

# PICTURE – Priests’ ICT Use in their Religious Experience

## WORLD REPORT (ver. 1.52)

**Research description:** PICTURE studies the usages of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and of the internet in particular, by the priests of the Catholic Church all over the world. PICTURE does not intend to answer the question: how many priests do use ICTs? The research aims instead to offer a picture of *which are the religious activities done by priests online, and which are their attitudes toward digital technologies*. PICTURE studies only priests who access the internet, who are named in this report “ePriests”.

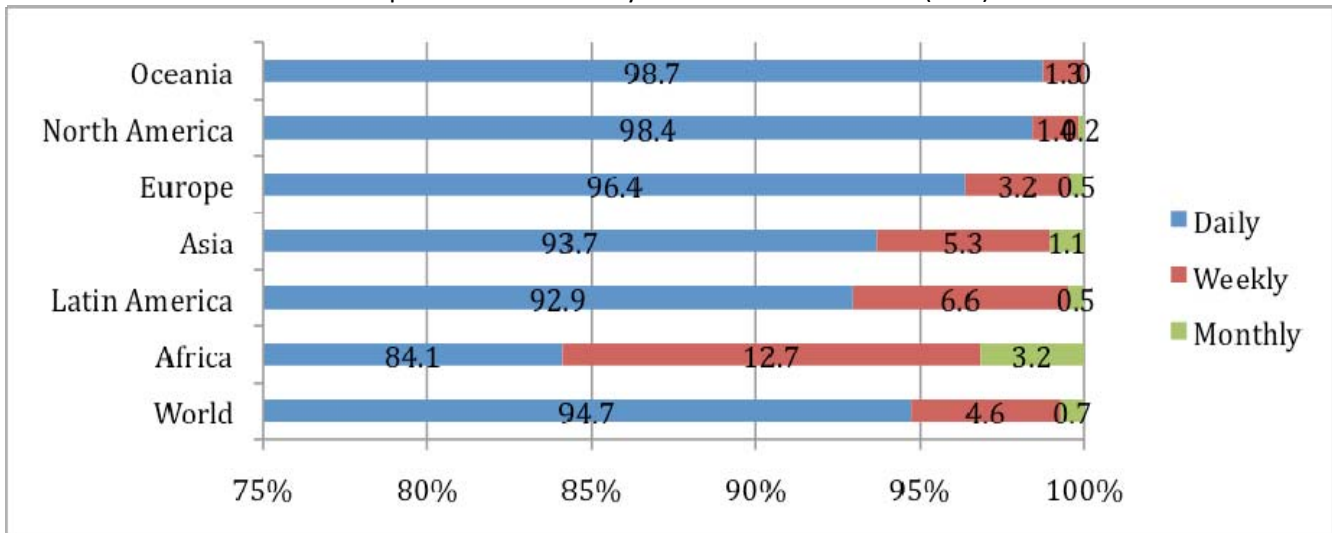
PICTURE was conducted by NewMinE – New Media in Education, and by webatelier.net laboratories of the Università della Svizzera italiana (Lugano, Switzerland), in collaboration with the School of Church Communications of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (Rome), and was supported by the Congregation for the Clergy.

**Main results:** Respondents to the questionnaire were 4’992, namely 1.2% of the total number of priests in the world (source: Congregation for the Clergy, 2007): 6.6% of the questionnaires were filled in on paper (328) and 93.4% online (4’664). Respondents come from 117 countries, spread across all the continents: 54.6% from Europe, 37.3% from the Americas, 3.9% from Asia, 2.6% from Africa and 1.6% from Oceania. The percentage of respondents from Europe, Americas and Oceania is higher than the percentage of priests present in those areas; while Asia and Africa are slightly under-represented, data have been weighted to balance this.

| DEMOGRAPHICS          |           |                     |                                     |         |
|-----------------------|-----------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| PICTURE DATA (2010)   |           |                     | CONGREGATION FOR CLERGY DATA (2007) |         |
| N. ePriests           | 4’992     |                     | N. Priests (world):                 | 408’024 |
| Age mean              | 48        | 22.9% religious     | Religious                           | 135’593 |
|                       | years old | 77.1% secular       | Secular                             | 272’431 |
| Priesthood years mean | 20        | Religious: 21 years | --                                  | --      |
|                       | years     | Secular: 19 years   | --                                  | --      |

### OWNERSHIP AND FREQUENCY OF ICTs’ USE

Graph 1: How often do you access the internet? (in %)



**Comments:**

94.7% of the ePriests worldwide do it on a daily basis (differences are visible among different geographical areas). 82.8% have access to a laptop and 81.2% to a desktop computer. The access to other mobile technologies ranges from 90.6%: cell phone, to 73.1%: digital camera, 44.0%: mp3 player and 25.7%: other handheld devices (palm, etc).

KEY ACTIVITIES IN THE PRIESTLY MISSION

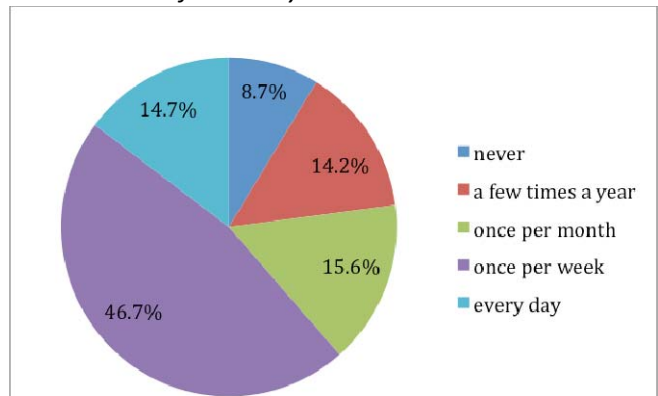
**Homilies (preaching):**

Comment:

The internet is a highly valued resource to prepare preaching activities. 46.7% search online for homily materials once per week, and 14.7% do it approximately every day.

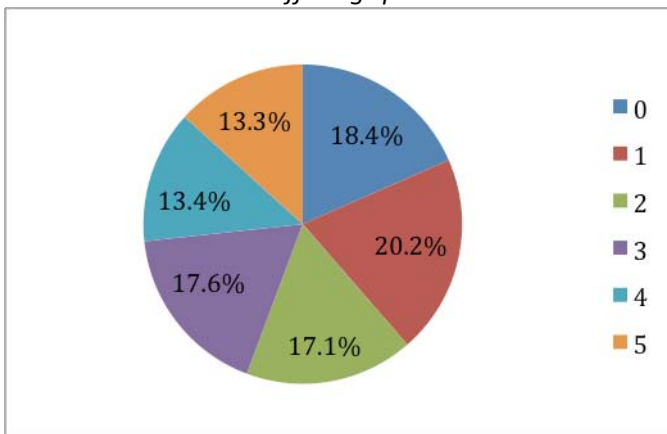
50.6% of the ePriests consider using the internet as useful or very useful for a better preparation of homilies; just 6.8% don't consider it useful at all for this purpose.

Graph 2: How often do you... search for homily materials online?



**Spiritual advice:**

Graph 3: How useful do you consider using the Internet for... offering spiritual advice?



(The index ranks from 0=not at all to 5=very useful)

Comment:

The percentage of ePriests who consider the internet almost not useful or not at all useful for offering spiritual advice reaches 38.6%, higher than the 26.7% who consider it useful or very useful.

Conversely, the majority of ePriests worldwide see the internet as useful or very useful to find data (85.2%), reading about current events (82.1%), research/study (75.6%) or to support parish activities (60.6%).

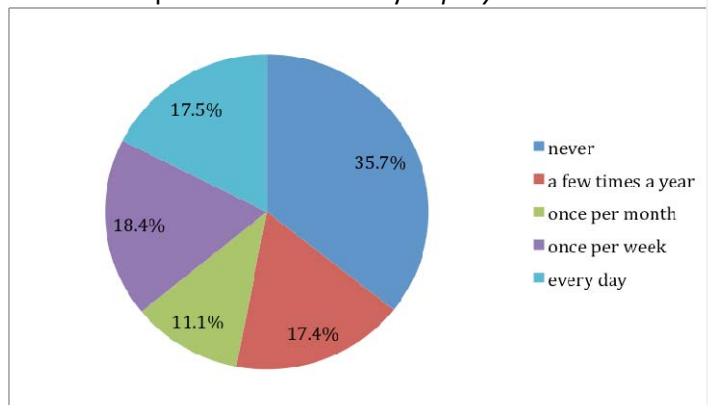
**Praying:**

Comment:

35.7% of the ePriests worldwide never use the internet to pray online (this refers mainly to the Liturgy of the Hours loaded and accessed through a portable device), but 35.9% of them do it at least once a week (17.5% of which everyday).

31.9% don't consider it useful at all for praying, 21.7% see it as not much useful, and only 9.4% consider the internet very useful for the purpose.

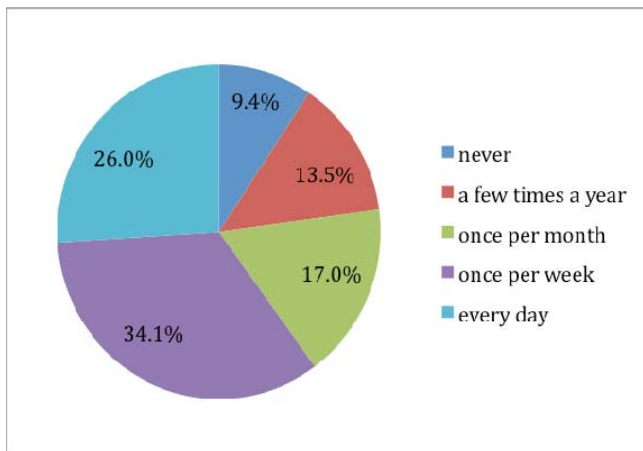
Graph 4: How often do you pray online?



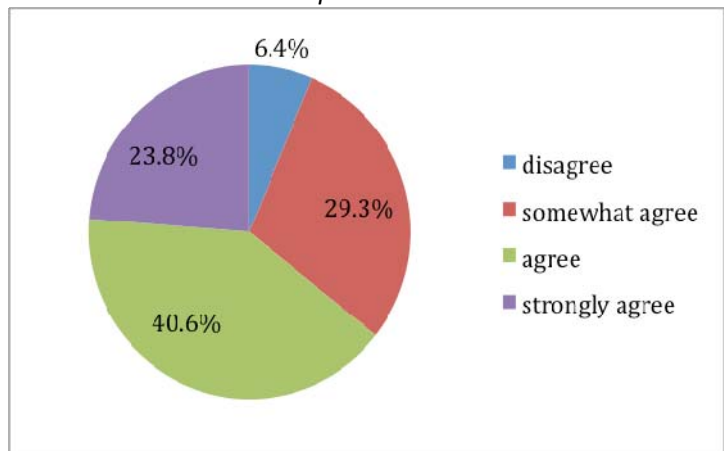
FORMATION

Study:

Graph 5: How often do you study online?



Graph 6: How much do you agree with the statement... technology enables the improvement of the formation of priests?



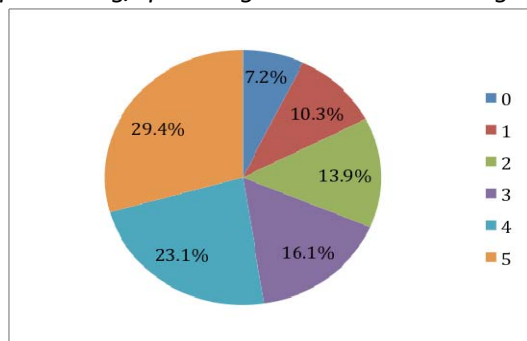
Comment:

26.0% study online approximately every day and 34.1% do so approximately once per week. Only 9.4% never study online. Moreover, 40.6% of the ePriests agree with the statement that technology enables the improvement of the formation of priests, and 23.8% even strongly agree with this statement.

Requested about their appreciation for the most useful instruments to learn something new, 20.4% of the ePriests prefer to use search engines and 17.9% prefer reading magazines or books. Only 6.0% prefer using online education, and 4.9% social networks.

ENCULTURATION OF FAITH

Graph 7: How useful do you consider using the internet for... presenting/spreading the Christian message?



(The index ranks from 0=not at all to 5=very useful)

Comment:

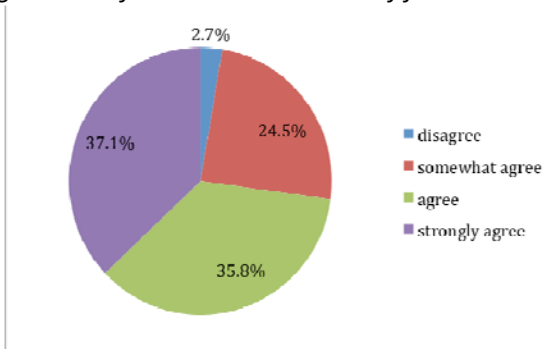
52.5% of the ePriests consider the internet useful or very useful to present or spread the Christian message. Only 7.0% consider the internet not useful at all for this purpose.

Moreover, almost three fourth of worldwide ePriests (72.9%) strongly agree or agree with the statement that *new technologies allow for the enculturation of faith in today's world*. Only 2.7% do not agree at all with it.

56.8% of the ePriests agree or strongly agree with the statement that *digital technologies make it possible to better evangelize people* (only 6.8% disagree), and the percentage reaches 75.1% for the statement that *technology allows for the better evangelization of young people*.

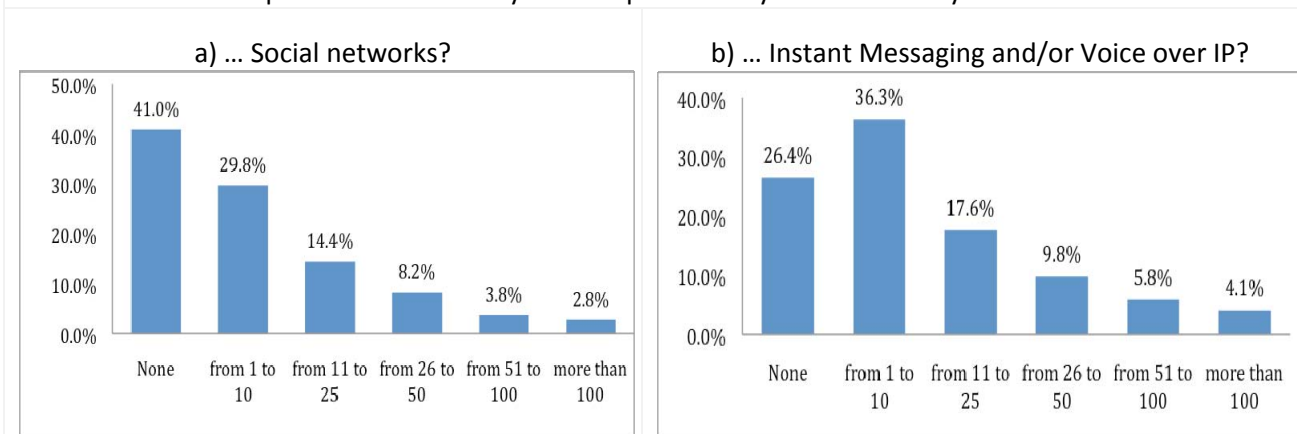
By the way, 34.3% also agree or strongly agree that the *Christian message doesn't get to elderly through technology*.

Graph 8: How much do you agree with the statement new technologies allow for the enculturation of faith in today's world?



COMMUNICATION AND SOCIALIZATION IN THE ‘DIGITAL CONTINENT’

Graph 9: With how many brother priests are you in contact by means of...



Comment:

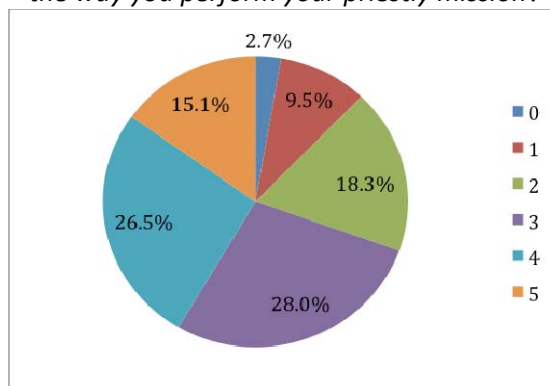
79.1% of the ePriests consider using the internet for communication with other people as useful or very useful. However, ePriests are less incline to use social networks: though 26.4% access social networks on a daily basis (and 17.6% once a week), 35.3% never access them. When using social networks, 29.8% are in contact with 1 to 10 of their brother priests and even 2.8% declare to be in contact with more than 100 brother priests; nonetheless, the majority (41.0%) do not use social networks for getting in touch with other priests (in fact, ePriests in Latin America and in Asia are in contact with more brother priests than priests in other geographical areas). Also, 36.3% of worldwide ePriests are in contact with 1 to 10 of their brother priests through Instant Messaging or VoIP, while 26.4% are not in contact with any of their brother priests through these means.

CONCLUSION

Comment:

41.6% of the ePriests worldwide consider that the use of digital technologies has improved much or very much (values 4 and 5) the way they perform their priestly mission; 46.2% of them do not perceive big improvements (values 2 and 3), and only 12.2% see very small or no improvements at all (values 0 and 1). Indeed, while 17.5% of the ePriests agree or strongly agree that the dangers of technology are greater than the opportunities it offers, 38.2% disagree with this statement.

Graph 10: How much has the use of digital technologies improved... the way you perform your priestly mission?



(The index ranks from 0=not at all to 5=very much)

Methodology:

The research was meant to collect the testimony of 1% of Catholic priests, considered proportionately in the countries where priests perform their pastoral activity.

The collection of questionnaires began on November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009 and ended on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The questionnaire, available in seven languages (English, French, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish and German), was compiled both online and on paper. In order to ensure the widest possible distribution, the questionnaire was diffused in several ways: all the Bishops Conferences of the world were contacted, both via email and ordinary mail; all the dioceses of the 50 countries with the largest number of priests and the largest religious orders were contacted by e-mail as well. The questionnaire was also advertised through several catholic news agencies. To prevent errors and frauds, the research was publicized only through Catholic agencies and the incoming traffic to the web page of the research was constantly monitored; in addition, although the questionnaire was anonymous, many priests left their names and contact data.

An important caveat: PICTURE does not intend to answer the question: *how many priests do use ICTs?* The research aims instead to offer a picture of which are the religious activities done by priests online, and which are their attitudes toward digital technologies. PICTURE studies only priests who access the internet, who are named in this report “ePriests”. Percentages offered are calculated only from the effective answers and do not consider those who did not respond.