

## PICTURE – Priests’ ICT Use in their Religious Experience

### SWITZERLAND REPORT

**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”.

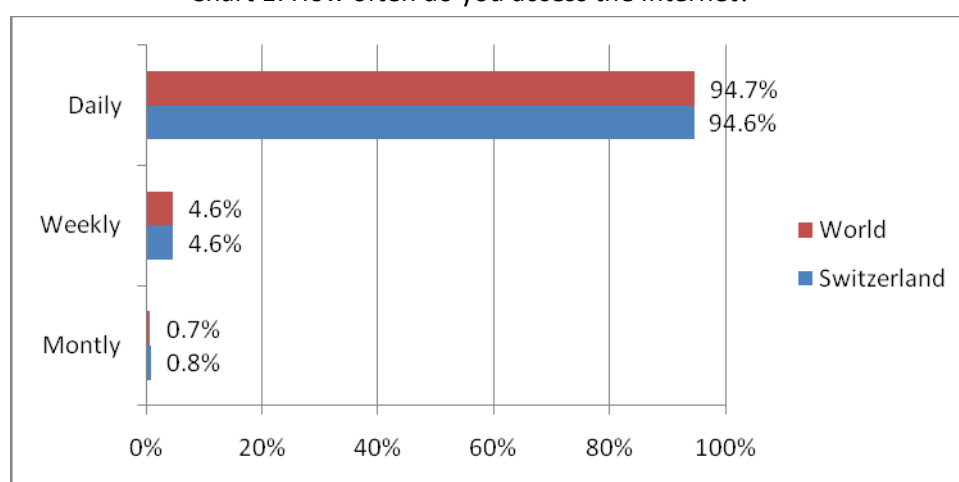
PICTURE was conducted by NewMinE – New Media in Education, and by webatelier.net laboratories of the Università della Svizzera italiana (Lugano, Switzerland), in collaboration with the School of Church Communications of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (Rome), and was supported by the Congregation 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; in order to balance this difference, the data have been weighted. The answers from Switzerland (considered in this report) are 131, namely the 4.8% of the priests in this area (2’757, ref: Congregation for the Clergy, 2007).

DEMOGRAPHICS					
PICTURE WORLD DATA			PICTURE SWITZERLAND DATA		
N. ePriests	4’992		N. ePriests (Switzerland):	131	
Age mean	48 years old	22.9% religious 77.1% secular	Age mean	54 years old	22.7% religious 77.3% secular
Priesthood years mean	20 years	Religious: 21 years Secular: 19 years	Priesthood years mean	24 years	Religious: 20 years Secular: 25 years

#### OWNERSHIP AND FREQUENCY OF ICT’S USE

Chart 1: How often do you access the Internet?



#### Comments:

94.6% of the ePriests in Switzerland access the Internet on a daily basis, in almost the same percentage as the world average (94.7%). 83.2% of them possess a desktop computer and 74.8% a laptop. The access to other mobile technologies ranges from 90.1% of mobile phones, to 71.0% of digital cameras, 30.5% of mp3 players and 23.7% of other handheld devices (palm, etc).

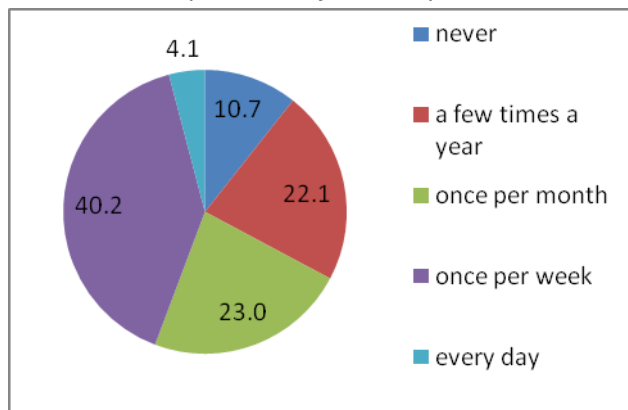
KEY ACTIVITIES OF THE PRIESTLY MISSION

**Homilies (preaching):**

**Comments:**

The Internet is a highly valued resource to prepare preaching activities. However, in Switzerland only 44.3% of the ePriests search online for homily material at least once per week (world average: 61.4%). Furthermore, 37.2% of them consider using the Internet as *useful* or *very useful* for a better preparation of homilies; 9.3% do not consider it useful at all for this purpose. Thus, ePriests in Switzerland have a more negative perception of the usefulness of the Internet for this purpose than the world average (50.6% useful and very useful; 6.8% not at all useful).

Chart 2:  
How often do you search for homily material online?

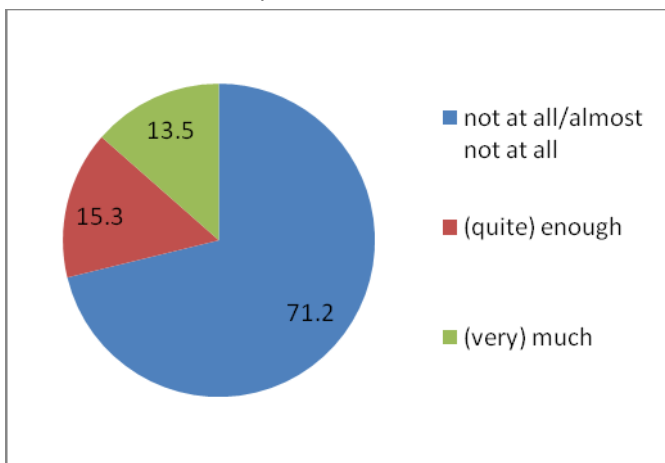


(Data are presented in percentages)

**Spiritual advice:**

Chart 3:

How useful do you consider the Internet for *offering spiritual advice*?



(Data are presented in percentages)

**Comments:**

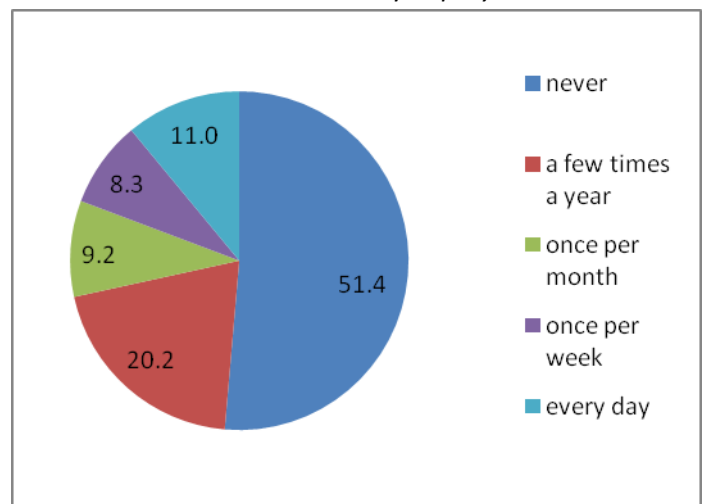
The percentage of ePriests who consider the Internet almost *not useful* or *not at all useful* for offering spiritual advice reaches 71.2% in Switzerland. Only 13.5% consider it *useful* or *very useful* for this purpose. Worldwide these percentages are 38.6% and 26.7%, respectively. Furthermore, ePriests from Switzerland see the Internet as *useful* or *very useful* for finding data (82.4% of the respondents), for reading about current events (71.2%; world: 82.1%) or for research/study purposes (61.3%; world: 75.6%). Again, 46.6% of them consider the Internet as *useful* or *very useful* to support parish activities (globally the percentage rises up to 60.6%).

**Praying:**

**Comments:**

51.4% of the respondents never use the Internet to pray online (this refers mainly to the Liturgy of the Hours loaded and accessed through a portable device), and only 19.3% of them do it at least once a week. Conversely, worldwide averages are 35.7% and 35.9%, respectively). As for their level of appreciation of the Internet for praying, 25.2% do not consider it useful *at all* and 17.4% consider it *very useful* for the purpose. In this case, the ePriests in Switzerland consider it more useful than the world average, where 31.9% do not consider it useful at all and 9.4% consider it very useful.

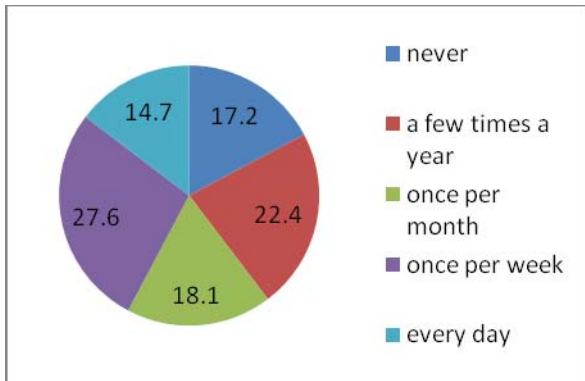
Chart 4: How often do you *pray* online?



(Data are presented in percentages)

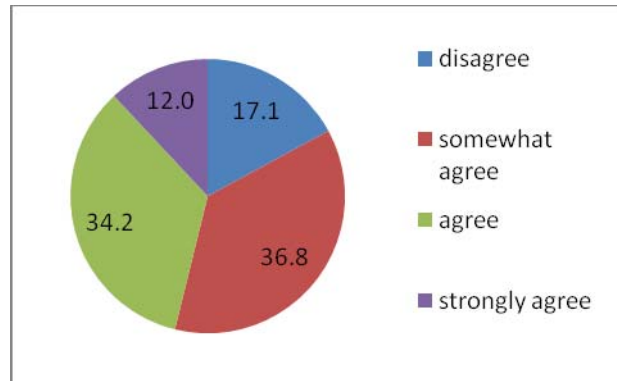
FORMATION

Chart 5:  
How often do you *study* online?



(Data are presented in percentages)

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



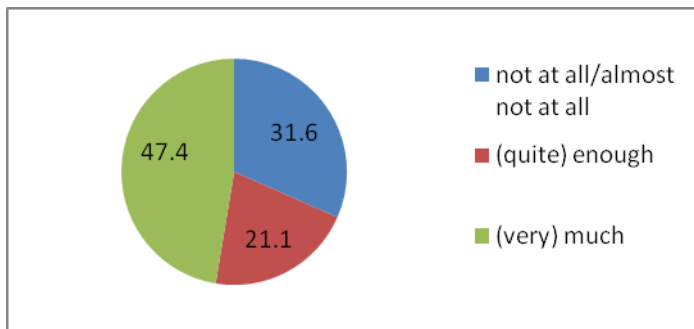
(Data are presented in percentages)

Comments:

14.7% of ePriests in Switzerland study online approximately every day, 27.6% do it approximately once per week. Only 17.2% never study online. These percentages suggest that ePriests in Switzerland use the Internet less than the world average for study purpose (every day + once per week: 60.1%). 34.2% of Swiss ePriests *agree* with the statement that “technology enables the improvement of the formation of priests”, and 12.0% even *strongly agree* with this statement. Also in this case, respondents seem to appreciate ICTs less than the world average (40.6% agree and 23.8% strongly agree). Requested about their appreciation for the most useful instruments to learn something new, 23.5% of the ePriests in Switzerland prefer to use search engines and 17.6% prefer to read magazines and books. Among the less appreciated, 5.4% prefer online education and only 3.8% prefer to use social networks.

ENCULTURATION OF FAITH

Chart 7:  
How useful do you consider the Internet for *spreading the Christian message?*

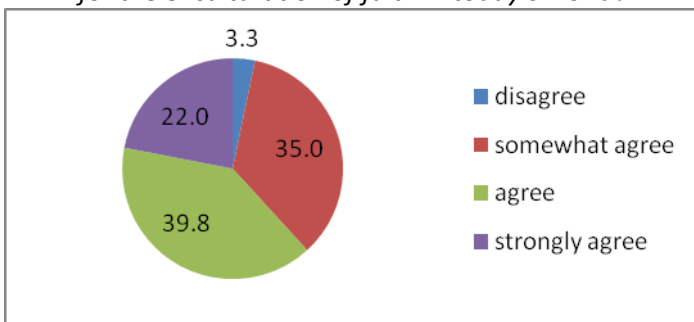


(Data are presented in percentages)

Comments:

47.4% of Swiss ePriests consider the Internet *useful* or *very useful* to present or spread the Christian message. 31.6% of them consider it *not useful* or *almost not useful* for this purpose, in much higher average than the world percentage (17.5%). Moreover, most of them (61.8%) *agree* or *strongly agree* that “new technologies allow for the enculturation of faith in today’s world” (much less than worldwide: 72.9%). 54.9% of Swiss ePriests *agree* or *strongly agree* that “technology allows for the better evangelization of young people”, and 24.4% that “digital technologies make it possible to better evangelize people” (much less than the world averages of 75.1% and 56.8%, respectively). Furthermore, 37.9% of them also *agree* or *strongly agree* that “the Christian message doesn’t get to the elderly through technology” (worldwide: 34.9%).

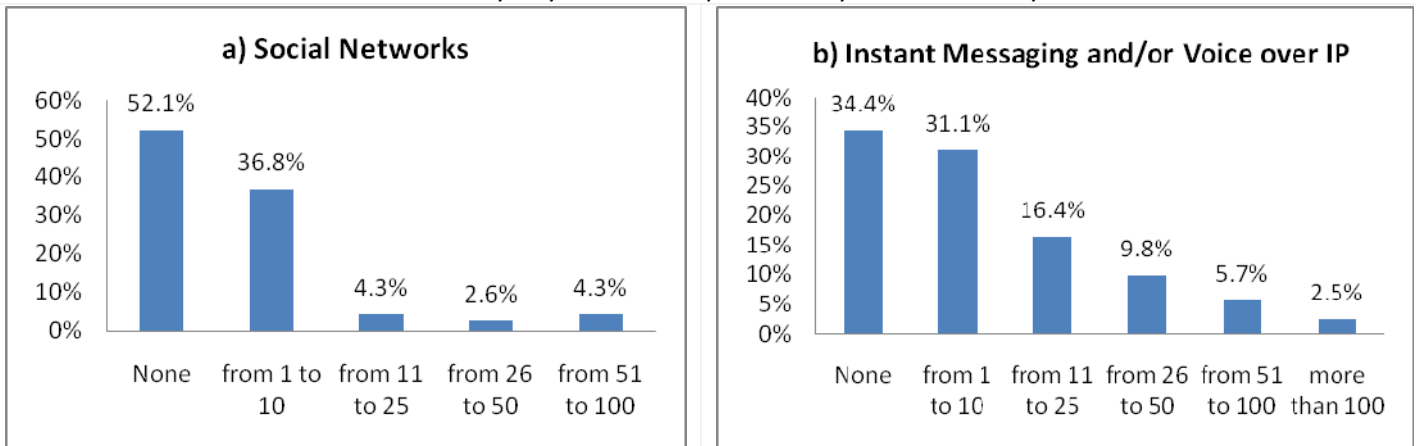
How much do you agree with the statement *new technologies allow for the enculturation of faith in today’s world?*



(Data are presented in percentages)

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIALIZATION IN THE ‘DIGITAL CONTINENT’

Chart 9: With how many of your brother priests are you in contact by means of ...?



Comments:

80.8% of the ePriests in Switzerland consider using the Internet for communicating with other people as *useful* or *very useful*. However, they seem to be less inclined to use social networks: although 15.1% access social networks on a daily basis and 9.4% once a week (world data: 26.4% and 17.6%, respectively), 61.3% never access them (much more than world average: 35.3%). When using social networks, 36.8% of them are in contact with 1 to 10 of their brother priests, and even 4.3% declares to be in contact with more than 100 brother priests; nonetheless the majority (52.1%) do not use social networks for getting in touch with other priests. Also, 31.1% of ePriests in Switzerland is in contact with 1 to 10 other priest through Instant Messaging or VoIP, while 34.4% are not in contact with any other priest through these means.

CONCLUSION

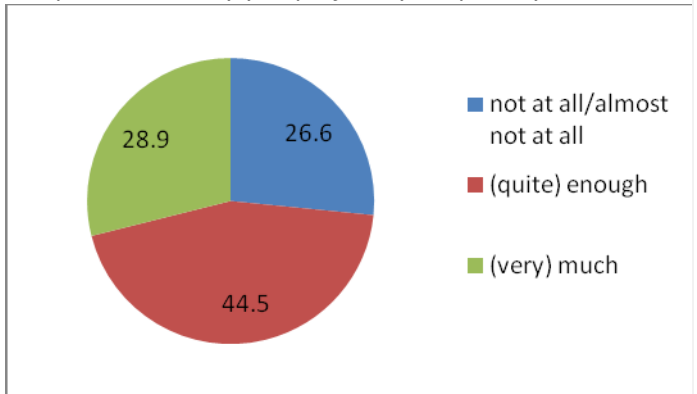
Comments:

28.9% of the ePriests in Switzerland think that that the use of digital technologies has improved much or very much (values 4 and 5) the way they perform their priestly mission (worldwide: 41.6%); 44.5% do not perceive big improvements (values 2 and 3), and 26.6% see very small or no improvements at all (values 0 and 1). Significantly, worldwide only 12.2% of ePriests see very small or no improvements at all.

Indeed, while 16.3% of the Swiss ePriests *agree* or *strongly agree* that “the dangers of technology are greater than the opportunities it offers”, 35.8% disagree with this statement.

In conclusion, although the general perception of the opportunities offered by ICTs is positive among ePriests in Switzerland, nonetheless this is often much more negative than in the rest of the world.

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



(Data are presented in percentages)

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.