

PICTURE – Priests’ ICT Use in their Religious Experience

GERMANY 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”.

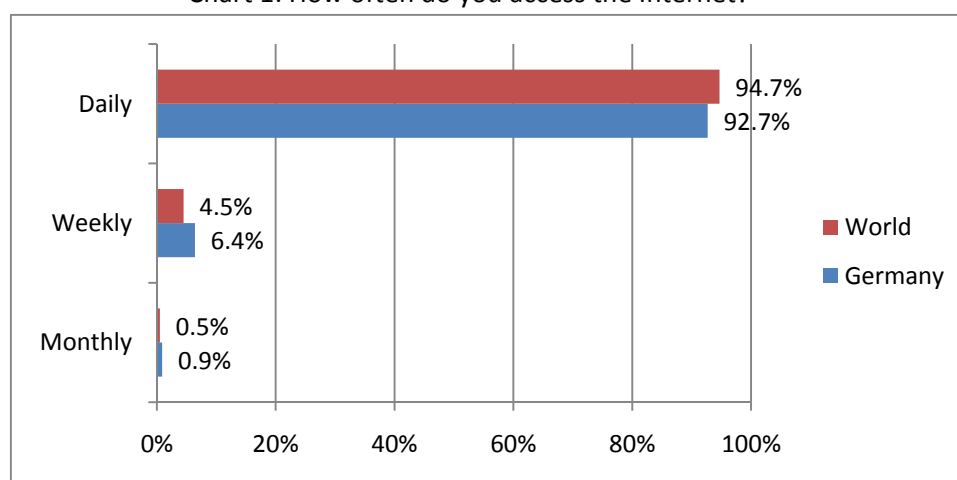
PICTURE was conducted by NewMinE – New Media in Education, and by webatelier.net laboratories of the Università della Svizzera italiana (Lugano, Switzerland), in collaboration with the School of Church Communications of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (Rome), and was supported by the Congregation 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 Germany (considered in this report) are 110, which equals 0.6% of the priests in this country (19’902, ref: Congregation for the Clergy, 2007).

DEMOGRAPHICS					
PICTURE WORLD DATA			PICTURE GERMANY DATA		
N. ePriests	4’992		N. ePriests (Germany):	110	
Age mean	48 years old	22.9% religious 77.1% secular	Age mean	48 years old	8.3% religious 91.7% secular
Priesthood years mean	20 years	Religious: 21 years Secular: 19 years	Priesthood years mean	19 years	Religious: 12 years Secular: 19 years

OWNERSHIP AND FREQUENCY OF ICT’S USE

Chart 1: How often do you access the Internet?



Comments:

92.7% of the ePriests in Germany access the Internet on a daily basis, with a percentage slightly lower than the world average (94.7%). 88.2% of them possess a desktop computer, and 85.5% a laptop. The access to other mobile technologies ranges from 91.8% of mobile phones, to 74.5% of digital cameras, 41.8% of mp3 players and 35.5% of other handheld devices (palm, etc).

KEY ACTIVITIES OF THE PRIESTLY MISSION

Homilies (preaching):

Comments:

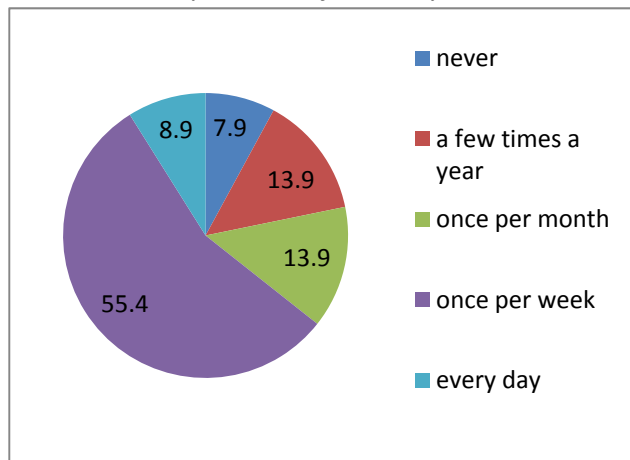
The Internet is a highly valued resource to prepare preaching activities. 64.4% of the respondents from Germany search online for homily materials at least once per week (world average: 61.4%).

44.0% of German ePriests consider using the Internet as *useful* or *very useful* for a better preparation of homilies; only 7.0% do not consider it useful *at all* for this purpose.

Thus, ePriests in Germany have a perception of the usefulness of the Internet for this purpose that is slightly more negative 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?

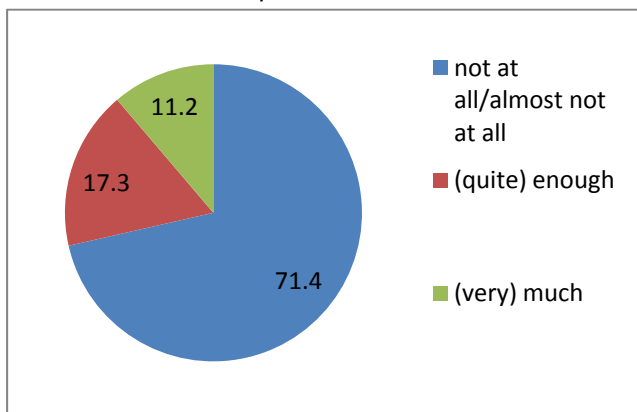


(Data are presented in percentages)

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 71.4% in Germany. Only 11.2% consider of them it *useful* or *very useful* for this purpose. Comparing it to the world data (38.6% and 26.7%, respectively), it emerges that also in this case German ePriests have a more negative perception of the usefulness of the Internet for their priestly mission. Conversely, ePriests in Germany see the Internet as *useful* or *very useful* for reading about current events (86.4%), for finding data (83.8%), and for research/study purposes (77.9%). Furthermore, 45.9% of them consider the Internet as *useful* or *very useful* to support parish activities (globally the percentage rises up to 60.6%).

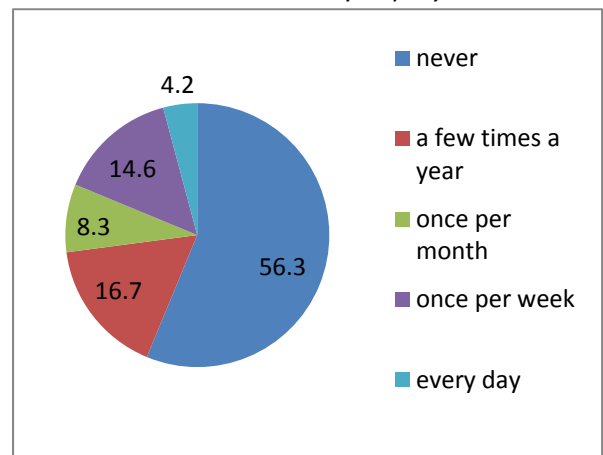
Praying:

Comments:

56.3% of the respondents from Germany (in contrast to 35.7% in the world) never use the Internet to pray online (this refers mainly to the Liturgy of the Hours loaded and accessed through a portable device), while 18.8% of them do it at least once a week (the worldwide average is up to 35.9%).

As for their level of appreciation of the Internet for praying, 7.1% do not consider it useful *at all* and 33.7% consider it *very useful* for the purpose. Surprisingly, these figures are opposite to the world data, where 31.9% do not consider it useful at all and only 9.4% consider it very useful for praying.

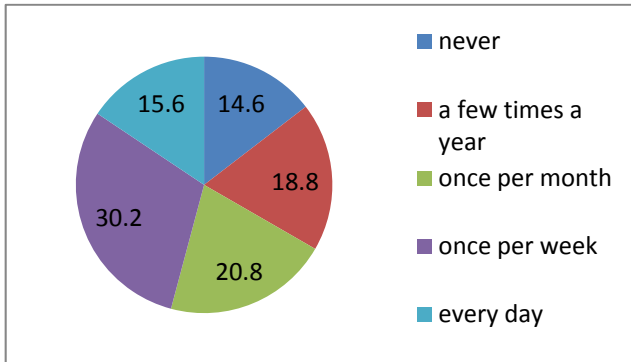
Chart 4: How often do you pray online?



(Data are presented in percentages)

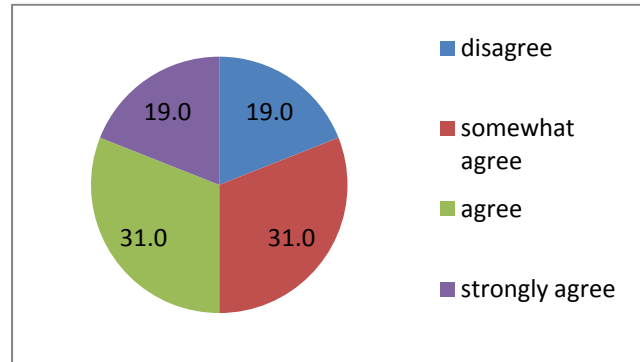
FORMATION

Chart 5: How often do you study online?



(Data are presented in percentages)

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



(Data are presented in percentages)

Comments:

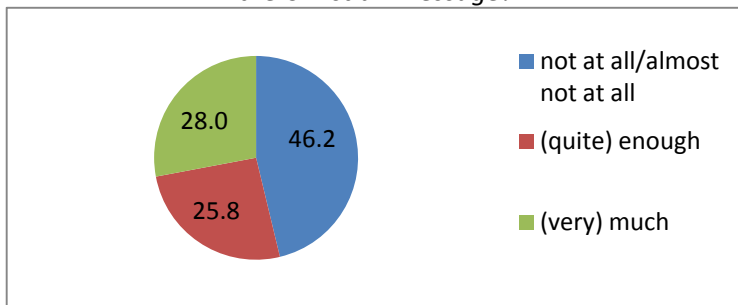
15.6% of respondents study online approximately every day and 30.2% do so approximately once per week. Only 14.6% never study online. However, these percentages suggest that ePriests in Germany use the Internet less than the world average for study purpose (world data for every day + once per week reaches 60.1%, and only 9.4% never study online).

31.0% of ePriests from Germany agree with the statement that “technology enables the improvement of the formation of priests”, and 19.0% even strongly agree with this statement. Also here, however, 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, 20.3% of German ePriests prefer to use search engines and 18.6% prefer to attend personalized trainings (in the world average reading books and magazines is preferred over personalized trainings). 6.0% of German ePriests prefer to use social networks and 4.1% online education.

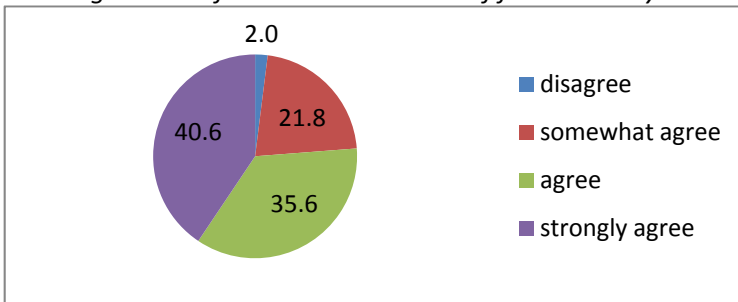
ENCULTURATION OF FAITH

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



(Data are presented in percentages)

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



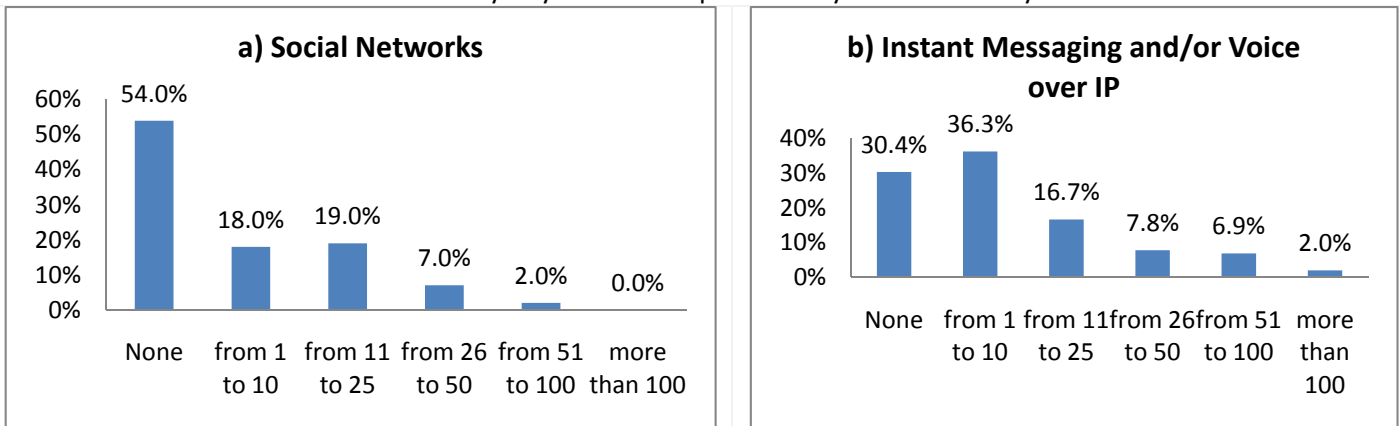
(Data are presented in percentages)

Comments:

28.0% of German ePriests consider the Internet useful or very useful to present or spread the Christian message (world average: 52.5%). 46.2% of them consider the Internet (almost) not useful for this purpose, much more than the world average (17.5%). However, most ePriests in Germany (76.2%) agree or strongly agree that “new technologies allow for the enculturation of faith in today’s world”, higher than the world average (72.9%). 58.0% of them agree or strongly agree that “technology allows for the better evangelization of young people” (world average: 75.1%), and 27.7% that “digital technologies make it possible to better evangelize people” (worldwide: 56.8%). In general, it seems clear that ePriests in Germany believe less in the evangelization of people through the internet than the average of the ePriests worldwide. Finally, 29.7% of them agree or strongly agree that the Christian message doesn’t get to the elderly through technology (world: 34.3%).

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIALIZATION IN THE ‘DIGITAL CONTINENT’

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



Comments:

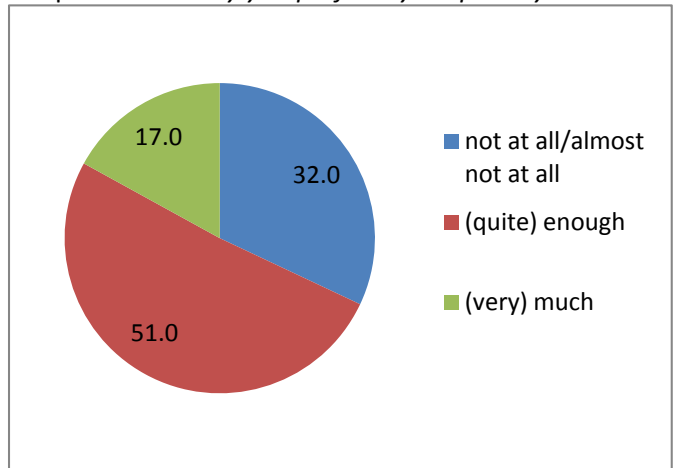
77.7% of the ePriests from Germany consider using the Internet for communication with other people as *useful* or *very useful*. However, they seem to be less inclined to use social networks: though 17.9% of them access social networks on a daily basis and 12.6% once a week (world data: 26.4% daily, 17.6% once a week), 52.6% never access them (much more than world average of 35.3%). When using social networks, 18.0% of German ePriests are in contact with 1 to 10 of their brother priests; nonetheless the majority (54.0%) do not use social networks for getting in touch with other priests. Also, 36.3% of the ePriests in Germany are in contact with 1 to 10 of their brother priests through Instant Messaging or VoIP, while 30.4% are not in contact with any of their brother priests through these tools.

CONCLUSION

Comments:

17.0% of the ePriests in Germany think 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%); 51.0% do not perceive big improvements (values 2 and 3), and 32.0% 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. While 10.8% of German ePriests *agree* or *strongly agree* that “the dangers of technology are greater than the opportunities it offers”, 35.3% *disagree* with this statement (worldwide: 17.5% and 38.2%, respectively). In conclusion, although the general perception of the opportunities offered by ICTs is positive among ePriests in Germany, nonetheless this is often 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 15th, 2009 and ended on February 28th, 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.