

Church reaching out to the digital world

The Australian, Father John Flynn of the Congregation of the Legion of Christ (LC) is based in Rome and had been involved with the online media service Zenit from its beginning. In 2008 he helped with the launch of Xt3.com, which is the official social networking site for World Youth Day. In the beginning of 2010 he published an article looking at how the Church is reaching out to young people in this digital world. His starting point is the question: "Who says the Church is out of touch with the modern world?" He cites the message for World Communications Day 2010, where Benedict XVI urges priests to communicate through the digital media. "The world of digital communication, with its almost limitless expressive capacity, makes us appreciate all the more St. Paul's exclamation: 'Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel,'" the Pope commented.

Flynn refers to a recent study of the Kaiser Family Foundation which showed just how important it is for the Church to be present in these rapidly developing forms of media. This study, *Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8 to 18-Year-Olds* was the third in a series of large-scale national surveys by the US foundation about young people's media use. It revealed that 8 to 18-year-olds today devote an average of 53 hours a week using mobile and online media. If the overlapping consumption of media is counted separately, then there is a total of 10 hours and 45 minutes daily. It is clear that the Church cannot be indifferent to this (r)evolution in the media. This is why the Pope expressed his desire that priests and consecrated men and women use the digital media to "enable God's message to walk the virtual highways of cyberspace" in their work of evangelization. ■

Priests and Internet

In the first half of 2010 a special survey is being launched that aims to give an international overview of priests' use of the Internet. The project is called The PICTURE (Priests' ICT Use in their Religious Experience). Set up on the occasion of the Year for Priests, it is supported by the Vatican Congregation for the Clergy and sponsored by the Università della Svizzera Italiana in Lugano, Italy, and Rome's Pontifical University of the Holy Cross.

The survey is expected not only to give a better sense of priests' attitudes toward the use of the Internet, but also to improve the efficacy of online communication in the Church. Researchers are looking for 437 respondents, particularly 229 from the United States, 167 from Germany and 41 from Italy. The survey, which takes just a few minutes, is available in six languages on the PICTURE project ■ www.pictureproject.info/?page_id=278.

Priests and Mobile Phones in Africa

There are nearly 300 million phone subscribers in Africa, which will probably double by 2020. Most of them are in South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. "The Church sees the mobile phone as a blessing and a gift from God," says Fr. Martin Wanyoike, national Secretary of the Social Communications Commission of the Kenya Episcopal Conference. "We must use it for the service of the world."

A mobile phone suspended on a belt round the waist, or from the neck, is a common sight among members of Church congregations in Africa. Now, Church leaders even say that the mobile phone helps congregations to grow. Their use increased rapidly in Africa about 10 years ago. "It is as if cell phones have come to revolutionise everything, even Christianity," says Anglican Bishop Charles Gaita of Nyahururu in central Kenya. "They are making things happen quickly and improve lives," he says. Religious matters are even discussed on social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, and Gospel tunes are also used as ring tones.

Connecting the phones to microphones to record sermons that can then be sent to congregations in remote areas may sound strange but the Churches are doing it, according to Archbishop Mweresa Kivuli, chairperson of the Kenyan Chapter of the Organization of African Instituted Churches. "If there is a preacher the congregations consider important elsewhere, we connect them to the pastor through this means," Kivuli told Ecumenical News International.

"We have at times linked our churches to overseas preachers."

Recently, mobile phone companies introduced money transfer services, which some Christians now use to tithe or give offerings. The churches only need to inform the congregation of the required mobile phone number for this service. "We get money through the mobile phones once we give out the account details. We have realised there are many Kenyans who do not earn a monthly salary. So, to facilitate their offering, we use the money transfer service," says Rev. Wellington Mutiso, an evangelical Church pastor and General Secretary of the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya. Mutiso says the phones have proved useful as a follow-up tool for converts to Christianity. "If we do not see them in Church [after their conversion], we call them or send an SMS. The response is immediate," he says. "I can assure you they [the phones] are helping the Church to grow."

At the same time, money transfer services are providing an extra way for churches to raise relief funds. In January, for example, following the earthquake in Haiti, the Catholic Church in Kenya appealed for donations for Haiti to be sent through one of the phone money transfer services. "The response has been good. We managed to collect 500,000 [Kenya] shillings (US\$ 6,500) in a short time. The money was sent to us through the mobile phones. This is a beautiful service," says Wanyoike. www.eni.ch ■

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L'Eglise ouverte au monde numérique

L'Australien John Flynn, père de la Congrégation de la Légion du Christ (LC) vivant à Rome, est lié à l'agence de presse en ligne Zenit. Il connaît bien la problématique de la société digitale. En 2008, il a contribué au lancement de Xt3.com, le site des Journées mondiales de la jeunesse (JM) à Sidney. Début 2010, il a publié un article dans lequel il indique comment l'Eglise va à la rencontre des jeunes dans ce monde numérique. Son point de départ est la question : « Qui a

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dit que l'Eglise n'est pas en contact avec le monde moderne? ». Il cite le message de la Journée mondiale des communications 2010, où Benoît XVI exhorte les prêtres à communiquer à travers les médias numériques. Pour Flynn, étant donné que de plus en plus des jeunes investissent une grande partie de leur temps dans le cyberspace, le Pape a eu un discours salubre en appelant les hommes et les femmes de l'Eglise à utiliser les médias numériques pour l'évangélisation du « continent digital ».

Dans son message, le Pape lui-même perçoit les nouveaux médias comme une opportunité pour l'évangélisation : « Le développement des nouvelles technologies et, dans son ensemble, le monde numérique représentent une ressource précieuse pour toute l'humanité et pour l'homme, de même qu'une stimulation pour la rencontre et le dialogue ». Le thème de la JMC 2010, « Les nouveaux médias au service de la Parole », s'insère aussi dans le parcours de l'année sacerdotale, et met au premier plan la réflexion sur un domaine pastoral vaste et délicat comme celui de la communication et du monde numérique, « dans lequel sont offertes au prêtre de nouvelles possibilités d'exercer son ministère au service de la Parole. Les moyens modernes de communication font partie depuis fort longtemps des moyens ordinaires utilisés par les communautés ecclésiales pour s'exprimer dans les limites de leur propre territoire et pour instaurer, très souvent, des formes d'échange à plus large échelle, mais leur récente expansion et leur considérable influence en rende toujours plus importante et utile l'usage dans le ministère sacerdotal. » ■

Les prêtres et l'Internet

Début 2010, l'étude scientifique internationale PICTURE (*Priests' ICT Use in their Religious Experience*) a été lancée dans le but d'analyser « quelle utilisation d'Internet font les prêtres de l'Eglise catholique ». Le projet cherche à comprendre l'attitude des prêtres vis-à-vis de ce nouveau média, ainsi qu'à développer une communication plus efficace de l'Eglise en ligne. L'étude est conduite par New Media in Education Lab de l'Université de la Suisse italienne (Lugano), en collaboration avec la Faculté de communication de l'Université de la Sainte-Croix (Rome). L'analyse sur le site www.pictureproject.info, consistait à remplir un questionnaire concernant les compétences technologiques des prêtres, le déroulement de l'activité en ligne, l'apprentissage et leur manière de communiquer dans le monde numérique. Pour le prof. Daniel Arasa, professeur de communication numérique à la Sainte-Croix, PICTURE représente « une contribution originale de la recherche universitaire à l'année sacerdotale lancée par Benoît XVI ». Les résultats de l'étude seront communiqués en juin 2010. ■

Sacerdotes e Internet

Papa Benedetto XVI llama a los sacerdotes a utilizar más las tecnologías modernas como Internet, en un mensaje para el 44ª Jornada Mundial para las Comunicaciones Sociales. Los nuevos medios posibilitan una "nueva época" de la proclamación de la fe, dijo el Pontífice. La creciente difusión y la influencia de las nuevas vías de comunicación permiten evangelizar

de forma comprometida, consideró. El uso de Internet debe ser parte de la formación de los sacerdotes, añadió. La Jornada Mundial se celebra bajo el lema: "Los sacerdotes y la preocupación por las almas en el mundo digital: los nuevos medios al servicio de la palabra".

¿Cómo utilizan los sacerdotes Internet? A esta pregunta trata de responder la investigación científica internacional PICTURE que fue lanzada en Noviembre 2009 con motivo de la celebración del Año Sacerdotal. La Congregación para el Clero de la Santa Sede apoya este proyecto, que será útil no solo para comprender mejor la actitud de los sacerdotes respecto a este nuevo medio, sino también para proyectar una más eficaz comunicación en línea de la Iglesia.

La investigación PICTURE (acrónimo de "Priests' ICT Use in their Religious Experience", es decir, uso que hacen los sacerdotes de las tecnologías de información y comunicación) es conducida por el "New Media in Education Lab" de la Universidad Suiza Italiana (Lugano, Suiza) en colaboración con la Facultad de Comunicación Institucional de la Universidad Pontificia de la Santa Cruz (Roma).

Según Daniel Arasa, profesor de Comunicación Digital de la Santa Cruz, este estudio "es una contribución original de la investigación universitaria al Año Sacerdotal promovido por Benedicto XVI".

Los resultados de la investigación serán públicos (Junio 2010) en el sitio web www.pictureproject.info. ■

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digital photo/video cameras, satellite phones, audiovisual equipment such as radio stations, audio/video editing kits, mini TV stations, digital production and "on air" facilities, photocopiers, etc.

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