during, and after a crisis depends largely on what systems and procedures you have in place. A good crisis communications plan is one that anticipates the worst, is well thought out, and is ready to be implemented at a moment's notice.



Your challenge in a crisis is to maintain clarity about what information you can legally and responsibly give to journalists while respecting their need for information.

### Crisis Communications: Readiness Checklist

These items should be in place prior to a crisis arising:

1. **Public relations policies and procedures** - A statement of mandate, values, program, leadership (these should include the formation of a crisis communications committee/team).
2. **Crisis communications action plan** - Key people, roles, action sequences, scenarios (key people should include emergency officials).
3. **"Big Picture" information piece on your community (fact sheet)** - A one-page summary of your community (who you are, what you do, where you serve, history and mission).
4. **"Window" information piece on sponsored ministries/programs** - A brief, succinct description for background purposes.
5. **Reference files on potential crisis situations** - Any relevant minutes, reports, clippings, all indexed and portable.




6. **Key person list** - Work and home telephone numbers, one-page job summary and one-page bio of leadership, administrators of sponsored ministries, etc.
7. **Designated spokesperson(s)** - Identify key spokesperson(s) to handle media inquiries; communicate who this person is to staff and community members.
8. **Designated media coordination** - This function is usually assigned to the public relations/communications coordinator of the congregation. She/he should be credible and trusted by your community members and staff as well as the media.
9. **Media directory or detailed list** - At all times, you should have a concise list of contact information for major media, public relations/communications coordinators, key spokesperson(s) and your leadership.
10. **Media contact log** - Keep a separate tracking sheet for each journalist/ story. Know who contacted you, when, about what, how to contact them, what their deadline is, and any follow-up.

### **Crisis Communications: Sample Policy in Brief**

All calls or requests of a potentially sensitive nature from the media or other source should be immediately directed to the director of public relations who, in consultation with the leadership from the congregation and/or sponsored ministries, will prepare and communicate an appropriate media response within 24 hours.

The director of public relations will assess, whenever possible, the reporter's intended story angle and deadline requirements and agree to get back to the reporter with an appropriate response.



Note: sisters and lay staff, particularly telephone receptionists, should be reminded routinely that media inquiries/visitors should be directed to the director of public relations. The PR director or communicator for the community should be available on a 24-hour basis. Pertinent contact information should be made available to appropriate personnel.

The director of public relations should immediately notify the leadership of each entity of any such inquiries. The leadership will meet with the director of public relations to assess the situation, discuss an appropriate response, and seek legal counsel, if necessary. At this time, one spokesperson will be designated to handle media inquiries.

If necessary, steps should be taken to communicate internally with the appropriate publics (sisters, volunteers, staff, parents, etc.) of each entity to offer guidelines for appropriate action.

All facilities—the motherhouse and sponsored ministries—are private property, and, as such, media representatives should not be on the premises unless invited by the director of public relations or other designated administrator.



If a media representative visits any facility and is not invited by an authorized administrator, immediately notify the director of public relations. If the director of public relations is not on site, courteously request the media representative's business card and tell him/her that the PR director will be in contact with him/her as soon as possible.

On authorized media visits, the director of public relations or a designated individual should accompany the reporter at all times.

### **Communicating with Internal Audiences During a Crisis**

Communicate the crisis situation to your community members and other key internal audiences, as appropriate. Respect the confidentiality of those involved in any crisis or potential crisis and exercise compassion and sensitivity in your communications.

It is strongly recommended that your community members not speak to reporters, particularly during a crisis and that they be reminded to refer all inquiries to the designated spokesperson for the congregation. As many crises tend to unfold unexpectedly, it is appropriate to inform community members in advance of any scheduled media coverage.

### **Communicating with the Media During a Crisis: Spokesperson Guidelines**

- Demonstrate congregational concern about people involved.
- Explain what is being done to remedy the situation.
- Keep the message consistent with all constituencies. Never tell one constituency anything that is not being told to the media.
- Be open, honest, and tell the full story. If you do not, someone else will, thus increasing the possibility that the incident team will lose control of the situation.
- Never respond with "no comment" but instead explain why you cannot answer the question. (For example, "We do not have the details confirmed at this time" or "We will provide you with an update when we do have an answer to that question.")
- Do not guess or speculate. If you do not know the answer, say so and offer to track down the answer.
- Respect reporter deadlines. If you promise to get information, do so promptly.
- Never speak off the record. The media can use any information released.
- Never give exclusive interviews during a crisis. All members of the media should have a chance to gather information.
- If an injury or death has occurred, do not release the name(s) of the injured/deceased until all next of kin (immediate family) have been notified.
- Do not provide damage estimates, discuss responsibility for the incident, or discuss legal liability in any way.
- Be available 24 hours a day.



- Notify receptionists and other employees to direct all media inquiries to the incident team without speculating on the situation. Do not discuss illegal activity at any time. If it is assumed, say, "Police are investigating. We are cooperating." Refer all questions to the appropriate law enforcement agency.
- In cases when media request interviews with sisters, associates or family members, provide a liaison to the individuals for the media so that the family can protect their privacy if they choose.
- Avoid "side comments" meant to be humorous. Do not accept hypothetical questions. Do not repeat negatives as a question. Taken out of context, these remarks can be very damaging.
- Use everyday language, not jargon, when talking to reporters.
- Provide written materials that give reporters background information. This information will be supplied by the communications director.

## Best Practices

### #Synod2018

The Synod of Bishops on Youth, Faith, and Discernment that was held in Rome in October 2018 marked the first time that a communications plan was created for a synod with an office assigned to develop and execute that plan. Management of communications began a year before the synod, and the hashtag #Synod2018 quickly went viral.

Outreach was an area of focus for both the synod's website and social media presence. For the first time an online questionnaire—directed specifically toward young people—was released through the website. On social media, the synod's posting style was friendly and interactive.





## FUNDRAISING AND COMMUNICATION

Raising funds to support new ministries, and indeed operations, is not a new concept for religious institutes. Nearly every missionary has faced the necessity to seek out funding for new ministries, new buildings, and resources, often searching for such support many thousands of miles from home. Fundraising may not be why anyone enters religious life, but it is a frank reality for those serving the people of God. In this section, we will address the central questions: how can communicators support fundraising activities? How can communicators and fundraisers support each other and the institute?

### Breaking Down Misconceptions

A common misconception is that raising funds is professionalized begging. This is simply not the case. However, many who come to fundraising do so out of necessity and often with a sour taste for the practice. One such reluctant fundraiser is the noted Dutch theologian Henri J.M. Nouwen. When faced with the need to raise funds to support his ministries, Nouwen, like any good theologian, started by writing about it. In 37 short pages, Nouwen reworked the mental framework many of us bring to the topic of fundraising from dreaded task to life-giving ministry. He notes early in the piece that the common definition of philanthropy is a love of humanity. With such a definition, fundraising becomes an invitation to enter into relationship with a congregation and their work. In essence, philanthropy is another invitation to enter into relationship with Christ. Nouwen's tract *The Spirituality of Fundraising* is a wonderful resource for anyone engaged in the ministry of philanthropy.

### Communication and Philanthropy

Whether funds are needed to open a new school in a distant ministry site or to fund long-term care for retired members, most religious institutes eventually need to raise money. In some congregations, these tasks fall to leadership. In others there are dedicated sisters, lay staff, associates, or volunteers pitching in to secure the financial future of the institute.

As communicators, it is highly likely that at some point you will work on a fundraising campaign or on a team with fundraisers. If you're going to work together, you should understand one another. You're not so different as you might think. Many of the challenges you face are also those that frustrate development professionals.

“

*Fundraising is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that we offer other people an opportunity to participate with us in our vision and mission.*

”

Henry Nouwen

## Common Skillsets

The fundamental skills necessary to be a successful communicator and fundraising officer are largely the same, with a few key adjustments on the way in which those skills are implemented.

It is all about relationship.

Both communication and philanthropy are deeply rooted in building relationships and creating dialogue between the institute and key audiences. Both functions rely on highly developed written and verbal communication skills. Both fundraisers and communicators tell good stories about the congregation, members, and the ministries in which they are engaged. The communicators may seek to raise public awareness of societal needs, invite vocations, encourage lay associates to get involved, or alert the public to services provided by the institute. The fundraiser may engage in the same activities but takes the conversation one step further with a specific invitation for others to join in that ministry through a philanthropic contribution.



## Fundraising Fundamentals...in 500 Words or Less

As this is intended to be a practical guide for communicators, here is an introduction to some key concepts in fundraising. Each of the sections draws from the book *Achieving Excellence in Fundraising*, 3rd Edition (Temple, Seiler, Aldrich & Rosso, 2011)

### Planning

**Assess Needs:** the fundamental question that must be answered is why a donor should support the institute and associated ministries. This must be answered before any funds can be raised. The more specific the needs, the more clearly a plan can be developed to meet those needs.

**Case for Support:** once the needs have been identified, a case for support can be built. The case for support is made up of those elements that come together

### Practical Guide to Fundraising

1. Tell good stories.
2. Invite your audiences to join you in mission.
3. The most common reason that donors don't give is that they were never asked.
4. Remember your skills as a communicator translate very well to fundraising.
5. The single best primer on philanthropy for ministry: *The Spirituality of Fund-Raising*, by Henri J.M. Nouwen.



in order to provide a complete picture of the identified needs, how the institute might address those needs, and the opportunities available for financial support.

Strategy: once needs are identified and a case is built, a strategy must be developed to share the needs and case with prospective donors. This process involves an understanding of the fundraising cycle and the dynamic operations of annual giving, major gifts, capital campaigns, and planned giving.

## Implementation

A strong fundraising plan that involves the interplay among the four main categories of philanthropic gifts:

- Annual Giving – gifts that come from many donors, supporting ongoing programs and services (current income)
- Major Gifts – gifts that come from a select group of donors, supporting special programs and projects (income and assets)
- Capital Campaigns – gifts in support of specific campaigns to support capital projects such as buildings, infrastructure, endowments, etc. (assets)
- Planned Giving – future gifts often related to estate planning (endowment, capital)

## Ethics and Integrity

*"Do what you say you will do."*

—Maureen Egan, PhD

It is not enough to simply raise funds. For philanthropy to be life-giving and transformative, the manner in which donors are invited to join in the mission matters. The way in which funds are spent matters. Even the way those activities are reported to donors and the public matters.



Since philanthropy is built upon relationships, great care must be taken when nurturing those relationships. One way to help ensure donor confidence is to use contributed funds for the projects they were intended to support. Put very simply, institutes must do what they say they will do with donations. For example, if funds are raised to build a new school, then they should not be used to supplement members' retirement funds. And it is not enough to simply spend funds appropriately, it is critical to show donors and the public that donated funds are reaching their intended projects or ministry areas. Communicators can be instrumental in the stewardship and reporting function that is so necessary to conduct ethical fundraising. Many professional associations of fundraisers have a code of ethics for members. Seeking out and formally adopting such a code sends a strong message to donors that the congregation takes its role as steward of gifts seriously.



## Professional Associations and Codes of Ethics

One of the best ways to understand the values of a profession is to study its codes of ethics. A growing number of professional fundraising associations, often organized nationally or by global region, have emerged over the past 50 years to further advance the fundraising profession:

- Kenya Association of Fundraising Professionals: [www.fundraisingkenya.org](http://www.fundraisingkenya.org)
- Southern Africa Institute of Fundraising: [www.saifundraising.org.za](http://www.saifundraising.org.za)
- Fundraising Institute Australia: [www.fia.org.au](http://www.fia.org.au)
- Associação Brasileira dos Captadores de Recursos: [www.captadores.org.br](http://www.captadores.org.br)
- Deutscher Fundraising Verband e. V.: [www.fundraisingverband.de](http://www.fundraisingverband.de)
- Association of Fundraising Professionals: <http://www.afpnet.org>

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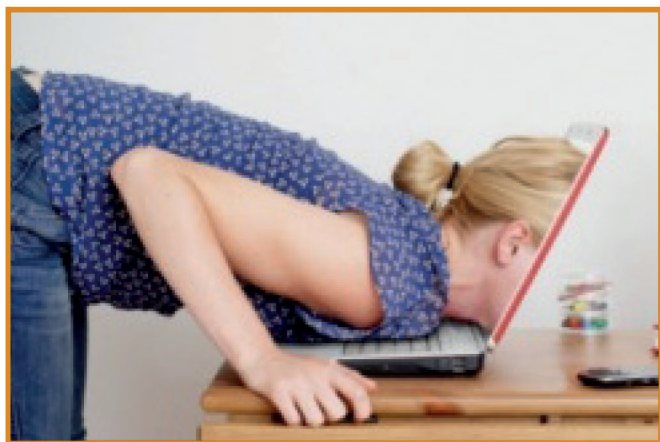


## THE DARK WEB

Digital opportunities have opened new roads to criminal activity, illegal as well as legal but unethical. An immense space, brimming with options, has moved onto the web with an entire range of actions, some old but previously conducted only in the physical world, some new and favored by the digital world. There is an entire world on the web that you cannot see and is difficult to pursue; this is very worrisome from an ethical standpoint.

How does this relate to religious life? In at least two ways:

- Sisters can become entangled, knowingly or not, in traps on the web, such as identity theft, demands for money or passwords, proposed meetings (for spiritual reasons that are later revealed to be of a sexual nature or a scam), online stalking, and internet addiction. Personal or community problems may also cause them to retreat into the web.
- Sisters have an educational duty, not only in cases where their charism requires it, but also as adults who live in the world and take on the responsibility of contributing to overall human development.



For these two reasons, it is up to the world of religion to be aware of what the web can hide, the dark web, and we must train ourselves to notice the signs in our sisters and in the young people and adults with whom we walk in our daily lives. For people who hold positions of responsibility in the congregation or are responsible for teaching (both in schools and informally), it is a duty to know what we are talking about.

We will briefly list some of the most common phenomena, a few neuroses or addictions linked to the internet, and a few phenomena typical of the dark web. We encourage you to learn more about the subject, because there is a lot about which we should read.

### **The Web as a Space of Responsibility for Every Sister**

We must learn to inhabit the web with self-awareness, wisdom, and responsibility. Why are we online?

- Always looking for new sensations and different stimuli.
- A desire to be seen, recognized, looked at (narcissism).

- Fear of relationships with others, fleeing from conflict (isolation).
- Anxiety to see if others are looking, and whether I have notifications (vamping: this is the phenomenon of people who wake up at night to check their smartphone).

### What can help us prevent these phenomena?

Education and training.

Zygmunt Bauman, a Polish sociologist, has said that **spirituality is an antidote to techno-liquidity**.

We will briefly list a few of the phenomena that can lead to real psychiatric diseases that are harmful, not only to people, but also to their social and family contexts:

- Internet addiction (facilitated by the option for constant access and driven by a desire for control and the excitement it offers)
- Online pornography addiction
- Virtual relationship addiction
- Addiction to role-playing games and online simulation
- Gambling addiction
- Input and information overload (constant and intense flow of data)

### The Web Is an Educational Space

The fact that everyone can easily access the digital web does not mean that we are trained sufficiently to do so with the proper attention. This is especially true for young people, digital natives who were born immersed in digital culture, but who do not know its limits and its dangers. The role of adults in guiding young people in this area is crucial and pressing.

There are two phenomena that the internet is increasing:

1. The adultification of children
2. Constant exposure to the public, even in the intimate and personal sphere

Boys and girls are showing an increasingly early and exposed sexualization; physical maturity does not correspond with existential and relational maturity. They are increasingly depicted as little adults, from clothing to behaviors.

“Big Brother” teaches that the web also lets us display our private and intimate lives: everything can be shared and public. To cross this delicate threshold that differentiates the public from the intimate spheres of life is to place powerful pressure on people who are not prepared to manage this constant exposure; consequently, influencing behaviors and leading people where the companies want them to go can be big business. The religious world cannot afford to ignore the challenge of helping to redefine intimate and personal space as well as interior and spiritual life. A human being is a very complex space, and neglecting some of its dimensions, like the interior and intimate one, can lead to an existential





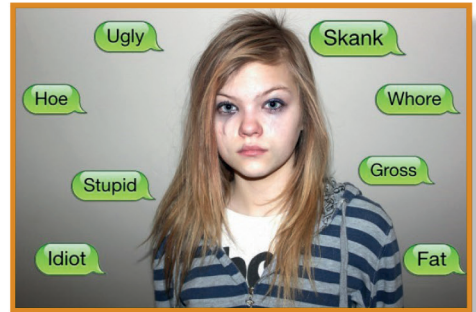
imbalance and to externalization of mental issues that are the source of enormous pain for the individual.

The solution is not to cut young people off from the web, but rather to live it along with them in a dynamic and ongoing dialogue, an authentic and credible conversation. We must use the web itself to help children become aware and nourish a sensitivity as adults in noticing the symptoms that young people are suffering, signs that they may be the victims of online addiction or of other adults. One of the biggest difficulties for victims of abuse is asking for help, because they feel guilty for what they are being subjected to, and do not have the human maturity to separate their own responsibility from that of others.

**We must also focus on the types of images and photographs of children and young people we publish on the internet.** With these photos we help build the digital identity of young people, who, at 18 or older, will find that they already have a digital past built by adults with which they will have to reckon. Therefore, great care in this area is critical.

To help the victims of online abuse we need a network of people, institutions, and laws that affect the dignity of children. The first report must be made in the space where the abuse took place, and then to the appropriate authorities.

An important job on the internet is putting pressure on the social media platforms where young people gather to implement forms of protection and precautions for children and young people, and to remove videos and photos that harm a person's dignity.



Educators thus far have very much undervalued the danger of the digital; the changes happened too fast, and now that we have begun to act, the problem is already serious.

### Some of the Phenomena

We will list here a few of the most common phenomena that harm the dignity of young people and put their future lives and their safety at risk.

#### Online Grooming

This is an international phenomenon. In some countries there are actual organizations for luring children into the digital world. One result of this can be human sex trafficking. Grooming means all the strategies that adults and older young people employ to get close to young people and children in the digital spaces where they are, pretending to be friends, or tempting them with bait such as money or gifts in exchange for photos or meetings. It is incredibly difficult for children to say no in these cases, both because of the power that adults naturally

hold over them, and because of the power that money and presents can exert on a forming personality.

### **Grooming**

The word implies caring, paying special attention. A groomer is a charmer, a manipulator. Online grooming follows a specific playbook: initial friendship phase, risk assessment phase (assess risk of pursuing grooming), building a relationship of trust (often a victim becomes dependent on the groomer), phase of consolidating exclusivity (and isolation from other significant relationships), and a final phase that sexualizes the relationship (progression of requests).

### **Sexting**

Sending texts or images of a sexual nature by smartphone. In general, this content is shared within a relationship with someone they know and trust, and it is generally girls who send their sexual photos or texts to their boyfriends. The problem usually arises once they are no longer together, or the friendship breaks down; in this case we do not know what the other person may do with our intimate images.

### **Sextortion**

This is a threat of publishing another person's intimate photos or texts to demand money or sexual services. It is a real international business. In general, it baits adolescents with a friendly, confidential approach full of compliments, and then proceeds to getting the young person to send intimate photos of a sexual nature that will then be used for extortion. This occurs through social media, dating sites, online games, email, and web sites.

### **Cyberbullying**

This is a quickly expanding phenomenon on social media and networks that young people use (WhatsApp, SnapChat). In cyberbullying, in addition to the victim and the persecutor, there are others who help and support the person doing the bullying, and others who, with their silence do nothing to stop it. The emotions that characterize everyone in bullying are rage and fear. They all share difficulties managing their emotions. The victims often feel guilty for what they are going through and find it very hard to talk about it with adults. Cyberbullying is very common in the adolescent phase, when identity is still being built, and how others see us has a big influence on how we see ourselves. It is a common phenomenon among males, but it is growing in girls as well. In Italy, a law has been passed to fight this crime: Law 71 of 2017. The crime can be reported to the platform on which it took place and then to the competent authorities.



## The New Currency: Big Data

By 2025, we will have an amount of data that could be stored in CDs lined up from here to the moon and back.

Data and information are becoming the new currency of the twenty-first century; wars will be waged for it and forces will be armed. The weapons and the conflicts will not take place just in the desert or in the sky, but also on the web.

"If you are not paying, you are not the customer: you are the product." In every free digital space, we are the products. They track our clicks, our online choices, the websites we visit, the purchases we make, the likes we give. When we inhabit the digital world, we leave traces that powerful algorithms process, creating personal profiles. While we visit three sites, in real time, another 150 are informed of this fact. You can see this for yourself pretty easily with data mapping programs. These data are a valuable currency that a social network can sell to companies; these companies no longer need questionnaires, because they can predict our future choices through the digital fingerprints that we leave on the web.

This allows companies to:

- Offer personalized sales and promotions
- Anticipate our future choices and estimate our needs and behaviors
- Guide and influence our external choices and our desires
- Anticipate and trigger events
- Plan production and distribution of their product more accurately

Think this is a scene from *Minority Report*? It is not a movie; it is already reality. This should not scare us or lead us to make anachronistic choices such as not using the web. It should instead prompt us to be aware and cautious.

The possession of material goods is no longer a prerequisite for companies. Think of some of the richest companies today—they do not own any of the material goods or services that they offer. Uber does not own a single car, and Airbnb does not own one room, and yet they move millions of dollars, simply by connecting supply and demand on the web, connecting data in real time.

There are two questions that are not technical, but anthropological: how to find a new position for human beings on this horizon? How to stop people from becoming simply terminals in the Internet of Everything, where everything is connected?



## Web Challenges

These are actual challenges that are launched online, ranging from self-harm or self-mutilation shown live, to instigation to suicide. There are also challenges to participate in risky behaviors that put those who accept the challenge in danger. It is all recorded live and shared on the various social media.

## Circulation of Material Depicting the Abuse of Children

This is the production and circulation of material of a sexual nature depicting minors. The word 'pedopornography' is no longer used because it can be misinterpreted to imply voluntary participation by the minors (as occurs in pornography), rather than an act of violence in which the minor does not have the element of choice, because of his or her age and the context in which he or she lives. It is often difficult to identify the source of this material and to fight this phenomenon, precisely because of the nature of the web.

## Live Broadcasting of the Sexual Abuse of Children

Abuses perpetrated on minors are recorded and put online. On some sites there can actually be requests from users (rapes and violence on demand). Often the currency used on these sites is digital. This phenomenon is closely tied to sexual tourism in some countries, and in Southeast Asia especially.

To learn more about the issue of #childprotection in the digital world we recommend the website [ [www.childdignity.com](http://www.childdignity.com) ].



### Are you familiar with the Hikikomori?

It is a Japanese word, because it appears that the phenomenon is especially acute in that country. A Hikikomori is generally a young person who isolates him or herself at home. They never leave their room, and the digital world becomes their only relational space. They live in their room, where they sleep, eat, and spend most of their time without ever leaving.

### Do young people feel safe online?

Young people do not use email and are not on Facebook. They use the fastest and most immediate social media, but with very little regard to a safety plan or confidentiality. They need our guidance in this educational process.

## Best Practices

"Child Dignity in the Digital World" was a congress organized by the Centre for Child Protection at the Pontificia Università Gregoriana in Rome, from October 3-6, 2017 to prompt a debate on the challenges and risks that minors face on the web. It concluded with the Holy Father's presentation of the Declaration of Rome, a document organized into 13 strategic approaches aimed at political leaders, internet providers, medical organizations, police, and religious authorities to enable them to ally themselves in a concrete joint effort to protect children.

This "higher" dimension might seem out of our reach, but in actuality there are very concrete steps that we can take to protect our own children. We have identified five priority items:

1. **Do not publish on the internet sensitive data about children or photos in which their faces are clearly recognizable.** Today's biometric recognition systems are becoming increasingly sophisticated and refined (for example, in China, Alibaba and KFC restaurants allow you to pay with simple facial recognition). Therefore, exposing a person's face without their conscious consent is equivalent to circulating a unique signature. Identity theft and the manipulation of images are the order of the day, so it is important to safeguard images depicting children. Whenever you want to circulate a collection of photographs in a family or community context (parishes, schools, etc.), it is a good idea to restrict access to the people you want involved by using the privacy tools provided by the people in charge of online services.
2. **Contribute to ongoing and continuous training for children regarding their relationship with digital screens** "to educate them and provide them with the tools necessary to use the internet safely and responsibly, and to avoid the harm being done to many of their peers." (Declaration of Rome, October 6, 2017). Consistent education, in addition to attentive listening, can help

prevent serious problems deriving from abuses of power and harassment perpetrated by digital means.

3. **Immediately report all serious risks for minors**, whenever you suspect abuse, grooming, attempts to gain their good faith, or involvement in addiction.
4. **Monitor and oversee online gaming**, which in some cases can mask dangers that are not insignificant. In addition to managing a correct media diet in terms of gaming, just as you would for food, adults can help young people grow their awareness of the risks that hide behind seemingly innocuous appearances and be alert to the risk of addiction.
5. **Use courses, training sessions, articles, and other aids** to help adults understand what risks and resources children may encounter today when they interact with digital screens, without ignoring the fact that the adults too may need training, and not just technically, but also in modulating interpersonal communications mediated by electronics.

A few dioceses and pastoral individuals have already turned to experts in this area. In addition to turning to the Child Protection Center at the Pontificia Università Gregoriana [ [childprotection.unigre.it](http://childprotection.unigre.it) ] for preventative steps, also look into the Catholic Voices Italia project, which focuses particularly on communications in this area. When the Church is directly involved in abuses, correct communication of the ecclesiastical situation becomes crucial, both internally and externally, because it can either elevate or thwart the broad commitment to protect children. In this vein, the method used by Catholic Voices [ [catholicvoicesitalia.it](http://catholicvoicesitalia.it) ] teaches about overcoming prejudices and with them the defensive attitudes that they cause, in an effort to reestablish the image of the Church as a place of healing and to reopen the dialogue with everyone on an issue that involves everyone.

To avoid wasting time and energy, it is a good idea for this to take place at the provincial or diocesan level.

Fr. Marco Sanavio  
Director of the Social Communications Office of the Diocese of Padua  
Member of Weca - Catholic Webmasters Association  
[www.weca.it](http://www.weca.it)



## COMMUNICATIONS TRAINING

### **A Network at the Service of Communications for Religious Life**

It is critical to stay up to date in this arena: change happens fast, and it is hard to keep up with everything. There is no need to get neurotic about knowing and learning everything. But we do need to be clear about what our communications priorities are, and to deepen our understanding of what we need in order to do good service.

It can be useful to set up a Google alert for key words to know what is happening online on an issue we need to know about, and then we can choose what we need

Sign up for a sector newsletter (There are very few newsletters for communication for religious life; there are forums and platforms for communication in the Church in general). Watch to see if any specific books come out. Join an association like CWR that offers a series of training services for members and a forum/group for sharing experiences and learning from each other.



Sign up for dedicated webinars or online courses.

### **UISG Opportunities**

- **Platform for communicating the mission:**  
<https://communicatingmission.wordpress.com/>
- **Multilingual Facebook group ("Communicate the Mission"):**  
[www.facebook.com/groups/comunicarlamision/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/comunicarlamision/)

### **Change Your Password Day**

We recommend that you choose one day a year to change the passwords for your various accounts, especially institute accounts, making sure to leave a copy of the new access keys in the congregation's files.

## Pure as Doves and Shrewd as Snakes

For safety and responsible use of media, it is better not to provide too many personal details whenever possible. We know that, especially in online purchases, if we do not provide certain information, we cannot complete the transaction.

Some people recommend not providing your date of birth to help prevent identity theft. Never send your credentials, like your username and password. No bank or other institution will ask for or send sensitive information by email. In the event of identity theft or improper use of your data, there are police offices in nearly all countries where you can report the crime, or you can do so directly in the digital space where the crime took place.

Be careful about your privacy settings every time you open a new account on social media or other applications. Also check for updates to the settings for accounts that you have had for a while.

Research has found an inclination (bias) to leave things the way they are. In our case, that translates into a reluctance to change the default settings that we find when we open a new account. It takes effort to simply be aware of the settings that are already in place.

- **UISG newsletter dedicated to communicators for religious life:**  
Email [comunicazione@uisg.org](mailto:comunicazione@uisg.org). Include your name, congregation, position, and preferred language: Italian, English, French, or Spanish.
- **UISG webinars on communication in religious life:**  
Follow the webinar calendar on the UISG website. (Webinars are organized in collaboration with CWR and MMI).

### Other Important Continuing Education Resources:

- [ [www.linkedin.com/learning](http://www.linkedin.com/learning) ] (English only)
- [ [www.lacomunicazione.it](http://www.lacomunicazione.it) ] (Italian only)
- [ [www.signis.net](http://www.signis.net) ] (Various languages)
- [ [www.intermirifica50.va](http://www.intermirifica50.va) ] (Various languages)
- [ [www.c4wr.org](http://www.c4wr.org) ] (English only)
- [ [www.aranzulla.it](http://www.aranzulla.it) ] (Italian only)
- [ [www.multimedia-int.org](http://www.multimedia-int.org) ] (English only)
- [ [www.ewtn.co.uk](http://www.ewtn.co.uk) ] (English only)



## Global Catholic Media Network

[ <http://www.intermirifica50.va> ]

The name of this global database is taken from the decree on social communications issued by the Second Vatican Council concerning the subject of information and the media.

*“Since the effectiveness of these media reaches beyond national boundaries and has an impact on individual members of the whole human family, national offices should co-operate among themselves on an international level.” (Intermirifica, n. 22)*

The database contains the names and important information for Catholic media around the world. It is an incredible source of information to facilitate networking and global collaboration in this delicate task. To be part of the database, fill out a short form with your information.

## Safe Password

How many characters does your usual password have? Do you have different passwords for various accounts, or do you use the same one for all your profiles? Have you had someone hack your email password? You need to use safe passwords that contain numbers, letters, special characters, and capital and lowercase letters.

The more complex they are, the harder it is for programs to crack them, or at least the longer it takes them. It is better to use different passwords instead of always the same one. You can pick a personal system that you adapt to various accounts.

An example: my standard password is ogioku!YU? I can insert the name of the platform each password refers to inside it. So in this example, for Google my password would be: o9GiokOOuGL!YU?E.

Especially for people who travel a lot and tend to use computers other than their own, or who use free Wi-Fi, always log out of any accounts you use. Never leave your password saved on a computer that does not belong to you. Even if no one else uses your computer, it should be protected by an access password.



## What do women religious expect from communication or training in this area?

Something to encourage older sisters to see the benefits of the tools of modern communication, so they can manage inactivity or the loss of things to do.

How can we use modern communication to break down cultural stereotypes?

How can we touch the hearts of other people who belong to a different culture?

I want to communicate in a way that conveys the charism of the congregation to the sisters as well as our friends.

I want to learn ways to communicate the good news to people in our time.

How can I communicate regularly with regions of Africa despite the poor connection?

The risks of social networks; ensuring privacy in the use of communications tools; awakening our conscience to judicious use.

Strengthening collaboration through social media.

I want to learn to communicate and to listen, to build communion together. The chance to stay in contact with our sisters in other parts of the world.

Reviewing different social media styles to communicate effectively.

How can we use tools and social media for online meetings and exchanging information between the various parts and cultures of the same institute?

What makes a news item interesting for a broader audience of an international community?

Positive use of new technologies for a better and deeper understanding of different cultures.

When content is blocked in internet communication in African countries.

What can we do to bring communications closer to the congregations?

More effective means of communication for the congregation in order to be able to convey its image externally.

Learn more about how to create and use the internet to promote the congregation; how to create information that is not boring and does not lose what is essential.

Communication as encounter, communion, and change; non-violent communication.

Open horizons of possibility in using media; everything that can help us to build an intercultural community.



**UISG asked participants in communications training courses what they learned from those courses. Here are a few responses:**

I am learning slowly, but I see so many possibilities. The power of communication connects and joins hearts and minds. Jesus was the greatest communicator.

Communication builds solidarity.

The web is indispensable and unavoidable today more than ever. We cannot do without it.

Communicating the good news, our mission. Exciting!

The possibilities in the field of communications are exciting and challenging.

Lord, how can I listen to you through these new methods?

A new world of communication is on the road...take one step after the other, it is crucial.

I feel a passionate world is opening for congregations through communication. Challenge for announcing the Gospel.

Communication requires careful attention.

I feel called upon to proclaim the good news through social and digital media. It is a challenge to be creative.

Without using social networks and media we would be invisible, and we would isolate ourselves.

In communications, the most important thing is the language of love.

I am excited by the idea of meeting online with my sisters from other countries and taking part in webinars.

Our future: the power of social communication.

A window has opened onto a world that was almost unknown to me.

The feeling of being 'a single body' as a consecrated person. An intense day on the importance of social media, but the concern is to control them to the point of connecting those responsible for the women's congregations.

Digital communication is like a bicycle: you have to pedal to avoid losing your balance.

Communication is something extraordinary, animated by the digital. We are not afraid to move forward step by step.

Thank you, Lord, for digital information that makes life easier.

Communication is an important and ongoing effort for congregations.

There is no future without the development of communication.

Overcoming the fear of communication and complexity. Daring to enter the world of communication to share the Gospel with everyone. Communicating to talk about Jesus with people far away.

I learned that media is not something to fear, but something to embrace.

I am more aware of the importance of training for social media to bring the good news and to have an evangelical presence in it.

## YouTubers

The theme of World Communications Day 2019 was, "'We are members one of another' (Eph 4:25). From network community to human communities."

The "community" is very important for a recent phenomenon that we call "YouTubers." The name "YouTuber" refers to individuals whose main or only platforms are YouTube channels, personalized subpages of the YouTube video sharing platform. The community for a YouTuber is his/her group of followers/fans.





## Digital Self-Defense Techniques

If you do not know from what to defend yourself, you will never be able to think of the correct defense.

When we talk about safety, we are talking about privacy and confidentiality. It is important to better understand what the strategies are to guarantee our digital privacy and confidentiality, and then to make our sisters aware, including local, provincial, and general leadership.

We need to invest resources to be able to protect sensitive data from external attacks and violations. The most frequent violations to our privacy occur due to a lack of attention and knowledge.

A few questions to ask ourselves:

- What do I have that is worth protecting?
- From whom do I want to protect it?
- How protected should it be?
- What would happen if that protection were not there or not working?
- How much am I willing to invest for safety?

Today there is an obvious imbalance of power between companies and users: there is a great lack of transparency from the former, and very little freedom for users, in the sense that if they decline to share their personal information, they are not allowed to proceed with the online operation they are attempting.


In May 2018, the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation came into force, and we hope it will protect increasing numbers of users. The right to confidentiality must be guaranteed for everyone, not just those who have advanced technical skills for protecting themselves or big investments to make.

Encryption programs exist, but you need certain technical skills to adopt them appropriately.

Some technicians say it is a war lost in advance. The people who are safest online are those who protect themselves with more investment.

Those who do not invest in security are in constant danger. The web is the place of greatest vulnerability. Most websites we visit are not pure HTML pages; behind those pages there are programs and codes that take actions about which we are not aware.

Not every site is reliable; often, when surfing, we land on sites we do not know, and without wanting to, as we read, we are downloading invisible programs that can harm our computers. It is best to surf with the HTTPS protocol.



There is a science known as “social engineering” that uses strategies designed to deceive users by learning from their social network, friends, and trusted spaces. The goal of the deceit is to manipulate successfully for economic gain. Generally, the process starts with keeping the selected person under observation: social media interactions, frequent personal connections, the sort of content that is shared. This continues until a clear profile of the person and his/her social network has been created. At this point, the scammer is ready to assume the identity of one of the person's friends, using words, common interests, and the same way of relating. It is hard for the victim to realize that they are not communicating with their actual friend, but rather with a scammer who has assumed the identity of someone close to them.

Scams of this sort always require the unaware user to participate.

Another example is phishing: when we receive an email from an institution with which we have a contract or relationship asking for personal information or a password. These emails are never from those institutions. Therefore, never provide passwords or sensitive information by email. Millions of these phishing attacks are sent every day, and some providers like Google and Hotmail can intercept them and direct them to spam. On other occasions they get through and can trick us.

Other small tools, especially for people who travel a lot:

- Avoid using open Wi-Fi networks.
- If you access your accounts from public computers or someone else's computer, always log out (exit the application).
- Use more complex passwords.
- Never enter websites that your computer warns are unsafe.
- Do not click "OK" for requests or questions you do not understand.
- Cover your webcam when you are not using it.



## MOST COMMON WORDS IN COMMUNICATION

- # Account
- # App/Apps
- # Audience
- # Bit
- # Blog
- # Broadcast
- # Browser
- # Click
- # Cloud
- # Comment
- # Computer
- # Contact/Contacts
- # Content
- # Download
- # Email
- # Embedded
- # Feedback
- # Find
- # Folder
- # Fundraising
- # Hangout
- # Hashtag
- # Hate speech
- # Homepage
- # Internet of Everything
- # Internet of Things
- # Lay out
- # Link
- # Live

- # Livestream
- # Loading
- # Log in
- # Log out
- # Mouse
- # News
- # Offline
- # Online
- # Password
- # Play
- # Post
- # Provider
- # Read more
- # Reserved area
- # Search
- # Settings
- # Share
- # Sign in
- # Sign out
- # Subscribe
- # Template
- # Tools
- # Unsubscribe
- # Update
- # Upgrade
- # Upload
- # URL
- # Username/User
- # Webinar
- # Website





## PRAYERS AND GOSPEL PASSAGES

### Prayers to Aid Contemplation and Mindfulness

The contemplative and prayerful dimension is very important in communication. Learning to balance silence and words, noise and sound, input and output, is challenging for everyone, but especially for people who deal with communication.

We are the daughters and sons of a God who is communication: Jesus is the living proof. The Gospels are the oldest social network: whoever has lived the extraordinary experience of knowing Jesus has felt the urgency to share Him, reaching those near and far. Is this not perhaps what we are doing when we feel within ourselves a joy to be shared? We can do it with a friend by knocking on her door. In the digital space, we can find support from our virtual friends.

We offer you prayers and Gospel passages annotated with an eye to communication that you can use for yourself or to inspire meetings in your congregation. You can choose music that lends itself to prayer. The prayers can be read personally, by a reader, in chorus together, or in canon. Take a moment of silence to feel which words resound within you and write them down. This dynamic can also be done in a group.



**New Psalm 138 "In His Nets"**  
**(Pa'i Alberto Luna, Santiago, 11.12.2017)**

Lord, you scan me and you know me, you know if I am connected or away, from afar you sense what I am thinking.

Whether I am chatting, walking, or sleeping, you access all my messages.

Even if I have not posted a single word, you, Lord, already know the whole sentence.

You are there with me anywhere, and scroll a finger over me.

Your knowledge from the cloud overcomes me, the resolution is too high for me.

How can I escape you? How can I escape your web?

If I find somewhere with no signal or go to the edge with no Wi-Fi, even there you are connected.

If I were to grow wings, like an airplane, and fly without battery to the far side of the ocean, even without GPS you would find me with no satellite.

If I say: I will delete my browsing history, I will delete all my profiles.

From you, nothing will be hidden and my passwords are all revealed. Because since the beginning my files have been saved in your database.

I thank you for many wonders, they are your works and my soul knows this well.

You had me recorded in your list before I realized it.

You know all of my contacts.

You included my profile in your friend list and added me to your group.

My favorite pages are before you, and your portal makes a record of all my accesses.

You log my every visit.

The data in your system are infinite, they exceed the size of my memory. How can I save them?

Even were I to spend my life updating them I would never arrive at your final version.



## A Brief Comment

God is for us a source of inspiration and a destination for all our communications. We need not say God to announce Him. It seems as if the digital space opens to us horizons about which we only dreamed before and carries us even to imagine just the smallest part of the infinite. We are creatures who often dream of being creators. In a certain sense, we are. Still, we must remain aware that we are part of something bigger and use it as a strength.

We pray that the discoveries of technology will not carry us far from our complex humanity.

## Annotated Gospel Passages

*The cure of the man with the withered hand*

Matthew 12:9-13; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11

This gospel passage is highly charged, not by what is being said verbally, but by what is being communicated through gestures (watching, looking), symbols (synagogue, right hand), emotions (anger, grief). Jesus responds to the charge of the Pharisees with a question, and a command: Stretch out your hand. These words, once spoken by God to Moses (Ex 9:22, 10:12, 14:16, 26) resound through the eons and are once again heard on earth. But the significance of this phrase, so closely connected with the very person whose law these Pharisees want to protect, is lost on them.

They cannot hear what is not being said. Can we? Jesus understands by what is being communicated non-verbally that he is on trial with a sentence of death in the balance. In his defense, Jesus asks a question, and responds to it by healing. Thus, he communicates loudly and clearly: "I love you so much that I accept the death to liberate you from the plague of death."

*How aware am I of non-verbal communication? Can I read between the lines? Have I developed an ear that can hear what is not being said verbally?*

*The kingdom of heaven is like...*

Each one of us can fill in the blank with our favorite image: a mustard seed, yeast, a man who sowed good seed, a dragnet, hidden treasure, a pearl, a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, ten virgins....While each parable reveals a different aspect of the kingdom, each of them is similar in the sense that the images that Jesus uses are drawn from life.

Thus another parable! Our own lives are made of the stuff that reveals the Kingdom of God here and now. All that God has created proclaims the Kingdom of God—Jesus knew that and so gave us memorable parables that still teach 2000 years after he spoke them. If the life-images of Jesus' day are that powerful, so are their modern-day equivalents. "Well then," Jesus said, "every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom new things as well as the old" (Matthew 13:52).





—Mark 4:9.

—Luke 1:38

## Prayers

### The Communicator's Prayer

Holy Spirit, you blessed the first disciples with the power to spread God's love throughout the world.

Give us a new power to proclaim your word through our own unique gifts and through the channels of clear communication.

Make us willing to receive that word as it enters our daily lives. Bless all who use their talents in the field of communications.

Guide those who send out the message and those who receive it, so that all people may come to know your truth and be renewed by your love. We ask this through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Amen

National Catholic Communications Office  
Diocese of Richmond, Virginia

### Communicating the Mission

Lord, we communicators are at the service of your Word so that within us and in the world, beauty and hope may prevail.

Lord help us to learn to communicate to nourish the seeds of good that live in our society, our institution, and the world.

Lord make us able to brim over with the good news: if it inhabits us profoundly we cannot hold it back and we will communicate consciously.

Lord illuminate us so we may be able to create ample space for relationships, points of communion, and moments of silence that become a profound encounter.

Lord accompany us always with your Spirit in our task of communicating the mission.

USMI-UISG 2017 Communications Training



## The Manifesto of Non-Hostile Communication

[ [www.paroleostili.com](http://www.paroleostili.com) ]

- Virtual is real. On the internet, I only write or say what I would dare to say in person.
- You are what you communicate. The words I choose define who I am. They represent me.
- Words shape the way I think. I take all the time I need to express my views in the best possible way.
- Listen before you speak. No one can always be right, and nor am I. I listen, with an honest and open-minded attitude.
- Words are bridges. I choose words to understand, make myself understood and get close to others.
- Words have consequences. I am aware that what I say or write can have consequences, small or serious.
- Share with care. I share texts and image only after I have read, assessed, and understood them.
- Ideas can be discussed. People must be respected. Those whose views and opinions differ from mine are not enemies to be destroyed.
- An insult is not an argument. I accept no offensive and aggressive words, even if they support my point of view.
- Silence says something too. When it's better to keep quiet...I do.





**Hi! I'm Cheridan Sanders and I'm a Founding Partner of Longbeard, a digital media design firm based in Rome, Toronto, and Cape Town. We're a team of creatives and developers intent on being a force for good by helping our clients move hearts and turn heads.**

**[ [longbeard.com](http://longbeard.com) ]**

**How did you come to work with religious?**

The team at Longbeard came together because we'd all worked with Catholic organizations in different capacities prior to founding Longbeard, and while we saw the tremendous impact religious have in the world, we also recognized a great need to use design, online media, and new technologies more effectively. Our mission is to help our clients more effectively be a force for good in the world.

**What has struck you most during your time working with women religious?**

I've had the great fortune to travel the world witnessing the impact women religious have in the farthest reaches of the globe from founding schools and hospitals to catechetical formation, social justice issues, education (and the list goes on!). Without a doubt, the future of humanity depends on the courageous example of women religious and the works of charity they accomplish each day.

**What kind of requests do you receive from them?**

Most of the time, we help with refreshing their brand so that their promotional materials (website or otherwise) accurately reflect their charism in today's context. We help our clients translate who they are and what they do, using the media and tools available today.

**What are their communication needs, in your opinion?**

For the most part, the greatest need is to ensure that the charism is being communicated accurately. Often their digital presence is neglected because they are so focused on their works. But as important as their ministries are, we have to remember that the charism must be shared in order to ensure the longevity of the community. Whether it is an online strategy or tools to increase donations, vocations, or revenue from their business ventures, an effective online strategy can extend their reach, garner support, or source new markets.

**What would you suggest to a religious institute that would like to start a serious process of communication?**

It's important to remember that communicating your charism is not one thing among others. Rather it is an essential part of the ongoing evangelizing activities of the community throughout time; as such, it needs time and resources allocated to the work. It needs to be treated as a priority.



**What kind of cultural obstacles do you see in the religious world toward communication?**

There's a tendency to be intimidated when encountering new media and technologies. Some may view these media and activities as inconsistent with religious life. And, yes, these tools are extremely powerful. Still, they're also an incredible opportunity to evangelize. We have to stay focused on the mission, the original impetus for your founding. In order to be faithful, you need to be where the people are. Also, embracing new technologies offers the opportunity to improve workflows so you can spend less time on administration and more time in ministry. So, these media present both challenges and opportunity.

**What have you learned about communication through your work with religious?**

Women religious are the best networkers in the world, hands down! I sense a deep need in today's world for the witness of women religious—their wisdom and the example of their lives, their sisterhood. It's precious and it calls out the best in others, especially other women. This is why it is critical that religious communities are visible online, and that people know how to find them!

**Could you share three key suggestions for a religious institute to communicate well?**

Inspire: remember when you fell in love with the Lord? It was an experience which lifted you out of the ordinary and it changed your life. People still need that, more than ever. Help them experience something of the flame that you experienced and point them towards this greater reality. Everything you produce should help share this original inspiration, this gift of the Holy Spirit.

Consistency: take care to differentiate yourself from other communities. By using very clear and consistent packaging, people should at a glance be able get a sense for who you are and what you do.

Clarity: people suffer from information overload these days. Less is more. Say one thing and ensure it's the one necessary thing.

## Branding for Congregational Communication

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### A brand is...

- Logo, symbol, tagline, motto, website, style, manual, mission, statement, mark, signage...
- But a brand is something larger than all of the above.
- A brand is sustaining and powerful, if correctly well-defined and intentionally executed through an effective brand strategy.

### What is a brand?

*"The brand is a story. But it's a story about you, not about the brand."*

(Seth Godwin)

- A brand is the **story** about you in terms of your **relationships** and your **connections** to your stakeholders/constituents.
- A brand is the set of **relationships, expectations, memories, emotions** that, taken together, account for a person's decision to choose, support or link to an organization.
- A brand reflects how **your key constituents think and feel** about what your organization is and does.
- **A brand communicates who you are**, what you stand for (values), and the unique and meaningful benefits you deliver to your members/partners/ supporters.
- A brand can answer the question: "Why should I join, engage in, partner with, support, fund, be inspired, or listen to this organization?"

### Think of branding

- Branding is a **strategic process**. Without a strong brand foundation built on a well-defined strategy, brands are weak and non-identifiable.
- Through a participatory strategic planning, organizations must develop a broader approach, **managing the brand** to create greater social impact and tighter organizational cohesion.
- At every step in an organization's strategy, a strong brand is vital in helping to maintain focus on the mission.
- Your brand is **your mission, your message, and the people** that drive both of those things.

### The power of branding

What are the **characteristics** of a good brand?

- **Unique:** find the heart of your organization, the very essence at its core values. You're already a unique entity—you just need to convey this through your brand
- **Authentic:** take a long look at the history of your organization, the vision and the charism of your founders and then reflect those back inside the brand.





- **Consistent:** be consistent in the way your brand looks (visuals), the way it sounds (tone), and the way it interacts (members, staff). Consistency is reflected not only in your words and actions, but in the look and feel associated with your organization. Leave people with a solid, strong, and singular impression of who you are, what you stand for, what mission you are focused on.

#### ***What are the benefits of a good brand?***

- **Connection:** a brand establishes trust with the world outside and creates a strong sense of alignment with the organization values and mission. It connects the organization to communities, supporters, stakeholders.
- **Unity:** a good brand creates unity and a deep sense of belonging/membership. A good brand unifies the head, the hands, and the heart in the pursuit of a goal.

Strong branding brings people together behind the mission with an authentic spirit of sharing and a sense of proud affiliation.

#### ***Key steps to build a brand***

- Formulate your **brand's personality**—the heart and soul of a brand—by defining its core values, vision, and mission.
- Define a branding **mission statement:** what is your mission, your purpose—craft a clear expression.
- Identify your **audiences**, keeping in mind those whom you wish to reach
- Create or define the **visual identity** of your brand.
- **Communicate** your organization's brand consistently and authentically across all touchpoints.
- Prepare tools that empower members to convey the brand personality in their own way and correctly **apply** branding visual elements.

#### ***Elements of brand identity***

The elements/components of a brand help to identify and differentiate it from other brands:

- Name
- Logo and symbol
- Tagline
- Typography
- Colors
- Messages and visual concepts

The entire set of brand elements makes up the brand identity. Cohesiveness of brand identity depends to the extent to which the elements are consistent.

#### ***The making of a logo***

A good logo is **distinctive, appropriate, graphically simple, easy to work with, and easy to read.**



### **Check list**



Is it simple?

Less complicated and clean logos help an organization stand out.



Is it memorable?

Good logos are instantly recognizable.



Is it practical?

Your logo must effectively work in a variety of sizes, media, and applications. It must be easy to read and easy to reproduce.



Is it meaningful?

A good logo fits with the organization's brand personality and helps convey values and mission in a visual representation.

### ***The role of brand for religious congregations***

Brand building and image development are important topics for any religious organizations, especially those wishing to provide an effective service for the public. Branding helps the congregation:

- **Maintain** focus on those activities, initiatives, and behaviors it values.
- **Prioritize** projects and programs in the apostolic mission.
- **Communicate** (internally/externally) both effectively and efficiently.
- **Attract and engage** like-minded people to advance its mission.
- **Convey and spread** its core **values** and **spirituality**.

### ***Branding for visibility***

A strong and consistent branding helps the congregation to:

- Clearly highlight its core mission and values.
- Raise awareness and recognition of the organization.
- Ensure and increase visibility of the organization, by being better seen, read and shared on traditional and social media.
- Foster relationships with diverse audiences.
- Speak with a unique and important voice, delivering a clear message that resonates with all its stakeholders, from institutions to members and donors/supporters.
- Authentically reflect vision, mission, and values.

### ***Brand identity, a shared commitment***

If branding is a strategic approach, the involvement of different levels of leadership of the congregation is fundamental to the process.

Branding is also an opportunity to improve the organization's cohesion. The development of a consistent brand identity can strengthen connection among members and with communities worldwide.



Activities/tools for enhancing a congregation's commitment and effort:

- Inform and share through training and workshops.
- Establish correct use of the branding identity in manuals and documents.
- Follow the example of other organizations' successful branding by using templates and models

### ***United in diversity***

Brand management is especially challenging for congregations working globally. Language and symbols vary from country to country.

It is particularly important to build a **common brand** around mission, values, and strategy, leaving it to the local provinces to better represent/adapt the components of the brand with **respect for cultural, social, and historical diversity**.

Embracing a common brand identity creates organizational cohesion, concentrates focus on the mission, and reinforces shared values.







## UISG - International Union of Superiors General

As an international body rooted in Christ, and representing congregations of women religious throughout the world, UISG seeks to witness to and proclaim the identity of apostolic religious life in all of its diversity. Through weaving global solidarity and opening new frontiers we animate, support and stimulate leadership of religious to be a prophetic voice and witness in the Church and the world. The mission of UISG is to build bridges that span distances, borders and boundaries in order to create ways for members to be in communication, in community and in communion. The purpose of UISG is to promote an understanding of religious life.

[www.uisg.org](http://www.uisg.org)



## Communicators for Women Religious

Communicators for Women Religious (formerly the National Communicators Network for Women Religious) is a professional organization of personnel responsible for communications within religious congregations of women. Our mission is to be a network of professional support and education for members who promote understanding of women religious, enhance their image and advance their mission. CWR is also a resource for organizations serving women religious.

[www.c4wr.org](http://www.c4wr.org)

## **M** Multimedia International

## Multimedia International

Religious people help religious people in the effective use of media for evangelization. MMI is a volunteer organization of religious congregations and similar groups in Rome. We emphasize cooperation and sharing skills among members. MMI members have the opportunity to work together to use the media more effectively in the mission of evangelization. Founded by Fr. Stephan Bamberger, SJ in the early 1970s, MMI has grown with the media changes brought about by modern technology. Now, MMI strives to increase among members the awareness of the importance of media, especially in the promotion of Christian values, explore how modern communication technologies can assist the work of mission, develop technical skills in the presentation of news and the handling of equipment, and make available selected equipment for use by the membership.

[www.multimedia-int.org](http://www.multimedia-int.org)



