

SYMPOSIUM PAPER

A New Door of Faith: Catholic Identity, Evangelization, and Renewal through Social Media¹

We want this Year to arouse in every believer the aspiration to profess the faith in fullness and with renewed conviction, with confidence and hope.²

Today in the United States, large numbers of people self-identify as Catholic, yet a small number practice their faith. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate's (CARA) 2010 statistics estimate that nearly 74,470,000 people self-identify as Catholic in the United States, yet only 17,873,000 attend Mass regularly. 2,979,000 are very involved in their parish outside of Mass, and both volunteer and paid lay ministers only add up to 50,298.³ What does "Catholic" mean today? According to the stats, when someone says "I am Catholic" in the United States, the belief and commitment behind that statement is likely to be weak.

The Church has proclaimed a Year of Faith, and through standing initiatives such as the New Evangelization and renewal efforts, is encouraging believers to profess their faith with confidence. By doing so, they can spread the joy of what it means to walk with Christ and revitalize an evangelical zeal that is sorely missing in many Catholic interactions. Further, Church leadership recognizes that times have changed dramatically over the last 15 years. Today, communication has taken on new forms and we must enter the digital world to make a difference.

Social media can be used to strengthen Catholic identity by bringing people with overlapping interests together from all over the world. While the digital divide still means that some people and perspectives are left out, we are discovering an increasing experience of wholeness and mutual support worldwide among Catholics of different nationalities. A Catholic identity is not just solidarity through a collective loyalty to the Pope or the liturgy. Through

¹ This paper was first presented at the Year of Faith Symposium on Catholic Identity held on October 11-12, 2012 at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in Huntington, NY.

² Benedict XVI, "*Porta Fidei*," An Apostolic Letter issued "*Motu Proprio Data*," § 9, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20111011_porta-fidei_en.html (accessed September 1, 2012).

³ Mark Gray, "A Micro-Scoping View of U.S. Catholic Population," Nineteen Sixty-Four, entry posted May 11, 2012, <http://nineteensixty-four.blogspot.com/2012/05/microscoping-view-of-us-catholic.html> (accessed September 1, 2012).

social media, people can connect and exchange information and opinions about more detailed aspects of the faith, so long as they understand the same language. Social media can also help people overcome publishing obstacles of the past and share a wider variety of thoughts.

The challenges of the new social media culture are many. We must not allow the new technology to de-humanize us, further fragment our communities, or lead to self-centered or insincere behaviors. The new freedom can result in information overload, so people may need assistance with interpretation and application. Also, the new landscape means that old communication methods may not be as effective now. Messages need to be adapted to the online universe, and merely transposing book knowledge to the electronic world won't be compelling for audiences. The new medium of social media needs to be leveraged for what it is.

Ultimately, the reason social media is so important for the Year of Faith is that it seems so perfectly compatible with the Holy Spirit. The combination of the Holy Spirit and social media is a recipe for worldwide renewal. The Holy Spirit is known to be fiery, and hence, the messages the Holy Spirit wishes to impart could come quickly – as flashes of inspiration. Social media allows everyday people to spread those messages to the world without delay.

Catholic Identity through Social Media

Without fear we must set sail on the digital sea, facing into the deep with the same passion that has governed the ship of the Church for two thousand years.... [W]e want to qualify ourselves by living in the digital world with a believer's heart, helping to give a soul to the Internet's incessant flow of communication.⁴

Pope Benedict XVI

Social media presents both opportunities and challenges for those seeking to maintain a strong Catholic identity in the United States today. If someone is strongly Catholic in their personal lives, they will probably exude this faith identification through their social media interactions. They can leverage social media to enhance their existing local connections and become a citizen of the world – or “set sail” as the Holy Father says.

⁴ “Pope Asks Bloggers to Give Internet a Soul,” Vatican Radio Website, http://storico.radiovaticana.org/en1/storico/2010-04/374892_pope_asks_bloggers_to_give_internet_a_soul.html (accessed September 1, 2012). Full text of speech: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2010/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100424_testimoni-digitali_en.html.

While those who have difficulty connecting to their Catholic communities locally may finally find a home in cyberspace, or digital safety net, they may also find very individualized spiritual material online that could lead them away from the Church. Traditional religion now competes with a burgeoning industry of spiritual gurus and coaches who blend numerous veins of wisdom together to cater to people who want to increase their fulfillment in life. If a priest or lay minister is not available to help someone blend their discoveries from the latest bestselling book or personal empowerment seminar with Catholicism, the quest for fulfillment can result in a crisis of faith.

Further, social media can have a superficial element that leads people to feel busy, but at the end of the day, relationships are not deepened. In essence, people can sometimes present only a false façade of themselves online, rather than their true identity, which can make it a shallow venue that holds a lot of disappointment.

Opportunities – How Social Media Can Strengthen Catholic Identity

“For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”
Matthew 18:20

One of the most effective strategies for leveraging social media to strengthen Catholic identity is to build a website, blog, or social media account around a particular niche. The power of the niche is well known in marketing and advertising. The idea is that when someone goes online for information, services, or to build a network, they are most drawn to others who really “get” them and their specific circumstances.

Catholic mothers who have chosen to leave the office environment in particular have latched on to social media to strengthen their Catholic identity and sense of community. Before I got pregnant, I didn’t realize why this niche was so necessary. Yet, when I discovered that a top-selling pregnancy guide offers step-by-step instructions for expectant mothers to cope with traditional office jobs or change jobs, but no tips for leaving the office environment either permanently or temporarily, the cultural gap became surprisingly clear. The priorities of a stay-at-home mom or home-based “mompreneur” are not always catered to in modern family literature.

Lisa Hendey has led the way for the Catholic mom base. Her website, CatholicMom.com, is enormously popular and also features a podcast series. Hendey invites many Catholic bloggers to submit pieces to her site for publication. In *The Church and New Media*, she describes her humble beginnings

in Chapter 9.⁵ Now, she has authored several books and is frequently invited to speak on the radio and at Catholic conferences in-person.

Like Hendey, my work with single Catholics started humbly. I remembered the frustration, confusion, and loneliness of the Catholic dating scene, and didn't want scores of other women to feel alone in their struggles. I also wanted to bring more reality-based advice to the forefront and provide an alternative to outdated courtship guides. I launched my first blog in 2008 on www.blogger.com as a newlywed. Eventually, I bought a descriptive web address to build my brand and audience, www.singlecatholicwoman.com. With my husband's help, I connected my blog to this URL. It was amazing how quickly things took off. My work was featured on Catholicmatch.com, Catholic Exchange, and soon other websites, magazines, and even *The Washington Times*. And then, I got a book deal, which led to radio and TV shows, interviews, and in-person opportunities.

For example, in March of this year, I attended the "Behold Conference" for Catholic women in Peoria, IL as a guest blogger. This year, a roundtable brought together blogging Catholic women of every variety. The roundtable and conference proved just how powerful social media has become because online writers got to meet each other and see just how much we influence each other's lives on a daily basis. While Hendey and I have different niches, we are both under a large umbrella of Catholic female bloggers who discovered the power of social media to build meaningful connections.

Other examples of "niching" can be found among Catholic groups with particular interests. The Arlington Diocese Charismatic Movement, for example, has a well-developed Facebook page that brings people together around charismatic events and topics. A website, www.newliturgicalmovement.org, caters to those interested in traditional Masses.

The question to ask ourselves is, what other online niches can be built to bring Catholics together and strengthen their identities? I spoke with a publicist and we both agreed that Catholic women who work outside the home, particularly in secular environments, are falling through the cracks big time. Some women feel that they must have many children and leave their jobs to be embraced and catered to in the Catholic world, but women may have other lifestyles for a variety of reasons. This publicist spoke to a major Catholic media outlet about this forgotten population in an attempt to raise awareness, and didn't feel like she got much traction. And this is where blogs come in! Bloggers

⁵ Brandon Vogt, "Chapter 9, That They May Be One: Cultivating Online Community," in *The Church and New Media: Blogging Converts, Online Activists, and Bishops Who Tweet* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2011), Amazon Kindle Edition.

don't need to wait for someone to bless their efforts or understand their frustration – they can just go and create. How many untapped niches could be out there, waiting for a vanguard to lead the way?

Clergy can also be highly instrumental in strengthening the Catholic identity of web surfers by building their own websites and social media accounts. One well-known example is the much-admired Fr. James Martin, SJ, who regularly sends inspirational messages to thousands of fans via Twitter and Facebook. Some bishops are even adopting social media accounts to expand their sphere of influence. Further, clergy who are willing to extend some pastoral care to people outside their parish boundaries can really *save* someone's Catholic identity. If the clergy member is a priest, he is truly *in persona Christi* and *a fisher of men* when he connects with people online.

For example, my Catholic identity was strengthened when I re-united with a priest friend online. We had met 10 years before at a parish, yet even with a book that had received a coveted Catholic Press Association award, I felt extremely alienated in my suburban town. My attempts to reach out to my local pastor were met with deafening silence. Regardless of my tireless efforts to build up Catholic singles nationally, I felt abandoned by the Church locally. To me, my situation spoke to a major deficiency in our parish life. Yet, the Web was a safety net. Re-connecting with my priest friend online allowed me to continue using my gifts to build up the Church in new and creative ways. Without this providential cyber reunion, I could have easily become discouraged enough by my local circumstances to take my contributions outside the Church.

Social media is also a fantastic safety net for introverts. Even if they have a good parish, they may not like crowds of people and could have intellectual interests that translate better to written material. I say that with the advent of online dating, the playing field is leveling out for introverts who may prefer a non-threatening online introduction to a new person. Same goes for Catholic identity. If an introvert isn't comfortable diving into church socials, they can balance parish activities with memberships in online communities.

To me, one of the biggest blessings that social media has to offer is that it can give a lost sheep a spiritual home in cyberspace. If work, family obligations, or any other circumstance mean that someone is stuck without a strong Catholic community, they can probably find likeminded individuals online to chat with. Further, with a little effort, social media can become "real life."

Challenges: How Social Media Can Threaten Catholic Identity

Often sincere people who leave our Church do not do so as a result of what non-Catholic groups believe, but fundamentally as a result of their own lived experience; for

*reasons not of doctrine but of life; not for strictly dogmatic, but for pastoral reasons; not due to theological problems, but to methodological problems of our Church.*⁶

Benedict XVI

As with “real life,” the Catholic social media environment still has its share of challenges. For one thing, if you fall into a category that nobody has built a niche for yet, you could have difficulty making meaningful online connections.

Sherry Weddell of the St. Catherine of Siena Institute, which focuses on building up lay apostles, recently pointed out that spiritual seekers are at risk of losing their Catholic identity. She wrote,

This is going to be very hard for some to hear but there is a hidden hemorrhage of Catholics from within our parishes to the Protestant world fueled by spiritual growth and spiritual hunger, not spiritual disinterest. The Pew US Religious Landscape Survey found that 71% of adult Catholics who became Protestant said their primary motivation was that ‘their spiritual needs weren't being met.’ The whole ‘they just want to be entertained’ meme that I've heard so often in Catholic circles is almost entirely a projection of our assumptions upon a group with very different concerns that we haven't been willing to take seriously – yet.⁷

This risk is especially pronounced now that people can quickly and privately search for spiritual food online and establish streams of nourishment that are invisible to their pastor or friends. It has gotten exceedingly easy, even without neighborly connections, to find alternatives to the local parish. The bottom line is that now, in this environment of instant and low cost information, Catholic parishes are competing with the Internet for their audience. If the local priest is unpleasant, unresponsive, or doesn't have compelling answers to spiritual dilemmas, people can just go to Google and find something or someone else.

⁶ David Kerr, “Pope Examines Why Latin American Catholics Join Evangelical Churches,” *Catholic News Agency*, June 22, 2012. <http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/pope-examines-why-latin-american-catholics-join-evangelical-churches/> (accessed September 1, 2012). Full text of the speech is accessible at: http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2012/june/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20120622_vescovi-colombia_en.html.

⁷ Sherry Weddell, “A Hidden Hemorrhage Fueled by Spiritual Growth?” St. Catherine of Siena Institute Blog, entry posted July 5, 2012, <http://www.siena.org/Blog/Page-3> (accessed September 1, 2012).

The hemorrhage that Weddell speaks of is not just about people leaving to warmer Protestant churches that encourage conversions of heart. In a talk given at Harvard's Divinity School, bestselling author Fr. Thomas Keating says that we are now in an age of "religious pluralism." He says, "How we live together with different points of view is going to become more and more important."⁸ The number of viewpoints and recipes for happiness that people can have is exploding. People are blending strains of religion, spirituality, and even psychology and other disciplines in an attempt to truly meet people "where they are at." Many motivational speakers, writers, and coaches promote services to potential customers and clients online. They sell teachings and techniques to people who want to renew their lives. Their wisdom is usually not Catholic, though their material may contain elements of Catholic spirituality without proper citations, references, or context.

Since many observant Catholics tend to be the last people to jump on board with contemporary self-help endeavors, members of the flock who want *something more* are usually left with options that won't usually appear in a typical Catholic bookstore. Alongside this self-help industry, people like Keating have worked extensively to blend Christian spirituality with modern self-help. For example, in a book entitled *Divine Therapy & Addiction: Centering Prayer and the Twelve Steps*, he shows how the steps of the famous Alcoholics Anonymous program dovetail with traditional spirituality.⁹ Yet, he is oftentimes roasted on the Catholic blogs for his initiatives, like centering prayer. Even so, his centering prayer is similar to Dr. Herbert Benson's "Relaxation Response," which was recently highlighted on the Science Channel. Benson, who is Director Emeritus of the Benson-Henry Institute and Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School, developed this meditation technique to reduce stress and dispel negative thoughts. Both Keating and Benson were inspired by Buddhist monks, and Benson's techniques are scientifically proven to reduce stress.¹⁰

Keating's intent behind centering prayer seems to have originated from a desire to give Catholics a more diverse tool kit for spiritual development, while enabling them to stay Catholic. Ironically, some Catholic intellectuals turn their back on him for not being enough of a "purist" in the Catholic sense. The trend is disconcerting in that we are now learning that some meditation techniques are as powerful as medicine. Yet, when someone tries to "baptize" a non-Christian

⁸ Thomas Keating, *The Human Condition: Contemplation and Transformation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 21 [Amazon Kindle Edition].

⁹ Thomas Keating, *Divine Therapy and Addiction: Centering Prayer and the Twelve Steps* (Herndon, VA: Lantern Books, March 1, 2011), Amazon Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ "Mysteries of the Subconscious," *Through the Wormhole with Morgan Freeman*, season 3, TV show (Discovery Communications, 2012).

meditation technique with proven health benefits, they run the risk of being exiled by their brothers and sisters.

Self-help gurus, by the way, eagerly borrow from the work of Keating and other Catholic thinkers (even saints!), re-package it in a more secular way, and find it to be enormously lucrative. If we don't work to keep innovators in the fold, other people will embrace them and recognize their talents. The potential outcome is that Catholics will not have many ways of maturely integrating modern discoveries with their faith and face the prospect of "falling behind" other spiritual seekers.

The answers people find these days can have confusing labels on them, but the truth is that the answers that someone finds online may address their particular needs better than anything they can easily find in the Church. While the personal development they find may strengthen their spiritual identity and understanding in general, they may not know how to integrate these discoveries into their Catholic identity when they get to that step. Without support, a rupture can occur.

Another aspect of the hemorrhage is that many Catholics respond strongly to the mystical elements of our tradition, and finding it so difficult to encounter mysticism in the Church they go searching elsewhere. Dr. Alan Schreck, author of *Rebuild My Church: God's Plan for Authentic Catholic Renewal*, says that one strain of renewal can be referred to as *experience-oriented renewal*.¹¹ People, especially those with mystical leanings, seek vivid spiritual experiences to confirm invisible realities. The "born again" experience is one such example. Without some sort of mystical experience to renew or validate one's faith, a spiritual seeker may not maintain a Catholic identity.

I am able to provide some unique insight into this mysticism-seeking dynamic because of my upbringing, which introduced me to spiritual teachers and mystics who are not observant Catholics, but who are nevertheless successful and well-regarded in their fields. Interestingly, a man I know who specializes in Peruvian shamanism, or indigenous and pre-Christian spiritual traditions, tells me that the majority of his clients are some shade of Catholic.

Beyond seeking mystical experiences, the demographics of the shaman's clientele also beg the question of ancestral longings that may exist in Catholics, who by and large, do not come from Jewish bloodlines or traditions. For instance, I am not aware of any Jewish ancestry in my background, so when we speak of Christ as a Jew, it represents one side of his identity that I cannot immediately connect with based on my own family of origin. Could it be that

¹¹ Alan Schreck, *Rebuild My Church: God's Plan for Authentic Catholic Renewal* (Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books, 2010), 46-47.

people have a deep desire to know or remember how their ancestors discovered and connected with God before they were introduced to organized religion? Do some people have an urge to connect with God on a very natural, intuitive level? What can the Church offer such people to fill that need? It's easy for any curious person to find shamans online these days. One does not need to become a member of an exclusive club to gain access to them. In many cases, shamans present themselves in a sophisticated manner without labels such as "pagan" that could be jarring for a Christian.

Those with powerful and "unusual" charisms tend to have extreme difficulty maintaining their Catholic identity too, forming another hemorrhage. 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 says, "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil." While the gift of prophecy is described in spiritual gift assessments as a legitimate expression of the Holy Spirit, people who use the gift frequently to serve others are usually frowned upon in the Church today and have such a hard time finding pastoral care that we lose them. I know several "psychics," and many of them are former Catholics and even maintain some strong Catholic beliefs.

In his book, Dr. Schreck summarizes various renewal efforts throughout history and assesses their success or failure. The New Prophecy movement that Montanus started in the second century may still have some bearing on how Church members behave today towards charismatic gifts such as prophecy. Upset by the gradual disappearance of Pauline charisms, Montanus launched a sustained effort to revive and encourage the use of spiritual gifts. However, the bishops at the time thought that Montanus' activities presented the danger of an us vs. them mentality, or "because we nurture the gift of prophecy, we are more Christian than you." The conflict led to one of the first schisms. Perhaps our collective and even institutional memory has kept this trauma buried somewhere, and the result is to tip toe around the gift of prophecy.¹²

These days, people with special charisms can find support online. The hope is that they can find a listing for a Catholic charismatic group within driving distance. But, they may not, or it may not be sufficient. The other route is for people with uncommon spiritual gifts to Google a metaphysical church, meet-up group, or even access online training catered to people with their gifts, thereby becoming an "internet runaway." My observation is that these runaways typically don't begin their exodus with a schism mentality, per se, but simply want to be true to themselves and grow spirituality in an environment that welcomes them. For them, the cookie-cutter effect and cold attitude of

¹² Schreck, 151-152.

Catholic communities simply proves unbearable. As Melinda Selmys said in an article that appeared in the *National Catholic Register*, “God is not interested in uniform humanity.”¹³ People can only express the power of their spiritual gifts if they are permitted to be themselves and allow the divine spark within them to shine through.

Hence, if we can’t welcome people into our family and help them fit in, they have an easy door out through the Internet and may feel compelled to take it in the interest of spiritual authenticity. For our outcasts, the Internet may represent another, separate “door of faith” rather than a safety net that keeps them in the Church and self-identifying as Catholic.

Ignoring these hemorrhages does not bode well for our future. An environment that is increasing in religious pluralism (and lapsed Catholics) means that we are going to be ministering to more people who were not raised in a strong Christian tradition. So if we want to be patient with Catholics who have sought answers outside the Church today, we have to realize that in the future, building Catholic identity in people may depend on us seeking to understand their spiritual journey with true compassion...and meeting them online, where they or a parent might have fallen away to begin with. Listening to their stories and skillfully connecting threads of their narrative to Catholicism may be more helpful than aggressively debating the legitimacy of their personal, life-shaping encounters with God. We have to become bridge builders for some to have any hope of constructing a valid Catholic identity that will hold over time in the midst of the diverse experiences the digital world has opened up to them.

Another unrelated challenge of social media when it comes to identity is simply that it can be cold, superficial, and encourage selfish behaviors. People who update their statuses on Facebook or Twitter, for example, might be so keenly aware of other people watching that they start to develop an online persona that is different from their true selves. Their online self is a “false self” and aims to gain a certain reaction from others rather than make meaningful connections. Insofar as we need other people in our lives for God to work effectively – since God does work through other people – those who spend an inordinate amount of time online can run the risk of: 1) giving an incomplete version of themselves to the world; 2) not nurturing warm enough relationships to generate or permit much providential intervention and collaboration inspired by God; and 3) spending a lot of their time in self-serving ways – i.e., what article

¹³ Melinda Selmys, “True Christians Must Be Themselves,” *National Catholic Register*, August 25, 2012. <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/true-christians-must-be-themselves> (accessed September 1, 2012).

do I want to read next rather than how can I contribute to my family, community, or partner with someone else for a greater good?

This dynamic can be de-stabilizing and one psychological theory in particular lends itself to describing how that can happen. It is the idea that those who rely too heavily on the outside world for gratification and positive emotions develop an *external locus of control*. The audience can become your master if you are not careful on social media. The goal for a well-rounded, mature, happy person is to have a stronger *internal locus of control*. This means that feelings of fulfillment and self-respect come from within. Decisions are made because that is what is right for you as an individual, or what God communicates to you. Those who use social media frequently need to check in with themselves to make sure they are not becoming overly reliant on the responses of others for happiness. Their identity need not be shaped by “likes” and status updates.

Evangelization through Social Media

*The Christian faith is a true encounter and relationship with Jesus Christ. Transmitting the faith means to create in every place and time the conditions which lead to this encounter between the person and Jesus Christ. The goal of all evangelization is to create the possibility for this encounter, which is, at one and the same time, intimate, personal, public and communal.*¹⁴

The Web is a great opportunity for evangelization. One key to leveraging it more effectively is for Catholics to pursue personal forms of evangelization with the same zeal that you’ll find them demonstrating in the public square. As a group, Catholics might passionately support pro-life and religious liberty campaigns, but not know how to talk to a neighbor or friend about their beliefs. To support this shift, I propose re-thinking our approach to social media and reflecting on how online interactions can prompt life-changing conversions.

Evangelization on the Personal and Collective Levels

When I was a Protestant evangelical, evangelizing was a big part of my identity. How could you be a Christian and not engage in some form of evangelization? It didn’t seem possible to me to live as a Christian and not be constantly contemplating how I could evangelize. Yet, when I became a

¹⁴ Synod of Bishops, XIII Ordinary General Assembly, “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith” (*Instrumentum Laboris*): http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/synod/documents/rc_synod_doc_20120619_instrumentum-xiii_en.html (accessed September 1, 2012), § 18.

Catholic, evangelization on the *personal level* seemed liked a foreign concept to many of the people I met, even daily Mass goers.

In a recent Church document on the New Evangelization, the idea that evangelizing could be limiting someone else's freedom is cited as a potential barrier.¹⁵ If people are hesitant to evangelize out of concern for disrespecting other people, they may view evangelization as an aggressive action wholly apart from their true identities. That begs the question, how can true evangelization, which is not typically aggressive, be woven into the fabric of Catholic identity? In many daily circumstances, evangelization is simply being yourself with others and choosing not to withhold information about your religious practices or faith. God does the rest. How can simply "being yourself" and remaining open to God in your social life be an infringement on another's liberty? A strong Catholic identity is a form of evangelization.

While evangelization on a *personal level* is uncomfortable for many Catholics and displaced from their identity, active Catholics do understand evangelization on the *collective level*. Many are willing to stand up first in the public square to defend human life, the sanctity of marriage, and religious liberty. How can we transfer this passion from the public square to our personal lives?

In an effort, to raise awareness of what a Catholic evangelical sensibility on a day-to-day, *personal level* is about, I've written and spoken extensively about a concept I call "growing outside of yourself." I started discussing the concept on my blog for single Catholic women several years ago and later in my book, *How to Get to 'I Do': A Dating Guide for Catholic Women*.¹⁶ In April 2012, I arranged a live web chat with Fr. Elias Carr, Can. Reg. and a Catholic author, Kate Wicker, who is married to a non-Catholic to continue discussing and developing the concept.

By "growing outside yourself," I propose that singles look at their dating lives through God's eyes. If a single Catholic has tried to find a spouse year after year in the same churchy places and is coming up short, I advise them to ponder the phrase, "When God says no, it's time to grow." In my book, I acknowledge that I would not have found the faith without the help of a Catholic boyfriend in college. Had a Catholic not seen the good in me, and shared his faith with me in a compelling manner, I don't think I would have converted. In other words, I needed to be evangelized! We both had to "grow" outside of ourselves and our communities for this to happen, and sometimes that is God's plan.

¹⁵ *Instrumentum Laboris*, § 35.

¹⁶ Amy Bonaccorso, "Chapter 7, Growing Outside Yourself," in *How to Get to 'I Do': A Dating Guide for Catholic Women* (Cincinnati, OH: Servant Books, 2010), 68-78.

Upon reading my chapter, one knowledgeable Catholic professional told me that my ideas were “Protestant” and a few Catholic reviewers online questioned the concept of dating non-Catholics across the board. They wondered if I was proposing “missionary dating,” or a manipulative attempt to force a conversion through romantic relationships. The idea that two single people of different faith backgrounds could genuinely bond over shared interests and human virtue seemed hard for some Catholics to grasp. Even if the fruit of the sharing is an eventual conversion, some Catholics I’ve spoken with seem egotistical and impatient when faced with such a possibility. Some only see the value of sharing their faith if the non-Catholic party immediately collapses their opinions and promptly conforms to the Catholic perspective on everything. Such expectations are unrealistic since conversions are rarely instantaneous or occur through flagrant disrespect of someone else’s life experiences and independence.

The risk I took by proposing the “growing outside yourself” concept has won some support though, particularly among devout women in Catholic publishing who married virtuous non-Catholic men. Yet, they oftentimes share frustration with me because well-known Catholic speakers and teachers they know have diminished the spiritual nature of their journeys.

Consequently, I’ve concluded that the evangelical spirit in the *personal sense* is a bit misunderstood and unfamiliar in the Catholic world. Many don’t understand how to share their faith with people in casual conversation. To so easily confuse how God naturally works through relationships with callous manipulation, and to be so suspicious of a Biblical concept such as sharing our faith with those we love, reveals an embarrassing blind spot.

We need to think about why evangelization is so difficult for Catholics on a *personal level* and what can be done to help Catholics become more comfortable with their call and responsibility to evangelize in their personal relationships, especially online.

Catholic Social Media Norms and Evangelization

The way Jesus treated people is to be considered an essential element of Jesus’ method of evangelizing. He was able to welcome everyone, without distinction, and never exclude anyone: first, the poor, then the rich like Zacchaeus and Joseph of Arimathea; outsiders like the centurion and the Syro-Phoenician woman; the righteous, like Nathanael; and prostitutes and public sinners with whom he also sat at table.¹⁷

¹⁷ *Instrumentum Laboris*, § 23.

The discomfort that many Catholics feel about evangelization in their relationships plays out in social media every day. Since we are not usually evangelical in identity, the unspoken rules of the Catholic social media world can hinder evangelization. If you develop a network of devout (especially those who self-identify as “conservative” or “orthodox”) Catholic friends on popular social networking sites such as Facebook or Twitter and observe their patterns, you will see what I mean. The messages often overlap and people tend to send similar things into cyberspace.

Insofar as friends share similar interests, this is expected. The potential problem is that I’ve noticed that those who diverge *even in the slightest* from the expected messages may get negative comments. One has to carefully weigh what is shared and realize that within this narrowly defined group, true freedom of expression and spiritual exploration may not be welcomed. In that sense, the online Catholic environment can be a bit shallow. The social media false self takes over. “Well, I think this is really helpful, but if I post this, so and so is going to get nasty with me and judge me, and it may not get many likes.” Social media can become like a high society party where people are trying to make a good entrance.

In this scene, people might be threatened by competing ideas that they may or may not understand. Therefore, they may only want to socialize with people of a very similar mindset in an attempt to shield themselves from a world that is increasingly hostile to traditional Christian values. In essence, the outside world is seen as the enemy because it seeks to dismantle our Christian identity. So, unspoken social norms develop to support people in this culture war.

Within this dynamic, Catholics may speak up to defend and assert their beliefs, but not listen or hear anything that the perceived “the other side” has to say. I call this the “cocoon effect.” In psychology, a *false-consensus effect* or *false consensus-bias* describes the tendency people have to overestimate how much people agree with them. It can happen when they surround themselves with likeminded people and thereby, slowly become convinced that more people agree with them than disagree with them.¹⁸

I mention the dangers of cocoons in my book. To be fair, the cocoon effect can have benefits. If we have good Catholic friends within this tightly wrapped cocoon – at least we are getting support in maintaining our faith! But, this comfort zone is not always conducive to evangelization. And, it may be difficult to cook up any forward leaning, yet Catholic, concepts in this “play it safe” space because the expectations are that everyone stay within the parameters of the

¹⁸ “False-Consensus Effect,” Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/False-consensus_effect (accessed September 1, 2012).

cocoon. This is particularly problematic when it comes to the material coming out in the self-help and metaphysical scenes, which oftentimes has compelling overlap with traditional Catholic spirituality. Many are too tightly wrapped in a cocoon to see this opportunity for evangelization. Opportunities are missed through a lack of openness and connectedness.

What I have learned from my time in the Catholic, Protestant and non-Christian worlds is that behind every successful evangelizer are good, diverse relationships. An evangelist has a big heart. An evangelizer needs: 1) the compassion to love people who are not fully “in the fold” while maintaining their own faith identity; 2) Christian fellowship to keep them strong enough in their faith and identity to evangelize in a compelling manner. The Catholic social media norms support number two, but not number one.

So, how do we get better at number one? Here are three tips:

1. Tone Police It!

Mark Twain said, “Kindness is the language that the deaf can hear and the blind can see.” We should monitor our tone and communication via social media. An occasional sarcastic remark to make a point and get a laugh is one thing. And with the growing attacks on religious liberty, we can’t avoid making some pointed comments in that area. But, *a habit* of harsh or accusative online exchanges is not a good idea. Yes, sometimes people get passionate, and you have to be true to yourself, but your comment could be online for a long time and you could really turn someone off. It doesn’t matter how academically correct you are when outlining Thomas Aquinas’ points on the latest religious debate if you are highly disrespectful and condescending in your demeanor. The person on the receiving end could be completely turned off and close their mind just because they felt insulted by your tone.

2. How Would Jesus Participate in Social Media?

Pope Paul VI wrote, “Jesus himself, the Good News of God, was the very first and the greatest evangelizer.”¹⁹ If Catholics are serious about being followers of Christ, it’s hard to justify insular behavior. Christ had his group of disciples and loyal followers, but the point was to spread the message. He is known to have eaten with sinners, so what does that mean he would do online?

¹⁹ Paul VI, “Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*” § 7, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi_en.html (accessed September 1, 2012).

Would he limit his friends list to only the most devout followers? I don't think so. Preaching to the choir is only going to bear so much fruit.

I believe that Jesus would be generous about accepting followers. I also think he'd engage open-minded spiritual seekers who were not super devout and observant on the surface. I don't see him wasting time on people who were out rightly hostile towards him, and I don't see him being a pleaser, but he didn't shy away from sharing the Gospel with those who would listen. It's hard to know who will listen initially, right? Stories about abortion providers converting and leaving the industry are now published online. With that in mind, what baby steps could we take to be a little bit more engaging in cyberspace?

Similarly, how would he blog? I think Christ would be a great blogger! I can see him writing about his daily travels and who he met that day, and teaching about how those daily activities reflected God. He'd try to touch people's hearts and be accessible. He would speak the truth boldly, and not everyone would like it, but just as he spoke in parables, his words would be understandable to the everyday person.

3. Be Spontaneous Sometimes

If the Internet is a digital sea, what's wrong with occasionally being a bit spontaneous with your surfing? You never know what you will find out there, and I know through numerous "coincidences," that sometimes I'll end up somewhere unintentionally, but know God steered me there for a reason. Maybe I discovered a book that I had to order, or found a quote that I could use in my writing or with a coaching client.

At the same time, what if you need to hear "the other side" on an important topic? To win a debate, you have to know what the other side plans to say and how they think. Where are they getting their stats and why does their information not match up with what you read elsewhere? In some cases, learning about another side allows you to nuance your argument better. So much information is online today and it's usually possible to find a niche or corner that especially appeals to you. Yet, being too closed off can handicap people intellectually and diminish their ability to evangelize and persuade effectively.

Online Conversions

*Jesus' evangelizing actions leads a person quite naturally to a conversion-experience.
Every person is called to conversion and to faith in God's merciful love.²⁰*

²⁰ *Instrumentum Laboris*, § 24.

If you need some motivation to get into this evangelization thing online, find a few stories about online conversions. I have a few quick examples.

I originally met Christ online circa 1998, which makes me a very early online conversion. The experience taught me so much about how Christ works that it has influenced my philosophy on evangelization immensely. It happened when I was in college and on a message board for a music group. A debate broke out about one of the band member's alleged adultery on the road with young girls. I wrote that if it was true, it was wrong. Unbeknownst to me, a Protestant youth minister backed me up. He messaged me privately to see if I was a Christian. I wasn't, but soon was based on our long email conversations.

What still bewilders me about my initial conversion is that I was nowhere near a faith-related website. I was just being my music-enthusiast self and chatting online about events of the day. And yet, Christ still found me. But, if we read Scripture and take it seriously, that is how God works. However, I don't know many Catholics who would "go fishing" for people like this youth minister did. His success reflects my belief that a strong Christian identity is the best key to evangelization, because through just being oneself, the Gospel gets out there.

This youth minister was critical to my conversion because without his emails, I don't think my choice would have stuck. My parents, though very spiritual, did not have an interest in Christianity. I also remember my old friends heckling me publicly on my college campus for my conversion, yelling "Christian!" "Sell out!" and other things. I had to completely change my social group and leave my old life behind, and the youth minister gave me tips on how to build a more supportive social circle.

Jennifer Fulwiler describes how her path from atheism to Catholicism began in 2004 via the blogosphere in Chapter 2 of *The Church and New Media*. She writes, "The personal musings [of bloggers] were so much more raw and relevant to my life than anything I could find in the newspaper."²¹ When she encountered Christians online, her stereotypes about them fell apart. Fulwiler started her own blog to share her thoughts as she journeyed to the Church, and others left comments to start a dialogue. She says, "Blogging, in particular among the New Media tools, has transformed spiritual conversion into a communal experience."²²

A prominent atheist blogger, Leah Libresco, announced that she is converting to Catholicism this summer. She said that her conversion decision came after debating many "smart Christians," and at least a portion of those exchanges happened through her blog on www.patheos.com. Her example

²¹ Vogt, 46.

²² Vogt, 50.

shows how news of a conversion can spread like wildfire through social media. Her conversion announcement on Facebook was shared over 18,000 times. When she posted the news about her upcoming Rite of Christian Initiation on her blog, it was viewed 20-30 times more than her typical posts.²³ This example demonstrates just how powerful social media can be. When I converted, maybe 20-30 people knew about it, but in this case, thousands of people knew about Libresco. Conversions can shake others up, so sharing the news itself is a form of evangelization.

In Chapter 1 of *The Church and New Media*, Fr. Robert Barron discusses the success of www.catholicscomehome.com. The website has accurate and easy-to-understand explanations of Church teaching. The group behind the website sponsors T.V. commercials to encourage fallen away Catholics to find them online. Fr. Barron writes, "In one survey, over 53 percent of inactive Catholics or former Catholics considered returning to or checking out the Catholic Church after viewing just one of the Catholics Come Home commercials."²⁴ As a result of these campaigns, over 200,000 have returned to the Church.²⁵

Catholic Renewal Through Social Media

"Be who God meant you to be, and you will set the world on fire."
St. Catherine of Siena

We have to remember that social media took off because readers value the honesty of bloggers. A blogger's candor and unique personality or perspective can quickly connect people with similar interests and issues. A blogger can circumvent traditional publishing guardians who are oftentimes not truly open to original and creative ideas. An article in *Scientific American* recently demonstrated, for example, that people tend to view anything new and innovative with caution, even if they say they are looking for something cutting-

²³ Dan Merica, "Prominent Atheist Blogger Converts to Catholicism," CNN Belief Blog, entry posted June 22, 2012, <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/06/22/prominent-atheist-blogger-converts-to-catholicism/?iref=allsearch> (accessed September 1, 2012).

²⁴ Vogt, 38.

²⁵ "Over 200,000 Lapsed Catholics Return to Church through 'come Home' Outreach." Ewtnnews.com post, December 18, 2010. <http://www.ewtnnews.com/catholic-news/US.php?id=2338> (accessed September 1, 2012). For more conversion stories, visit www.whyImCatholic.com.

edge.²⁶ Such a tendency in people is known among writers who interact with literary agents and acquisitions editors regularly. Yes, they want something a little bit different, but they also want to know what established category an idea falls into and how it parallels with previously published material. Social media, therefore, can be the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit because it does not present common publishing obstacles and restrictions. Social media empowers writers to make their own way.

The freedom of social media, while valuable, also introduces the risk of embarrassing communication faux pas and the question of peer review. How do forward-thinking writers embrace social media and make it work for them, but also gain the input of other people for buy-in and valuable critiques? While the freedom to introduce new ideas is revolutionary, there are times when new theological concepts or religious experiences would benefit from the review of other knowledgeable people who are qualified to give educated opinions. Perhaps one reason why the same religious writers continue to sell books without proposing much in the way of new thought is that some readers just want to know that what they read is thoroughly vetted. From that perspective, peer review can add tremendous value to written material, and we're still learning how to incorporate that into the online universe.

Renewing the Written Word

*A church in need of renewal does not let the light of Christ shine clearly or brightly.*²⁷

One element of religious publishing is that traditional Christians have an established tendency to aggressively edit written work. Our motives vary and are ripe for analysis as we try to fully leverage social media's capabilities. While a blog entry can stay in cyberspace for a very long time and cause people to prudently edit their work, we should also want writing to retain the fire of the initial inspiration, which may have come from the Holy Spirit.

The tension between candor and formality as a theme in religious publishing is exemplified through the first known autobiography written in the English language. Margory Kempe, a lay mystic who is honored in the Anglican Church, originally lived the life of a middle class mother. After having many children, she negotiated a celibate marriage with her husband. With the support

²⁶ Mary Konnikova, "Why Are We So Afraid of Creativity?" *Scientific American*, February 26, 2012. <http://blogs.scientificamerican.com/literally-psyched/2012/02/26/why-are-we-so-afraid-of-creativity/> (accessed September 1, 2012).

²⁷ Schreck, 3.

of clergy, she dictated her book, *The Book of Margery Kempe*, which narrates her experiences as a mystic. The book was completed in 1438.

Although these experiences were diligently vetted with priests and even Julian of Norwich, an edited version of the book (a “pamphlet”) reportedly appeared in the 15th century to whitewash anything that might have been questionable. Scholars who read the unedited version after first encountering the edited version were surprised by the differences.²⁸ Editing such as this raises so many questions. Do we edit out of pride? Out of an exaggerated need to impress other people and fit in? Are we hypersensitive about details that don’t seem to be the norm? Is this urge of God or not?

In modern times, it is clear that Catholic editors and publishers are sometimes reluctant to print stories that present anything too real, even if it adds a literary dimension or increases the likelihood that an audience will take interest. For instance, a writer I know described her experiences with infertility, which is known to be a painful experience and can be particularly frustrating for observant Catholics. She painted a scene of her husband being poked, prodded, and humiliated by a doctor. The moral of the story was that they chose to refuse IVF treatment based on their faith, even though their choice was not supported by their doctors. Yet, a Catholic bookstore would not carry the book because of the true-to-life scene of her husband’s office visit. Had she published through a traditional Catholic publisher, the scene probably would have been struck from the manuscript, but she had the luxury of publishing through another avenue. Thankfully, the review section on Amazon.com allows fans to support her work. This brave author managed to skirt Catholic publishers and Catholic bookstores, but think about all of the material that doesn’t get through the censors because of a paranoid fear of offending others.

Sometimes, Catholic publishers and editors may just have a fear of anything cutting edge, and through this fear and perhaps a bit of ignorance, not support new projects. Last year, I attempted to publish a story about the Canonry of St. Leopold with a Catholic newspaper and encountered resistance because although their tradition is ancient, there are not many canons in the United States. From my perspective, the newness factor of canons in this country made the story! However, without substantial evidence demonstrating that ecclesial authorities in this country were cheerleading the efforts of canons in a sustained manner, it was difficult to promote the Canonry’s efforts. Further, the editor did not seem to embrace liturgical renewal, which is a passion of the Canons and the Holy Father. After months of trying to change the story to meet

²⁸ “Margery Kempe,” Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margery_Kempe (accessed September 1, 2012).

the editor's interests, I finally published a two-part interview with the Canons online via two media outlets. It got over one hundred "likes" on Facebook and was viewed countless more times.

Now, the information is out there for any man who is discerning a vocation. Before social media, the editor's word would have been final, or, it could have taken years to find an editor who was supportive. Interestingly, a wise old Carmelite nun I know predicted that it would be hard for me to promote the Canons because their uniqueness could easily be viewed as a threat. Regardless, she encouraged my efforts because she could easily see the significance of their work.

The urge to edit, therefore, can go beyond style and flow, and in those instances, deserves some questioning. Among orthodox Catholic writers, outright dissent is usually not the issue at hand. It's oftentimes about compelling and personal spiritual and experiential details, or a forward-leaning inspiration that needs discussion. A wise sage once said that those who seek truth, seek God, whether they do so knowingly or not. When we can't fully honor the simple truth of a Catholic author's experiences and message, it is possible that we also do not honor God.

It is particularly important to evaluate our editing motives when we call for a "renewal" that is understood to be highly charged by the Holy Spirit. Renewal-based communication is dependent on us allowing spiritual flames of inspiration to survive well-intentioned editing efforts. The St. Catherine of Siena Institute's *Catholic Spiritual Gifts Inventory* lists writing as a charism. We have some writers who prayerfully using writing as a way of expressing God's love and wisdom. Consequently, social media can be an ideal communication medium for God now. Much of the online blogosphere is not edited or only lightly edited, meaning that some of the most fresh and raw faith experiences can get out to people quickly.

Traditional publishing still has value. Much of the value is that it offers some kind of endorsement and professional editorial review. Social media can serve as a launching pad to traditional publishing. A publisher is concerned about staying afloat financially, so they can be persuaded to support causes that have lots of online support.

Clerical Support and Peer Review

A potential downside to social media's free flowing style is the lack of peer review and vetting, which traditional publishing provides. One religious publishing element of Kempe's work that has received a lot of attention was her reliance on clergy for assistance. She would not have been able to complete the

book without their loyal support. She could not write, so they found scribes to help her. And, they wrote notes in the margins of the work once it was completed. Without those supporters, Kempe could have been the same woman with the same experiences, yet been labeled a lunatic and unstable zealot. The clergy were a source of empowerment and validation, but also a form of peer review. Their endorsement guarded her from criticism and allowed her to do the work she felt called to do.

Even now, lay people who write extensively are fortunate if they have a priest to endorse or support their work. Such an ally helps to legitimize their points of view, give them confidence in the competitive publishing world, and perhaps offers some defense against over-zealous editors. A priest's support can represent a first layer of vetting.

Still, some recent publishing faux pas show us that traditional vetting methods are not always foolproof. And, social media can make a serious error even more egregious than in the past. When the *National Catholic Register* recently published an interview with the elderly Fr. Benedict Groeschel of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, the confusing and bizarre comments he made about child molestation immediately hit the secular media. The editor in chief initially apologized, saying that the piece had not gone through their regular editorial process. This would not be surprising – modern Catholic publishing has some “untouchables” or authors who are so wildly successful that nobody dares to edit their work. Yet, questions quickly arose about the condition of Fr. Groeschel, and whether publishing suspect comments from someone in deteriorating health demonstrates journalistic integrity or discernment. Similarly, should his order have permitted the interview if they knew he wasn't his old self for whatever reason? The example showed just how damaging a lapse in peer review, vetting, and judgment can be, and how social media can cause such instances to result in irreparable damage to reputations. Everyone knows that this unfortunate incident will survive as a footnote in some online biographies and summaries of this priest from now on.²⁹

The only saving grace is that social media allows for people to weigh-in and comment on controversies. It may not be equivalent to peer review, but it's something. In the past, the editors were kings and queens, and while people could write letters to the editor, nobody was required to publish them. In a recent blog post, Jennifer Fulwiler writes, “The power of the elite to control

²⁹ John Burger, “Father Benedict Groeschel Reflects on 25 Years of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal,” *National Catholic Register*, August 27, 2012. <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/father-benedict-groeschel-reflects-on-25-years-of-the-franciscan-friars-of/> (accessed September 1, 2012).

information is gone.” She says, “Two decades ago, a news report could say something inaccurate about the Catholic Church, and the average person would never hear the counter-point to balance it. These days, with bloggers and social media users on the case, there is a loud and public backlash to such situations which helps get the word out about inaccurate or unfair reporting.”³⁰ In the case of Fr. Groeschel’s comments, the Catholic public quickly weighed in to question the circumstances surrounding the interview. People who had followed his work for years wanted the secular media to know that something was amiss. In the old days, paper copies of a manuscript with an error, mistake, or other issue could quickly be destroyed. That doesn’t work in cyberspace, but the digital world does offer a forum for immediate public discourse and questioning.

The new information environment reminds us that some forms of vetting are dying slow deaths. Libraries used to play a role in controlling the flow of information once something was published. Librarians assessed whether material would educate their patrons and contribute to the common good. Nowadays, librarians are still charged with making collection decisions based on their budget and clientele, but they do not have the same control they did in the past. Similarly, publishers are still a force, but writers are sometimes choosing to bypass them through self-publishing now.

The new environment is a double-edged sword. The digital world is weakening the editorial review and vetting processes we relied on in the past. Yet, now we have more freedom in publishing, learning, and communication. In my view, the newfound freedom is a breath of fresh air and a critical tool for renewal. It empowers the laity in particular, who can now express their individual charisms to broader audiences with a mouse click. In essence, the information explosion also forces Catholics who want to build a strong faith identity to have an “adult faith,” a term that Diarmuid O’Murchu has popularized in his recent book entitled “Adult Faith.” The speed of communication and information means that they can’t always ask a priest for guidance and expect an instant response. They need to think on their feet and move on from spoon-fed simplicities. Questions are bound to come up though. Established online publications will still have some traditional vetting, but how do we introduce peer review to other corners of the digital world in a way that doesn’t destroy the gift of freedom we now know? Where is balance?

³⁰ Jennifer Fulwiler, “Why the Internet Will Lead to Mass Conversions to Christianity,” Jennifer Fulwiler Blog, entry posted August 29, 2012, <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/jennifer-fulwiler/why-the-internet-will-lead-to-mass-conversions-to-christianity> (accessed September 1, 2012).

Are comment fields on blogs sufficient peer review? If people leave substantial comments that validate a writer's work, it can be peer review. But what about things that really deserve the attention of a professor or theologian? Like Kempe, not every budding mystic and theorist has a formal theology degree and academic circle. Yet, it is abundantly clear that the Holy Spirit will speak to anyone. EWTN has some overburdened Q&A columns, but unless one is ready to publish a book, submit work to an editor, or enrolled in an advanced degree program – quality peer review can be hard to come by.

At minimum, it may be time for a revival of Catholic academic journals, or for a new breed of journals that are not limited to academics. The journals could be online so people could conduct reviews more swiftly than the print world permits. And the journals might be a safer place to experiment with new thoughts than social media, where comment fields can devolve very quickly into ad-hominem attacks.

Our Calling

The world is waiting for us – clergy and laity – to creatively evangelize and renew Catholic thought online. Our churches are not just four walls – we are connected through the Web. The generation of parish boundaries is dissolving – we must expand our horizons to change the world and use our charisms effectively. The digital world, therefore, can challenge us all to think about how to balance our in-person lives with our virtual lives. While Catholic identity, in the past, might have been shaped primarily by family and an ethnic neighborhood, most people nowadays are also shaped by what they learn and experience online.

People are interested in what the Church teaches and what our clergy, speakers, and writers have to say. A primary challenge is to meet those people “where they are at.” Not every spiritual seeker surfing the internet is going to respond favorably to the same things. Success will require continued experimentation, optimism, and a dash of prudence. A wise sense of caution should not turn into fear though. As Pope Benedict XVI said, “Without fear we must set sail on the digital sea...”

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