

'SHARING' THE CATHOLIC FAITH: HOW PRIESTS ESTABLISH/MAINTAIN
RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY ON FACEBOOK

A Dissertation

by

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ABSTRACT

Understanding how religious leaders use the internet to maintain their religious authority has been an area of study in media studies for the past twenty years. Little consensus has been reached as to what religious authority is, in the context of the internet. Nor, has the population of Catholic priests been investigated in light of religious authority on the internet. Therefore, this study seeks to understand strategies used by Catholic priests in the United States on Facebook to establish/maintain their religious authority using Facebook. Data was gathered by survey and in depth interviews with priests who acknowledged using Facebook on a regular basis.

Survey data indicated that priests utilized Facebook in ways that mirrored three parts of their priestly identity. They used it as representatives of the institutional Catholic Church, members of the profession of priests, and as individuals. These three parts of priests' identities led to differing strategies. Being a representative of the institutional Catholic Church included disseminating important Church information and defending doctrinal teachings of the Church. As a member of the profession of priests, they used Facebook to disseminate information about their local Church and build relationships in the professional capacity. As individuals, priests used Facebook to stay in contact with friends and family, sharing life events, using Facebook as a news-aggregate, and as a source of comedic content. It became evident that even the personal ways that priests used Facebook were ways of maintaining religious authority. Contrary to the overt strategies, priests utilized the personal space for covert evangelization.

Since the survey data indicated that their identity was so important on Facebook, interview questioning probed why and how identity construction took place. Interview data indicated that authenticity was of the upmost importance when constructing an identity. Priests had to consider various and sometimes contradicting audiences when posting content on Facebook to represent themselves on Facebook. Additionally, their identities had to indicate that they were made in God's likeness in order to connect their various identities with a sense of religious authority. This led priests to the strategies indicated in survey data, namely, relationship building, evangelizing, and promoting Church-related content in order to establish/maintain religious authority on Facebook.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my children, Dylan, Lily, and Dominic. To accomplish big things requires us to work through difficult issues. Great things are never accomplished easily. I have never been the smartest but I have paid attention to my heart. That has led me to experience and accomplish incredible things. Let this project be an example for you. It began as an idea; I thought and thought and thought until it was clear enough to explain it to others. It took a lot of time and a lot of work. If you listen closely enough, then you will find your truth and that truth will guide you forever. Allow these words of Teilhard de Chardin to be planted in your heart.

Above all, trust in the slow work of God. We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.

We would like to skip the intermediate stages. We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet, it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability - and that it may take a very long time.

And so I think it is with you; your ideas mature gradually - let them grow, let them shape themselves, without undue haste.

Don't try to force them on, as though you could be today what time, (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow.

Only God could say what this new spirit gradually forming in you will be. Give our Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you, and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.

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in positive ways to help the Catholic Church understand her presence in these emerging times and places.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

What if Jesus decided to post The Beatitudes on Facebook rather than speak them to a crowd on the side of a mountain? Would he publish them in a list form on BuzzFeed with GIFs and memes and then link that webpage to his Facebook profile? Perhaps he would publish them as status updates, one each day to allow his Facebook “friends” to start a dialogue or debate about their meaning and practicality, all the while generating more attention and more hits on his Facebook profile. What strategic advantages and disadvantages would Facebook have for Jesus? Putting Jesus in contemporary times and imagining him using Facebook is an interesting thought experiment and it allows us to think about the pragmatism of modern day religious leaders using Facebook in their own ministries to remain legitimate religious figures.

Perhaps, without similar fame and recognition of Jesus, there are a lot of Christian religious leaders utilizing some of these contemporary communication tools to aid their ministries that deserve to be studied. This study looks at one religion’s leaders and their use of Facebook. By studying the way American Catholic priests use Facebook, discoveries can be made about how their strategies to establish/maintain their perception of religious authority online. These strategies could be implicit or explicit. They could be strategies they have attempted to use offline and carried them to Facebook. They may purposefully try things on Facebook to give them a perception of authority and they may give off a perception of authority without even noticing.

In order to unravel how Catholic priests are utilizing Facebook to achieve a perception of authority a thorough investigation of authority and its relationship to power must be discussed. We will look at Lincoln's notion of authority as a reciprocation of power by a leader's followers, followed by Hofstede's power distancing to provide context for differing strategies for establishing power to differing audiences, and finally, Weber's three types of legitimate power. Each of these theories on authority and power provide a framework to discuss differing aspects of authority in this study. Particularly important is the understanding of the way the institutional Catholic Church influences religious authority of priests on Facebook. From the organizational structure to the Church's important documents on social communication, the Church is influential in understanding religious authority of its leaders, the priests. Lastly, a discussion must be had about placing religious authority in the context of the internet. Pauline Cheong has theorized three logics of religious authority online: the logic of disjuncture and displacement, the logic of continuity and complementarity, and the logic of dialectics and paradox. By evaluating Cheong's logics, a better understanding of how priests utilize Facebook to communicate will show a negotiation of power they have offline that is attempted to be brought online.

In order to discover how priests are using Facebook to establish/maintain their perception of religious authority, two stages of data collection were conducted. First, an initial survey was written, disseminated, and analyzed. The fifty-seven responses provided some initial information that proved useful when conducting interviews. The survey provided some initial information about priests' motivations for using Facebook

initially and how it has evolved to how they presently use Facebook. It provided insight on how they construct their identities and how that related to their perception of religious authority on Facebook. Information like this provided direction to probe deeper into priests' motivations and strategies for using the various tools on Facebook and allowed for an interpretive analysis on the negotiation process priests' undertook to achieve a perception of religious authority online.

Aside from a general interest in discovering how and why priests are using Facebook to establish and maintain religious authority on Facebook, this study provides additional data to decipher what religious authority is, especially in the context of the American Catholic priest who participates in that role online. The tension between the hierarchical power structure of the Catholic Church and the seemingly horizontal power structure of the internet proves to be an interesting place to study a perceived paradox. How are priests negotiating this tension to continue to be religious authorities?

Statement of problem

Understanding how authority is established/maintained on the internet remains an important issue to new media scholars because a clear relationship between authorities on the internet is lacking, thus far in scholarship. Some researchers have claimed that new media promote a decentralization of power and undermine established patterns and systems of authority because communication technology has become faster, more adaptable, and ubiquitous, therefore threatening traditional hierarchies of authority already established offline (Dutton, 2009). Other scholars claim that traditional offline

authorities have established a similar authority online (Barzilai-Nahon, 2005). Still others have discovered a negotiation between these two opposing conclusions, leaving authority figures to mediate between the power they are attempting to maintain in the realm of the internet and online forces that are attempting to strip them of that power in some instances (Wheeler, 2012). The range of these three differing conclusions highlights the need for further investigation and discussion about how authority is conveyed online and the implications of these patterns and manifestations for established authorities.

Furthermore, the internet and social network sites are incredibly populated spaces that have connected a substantial amount of the American population. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project (2013), social network sites (SNSs) connect 73 percent of American adults. The prevalence of SNSs implicates them as a substantial cultural artifact where a large majority interacts, relationships form, and various accounts of authority play out. Ellison and boyd (2013) define SNSs as:

A networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-level data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site.

SNSs seem to be a natural place for offline organizations, like the Catholic Church, to populate so as to maintain a simultaneous presence offline and online. It has become increasingly urgent for organizations and their leaders to utilize social media to expand a public presence and remain relevant in the public realm. More than ever, leaders in a place of established power from hierarchical organizations can utilize the capabilities of online social networking to establish and maintain authority in order to mimic an offline authority already established within the confines of the organization's ideology. Yet, communication through SNSs may change the way in which those leaders establish and maintain that authority online. This study explains some of those differences for Catholic priests.

A study of religious authority, as it is established/maintained through social media, will be helpful in order to further explore the relationship between the medium of Facebook and the type of religious authority granted by an influential institution, like the Catholic Church. Considerably more research needs to be conducted on the Catholic Church's authority online to gain a better understanding of how the Church is utilizing SNSs to further its role as a religious authority to over a billion people. To this point, studies on the intersection of online media and the Church include how Catholic dioceses communicate online, in general (Arasa, 2010), and how Catholic religious institutions have adopted the internet to communicate internally and externally (Zyga, 2010). However, no studies have been conducted about how SNSs are used by priests as authority figures of the Church.

The Catholic Church is one of the largest organizations in the world, claiming over one billion members, which accounts for 50 percent of the world's Christians (Pew Research Religion & Public Life Project, December 2011). Its organizational structure is inherently hierarchical with the pope as its head, while cardinals, bishops, and priests serve as the pope's subordinates. Several of the Church's documents and public communications have called for its leadership to become knowledgeable users of new media to further the Church's mission to spread the Gospel by evangelizing. The Church document "Guide to the training of future priests concerning the instruments of social communications" (1986), speaks directly to the role of priests and the growing number of social communication technologies:

Future priests should be trained in the seminary in the correct use of these instruments [including social media]. This provision had a threefold purpose, namely, that the seminarians might impose discipline on their own personal use of the media, that they might be able to train the faithful in their turn to exercise similar self-discipline, and that they might learn how to use the media in their own apostolate (par. 4).

Speaking directly to the uses of SNSs, Pope Benedict XVI's annual World Communications Day message of January 2013 acknowledged the proliferation and importance of social network sites in contemporary life and addressed the challenges SNSs pose on values of veracity, generosity, and authenticity. From the positive

response the Catholic Church has given SNSs and its cultural implications, the study of priests and their use of SNSs to establish/maintain religious authority is important to examine at a time when more of people's time and energy is being placed on SNSs, like Facebook. Religion should not be overlooked.

Rationale for study

This study investigates how and to what extent Catholic priests use Facebook to establish/maintain authority online. Priests are situated within a power structure that makes them subordinate to their local bishops, yet are granted authority by those bishops to lead a group of lay people (unordained members of the Church). Priests are of particular interest because they wield a considerable amount of power within the organization of the Catholic Church. This study examines how priests utilize the functions of Facebook, which some have argued has dispersed power horizontally, to establish and maintain authority as priests within their vertically structured hierarchy. By studying priests, we will discover how priests negotiate these seemingly opposed power dynamics.

Within the context of internet studies of religion, this study looks at how authority is asserted online. Studies to this point vary in their assessments of authority. Some scholars assert that traditional authority is being threatened and systematically decentralized to a more diverse group of people because of the ease of publishing and communicating on the internet (Horsfield, 2012) & (Barker, 2005). Other studies have concluded that traditional authorities who hold power offline have found ways to exert

power online in order to maintain their influence (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai, 2005). Yet, other scholars have noted authority figures within religious organizations must negotiate between the decentralized nature of authority on the internet and protecting authority already established offline in the online realm (Cheong, Huang, and Poon, 2011b). This dissertation positions itself to investigate how Catholic priests establish/maintain authority within these three logics of religious authority online. It will study how priests operate within a social media environment to conduct their ministry online to establish/maintain their authority. Therefore, this study should advance the scholarship of media use by priests of the Catholic Church. It should also build upon the existing literature on the Catholic Church's internet use and broaden the scholarly understanding of religious online authority.

The Catholic Church has had to respond and adapt to the rising numbers of people using social media by dedicating a considerable amount of time and energy to consider the positive and negative consequences for using social media. Over the past several years, the Holy See (the official name given to the governmental institution of the Catholic Church) has continually addressed the growing impact of internet use and the potential societal implications in official documents like "Ethics in Internet" (2002), and "The Church and the Internet" (2002), as well as the Pope's public addresses within the annual World Communications Day celebrations. The Catholic Church has been vocal whenever a new communication technology is developed and adopted. It has responded to the positive and negative aspect of communication technology as it may benefit the Church. It has also been one of the earliest adopters of social media.

Currently, the Pope has a Twitter account and communicates almost daily through the medium. Several Vatican communication services, like Vatican News and Vatican Radio, use Twitter and Facebook to disseminate news, pictures, messages, and other information to followers on Facebook. The Catholic Church has reflected on, commented about, and utilized the newest media tools in order to serve as a model for social media's potential communicative power. As Benedict XVI states in the 47th World Communications Day address (2013), social networks, "when engaged in a wise and balanced way, help to foster forms of dialogue and debate which, if conducted respectfully and with concern for privacy, responsibility and truthfulness, can reinforce the bonds of unity between individuals and effectively promote the harmony of the human family." Such a positive endorsement of social network sites speaks to SNSs place in contemporary society and should encourage priests to utilize social network sites' potential. This study seeks to answer if priests are, in fact, using SNSs like Facebook to foster dialogue and debate to unify the human family, while managing their religious authority on Facebook.

Research question

At this point in time the Vatican has expressed a balanced but optimistic opinion of social media (e.g. "The Church and the Internet"; "Ethics in Internet"; "Social Networks: Portals of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelization"), but it is unknown how priests actually use SNSs in order to manage their religious authority. It is understood that SNSs are an integral part of life for a large majority of the population,

yet there is much to discover about how authoritative roles translate offline to online and how priests perceive their roles on SNSs as priests. Therefore, the principal research question for this study is:

- What intentional or unintentional strategies, if any, do Catholic priests use on Facebook to establish/maintain their perception of religious authority?

This question points to how priests use Facebook in intentional and unintentional ways and seeks to understand how priests build new means of authority, while sustaining authority they already achieved. In order to address this question, four key issues are explored. First, the ways priests consciously use Facebook which reflects their understanding as a religious authority within the Catholic Church as a priest. Second, the inexplicit ways priests present themselves as religious authorities via Facebook through their actions online. Third, their strategies used to maintain or extend their offline priestly roles as religious authority figures. Fourth, priests' strategies that build on the advantages and affordances offered by Facebook that help them assert or establish their religious authority online in unique ways. By addressing these issues and answering the question regarding priests' unique performance of authority on Facebook, to aid new and maintain old paths to authority, a clearer understanding of how priests use Facebook will be available to expound upon the relationship between religious authority and the utilization of SNSs.

Contributions

At this time, internet studies understand authority in several different ways: as structural hierarchies, systems of power, moral authority, and authority of divine nature, for example (Campbell, 2007). However, because of the broad articulation of the concept of authority in relation to media/internet studies, there continues to be difficulty in defining the term authority. Therefore, this study contributes to the understanding and the definition of authority in the specific context of SNSs. More specifically, this study investigates to what extent Catholic priests use Facebook to establish/maintain authority. This study identifies the ways in which Catholic priests utilize SNS's tools to maintain their ministerial role as priests, therefore illustrating concretely how religious authority is established/maintained. The study explores the concept of authority by considering how priests function as religious leaders and how SNSs may affect their role as priests.

As a recognized leader of the Catholic Church, the Catholic priest serves as an important authoritative figure for many members of the Church. The priest is a member of an extreme hierarchy and is granted authority to serve the members of the Catholic Church. Outwardly, the priest symbolizes the hierarchical structure of the Church and its doctrinal beliefs. Likewise, Facebook extends the public perception of the priest as it broadens the network of followers of priests. They are able to connect with more people and potentially have more influence as a priest.

This study also contributes to studies of media, religion and culture by highlighting the specific ways in which religious authority is maintained via SNSs. As discussed above, religious authority has been theorized in three different ways (Cheong,

2013): as a disjuncture from traditional authority, a continuation of authority offline, and a negotiation of authority figures between those who would disrupt traditional power and attempt to establish authority themselves. This study uses Cheong's typology of authority to consider the relationship between Catholic priests and Facebook. This study articulates how Catholic priests' religious authority manifests itself using Facebook and adds to previous research that shows how religious authority of other religions is constructed and maintained within digital culture.

Moving forward, Chapter 2 discusses the literature and theoretical frameworks that help answer the research question. Chapter 3 discusses the research methods used to gather data. Chapter 4 presents the survey data and provides discussion on how priests use Facebook to establish/maintain religious authority on Facebook. Chapter 5 presents and discusses the interview data to answer how priests establish/maintain religious authority on Facebook. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a discussion and conclusion of the findings.

CHAPTER II

FRAMEWORKS: AUTHORITY, NEW MEDIA, AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

This study attempts to identify more clearly how authority and power are utilized by Catholic priests through the mediated environment of Facebook. In order to better understand the strategies of Catholic Priests on Facebook to establish/maintain their authority, the topic of authority with regards to the Catholic Church and media must be situated in a few areas of literature. Much of this discussion of priests' authority on Facebook hinges on a broad understanding of what authority is and how authority is related to power, primarily. First, we will explore several definitions of authority and power to help frame religious authority in the contexts of priests as part of the organizational structure of the Catholic Church and their use of Facebook. Second, authority must be discussed as it has been studied in the fields of internet studies and religion. Third, identity and its relationship with authority are introduced. Finally, the authoritative structure of the Catholic Church is described along with how the Church has responded to the advancement of social media. Overall, this discussion should provide a foundation to present an idea of how Catholic priests in the United States use Facebook to build and maintain religious authority.

The concept of authority in communication studies

Beginning with the premise that priests are public figures who represent the Catholic Church and assume particular authoritative roles through their identity as priest and their communicative practices, an understanding of how authority has been

theorized needs to be discussed. The term authority can often be understood in relationship with power, therefore a discussion of power and power's relationship to authority are relative to this matter. Because power is accepted as endemic to the social condition of human beings, this section will explore the theories of authority and power according to Weber, Lincoln, and Hofstede. Each theorist provides a different and useful aspect of authority that aids in understanding the various ways that priests use Facebook. Therefore, these four theories are used in order to provide a foundation in which to speak on religious authority in particular.

To begin, Weber's categories of legitimate authority: traditional, legal-rational, and charismatic provide three distinctive ways to look at priests' religious authority. Priests' power comes from God and is authorized by the magistrate of the Catholic Church. It is a tradition, that is, time and circumstances have established an authority that priests exercise to this day. The Church has established a legal sense of this same authority through an established Church law called Canon Law. Along with these two types of religious authority, priests can also establish religious authority through their individual charm, courage, wit, or 'it' factor which makes them seemingly natural leaders. Weber's three types of legitimate authority provide three differing ways to establish religious authority of Catholic priests. Next, Lincoln helps explain the reciprocal nature of authority, granting some power to the group of followers and can be useful when considering the horizontal power distribution of the internet that priests have to consider when establishing their religious authority online. In other words, priests must be conscientious of how they communicate online in order to satisfy their

audience in order to maintain favor with said audience. Simply stated, without a congregation the priest cannot be much of an authority. Finally, Hofstede provides an understanding of power distancing that can explain strategies of priests who attempt to connect with their followers by constructing their Facebook identity to coincide with their followers expectations of what a priest should look and act like. Together, these theories of power and authority illustrate a religious authority that is rooted in tradition, law, and the individual ability to gain followers within the technological environment of a social media platform, like Facebook. Furthermore, authority is granted by a group that is being led and is shaped by the cultural context where the priest must assume high or low power distancing to construct an identity suitable for that cultural context. For further explanation we turn to each of each these ideas of authority and power beginning with Max Weber's legitimate authority.

Weber attempts to be precise in his description of the varying types of authority. He provides an explanation for a type of authority he observes as legitimate rule (Bendix, 1977, p. 294-295). He contends that only three categories of legitimation strategies, which he calls 'pure types', are used to rule: traditional authority, legal authority, and charismatic authority. Traditional authority is legitimated because the authority has been normative by a length of unofficial time that makes it right and just. In these cases power is usually assumed by an inheritance or in the case of the priesthood, passed down from a bishop to a priest. Legal authority is based on a system of laws that is enforced through an administrative system and judicial protocol. The administrative system is established by appointments and elections, where the superiors

are subject to limits to their power and a separation of private life and official capacities. Finally, charismatic authority is legitimized not by legal means or tradition but by some sort of leadership qualities found in a person. This person is perceived to have some sort of magical powers, prophesy, or heroism. Subordinates grant him the power to lead because of these unique qualities.

Weber's three types of authority can be used to characterize the ways in which Catholic priests establish their authority and arguably, on social network sites (SNS) like Facebook. As Weber describes authority, priests possess this authority in varying degrees. Within the Catholic Church, the priest has the constitutional right granted by his local bishop to exercise authority over the parish or other ministries put in charge of him as a member of the clergy (Lumen Gentium, 1964). Relatedly, a priest also obtains traditional authority through his membership with the Catholic Church and the Church doctrine which states that the pope is the successor of Saint Peter, who Jesus Christ personally chose to lead the Church, the pope's duty to name each bishop around the world and then those bishop's duty to train and ordain priests for his dioceses.

Charismatic authority seems to be obtained on an individual basis and has more to do with the individual's ability to gain favor of his followers based upon his personality and the perception that his parishioner have of him in order to accept his leadership. As has been stated above, these three types of authority provide a three useful ways to define authority for the purposes of understanding religious authority of Catholic priests.

In this milieu of priests and his followers, where is the power that resides with the latter? Power can also be derived from a group of people and then placed upon an

individual or institution. Lincoln (1994) describes authority as the relationship between one person and his or her subordinates. Reciprocation must be present between one who has power and the subordinates who grant that power. Lincoln explains that authority is not something merely taken but is something that is mutually given (Lincoln, 1994). Lincoln does not suggest that all authority is granted and taken without coercion; in fact, the fear that may motivate subordinates to grant authority is reason enough to grant power. Arguably, contemporary Church functions reciprocally as Lincoln describes; it claims certain authorities but only so far as it is granted by its members. For instance, a priest cannot function in a parish, celebrating sacraments, leading parish councils, and teaching the doctrines of the Church if it is not generally granted to him by the lay people associated with the that parish. Parishioners continually have the agency to travel to another church or not attend at all. Power is tangible in these relational instances, like a parent and child, or a superior and a subordinate.

Along with the reciprocal nature of power, resides cultural norms that are prescribed by a community. Hofstede identifies that there are different types of power at play and addresses the issue of power perception in *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (2010). He theorizes that there is a notion of high power and low power to explain the different “power distances” expected in different cultures. In high power distance cultures, power is to be tangible and visible. Power can be conveyed through a position in society and external items like clothes, cars, homes, etc. Power distancing among members of society are signs of a healthy society. In low power distance cultures, the noticeable signs of power are to be minimized and discouraged.

There is to be a spirit of equality among all members of society. Charles Tidwell summarizes it nicely when he states that in high power distance cultures, “powerful people try to look as powerful as possible.” In low power distance cultures, “powerful people try to look less powerful than they really are” (Crouch, 2013). Depending upon a culture, one will be more conducive than the other. As priests construct their identity on Facebook they will fall somewhere on this spectrum between high power and low power distancing depending upon how they perceive their networked community responding to their constructed identity.

For the purposes of this study, each of these theories complements the others through their differing emphasis on how priests establish/maintain religious authority online. Weber’s categories of legitimate authority provide differing ways that priests can establish their religious authority in the tradition of authority that has grown over time, the legal backing of the institutional Catholic Church, and the individual priests’ ability to use his personality and charm to gain legitimation. Lincoln helps explain the reciprocal nature of authority, granting power to the group of followers such as a priests’ Facebook ‘friends.’ This can be useful when considering the horizontal power distribution of the internet that priests have to consider when establishing their religious authority online. The context of the internet makes anyone with a convincing idea and an audience a potential authority, therefore, priests must be aware of the power that the audience holds to turn away from him and seek someone else to follow. Hofstede provides an understanding of power distancing that can explain strategies of priests who

attempt to connect with their followers by constructing their Facebook identity to coincide with their followers expectations of what a priest should look and act like.

Internet studies and authority

With a working understanding of power and authority, we now turn to how authority is represented, characterized, and practiced specifically to the online experience. Several studies have been conducted in order to better understand the way authority has been practiced and categorized online. Campbell (2007) completed a survey of published research on the topic of authority on the internet and synthesized several emerging themes. Among them were discussions of official organizational structures, a specific role an individual held, the general relationship between authority and power, and finally, the relationship between online and offline texts or information. Although, this extensive list of ways authority is identified online, the varying ideas of authority indicates that the term still demands further study and refinement (Campbell, 2007, p. 1045).

Furthermore, an additional category has emerged in the form of algorithmic authority. Algorithmic authority is “the decision to regard as authoritative an unmanaged process of extracting value from diverse, untrustworthy sources, without any human standing beside the result saying ‘Trust this because you trust me’” (Shirky, 2009). Shirky goes on to describe three characteristics to differentiate between personal and institutional authority. First, it takes information from several sources, which are not vetted for trustworthiness and ignores the need for any human to verify the results of the

algorithmic results. Second, the results of the search are generally good and become viable to users of the information. Third, it describes the psychological phenomenon in society when algorithms become a trusted and commonplace source of information. The logic of Wikipedia is a good example (Shirky, 2009). Shirky's explanation of algorithmic authority plays a role in the discussion on authority because it limits the freedom of internet users. In the name of organization and efficiency, algorithms do not allow everything to be seen when using a search engine or viewing the newsfeed on Facebook and play the part of a gatekeeper deciding what the user should and should not see.

As Campbell (2007) has indicated, people's engagement with the internet has changed the way in which authority is understood. Add the algorithmic logic to the authority on the internet and there becomes a complicated web of characters all providing ways in which authority and power are perceived online. Therefore, a more nuanced understanding of online authority needs to be explored. The ways in which Catholic priests use SNSs in order to establish and/or maintain their perception of religious authority builds upon previous studies that have explored other religion's leader's use of the internet to establish authority. The study of priests' use of Facebook seeks to explain ways in which authority figures perform online in order to better understand the framework of authority and power online.

Religious authority and the internet

This study of priests' use of Facebook situates itself in an already established body of literature on religious authority and the internet. The literature specific to religious authority and the internet can be divided into three logics, according to Pauline Cheong (2013). First, the logic of disjuncture and displacement describes the internet as a place where religious authority and new media provide space for upheaval. Second, the logic of continuity and complementarity describe the internet as a place where offline authority uses the tools of the internet to establish authority online. The third logic of dialectics and paradox illustrates how authority figures struggle to negotiate between the dimensions of new media and the already established elements of authority. This section provides an overview of research that is placed within these three categories of religious authority online and will frame the way religious authority is understood in the context of priests' use of Facebook.

The logic of disjuncture and displacement

One common theme through the literature of religious authority is the inception of changing power figures online. "Technological innovations allow for a wider and more equitable participation of the individual" (Echchaibi, 2011, p. 43) where the traditional authorities of religion are seen as displaced by gatekeepers of new media like webmasters, moderators and forum managers set standards and officiating communication (Campbell, 2012; Campbell, 2010). Because of the changing landscape of authority online, the logic of disjuncture and displacement argues that the internet

allows for more individuals to communicate their own interpretations of an established religion offline. Anderson (1999) considered this a “creolization” of religion.

In the Muslim faith there are different voices coming to the foreground as they gain popularity with their personal testimonies online. Echchaibi (2011) highlighted three such Muslims that have garnered a following by telling their real-life experiences and establishing their grasp of life’s daily pressures. Each Muslim commentator “remind[s] their viewers that they’ve done it all and now they’re back on the right path” (Echchaibi, 2011, p. 35). They gain authority online by giving a testament of the trials and errors each person endures to a wide audience. The internet’s new opportunities to connect with broader audiences have allowed new voices to compete with already established voices and to gather new audiences (Anderson, 2003).

In another instance, the authority figures are not seen at all. For example, a study showed that new religious movements functioned without a recognized central leader or necessarily a traditional institution (O’Leary, 1996). Hence, new media communities are able to exist without the connection to recognized religious institutions offline which have dominated the religious landscape for millennia.

There also seems to be a shift in the way in which the individual approaches types of information on the internet. The individual seems to have taken greater control over what content to consume. There has been a shift from the institutional church as the place holder of theological authority to a privatization of faith. The individual claims the power to decide what content to believe online. However, this content is without authorization from an offline authority and seemingly lacks a gatekeeping function. In a

study of four Muslim websites which provide normative content for Muslim minorities, researchers found that the relationship between global and local Islamic institutions and the content online shaped offline religious manifestations and practices (Sisler, 2011). Specifically, those who subscribed to the website's doctrine were more likely to display a greater propensity for individual faith and emphasized the role of self in matters of faith (Sisler, 2011, p. 1136). The fluidity and diversity of information and the interpretation of that information is a major theme throughout the literature of religious authority.

The internet also allows new voices of authority to emerge by redefining traditional symbols and teachings. Turner (2007) explains how new global informational technologies "expand conventional modes of communication, open up new opportunities for debate and create alternative visions of the global community" (p. 120). Within the Muslim faith, Turner proposes that religious authority could be claimed by anyone because of the democratized nature of modern communication technology. The technology offers easy connection for lay producers to offer interpretation of sacred text and for consumers to consume it. Anderson (1999) posits that the internet provides "a sphere of intermediating people, new interpreters, drawn from these realms and linking them in a new social, public space of alternative voices and authorities" (p. 56). These mediators of authority on the internet alter the past hierarchical structures of previously established religions. For example, Helland (2007) describes the experience of Hindu cyber-pilgrimages to maintain connection to faith and Indian culture while side-stepping the local *puja* wizards, to a degree. Scholz, et al. (2008) illustrates how the more

interactive features of the internet have changed the perceptions of the Muslim faith. In a study of podcasts broadcasted on the web, producers of Muslim content sought to push for a more interactive format which highlighted a diverse message so as to change the public perception of Islam. The producers used the medium of the internet to effectively collaborate and participate with a broader community and subsequently disseminate their message. Their motivation was the perception of their religion stuck in an older generation, unable to communicate with a more global community. Therefore, the producers set about displacing an authority unable to perform in the contemporary culture. Here is an example of a generational difference in the way media is utilized.

The logic of disjuncture and displacement supports the idea that online communication changes the power of authority. Given the different opportunities of information dissemination and gatekeeping, new voices are able to challenge the established authority offline. As the internet's capabilities changed to include more interactive and diverse communication possibilities, the idea that the medium would become a tool for disruption of authority becomes apparent.

The logic of continuity and complementarity

Despite the numerous examples of authority changing because of the internet, the internet can also provide opportunities for offline authorities to maintain some control (Campbell, 2012). The logic of continuity and complementarity (Cheong, 2013, p. 78-82) argues that the internet is mostly used by the established authorities to further perpetuate established offline authority by augmenting the way authority is established

and maintained. Organized religions offline have become more prevalent online because they have noticed some of the advantages of having a presence on the internet. For example, some of the tools on the internet, like text media are similar to offline tools making the shift from analog to digital easier for traditional religious powers because they already possess credibility offline. They have transferred content, like church bulletins, online and authority is already established to the websites because the Church is a trusted institution offline. Traditional religions are using the internet effectively in order to establish a similar authority online that they already possess offline.

To help illustrate, Cheong (2011) highlights how ministry effectiveness depends on a mastery of web-based media. In a study of ministers' relationship to new media, she uncovers a need for pastors to covertly visit chat rooms and survey members' blogs to get a sense of social interaction among younger members. In this way, ministers were able to maintain a level of authority by incorporating this new found expertise. "In acquiring new epistemic functions, legitimacy is reconstituted such that it is not only derived from specialized knowledge, but also on the communicative character of religious authority by reconfiguring the exercise of authority in a sociocultural context" (Cheong, 2011, p. 948). Because the internet is posing challenges to the established religious authorities, especially to communities that claim power over knowledge which is embedded in a hierarchical organizational structure, traditional religious groups have had to redefine their grasps upon authoritative power so as to create updated forms of interaction.

The internet has also allowed for old media to be transposed onto the new media platform. Within the Islamic religion the new media has an important role in the global spread of fundamentalism (Turner, 2007). It seems to accomplish this dissemination by utilizing the traditional modes of recorded sermons and lecture via the internet. Where authorities would have used cassette tapes before, they now use digital recording material that can easily be moved on the internet infrastructure (Scholz et. al, 2008). In a study on Muslim groups, Scholz et. al discovered that the communicative style of the *hutha* dominates the podcast format because it legitimates the religious speech synchronically and diachronically. “This two fold legitimacy is on the one hand, achieved by linking the podcasted sermons via the website’s archive to the sermons of the present *halifa*’s predecessors down to the time of the movement’s founders. On the other hand, the presence of the community’s head is projected into space and turned into a direct experience for the listener by the immediate and unfiltered style of the podcasts” (Scholz et. al, 2008, p. 497). Linking the knowledge of the past to the newest medium caters to the authoritative nature of the medium itself. By merely utilizing the new tools of the internet, credibility and authority is achieved.

Therefore, religious authority is institutionalized by the ways in which religious organizations are using the internet to establish doctrine, disseminate information, and connect with members of their religious communities. In a study of Singapore Christian communities Cheong, Huang, and Poon (2011a) found that in order to combat other types of authorities, religious leaders have begun to act as “strategic arbiters” of information online, re-legitimizing their authority. In a different study of Buddhist

priests, Cheong, Huang, and Poon (2011b) concluded that given the priests' understanding of the spiritual process, it is best if the followers of Buddhism are within spatial proximity of the spiritual leaders. The process requires religious leaders to be arbiters of the faith and the faith requires followers to be physically present for the ritual acts. However, even though the Buddhist priests attempt to maintain authority they understand the need for a presence on the web to remain credible by disseminating information so as to re-localize authority around the knowledge of the priest. Hence, the internet is used to co-opt "followers through norm construction, branding and surveillance" (p. 1176).

Research also suggests that members of religious organizations that do not hold an authoritative office can reiterate and continue to establish the authority of an organization. Cheong, Halavais, and Kwon (2008) studied how the use of blogs offered a way for members of Christian communities to express their faith through the internet. One of the outcomes of this study describes the conservative Catholic movement having a strong voice in the blogosphere. "Several bloggers emphasized their role as 'online scribes' who chronicle their 'spiritual journey via blogging'" (p. 122). This is important because "a significant number of the blogs in the sample engaged this larger conservative Catholic movement, and these sites tended to be more interlinked and engaged in a broader conversation than other blogs" (p. 126). The forum of the internet has provided a mouthpiece to certain followers who feel as though they are called to evangelize in this way. The interactive nature of the internet has given an arena for anyone who cares to speak. This seemingly democratic notion of the internet has

provided a shift in the authority of the Church and speaks to a postmodern culture of diverse realities and practices, even when the participants reestablish the authority of an institution.

A growing body of literature indicates a particular logic of continuity and complementarity of authority in religion. They are “increasingly portrayed as adaptive and as exercising significant control by, for instance, curtailing the negative impact of false and inflammatory interpretations and reclaiming their audience’s respect and trust” (Cheong, 2013 p. 82). Authoritative entities are seemingly using the internet to aid in their control of online, as well as, offline activity.

The logic of dialectics and paradox

Finally, the logic of dialectics and paradox (Cheong 2013 p. 82-84) argues that the ways which authorities navigate their experiences of new digital, mobile, and multi-geo-locational media application are situated in a tension between the construction/maintenance of authority and the patterns of information dissemination which threatens authority. This situation makes the authoritative figures manage the conflicting tensions, role ambiguities, and challenges between participating as a public figure but also as a private citizen.

In the context of internet religion, the conflicting forces of authority, both traditional sources of religious authority and new authority figures, pose a tension as to who remains heard and relevant in the public discourse of faith issues. “The tensions created [online] highlight the fact that the internet represents a sphere for the

renegotiation and canonization of accepted sources of authority as religious web masters, forum moderators, and expert bloggers become framed as sources of religious knowledge and, through this recognition online, acclaim sources of power” (Campbell, 2012, p. 74). A struggle has commenced as to who constitutes a religious authority on the internet.

The logic of dialectics inherently speaks to the frictions between the conflicting spheres of religious thought. Cheong and Poon’s study (2008) describes how Buddhist communities exist in this tension. “The internet augments community building by introducing new communicative forms that both enrich and extend community life, yet increased online associations do not necessarily always contribute to social capital building with dispersed solidarities” (p. 106). They found that the internet complements social capital by enhancing the communal elements already established in the religious organizations. The internet also transforms social capital by positively influencing new forms of communication between religious leaders and members and the organization of activities. However, it creates perverse relationships in the sense that it decreases the monopoly of social control on religious knowledge, but serves as a poor instrument to establish substantial relationships. Barker (2005) marks similar tension in her study of Muslim integration of rituals on the internet. “Technologies are not only passive transmitters or neutral environments for the practices of human actors but filter, colour, and form human practices in diverging ways” (p. 1198). On one hand, online environments can influence an established authority and on the other hand, the established authority already has a set of agreed upon social guidelines which are moved

from the offline realm to the online with mixed results. These social guidelines only need to be recast in order to fit within the new cultural and media ecology (Sisler, 2011). In a sense, the religious authorities work with the shifting media of the internet by understanding its strength in dissemination of information but its weakness in developing a deep interpersonal connection with followers.

Tensions also manifest around content which is counter to a religion's moral code. On the one hand, the internet can be understood as an incredible force to disseminate information and on the other hand, when content is connected to a specific religion, someone has to be accountable for what is produced on their sites. Within the Jewish faith, there is much division regarding the role of the internet. "This is because it is a technological medium that easily facilitates the transgression of traditions and authority structures in community" (Campbell, 2011, p. 378). It becomes important how issues of religious authority are construed on the internet because there is a degree of distrust of traditional authorities. Emerging authorities also deal with similar complexities when disseminating content. An Orthodox Jewish online forum goes through a highly vetted process when selecting members for their forums. Not only are members questioned about their orthodoxy but they also must be affiliated with a recognized offline community in order to be legitimized in the eyes of the forum's authorities. The result is a paradox of anonymity and freedom from control from any particular rabbi, and the added responsibility to demonstrate that they honor their particular religious heritage (Campbell and Golland, 2011, p. 715-717).

Cheong's third logic speaks directly to the Catholic Church's ability to maintain authority through contemporary social media. The Church resides within the tension of the vertical authority that is a hierarchical structure of the Church and the horizontal (or flattened) patterns of information dissemination afforded by the internet. Historically, the Catholic Church has labored to control media (Eisenstein 1980; Loach 1986) and I argue that SNSs are no different in that regard but may pose different challenges than some other communication technologies.

To illustrate, Campbell (2012) describes the Catholic Church's adoption of YouTube in this tension. Indeed, the Church sought to adopt this medium to aid the mission of spreading Church teachings but refused to subject themselves to the interactive capabilities of the technologies. Therefore, they negotiated with YouTube to have its ranking function and comment section disabled. "This adoption mirrors the Catholic Church's tradition of embracing new forms of media for religious purposes, though not without concern and thoughtful reflection about its potential impact on society" (Campbell, 2012, p. 92). The Catholic Church has traditionally established councils to help reflect on the theological implications of communication technology. It seems as though the Church feels strongly enough to dedicate much time and effort to thinking through the great many ramifications that social media offers and the YouTube example illustrates the tension which the Church understands and uses media. The tools of social media can be used to further the Catholic mission but in SNSs that message may be difficult to control.

Research seems to be shifting focus from a competing dichotomy of new authority online and old authority from establish institutions offline to a more nuanced understanding that both can exist and need to negotiate authority in the same environment. Specific to this project, Catholic priests must negotiate their religious authority in a newer medium of SNSs to continue to have a degree of power in the Catholic Church. Priests' participation online suggests that Cheong's third logic of religious authority online is a more nuanced way of considering religious leaders use of Facebook. Priests have to negotiate between the paradoxes of being representative leaders of a vertical power structure of the Catholic Church and participate in the more horizontal power structure of the internet. They also have to negotiate their network of followers who were mostly confined to a parish to potentially anyone in the world. These examples illustrate that Cheong's logic of continuity is not going to fully explain how priests establish and/or maintain their perception of religious authority on Facebook. There are adaptation and concessions that priests will have to make in order to make Facebook a viable place to serve as religious leaders.

Identity on social network sites and its relationship to religious authority

The introduction of SNSs in the mid-2000s saw a shift from internet users being consumers to now also being producers. They were able to participate on SNSs by constructing their own identities blurring the lines between the offline and online context and practices (Lövheim, 2013). Facebook in particular provides an opportunity for users to participate in self-presentation practices. boyd's analysis of teenagers use of SNSs

(2007) describes a how in an offline situation “the body serves as a site of identity performance. In conveying who we are to other people, we use our bodies to project information about ourselves. This is done through movement, clothes, speech, and facial expressions” (p. 11). When the body is mediated, however, people manage these processes differently because the skills necessary to interpret communicative situations are different. Borrowing from Jenny Sundén (2003), boyd argues that people using SNSs “must learn how to write themselves into being” (p. 12, 2007) by utilizing the tools of text, images, audio, and video. People are then able to more carefully choose information to put forward, therefore attempting to eliminate unwanted reactions that occur with offline communication. However, boyd argues that “these digital bodies are fundamentally coarser, making it far easier to misinterpret what someone is expressing” (p. 12, 2007).

For religious leaders, “writing themselves into being” is a practice that is analyzed and discussed in relationship to religious authority. Lövheim (2013) concludes by indicating that the project of identity construction is not all that different online than it is offline. “Religious identities in contemporary society are performed and mediated;” (Giddens, 1991; Ammerman, 2003) “in a different way from previous societies, they call for constant revision and continuous performance in known and unknown social settings, of which some are digital and other are physically located” (p. 52). For Catholic priests who use Facebook, the construction of a religious identity is on the one hand inherent to their personal identity and on the other hand a clear indication of their profession; we must consider their own agency to construct their identity on Facebook but also be

attentive to how they construct by considering their audiences. The strategies they have in constructing their religious identities may have implications on how their religious authority is manifest.

Above authority was said to be the enactment of a perceived sense of power that is legitimated from legality, tradition, and charisma while also being granted and negotiated by the expectations of followers. On Facebook, the individual priest is responsible to constructing their identity to coincide with the legal, traditional, and charismatic legitimacy. By identifying as having an affiliation with the Catholic Church by donning priestly attire or placing the title of Father as part of a profile name they project authority through their choice of identification construction. Likewise, if they choose to put elements of life outside of ministerial duties that are projected to be more professional, then priests are choosing a construction of an identity that they hope will attract more followers, furthering the evangelical effort of the priest.

The role of authority in the Catholic Church's use of media

The way the Catholic Church handles media is influenced by a culture which can be seen in its organizational structure. The most important content is directly related to who says it. For instance, if the pope provides commentary on an issue then that has much more weight than if a priest says something. Since Constantine declared Christianity to be the official religion of the Roman Empire, granting unprecedented authority to the Church and to its leaders, the Catholic Church has operated from a top down manner and this is reflected in the way media has been treated. Therefore, a

description of the Church's structure is needed, followed by a detailed overview of the Catholic Church's relationship to media in its documents and the ways media may potentially impact the idea of authority of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church's authoritative structure

The worldwide Catholic Church is organized as a hierarchy, that is to say, an organizational system which functions with people and groups ranked one above the other according to the amount of authority it is given. The Church is led by the pope who presides over the entire Church and leads from central governing location of the Vatican (Reese, 1996). The Holy See, the name of the Catholic Church recognized by the United Nations, oversees the global Church which is sectioned into dioceses, much like the United States is divided into states. In addition to leading his fellow bishops, the pope oversees a range of departments which is called the Roman Curia and is considered the central governing body of the Vatican. The Curia addresses the needs of the Church members and their leadership such as spiritual guidance, administrative direction, or humanitarian aid.

The Roman Curia offices are also organized hierarchically. Pontifical Congregations are considered the highest rank, followed by Pontifical Councils and then Pontifical Commissions. There are nine top-level Congregations. Some of the most important and productive include Doctrine of the Faith which is responsible for articulating the tenets of Catholicism; Causes of Saints which investigates and determines the legitimacy of sainthood of deceased people; Divine Worship and the

Discipline of the Sacraments which oversees the rubrics for liturgies; and finally, the Congregation of Bishops and the Congregation for Clergy which oversees the responsibilities for the ministry and life of bishops, priests and deacons.

Beneath the Congregations are eleven “Pontifical Councils” which include a Council for Laity which addresses the needs of the un-ordained members of the Church (the laity); Council for Christian Unity which seeks ways to unite the different Christian faiths; the Council for the Family, Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant which oversees the needs of migrants and refugees around the world; Council for Culture which addresses ways in which to dialogue with general cultural characteristics that are counter to the Catholic faith; and the Council for Social Communication which is accountable for responding to the emerging communication trends of the world. The latter will be discussed at greater length because they directly speak to the needs and responsibilities of Church leadership to utilize social communication to aid in ministerial duties of Church as a whole and specifically, clergy for the sake of this project.

Beneath the Councils are seven “Pontifical Commissions” which include the Theological Commission and Biblical Commission which oversee matters of theological and biblical issues, the Commission for Sacred Archeology, the Commission for Latin America which concerns itself with the general wellbeing and growth of the Church in Latin America, *Ecclesia Dei* which seeks to keep united a group of dissenters after the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s, and the Commission for the Catechism of the Catholic Church which oversees the promotion of the central tenets of the Catholic faith as written in the Catechism. All of the Congregations, Councils, and Commissions of the

Roman Curia serve as the central government of the Roman Catholic Church. This hierarchy depicts the level of importance regarding these interests and needs of the Church. For this discussion it should be noted that the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (PCSC) sits in a place of relative importance. It is not at the height of a “Congregation” and not as low as a “Pontifical Commission.” It sits at a level of moderate importance given its substantial status and specific job to address the ever expanding role of social communication of the Church in the world. As for all Congregations, Councils, and Commissions, the Council for Social Communication’s relevance greatly depends upon the sitting pope and the pope’s comprehension of social communication’s role in the mission of the Catholic Church in the world. At this point, it is important to understand the governing structure of the Catholic Church, how the hierarchy of Church understands each of these office’s role within the governance of the Church, and where the PCSC’s place of importance within these offices.

Papal roles

As the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, the pope’s time is greatly divided between numerous items. He serves as the head of the Roman diocese where 2.6 million Catholics reside, the sovereign head of state of Vatican City, and perhaps most importantly, he serves as the head of the College of Bishops (Reese, 1996). This latter role is a delicate balancing act between the pope’s universal jurisdiction and allowing the local bishops around the world to autonomously run their own diocese. The Church has,

taught that the bishops are responsible not simply for their dioceses, but that as a college they have a role in the governance of the universal church. On the other hand, the council stressed that the pope is the head of the college of bishops, which cannot act without his approval. Thus it tried to find a middle ground by stressing both collegiality and papal primacy. Collegiality is important, but the pope has the last word and can often act on his own (Reese, 1996, p. 24).

The two entities of the College of Bishops and the papal office make up the supreme authority of the worldwide Church but because the College of Bishops rarely meets the pope is left in Rome to run the Catholic Church with the assistance of the Roman Curia.

The Roman Curia runs the day-to-day operations of the Church handling various duties that include marriage annulments, refugee services, liturgical worship, and social media, which will be discussed in detail later. Roman Curia runs as an ad hoc bureaucracy, addressing worldwide events as they happen. The pope's agenda is dictated by the importance of an event either by the context of the event or the aspirations of the sitting pope. For example, in response to the recent typhoon in the Philippines, Pope Francis gave a public address that expressed his closeness to those who were affected by the typhoon and asked for prayers for the victims ("Pope expresses closeness to typhoon victims," 2013). Obviously, this event was not scheduled and replaced the time of some other event to mention. Similarly, the role of the pope over these offices greatly depends upon the leadership in charge; the pope's goals will change how he will work with the offices of the Roman Curia depending on how he interprets the needs of society.

Specifically regarding the Pontifical Council for Social Communication (PCSC), the Church has dedicated a relatively large amount of time and effort addressing the impacts of media. Since the establishment of the PCSC in 1964, various popes have approved eleven documents on communication (Soukup, 2005), which is a substantial number considering the midlevel organizational status of the PCSC. Plus, the pope celebrates a World Communications Day each year, which highlights a specific communication need in the world.

Most recently, Pope Benedict XVI's 2013 World Communications Day address spoke directly about social network sites. He states:

Believers are increasingly aware that, unless the Good News is made known also in the digital world, it may be absent in the experience of many people for whom this existential space is important. The digital environment is not a parallel or purely virtual world, but is a part of the daily experience of many people. Social networks are the result of human interaction, but for their part they also reshape the dynamics of communication which build relationships: a considered understanding of this environment is therefore the prerequisite for a significant presence there (2013, par. 5).

Social media poses a challenge to inclusivity and community, creating separate classes of those who have access to social media and those who do not. This simply serves as an example of the type of attention social media is garnering from the highest office of the

church. The office of the pope has dedicated considerable time to address the role of social communications in society and the Church and even participate in social media with his Twitter account.

The role of the pope is worth mentioning in this context because of his stature on the geopolitical landscape and the amount of authority he wields for many priests. It is important to understand the pope's role as the head of the Catholic Church and as he is related to the numerous Congregations, Councils, and Commissions. It is also important to understand the pope as the person who sets the pastoral agenda for priests all around the world through the local bishops. For instance, Pope Francis in recent months has publicly modeled a simplicity that he wants priests to follow. It really is the priest that has the most interaction with the members of the Catholic Church and is the focus of this study but hundreds of millions of people keep a watchful eye to see what the pope is doing and what he is saying. Beginning with the pope, the authority trickles down to the priests where they are in charge of leading their congregations on daily basis.

The priest's role

The role of priests is defined in the Church document *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (1965) as:

a special grace to be ministers of Christ among the people. They perform the sacred duty of preaching the Gospel, so that the offering of the people can be made acceptable and sanctified by the Holy Spirit (par. 2).

In general, priests function as communicators of the Catholic faith to a smaller group than the pope by comparison, typically to a parish community. It is assumed by the Church that “The people of God are joined together primarily by the word of the living God” (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 1965, par. 2), which is taught by priests, locally. Therefore, as a leader of the people of the Church the responsibility of priests is to communicate the messages of the Catholic Church. What separates priests from laity is the belief that priests have been called by God to be special sharers of God’s work in the world to administer the sacraments and dedicate their lives to lead people according to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Therefore, by means of the hierarchical structure their function is seen as leaders to the laity. As representations of “Christ as Teacher,” priests are educators of the faith and have a duty and obligation to lead the followers of that faith according to the direction of their local bishops and the pope.

Priests are asked to utilize any instrument necessary to lead and instruct the faithful, including SNSs. The Church understands that social communication has become a profound influence on nearly every aspect of modern life. Likewise, the Church recognizes that many teachings and beliefs have manifested themselves against the Church’s teaching authority. It has become the responsibility of priests to counter these alternative teachings by participating in social communication and being present to the world through all media available (*Guide to the Training of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communication*, 1986).

The Catholic Church, in general, and priests in particular have to contend with many issues concerning the media. Because humanity has directly been responsible for

the creation of the technology, priests are asked to unpack the values attached communication technology. For instance, one observation is that media has an ability to help “bring about revolutionary changes in commerce, education, politics, journalism, the relationship of nation to nation and culture to culture – changes not just in how people communicate but in how they understand their lives” (The Church and Internet, 2002, par. 2). Therefore, one job of priests is to educate the faithful about social communication technology and how it can be utilized to further the mission of the Catholic Church. Seen as models of the Catholic faith, this role as educator indicates the level of influence that an individual priest can have on the people that he leads. In order to aid priests, the Church has created the Pontifical Council for Social Communication. This Council is responsible for the official comprehension and utilization of communication platforms. It, in a sense, is the lead communicator on all matters of communication.

The Catholic Church and media

The Church created the Pontifical Council for Social Communication (PCSC) to address the issues of communication in society after the Second Vatican Council. The Second Vatican Council was a worldwide meeting of church leaders from 1962 to 1965. This meeting served to orient the Church in modern times which included contemporary issues regarding communication.

In *Inter Mirifica* (the Church’s decree on communication during the Second Vatican Council), “the Council acknowledges the ongoing importance of mass

communication in the contemporary world and identifies several thematic areas: the right to information; the relationship between the rights of art and moral demands; public opinion; and the uses of the mass media in civil society and by the Church” (Soukup, 2005, p. 236). In order to address these broad and important topics the Council established the PCSC. The PCSC was then charged with establishing a direction for pastoral instruction regarding the uses of social communication.

The PCSC’s document *Communio et Progressio* (CP) provided instruction for bishops and priests regarding the media and became the principal position of the Catholic Church’s use of media. CP laid out for the entire world how the media was to be understood and used for purposes of ministering to believers and evangelizing to non-believers. Principally, it is grounded in the belief that “the Church sees these media as ‘gifts of God’ which, in accordance with his providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with his plan for salvation” (*Communio et Progressio*, par. 2). In short, the theme of the entire document is that “communication exists for increasing human communion, unity, and progress” (Soukup, 2005, p. 236). This is illustrated throughout the document as it claims Jesus Christ, “as the only mediator between the Father and mankind He [Jesus] made peace between God and man and laid the foundations of unity among men themselves” (CP, 1971, par. 10). Communication technology is understood as a progressive tool to continue to spread Jesus’s message as proclaimed in Christian scripture. CP continues in the second part to highlight the ways in which communication technology aids human progress in the expression of public opinion, access to information, the continuation and proliferation of

education, as a form of artistic expression, and the importance of honest advertising. All this can only be possible if conditions of proper use of social communication are applied.

The second chapter is dedicated to the ways in which proper training and responsibilities for both the senders and receivers of messages are to be conducted. Also, this chapter lays out the ways in which groups are to cooperate with one another. Both laity and authorities have responsibilities concerning social communication. “These authorities have the essential duty of maintaining freedom of speech and of seeing that the right conditions exist for it...It also requires citizens exercise responsibility and self-control both as communicators and recipients” (CP, 1971, par. 84-85). It also addresses the needs for nations to be responsible stewards of communication capabilities. Nations should continue to establish communication technology for their citizens and those who are more established should aid other nations who are lagging behind.

The third and final part of the document specifically illustrates how members of the Catholic Church can responsibly utilize these “marvelous technical inventions” (Inter Mirifica, par. 1). CP outlines how each member of the Church should look to the spiritual foundations of the Church’s teachings to guide their use of social communication. “The Church considers it to be one of her most urgent tasks to provide the means for training the recipients in Christian principles [regarding social communication technology]. This is also a service to social communications. The well-trained recipient will be able to take part in the dialogue promoted by the media and will demand high quality in communications” (CP, 1971, par. 107). This then leads into sections on how Catholics can better dialogue with the world to better unify all humanity

through the use of the printed word, cinema, radio and television, and the theatre. Finally, CP specifies exactly how important the possession of proper communication technology is for the Church globally and locally. It is equally important to be organized with professional personnel so that the Church can dialogue with society properly.

To synthesize this document, CP illustrates the particular importance of social communication in the world because the Catholic theological worldview stresses three foci of theology regarding social communication: communion, sacramentality, and mediation (Soukup, 2005). Hence, the Church claims that God,

Incessantly communicates his gifts to men and women, the object of his particular solicitude and love...in order that his image in his human creatures might increasingly reflect the divine perfection, he has willed to associate them in his own work, making them, in their turn, messengers and dispensers of the same gifts to their brothers and sisters to all humanity (*Guide to the Training of Future Priests Concerning the Instruments of Social Communication*, 1986).

In other words, the Church assumes that God provides humans the ability to share in God's plan to love through the gift of communication. As a gift from God, media then serves a major role in the mission of the Church. From this assumption, and as seen from the documents of the Second Vatican Council, great responsibility has been granted to Councils and Commissions in charge of aspects of communication, particularly the PCSC. It was created to be an institution that remains in conversation with the rapid

development of mass media. The Pontifical Council of Social Communication states that, “Communication is more than the expression of ideas and the indication of emotion. At its most profound level it is the giving of self in love” (CP, 1971, par. 11). The Catholic Church understands that all tools of communication have a role in the development of humanity. From the pope to ordinary priests to the laity, all have a significant role in being present in these spaces where people communicate in order to promote unity and progress just as the Church calls its members to do in the offline realm. CP provided the groundwork for the Church to engage media and the template for future documents, including *Aetatis Novae* and *The Church and the Internet*.

The Catholic Church and new media

The Church’s rhetoric on new media in particular is quite optimistic. Pope John Paul II (2005) states “from the beginning of my ministry as Pastor of the Universal Church, I have wished to express to the entire world ‘Do not be afraid!’ Do not be afraid of new technologies! These rank ‘among the marvelous things’ – *inter mirifica* – which God has placed at our disposal to discover, to use and to make known the truth, also the truth about our dignity and about our destiny as his children.” Beginning with the 36th World Communications Day (2002), Pope John Paul II addresses the internet directly. He likens the internet to the Roman forum where there was openness to politics and business. With that openness came great opportunity but also many dangers. To begin, Pope John Paul II optimistically states, “Above all, by providing information and stirring interest it makes possible an initial encounter with the Christian message, especially

among the young who increasingly turn to the world of cyberspace as a window on the world. It is important, therefore, that the Christian community think of very practical ways of helping those who first make contact through the Internet to move from the virtual world of cyberspace to the real world of Christian community” (Pope John Paul II, 2002, pt. 3.). In this sense the pope illustrates how the internet can be a gateway for people to discover Catholicism. He also points out the internet can provide a kind of follow-up that evangelization requires in order to continue catechetical lessons and continued instruction. Furthermore, the internet can provide a nearly endless supply of contacts in order to further evangelize.

Pope John Paul II also provides negative aspects of the internet. The information is a great source of knowledge but much of that knowledge is without value, the Pope claims in the 36th World Communications Day address. The internet also redefines a person’s sense of time and space and it brings into question whether or not an individual is taking the time to reflect on what information the internet is providing. This fleeting manner in which information is consumed “favours a relativistic way of thinking and sometimes feed the flight from personal responsibility and commitment” (Pope John Paul II, 2002, pt. 4). Finally, Pope John Paul II addresses the widening information gap in the persistent age of globalization. He points out that it will be important to continue to provide developing countries with the infrastructure to maintain a place in the global marketplace.

Not until the 2009 World Communications Day does the Pope address new media again. Pope Benedict XVI describes how new communication technologies must

be used “to promote human understanding and solidarity” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009). He talks about the numerous things the internet and social media have provided for humanity, namely, at the heart of new media’s popularity is the basic human need for relationships. Love is at the center of the immediate success of the internet. Also, the internet has provided a dialogue among people across countries and cultures. People are able to share their values and cultures with others in different places in the world. Friendship, too, has also become a more prominent topic in this age of new media. Networks of friends now have the ability to do incredible acts of justice in the name of peace and human solidarity. Pope Benedict XVI then urges the readers to secure these networks of people so that the powers they possess will not be lost. And like his predecessor, John Paul II, Benedict XVI calls for the dispersion of new media tools around the world so that all may be a part of the opportunities afforded by the internet. Pope Benedict XVI concludes his World Communications Day address with an appeal to the younger generation, who is more adapted to the digital means of communication, to use the tools of the internet to evangelize and spread the Gospel to the “digital continent.”

Pope Benedict XVI also argues that priests’ use of new media is terribly important. “As new technologies create deeper forms of relationship across greater distances, they [priests] are called to respond pastorally by putting the media ever more effectively at the service of the Word” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2010). First, this requires the proper training in seminary to be able to use the resources of new communications tools to minister as leaders of a community. Then, a priest can move out into the digital

realm and live out his priestly life just as he would offline. However, the pope advises, “priests present in the world of digital communications should be less notable for their media savvy than for their priestly heart, their closeness to Christ” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2010). There are numerous potentials for new and prosperous pastoral possibilities so long as the practices of digital communication are rooted in prayer.

Aside from the intriguing possibilities of the internet and its transferring of information, the internet holds a nefarious characteristic. One’s identity can easily be masked and one can communicate to others under false pretenses. The pope warns that this is no way for a Christian to behave online. “It follows that there exists a Christian way of being present in the digital world: this takes the form of a communication which is honest and open, responsible and respectful of others” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2011). The pope then implores Christians to responsibly use the tools of digital communication and remember that the human desires for relationships, communion and meaning are reflected in social networks is first known in Jesus Christ.

Pope Benedict XVI also provides special attention to the type of commitment that participating in social networking sites takes. “People are engaged in building relationships and making friends, in looking for answers to their questions and being entertained, but also in finding intellectual stimulation and sharing knowledge and know-how” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2013). All of these aspects of social network sites pose challenges when people want to engage in authenticity and inclusiveness. Like the other tools of new media, the pope identifies many positives with social network site. They can be places where believers can express their hope and joy, namely to evangelize

about a “faith in the merciful and loving God revealed in Christ Jesus” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2013). The pope also identifies social network sites as a developmental tool to the human person. They can connect people who share the Christian faith and may be isolated from a physical faith community with likeminded believers and give the isolated person an outlet to feel the social support of the Church. The internet and in particular SNSs can be a complicated and imposing environment. Church documents and remarks from the pope describe numerous positives and negatives of new media communication tools. There are a great deal of possibilities regarding evangelization, catechesis, education, dissemination of information and news, apologetics, administrative works, and some forms of pastoral counseling and spiritual direction. The internet can serve as a complement to the interpersonal activities of liturgy and proclamation of the gospel, especially to the youth, home-bound, and people living in remote parts of the world. There is also potential good of two-way communication and the changing administrative styles from top-down to a more horizontal power structure (The Church and Internet). Education and training pose a positive opportunity for the Church. On a pastoral level, the Church argues that there should be programs teaching media education, as well as, ongoing training for priests, seminarians, and religious.

There are also many challenges presented, namely that there are a number of problematic groups that have outwardly expressed hatred towards the institution of the Catholic Church. There are several websites affiliated with the Catholic Church but can trace no authority to a Catholic institution. Do they have authority? Simply put, yes they do if people believe what they read on their websites. This causes confusion among

internet users. There is also the consumerist nature of the internet that could become prolific in matters of faith. Just like shopping for clothes, a person might pick and choose aspects of different religions to practice while browsing the internet. The document then concludes with a list of recommendations for Church leaders, pastoral personnel, educators, parents, children, and all people of good will.

Summary

To summarize, in order to uncover some of the strategies that American Catholic priests implement to build and maintain their perception of religious authority we must first understand that authority, in light of Weber, Lincoln, and Hofstede, is the enactment of a perceived sense of power that is legitimated from legality, tradition, and charisma while also being granted and negotiated by the expectations of followers. Relatedly, this study seeks to understand how it is related to the type of authority that is granted to priests by the institutional Catholic Church. Also, it seeks to discover if we can we ascertain a more nuanced way of understanding religious authority on the internet by situating this study in Cheong's logic of dialogical and paradox. This study of priests and their use of Facebook is ripe to uncover some considerations they must keep in mind to establish/maintain their perception of religious authority, particularly with regard to identity construction and its relationship to building/maintain religious authority. These questions guide an analysis of priests' use of Facebook.

Pope Benedict's message on the 47th World Communications Day, regarding the internet and SNS's, gives a glimpse of the internet's progression in the modern age of

ministry. “These spaces, when engaged in a wise and balanced way, help to foster forms of dialogue and debate which, if conducted respectfully and with concern for privacy, responsibility and truthfulness, can reinforce the bonds of unity between individuals and effectively promote the harmony of the human family. The exchange of information can become true communication, links ripen into friendships, and connections facilitate communion.” The internet is understood to be a place to share knowledge so as to develop relationships and intimacy. The literature explored in this chapter provides a framework to be able to answer whether or not priests are maintaining their perception of religious authority.

Religious authority in this context is understood as the ability to enact power in the role of priest, granted by the institutional Catholic Church, in order to establish communion with their network of followers. Communion, in this context, is the religious understanding of togetherness between the priest and his followers through a common believe in Jesus Christ. Power is used in the context to evangelize and lead people to a fuller understanding of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the Catholic faith, not to lord over. A priest is many things; he is an individual who has agency, a member of a community, a representative of the institutional Church. He must hold all these in context when discerning how he utilizes Facebook. Furthermore, the title of priest incorporates more than just a professional label; it is an ontological sense of being that is not easily distinguished from the personhood of the individual. Therefore, the priests’ construction of the identity on Facebook has consequences on how religious authority is established and maintained on Facebook. The title and role of priest is also linked to the

hierarchical Church, which has Jesus Christ as its head who ordained the Apostle Peter as the first pope and has had an unbroken chain of succession ever since. The pope is responsible for leading the worldwide community of bishops, and the bishops ordain the priests. This illustrates that religious authority is not only related to what priests do on Facebook but also to an institution with an overtly divine link granting power.

Communio et Progressio prescribes how priests should use Facebook in order to bring people together. It highlights the ways contemporary communication tools have the ability to bring the world into communion, as brothers and sisters in Christ, and that priests should be at the forefront of utilizing it for this purpose. This study seeks to understand how exactly American Catholic priests utilize Facebook for the purposes guided by the Church documents on the matter. Through the use of survey and interviews with Catholic priests, a better understanding of how they strategically use Facebook to establish and/or maintain their perception of religious authority will be discovered and compared to what the Church has determined to be a constructive way to utilize the functions of SNSs, like Facebook.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In order to discover how priests' establish/maintain perceptions of religious authority on Facebook, methods of survey and respondent interviews were devised to provide a quantitative and qualitative data set. Studies using mixed methods, as illustrated by Lindlof and Taylor (2011, p. 275), describe survey and interviews conducted in order for the interviewees to expound upon their survey answers. The result was a rich data set that achieved great depth and breadth as to how priests perceived their religious authority being conducted on Facebook. By asking priests about their general uses on Facebook, like how Facebook's chat feature is used for ministerial purposes, what types of photos they post, examples of recently posted status updates, and their opinions on how Facebook can be utilized as priests uncovers their methods of establishing and maintaining religious authority on the social network site (SNS). This chapter will discuss the field and participants of the study, provide a rationale for the methods, survey and respondent interviews, and how these two data sets complement one another in order to provide a thick description of the ways Catholic priests use Facebook to establish and/or maintain religious authority. Finally, in order to explain the values in interpreting parts of the survey that asked for open-ended responses and the word documents produced from the transcribed interviews, Grounded Theory will be discussed.

Approaching the field

The field is defined broadly not by a geographical location or physical space (i.e. a living room or city) but by a media-sphere (boyd, 2009). The media-sphere is then dictated by how the participants used the social network site, Facebook, to connect with a community that shared that same “space” of the media-sphere. In other words, it is not necessary to share the same physical space with the participants to define the field as previously understood in academic research. In the case of this study, the field merely asks that research be conducted within the realm of Facebook.

The field itself is a collection of participants that happen to share the role of priest and utilize Facebook for personal and/or professional use. For the most part, I consider myself an insider conducting research within a setting and with a population about which I know. First, as a member of the Facebook community and environment, I know a great deal about how the social network site works and about the logics governing many of the elements of the SNS. As part of my environment I am “friends” with many priests on Facebook and follow a few well-known priests who have their own public pages. The connections with priests on Facebook led to my inquiry of how priests use Facebook in a professional manner.

From a religious point of view, my personal experience as a Jesuit Scholastic, studying for the priesthood, afforded me an insider’s perspective on the Catholic Church and priests’ training. However, I lacked the obvious experience of being an actual ordained priest. Therefore, Catholic perceptions of social media required that actual

priests be asked about their use of Facebook to better understand how the views of the Catholic hierarchy were being implemented in the field.

There is a wide spectrum of participation on Facebook by priests. On one side of the spectrum, priests have only a few “friends,” to use Facebook’s term, in a semi-private venue. On the other side, a few priests have public pages that allow Facebook users to “like” them and observe and interact with the priest in a much more public context. This broad spectrum allowed for a breadth of fieldwork in which to question priests’ role and their perceptions of Facebook to implement their authority as Catholic priests. Responses and understandings emerged from the perceptions of authority priests portrayed on Facebook given their participation and popularity on the social network site.

The field provided the combination of survey data and respondent interviews to produce a collection of concepts which are theoretically related. The survey provided a set of primarily quantitative data but also provided extended answers to open-ended questions which were coded and grouped in themes of personal, professional, and institutional content and context. The respondent interviews emerged from of the survey and provided a dataset focused on a few priests and their ideas of how they used Facebook and how their profession of priest is fashioned by Facebook. This research answers, to a degree, how the authoritative role of the priest, as instituted by the Catholic Church and the people they serve, is perceived in an online context like Facebook.

Participants

According to Lindlof and Taylor (2011), participants for qualitative studies are, recruited for their expertise in a skill or discipline or because their role in a scene or in critical events created a unique fund of knowledge. Interview subjects who occupy a certain status or social category – e.g., homeless men, middle-class adolescents, female captains of industry – may be chosen because of their life conditions, the challenges they face, or the power they have (or lack) (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011, p. 174).

In mid-2014, approximately 50 priests from my personal and professional network were recruited to participate in the survey about their lives as priests, their use of Facebook, and their perceptions of Facebook's utility to carry out the duties of a priest. They were American Catholic priests that used Facebook. Personal contacts proved to be a viable pool of participants to gain knowledge for this project (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). The hope was that those 50 priests would complete the survey and then recruit one of their priest associates that used Facebook to complete it as well, providing a total of 100 completed surveys. The turnout was smaller than anticipated. After three months only 25 surveys had been completed. More participants were needed, obviously. Therefore, I turned to my professional network of scholars to study similar areas religion and media and asked if they could help recruit potential participants. The numbers of potential participants which they forwarded the survey is not known. Facebook was also mined at this time by searching the "friends" of the researcher's Facebook contacts.

Search-terms of “Father” and “Fr” were used and a number of other potential participants were identified. Approximately 500 additional priests were contact from this method and invited to take the survey and to invite their fellow priests who use Facebook to do the same. Thirty-one more participants were gained, bringing the total to 56 survey participants. The total was well short of the goal of 100 survey participants. Therefore, this survey could be seen as a pilot study to a larger study that could be done using the survey method.

The participants in the study were from a variety of backgrounds. Survey data participants’ ages ranged from 28 to 73. They had been ordained from less than a year to 47 years. Participants resided in twenty different states. Nearly half of the participants worked as parish priests, but ten were also campus ministers, five were teachers, others were students, retreat directors, actors, hospital chaplains, professional counselors, and vocation directors. The demographics of these participants were widely varied in age, priestly experience, and location. Many had different functions other than parish priest. The one common factor each of them shared was an affinity for Facebook and its utilities.

From the survey, 25 interview participants were identified. Of the 25, 22 were interviewed. Interview participants ranged in various demographics. Ages ranged from late 20s to well in their 70s. Some priests had only been ordained a few months and others had been ordained for over 40 years. Priestly occupations included parish administrators, campus ministers, college professors, spiritual directors, actors, psychologists, and others. The participants were from all over the country. They resided

in the west, east, midwest, north, and south. Some lived in very large metropolitan areas and others lived in rural areas. Although these priests resided in different parts of the United States they share a common Catholic culture particular to their priestly vocations, as well as, their use of Facebook. dana boyd (2009) argues that in contemporary society, “culture is socially proximate not geographically defined” therefore “it makes more sense to find a sample population and try to flush out who they know and the culture that forms among them” (p. 28). Therefore, the proximity of participating priests is less important in this study than the networked group of priests that use Facebook. The participants are viewed as interpreting, producing, and using media to establish and/or maintain an authority that is given to them by the institution of the Catholic Church and lay members of the Church to which they minister. With an understanding of the field and the participants of this study, a rationale and explanation of the survey will be provided.

The survey method

According to Merrigan and Huston (2015), surveys can be conducted for several reasons, including exploration of attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors, and exploring associations between various phenomena. They can be designed in order to research a cross-section of a population or provide an extended, longitudinal view of data. A sampling of data can be conducted from a random selection, which can be useful to discover ideas or attitudes which would be representative of the entire population. Data can also be sampled from a nonrandom method, particularly if samples are part of a

network. “Network studies emphasize the uniqueness of each network as a whole system. In such studies, the selection method for network analysis is almost always purposive or snowball sampling, rather than random, because the network researcher aims to sample the entire social system” (Merrigan and Huston, 2015, p. 271).

There are several different ways that survey data can be conducted, including face-to-face, focus groups, telephone, and internet questionnaire. Personal interviews can be useful to build rapport and trustfulness. It also makes it more difficult for the one being surveyed to skip questions, plus it is easier to probe for more in-depth responses and monitor participants’ nonverbal reactions. Focus groups have the advantages of personal interviews but also gather many people together at once to gain data. The format of the focus groups is more loosely structured so that a wider range of information can be collected. Focus groups can also gain insights into conceptual research that has proven inconsistent or contradictory. Telephone surveys have the advantages of providing more representative samples than personal interviews or focus groups. They also eliminate many privacy and safety concerns of the participants. Also, the interviewer’s appearance cannot influence the way in which questions are answered. Internet questionnaires can be particularly useful for their ease in creating and disseminating the survey. Software programs like *Survey Monkey* and *Qualtrics* allow a researcher to choose types of questions they would like to ask, like open or closed questions, for instance, or gain responses of degree, for example, on a Likert scale. Additionally, survey software provides immediate analysis of data and can be easily organized by individual question or complete survey data (Merrigan and Huston, 2015).

Questions on the survey sought to answer three areas: general demographics of participating priests, what applications of Facebook did priests use (i.e. post content, sharing content, pictures, videos, and messenger), and their thoughts and feelings on Facebook's use in their role as priests. Questions were formatted so that priests could provide multiple answers to questions on the ways they used Facebook. They were also provided space to add their own answer if one was not provided for them. This allowed for flexibility and a range of answers. The five point Likert scale was also used in order to show a degree of agreement to statements regarding how Facebook can be used in their role as priest. Many questions were also followed up with an opportunity to elaborate and provide examples in the priests' own words. The open ended questions provided space for participants to share their specific experiences on Facebook, allowing for the interpretation of the researcher to discover themes for ways that priests used Facebook to establish and/or maintain their perception of religious authority on Facebook.

Application of survey

For this project, many survey applications described above were applied, including the non-random sampling and the internet questionnaire. Below, the specific survey methodological choices will be described. The nonrandom sampling was applied and proved important due to the closed nature of Catholic priests' network, the specificity and limitedness of the Catholic priest community, and because of the researcher's access to a relatively larger number of priests. Recruiting participants for

the survey from the researcher's personal and professional contacts, as well as asking other non-priests to recruit priest participants became paramount to finding enough priests to qualify the survey data as relevant. Recruitment happened in two stages. The first round of recruitment was completed mostly by emailing priests and personal/professional colleagues who know many priests a flyer describing the study and an invitation, with a link to online survey, to complete the survey. The second round of recruitment used the researcher's Facebook network of "friends" to identify priests, a type of second-degree connection from the priest and the researcher. Those who identified as priest on Facebook were then contacted via Facebook's private messaging service. The same language was used in the private messaging on Facebook as in the email. In all, 56 surveys were completed.

The survey was published and distributed through the computer software program called *Qualtrics*. This program was chosen because it is software to which Texas A&M University has a subscription and is provided for faculty and students to use without personal cost. *Qualtrics* proved to be robust enough to produce a professional looking survey with Texas A&M University identification in the heading, therefore providing more legitimacy for the project than simply producing a more generic survey via another survey software provider, like *Survey Monkey*, which would have personal cost for a survey over ten questions. The ease of dissemination also played a factor in using an internet questionnaire survey, as well as the way *Qualtrics* organized and analyzed the data gathered.

The information gathered from the survey was in three categories: general demographics, uses of social network sites, and the motivations/intentions for using Facebook. The survey questions can be seen in Appendix 1. Unlike personal interviews, focus groups, or telephone surveys, the online survey allowed me to gather data in a non-threatening way that would focus respondent interview questions. For example, if data showed that a participant was a parish priest, then a follow up question during the interview would ask if and how he used Facebook to counsel individuals on Facebook's message feature. I could also ask how the broad network of people with whom the priest has "friended" on Facebook was ministered to in comparison to his specific, local congregation. Questions like these provided space for the priests to broadly talk about their choices of utilizing some Facebook features to extend their priestly ministries beyond the material world to the online realm. These questions also show choices they make when considering the differences between constructing an identity online versus offline. The online survey method also allowed for participating priests to complete the survey in their own time, limiting the amount of scheduling that needed to be conducted. The data gathered gained a general sense of how participants utilized Facebook for personal and professional reasons, and how they perceived its importance in completing priestly duties. In general, this survey served as a preliminary data set to represent a general profile of participating priests and how they engage with Facebook.

Qualitative interview method

Qualitative interviewing can serve many purposes for data collection, including,

[to] understand the social actor's experience and perspective through stories, accounts, and explanations, elicit the language form used by social actors, gather information about things or processes that cannot be observed effectively by other means, inquire about the past, verify, validate, or comment on information obtained from other sources, achieve efficiently in data collection (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011, p. 173).

Several different types of interviews, including ethnographic interviews, informant interviews, narrative interviews, focus group interviews, and respondent interviews can achieve these purposes. Ethnographic interviews are the most informal, where the researcher is casually engaging within a culture and asks a participant questions, not necessarily from a structured interview guide. Informant interviews are conducted with participants who know a great deal about a culture or a situational context valuable to the research objectives. The narrative interview is a method of capturing entire stories where the informant understands his or her position within a narrative context of a culture or phenomenon. Also, the narrative interview is concerned with the entirety of the story in contrast to an informant or respondent interview where the researcher may extract certain materials, like themes or opinions of the informant. The focus group interview is particular because it interviews a small group of informants with similar interests to the research topic at one time. Obvious advantages to this method include the efficiency data can be gathered, the interaction of informants have with one another to generate data and provide differing shades of meaning to topics, and the ability to compare, contrast, and

critique fellow informant's perspectives on a research topic. Finally, the respondent interview seeks to gain open-ended responses to questions. In contrast to informant interviews, who provide information about their world, respondents only speak for themselves as individuals. They "are conducted to find out how people express their views, how they construe their actions, how they conceptualize their life world, and so forth" (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011, p. 179). The general goals of respondent interviews are:

- 1) To clarify the meanings of common concepts and opinions,
 - 2) To distinguish the decisive elements of an expressed opinion,
 - 3) To determine what influenced a person to form an opinion or to act in a certain way,
 - 4) To classify complex attitude patterns,
 - 5) To understand the interpretations that people attribute to their motivations to act
- (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011, p. 179)

Respondent interviews are used to gather the subjective standpoints of participants on the areas relevant to the research project.

In some cases, respondent interviews can be guided by other types of data, like survey data. Lindlof and Taylor (2011) advocate for this mixed methods approach by stating that,

Questionnaire surveys can be valuable exploratory method due to their ability to capture a comprehensive look at a social unit. In the context of a qualitative

project, a survey can serve several purposes. First, a survey may return enough responses for a baseline assessment of key variables. Second, surveys can be used for identifying persons for further qualitative study. Third, surveys and qualitative techniques can be used in a multistage design, with one stage feeding certain types of data into the next stage (p. 108-109).

For this research project, respondent interviews provide the second part of the multistage design. In hopes to probe deeper into the reasons and perceptions of Catholic priests' use of Facebook, respondent interviews were conducted. In general the questions asked in the interviews were seeking to gain a better understanding of how and why priests used Facebook. Was it mostly for personal reasons? Or were there professional reasons for priests' use of Facebook? How did those differ? What was the relationship between their offline ministry and their use of Facebook? And most importantly how was their authority enhanced by using Facebook? Some of these questions were asked in various ways on the survey but during the interview they were topic starters to delve deeper into their motivations and understandings of how and why they used Facebook as Catholic priests. One surprising discovery in interviewing priests about Facebook was how intentional they were about constructing identities that form with their perception of self and their negotiation with their "friends" on Facebook. The interview allowed for greater depth than the survey because it allowed space for them to speak at greater length about their choices on Facebook than a survey would. The survey was to be used as an initial

tool to gauge motivations and feelings about Facebook in relation to the role of the priest as an authority.

Application of respondent interview

Interview participants were identified using an internet survey. The last question on the survey asked for permission to contact participants for an interview by providing an email address. Their email address was used to contact the priest in order to set up a follow-up interview. The email sent to priest participants consisted of a note of gratitude, an explanation of the interview and how it related to the survey priests took, and an attached consent form to sign and return granting permission for the interview to be recorded and data collected to be used in this study. Twenty-two interviews were secured. Recordings failed on two of the interviews, but detailed notes were used in order to retain information about the themes and general thoughts of those two participants. Otherwise, the interviews were conducted and recorded either in person, on the phone, or over Skype. The twenty interviews that were successfully recorded were outsourced to a transcriptionist working for CabbageTree Solutions, where the transcriptionist provided an exact word translation of the interviews in the form of word documents. Those word documents were then uploaded to the coding software Atlas.ti, and codes and themes were then assigned to the text for all twenty transcripts.

In this study, the survey proved useful to set a baseline for key variables, like uses for personal professional and institutional, identify persons for further study, and provide data to identify questions for the respondent interviews that would provide a

deepening of knowledge about how and why Catholic priests use Facebook. For example, data emerged from the survey that indicated that priests were using Facebook to connect with others in a more personal way, rather than professionally. This suggests that priests were utilizing Facebook in a much more casual manner to connect with other Facebook members that they knew well offline and that they were projecting a sense of self that showed a person that was more rounded than merely the liturgical duties that most priest practice. This data led to a line of questioning for a better understanding of how that was happening, and whether or not they felt like the more casual display of a priest was having an impact on their religious authority, from their perspective.

Respondent interviews afforded the personal experiences of priests' utilization of Facebook and a clearer understanding of how and why these priest participants used Facebook in order to identify themes regarding their perceived authority as priests and how Facebook might play a part in their ministry. The interview questions revolved around three areas: general information about participant's priestly ministry so as to compare and contrast that ministry to what they do on Facebook, the participant's familiarity and general usage of Facebook to establish how and when they use it for personal and professional reasons, and the participant's motivations and intentions for using Facebook. For example, a line of questioning conducted during the interviews asked: Do you see your participation on Facebook as an extension of your ministry offline? If so, how? How is ministry on Facebook different than ministry offline? A complete interview guide can be seen in Appendix 2. These areas of question provided

content that was then interpreted and categorized into varying ways that authority was trying to be achieved on Facebook.

Respondent interviews sought to determine what influenced a priest to form a positive opinion about Facebook in order to implement it into some aspect of their life. While the survey could supply data that gave degrees of opinion on Facebook's favorability, the interviews provided an opportunity for priest participants to share extended examples and stories that could be used to deepen understandings of how Facebook was important to some priests to establish and maintain religious authority. For example, when asked how priests used Facebook they recognized that their Facebook "friends" followed them for several different but related reasons. They were personal friends, family members, a past teacher, and also someone who represented the institutional Church. Through the interview process, priests could flesh out these multiple ways in which they had to represent themselves on Facebook in order to be a religious authority online. Also, respondent interviews sought to understand the interpretations that priests attributed to their motivations to use Facebook. By comparison, the survey was limited in their effectiveness to provoke detailed answers. Interviews allowed for the possibility to ask follow up questions where needed and provide a clearer picture of the choices they made on Facebook. For example, priests were asked to explain why they chose whether or not to present themselves in a Roman Collar or liturgical vestments in their profile picture and whether or not to include the title of "Father" in their Facebook name. These types of influences and motivations were more easily asked and explained using the interview method.

In order to extract the meaning from the interviews the method of Grounded Theory was implemented. The word documents which were produced from the recorded interviews were then coded and categorized by themes using the software Atlas.ti. The Grounded Theory method will now be explained and justified for this project.

Grounded theory method

Grounded Theory is explained through three principles:

- 1) Emergent theory is “grounded in” the relationships between data and the categories into which they are coded.
- 2) Categories develop through an ongoing process of comparing units of data with each other (a process known as the *constant-comparative method*.)
- 3) Codes, categories, and category definitions continue to change dynamically while the researcher is still in the field, with new data altering the scope and terms of the analytic framework (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011, p. 250).

Coding includes two types, open coding and *in vivo* coding. Open coding is where the researcher reads through the text and extracts meaning by assigning a code to a chunk of data that is consistent with its own context. *In vivo* coding is used when the social actors being researched characterize their own scene. They use some sort of vivid language which can serve as its own category or as an important example in the research narrative. During this stage of the method codes emerge and begin to clump together in categories

through the constant-comparative method. At this time, definitions and theories are also taking shape which should hold the categories together for further analysis. Further refinement of categories must take place in a stage called integration (Lindlof and Taylor, 2011, p. 252). This point of the process starts with by creating a new set of codes so as to connect the varying categories and string together a narrative that is theoretically sound. Dimensionalization is the final part of the Grounded Theory method. At this stage each categorical construct is examined for their properties and supporting references to the incidents that make up the construct and varying dimensions are teased out. Each category should be theoretically saturated, where new data would add little to the concepts.

Grounded Theory techniques were implemented in this project to generate a more conceptual understanding of priests' description of their motivations and understandings of Facebook in both the answers of the open ended questions of the survey and the transcriptions of the interviews. As mentioned above, the benefits of Grounded Theory are found in the findings of common properties and variable dimensions of the data that emerge from the analysis of a data set like a series of transcriptions (Glaser, 1998). The themes that arise from the method of Grounded Theory are the theoretical codes which weave together a narrative that answer the proposed research question. The hope is that through this method hypotheses can be made to connect and expand existing theory (Glaser, 1998). For example, in this research a broad theoretical code was identified as "authenticity." It began to crystalize as several priests identified "being true to one's self on Facebook" as one aspect about

their use of Facebook as having an important impact on their role as priest and their perception of authority. Linking to other research illustrates ways in which other religious leaders strategize for authority online. Grounded Theory provides a way for concepts to organically emerge from the data and for the researcher to interpret those concepts. Identity, for example, organically emerged by sifting through the transcripts of interviews. By attempting to eliminate biases and preconceptions, a researcher can allow the data to speak for itself. In this way, identity emerged as a theme that informed the way priests utilize Facebook to establish and maintain a perception of religious authority.

Summary

The mixed methods approach to this study provides enough data to make evident the themes and categories that emerged from the data. Therefore, this study enhances the understanding of the relationship among authority, new media and religion. The online survey questionnaire provides a starting point for an analysis of how priests use Facebook to establish and/or maintain religious authority. Respondent interviews then enriched that initial data by allowing survey participants to further expound upon some of the major themes that arose from the initial survey. These two methods together provide a breadth and depth of data to allow themes and categories to emerge using the Grounded Theory method. Moving forward, this study can provide further research to more succinctly comprehend how authority is perceived, created, and maintained in the specific context of Catholic priests' use of Facebook, or provide a place to compare

other religious authority figures use of Facebook, or compare priests' use of other social network sites. Generally, it builds on a body of knowledge that has emerged in the field of religion and media and enhances the conversation of new media scholarship.

Facebook is a large forum and a phenomenon which has captured a large portion of the global population. The survey provided a foundation of understanding of a large number of priests who use Facebook. It provided a way to gather themes of personal, professional, and institutional that helped understand degrees of differences in ways that priests identified to establish religious authority and could later be explored in a more thorough manner with interview participants. Information about the relationship capabilities of Facebook and the ability to use those relationships to establish and maintain a perception of religious authority was one example of how the survey influenced the interviews. The interviews then provided a much more in depth line of discovery into how and why Facebook was an important means to establishing and maintaining a sense of religious authority. By allotting a significant amount of time to explore priests' use of Facebook and their feelings towards Facebook's usefulness for their ministries, a wealth of data was generated allowing priests' Facebook use and opinions about Facebook to be analyzed and interpreted thematically to help explain how religious authority was established and maintained by priests using Facebook. In the remaining chapters key research findings are presented. First, an analysis of survey data is presented (Chapter 4), followed by an analysis of data from respondent interviews (Chapter 5) and finally, a discussion about the relationship between the findings and previously mentioned literature on authority and digital religion(Chapter 6).

CHAPTER IV
FACEBOOK PERFORMANCES BY CATHOLIC PRIESTS TO
ESTABLISH/MAINTAIN
RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY – THE SURVEY DATA

In order to answer the question of how Catholic priests use Facebook to establish/maintain religious authority, data was gathered via survey of priests' use of Facebook. The survey was conducted online to gain a general sense of how Catholic priests used Facebook for ministerial purposes. The survey was also conducted to guide the interview questions that would follow the completion of the survey. In all, the survey allowed for an understanding of how priests consciously used Facebook to reflect their role of priest. This included ways in which priests presented themselves as religious authorities through their actions on Facebook that they may not be explicitly aware of, strategies priests used to extend and maintain their offline priestly roles, and how they understood Facebook aiding to establish/maintain their religious authority. Through survey responses, it was noted that priests highlighted a number of institutional, professional, and personal ways that they employed in their use of Facebook that indicate underlying understandings of how Facebook helps them perform their roles as religious authorities online.

Religious authority in this context is defined as the ability to convey authority in the title of priest, granted by the institutional Catholic Church, in order to establish relationships with their network of followers. The authority that resides in their title of priests reflects a Weberian sense of authority that manifests itself through his connection

with the institutional Church (traditional), the institutional Church's governing documents (legal), and priests' ability to make personal connections with his networked congregation (charismatic). These varying types of authority allow priests to evangelize to those who are seeking and walking with them on their religious journey. Authority is also derived from a Lincolnian sense of authority in that power is granted to priests by those who follow them. The authority of priests incorporates more than just a professional label but it is an ontological sense of being that is not easily distinguished from the individual. Therefore, the personal use of Facebook by a priest has consequences on how religious authority is established/maintained on Facebook. The authority of priests is also linked to the magisterium and hierarchical Church, which states that Jesus Christ is its head who ordained the Apostle Peter as the first pope and has had an unbroken chain of succession ever since. The office of the pope is responsible for leading the world wide community of bishops, and the bishops ordain the priests. This type of religious genealogy, the Church believes, draws a line from all priests to Jesus Christ and illustrates that religious authority is not only related to their professional duties or their personhood but also to an institution with an overtly divine link. Religious authority is manifest from an institutional, professional, and personal manner. This survey is a tool to illustrate some strategies that priests use on Facebook to establish/maintain religious authority by assessing priests' perception of their religious authority in light of the Church document *Communio et Progressio*.

Communio et Progressio, the document outlining how social communication should be utilized by priests and the entire Catholic Church, prescribes how priests

should use communication tools like Facebook in order to build relationships, evangelize, and lead them to a closer relationship with God. The document highlights the ways contemporary communication tools have the ability to bring the world into communion in Christ, and that priests should be at the forefront of utilizing it for this purpose. With that in mind, we now examine who was surveyed and discuss how priests used Facebook in institutional, professional, and personal ways to establish/maintain religious authority.

Demographics

Fifty-seven surveys were completed and the respondents varied by age, ordination date, geo-location, and specific roles in priestly ministry. Ages ranged from 28 to 73. Participants had been ordained for less than one year to 40 years. They reside in 22 different states and represent all regions of the continental United States. Most of the respondents were parish priests (n=27), but others indicated that they were campus ministers at public and private universities (n=9), educators (n=4), writers (n=2), spiritual directors (n=2), vocation directors (n=2), student (n=1), actor (n=1), Catholic high school administrator (n=1), and hospital chaplain (n=1). Some priests indicated working in two or more roles and that is reflected in the list of priests' occupations above. Survey data indicated that on average, priests were connected to the internet over seven hours a day, and they were on social media an average of two hours a day. On average, surveyed priests have been active on Facebook for 7.5 years and check their Facebook account over two times a day. It seems that most priests that are active on

Facebook are regular users, but they also have occupations that call for a connection to the public (e.g. parish priests, campus ministers, educators). This type of demographic information answers, to a degree, who these priests are, but does not answer how or why they use Facebook. To answer those questions, priests responded to questions pertaining to their reasons for using Facebook and were asked for extended explanations regarding the type of status updates they post on Facebook, types of materials they share from others Facebook pages, and their perceptions as to Facebook's effectiveness to aid in their ministry.

From the data, three categories of priests' uses of Facebook to aid in their establishment and maintenance of religious authority emerged: institutional, professional, and personal. Each of these categories provided a functional way in which priests use Facebook and in different ways they established/maintained their religious authority. These categories seemingly overlap and are difficult to distinguish when looking at the content alone. They only separate when inference into their intentions and what might be perceived by their audiences that strategies begin to emerge. Some data showed explicit strategies of priests attempting to establish/maintain religious authority, and other data only implied strategies and required interpretation. Each of these categories will be discussed and survey data will provide evidence for the findings. First, priests use Facebook in a number of ways that can be described as "personal," for example, using it to connect with family and friends. The personal category focused on sharing more of the individual priests' interests and information rather than overtly religious content that symbolizes an aspect of the Catholic faith or institutional Church.

This personal content of priests' lives illustrates Weber's charismatic authority for it allows the priest to attract followers to lead by showing personal aspects of their identity. The personal also represents Hofstede's low power distancing by diminishing the professional part of priests' life and allowing a priest to show the more common part of their lives that Facebook "friends" may find endearing. Perhaps also, priests utilize the more personal aspect of Facebook to strategically expand their public identity as priests. Second, the professional representations on Facebook are marked by the overt and normative functions of a priest. For example, priests use the professional representation to more overtly display their religious role as priests, by donning a Roman collar in their profile picture, using the professional title of "Father" before their profile name, or providing explicit spiritual content that would be expected and normative of a religious leader. The professional category illustrates Weber's traditional and legal types of authority in the sense that priests utilize symbols of the priesthood to show a part of their identity in connection to the Catholic Church. The ways priests set themselves apart on Facebook also illustrates their ability to utilize Hofstede's high power distance by marking the priest as different through their dress and accepted title. Again, utilizing the function of Facebook, a priest can consciously extend his understanding of religious authority by simply showing that he is, in fact, a priest. Finally, the institutional category is defined by the role of the priest as a representative for the institutional Catholic Church, which means that the priest is using Facebook for more than an individual use but also to illustrate that he is a part of an institution, a collective of the Catholic Church. In this category, Weber's traditional and legal types of authority will also be employed

as well as Hofstede's notions of power. In this chapter, Catholic priests will be shown to use Facebook in these three categories by the content that they reported to post and share, their perceptions about ministering and evangelizing on Facebook, and their strategies in fostering relationships on Facebook. This data provides evidence to show how Catholic priests negotiate the technological advantages and disadvantages that Facebook provides for priests' ministry and begin to interpret how their religious authority is established/maintained. We will begin by looking at the institutional ways in which priests use Facebook.

Identifying with the institutional Church aids religious authority

The institutional category is identified with how priests identify their role or position with the larger institutional Church. Priests typically illustrated this relationship to the institutional Church by the content they posted on Facebook related to institution of the Catholic Church. For example, they may post content that is directly from the Vatican or news from the pope; or they may serve as a type of messenger and interpreter to address issues that are being conducted in the Vatican. In this manner, the institutional category describes how priests utilize Facebook to connect to and be perceived in relation to the larger organization of the Catholic Church. There is a perceived and understood overlap between priests' professional use of Facebook and how it may be interpreted as institutional. However, here the distinction is made between priests' professional and institutional use of Facebook by their functions as a priest and then how a priest identifies with the institutional Church, respectively.

To begin, it should be pointed out that the pope does not mandate that all priests use social media like Facebook, but the popes have strongly suggested social media's use for ministerial and evangelistic purposes, offering legitimacy to priests' use of it for these purposes. In the 47th World Communications Day address (2013), Pope Benedict states,

In the digital world there are social networks which offer our contemporaries opportunities for prayer, meditation and sharing the word of God. But these networks can also open the door to other dimensions of faith. Many people are actually discovering, precisely thanks to a contact initially made online, the importance of direct encounters, experiences of community and even pilgrimage, elements which are always important in the journey of faith. In our effort to make the Gospel present in the digital world, we can invite people to come together for prayer or liturgical celebrations in specific places such as churches and chapels. There should be no lack of coherence or unity in the expression of our faith and witness to the Gospel in whatever reality we are called to live, whether physical or digital. When we are present to others, in any way at all, we are called to make known the love of God to the furthest ends of the earth.

The Pope sees the digital realm of Facebook as a place that priests need to utilize in order to fulfill their priestly duties of ministering to those they encounter. This remark is also an indicator of the type of guidance from the hierarchy to persuade priests to populate social media as they would anywhere else in the material world. Surveyed

priests who actually identified with the institutional Church on Facebook could look to this address and find vindication for their use of Facebook as a ministerial tool.

Surveyed priests noted that there were few instances that the Holy See had bearing on why and how they use social media. As indicated in Chapter 2, the Vatican has published incredibly prescriptive and profound documents (i.e. *Communio et Progressio*) on the way the Church and priests should utilize modern communication tools, like social media. However, data showed that most priests pay little attention to those documents. According to Table 1, 75 percent of priests marked 1 or 2 on a 5 point Likert scale, indicating that the Holy See has little to no influence over their use of Facebook.

Table 1
Question: How much influence does the Holy See have on your use of Facebook?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	1	15	54%
2	2	6	21%
3	3	2	7%
4	4	3	11%
5	5	2	7%
Total		28	100%

A university chaplain¹ on the east coast explained his personal feelings on the matter.

On one hand, as a priest, I always want to be doing what the Holy See is asking of us priests. On the other hand, I was using Facebook as a priest--and rather extensively--far before the Vatican said anything about the topic. So it was integral to my priestly ministry before the Holy See encouraged us to make it so.

This seemed to be a common sentiment among some priests that use Facebook on a regular basis as a ministerial tool. Often, they saw the Holy See's response to social media as tardy, only confirming what they had been doing. In this sense, however, this type of justification does serve as a type of Weberian legal legitimacy. In other words, despite their feelings on the Church's encouragement to use social media like Facebook, many priests do use it for ministerial purposes like advancing institutional Church messages and defending the doctrinal tenets of the faith on Facebook.

Therefore, the institutional category is partitioned into two different ways in which priests established/maintained religious authority. First, priests that did use Facebook in an institutional fashion tended to mainly use it to disseminate information about the larger institutional Church. Because there is a large amount of information that trickles down from the echelons of the Catholic hierarchy, priests see a role on Facebook as a messenger of information from their superiors. Second, priests see their role within

¹ The survey was considered anonymous, therefore specific identifiers and demographic information is not always available to attribute specific quotations to specific participants.

the institutional Church as someone who defends the tenants of the Catholic faith and doctrine.

Dissemination of information from the institutional Catholic Church

According to survey data, the dissemination of information about the institutional Church was one way that priests indicated they used Facebook. Sixty-five percent of surveyed priests said they used Facebook to push Church related information to their Facebook networks. When asked about the type of content priests shared, 81 percent (n=29) of priests said it was Church events. When asked for examples for things that priests shared on Facebook, their examples included pictures of ordinations, links to retreat programs, a clip of Pope Francis telling a joke, an inspiring story about the Catholic faith, insightful quotes from saints or Catholic writers, commentary from Church leaders on the relationship between political matters and the Catholic faith, historical pieces on Church dioceses, and content about the persecution of Christians in the Middle East, as examples. When asked why priests continue to use Facebook, 53 percent (n=23) said sharing information about the Church was an activity that they did on a weekly basis.

A motivation to use Facebook is to disseminate insightful information about the Catholic Church, like a catechetical emphasis the pope wants to make on the Church's response to the poor. First, the priest acts as a type of religious authority by establishing a place of informational privilege. He gains religious authority by being a source of knowledge for his network of Facebook "friends." Furthermore, sharing this type of

information serves as a teaching tool for some priests. It points to areas of which he wishes his followers to pay great attention. He is able to maintain religious authority in the sense that he continues to be a teacher for his followers in the same way he is a teacher offline. The priest can also establish new religious authority by perhaps connecting with someone outside of his usual network of friends and family. The religious authority that comes from the institutional Church also provides the priest with a Weberian authority of tradition and legality. In both senses it provides legitimacy to his role by the mere connection and recognition with the institutional Church. His initial credibility is substantially stronger because he is a priest and a messenger of the Church. To represent the institutional Church is an important way in which priests negotiate religious authority on Facebook. In this way, priests can assert a type of authority they find offline as members of the hierarchical Church and also utilize Facebook's ability to disseminate information to a larger network of people.

Defending the faith

Priests also indicated through the survey data that at times they felt as if they had to engage people concerning the doctrine of the Catholic faith. Only 37 percent of priests marked 4 or 5 on a 5 point Likert scale, indicating that their visibility on Facebook allowed them to engage people suggesting ideas contrary to Catholic teaching or doctrine. So what are we to make of the majority of priests that do not find Facebook to be a suitable place to engage in controversial conversations regarding Catholic doctrine? The survey data indicated that not all priests found Facebook to be a good medium to

debate people on such divisive topics. Fifty-five percent marked 1 or 2 on the question about priests' visibility to engage people suggesting contrary ideas to Catholicism. They commented that they didn't want to be divisive; that the medium was too limited to have a meaningful dialogue; that past experiences of debating difficult topics on Facebook was found to be useless; and that, because of the way Facebook has designed its privacy settings, priests are typically networked to like-minded individuals and therefore, encountering these types of conversations was rare. Although, engaging people on matters of the Catholic faith was not a major activity priests did on Facebook, there were a few that believed that, since people were present, priests needed to be available in order to teach and model the faith.

Obviously, this group of priests is in the minority, not because other priests do not necessarily believe that Facebook can be a place to engage defending Catholic doctrine, but perhaps, because priests have not encountered hostility on Facebook regarding challenges to Catholic doctrine. This small number of priests is included in this analysis as important because Facebook can be such a hostile place for controversial topics. According to the survey, priests have addressed issues like abortion, same-sex attraction and marriage, euthanasia, pornography, pro-violence, and contraception. Leveraging their priestly credentials in order to counter ideas contrary to Catholic doctrine is an apparent way in which a few priests are establishing and maintaining religious authority on Facebook. Priests are asserting their expert knowledge to assume power over a people who have contrary ideas to the Catholic faith. Again, this is maintaining religious authority that priests have offline but establishing religious

authority to a potentially larger network of people. Hot button issues are certainly discussed on Facebook and some priests have gone so far as to try and correct some misconceptions about the Catholic Church.

How professional uses of Facebook are connected to religious authority

Priests also present themselves professionally as religious authority figures on Facebook. “Professional” use is identified as using Facebook for normative functions of ministry and priestly life, like a picture that depicts a priest in a Roman collar or liturgical vestments, or posting content that is indicative of priests leading people in prayer. The priest could post a status about a local Church-related event, a meditation, or prayer. He could use the message feature of Facebook for counseling and spiritual guidance. This category shows a normative understanding of priests’ professional presence on Facebook that clearly marks the user as a Catholic priest. In contrast to the personal, priests’ Facebook activity is overtly religious and interpreted as indicative of Catholic priests. In these ways, priests subscribe to the type of religious authority that is legitimated in his relationship with tradition and legality of the Church, as well as their perception of how a priest should look and act. They take advantage of Facebook’s ability to illustrate what a priest does in a more formal and traditional manner.

Overall, the survey data indicated that the professional function of Facebook for priests was more evident than the institutional function. When asked why priests initially joined Facebook, only 13 percent (n=6) of priests said that they first joined to minister to the public. Only 4 percent (n=2) said they initially joined to proselytize, that is, to

convert people to Catholicism. However, priests have grown to see Facebook as a tool for priestly ministry and to be more overt in constructing an identity that is normative of the priesthood. When asked why they continue to use Facebook, 56 percent (n=27) indicated that they use Facebook because they are called to be with people and it has an enormous virtual population. Facebook seems to have changed for surveyed priests from a medium which helps priests remain connected with people for personal reasons to a place to have a ministerial presence as they would offline.

To aid in the explanation of the professional use of Facebook by priests, this category includes two sub-categories: information dissemination and relationship building. The category of information dissemination on Facebook mimics the older medium of the parish bulletin where a message was communicated from one to many. The content of the parish bulletin was indicative of a one sided medium where there is a small group of people (or in this case, one priest) communicating information to a larger group. For the most part, power and authority reside on the side of the one disseminating the information. On Facebook, priests utilize the property of broadcasting content to his network of followers in a very similar manner. Relationship building in the professional sense provides a description of how priests use Facebook to foster relationships in a more hierarchical way, where the priest is perceived as superior because of his position and his role as spiritual leader. This relationship is unlike the personal category (discussed below) where the relationship was seen to be between equals. Religious authority is seen in the unbalanced nature of the relationship. Religious authority resides in the fact that priests have a perceived and respected expertise in Christian spiritual

matters for Catholics. These two subcategories, information dissemination and building relationships, illustrate two ways that priests use Facebook to establish/maintain religious authority.

Information dissemination as a professional function of priests' use of Facebook

Priests use Facebook in a professional manner by disseminating information in a style which mimics the parish bulletin in its content and mode of distribution. Content includes daily scripture readings, priests' homilies, invitations to meditate, formal prayers, and requests for prayers. Priests also share links to inspiring articles or stories of people modeling a Christian life. This style of communication also mimics the broadcast model in that there is little control over who sees the content that a priest posts or shares on Facebook. It is simply published on his wall and the algorithmic logic controls who may or may not see it in their newsfeed.

When asked what type of content priests share on Facebook, the survey data showed that 58 percent (n=21) of priests share spiritual reflections and/or insights. When asked what priests would post on an average week, 36 percent (n=17) of participating priests indicated that they post prayers, scripture passages, or other spiritual reading materials, 57 percent (n=13) of priests said they share religiously themed pictures. Although not a strong majority of priests utilize Facebook in these professional ways, there are some priests that use Facebook in this manner to strategically negotiate religious authority to illustrate the legitimacy of their professional identity as priests. These actions could be paralleled to the more traditional communication practice of

passing out prayer cards where the purpose was to place the card in a book or in a place that would be regularly seen in order to remind people to pray and reflect. Along with being a place where a large amount of people are located, Facebook is also a cheap and easy way to disseminate materials. For example, surveyed priests expressed that they post articles from an array of publications that presumably contain a lesson for their Facebook network to read. A Midwestern parish priest and spiritual minister at a college shared that he posted an article from *The Guardian* regarding envy in relationships and an article on storytelling and truth from an online publication called *The Jesuit Post*. Another priest from the east coast, who serves as a university chaplain, stated that he posted a picture of a priest celebrating Mass combined with a quote about the Eucharist. A different priest from the south, who serves a parish, offered a prayer that said “What a beautiful morning! May the peace at work now, through St. Monica’s intercession, be always in our hearts!” and a prayer from St. Rose of Lima. These three examples indicate that priests use Facebook professionally by inviting people to reflect and pray. Portraying the professional side of the priesthood shows different ways to utilize Facebook to establish/maintain religious authority. Facebook serves as another medium to distribute content to a priests’ followers in order to lead them in a proper Christian formation as prescribed by the Catholic faith.

Additionally, some priests use Facebook to promote their own religious works. Forty-five percent (n=21) indicated that promotional statuses for their events or products are a type of post that priests publish. Several survey participants indicated that they have books, blogs, websites, and speaking engagements, and they use Facebook to

promote those materials and events. A priest on the east coast, who serves as the director of a Catholic campus ministry at a public university, shared that his last two Facebook posts prior to taking the survey were an invitation to “JOIN US THIS & EVERY SUNDAY FOR CATHOLIC MASS RIGHT ON CAMPUS - 8:30 PM - Student Center Café” and “Wings & mozzarella sticks... Cigars... ‘Band of brothers’ DVD - first Newman men's night underway.” Facebook serves as an important way for priests to disseminate information about their ministry’s events because there are a lot of people on Facebook but it is also free of charge. Another example is from a Catholic school administrator who linked his homily from a parish website to his Facebook page, and, also, pictures of him filming with a local TV station to introduce his school’s new mobile app. Facebook not only disseminates information and promotes a larger ministry but it also serves to promote the individual priest, as well. By promoting the individual priest, it shows their network of followers what the priest is doing in a professional capacity.

Data indicates that part of the priests’ motivation to use Facebook is to inform his network of followers about spiritual matters and about the more professional events of the priests. Priests achieve religious authority through the dissemination of information on Facebook by appealing to a Weberian sense of traditional and legal authority. Like the priests who disseminate information about the institutional Church, priests in the professional sense use the clout of their position to promote some information over other information. Their position within society, particularly among the Catholic Church, adds weight to their posts. In this way, priests appeal to authority in the traditional and legal

sense. The role of priest is handed down to them from the hierarchy of the Catholic Church from their bishops and is accepted by members of the Catholic Church through their implicit participation in Church community. Facebook is another way to communicate to members of the Church community and it is an extension of the community to which he ministers through the network of friends he may have on Facebook.

Perhaps surprisingly, most priests did not recognize Facebook as a place to model Christian living. When specifically asked why priests post Facebook statuses, only 27 percent (n=13) indicated that it was to model the Christian life. Relatedly, only 23 percent (n=11) of priests were motivated to use Facebook to serve as a model to other users on the appropriate way to use Facebook. This seems a low percentage of priests and inconsistent with the types of activities priests practice on Facebook. If, in fact, a priest's call is to be a representative of a model Christian, then it would seem that Facebook would be a place that priests would want to be visibly proactive in promoting a Christian way of being.

This way of using Facebook parallels many of the findings of Daniel Miller's study of a Trinidadian quasi-Pentecostal Church (2011). The article describes how this church community believes that God has placed the internet in this time and space, and sees the internet as a tool to broadcast and reach people. They understand that by using the social capabilities of the internet they are simply meeting people where they are. Many community members do not feel comfortable conversing about religious matters face-to-face, therefore, Facebook allows fellow believers the distance and a degree of

anonymity to speak freely with one another. Similar to the findings in the survey, priests realize that many of their Facebook ‘friends’ benefit from the dissemination of spiritual materials, the ease of gathering people together (particularly the younger generation) to function as a community, and the modeling of Christian life. However, the model of information dissemination has its limitations and only engages a few of the functions of which Facebook is capable, particularly the ability to begin and build relationships. The professional capacity to build relationships is an important reason that priests use Facebook.

Relationship building in a professional capacity

According to survey data, building relationships with a Facebook network was an important function for priests in the professional sense (as well as the personal sense). The professional way of building relationships was understood as more of a relationship between a superior and subordinate, where there was a clear distinction between the priest and his followers. It is unlike the relationships mentioned in the personal category because the priest uses his profession of priesthood to distinguish himself from the group he leads, not necessarily for the sake of ego but because of his place of expertise. For example, if a priest were to utilize Facebook to counsel someone, then the priest would be in a place of authority by offering advice and suggestions. In this way, a priest establishes his religious authority by conducting himself as an expert on spiritual matters because he has knowledge on spiritual matters that people turn to when they need

council and guidance. Table 2 provides some insight into this place where religious authority is maintained for priests on Facebook.

Table 2

Question: “Why do you continue to use Facebook?”

#	Answer	Response	%
2	To keep up with contemporary communication tools	29	60%
3	Many people use Facebook and I need to be where the people are	27	56%
9	To disseminate Church related activities and announcements	24	50%
10	To connect with a younger population	24	50%
11	Other:	21	44%
5	To stay in-line with the Church's suggestions that social media is important	14	29%

According to Table 2, 56 percent (n=27) indicated that because people were present on Facebook, priests felt they needed to be present in order to lead them in a professional

capacity. Perhaps similarly, priests thought that because Facebook was becoming a prevalent communication tool it was important to also keep up with how people were communicating (60%, n=29), including, to remain relevant to the younger generation (50%, n= 24). Perhaps one of the more pragmatic practices of priests on Facebook was connecting online with people they minister to offline on Facebook (49 percent, n=23). As mentioned above, Facebook has the ability to keep people connected that are varying distances apart and can serve as a means to continue relationships online that are fairly regular offline. One way this is possible is through the messaging feature of Facebook.

When asked about the messaging feature on Facebook, 61 percent (n=30) of priests said that they used the messaging feature for ministering purposes in the previous month. Ministering in this context could mean evangelizing or spiritually counseling a person over Facebook's chat feature. One priest described how people sometimes share struggles they are having with a Church teaching or with a personal experience. In this way, the space provided security to open up about issues. The topic of using Facebook messaging in a ministerial setting was quite divisive, however. One priest commented that he thought that using the messaging feature was "completely ridiculous." When asked to consider if Facebook was an effective place to minister and counsel on a five-point Likert scale, 71 percent marked 1 or 2 to indicate that it was not a high consideration. Other priests, however, have found it to be one of the most useful ways in which to minister. Some priests commented that they simply used the chat feature as an initial place of introduction and invite the person to meet face-to-face for a more lengthy discussion. Those that did engage more with the chat feature had conversations range in

degree from seeking answers to doctrinal issues to conversations that are considerably substantial and, in some cases, lifesaving. Some examples of conversations that priests had on Facebook include advisement for men considering a vocation to religious life, consoling a person who was struggling to sleep because her father had committed suicide the previous year, advising someone regarding a complex medical-moral problem, people considering returning to the Church after a lengthy absence, conversations about struggles of faith, and requests for prayers.

One possible explanation as to why the messaging feature is useful (if not popular) is because of the distancing that takes place between the lay person and the priest. Perhaps the person seeking advisement from the priest needs to talk to someone but Facebook provides a safe distance to speak on more delicate topics without the possible embarrassment of speaking with a person face-to-face. Some priests believed that Facebook provides a distance that some people need in order to have conversations on life and faith. One priest commented, “this medium allows [people] to feel a bit ‘confessional;’ there is anonymity and yet, familiarity.” For some priests the chat feature on Facebook provided a valuable tool to minister and serve others and offered yet another opportunity to maintain a degree of religious authority through their ability to answer questions about spiritual and psychological matters. Those who seek out priests on Facebook over the messaging feature believe that these men have answers that will aid in their understanding of their struggles or confusion. In a Lincolnian sense, this shows evidence of a reciprocation of authority that people provide priests. People would not seek them out otherwise.

The types of conversations also provide evidence to the religious authority that priests maintained. Priests indicated that these conversations were not about the mundane events of a person's life but substantial issues that priests are trained to handle in seminary and ongoing pastoral counseling. They include issues of faith, vocation, and personal psychology. These conversations mirror similar conversations priests have had offline. In this way, they maintain their religious authority by performing these professional tasks of a priest. If a priest were to speak with new people outside of his offline network, then this would be an example of establishing religious authority. Facebook allows for the potential of engaging with new people and the distancing and immediacy for new people to engage with priests on Facebook. Priests seem to perceive that their religious authority is no less maintained if their professional tasks of providing counseling and spiritual guidance are performed on Facebook. It seems that a majority of priests understand the significance of Facebook's popularity among the people they minister. However, data suggests that only a few recognize that it can be an important space to invite counsel and spiritual direction in order to establish/maintain their religious authority.

Personal uses of Facebook aid in achieving religious authority

According to survey data, participating priests (n=57) valued Facebook as a place to share personal parts of their lives. The personal category identifies parts of a priest's Facebook identity that are not overtly connected to the priesthood or the Catholic faith. They may not wear priestly garb, like a Roman collar or liturgical vestments in their

profile pictures, nor would they post things that are understood to be normative behaviors related to the priesthood or even necessarily religious. Rather, they may communicate about family, entertainment, politics, and science, anything that does not have a relationship to the Catholic priesthood or Catholic faith. Even though these things may not be religious in nature, they still are important to the individual priest and show a more complete picture of a person. The personal use of Facebook allows the priest to be seen as a more dynamic person, rich with likes and dislikes, beyond what the general public sees of a priest as an institutional placeholder for the Catholic Church. For example, the survey asked that participating priests' check all that applies to the question, "Why do you post personal statuses?" 60 percent (n=29) responded that it was to share current events of their lives. With the option to include other reasons not included in the survey's list, priests added reasons like, "To share important events in my life," "To connect with friends," and "To follow family, friends, and couples whose marriages I have witnessed." This category identifies aspects of priests' Facebook use and identity that are not overtly connected to the priesthood or Catholic faith, yet are important ways for priests to negotiate religious authority, which will be explained in greater detail later. This personal category is further broken down into sub categories: connecting with family and friends, sharing life events, being a news aggregate, and providing comedic content. These subcategories were the most common motivations for priests' use of Facebook, in order to provide his network of friends and followers with greater knowledge of priests' likes and dislikes beyond his profession as a priest.

Data from this category suggests that personal Facebook activity may still have implications for priests' establishing/maintaining their religious authority in a strategy observed as "covert evangelism." Here, priests' personal use of Facebook may be an intentional, or even unintentional way to assert themselves as a leader by allowing a more personal side of themselves to be revealed for the sake of religious authority. For some priests, the ability to convey a personal side on Facebook decreased. They believed, a standard that people placed on priests and made them more relatable, likable, and trustworthy. We begin with the most popular reason priests (like most Facebook users) utilized Facebook: connecting with family and friends.

Connecting with family and friends

According to the survey, a majority of priests use Facebook to remain connected with family and friends. Overwhelmingly, survey data supports that priests primarily use Facebook as a way to remain connected with people they know offline. When asked why priests initially joined Facebook, 75 percent (n=36) indicated it was to connect with family and friends. This was an activity they did in a typical week and it was a reason for their continued participation on Facebook. Obviously, this suggests that Facebook is utilized by priests so they can maintain relationships with people that are not physically present on a regular basis.

As Alex Lambert points out in his book, *Intimacy and Friendship on Facebook* (2013), people enjoy Facebook for continued connection to people that have moved out of their "life-world," that is, the relationships that are maintained in the physical and

temporal space on a regular basis. These may be people who have become geographically distant or temporally distant, meaning people with whom a Facebook user shared a previous social connection, but who have since drifted away because of time and changing circumstances. High school friends are an example of temporally distant friends. Remaining connected or reconnecting with people has emotional rewards, especially if the person has reconnected with a close friend from a previous social circle. Lambert describes this process as “defeating loss” of valuable relationship (p. 80). For priests, relationship building is fundamental to their ministry. The more they can extend their relationships beyond their physical world, the more potential to connect with people and serve as ministers to them.

Related to Lambert’s Facebook insights, the a-synchronicity of Facebook could also be beneficial for priests because it allows them to remain in relationship with people from their past assignments without the time constraints of a face-to-face or telephone interaction. During the course of priests’ training and ministry, priests are moved on a regular basis. They inherently become connected to the communities that they serve by taking part in the church community, making friends with parishioners, participating in church functions, and leading the community as a priest. Unlike other mediums, like email or telephone, Facebook allows people to remain connected indefinitely and without the rigor of a scheduled time or place to connect. Facebook allows any member to view what others are posting on their individual pages, therefore keeping tabs on their lives as presented on Facebook. It also allows for the connection of many people in one place, giving the Facebook user a sense of community (Lambert, 2013, p. 83-84).

For many priests, the ability to remain in relationship with people from several differing networks provides evidence to Hofstede's theory of power distancing. Interactions with family and friends are low power distancing because these are people with whom they may have had lengthy relationships. For many priests, the professional tone of their ministerial careers is diminished. In this regard, priests secure authority by matching a casual style of ministry to the intended network of family and friends with whom they already have relationships established offline. Furthermore, religious authority could be established if people outside of priests' network of family and friends discovered priests' Facebook page and were attracted to the personality he has constructed on Facebook. It may lead this person to seek out this priest outside of the context of Facebook for spiritual guidance. Related to connecting with family and friends is the ability to share aspects of priests' life on Facebook.

Sharing life events

The survey data also indicated that sharing personal content was an important factor for priests using Facebook. Personal content can be anything from sharing feelings, posting their whereabouts, or posting photos of friends and family. Again, personal content would not necessarily be related to the profession of priesthood but rather showing aspects of priests' life other than "Church" content. The table below shows the importance of Facebook to priests who wished to share this type of content on Facebook.

Table 3
Question: “Why do you post personal statuses?”

#	Answer	Response	%
5	To pass along Church related news	32	67%
2	To share current personal events	29	60%
3	To show how the Catholic life is relevant to the public	27	56%
7	Other:	20	42%
6	To share moments and feelings about daily life	13	27%
4	To model the Christian life	13	27%
1	To show your interior life	11	23%

Table 3 above shows that 60 percent (n=29) responded to sharing current personal events, 27 percent (n=13) shared moments and feelings about their daily life, and 23 percent (n=11) responded to show their interior life. A few priests commented that they specifically liked to post where and when they are traveling so people could keep up with their whereabouts and what they are doing in different parts of the world. Others mentioned how they liked to share the “non-religious” aspects of their lives. One participant said “I like posting about non-church things to show I have a fun life. I post about camping or riding a motorcycle.” Another said that he uses Facebook to “check in at breweries and baseball games.” While sharing life events, however mundane, a type of intimacy is created between the person who posts and his network of friends and

family who read it. Lambert (2013) states that status “publicity affords one-to-many performances. It offers the opportunity to ‘include’ a meaningful social group. Inclusion fosters group intimacy, emotion of belonging, and collective interpersonal history” (p. 85). Priests sharing personal events shows a hope to foster some degree of group intimacy so as to foster relationships and maintain a sense of emotional belonging with their group of networked friends. Again, priests are participating in low power distancing when they provide intimate details about their lives that may be shared by their network of Facebook followers. Similarly, Weber’s charismatic authority describes a type of authority that is placed upon people who can achieve a type of intimacy with followers (Benedix, 1977). Examples of riding a motorcycle, going to baseball games, and doing other non-religious things grant the priest a type of “everyman” persona that is relatable and admirable. Sharing personal events was not the only way that priests established/maintained religious authority on Facebook. They used the ability to share news stories as a way to build a narrative about their identity and their likes and dislikes.

News aggregate

According to the survey data, Facebook also serves as a news provider for priests, as 74 percent (n=35) of participants indicated that Facebook allowed them to “keep up with the news” on a weekly basis. Staying current on events was important to connecting with priests’ followers. To be “in the know” provides a person with social status. The news is defined in a broad context as it could be considered global, church, or even other people’s personal news. This, however, was not a reason why priests initially

joined Facebook. Only 17 percent (n=8) of surveyed priests indicated that they joined Facebook to stay current on world events. This could indicate that either the function of Facebook as a news provider was not considered when priest participants joined Facebook or that Facebook has become more of a place to circulate news than it was during its younger phases. Fifty percent (n=18) of priests said that news events were content that they normally share with their networks. With regard to authority, the news stories that priests share on Facebook shows their publics what they consider important and provide an insight for their network of followers as to what matters to them. In a way, the priest who consumes and shares news items on Facebook is participating in a semi-public discourse on social and political matters relevant at the time; it shows to a network of followers priests' likes and dislikes and allows for followers to gain a better understanding of the priest. The act of sharing and reposting news on Facebook is a part of identity construction, allowing priests' network to know about the person in a more passive manner than the priest overtly stating his beliefs.

To construct an identity on Facebook in this way is to participate in the on-going discourse of who he is and what matters to him. The priest maintains religious authority to people he knows offline by connecting news stories to his Facebook profile wall, allowing his network to see what he believes others should be reading. In this way, priests are suggesting a Weberian traditional authority that proposes an authority that comes from a position of time and status. In a passive manner, a priest is suggesting that the news he shares on his Facebook profile is important and should be considered by his network of followers. Similarly, Facebook also provides a lighthearted way for priests to

construct an identity, allowing people to know them through the ability to share content that is intended to be funny.

Comedic content

The survey also indicated that comedic content was used in personal ways by priests on Facebook. Priests found that posting funny content afforded them social cache and allowed them to be more approachable and relatable. Comedic content is defined as that in which is considered to be lighthearted and funny. 56 percent (n=36) of priests indicated that they shared funny jokes, memes, or videos with their networks of followers, and that 35 percent (n=8) of pictures that priests shared were of humorous memes. One priest said that the type of status that he likes to post is “material I’ve found relevant, funny, moving, etc.” Getting their network of followers to laugh on Facebook was an important way that priests used Facebook in a personal fashion. Sharing comedic content allowed for priests’ network of followers another way for them to know the individual priest. Comedic content allowed for another way for the priest to construct his identity in order to maintain religious authority. Comedic content establishes relationships, extending their personalities offline to the online or perhaps showing a playful side of priests’ identity that does not get portrayed in an offline setting. Comedic content shows a lighter side of a priest and arguably, makes the priest more accessible to the public. Posting comedic content, like telling a joke, allows others to relate to that person in a slightly different way than may be seen in some of the more popular functions of a priest, like presiding over a liturgy or hearing confessions. Here, again, the

priest is subscribing to Hofstede et al.'s low power distancing by relating to others using the power of comedy via Facebook, as well as, Weberian charismatic authority to assert religious authority by portraying his personality on Facebook. Whether it is sharing life events, news stories that are not religious, or sharing comedic content, these types of content construct an identity that is hoped to be perceived as being relatable to priests' network of followers.

The personal ways in which the priest uses Facebook lead to a particularly interesting way in which the priest is able to establish and maintain their religious authority. Priests are able to subtly minister to their followers in a non-conventional way. They are able to minister by showing a more personal side of their identity through their selective construction on Facebook. Priests can covertly evangelize by displaying the personal aspects of their lives and implementing a low power distancing and a charismatic authority that perceivably could not be achieved by using Facebook in either an institutional or professional manner.

Covert evangelization

To this point we have discussed how priests used Facebook to connect with friends and family, shared life events, shared current events, and even provided comedic content on Facebook. Put simply, the personal content posted on Facebook by priests can be perceived as a way to connect on a level that is relatable to priests' network of followers. Participating in Facebook in this way humanizes the role of the priest in a way that may be more accessible to priests' network by the sharing of personal content in a

public way. This way is not overtly instituting authority on Facebook in often-times heavily religious-themed posts on Facebook. To help illustrate, consider this commented a priest posted on the survey.

Facebook is just another location in the world. To the extent that I want to share a joyful life with others in each location to which I'm sent, I also want to do this on Facebook. That said, the way I find to evangelize effectively is simply to live a thoughtful, reflective, prayerful, believing life. In our age of celebrity, Facebook just makes this effort visible and (hopefully) therefore consoling.

This particular priest illustrates nicely one way in which Facebook should be considered. It should be yet another way to connect with people in order to lead people to Christ. Little should change between the offline identity and the online construction of an identity on Facebook. This commenting priest states that it is through his joyful life that, either perceived offline or online, leads to the greatest way to evangelize. In this context evangelization simply means bringing Christianity to people through preaching the Christian Gospel messages either verbally or nonverbally. As shown in the survey data, one way in which priests evangelize is by showing the mundane and personal events of priests' life in a semi-public way on Facebook. Therefore, what may seem to be the everyday events of an individual priest are actually intentional or unintentional ways in which to continue to preach the Gospel, which are priests' principle duties. For instance, when asked to respond to the survey question, "Why was Facebook a place to

evangelize?” one priest wrote, “I find Facebook to be a ministry of presence; an opportunity to be more ‘accessible’ to the ‘people of God,’ especially the younger generation. It’s an entry point to face-to-face conversations.” This response shows that Facebook is understood to be a meeting place for people, not necessarily in the same time and space, but a place, nonetheless, for priests to represent themselves as individuals and as representatives of the Catholic priesthood. A different priest answered,

I think by sharing what is going on in my life I am giving witness to a lived, devout life. People get a chance to see all that I do, both in terms of ‘regular’ ministry and other things, like giving the invocation at NASCAR races. It witnesses to the idea that we live our faith at all times in all places.

By sharing the more personal parts of their lives, priests believe Facebook is a way to reach people and another way to publicly model a Christian life that they personally and professionally embody whether it is overtly through religious content or covertly through the secular means of water skiing, going to a baseball game or NASCAR event.

In a way, these examples show priests not only being relatable but also authentic. The survey data indicated that a priest aspires to be true to himself by authentically representing himself as the person he is offline. This authenticity helps evangelize, as well. Especially if the priest is primarily connected to family and friends, showing a true sense of self rather than an embellishment of self is an obviously wise choice. Likewise,

showing an authentic self on Facebook is valuable to people with whom a priest may meet in the future. An embellishment of self would hinder any religious authority that they may have gained if they were found to be fraudulent in who they were on Facebook. One priest wrote in response to what he posted on Facebook,

I just try to be myself on FB [Facebook] – post about the things that interest me (music, sports, justice, politics, family vacations) and I guess I might look at this as a very subtle attempt at de-clericalizing or de-mythologizing the priesthood.

For this priest, Facebook seems to serve as a way for him to intentionally represent himself in a casual way in order to flatten the perception of authority of the priesthood from the traditionally perceived vertical hierarchy of the Catholic Church. For some people, Catholic and non-Catholic, the overtly religious content on Facebook can be a turnoff and some priests have recognized this as such. Therefore, priests have turned to tools like Facebook that allow for the display of other types of content which still shows a Christian life but in a less-than obvious way. Priests are able to construct an identity on Facebook that is still true to themselves and may also attract a wider network of followers than those who are already devout followers of the Catholic faith.

Priests' personal utility of Facebook can be understood as a way to be charismatically authoritative in a Weberian sense, albeit in a more subtle and nuanced way than the overtly pious representation of a priest in the institutional and professional sense. Specifically, this way of evangelization is more covert than posting prayers and

scripture passages because the personal information of a priest allows a glimpse into their private lives, making them seem more accessible and sometimes more charismatic.

To help illustrate, a parish priest from the Midwest said,

As a priest my whole life is ministry. So, my sharing pictures of hanging out with friends, or jokes, or pictures of normal life, or articles about Jesus & the Church or whatever - it's all ministry. The aim of my Facebook page is the same aim as my life, to help people see what it can look like to believe in God and participate in the Church in the postmodern West.

In a way, priests that intentionally use Facebook in this manner are developing relationships with their public on Facebook so as to continue their mission as priests, to preach the Gospel in the simplest and perceivably non-religious events. Several examples include writing about major life events, sharing photos of vacations, and posting about favorite foods. One priest provided an example of one of his latest Facebook posts and it said,

Dark Chocolate Gelato from Lush Gelato. Check. Dark Chocolate Raspberry Twist Ice Cream from Fenton's Creamery. Check. Dark Chocolate Dove Squares. Check. Extra Dark Chocolate Godiva Bar. Check. Newman's Super Dark Chocolate Peanut Butter Cups. Check. Homemade chocolate chip banana bread. Check. Bring on FAT Tuesday!

As entertaining and mundane as this may be, it serves to represent the everyday types of events that priests post on Facebook to show their individual personalities. It could be intentionally or unintentionally posted to show a human side of the priesthood, but the fact remains that this type of communication seems to indicate that priests, consciously or not, are evoking a type of charismatic authority by making the priest an “everyman” figure that is more relatable and accessible, hence, easing the way for followers to learn about Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church. Furthermore, these types of Facebook practices can be related to Lincoln’s (1994) principle of authority that says that authority is achieved if it is granted by his followers. Intentionally or unintentionally, priests are utilizing Facebook to relate to their network of followers, thus attempting to be more likable and making it easier to obtain authority from people that like them. By engaging a network of followers with more personal and intimate content, priests seem to believe that it makes evangelizing a bit more palatable for others. Priests are practicing a style of evangelism made famous by Saint Francis of Assisi, “Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary, use words.” They are constructing an identity on Facebook that is authentic to themselves, and at same time allowing their network of followers to see a more amicable and well-rounded persona than maybe their offline networks may be able to perceive.

For some priests, evangelism relies on developing personal relationships by sharing more about the individual than just what is perceived by a congregation on Sunday. In order to teach about Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church, a personal

relationship, perhaps even friendship, can be useful to establish credibility, and therefore, have a more profound impact on priests' network of followers. Nearly half of the survey participants indicated that they were parish priests and another large percentage indicated they were campus ministers, counselors, hospital chaplains, and/or spiritual and vocation directors. For men in these ministries it seems necessarily important that in order to be an effective minister, they build a rapport with whom they minister. An important aspect of relationship building is communicating a degree of personal information in order for others to feel comfortable practicing some sort of reciprocation. Once this back and forth takes place, there is a connection and a potential of ministry emerging. The personal utilization of Facebook allows for a more covert means of evangelization than the institutional or professional means.

Summary of survey data analysis and the relationship to authority

The survey data indicated that priests use Facebook in a variety of institutional, professional, and personal ways. First, Facebook was a place for priests to represent the larger institutional Church. In this capacity, priests served as a type of placeholder for the institutional Church. They used Facebook to disseminate information about universal (not local) Church-related events and announcements. In this way, priests' titles carried a Weberian sense of traditional and legal authority to show the importance of the message coming from the Holy See. Also, this type of message sharing linked the priest to the hierarchical Church. Priests also used Facebook as a place to teach people about the Catholic faith and to defend Church doctrine when necessary. These ways in which

priests used Facebook can be understood as a legal type of authority. Without priests' affiliation with the Holy See their capacity to serve as a mouthpiece for the Official Church and have the authority to defend Catholic doctrine would have been minimal. By simply being associated with the Catholic Church serves as a way in which Catholic priests can establish/maintain religious authority on Facebook.

Secondly, survey data supported the idea that priests used Facebook in professional ways to establish/maintain their religious authority by practicing their roles as priest which are perceived as normative offline. "Professional" was defined by the overt ways in which a priest uses Facebook in religious ways that are traditional and normative to the function of a priest. The professional ways in which priests used Facebook included the dissemination of information about local Church events, invitations to pray, requests for prayer intentions, and invitations to attend priests' public engagements. Developing relationships with people for professional reasons was also included in this category. Namely, some priests found that Facebook was a good way to remain present to people and to meet them where they are spiritually. Facebook provided a place for a strictly priest-and-lay-person relationship. Authority in this category was seen to be contrived from a more traditional means. As Weber describes this type of authority, it is passed down to the person and granted to him not by what he does but by whom he is and with whom he is affiliated. In this sense, priests' authority is derived by being ordained by a bishop (a higher figure in the hierarchical structure of the Church) and then transposed onto Facebook as an extension of the type of authority that has been given to him offline.

Finally, the personal ways that priests used Facebook included connecting with family and friends, sharing life events, using Facebook as a place to share news events, and share comedic content. These more personal means are ways in which religious authority can be generated through the intentional or unintentional practice of covert evangelization, where priests share the personal side of themselves in order to show a more complex way of being a priest and Christian. This is an example of Hofstede's low power distancing, where a person of authority acts like they have little power actually aids in their generation of power, and can be an effective way to gain authority. Also, Weber's category of charismatic authority also evident in the personal ways in which priests use Facebook and help establish/maintain religious authority on the Facebook. Weber contends that the individual can generate charismatic authority by the individual's character, prophecy, or heroism. Charismatic authority is illustrated through these portrayals of a more personal aspect of priests' lives that coincide with the expectations that priests' network of followers have of them. By allowing his Facebook network to see his more personal life, a priest may attract and establish greater religious authority by projecting a type of relatability.

Returning to *Communio et Progressio*, through the institutional, professional, and personal ways that priests use Facebook, they achieve much of what this Church document suggests as appropriate to priests. Surveyed priests indicated that they built relationships in the professional sense that allowed them to guide followers in the ways of the faith. They also built relationships in a more casual and personal way by constructing identities on Facebook that were accessible and relatable to their network of

followers. Facebook also allowed them to evangelize in a traditional sense in that they disseminated religious content. It also allowed them to evangelize in a more covert fashion by giving more personal information that was less religious, but potentially, just as effective in leading people to Christ.

Proceeding from here, the survey data serves as a standalone data set, but it also informs the proceeding chapter, analyzing interviews of priests who completed the survey. It discusses strategies of how priests construct their identities, how that impacts the development of relationships with their network of followers, and their ability to evangelize on Facebook. The survey data served as a jumping off point to construct questions to flesh out the categories of institutional, professional, and personal ways of using Facebook.

CHAPTER V
PRIESTS' PERCEPTIONS OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY ON FACEBOOK -
INTERVIEW DATA

In the previous chapter, the survey data provided three ways to understand how priests were utilizing Facebook to establish and maintain their religious authority. They were labeled institutional, professional, and personal. With the survey data in mind, priests were interviewed to explore those different ways of using Facebook in order to probe more deeply into possible considerations priests took to make sure that their religious authority remained intact and potentially grow. For example, when priests were asked about how they decided to emphasize the personal over the professional identities on Facebook, specific justifications for authenticity and evangelization came to light. Therefore, this data explores the institutional, professional, and personal contexts of priests' Facebook use in order to elaborate the strategies priests use to establish and maintain their religious authority. It provides a deeper analysis of how priests perceive their religious authority being established and maintained on Facebook in four specific ways: the construction of their identities on Facebook, how constructing those identities helps develop relationships on and off Facebook, using their profession to further evangelize the Catholic faith, and promoting spiritual materials and ministerial events.

Each of these four Facebook practices will be discussed in greater detail later in the paper, but as a way of introduction, please allow further explanation between these practices and their relationship to the survey data and the research question posed in Chapter 1. The importance of constructing an identity on Facebook for priests came

from a line of questioning regarding the types of content priests posted on Facebook and reasons why they posted or eliminated some content. It became evident that image management was an important practice because they had to juggle these differing parts of their identity, namely, their relationship with the institutional Church, the profession of the priesthood, and their own individuality. Their identity construction is related to their sense of religious authority because, like offline, many felt as if every public action was scrutinized. From the interview data, it was clear that at the forefront for most priests was that they conveyed an identity that was honest and yet, did not create scandal for their networks of followers. The practice of identity construction also led to the rest of the ways that priests used Facebook to establish and maintain religious authority.

Interviewed priests felt like their authentic identity led to the important task of relationship building. Simply, if they put forth an honest and interesting identity on Facebook, it would attract others to their ministry and allow for greater religious authority. They could better represent the institutional Church and the profession of the priesthood. Relationship building, as was conveyed in Chapter 4, is a principle task on Facebook in varying degrees. To not engage with people on Facebook, priests felt, would be to severely limit Facebook's potential as a ministerial tool.

Similar to the practice of relationship building, the practice of evangelizing was directly impacted from the practice of constructing an authentic identity on Facebook. Evangelizing is sharing the message of Jesus Christ and is understood as a means of teaching. For a Facebook user to have legitimacy as a teacher they had to construct an identity that was authentic but also connected to the institutional Church and the

profession of the priesthood. Priests felt as if people would not be as likely to be impacted by their evangelical message if those parts of their identity were not evident on their Facebook profile. As a teacher, a priest maintains religious authority through their ability to be a source of knowledge that is sought by others.

Finally, identity construction impacted the practice of content promotion. Priests, because they are perceived by many to be leaders of the Catholic Church, play an important role in disseminating information. Facebook is an inexpensive and easy way to push content to priests' network of Facebook 'friends.' Priests believed that their effectiveness in promoting events or spiritual content was directly related to the way they constructed their identity on Facebook. Their religious authority was maintained because they, again, held knowledge that others wanted and their identities as priests continued a Weberian sense of traditional authority by simply conveying in their Facebook identities that they were priests.

These strategies included both intentional and unintentional means to establish and maintain religious authority. For instance, data identified a tension between priests' professional and personal representations of themselves on Facebook. Asking several priests to describe this experience, specifically, allowed for a fuller understanding of their identity construction on Facebook to achieve authenticity, which is, presenting a true sense of self. In this way, most priests found presenting an authentic self to their networked audience's imperative to establishing and maintaining religious authority on Facebook and will be explained at length below. Along with constructing an authentic identity on Facebook to establish authority, priests indicated that the conscious choice to

publicly represent themselves casually or professionally was a strategy to establish religious authority in hopes to connect with their network of Facebook 'friends.' This connection, priests conveyed, is the most imperative aspect of establishing religious authority with their networks and will be explored below. For most priests, their ministries are contingent upon building relationships with people, to become intimately involved in people's lives in order to minister through continued evangelization and aid in people's spiritual growth. A relationship allows for instruction and evangelization to occur because, as priests, they are considered to be a representative of the Catholic Church and an authority on the faith. In this chapter we also explore the way Facebook is viewed as a means to personally connect. For instance, the promotion of Church events that the priest may be presiding over establishes religious authority, only if it were a personal invitation from the priest to consider an idea or participate in a religious experience. The themes of identity construction, relationship building, continued teaching and evangelization on Facebook, and Facebook's ability to promote ideas and events have been positive and productive ways that priests use Facebook. However, priests also conveyed many negative aspects to avoid on Facebook in order to maintain their religious authority. Avoiding visceral commentary on Facebook and not allowing Facebook to be too consuming are some examples that will be explored to help describe how priests are establishing/maintaining their religious authority on Facebook. Finally, the Catholic Church's commentary on social media impacted, positively and negatively, the way priests performed on Facebook. The Church impacted the way priests perceived their religious authority on Facebook. The interview data suggests that priests utilize

Facebook in a variety of ways that aids their ministry, one of the most important and influential ways they indicated was their individual representation on Facebook as a good and holy person that tries to provide as authentic identity as possible.

Constructing an “authentic” identity helps establish/maintain religious authority

Social network sites (SNSs) like Facebook offer the ability to construct identities through the use of text, images, video, and audio (boyd, 2007). A Facebook profile is nearly a *tabula rasa* that can be constructed in nearly any way that the user deems useful to his or her needs. A person looking for business opportunities will probably go through his or her profile to edit photographs or video that may seem unprofessional. Likewise, priests might remain conscientious of his image construction because it represents himself, the profession of the priesthood, and the institutional Catholic Church. The survey data indicated that the institutional, professional, and personal areas of their identity were of concern for priests when they utilized Facebook. As Lövheim (2013) pointed out, identity construction for religious leaders on the internet is similar to identity construction offline. Therefore, priests constantly have to revise and reconsider their performance depending on the audience and circumstances, offline and online. If they are in the presence of one group of people they may act one way and if they are around a different group they may act a different way. For many Facebook users those varying groups get muddled together, making it difficult to navigate the various ways identity can be constructed on Facebook. One obvious advantage of Facebook is its

potential to establish religious authority to different audiences, while maintaining religious authority to an audience with whom they already have a relationship offline.

At the heart of constructing an online identity is priests' ability to remain authentic to themselves, their profession, and the institutional Church. Interestingly, there is a negotiation process to determine what they should post online in order to construct this 'authentic' identity. Like offline, priests make choices about what to share but unlike offline, they have to be all the more careful due to the inability of audiences to interpret some content and the permanency of content online. The interview data indicated that priests considered various aspects when constructing their identity. Those included the differing strategies when identifying themselves for different audiences, how their identity construction could serve as an invitation to expand their ministerial presence from online to offline, and ultimately, how their identity construction was consistent with the theological principle of their being made in God's image. Before explicating further into these parts of priests' constructing an authentic identity, let us look more closely into what an authentic identity is in the context of priests' use of Facebook to establish/maintain religious authority.

For this project, an authentic identity is a representation of self on Facebook that is true according to what the priest believes to be accurate about himself. The evaluation of the authenticity of an identity on Facebook was made by the priest in this context. No cross-examination was made between the person and who they claimed to be on Facebook. Authenticity was judged, by the priest, by comparing their online identity with their offline identity. If they matched, then the priest found his online identity to be

authentic. The truthfulness in a Facebook identity provided credibility in their ministering, priests believed. This ministering is the *telos* discussed in Chapter 2, for, through their identities priests provide guidance to those who viewed his profile and the content on his Facebook. How they constructed their identities online served as power to maintain religious authority in a Weberian charismatic sense because their identities serve as knowledge of what is morally acceptable for priests. Portraying an authentic identity allowed priests to then build relationships, evangelize, and legitimate a religious authority to promote Church related materials and events on Facebook, which will be discussed at greater length below. The various ministerial ways in which priests used Facebook seemed to hinge on whether they constructed an identity on Facebook that was authentic and attractive to their audiences.

Constructing an identity while considering differing audiences

Constructing an authentic identity on Facebook was a negotiated activity by priests because priests have several different audiences to consider. They had to be aware of what they posted and how that reflected on them as an individual, the profession of the priesthood, and the institutional Catholic Church. Priests expressed a sense of responsibility and struggled to engage with differing audiences because some audiences knew them before they were ordained priests, like classmates and family, while others only knew them as priests. Each of these identities came with differing expectations from their audiences. Therefore, their choices of content to publish and

approaches to using Facebook shifted depending on their audience. Eric², who has worked in a parish setting, as well as the film industry, expresses his experiences of trying to construct an identity that is suitable for drastically different followers.

Sometimes there might be something that I would post, if only my friends followed me, or if only film people followed me, but will not post because there are people who don't know me and conversely there are things that I might be tempted to post publicly as a priest but I won't because all those other people who follow me. So, it does play into my thinking about what I put up there as my role as priest, but at the same time, everything I post is something someone would post if he were taking the priest hat off and having a beer. I know some people wouldn't, that speaks to my theology of priesthood, too. Because some people would never speak about taking off the hat of priesthood, they're ontologically priests. I mean I see it as, you know, it's certainly part of who I am and it's my job in different ways, but, it is something you know, I don't consider myself a priest, that role as a leader of the Church in the Christian community when I'm hanging out with friends from high school or whatever, I'm just Eric (Eric, October 13, 2014).

What Eric illustrates is the negotiation process of considering what to publish on

² Aliases are used throughout this document to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Facebook in light of the audiences to whom he is connected. He considered his varying audiences and how his posts were going to affect them. He also considered his own interpretation of the priesthood and how that affected communications with differing audiences. One can sense the struggle to maintain a consistent identity when Eric considered all the varying networks to which he communicated. He considered posting something for one group of ‘friends’ but cannot because the other group of ‘friends’ would not appreciate the post. Eric illustrated quite well the many dimensions of priests’ identity and that sometimes it is difficult to reconcile one aspect of priests’ identities with the other. The tensions of conflicting parts of one’s identity are forced to the forefront when publishing on Facebook who a priest is and what a priest likes and dislikes. In Eric’s case, he had to be vigilant to the varying audiences and negotiated the tension between representing an authentic identity and truncating parts of his identity that would have been seen as scandalous to a different group of Facebook followers. On one hand priests want to be themselves and represent themselves by posting content that is true to their identity, but part of their identity is also connected to the larger network of the Catholic Church and the expectations placed upon priests to embody the Church and a moral code that is placed upon the priest. Some priests articulated that they believed that the priesthood embodies an ideal of the Catholic faith, and sometimes that interfered with priests’ authentic identity construction on Facebook. An ideal is placed upon the person and cannot be achieved all the time. For fear of scandalizing or upsetting a particular audience, priests had to be judicious about what content they posted on Facebook.

Arguably, priests negotiated what aspects of their identity to make public on Facebook because they understand that their identity on Facebook conveys a Weberian sense of traditional authority by simply identifying as a priest. They evoke an authority that is related to the institutional Church and ultimately, to Jesus Christ. Weber's traditional authority, an authority that comes from time and circumstance, is achieved because of their connection to an institution, like the Catholic Church, and one that is accepted by a group of people that grants their approval on the individual to lead them (Lincoln, 1994). If priests' identity does not coincide with the expectations of his Facebook audience then religious authority may be diminished or lost. Therefore, in order to establish and maintain religious authority, priests have to constantly negotiate their audience's perception of who and what a priest represents and then adapt their Facebook identity to match both their audiences expectations and their own interpretation of his authentic identity.

Relatedly, interview data showed that priests negotiated the tension between the offline representations versus a Facebook representation of a priest. Some priests found that the different spaces called for different degrees of authentic representation. For instance, Tom states,

Well I think offline you're "offline"-so you "are who you are" whereas online I maybe be a little bit more intentional in terms of being aware of what I post, so, I think offline people get to know and experience the "real me" more so, although I do try to share that online. I try to share activities of me waterskiing and

horseback riding, and I do try to show that I love being a priest and I love life. So, while they may parallel each other, I think online is more targeted, um, at least thought out in terms of what I will post, and day to day you get the real me (Tom, September 6, 2014, personal interview via telephone).

Tom indicates that the online representation of priests seems to be more conscientiously constructed than the offline representation. Perhaps this is because of the permanency of online content or the time that one can take in deciding what to post and how to construct the best intended identity. With the ability of anyone to capture screen shots of online content, replicate, and repost at will, some priests construct their identity with more cautious thought than what they construct offline. This indicates the technological differences Facebook offers to offline communication that have bearing on priests' use of the medium. Such permanence makes priests wary of SNSs, like Facebook, and they take special care to post content that is more publically acceptable than perhaps their actions offline and in the immediacy of interpersonal, face-to-face communication forms. Obviously, but worth noting, Tom indicates that when communicating face-to-face there is less conscientious effort to construct an authentic identity than on Facebook. He admits to conscientiously considering what he will post on Facebook in order to construct the 'real' him.

Similarly, Brett, who is another parish priest in the south, comments on how he manages his identity online in this era of permanency.

I think I blocked all the photos holding a beer or alcohol on them. And that was definitely a decision that was made. If I'm going to keep using Facebook frequently, just to avoid any kind of ambiguity, I'm going to take off any alcohol on Facebook. I blocked quite a few photos of me on the beach, with friends in particular who were young women, or women my age who were wearing bikinis or something like that. I just didn't want to send the wrong impression. Or just create impressions I cannot control. And so for the most part the way I manage my presence on Facebook is to be myself, let people see my life, see who I am. The majority of my pictures are definitely not me in clerics or wearing ministerial robes but at the same time trying to get rid of pictures that might be difficult for someone to interpret and then use Facebook for anyone who wants to kind of flip through it and get a sense of who I am and contact me if they want to contact me, if they want to talk to me (Brett, October 19, 2014, personal interview via Skype).

Again, Brett illustrates a negotiation process of how priests construct their identity on Facebook that is not as considered offline. In the interview, Brett does not deny that he goes to beaches where there will be women in bathing suits and drinking an occasional beer, but in order to avoid scandal and manage interpretation of his religious authority as a Catholic priest, he edits this part of his identity. Brett's comments serve as a typical conundrum for priests. On the one hand they want to be known as they are offline, but they seem to be particularly careful not to convey an unintended meaning to people on

Facebook who may not know them as intimately as family or close friends. Because of Facebook's varying privacy settings, the application allows people outside of priests' selected network to view a limited amount of content on the priest's Facebook page, depending on how the individual sets the security setting.

It seems that priests are cognizant of not giving the wrong impression to the random stranger who might be looking for a priest to whom they can connect. Priests understand the ramifications of communicating the wrong impression to an audience because what is at stake is more than their personal reputations, but also the reputations of the Church and the profession of the priesthood, to a degree. Therefore, they utilize Facebook's malleability to construct an identity that is, on the one hand, an authentic identity, but edited to a degree so as not to scandalize parts of their network of followers. By striking this balance between what is a true representation of the individual and adapted for the appropriate audience, priests are more likely to achieve a sense of religious authority on Facebook that harkens to a Weberian traditional authority by attributing their identity in connection to the institutional Catholic Church. They negotiate between posting content on Facebook that is truly representative of themselves, but also does not raise issues to the part of their identity attributed to the role of priest. A priest's identity is associated with a type of power that is associated with a type of religious authority that is connected to a morality. If a priest displays content that is not deemed moral by their network of followers, then that tarnishes their identity and their role as a priest. Facebook raises many unique situations when considering what to make private versus public, because their identity and religious authority is not only

connected to themselves but to a much larger community and higher moral standard (perhaps unattainable). What priests make visible on Facebook represent them and the content serves as an insight into their representations as private individuals and public ministers. Priests take special care when deciding what interests to publish on Facebook so as to maintain religious authority they have offline and establish religious authority in this emerging Facebook space.

Priests construct an authentic identity by publicly posting content

If the above is true, that priests' religious authority is contingent on their constructing an identity that is 'authentic,' then the manner in which they construct their identity needs to be discussed. One advantage that an authentic representation afforded was the ability to find common ground with their network of 'friends.' Priests, like most Facebook users, create a public profile by displaying their interests; their profile picture, profile name, the statuses they post, news and comedic pieces they share, all make up the identity of a person on Facebook. In Chapter 4, some of these ways of constructing identity were talked about in light of the varying institutional, professional, and personal ways they represented themselves. In the interview, priests were asked about these particular types of Facebook information and how they aid in the construction of identity as a priest. Evidently, choosing content that is consistent with their offline identity is important because it allows them to maintain religious authority with friends and family they already know and establishes religious authority by introducing themselves to new

people via Facebook. Eric, the priest who works in film production and as a parish priest expressed his use of Facebook this way:

I kind of just go about being myself. You know, I really do. I'm a person who has been intrigued by faith from an early age; thought a lot about it. I like reading and thinking and conversing about the Bible and who God is, and similarly I like to have conversations about evolution or traditional African Religions. I find that, you know, I guess my strategy is engaging people in these things that I'm interested in and that I find they are interested in too, so almost this common intersection (Eric, October 13, 2014, personal interview conducted via telephone).

Eric's remarks show how imperative sharing content on Facebook can be in order to maintain and foster new relationships as a priest. To draw and express interests on Facebook, both Catholic and non-Catholic, is a way in which Eric is able to establish religious authority with new people he encounters on Facebook and maintain religious authority by continuing conversations online with people with whom he already has relationships with offline. Simply, it allows a priest's Facebook 'friends' to see what they like and dislike and suggest commonalities where relationships can foster. If it were discovered that a priest was not be genuine in their identity and a relationship was built on false projections of the priest's interests, then it is reasonable to assume that their 'friend' will not want to continue that relationship. The priest's credibility would

obviously suffer. Logically, priests want to represent an authentic identity to their network of ‘friends.’ The truthful representation has larger ramifications than relationships on Facebook. It can also be used to build relationships offline.

To disclose a priest’s likes and dislikes harkens back to Weber’s traditional and charismatic authority. Priests can maintain and establish a Weberian traditional authority by drawing on elements of their identity that represent the normative understanding of priesthood. At the same time they could maintain and establish a Weberian charismatic authority, but share other parts of their lives to show a dynamic life by witnessing to a devoted life to God. This content represents a well-rounded identity that may surprise some people and yet, attract the priest’s followers to consider a Christian lifestyle. Generally, this seems to be priests’ mechanism to construct an authentic identity so as to maintain and establish religious authority on Facebook. Specifically, it depends on the individual priest and how he perceives his own identity and how his identity will be accepted by his followers.

Priests’ professional versus personal representation on Facebook establishes their religious authority

The relationship between a priest’s authentic representation of their identity on Facebook and their perception of religious authority goes a bit deeper when their choice to convey a more professional or personal perception of the priesthood is examined. Priests were asked in response to the survey findings about how they managed the personal versus professional portrayals of their identity on Facebook. Their

overwhelming and overarching response was that they found it important that they represent an authentic self on Facebook as a priest. This manifests itself in differing ways, depending on the priest. For those priests who represented themselves as a professional priest, they posted a public profile picture wearing a Roman collar, some sort of liturgical vestments, or included the title of priest in their profile name, for example. For those who represented themselves in a more casual manner, they would not post a picture of themselves in the customary priestly garb or place a title before their profile name. These differing strategies paralleled how priests understood Facebook to be useful for their ministerial or personal purposes, and ultimately each shared the goal to represent an authentic identity on Facebook in order to achieve a perception of religious authority according to who they perceived themselves to be and how they intended to use Facebook.

For those who portrayed themselves in a more professional and normative representation of a Catholic priest, there were obvious advantages. This was an overt attempt at portraying authority in the Weberian traditional authority sense through a conscientious decision to outwardly portray their societal place on Facebook. For Jose, “the Roman collar means, ‘I belong to you’” (Jose, August 15, 2014). Jose’s sentiment speaks to a theological principle that priests are servants to the people and their end is to direct people to Jesus Christ. By donning the Roman collar they outwardly indicate a lifestyle that most Catholic’s would understand as an attempt to model a holy life and an openness to aid others to live in a holy manner. The Roman collar symbolized this for many priests and they saw a clear advantage of having this be a part of their identity on

Facebook because it shows their network of followers that they are there to lead by serving. It represents an invitation to connect with people. Micah expresses his decision to include a picture of himself in the Roman collar this way.

My experience has been when you wear a [Roman] collar to the grocery store or post office or airport, it invites a conversation. There is already a sense of identity there that a person can attach to. They already know something about you in a way and I find that very helpful for ministry. And so I don't think it's just the notion of the priest as set apart, which I think used to be the overriding notion in the 1940s and 50s. The idea was "the priest is set apart, the clothing sets them apart, their life sets them apart," there are all sorts of things that set them apart. For us, I think that 'apartness,' to use that term, would be the collar, for instance, and the symbols of priestly ministry and their effects on Facebook page in some way is hopefully an invitation TO [*emphasis included*] have a connection, or letting people know they can ask me about questions about faith. They can engage me in a sense, in the electronic world, as a priest, you know and for me that is the most important thing. That's why I changed the name for my identity on Facebook, its why I can only think of maybe one time since I was ordained that I have a picture of me posted without a collar, but in general I guess what I would think is my Facebook reality is not actually in terms of that public face, any different than the reality that I live my priesthood and what it's supposed to be (Micah, September 7, 2014, personal interview via telephone).

Not only do Micah and Jose consider the visual signs of priesthood to be useful invitations to minister, but it is also connected to their attempt at authentic representation of themselves both offline and online. In both men's statements, we hear their embracing the 'otherness' that is put on them as priests. This 'otherness' seems to be a clear perception of identifying as an authoritative figure in the Catholic Church. The Weberian traditional authority granted to them is conveyed in that profound symbol of the Roman collar. Their identity construction on Facebook is a visible way in which people can clearly identify them as a priest and connects a religious authority that is connected to them through the institutional Catholic Church. Their use of these outward signs of priest, both offline and online, are used as a way to communicate to people who they are and what they represent in their personhood and their profession.

Micah alluded to another way in which priests outwardly identify as a priest on Facebook. That is by adding the title of 'Father' before their name. This is somewhat controversial because Facebook's policy states that titles are not allowed in people's profile name. Priests have found a way around the policy by adding a dash after the abbreviation, 'Fr.' or simply eliminating the space between their title and first name (e.g. FrMicah). This defiance against Facebook's policy shows a degree of seriousness and commitment to identify as a Catholic priest on Facebook. Similar to posting profile pictures of themselves in Roman collars, the title of "Father" identifies the Catholic priest and therefore, a person of authority in the Catholic community in Weberian traditional sense. Dominic is a parish priest in the Midwest and says that his profile

name “does have the initials ‘FR’ in front of my name so people know I’m a priest. It’s in my bio information. There are indicators that I am a pastor of these parishes, that I attended seminary, that I am a Catholic priest. I don’t hide any of that” (Dominic, October 12, 2014, personal interview via telephone). The religious authority of the priest is outwardly expressed in these simple gestures of pictures and titles and it is a way to maintain a religious authority that is commonly seen and understood by Catholics in very similar ways to those found offline.

By overtly identifying as a Catholic priest, they are practicing Hofstede’s high power distancing. Their cultural understanding of their position of authority dictates that they set themselves apart from those that they serve. Priests, like Micah, stated that the priestly garb was an invitation to others to engage with the priest and alluded to the clothes setting them apart. The latter resonates with a high power distancing practice of the priest. High power distancing culture suggests to those in authority to dress, act, and perceive the self differently than those who are led. In a sense, donning the Roman collar exercises this. Priests who serve in this context also seemed to understand Facebook to be a more formalized space where the distancing between them and their audience would be greater than those who utilized Facebook to connect with friends and family. The conceptualized formal space also allowed priests to engage with people with whom they may not have previously established a relationship, and therefore, wanted to clearly maintain an unambiguous representation of them as a Catholic priest. Priests who served in the context of low power distancing were the opposite; these priests did not overtly represent themselves as Catholic priests on Facebook, but still maintained that their more

casual identity construction still served as a way to maintain religious authority.

Those priests who practiced low power distancing found that the inclusion of pictures of themselves in priestly attire and titles to be too overt, not representative of their authentic selves on Facebook, and not conducive to how their audiences perceived the role of priest. Hence, by constructing an identity that was more casual and less represented by the normative symbols of the priesthood, these priests could achieve religious authority. These priests used Facebook as a place where they connected with people that already knew they were priests and therefore they did not need to publicly express that on Facebook. Their religious authority as priests did not necessarily need the overt representations of the priesthood, like the Roman collar or the title 'Father.' A perception of authority could be achieved by being more casual and, in their words, relatable.

Dominic, who spoke before about not hiding the fact that he was a Catholic priest, also does not purposefully post pictures of himself in priestly attire. He says,

There may be pictures of me on there where others have tagged me at weddings and baptisms, but that's how they're connecting me. It's not about showing pictures of me as priest. And that's been kind of a purposeful thing for me because, I know who I am and it's not about that public image that I'm always trying to toss out there, I don't need to do that, I am who I am (Dominic, October 12, 2014).

There is a paradox to Dominic's statements, of course. On the one hand, above he stated that he does not hide that he's a Catholic priest in his bio information on Facebook, and on the other hand, he seems adamant about not portraying himself as a priest using the normative symbols of the priesthood on Facebook. In a way that is truthful to how he perceives himself. Perhaps he is not a priest that wears the Roman collar very often, therefore it would make sense that he would conscientiously and purposefully post profile pictures of himself as he and others know him. Like priests who construct their identity with the normative symbols of the priesthood, Dominic is an example of an authentic identity being conscientiously constructed to parallel the identity constructed offline. By achieving this symmetry between the offline and online identities, priests achieve a religious authority that is based not on what they wear and the title in front of their names, necessarily, but by the content they post being considered conducive to a moral standard placed upon priests.

Similarly, some priests were not attracted to putting the title of 'Father' in front of their profile names. Philip, who works as a campus minister at a Catholic university, says,

I'm not much into titles. Students call me "Father" but no one on the faculty or staff here calls me Father. I'm not big into titles. It's just my name and my Facebook, and supposedly it's your friends who you friend people [on Facebook], so, titles aren't really very important, I don't think (Philip, November 3, 2014, personal interview via telephone).

For Philip, titles are not necessary because of whom he connects with on Facebook. His reasoning seems to be that if people are connected to him, then he must know them offline and it is not necessary to have the title of priest before his profile name because it is inconsistent with how he is recognized offline. Repeatedly in interviews, a consistent representation on Facebook coincided with the representation they have offline.

Arguably, the strategies that priests administer to establish and maintain religious authority offline must parallel the strategies they use online with regard to their self-representation on Facebook. Priests who do not include priestly identifiers in their profile page or their profile name subscribe to Hofstede's low power distancing in order to exercise religious authority by not setting themselves apart from their followers. Facebook serves as a way to maintain a religious authority by being an extension of their authority already established offline by the priest attempting to meet their network of followers' expectations of their identity online.

Facebook seems to be a place where the differing power distancing of Hofstede's theory plays out. Both high and low power distancing seem to be legitimate strategies for establishing and maintaining religious authority on Facebook. Both strategies seem to be consistent with a perception of how priests view Facebook. Either Facebook is a place to professionally minister in a capacity that is consistent with a more public profile of a priest, or Facebook is a more informal space where a priest can be more casual with people with whom he has already established a relationship offline. Priests' choice to represent themselves in a professional or personal manner depends on how they perceive

their Facebook audiences and the audience's cultural expectations of how a priest is to represent themselves. Facebook is understood by priests to be a place that fosters relationships with the goal of leading his followers to a better relationship with God. For most interviewed priests, that started with how they perceived their own relationship with God.

Priests' identity construction is directed in belief that they are made in God's likeness

To construct an authentic identity, whether in a professional or casual manner, is contingent upon the understanding that priests construct their identity on Facebook based on the theological belief that they are made in God's likeness. Being a creation of God makes him responsible to represent God to others, both offline and online, in the best manner possible. To this end, he hopes to attract others to a Christian life through his own representation. Again, from the survey's categories of institutional, professional, and personal, interviewees were questioned about what strategies they implemented to construct their identities on Facebook in these ways. Jose, a priest from the Midwest, who is pastor of a parish and helps with ministry on a college campus, expressed a desire to simply, "be myself, in relationship with people and hope that by being myself it helps people know God a little better" (Jose, August 15, 2014, personal interview via telephone). Jose speaks to the theological premise of directing people to God in a manner that is true to his sense of self. Jose says he does this by, "Just be[ing] funny, or normal, you know. That's what I want to do, is be normal. And it's by being normal that when I invite people to stuff or post something, that's the way [to attract others to

Christ]” (Jose, August 15, 2015). Normal is a relative term, but when Jose expresses “normal” he implies an authentic identity that is normal for him and his consideration of what might be attractive to others as a Catholic priest.

Interviewed priests acknowledged that by relating their identity to God’s likeness, they were able to deflect attention from themselves as individuals onto God. Priests saw this as a way to minimize the glorification of self and place attention on the importance to a relationship with God. This also maintains a Weberian sense of traditional authority by coupling their personal identities with the likeness of God. Priests are able to maintain a traditional belief among Catholics that priests are representatives of God on Earth. Frank, a campus minister on the east coast, explains how this theological proposition influences his use of Facebook,

Holiness is the absolute imitation of Jesus Christ in my place, in my time, right now. Yeah, so taking the concrete reality in my spiritual direction, I’m very big on this point that, you know. Holiness isn’t lived in the imaginary world that we wish we were in. It’s lived in the concrete messiness of the world we’re actually in, right now, and in every moment of every day, whether things are good or bad, or whether it’s a moment of joy or suffering. There is always a virtuous response to what we face. And holiness is being able to manifest and live that virtuous response at all times, as often as possible (Frank, September 5, 2014, personal interview via telephone).

Frank is arguing that Facebook, like the material world, is a place where people are present. It is for that very reason that Frank feels like he must be present on Facebook because it should bring the holiness of God. For Frank, it is as important to construct an authentic identity on Facebook that is true to the priest's understanding of God's call to the priesthood, as it is to construct a similar authentic identity offline. This continuity helps him maintain religious authority. Jose states, "I want to conduct it [Facebook participation] the way I want to conduct everything, which like I said, is the presumption of trying to act the way God acts (Jose, August 15, 2015)." Jose's statement exemplifies a sense of religious authority that priests experience offline and continues on Facebook. Namely, the role of priest is largely associated with an identity with God, an authority that is established in a legal and traditional sense by the institutional Catholic Church. For interviewed priests, constructing an authentic identity is to know, convey, and act as God has created them to be. The authentic-self subscribed to God's creation is paramount to their daily lives and necessarily continued when they participate onto Facebook. This authentic representation on Facebook then leads to religious authority in Weberian traditional and legal senses in that they display their position of priesthood on Facebook as a type of religious figurehead that is related to Christ.

One of the tensions with which priests indicated having to negotiate was a concern with their own type of notoriety versus being a reflection of God and the Church. For example, John, the school administrator, describes an instance where he put a profile picture of himself as a superhero avatar and the backlash he got from his network of Facebook 'friends.'

It looks braggadocios, like ‘look at me!’ And it just struck me because that is not at all who I am and actually why I even posted it was that it is so funny because I’m not in shape, (laughs) I’m not the big jock or whatever. Whereas, if I was remotely those things, I would agree with her, you know, like, for example, I play guitar. And say, if I posted a picture of me looking like, I don’t know, Jimi Hendrix or something, you know, I would be like, what is that about? (John, September 14, 2014).

As has been expressed above, the ways in which priests represent themselves have to be carefully chosen based upon how their Facebook network will perceive those choices of identification. The perception of a priest’s identity has important ramifications as to whether or not they are perceived as religious authorities by their network of followers. In a Lincolnian sense, priests do not want their religious authority diminished by followers believing them to be arrogant. Because of priests’ relationship with the Catholic Church, there seems to be an underlying understanding that they have to publicly represent their relationship with the Church and Christ in some form on Facebook, while also representing an authentic sense of self. If they are perceived as being too arrogant it will be difficult to get anyone to follow them as a priest. Religious authority will be difficult to maintain because initial credibility will be lost. Eric, the parish priest in the south, expressed it this way,

It [Facebook] can be a little bit depressing, a little isolating sometimes, uh, you

kind of like, I guess, in my more spiritual moments I see people posting photos or posting articles and I second guess their motives for doing so: ‘Well are they trying to draw attention to themselves? Are they using this as a way of building up their ego and trying to make some sort of meaning for their lives?’ And you know I would be lying if I didn’t say I didn’t succumb to some of that myself, sometimes, you know, trying to make myself more interesting or, uh, knowledgeable or intelligent, trendy, than I actually am. So I don’t like that aspect of it (Eric, October 13, 2014).

The temptation looms for some priests to use Facebook to build up their own sense of self. For Eric, the ability to post content that draws attention to himself for the sake of his self-esteem is a trap that potentially hurts priests’ sense of religious authority.

When constructing their identities, interviewed priests stated that establishing/maintaining religious authority on Facebook began by constructing an authentic identity that took into consideration their personhood, conveyed interests with consideration to their network of followers, and their understanding of God’s relationship to their identities. Like offline encounters, they have to be flexible enough to adapt their identity to various audiences in order to maintain their religious authority. However, Facebook poses different challenges than offline because of Facebook’s permanency and the inability of audiences to always correctly interpret conveyed messages. Therefore, priests have to be strategic about their identity construction by publishing content on Facebook that is both truthful and appropriate for their audiences.

One important part of their identity is their construction of how they portray themselves as a priest. Some portray themselves in a professional way, fully embracing the symbolic clothing and titles associated with a normative perception of an American, Catholic priest. Other priests are much more casual in their identity construction and portray themselves in casual clothing without the titles. Both were understood to be effective ways of maintaining religious authority. One way that all priests expressed was the importance to construct an identity that was truthful in the way they were created in God's image. The construction of an authentic identity in these ways helped them establish religious authority on another medium to potentially a wider audience, while continuing to maintain religious authority over their network of followers with whom they have already established a relationship with offline. Priests expressed that by constructing an authentic identity they were able to build better relationships, evangelize, and have more legitimacy to disseminate information over Facebook that would be considered by their audiences. We will consider each of those in light of how it aids in establishing and maintaining religious authority.

Building relationships on Facebook provides a way to establish/maintain religious authority

Survey data indicated that, for many priests, Facebook was largely seen as a place to be relational and that, then, fostered religious authority by establishing trust and connections with their network of followers. In Chapter 4, relationship building was discussed in a professional context where priests maintained a traditional sense of

religious authority by continuing the superior and subordinate relationship. Relationship building was also inferred in the personal context when discussing Facebook's ability to retain and begin new relationships with family and friends. From those observations, interviewees were asked about how their identity construction aided in building relationships in both the professional and personal contexts. The mediated communication of Facebook allowed priests and their 'friends' to build relationships in a similar fashion as could be observed offline. They shared content, illustrating their likes and dislikes, senses of humor, political leanings, leadership styles, and many other aspects of their personalities. They in turned learned about their network of follower's personalities. This type of interaction, priests believed established rapport that could be used to continue building relationships online and could be transferred offline when priests encountered the same people. The reciprocation of publishing and consuming content on Facebook created relationships between priests and his network of followers. For many priests, building relationships is immensely important because their ability to lead people to Christ and the Church is dependent upon their ability to connect with people. Therefore, much of their sense of religious authority rests in the ability to build relationships. Facebook becomes a tool to aid in the construction and maintenance of these relationships. Eric expresses some ways in which relationship building takes place on Facebook.

I do find helpful, sometimes, too, just sharing a laugh with a friend or talking to someone I haven't talked to in a while, maybe a former student, you know? I

think there are opportunities to serve on Facebook, for sure. I have had people reach out to me who wanted to, you know, discuss what's going on in their life, maybe a former student, and that was the only way they could get in contact with me. Or ask a question about faith. I think it outweighs, it builds connections, it builds people up and it's helpful (Eric, October 13, 2014).

Eric highlights one of the arguably greatest advantages of Facebook is, namely, connecting with people and providing another way for priests to be present to people. The priesthood, to a great extent, is about participating in people's lives so as to direct them to become more Christ-like. Quite simply, if priests are to have religious authority, then they need to be present to confer with people, build relationships and continue a sense of religious authority that was granted to them by the authorities of the institutional Church and the laity. Caleb, a parish priest in the Midwest, describes the recognition of Facebook's utility in the material world for the simple reason that this is where people are present.

I think the biggest thing is that when I began seminary in kind of a formation of a real serious sensibility towards my religion, you go through a period where 'let's, let's get rid of everything kind of modern, let's just have our Bibles and maybe a copy of Augustine's Confessions, and let's ignore everything else that's going on,' right? So the fact is that we actually have an obligation to society at large to be involved in society, and Facebook is a way for me to do that (Caleb,

September 18, 2014, personal interview via telephone).

Caleb has recognized that Facebook can be an integral piece of his ministry to build relationships, gain trust, and help direct people to a relationship with God because that is where people are present. Facebook can be a space where a priest can be present and lead a network of people similar to the way they would lead a congregation offline. It is a strategy that extends their authority from the offline to the online to a broader network of people. Later in the interview Caleb continues,

So what Facebook really provided for me was an opportunity to stay connected to friends and people in other dioceses while I was studying out of state, and to provide them with pictures and stories and what was going on with what I was doing, keeping them up to date. And so while the medium might be impersonal in one sense, it also stretches the boundaries of the personal (Caleb, September 18, 2014).

Caleb touches on an important advantage that Facebook provides for priests. In a sense, Facebook increases the potential number of people with whom a priest can develop relationships. Facebook also allows for varying depths of relationships. A network of followers on Facebook can range from intimate relationships to fringe acquaintances, from people that one can have consistent communication to others that rarely are in touch. Both extremes of potential audiences are seen as beneficial because Facebook

allows for the regular communication to foster relationships and for the oft timed message to reach a person on the fringes that may have an impact on that person's life. For some priests, the relationships that are fostered on Facebook provide another link to the personal and ministerial role that Catholic priests play in society. Building relationships fosters a sense of trust through the medium of Facebook and that sense of trust is what establishes religious authority for many priests. Trust can only be established if the priest constructs an authentic identity and then continues to be truthful in the way he portrays himself. Philip, a campus minister at a northeastern university, expresses how religious authority is achieved through building relationships with people.

I think authority, for someone like me, is the fact that I spend a lot of time with them and my words are true. And they listen to me, but I take my breakfast and my lunch, every day, in the student cafeteria, and I sit myself down at lunch and say 'Can I eat with you today?' And I guess they could say no (laughs). So, I eat with students and I know lots and lots and lots of students and they ask me lots of questions and I give them the best answers I can, and really honest answers. Some questions are hard. Besides the job, I have a great office; it's located in the campus center, right in the middle of things. And my door, if I'm not with a student, is wide open, so I get loads of drop-in traffic (Philip, November 3, 2014).

Philip's comments provide a good description of how he builds relationship offline and

serves as an important metaphor that priests utilize on Facebook. First, he speaks about being present to the people he is in charge of leading. He goes to the cafeteria to eat with students. He has an office that is centrally located and keeps his door open. Philip allows students to ask him questions and he answers them honestly. Similarly, Facebook provides these types of advantages for priests. Facebook provides a central location where any other Facebook user can drop by a priest's Facebook page and leave a message. The priest has the ability to respond and converse with the person honestly. Religious authority can be maintained and established in a variety of ways when building relationships depending upon the context of the relationship.

If the relationship is more professional, displaying a superior and subordinate style of communication, then a Weberian sense of traditional authority is maintained. The priest may provide guidance and counsel to an inquiring person, for instance. If the relationship is more personal than religious authority is achieved through a Weberian charismatic authority. Philip illustrates that his strategies are contingent upon the relationships that are built by him being present with a true sense of self. Philip describes how Facebook allows him to continue his ministerial presence from offline to Facebook.

I've got all my groups through it [Facebook]! All the groups I meet with on campus I run through Facebook. Like, I'm the moderator for the rugby team, the rugby team are my favorite guys, so all my stuff with them is all on Facebook. And all the students who are assigned to see me or have to see me on a regular basis, they're all on Facebook with me. And that's how we keep track of things.

Students don't like email. Email is so passé, so they'll text you or Facebook you. Very convenient for me and very convenient for them, and you can be as secret or private as you want with individuals, which is kind of nice (Philip, November 3, 2014).

Philip conveys Facebook's ability to connect and organize many different relationships simultaneously, extending a ministry function of the priest. Oftentimes these groups have different needs and by creating different group pages, priests are able to communicate to these various organizations with the appropriate levels of privacy and security for the group. Certain aspects of communication between priest and laity have to be held in greatest confidence and having proper security and privacy on Facebook is extremely important to building relationships for priests. It adds to the level of trust that a person feels when communicating with a priest, aiding in his ability to minister and the religious authority that a priest can maintain. Many priests counsel and guide people through difficult, and often- times, personal matters. Being discrete is often necessary when communicating sensitive situations. If a priest was to break the confidence of trust by violating a person's sense of privacy, then priests' sense of religious authority would be greatly diminished. His reputation as a trustworthy priest would be negated and he would have a difficult time reestablishing his religious authority. Therefore, adopting communication tools, like Facebook, which provide security measures so that priests may continue to counsel and guide as they would in a face-to-face encounter is important.

Dialogue and relationships can turn nasty, however. Interviewed priests indicated that Facebook can turn very nasty. Priests admitted to avoiding this type of communication because it does not reflect well on their identity as priests who are supposed to act lovingly. Therefore, priests actively avoid this type of Facebook behavior for the sake of their religious authority. Bill compares the disparaging communication to driving a car:

It's very hard to communicate what you're actually trying to communicate through that written medium [of Facebook]. People do things in their cars that they would never do in a crowded hallway to each other. Cut each other off, flip each other off, lay on the horn, etc. because there is this shell for anonymity around it that's called the car. And the same thing is true online, I think. That people will say things and respond to things in a way they never would face-to-face which makes the entire thing, unless it's between particular friends, much more coerced (Bill, December 1. 2014).

Bill points to a disturbing trend in online behavior that creates distance between users, allowing them to have a greater sense of security and be brasher when dialoguing with each other. For this reason, the negative rhetoric on Facebook leads to the perception of higher amounts of anger and more emotional responses that override the logical and critical dialogue necessary to have meaningful communication. This, too, is something the priest obviously has to navigate when using Facebook. Priests seem to recognize

these limitations on Facebook and circumvent the visceral communication by inviting people to face-to-face communication. Antonio, a priest and actor on the west coast, describes that process this way,

It seems like those who post things, especially those who post things anonymously; it's like an opportunity for them to vomit on the screen, their vitriol and whatever. And a lot of it is not well informed especially when it comes to the Church or it's a very limited understanding of what it means to be Catholic. And so I try to avoid it. I try not to engage in it. Dialogue demands time and attention. Facebook is not about time and attention. It's about a different type of attention; look at me, check me out. (Antonio, August 28, 2014, personal interview via Skype).

Antonio describes Facebook's limitations to create space for meaningful dialogue for relationship building. That has forced priests to evaluate the ways in which their religious authority in any sense can take place through Facebook. With regard to Church doctrine or controversial topics in which the Catholic Church finds itself immersed, Facebook has serious limitations to address the type of civility necessary to properly dialogue, as well as the appropriate amount of time needed to spend communicating through Facebook.

Being a type of religious mentor, for some priests, integrates into the way that they are perceived by those that follow. Religious authority, in this sense, is only

possible through the tools that Facebook provides in developing relationships with their networks. Positive relationship building is contingent upon trust. Therefore, as Weber suggests, a positive relationship must be established through a type of charismatic authority, where a person is seen worthy to be followed because of their ability to connect with their followers. This can occur if the priest develops an authentic identity on Facebook that is supported with content that illustrates the priest's love for his followers. Facebook was created and continues to function as a way to connect people with each other and with ideas. Priests have discovered those advantages in order to further their ministerial calling to lead people to Christ. This opens up many more opportunities for priests, most notably, the ability to teach and evangelize.

Evangelization is a way for priests to establish religious authority on Facebook

For many priests, Facebook is a way to reach out to the public and evangelize. As defined in Chapter 4, evangelization is presenting the message of Jesus Christ to people with the hopes that they might choose to follow. Teaching necessitates religious authority for a priest (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 1965). The importance to build rapport with followers and its relationship to establishing and maintaining religious authority was discussed above. Proceeding, interviewed priests discussed how the ability of forging relationships aided in their ability to evangelize. The ability to evangelize as a means for religious authority will be argued below. In Chapter 4, evangelization was discussed in association to the use of Facebook in the personal context. Here, however, interviewed priests discussed their ability to evangelize in both the overt and covert ways

and how important their authentic identities on Facebook played a part in their ability to evangelize. As Micah states, “After I entered the seminary, and to be sure then on, following ordination, I think Facebook takes on for me, more of an evangelical path, and when I say that, I mean it is being used at least partially to spread the truth of Christ and His Church” (Micah, September 7, 2014). Priests used Facebook to evangelize by simply being a witness to the Catholic faith with their presence on Facebook. They evangelize by posting prayers and other spiritual content, and engage people on Facebook’s message feature to counsel. For many priests, Facebook is a medium to share the Christian faith that they represent with many of their network of followers. Micah goes on to say,

I think that the Church needs to have a public face, priests need to be out there, you know, and we do have to be doing these kinds of things. Because the media, in a sense, the way I think of it, is a reality. I mean there is always going to be information and there’s always going to be people creating information and consuming information, but the question is, what are they going to be creating? What are they going to be consuming? You know, and if the Church kind of just abdicates itself, if priests say ‘Well, I’m just too busy for Facebook.’ ‘I don’t think any of us should ever do Facebook,’ then, we’re missing out on a whole aspect of reality that is a means of evangelization. Facebook, even though its somewhat a self-selected group, as they are my friends and contacts and people who know me, there’s still a lot of people who would possibly read my page who

don't have that strong faith connection, and that's a means to, at least in part, reach those kind of folks (Micah, September 7, 2014).

Micah illustrates how Facebook serves as a way to evangelize to a group of people that otherwise potentially would not have the opportunity to hear about Jesus Christ and the Gospel. Micah recognizes that Facebook allows anonymity for people who are seeking spirituality in their own time and space. That type of flexibility allows priests to provide content that can be consumed without sharing the same time and space as their network of followers. To evangelize is to be a teacher, and the type of authority that a teacher obtains comes from an institution, the people who follow, and the power that a teacher has in his or her knowledge. In this sense, priests establish and maintain religious authority through a Weberian sense of traditional and legal authority from the Catholic Church and in a Lincolnian sense of authority from those who seek them for teachings on Christianity. These types of authority are similar to a teacher walking into a classroom with the backing of an academic university. Students, cognizant or not, trust a system that vets their instructors to provide a quality educational experience. Certainly a teacher carries his or her own authority granted by a degree, but authority is also placed upon the teacher by the institution with the hiring and continual employment of the teacher. Similarly, by being present on Facebook, a priest can assume a perception of religious authority with the support of the institution which ordained him a priest and therefore strengthen that authority through the ministerial task of evangelizing on Facebook. Luke, a newly ordained parish priest in the south, illustrates a very specific

way in which a priest has the ability to evangelize on Facebook using photos.

I've always loved pictures. All the pictures I took this last weekend were at a youth convention and I can just imagine, very Godly, holy, beautiful pictures on there [Facebook] that draws people's interest and putting a bible verse [on the picture]. We're in a culture that is stimulation happy, in the same respect, putting things out there that people want to look at, that they are interested in, turns a head towards God, and pictures are something that are very easy to do with cameras on your phone (Luke, November 8, 2014, personal interview via telephone).

Luke points out that he is competing with other content which consumes his network of followers. He imagines that his network spends a lot of time on Facebook and that he needs to place on their Facebook pages images that are going to make them think about God. He also comments on the ease at which it is to post content on Facebook and how this adds to Facebook's attraction to utilize it as an evangelical tool. Content is obviously necessary to evangelize about Christianity. Photos are just one example of content that priests post in order to evangelize on Facebook. The practice of publishing content for evangelistic purposes implies a sense of traditional religious authority. The teaching capacity has been a long standing tradition of the Catholic priesthood and it is maintained on Facebook in this fashion. In this regard it becomes important to have a perception of what a priest's network would find insightful. For many priests, it is a bit

of a guessing game at what may be inspiring and able to counter some of the other content that fills people's newsfeeds. Tim, a campus minister and vocations director on the east coast, says,

I post my homilies on there and different quotes that I find meaningful. So I look at it as an evangelization opportunity because I guess, like, the students, hopefully see something, as you're sliding down your timeline, stuff like that or things out there that maybe makes you think of Christ and makes you think of God. (Tim, November 18, 2015, personal interview via telephone).

Providing content with an evangelistic intention carries weight in that it comes from a priest, for they are charged with teaching about the Gospel and the teachings of the Catholic faith, an example of traditional authority. Therefore, some priests understand that Facebook can be a powerful tool to maintain religious authority by posting content that is going to turn people to a Catholic understanding of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Interview data also suggested that priests believed that Facebook is a place where ideas can only be reinforced and dialogue for new ideas is nearly impossible. For priests to engage people on Facebook and have a ministerial impact there needs to be a degree of openness for dialogue to occur. Priests indicated that they had experienced times where Facebook became a place for people to find validation rather than seek new ways of thinking about Christianity or the Catholic Church. Priests seeking to establish religious authority on Facebook avoided those types of groups and also avoided being a

person who used Facebook for validation. John experienced this on a Facebook private group for priests. He said,

There was a group of priests, mostly young, and it was supposed to be like this support and place of ideas and exchange, but mostly what I saw in there was, you know, stories of ‘oh you won’t believe what someone did at Mass today’ or that kind of stuff that ended up getting kind of bitey. I just left the group because I thought it just made me mad. I wasn’t affirmed in it. I just saw people who already know what they know (John, September 14, 2014).

John points out that Facebook can get tribal when users only seek out likeminded space to validate their ideas. Not very much changes in the way of dialogue and critical thinking. This could be related to Shirky’s (2009) algorithmic logic that underlies who and what is seen by other Facebook users. Even though it is out of the control of priests, they have to be media literate enough to understand an algorithmic logic at play and try to adapt their communicative strategies. Some priests seek out larger networks and the algorithms seem to only allow a certain group of people to see priests’ posts. This is a problem when priests are trying to minister to the largest number of people possible. Paul, a priest on the east coast, noticed this trend in his Facebook feed.

You tend to see things from people you interact with more frequently and one of the things that does, I have, and I haven’t looked recently, but I have near or over

1000 friends on Facebook and obviously I'm not close to all of them, but my strong suspicion is the people for whom religion is not an active interest, who don't like or comment or respond to the religious stuff I put on Facebook, basically never see anything from me because[of] the way the Facebook feed works. As a consequence, the stuff I do put up there is going to be seen largely by people who have a history of liking, commenting, and responding to the sort of stuff I do put up there. So in that sense, I don't see much difference in reception, but I think the reason I don't is because it's virtually all being received by the same people (Paul, November 24, 2014, personal interview via Skype).

This is an astute observation because the algorithms do seem to choose what Facebook users see on their Facebook wall. If this is the case, that the algorithm bases its choices on the information users have given, then one can assume that religious content will probably all be sorted to those who have commented or liked certain content that priests have previously posted. This begs the question, does the content that priests post on Facebook get to their intended audience? Do priests on Facebook continue to evangelize to likeminded people? What seems clear is that the algorithmic logic is something that priests must contend with when attempting to establish religious authority on Facebook.

When evangelizing on Facebook, priests embody Weber's categories of traditional and legal authority in the Catholic context by implementing religious authority that has been granted to them by the Church to evangelize to those they encounter offline and now online via Facebook. They have been providing leadership for

two millennia to the Catholic Church, which generation after generation has granted degrees of deference. The system of laws has established priests in a lawful position of authority to have authority to evangelize. In these ways, the priest's religious authority grants him the ability to evangelize on Facebook in the same way that he would evangelize offline. In other words, by identifying as a priest and then linking content to his identity on Facebook, this carries religious authority. In this case, a Catholic priest is able to establish religious authority with new contacts in a new media environment and maintain religious authority by using Facebook to post content and dialogue with followers in order to evangelize.

Promotional capabilities of Facebook aid priests in achieving religious authority

Evangelization relies upon the ability to promote content and the promotion of content was a way in which priest perceived their religious authority on Facebook. Interviewed priests believed that Facebook was an effective and efficient way to disseminate information, as was discussed in Chapter 4's observations regarding the dissemination of information in the institutional and professional context. Facebook provides a free and broad-reaching tool to spread the word about an event, piece of news, or a spiritual insight. As indicated in Chapter 4, this may come in the form of disseminating information about Church related events, promoting spiritual advice, or mining for relevant events in order to connect with others online and offline. Interviewees were asked about this practice in the institutional and professional context. Data from the interviews indicated that Facebook was a simple a way to transfer

information between people within the priest's network of followers. In this way, priests can gather a group of people together for a meeting or event to build relationships and evangelize. They maintain religious authority by being a type of gatekeeper of information.

For Micah, Facebook is a go-to place to promote events. He says, "With people on Facebook when there's, like, something new comes up and somebody posted and there are people tied to that post and there is just like dynamism there. And so if you ever want to promote something you're going to do it on Facebook" (Micah, September 7, 2014). Promotion occurs when either there is an event or a need to forward relevant spiritual content. Anyone who has used Facebook may not be terribly impressed by the notion of passing along information on Facebook, but for Catholic priests, one of the recurring struggles is informing their followers about crucial information for their respective churches and ministries.

Tom, the parish priest from the Midwest, says that promoting spiritual content is one of the most effective ways to use Facebook for him.

I do the office [a mandatory series of daily prayers for all priests] and I do it now on my iPad, just a couple times a day. When I get a line that strikes me I'll post it on Facebook and what I've found is that out of all the things I post, that gets the most likes and shares, and whatever. So, I think that is just a wonderful way to get the Word of God to the people. They're actually joining in on my prayer of the divine office, which is one of the three parts of my priestly call, and so I think

that's a wonderful use of it. And I think that helps to establish authority too, because they see it coming day after day and they just grow to love it (Tom, September 6, 2014).

What is striking about this comment is how communal the promotion of spiritual content is for Tom. He has found that by pushing prayer content that he is able to get people to pray with him. Being a leader of prayer serves as one of the primary functions of priests, and Facebook carries spiritual content beyond the walls of the church to a virtual space, like Facebook. Tom goes on to say that his homilies also serve this purpose on Facebook. "They get shared, commented on and sometimes that can get controversial, but it is getting it out there. And many of the people who are not in the pews are listening to it on Facebook. They're listening to it or reading it or getting it linked from my blog from that. I think the other thing is you are evangelizing." For Tom, Facebook serves as a tool to promote spiritual content that shares in the evangelization of people that are networked to his Facebook page. The ease at which information is spread around Facebook makes it easy for priests to promote content and allow their network to continue to cycle it around to other's networks in order to widen dissemination. The information dissemination capabilities of Facebook allows priests' perceived religious authority to grow more easily if they have content that is worth sharing to a network of followers. There also seems to be an optimism in Tom's comments that relate to the unstructured and unpredictability of this type of content promotion; he never really knows who is going to be affected by his post's content and, to an extent, allows what he

perceives as divine intervention to guide his content to those people that need to be touched by it at that given time. For priests like Tom, religious authority is established on Facebook by being a prayer leader, perhaps the most traditional role of the Catholic priesthood.

Along with promoting spiritual content, promoting church events is a way that priests perceive their religious authority. Event promotion allows priests to relay information to their networks via Facebook to increase participation. Priests identified several advantages of using Facebook for event promotion, like its obvious efficiency, but also the way in which an event invitation can be presented in a more personal way. Frank, a campus minister on the east coast praises the way Facebook promotes an event for his college's campus ministry.

I knew enough to know that in any ministry, certainly in the college environment, effectively getting word out, publicity, is always a challenge and that's still true to this day. I've learned that is always one of the great challenges, is getting the word out to people so they know things and so that is what really got me interested in Facebook. If I'm on Facebook maybe this gives another good option for getting word out to people and especially get word out on a last minute type notice. Some of the more traditional means, you make flyers, and walk around campus and hang up flyers, but that has a time period involved in that, whereas Facebook gave this opportunity to type up a few sentences or whatever and hit one button and immediately have it go to a lot of people (Frank, October 18,

2014, personal interview via telephone).

Frank points out an obvious advantage to digital content online. The temporal immediacy to connect with a network of other Facebook users increased the likelihood that the word would meet a large amount of people in a much shorter amount of time than the traditional means of printing and posting flyers. For someone who does ministry on a college campus, this could be very useful because oftentimes, spur-of-the-moment events can have profound increases in attendance, if the word is disseminated in a timely manner. Getting people to events helps priests maintain religious authority because they are able to connect with those people, build relationships, and share the tenets of Christianity. Frank goes on to talk about how event promotion also leads to a reciprocal amount of information gathering.

One level is just purely pragmatic information. I mean, we get word out through Facebook and it is a very important vehicle to put the word out about events that we're doing and holding, especially within the college students and campus ministry. Facebook events, which not only is a way to get info out, but it is some way to get info back in terms of numbers, especially for things that are not regular weekly things. It gives you some clue of how many people are coming, not that everyone does (Frank, October 18, 2015).

Frank alludes to the reciprocity of information that Facebook affords, which was emphasized in the relationship building of priests with their network of ‘friends.’ The relational nature of Facebook aids priests to be able to promote events in an efficient manner and trust is built on providing quality events and content, therefore leading to established religious authority.

This leads to the last type of promotional aid that Facebook produces for priests. Interview data showed that Facebook allows priests to mine the social network site to get a pulse on current events that are important to their networks of followers. For some priests, Facebook has become a way to stay in touch with the important events of their followers. A priest’s Facebook network places news events dealing with social policies or major social events on their page and then a priest may find that this is a trend or hot-topic that they need to address in a sermon or blog post. Eric states,

I use Facebook a lot for keeping up with what is going on in the Church. I do follow Jim Martin and NPR and Boston Globe and uh, and I have a number of friends who are religious priests and lay people who are theologians and religion teachers and campus ministry and so, I probably use Facebook more than anything else for, kind of as an aggregator of those kinds of stories. Pieces on what is going on in the senate or Pope Francis’s latest touching homily...um...I certainly use it both in my personal life because I’m interested in those things. But also in my public ministry, I often find something on Facebook that will benefit a homily, you know (Eric, October 13, 2014).

Information works fluidly on Facebook and priests disseminate and promote content, but they also consume content in order to be better informed about what others are interested in via Facebook. This strategy serves as a type of focus group for priests to gain an understanding of what matters to whom they minister and with whom they are connected with via Facebook. This type of insight allows them to construct informed homilies and other messages through materials that their networked followers are posting online. This preparedness allows for a more informed priest, and therefore, leads to a better chance of being perceived as having religious authority.

Utilizing the promotional capabilities on Facebook is beneficial for priests in two ways. First, the promotion of spiritual content and for ministry-related events is an effective and beneficial way to remain connected to a network of followers and allow for their content to be spread throughout numerous networks of people on Facebook. In this manner, they achieve religious authority as a type of gatekeeper of information. Second, promoted content from priests' Facebook network comes back to them as a way to maintain a pulse on the ideas and events that are important to their network of followers. This type, too, serves as a way to obtain knowledge to use as power. Priests can take this knowledge and apply it to Christian doctrine and further their sense of religious authority.

Summary of interview data analysis and discussion

Interview data suggested that priests established/maintained their perception of

religious authority primarily by constructing an authentic identity on Facebook. To construct an authentic identity involved many different aspects, including their differing networks of followers, the content that they post on Facebook, the degree they emphasized the priestly profession versus their individual personality, and making sure their identities convey a likeness to God's image. Each of these aspects of identity construction shows a variety of ways that religious authority is established and maintained. A Weberian sense of traditional authority is maintained when considering the various audiences to whom a priest is networked. Traditional authority is also maintained when a priest chooses to identify more with the profession of the priesthood. A Weberian sense of charismatic authority is established when priests consider the content they post on Facebook because the underlying motivation seems to be to attract people by indicating their likes and dislikes through the content choices. Finally, to consider their identities with God's image is to attempt to maintain a traditional authority by representing Christ on Earth and charismatic authority in an attempt to convey an attribute that attracts others.

From the construction of an authentic identity came the ability to establish good relationships with people, the ability to evangelize, and to promote content and spiritual materials. A healthy relationship took two different forms depending upon how priests viewed Facebook. If a priest viewed Facebook as a place to construct an identity that principally showed his professional side, then the relationships would tend to follow that same tone. Their relationships would be more hierarchical and religious authority would be maintained in a traditional and legal sense. However, if a priest viewed Facebook as a

place to construct a more personal side, then the relationships would be much more casual. The relationships between the priest and his followers would be more like equals. This type of religious authority is charismatic in its nature.

Constructing an authentic identity would also lead to greater impact for evangelization. To be a priest is to teach and for many priests evangelizing meant being present in a place where many people congregated, like Facebook, and offering spiritual advice when necessary. The religious authority maintained as a teacher on Facebook was much more traditional in the Weberian sense.

A priest cannot evangelize without the promotional capabilities of Facebook. Priests indicated that the promotional capabilities aided a great deal in their perceived religious authority. They were capable of disseminating a great deal of information to their network of followers and allow the 'share' feature to spread their messages. The promotional capabilities also allowed priests to mine data from their networks to greater impact their follower's lives. This strategy left many priests feeling as though they were better informed to minister and therefore obtaining greater religious authority in both the traditional and charismatic senses.

By asking priests why they used Facebook the way they did, opened up the key concern of identity construction on Facebook. Interviewed priests knew the capabilities of Facebook, good and bad, and provided context to better understand how Facebook is utilized for priests to establish/maintain religious authority.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

For many Catholic priests, using Facebook is useful in building relationships with individuals, disseminating and introducing theological ideas, keeping followers informed of events and meetings, leading people to deeper spiritual maturation, and providing a digital environment for community. With these types of advantages of social media identified, the question remains how priest are able to harness a social media tool like Facebook in order to lead.

This project attempts to answer the question: What intentional or unintentional practices, if any, do Catholic priests use on Facebook to establish and maintain their perception of religious authority? At the heart of this study is the definition of authority. Weber, Lincoln, and Hofstede help frame the concept of authority. Weber provided three types of authority which lead to legitimacy: tradition, legal legitimacy, and charisma. Traditional authority draws on the ways organizations have always conducted themselves. The past dictates how authority is practiced today. In Chapters 4 and 5, priests were shown to practice this type of authority through the ways that they constructed their identities in a traditional fashion, like posting profile pictures of themselves in the Roman Collar or liturgical vestments. They also practiced what would be considered traditional roles of the priest like leading prayer through Facebook and providing spiritual mentoring. Also, the means to which priests used Facebook to communicated traditional authority. Many priests understood Facebook to be a means to broadcast information to a large audience without the reciprocal tools of communication

that Facebook provided. They also saw themselves as gatekeepers to information in a sense that they determined what information was worthy to be sent through their Facebook pages. Legal authority is the authority that is established through the written law. In the Catholic context that is the Code of Canon Law. Priests are granted their religious authority through this written form which is superseded by an authority that is believed to be passed directly from God. This authority is called the Magistrate. The written law lays out the hierarchical structure of authority and the relationship between priest and laity. Data shows priests conducting Facebook activity in this way through the means of communicating with the laity on Facebook in such a way that the priest serves as an interpreter of Church teachings for the laity. For some priests there is an authoritarian distance between themselves and the laity based upon their profession as priest and their expertise in Church matters. Charismatic authority is derived from the character of the priest. This authority is the ability to connect with people. Most evident in a priest's decision to use Facebook for personal means. Priests posted materials that were not necessarily related to the priesthood but made their personalities more accessible and therefore displayed a charismatic type of authority.

Lincoln provided the element of the receiver's perception to establish authority which most priests considered when attempting to establish and maintain their religious authority. For instance, priests would not post content that would scandalize various groups of followers on Facebook. They would obviously lose credibility as someone trying to uphold values of the Catholic faith. Many priests felt like they were not free to post anything they pleased. Some followers would be hurt if a priest posted a picture of

themselves with an alcoholic beverage in his hand or a picture of a priest at a beach in his swimwear.

Finally, Hofstede provided the notion of high and low distancing to determine how an authority figure might consider their style of leadership when adjusting to the expectations of those he is leading. There is a degree of power distancing for priests that needs to take place to confer cultural norms for their Facebook audiences. Therefore, priests had to consider the cultural expectations of how he was to construct his identity in an authoritative position. In a high power distancing culture, the priest had to construct an identity that was more formal. For example, priests would wear the Roman collar, liturgical vestments, and post content that related more to the profession of the priesthood and as a representative of the institutional Church to achieve a type of separation between the priest and the laity. In a lower power distancing situation the priest's identity construction is the opposite. Priests will minimize the power distance between priests and laity. Participating priests constructed an identity that was more like an "everyman" by posting photos of himself doing things that laity could relate to, like going to a sporting event or posting content related to a priest's family.

Weber, Lincoln, and Hofstede helped frame religious authority for priests that is was instituted from the larger organization of the Catholic Church and from his own ability to connect with people with consideration for how his religious authority would be perceived by his followers and the collective culture to which he ministered. With that definition of religious authority in mind, and in order to address this central research question, four key issues were considered when analyzing data. First, the explicit ways

priests intentionally used Facebook to reflect their understanding as religious authorities of the Catholic Church. Second, the ways priests used Facebook that were inexplicit and unintentional means of maintaining and establishing religious authority via Facebook. Third, their strategies used to maintain or extend their offline priestly roles as religious authority figures. Fourth, priests' strategies that built on the advantages and affordances offered by Facebook that helped them establish their religious authority online. Finally, the discussion concludes with an analysis and commentary how priests are measuring up with the possibilities of Facebook in the ministerial lives of Catholic priests.

Intentional ways priests used Facebook for religious authority

As explained in Chapter 2, a priest's function is to be a leader of the people to teach, guide, and mentor according to the teachings of Jesus Christ (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 1965). As educators and models of the Catholic Faith, priests' actions and identities are important to intentionally manage so to lead people. For example, data showed that priests readily used Facebook to continue their teaching by posting materials on their Facebook pages. This is a function of priests that is established in the Catholic Church's Canon Law and maintained by a sense of tradition. In this sense, priests were aware of Facebook's abilities to lead and teach in the digital realm because it was best understood as an extension of the material world and therefore, utilized it in similar ways that they would have used older forms of media to disseminate information, continue their professional role as priest to teach and build relationships.

Priests used Facebook to disseminated information from the institutional Catholic Church to his Facebook followers. In this way, priests used Facebook as a tool to push information from the diocese or the Vatican. Their title of priest was believed to provide relevance and importance to the messages they disseminated to their followers. Priests recognized that their religious authority was granted in part by their recognized position as a priest who leads people. This is a religious power that is granted by the institutional Church but also through tradition. It is an authority that is similar to Weber's traditional authority and is legitimated by a length of time and assumed by a leader's followers. This type of authority is not necessarily earned through actions but is granted by a priest's position and title. Hence, when a priest posts information to be shared by his Facebook friends then certain credence is granted to a priest's post because it is the priest who posted it. For example, in Chapter 4, priests reported that sixty-five percent of surveyed priests said they used Facebook to push Church related information to their Facebook networks. When asked about the type of content priests shared, 81 percent (n=29) of priests said it was Church events. Therefore, priests utilized Facebook as a tool to share Church related information and believed it was an important means to be a priest.

Another way priests intentionally used Facebook for religious authority was their ability to intentionally build relationships with people in a professional manner. Priests were capable of using Facebook to parse the professional from the personal by focusing on spiritual counseling, leading followers to prayer, teaching, and other professional activities done by priests. In this way, a power distance was created between the

followers and the priest, in order to maintain the professional boundary between the priest and his followers. This distancing is similar to Hofstede's high power distancing where priests conscientiously seek ways to differentiate their position of authority from their followers. They do this by enacting Weber's traditional authority where authority is assumed as being respected by their spiritual leadership. The survey indicated that 56 percent (n=27) specified that priests felt they needed to be present on Facebook in order to lead them in a professional capacity. This shows the ability to enact religious authority on Facebook comes from an intentional decision to maintain a professional sense of authority on Facebook through their professional activities.

Priests also counselled and taught on controversial and contested teachings of the Catholic Church to followers to intentionally use Facebook for religious authority. Part of the role of the professional priest is to explain teachings of the Catholic Church. Some priests found Facebook to be a useful medium to address such topics and reach a larger audience. Teaching assumes that priests have a level of expertise on topics related to the Catholic Church. This assumed expertise then affords priests religious authority. Being a teacher is akin to all three types of legitimate authority according to Weber. Traditional authority is legitimated by people granting the priest authority based on his role and the history assumed with that role. Also, the priest assumes the role of teacher as prescribed in the Catholic Church's Canon Law and is an example of legal authority according to Weber. Finally, priests must also assume Weber's charismatic authority to be able to explain the teaching in a way that will be understood and accepted by his followers. The survey indicated that 71 percent (n=27) considered Facebook as a place to minister and

counsel. Priests indicated that many people provided invitations for conversations about Church teachings or a review of Church teachings so that the followers could advise others about a teaching. Providing further clarification as a teacher on Facebook was an intentional act on the part of priests to gain religious authority.

Finally, priests intentionally constructing a professional, priestly identity on Facebook to gain religious authority. Priests did this because they wanted their audiences to identify them as holding the authority of a priest that is granted to them by their followers and an authority that is granted to them by the Catholic Church. The identity that they consciously construct on Facebook is an important means of priest's attempt to maintain and establish religious authority on Facebook. The visual symbols that priests are able to use on Facebook, like the Roman collar and liturgical vestments, present to priests' audiences that they hold a role of religious authority that is granted to them by their follower's recognition, a la Lincoln's reciprocal authority and a religious authority linked to the Catholic Church vis a vis Canon Law. In this way, priests also practice Hofstede's high power distancing by establishing a differentiation between their professional expertise as a Catholic priest and those they serve. In chapter 5, Jose expressed in an interview that "the Roman collar means, 'I belong to you'" (Jose, August 15, 2014). Jose's sentiment speaks to a theological principle that priests are servants to the people and their end is to direct people to Jesus Christ. By donning the Roman collar they outwardly indicate a lifestyle that most Catholic's would understand as an attempt to model a holy life and openness to aid others to live in a holy manner. The Roman collar symbolized this for many priests and they saw a clear advantage of

having this be a part of their identity on Facebook because it shows their network of followers that they are there to lead by serving. It represents an invitation to connect with people.

Unintentional ways priests used Facebook for religious authority

Priests also completed tasks on Facebook that were not necessarily intended to establish or maintain religious authority. One of the major actions of priests on Facebook was to continue relationships with friends and family not in close proximity. By continuing relationships with friends and family on Facebook, a priest has the ability to continue their ministerial presence by being present on Facebook without the intention of representing themselves as a priest in a formal and professional fashion. It may not be their intention to use Facebook in this manner but they cannot help but represent themselves and *ipso facto* represent the priesthood and Catholic Church. In this way, even though they may not be wearing a Roman collar, for example, they unintentionally use Facebook for religious authority with their family and friends simply by being present on Facebook. Presumably, their friends and family that know the priests offline will know that they are priests without overt symbols which indicate they are, in fact, a Catholic priest. There is little distinguishing between the personal and professional uses of Facebook, in this manner. Therefore, unlike the intentional decision to indicate that a priest is a priest through overt symbols, in this way priests unintentionally gain religious authority with their friends and family by merely being present on Facebook. One thing that a priest does not have to worry about when connecting with family and friends is

publicly identifying as a priest using overt symbols of the priesthood, like the Roman collar. They just need to simply be on Facebook who they are in a way that is consistent with the way their family and friends know them offline. This, of course, is in a Weberian way of traditional and legal types of authority because priests do not shed the role of priest when connecting with friends and family offline or on Facebook. That role of priest continues, regardless of whether the audience has established a relationship with the priest offline, like his friends and family. When asked why priests initially joined Facebook, 75 percent (n=36) indicated it was to connect with family and friends. This was the most prevalent activity they did in a typical week on Facebook and it was a reason for their continued participation on Facebook. Obviously, this suggests that Facebook is utilized by priests so they can maintain relationships with people that are not physically present on a regular basis. This is also an audience that also is ministered to, regardless of intentionality, hence furthering religious authority.

Another way priests unintentionally maintained and established religious authority was by posting life events unrelated to the priesthood. By posting events of a priest's life that are not necessarily related to the profession of the priesthood, a priest has the ability to show a more dynamic identity of himself. Recall, boyd's (2007) assessment of online identity management where she argues that online users have the ability to construct their identities into being by selecting what they put forward. In this manner, priests construct an identity on Facebook that is potentially more complete and authentic through content that goes beyond normative functions known of the priesthood. Posting events outside the norm for priests is an important way that some

priests do not intend to establish and maintain religious authority. Hofstede's low power distancing indicates that by minimizing the levels of power between superior and subordinate, as is normally associated with the Catholic priest and laity, priests actually achieve greater authority. I argue that posting life events unrelated to the priesthood, like checking-in to a sporting event or posting a picture of themselves on a vacation with friends and family are ways that minimize levels of power between the priest and his Facebook followers, making him more relatable and achieving greater levels of religious authority by illustrating ways that priests are like the people that they lead. The survey indicated that 60 percent (n=29) responded to sharing current personal events, 27 percent (n=13) shared moments and feelings about their daily life, and 23 percent (n=11) responded to show their interior life. A few priests commented that they specifically liked to post where and when they are traveling so people could keep up with their whereabouts and what they are doing in different parts of the world. Others mentioned how they liked to share the "non-religious" aspects of their lives. One participant said "I like posting about non-church things to show I have a fun life. I post about camping or riding a motorcycle." Another said that he uses Facebook to "check in at breweries and baseball games." These types of Facebook posts provide information about priests' identity that perhaps is not readily known by followers. Some priests post this material on Facebook without the intention of gaining further religious authority but in fact it does just that by creating an identity of the priest on Facebook that is more relatable and approachable for followers.

Related to posting life events, priests also share content like news stories and comedic content that is not necessarily intended to advance their religious authority. News stories and comedic content are ways that are not necessarily intended to establish and maintain religious authority but they do by further constructing their identities by showing their tastes in comedy and what news events they find important enough to share and comment on. The news stories in particular might indicate what current events might be relevant to Catholic teachings. Comedic content is another way for priests show their personalities and a lighter side of a priest which often gets cast as rigid and serious. Like posting life events unrelated to the priesthood, this content provides his followers greater insight into this leader and, perhaps to some, make him more likable and relatable. These types of connections that followers can make to priests have the ability to This type of content provides evidence that they are posting this content not to express religious authority, necessarily but sharing content that they find important or entertaining. On the surface it does not have anything to do with their profession of priesthood. Because of their identity as priests, that content does have ramifications because it indicates to their audiences what social events they find important and what content they find funny. In this unintentional way, a priest is using Weber's charismatic authority to establish and maintain his authority. The charismatic authority is legitimated through the individual priest's ability to utilize his own personality and charm to gain favor of his followers. If a priest can share a joke or an important news story then he is revealing a part of himself which will hopefully be liked by followers and ingratiate himself to potentially gain greater religious authority. Fifty percent (n=18) of surveyed

priests said that news events were content that they normally share with their networks. With regard to authority, the news stories that priests share on Facebook shows their publics what they consider important and provide an insight for their network of followers as to what matters to them. Also, 56 percent (n=36) of priests indicated that they shared funny jokes, memes, or videos with their networks of followers, and that 35 percent (n=8) of pictures that priests shared were of humorous memes. One priest said that the type of status that he likes to post is “material I’ve found relevant, funny, moving, etc.” Getting their network of followers to laugh on Facebook was an important way that priests used Facebook in a personal fashion.

Strategies priests used to maintain religious authority on Facebook

In order to maintain religious authority, that is, to perpetuate a religious authority already experienced offline, priests found it important to continue their presence on Facebook. Facebook was seen in this way to be an extension of their offline ministries. They led prayer, counselled people, and continued to teach on Facebook as they would offline. In short, Facebook was another place where people were gathering and therefore, priests needed to be visible on Facebook just as they would be offline around public events. In this way, priests were illustrating a Weberian traditional authority by claiming religious authority based on his presence and profession as priest. Priests believed that followers continued to seek guidance through traditional means, as they would offline and therefore, priests provided that part of their professional role on Facebook. One survey participant commented, “Facebook is just another location in the world. To the

extent that I want to share a joyful life with others in each location to which I'm sent, I also want to do this on Facebook. That said, the way I find to evangelize effectively is simply to live a thoughtful, reflective, prayerful, believing life. In our age of celebrity, Facebook just makes this effort visible and (hopefully) therefore consoling." Religious authority by priests is maintained by simply being present in a location, albeit virtual and digital, where people are present.

Another way that priests maintain religious authority on Facebook is to assume the professional role of priest. If maintaining religious authority is perpetuating religious authority already experienced offline, then continuing their professional role of priest on Facebook by posting pictures of themselves in liturgically recognizable garb, choosing to have the title Father before their name, providing spiritual materials online, and other normative actions of priests representing their profession. By assuming the professional role of the priest, priests are practicing an authority that is described as a Weberian traditional and legal authority. In the traditional sense, a priest legitimizes his authority by assuming an identity that is recognizable as a priest and by using the title, Father, in his Facebook username. The legal authority is assumed through the priest's connection to the larger, institutional Church through his posting spiritual materials related to the institutional Church. One priest commented that,

"For us, I think that 'apartness,' to use that term, would be the collar, for instance, and the symbols of priestly ministry and their effects on Facebook page in some way is hopefully an invitation TO [*emphasis included*] have a

connection, or letting people know they can ask me about questions about faith. They can engage me in a sense, in the electronic world, as a priest, you know and for me that is the most important thing. That's why I changed the name for my identity on Facebook, its why I can only think of maybe one time since I was ordained that I have a picture of me posted without a collar, but in general I guess what I would think is my Facebook reality is not actually in terms of that public face, any different than the reality that I live my priesthood and what it's supposed to be" (Micah, September 7, 2014, personal interview via telephone).

Here, again is that intentionality to provide continuity of the professional role of the priest readily identifiable on Facebook. In this sense, a priest can maintain his religious authority by perpetuating his professional role of priesthood from the offline to the online.

An additional strategy priests use to maintain religious authority is through the promotion of Church related information. This information could be international from the Vatican or parochial from a priest's parish. The promotion and dissemination of information from a priest indicates the information's importance and significance. Often, priests will provide further explanation of more complex information (i.e. Church doctrine) which again, is a task many priests do offline but are continuing on Facebook. The promotion of Church related information is a traditional role of a priest. Before Facebook and other online media, priests would discuss Church information from the pulpit and in newsletter form in the weekly parish bulletin. Facebook is simply another

medium for priests to deliver such information to a wider audience and in a quicker fashion. In this way, he again assumes a traditional type of authority by continuing a function of the priesthood on Facebook that has been done offline for centuries. Surveyed priests expressed that they post articles from an array of publications that presumably contain a lesson for their Facebook network to read. A Midwestern parish priest and spiritual minister at a college shared that he posted an article from *The Guardian* regarding envy in relationships and an article on storytelling and truth from an online publication called *The Jesuit Post*. Another priest from the east coast, who serves as a university chaplain, stated that he posted a picture of a priest celebrating Mass combined with a quote about the Eucharist. A different priest from the south, who serves a parish, offered a prayer that said “What a beautiful morning! May the peace at work now, through St. Monica’s intercession, be always in our hearts!” and a prayer from St. Rose of Lima. The action of posting materials related to Church teachings and prayers is an important function of a priest to continue to provide guidance and counsel to his followers.

Strategies priests used to establish religious authority on Facebook

Facebook is also used to expand the religious authority of priests. One way is to publicly show that the role of priest is much broader than the stereotype of the priesthood through a depiction of a variety of interests and activities that priests undertake. Priests have a wide variety of interests that go beyond the normative expectations of what a priest does, like traveling, sports, the arts, etc. Facebook serves as

a great means to promote a richer and more complete identity for some priests. Facebook can serve as a medium to combat the stereotype of priests being radically different than their followers. One of the potential advantages of Facebook is its reach to a larger audience than a priest's offline ministry. Some priests understand Facebook's potential and therefore exploit that medium to combat preconceived notions about what priests do and who they are. Therefore, priests like to provide a richer, fuller identity on Facebook to help them be more relatable to their followers. By illustrating a fuller identity to their followers, priests establish religious authority in a way that Hofstede describes as low power distancing. This is done on Facebook by constructing an identity that is more like the identities of priests' followers. For instance, if a priest shows how he likes going to baseball games, in theory his followers will connect with him in a more social way than just as a professional priest. The priest is now an authority figure that is relatable to those who like baseball. A priest wrote on the survey, "I think by sharing what is going on in my life I am giving witness to a lived, devout life. People get a chance to see all that I do, both in terms of 'regular' ministry and other things, like giving the invocation at NASCAR races. It witnesses to the idea that we live our faith at all times in all places." Another priest said, "I just try to be myself on FB [Facebook] – post about the things that interest me (music, sports, justice, politics, family vacations) and I guess I might look at this as a very subtle attempt at de-clericalizing or de-mythologizing the priesthood." In this sense, this particular priest is illustrating how Facebook can serve as a medium to establish more religious authority to people he does not have contact with offline and in ways that are different than what people might think priests do.

Another way that Facebook aids priests establishing religious authority is Facebook's ability to shrink space and time to evangelize. That is, priests do not have to be in the same physical location at the same time, as they would need to be in a church to minister. Priests evangelize through their presence on Facebook, posting religious content, and ministering/counseling one-on-one through Facebook's messaging feature. Through Facebook, priests can expand their audiences from their usual offline followers to potentially anyone of the billion-plus Facebook users. This potentially enormous reach of followers is only possible because of Facebook's connectivity via the virtual environment. It allows priests to be present, disseminate information, and be in conversation with people regardless of physical location and time constraints. This helps priests establish new avenues of religious authority. Pope Benedict expressed the importance to utilize digital platforms, like Facebook to continue to spread the Gospel and unify the world through Jesus' message of love and compassion (Pope Benedict XVI, 2013). A priest commented in the survey, "Facebook, even though it's somewhat a self-selected group, as they are my friends and contacts and people who know me, there's still a lot of people who would possibly read my page who don't have that strong faith connection, and that's a means to, at least in part, reach those kind of folks." This priest illustrates how Facebook has the potential to reach people who otherwise would not have access to the Gospel and extending his religious authority.

Admittedly, spending a lot of time on Facebook was not every priest's past time. Many priests claimed they did not like ministering to people through Facebook because it was time consuming and impersonal. They would much rather converse with them

face-to-face. However, they readily understood the importance of Facebook potential for initial contact that could grow into an offline encounter. In this way, priests believed that they could establish religious authority by beginning relationships on Facebook and then potentially move them to a preferred offline encounter. Again, Facebook provides the means to expand priests' audiences and reach greater amounts of people. Facebook provides a different means to communicate and with different ramifications for offline encounters. This encounter is similar to the Cheong, Huang, and Poon (2011b) study where Buddhist priests found that maintaining spatial proximity was important given the priests' expertise in spiritual matters. Facebook is a means to establish religious authority with different followers than the parish parishioners or family and friends already known offline. These new followers provided priests with areas to expand their ministries through Weberian definitions of traditional and charismatic types of authority. Priests can remain priests in a traditional sense by identifying ways that potential followers would understand. They would also find ways to connect with potential followers by using their various types of personality traits to make a more personal type of connection with followers. Through these more superficial levels of communication priests hope to move followers to offline worship and participate in the greater offline community. Some surveyed priests commented that they used Facebook's chat feature as an initial place of introduction and invite the person to meet face-to-face for a more lengthy discussion. Those that did engage more with the chat feature had conversations range in degree from seeking answers to doctrinal issues to conversations that are considerably substantial and, in some cases, lifesaving. Some examples of conversations

that priests had on Facebook include advisement for men considering a vocation to religious life, consoling a person who was struggling to sleep because her father had committed suicide the previous year, advising someone regarding a complex medical-moral problem, people considering returning to the Church after a lengthy absence, conversations about struggles of faith, and requests for prayers. Priests indicated that often times, these conversations would lead to offline encounters and further conversations. While Facebook provided greater reach to the priest to establish religious authority with new audiences, it was still favored by some priests to utilize offline communication to streamline their ministerial duties.

The Catholic Church's call to utilize social network sites

On 12 May 2013, Pope Benedict XVI gave the Catholic Church's 47th World Communications Day address. It was titled, "Social Networks: portals of truth and faith; new spaces for evangelization." He spoke directly to the positives that social network sites, like Facebook, afford society and the Catholic Church. SNSs were "helping to create a new 'agora', an open public square in which people share ideas, information and opinions, and in which new relationships and forms of community can come into being" (Pope Benedict XVI, 2013). SNSs have the potential to better society, bringing people together for the sake of belonging to one another. Pope Benedict said that these communicative tools must be used with care because "the people involved in them must make an effort to be authentic since, in these spaces, it is not only ideas and information that are shared, but ultimately our very selves." SNSs are an extension of space and time

where an identity needs to be constructed and maintained, especially for Catholic priests seeking to maintain and establish religious authority on Facebook.

Within the context of this study, Catholic priests recognized that Facebook was a place where they continued to be themselves as an individual and a representative of the Catholic Church. In some instances these two were separated in priests' use of Facebook and in other instances the person and priest dyad was seamless. Both sides of the spectrum had their reasons. They ranged from some priests believing and understanding Facebook to be an informal space where priests' networks consisted of people they casually knew offline, to priests believing that the more formal construction of identity was an unnecessary barrier to place between the individual priest and his potential networks. Other priests believed that their authentic construction of identity was inherently linked to their priesthood and that representing anything else on Facebook would, indeed, be unauthentic. This more formalized, professional identity constructed on Facebook did not thwart relationships but actually invited others to converse and be in relationship. These varying strategies were directed at the same goal; their authentic representation of themselves afforded a great possibility of portraying a sense of religious authority. The priests who participated in this study communicated that religious authority was contingent upon building relationships, being in communion with others, and relationships were going to be more successfully developed, nourished and sustained if they authentically represented themselves on Facebook.

In Pope Benedict XVI's World Communications Day address, he went on to say that SNSs were a place where people came together to form community. "People are

engaged in building relationships and making friends, in looking for answers to their questions and being entertained, but also in finding intellectual stimulation and sharing knowledge and know-how. The networks are increasingly becoming part of the very fabric of society, inasmuch as they bring people together on the basis of these fundamental needs” (Pope Benedict XVI, 2013). The participating Catholic priests in this study indicated that Facebook offers a place to construct relationship and promulgate Catholic doctrine, to continue religious authority already obtained offline, and to establish religious authority with new people encountered on Facebook. Priests recognized that they personally needed that personal contact and also, their understanding of their vocation as priests depended upon being with the people and responding to the fundamental needs of connection, belonging, and love. Recall the document *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (1965) mentioned in Chapter 2, which defines the role of the priest as,

A special grace to be ministers of Christ among the people. They perform the sacred duty of preaching the Gospel, so that the offering of the people can be made acceptable and sanctified by the Holy Spirit (par. 2).

To be ‘among people’ seems to include the spaces and places that people are located online, like Facebook. Most priests are not looking to split their identities on Facebook. They looked to integrate their life as much as possible to be able to construct an

authentic perception of themselves, to share with others, and hopefully, have others share with them to build relationships.

Strategies for relationship building were described as mostly mundane attempts at connecting with their networks of people offline. Priests would use the everyday, matter-of-fact events of their day to share with their network. It seems as though it was the mundane, silly, and more human elements that priests presented on Facebook was the strategy that optimized religious authority. Those relationships allowed for an evangelical spirit to emerge so that priests could use Facebook as a place to simply be Christ-like to their Facebook community.

Pope Benedict XVI continued in the 47th World Communications Day address that SNSs do not necessarily need to be for the explicit expression of faith but rather a place where people can communicate preferences and choices in the spirit of the Gospel even when it is not spoken specifically. Many participating priests understood this inherently and even utilized this strategy to evangelize a bit more covertly. By sharing the less explicitly religious content, some priests believed that their religious authority would be maintained to a degree. In this way, priests were able to both intentionally and unintentionally maintain religious authority depending upon if they were conscious of their choice to post that content.

Priests avoided being seen as a personal celebrity on Facebook. Pope Benedict XVI alluded to a spirit of popularity that motivated people to use SNS, and, for many priests, religious authority would be thwarted if the focus was not directed to God and the Church. Even though some priests had large network of Facebook friends, diverting

attention from the individual-self had to be continually negotiated. Many participating priests spoke about the danger without admitting to having a personal struggle with the matter. One of Facebook's strengths is allowing people to highlight the events of individual's life. It is a place to share the important moments of life and to receive praise for those accomplishments. However, the personal moments for priests had to be framed within the context that they continued to preach the Gospel, in other words, portray God's love and works in the world.

Pope Benedict XVI's comments on social media echoed the themes of authenticity, relationship building, and overcoming the dangers of individual celebrity for the sake of God's glory found in the data provided by participating priests in this study. Even though most priests admitted to paying little to no attention to documents and addresses coming from the Vatican on the topic of social media they have come to many of the same opinions that Facebook has an opportunity to expand the reach of priests to be religious leaders online.

The priest is to be a representative of Jesus Christ on Earth. How an individual goes about being that representative in accordance with the expectations of the larger organizational Church and his congregation is a matter of interpretation. Add the capabilities of Facebook and there is left an area of study to unravel how Catholic priests use Facebook to maintain their sense of religious authority comparable offline and establish new means of religious authority via the medium of Facebook.

This study has identified that there are conscious ways that priests identified Facebook being useful to maintain and establish religious authority. There are also ways

that priests were not aware they were achieving religious authority. These two categories, along with the ways that priests maintained and established authority on Facebook, constituted the lenses to view priests' ability to be a religious authority on Facebook. This study has looked into ways that priests negotiate their online presence on Facebook to enhance their religious authority by constructing an identity that is more in line with their followers. It was one way that shows a navigation of priests' experiences in a digital application to construct religious authority akin to Cheong's logic of dialectics and paradox in religious authority studies online. Furthermore, a bridge has been constructed over an unnecessary chasm of Digital Religion studies. This study has shown that a religious leader's identity construction (Lövheim, 2013) can be a source of religious authority online, most especially in the social media platform of Facebook, where one's identity construction can be an important element of participation in that digital environment. Finally, this study has provided an analysis of Catholic priests' use of Facebook, a multipurpose digital application to communicate the personal identity of the priest, as well as, the representation of the institutional Church. This study has moved forward reflection on Catholic religious communication scholarship beyond some of the older digital studies of websites (Arasa, 2010) and listservs (Zyga, 2010) to consider the impact of more interactive and robust digital media platforms on Church practice and communication. Religious authority for Catholic priests is a negotiated practice can be seen as seeking to fit within the logics of Facebook and the individual's understanding of the priesthood, his personality, and his understanding of institutional expectations of the Catholic Church.

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
APPENDIX A
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

















My Report






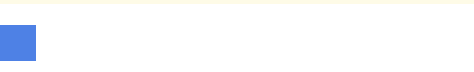

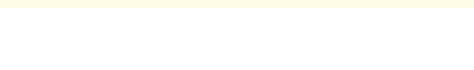
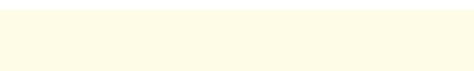
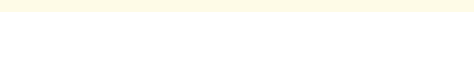
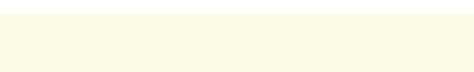
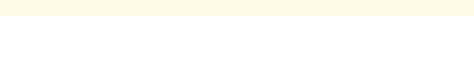
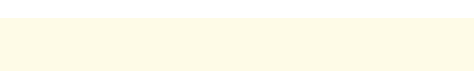
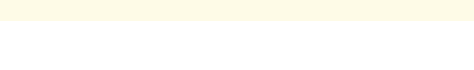
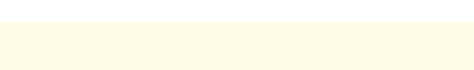
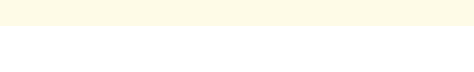

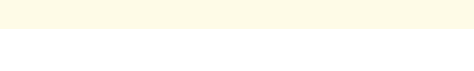

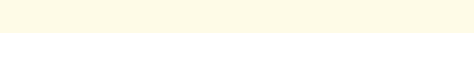
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1. What year were you born?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1920		0	0%
2	1921		0	0%
3	1922		0	0%
4	1923		0	0%
5	1924		0	0%
6	1925		0	0%
7	1926		0	0%
8	1927		0	0%
9	1928		0	0%
10	1929		0	0%
11	1930		0	0%
12	1931		0	0%
13	1932		0	0%
14	1933		0	0%
15	1934		0	0%
16	1935		0	0%
17	1936		0	0%
18	1937		0	0%
19	1938		0	0%
20	1939		0	0%

21	1940		0	0%
22	1941		2	4%
23	1942		0	0%
24	1943		0	0%
25	1944		0	0%
26	1945		1	2%
27	1946		1	2%
28	1947		0	0%
29	1948		0	0%
30	1949		0	0%
31	1950		0	0%
32	1951		0	0%
33	1952		0	0%
34	1953		0	0%
35	1954		0	0%
36	1955		2	4%
37	1956		0	0%
38	1957		0	0%
39	1958		0	0%
40	1959		0	0%

41	1960		4	8%
42	1961		0	0%
43	1962		0	0%
44	1963		2	4%
45	1964		3	6%
46	1965		3	6%
47	1966		2	4%
48	1967		0	0%
49	1968		0	0%
50	1969		1	2%
51	1970		1	2%
52	1971		1	2%
53	1972		1	2%
54	1973		2	4%
55	1974		3	6%
56	1975		3	6%
57	1976		2	4%
58	1977		2	4%
59	1978		2	4%
60	1979		2	4%

61	1980		1	2%
62	1981		3	6%
63	1982		2	4%
64	1983		0	0%
65	1984		1	2%
66	1985		4	8%
67	1986		1	2%
68	1987		0	0%
69	1988		0	0%
70	1989		0	0%
71	1990		0	0%
72	1991		0	0%
73	1992		0	0%
74	1993		0	0%
75	1994		0	0%
76	1995		0	0%
77	1996		0	0%
78	1997		0	0%
79	1998		0	0%
80	1999		0	0%





81	2000		0	0%
	Total		52	100%







Statistic	Value
Min Value	22
Max Value	67
Mean	51.38
Variance	132.32
Standard Deviation	11.50
Total Responses	52













2. What year were you ordained a priest?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1920		0	0%
2	1921		0	0%
3	1922		0	0%
4	1923		0	0%
5	1924		0	0%
6	1925		0	0%
7	1926		0	0%
8	1927		0	0%
9	1928		0	0%
10	1929		0	0%
11	1930		0	0%
12	1931		0	0%
13	1932		0	0%
14	1933		0	0%
15	1934		0	0%
16	1935		0	0%
17	1936		0	0%
18	1937		0	0%
19	1938		0	0%
20	1939		0	0%

21	1940		0	0%
22	1941		0	0%
23	1942		0	0%
24	1943		0	0%
25	1944		0	0%
26	1945		0	0%
27	1946		0	0%
28	1947		0	0%
29	1948		0	0%
30	1949		0	0%
31	1950		0	0%
32	1951		0	0%
33	1952		0	0%
34	1953		0	0%
35	1954		0	0%
36	1955		0	0%
37	1956		0	0%
38	1957		0	0%
39	1958		0	0%
40	1959		0	0%

41	1960		0	0%
42	1961		0	0%
43	1962		0	0%
44	1963		0	0%
45	1964		1	2%
46	1965		0	0%
47	1966		0	0%
48	1967		1	2%
49	1968		0	0%
50	1969		0	0%
51	1970		0	0%
52	1971		0	0%
53	1972		1	2%
54	1973		0	0%
55	1974		0	0%
56	1975		0	0%
57	1976		0	0%
58	1977		0	0%
59	1978		1	2%
60	1979		0	0%




















61	1980		0	0%
62	1981		0	0%
63	1982		0	0%
64	1983		0	0%
65	1984		0	0%
66	1985		0	0%
67	1986		0	0%
68	1987		0	0%
69	1988		0	0%
70	1989		0	0%
71	1990		1	2%
72	1991		1	2%
73	1992		0	0%
74	1993		4	8%
75	1994		0	0%
76	1995		1	2%
77	1996		0	0%
78	1997		1	2%
79	1998		0	0%
80	1999		2	4%






81	2000		3	6%
82	2001		1	2%
83	2002		3	6%
84	2003		2	4%
85	2004		0	0%
86	2005		0	0%
87	2006		0	0%
88	2007		3	6%
89	2008		2	4%
90	2009		2	4%
91	2010		2	4%
92	2011		3	6%
93	2012		1	2%
94	2013		6	12%
95	2014		10	19%
	Total		52	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	45
Max Value	95
Mean	84.37
Variance	149.53
Standard Deviation	12.23
Total Responses	52

3. 50 States, D.C. and Puerto Rico

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Alabama		0	0%
2	Alaska		0	0%
3	Arizona		1	2%
4	Arkansas		0	0%
5	California		5	10%
6	Colorado		0	0%
7	Connecticut		2	4%
8	Delaware		0	0%
9	District of Columbia		0	0%
10	Florida		0	0%
11	Georgia		0	0%
12	Hawaii		0	0%
13	Idaho		0	0%
14	Illinois		6	12%
15	Indiana		2	4%
16	Iowa		1	2%
17	Kansas		1	2%
18	Kentucky		0	0%
19	Louisiana		4	8%

20	Maine		0	0%
21	Maryland		3	6%
22	Massachusetts		0	0%
23	Michigan		1	2%
24	Minnesota		2	4%
25	Mississippi		0	0%
26	Missouri		2	4%
27	Montana		0	0%
28	Nebraska		4	8%
29	Nevada		0	0%
30	New Hampshire		0	0%
31	New Jersey		1	2%
32	New Mexico		0	0%
33	New York		3	6%
34	North Carolina		0	0%
35	North Dakota		0	0%
36	Ohio		4	8%
37	Oklahoma		0	0%
38	Oregon		1	2%

39	Pennsylvania		0	0%
40	Puerto Rico		0	0%
41	Rhode Island		0	0%
42	South Carolina		0	0%
43	South Dakota		1	2%
44	Tennessee		0	0%
45	Texas		4	8%
46	Utah		0	0%
47	Vermont		0	0%
48	Virginia		2	4%
49	Washington		0	0%
50	West Virginia		1	2%
51	Wisconsin		1	2%
52	Wyoming		0	0%
53	I do not reside in the United States		0	0%
	Total		52	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	3
Max Value	51
Mean	24.90
Variance	188.28
Standard Deviation	13.72
Total Responses	52

4. What is your primary job as a priest? (e.g. parish priest, teacher, spiritual director, etc.)

Text Response

parish priest

Campus ministry

Writer

University professor

Writer and editor.

young adult minister/spiritual director/actor

teacher

Parish Priest

Parish priest

Campus minister

Parish Priest

Parish Priest-Pastor

Parish Priest

Newman Center Chaplain

Student

Parish priest

Parish & spiritual ministries at a university

director of Campus Ministry

Pastor















university chaplain


parish priest
Parochial vicar
Associate director of a retreat house
parish priest
parish priest
Catholic school administrator
Seminary professor
Parish Priest
Parish Priest
University counselor
Assistant Pastor on UNL's Campus
Parish priest
Campus ministry at Indiana University
parish priest
HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN
seminary spiritual director
parish priest
Parish priest
Parish priest
Pastor; High School Chaplain

seminary teacher
Parish priest
parish priest
parish priest and campus ministry at a public college
Parish priest
Vocations Director; and Director of Newman Center/Campus Chaplain
parish priest
director of vocation ministry
Parochial Vicar
Pastor
parish priest
Parish Priest

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	52






5. How many hours a day do you spend connected to the Internet, including mobile devices?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		3	6%
2	2		9	18%
3	3		9	18%
4	4		3	6%
5	5		5	10%
6	6		2	4%
7	7		1	2%
8	8		1	2%
9	9		1	2%
10	10		3	6%
11	11		0	0%
12	12		2	4%
13	13		1	2%
14	14		0	0%
15	15		0	0%
16	16		3	6%
17	17		0	0%
18	18		2	4%
19	19		0	0%
20	20		0	0%

21	21		0	0%
22	22		0	0%
23	23		0	0%
24	24		5	10%
	Total		50	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	24
Mean	7.84
Variance	51.81
Standard Deviation	7.20
Total Responses	50

6. How many hours do you spend on social media sites, including mobile devices?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		24	50%
2	2		11	23%
3	3		6	13%
4	4		6	13%
5	5		0	0%
6	6		0	0%
7	7		0	0%
8	8		1	2%
9	9		0	0%
10	10		0	0%
11	11		0	0%
12	12		0	0%
13	13		0	0%
14	14		0	0%
15	15		0	0%
16	16		0	0%
17	17		0	0%
18	18		0	0%
19	19		0	0%
20	20		0	0%

21	21		0	0%
22	22		0	0%
23	23		0	0%
24	24		0	0%
	Total		48	100%









Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	8
Mean	2.00
Variance	1.91
Standard Deviation	1.38
Total Responses	48

7. What social network sites do you use? Check all that apply.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Facebook	50	100%
2	LinkedIn	17	34%
3	Foursquare	1	2%
4	Instagram	8	16%
5	Tumblr	3	6%
6	Twitter	30	60%
7	Pinterest	5	10%
8	Academia.com	0	0%
9	MySpace	0	0%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Total Responses	50

8. How many years have you had a Facebook account?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		1	2%
2	2		0	0%
3	3		0	0%
4	4		3	6%
5	5		8	17%
6	6		4	8%
7	7		5	10%
8	8		8	17%
9	9		5	10%
10	10		14	29%
	Total		48	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	10
Mean	7.52
Variance	5.11
Standard Deviation	2.26
Total Responses	48



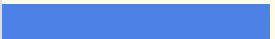

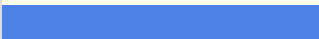
9. How often do you check your Facebook account on a PC, smart phone, or tablet?



#	Answer		Response	%
1	Less than once a week		3	6%
2	Once a week		1	2%
3	Twice a week		1	2%
4	Three times a week		2	4%
5	Once a day		3	6%
6	Twice a day		9	19%
7	Three times a day		6	13%
8	More than three times a day		22	47%

	Total		47	100%
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Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	8
Mean	6.45
Variance	4.25
Standard Deviation	2.06
Total Responses	47

10. Why do you post personal statuses? Check all that apply.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	To show your interior life		11	23%
2	To share current events		29	60%
3	To show how the Catholic life is relevant to the public		27	56%
4	To model the Christian life		13	27%
5	To pass along Church related news		32	67%

6	To share moments and feelings about daily life		13	27%
7	Other:		20	42%

Other:

To get people to laugh.

To share important events in my life

I mainly use my "public page," rather than my private one.

vocation promotion

I don't use any social media

I rarely do, occasionally post articles

To connect with friends

teaching

catechesis on different aspects of the faith

Daily scripture verses, homilies and meditations

I do not post personal stati.

To share with people where I am at, so that they might attend if they are nearby.

To teach, catechize, and spiritually edify others

To promote my ministry

TO FOLLOW FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COUPLES WHOSE MARRIAGES I HAVE WITNESSED

Almost never....only when a major event occurs in my life

To witness to the Vocation of Priesthood

Evangelization, and Parish News and happenings.

I rarely post personal statuses

I am interested in the exchange of ideas political, religious, moral, economic

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	7
Total Responses	48

11. Do you "share" content found on others Facebook news feeds?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	36	75%
2	No	12	25%
	Total	48	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.25
Variance	0.19
Standard Deviation	0.44
Total Responses	48

**12. If yes, then what type of content do you normally "share"?
Check all that apply, please.**

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Funny jokes, memes, or videos	20	56%
2	New events	18	50%
3	Church events	29	81%
4	Spiritual reflections and/or insights	21	58%
5	Prayers or prayer requests	12	33%
6	Other:	7	19%

Other:
teaching
Insightful commentary on hot button issues.
News stories
Meeting times
Articles, Videos of relevant current events
INFORMATION ABOUT MY RELIGIOUS ORDER'S PROGRESS AND MISSION
Again, mostly ideas, analysis

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Total Responses	36

13. Please provide an example of content that you have "shared" from a friend's Facebook page within the last 2 weeks.

Text Response

Lecture on Latin liturgy

I only share stuff about once a month, if that. I usually see something funny or relevant on one friend's post that I'll share with another friend. Or I'll share an article from The Jesuit Post

Ordination photos from Jesuit ordinations.

I shared information about a play I'm performing in:

<http://m.youtube.com/watch?v=aFXAo-n6aNc>

It was something funny.

A link to register for one of our retreat programs.

<http://www.catholic.org/news/national/story.php?id=55944>

News of an illness of a family member with another family member

An alumni event for my high school.

It is rare that I share anything and the last thing I shared may have been an article on modesty a couple of months ago.

New regarding the shooting in Ferguson, news about the persecution of Christians in Iraq

Recently I shared a brief article about how the first woman to earn a Ph.D. in Computer Science in the United States was a Catholic nun, as a way of giving (yet another) example of how as Catholics we understand that there is no incompatibility between faith and science.

A clip of Pope Francis telling a joke during a audience.

An inspiring homily or video or article or story relevant to the faith

An article about why it was not really necessary historically or militarily to drop the atomic bombs.

The recording of a song from a colleague/friend's funeral. Several students came to the front of the Church to sing a song in honor of their former drama director.

http://mobile.nytimes.com/2014/08/24/opinion/sunday/maureen-dowd-the-golf-address.html?referrer&_r=3

<http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1403531.htm>

News Content about college, or diocesan event

Blogs and articles involving spirituality and faith, insightful quotes from saints or noted writers, funny memes.

Leaving Europe, Arrive in USA. Meeting place for a meal.

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/september/wrong-kind-of-christian-vanderbilt-university.html?share=HEM3rHy3NoDHiyDTDefd4INjZn9ixdLt&paging=off>

I shared an article about the importance and success of the Ice Bucket ALS challenge.

ALS research is a cause near and dear to my heart because I spent a few years doing hospice ministry, and several of my patients suffered from ALS.

A link discussing the situation in Iraq and how to help them. A photo of a campus ministry event.

SHARED A BLURRED FACE OF A WOMAN AND AN IMAGE FORMED IN A BLANK SQUARE AFTER STARING AT THE WOMAN'S NOSE; POSTED SEVERAL GRAMMAR IRRITATIONS;

Memos, pope news. Relationship of faith to political & public life (eg HHS mandate)

I do not often, but if I do, it is typically a rare piece of Church news or a commentary on the Church in America.

Highest seminary enrollment in 25 years --

<http://www.local12.com/news/features/top-stories/stories/more-men-becoming-priests-large-seminary-enrollment-mt-washington-16765.shtml>

A historical piece on our diocese, a Catholic friend working on a kickstarter campaign

Content related to the persecution of Christians in Iraq.

A quote from GK Chesterton that someone had posted

I shared a picture, this morning, of two of our priests advertising an event our Community is hosting.

Sports related news article

A quote from Blessed Mother Theresa.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	33

14. Do you accept lay people as friends on Facebook?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		47	98%
2	No		1	2%
	Total		48	100%











Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.02
Variance	0.02
Standard Deviation	0.14
Total Responses	48

15. Do you accept other priests as friends on Facebook?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		48	100%
2	No		0	0%
	Total		48	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	1
Mean	1.00
Variance	0.00
Standard Deviation	0.00
Total Responses	48

16. Within the last month, how many conversations have you had on Facebook chat/video feature that you would consider ministry (e.g. spiritual guidance)?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	0		19	39%
2	1		4	8%
3	2		6	12%
4	3		4	8%
5	4		2	4%
6	5		4	8%
7	6		2	4%
8	7		1	2%
9	8		0	0%
10	9		1	2%
11	10+		6	12%
	Total		49	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	11
Mean	3.94
Variance	11.98
Standard Deviation	3.46
Total Responses	49

17. Can you please describe one conversation without breaching confidence of the person seeking spiritual guidance?

Text Response

I never use the chat function

As someone with a public page, I regularly engage people in online conversations about their faith. Privately, people send me many messages. The other day I had a conversation online with a person struggling with belonging to the Catholic church.

My cousin in law wanted to chat about his desires to serve the church as a married lay man and possibly get a theology degree.

A gay friend i had not talked to in many years contacted me through Facebook to talk about returning to the church now that the pope has publicly exhibited some acceptance of gay people.

Someone was asking me about Church teaching,

A person struggling with intense depression

Questions regarding the Catholic faith from a university student.

when someone has an illness and I could encourage others to pray for that person without revealing anything that was not important.

N/A

a conversation helping a former student find a place to take some time of for retreat.

A friend of mine (very strong Catholic married woman with a teenage daughter in public school) asked me to recommend a good book, appropriate for a teenager, giving pro-life responses to common "pro-choice" arguments. She had one book in mind but hadn't read it herself, so she was asking me if I thought it was good and the content appropriate for her daughter's age.

Someone I do not personally know requested friend status and then messaged me asking advice.

Spiritual direction Need for counseling Need for confession Set up appt Suicide crisis Abortion crisis Spiritual question Affirmation

His father committed suicide last year and he couldn't sleep. I was up, so we chatted for a while about hell and what happens after death and about God's mercy.

Answering a persons questions about strange manifestation happening in their home, and their wondering if a blessing of the house was needed.

I do not consider it prudent to offer spiritual guidance on FB. If someone asks, I normally suggest that they email me. On occasion I have given "advice" to someone regarding a complex medical-moral problem (e.g. they are struggling with whether or not to take a family member off life support; not sure what to do).

Ive had a few couples contact me and use Facebook to make arrangements to come meet me in person to get married or have their child baptized - this is especially true of non parishioners, friends from high school

As the pastor in a new parish, I have had individuals who had been away from the Church get in touch with me about returning. I have had other parishioners ask about problems of faith, trials in prayer, etc. Others use Facebook as a means of connecting simply to ask for prayers.

Issues relating to financial aide issues and stress; conversation with drug dependent student

NA

I don't do any kind of counseling or spiritual guidance over facebook, but I use it like an e-mail account to contact students and parishioners.

One recently involved someone asking about how to deal with a family member who is struggling with their faith. Another asked about how to grow more in love with God.

I keep chat turned off. I use facebook only to post pictures, check-in with old high school and family friends, and occasionally as an email service.

One parishioner who is pregnant wrote to ask if there is a Saint Charlotte, as she likes that name for her unborn daughter. Another non-parishioner I reached out to because his status indicated he had been going to a non-Catholic Church (he is Catholic) and I wrote to encourage and invite him to reconcile to the Catholic faith and return.

Setting up marriage prep meetings; setting up spiritual direction; sometimes answering questions of former students/parishioners about matters of faith

Never video chat, but I get messages often. These are mostly question of doctrine, or eduction, or asks for prayers. Younger parishioners will turn to message on facebook for their questions and scheduling confession, etc.

I had someone who wanted me to pray for them. He/she also wanted advice about how to deal with this personal situation.

Lengthy conversation giving guidance on an annulment.

I have a couple of individuals who because of distance and a previous spiritual direction relationship we continue to meet via skype. It can run from vocational discernment to talking about their prayer life or difficulties that they are looking for pastoral guidance on

It was a conversation related to a concern about the Sacrament of Reconciliation.



Parishioner concern ... I usually communicate via email to schedule an appointment; texting/IM is just for brief information

How I can better teach others about the Faith

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	32

18. Think back to when you first decided to join Facebook. Why did you first join Facebook? Please check all that apply.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	To connect with friends and family		36	75%
2	To connect with a younger generation of the Church community		17	35%
3	To minister to the public		6	13%
4	To share experiences		12	25%
5	To proselytize		2	4%
6	To relay information to the public		5	10%

7	To stay current on world events		8	17%
8	Other:		11	23%

Other:

To stay connected with the students I worked with; they communicated almost exclusively through FB

to be able to learn the names and faces of the rapidly changing student population of my ministry

Dissemination of communications. It was when I first started working as a college chaplain and some of the student leaders suggested to me that facebook was one of the best ways to get word out about events.

To share the faith -- which is different from "proselytizing" (which carries a negative connotation)

to meet new people, back when it was just college kids

Great way to organize groups I am part of at University. Contact with Alumni.

I was working in campus ministry at Fordham and the students urged me to join to stay connected w them. That was about all FB was useful for in those days!

I was asked to by internship pastor...

Mom joined. It was the last straw. I was in seminary at the time, so it was less ministerial then.

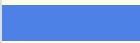


To bring discussions to people. I will often put up a discussion question and people will respond.

I was working on a college campus so it fit with my work.

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	8
Total Responses	48

**19. What motivates you to participate on Facebook now?
Please check all that apply.**

#	Answer		Response	%
1	To feel a sense of community		13	27%
2	To keep up with contemporary communication tools		29	60%
3	Many people use Facebook and I need to be where the people are		27	56%
4	To dialog with non-believers and critics of the Catholic Church		9	19%

5	To stay in-line with the Church's suggestions that social media is important		14	29%
6	To serve as a model to other users on the appropriate way to use Facebook		11	23%
7	To sense a little anonymity and communicate with a bit more distance than other forms of communication		2	4%

8	To provide one-on-one spiritual guidance		5	10%
9	To disseminate Church related activities and announcements		24	50%
10	To connect with a younger population		24	50%
11	Other:		21	44%

Other:

To stay connected with friends and family.

To stay connected with friends and family

Again, most is through my public page.

Stay connected with family.

To stay connected with family and friends

To connect with friends

to match names and faces. To counter false information about the Church.

Dissemination of information about campus ministry/church activities.

Evangelize to those who aren't in the pews and show the real earthly good

incarnational qualities of a priest as well

The only reason I haven't deleted the account is that it's the only way I'm connected to some high school friends.

To stay in touch with former students and friends.

To communicate with people where I am at (I travel for a number of ministries) and what I am doing. (So that they might be able to plug into it.)

To share the faith and be a positive influence in the lives of FB friends

Keeping in touch with a variety of friends and groups. Great for international contact.

To get good information to as many people as possible.

Primarily to be able to feel close to those in my religious order, my family members, and past friends through email and pictures.

To stay in contact with my non-Catholic friends while being transparent and forthright about my faith.

stay connected to family and friends; primary use of facebook is not ministry for me to promote Catholic Underground, a podcast in which I am involved.



To get a sense of where our students/younger generation are at (they reveal much of their likes, dislikes, thoughts, feelings -- often too much -- but that's helpful in developing pastoral plans)

my professional page is used to access the ministry facebook page I created

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	11
Total Responses	48

20. In a typical week, which of the following activities do you do? Please check all that apply.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Connect with family and friends		36	77%
2	Keep up with the news		35	74%
3	Post pictures		20	43%
4	Connect with people I minister to		23	49%
5	Dialog with people about other faiths		5	11%
6	Share information about Church related activities		25	53%

7	Post prayers, scripture passages, or other spiritual reading materials		17	36%
8	Other:		5	11%

Other:
 Also, post many evening meditations.
 Post news stories (including church news and my own blog posts) and comment on them
 Just chat with friends.
 Post helpful videos
 Note that I do these things more often on a monthly basis than a weekly basis.

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	8
Total Responses	47

21. What types of statuses do you post? Please check all that apply.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Church news	30	64%
2	Prayers and prayer requests	13	28%
3	Promotional statuses for events or products	21	45%
4	Motivational sayings	18	38%
5	Updates on personal life events	25	53%
6	Other:	11	23%

Other:
Your vision of what a priest would be doing on Facebook seems very limited.
I like posting about non church things to show i have a fun life. I post about camping or riding a motorcycle.
Material I've found relevant, funny, moving, etc.
teaching
Check ins at breweries and baseball games.
Articles about issues related to faith.
My own blog posts
Other current events
Articles
Liturgical season things: What is the saint today today? Elements of Advent.
Lenten station churches. Discussion questions.
i have two pages, one personal and one professional. my statuses differ for each page.

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Total Responses	47

22. Do you post pictures on Facebook?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		42	88%
2	No		6	13%
	Total		48	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.13
Variance	0.11
Standard Deviation	0.33
Total Responses	48

23. If yes, then what are the most common types of pictures you post. Please check all that apply.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Personal events	32	78%
2	Religious themed pictures	16	39%
3	Ministry related events	24	59%
4	Religious memes	14	34%
5	Humorous memes	13	32%
6	Other:	3	7%

Other:
 Students having fun at our activities

LANDSCAPE PICS OF THE GARDENS WHERE I WORK

I must distinguish: I post personal events on my personal page. Other posts are on my professional page.

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Total Responses	41

24. Do you "share" pictures from other people's Facebook pages?

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Yes	23	49%
2	No	24	51%
	Total	47	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.51
Variance	0.26
Standard Deviation	0.51
Total Responses	47

25. If yes, then what are the most common types of pictures you "share"? Please check all that apply.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Personal events	11	48%
2	Religious themed pictures	13	57%
3	Ministry related events	15	65%
4	Religious memes	13	57%
5	Humorous memes	8	35%
6	Other:	1	4%

Other:
inspirational

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	6
Total Responses	23

26. Please look back at your Facebook page and share your last three posted statuses.

Text Response

my ordination anniversary, a comment about the shallowness of so many posts, a 30+ year-old picture

Because a lady wants to look special on a Friday. (With a photo of Jon Hamm posing.)

The movie I just saw is just like this other movie but with one hilarious difference.

I'm thinking about leaving the priesthood to conduct a torrid-bordering-on-rancid affair with this Starbucks peppermint hot chocolate.

Feeling grateful, consoled and confirmed by God's love after my 8-day retreat and looking forward to this Saturday's ordination in Milwaukee. Dark Chocolate Gelato from Lush Gelato. Check. Dark Chocolate Raspberry Twist Ice Cream from Fenton's Creamery. Check. Dark Chocolate Dove Squares. Check. Extra Dark Chocolate Godiva Bar. Check. Newman's Super Dark Chocolate Peanut Butter Cups. Check. Homemade chocolate chip banana bread. Check. Bring on FAT Tuesday! I just bought: 'The Jesuit Post: #Faith #God #Frontiers #Culture #Mystery #Love' by Patrick Gilger www.amazon.com Buy your copy now and check out Chapter 18 for my article on the imminent extinction of the parasitic Guinea worm!

Link to an America article. Photos of church I spoke at. Link to article about Pope Francis.

1) Revolution: before, during, and after. #vneckthroughtheyears #BeijingSpringEWP — with Daniel May and Marc Oka. 2) Afternoon with the Szeto's. — with Joanna Szeto and Tedd Szeto. 3) The struggle against oppression in its many forms continues around the world. "Remembering" is really not just about recalling events of the past, like nostalgia. Rather, to RE-MEMBER means to "put life into"; it's a forward looking action that acknowledges the impact of those collective events in the present moment, thereby honoring that memory. So proud to be able to tell this story on the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square uprising/massacre of 1989. #BeijingSpringEWP Get your tickets now! (www.eastwestplayers.org) — with Nicole Barredo and 9 others. (6 photos)

It must be summer because I only end up doing drywall in the summer. Working on the Goodall farm. Ordination photos 2014 Making prayer ties and walking in silence to the top where we circled up. After some sharing we gave each grad a buffalo tooth.

They had to do with a recent Mission Trip. I posted pictures I took and about the experience of the trip.

A link to a retreat shared off of a student volunteers page. Someone posting a photo of me giving them an engagement blessing. "Happy Father's Day!"

https://www.facebook.com/fatherbob.knippenberg?ref=tn_tnmn

Wishing someone a Happy Birthday responding to someone in need of prayer
becoming aware of a situation that I would not have been able to assist

Thanking friends for a gift, with a photo of the gift. Thanks for birthday wishes.

Reflection on impact of major weekend in my life.

1) picture of Jesuit brother & role model 2) article on envy in relationships and the writing life from The Guardian 3) article on storytelling and truth from The Jesuit Post

so, this is telling in that I don't know how to do this. I must admit that I don't know very much about facebook and how to use it. I know how to accept friends, post reflections and scroll through the news feed and find people in the search window, but not a lot else, at least not by proper terms.

All three where quotes

1. An article about four college students who invented a nail polish that can detect the date rape drug. 2. A beautiful picture of a priest celebrating Mass combined with a quote about the Eucharist. 3. A humorous (though on-religious) meme related to cooking.

A link to my blog with my homily for the weekend and two religious/funny videos.

O Lord, you are good and forgiving, * full of love to all who call. -NP ---- Wait for me, says the Lord, -OR ----- Shared post from a relatives page FrMichael J.

Denk shared Luanne Mossa's photo. 23 hours ago my great grandpa Denk circa 1960 The original air guitarist with a coal shovel. Grandpa Denk, circa 1930 Picture.

8/18 checked in at Target Field 7/28 Shared Religion and Ethics NewsWeekly's Happy Birthday to Gerard Manley Hopkins 7/23 Picture out bikeriding with my sister

After almost completing two months here in the majority Muslim country of Kyrgyzstan, it has been a wonderful reminder that the vast majority of Muslim people loathe violence and desire peace. They are afraid of the Saudi incursions of money which are used to bribe women to wear the hijab and men to join subversive government groups pushing for a Caliphate. They are scared of the Syrian recruiters that have come here to Kyrgyzstan. Most Muslims here, like most in the world, desire peace, and it is always good in the American political climate to remind ourselves of this. Today is day 20 since I came to Kyrgyzstan, so I'm 1/3 of the way through. So far so good! I've helped so far with a youth camp for Christian kids without families and an English camp for college age Muslim students. Thanks for all the prayers, and keep them coming. "No one is more 'little' than a priest left to his own devices; and so our prayer of protection against every snare of the Evil One is the prayer of our Mother: I am a priest because he has regarded my littleness" (cf. Lk 1:48). Pope Francis

1. I posted a link for people to download songs from my website that were sung by my friend who died recently. 2. I posted a link to my homily, via the parish website, from Sunday. 3. I posted, via Instagram, a picture from "live remotes" I was filming with local TV station for my school's new mobile app.

No #Obama adm. rep at #JamesFoley Mem Mass. 3 sent to Michael Brown funeral. Shameful & disgraceful but no surprise. <http://t.co/pqnwbXJ9gg> Obama Sent No Representative to Memorial Mass for Beheaded Journalist James Foley President Barack Obama sent no White House representative to the memorial Mass held yesterday... M.CNSNEWS.COM Latest Obama Admin tweak to HHS contraceptive mandate does not solve moral problem for religious not-for-profits <http://t.co/mgr2WTm1rF> James Capretta - The Latest Step in the HHS Mandate Saga: The Non-Accommodation Is Still Not a... The Obama administration suffered two stinging defeats at the Supreme Court this summer related... NATL.RE My latest for Catholic Match: not an easy one to answer: Are Marriages Made in Heaven? « Catholic Match Institute <http://t.co/4eOeBl86Xc> Are Marriages Made in Heaven? Dear Father, In the book of Proverbs 18:22 it says, "He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD." The reason I bring this up is that I've heard it said so many times that "marriages are made in heaven." Are they? Does... INSTITUTE.CATHOLICMATCH.COM

go rams, article from the WSJ. shared video from NBC - bishop thomas addresses ice bucket challenge. and finally a screen capture of someone critiquing me on twitter and my response back.

1-"What a beautiful, quiet morning! May the peace at work now, through St. Monica's intercession, be always in our hearts!" 2-"Read great books. Books change our lives. Why? Because we become the books we read.... I'd like to come to your house sometime. I'd like to see your books. You show me your books and I'll tell you what sort of person you are. You tell me the ten books you're going to read in the next twelve months and I'll tell you how your life is going to change in the next twelve months." - Matthew Kelly, Catholic Speaker and Author" 3-"If only mortals would learn how great it is to possess divine grace, how beautiful, how noble, how precious. How many riches it hides within itself, how many joys and delights! Without doubt they would devote all their care and concern to winning for themselves pains and afflictions. All men throughout the world would seek trouble, infirmities and torments, instead of good fortune, in order to attain the unfathomable treasure of grace. This is the reward and the final gain of patience. No one would complain about his cross or about troubles that may happen to him, if he would come to know the scales on which they are weighed when they are distributed to men." - The Lord Jesus speaking to St. Rose of Lima. St. Rose, pray for us, that we might carry well our crosses and rejoice in the treasure that awaits."

Dinner at Canton Arms, Packing to Leave London, Heading for Heathrow Airport

1. "It didn't matter to them if we were politically or racially diverse, if we cared about the environment or built Habitat homes. It didn't matter if our students were top in their fields and some of the kindest, most thoughtful, most compassionate leaders on campus. There was a line in the sand, and we fell on the wrong side of it." 2.

'The power of evil men lives on the cowardice of the good.' St. John Bosco 3. Party on the Plaza - Thursday night 10pm Mass in the Union; 11pm Party on the Plaza

1. Simply the word "yay!" connected to a new video of a band I, and many of my friends, enjoy a lot called Nickel Creek. The video is part of NPR "Tiny Desk" concert series 2. "This. beautiful. And I just read today: ALSA raised \$1.9mil yesterday

alone, largest single day total ever. 'We have never seen anything like this in the history of the disease,' said Barbara Newhouse, President, The ALS Association."

That was connected to a video of a father suffering from ALS doing the Icebucket Challenge with his college aged daughter. 3. "yeah, Grandma Ethel! #strikeoutALS"

included w a video of the Kennedy family doing the Icebucket challenge en mass.

St. Paul's now has a foosball table!!! The day has finally come when I have my own business card. Go Hoosier Catholics. One of my favorite things about Baptizing babies is the fact that my hands smell like Holy Oil for the rest of the day.

A JON STEWARD RANT ABOUT FERGUSON MO; PICTURE OF A WOMAN AND STARING AT NOSE; A QUOTED DIARY REFLECTION OF THE CORRESPONDENT FOLEY KILLED BY ISIS IN IRAQ

1) An article containing Catholic Memes 2) An article from an online Catholic magazine 3) An article from a Catholic Blog

#1 I am so happy to be ordained...thank you to all who prayed for me. #2 I have been away for a while, but new photos are coming and I am almost done with thank you notes from my ordination. #3 My 40 day retreat just finished and I am moving into my new parish tomorrow!!!

Political analysis for local senate race re: abortion, contraception Meme: blood of martyrs Cancer & the pill

There is a lot of freedom flying overhead in Norfolk this week, and I couldn't be happier. FLYNAVY! Powerful reading today from the Office of Readings for Saint Andrew Kim Taegon, priest and martyr. Take a minute to read a section: (section then posted). I have Apple 6 now. It is like Apple 4 but bigger.

I rarely if ever post status updates

I have an official parish facebook and a personal facebook. The personal facebook is where there are discussions and the parish facebook is more activities happening.

Personal facebook: 1) The biggest struggles for Christians today they find themselves be converted by the world, instead of converting it. We are to be changed by Christ, and then in Christ change the world. However most people are formed by the world and converted to the world. 2) Quick Reminder: Ice Cream After ALL the Masses at Holy Cross Parish this Weekend! This is brought to you by the Oktoberfest committee as we Prepare for that big day. Mass times: Sat 4:30, Sunday 7:30, 9:15 and 11:00 Yes you can eat ice cream from breakfast. 3) RE: Adult Confirmation and R.C.I.A. Confirmation is a Sacrament of Initiation. To be a fully initiated Catholic you need to have the sacrament of Confirmation. Many people did not get confirmed at the normal time because they were not ready or were very busy. If you are an adult in that situation I would encourage you to call your Parish and begin Confirmation preparation as an adult. Those programs normally begin around this time. If you are a parent and promised to raise your children in the faith at Baptism, you should be a fully initiated Catholic and have the special graces of the Holy Spirit that come with that sacrament. RCIA is the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. If you are NOT Catholic you can begin that process as well. if you want to find out about the Church, begin the RCIA process to learn about the faith. The first period of the process is about getting your questions answered to see if you even

want to continue. It is very Non-Threatening. This is for the Unbaptized, but even if you ARE a baptized non-Catholic Christian they often go through this as well. Pray about this, and then call your parish so you can grow deeper in your faith in Jesus Christ.

Yarr! - It's International Talk Like A Pirate Day Hey gang! Interested in helping to fund a very Catholic, very talented, very awesome human being? Help my buddy James Rosenbloom kickstart his first album! "Father, What do I do if I get to Mass early?" <http://t.co/3rCxhqb5hh>

1. Posted thanking people for their birthday wishes 2. Posted pictures from a wedding I was tagged in 3. Another picture from a ministry event I was tagged in

#1 JOIN US THIS & EVERY SUNDAY FOR CATHOLIC MASS RIGHT ON CAMPUS - 8:30

PM - Student Center Cafe B & C

<https://www.facebook.com/events/918177828207210/> #2 Wings & mozzarella

sticks... Cigars... "Band of brothers" DVD. - first @MSU_Newman men's night

underway #3 A gem from Flannery O'Connor which seems timely: "All your dissatisfaction with the [Catholic] Church seems to me to come from an incomplete understanding of sin. This will perhaps surprise you because you are very conscious of the sins of Catholics; however what you seem actually to demand is that the Church put the kingdom of heaven on earth right here now, that the Holy Ghost be translated at once into all flesh... The Church is founded on Peter who denied Christ three times and couldn't walk on the water by himself. You are expecting his successors to walk on the water. All human nature vigorously resists grace because grace changes us and the change is painful."

On my personal page: 1. I asked friends and family to pray for my uncle and his family 2. I posted my Uncle's picture 3. I shared pictures from my vacation On my professional page: 1. I posted a picture of my uncle and asked for prayers. 2.

Informed everyone I was on vacation 3. shared a video I really like

Orioles video. Quote from St. Jerome, Seinfeld quiz

Announced First Friday Mass, posted a quote from Mother Theresa, and posted a meme of various sorts of Catholics.






Statistic	Value
Total Responses	40

27. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 indicating you “do not agree” and 5 indicating you “highly agree,” indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Please provide examples where requested. I consider activity on Facebook to be an important part of my role as a priest.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	1	8	20%
2	2	17	41%
3	3	4	10%
4	4	7	17%
5	5	5	12%
	Total	41	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	2.61
Variance	1.74
Standard Deviation	1.32
Total Responses	41

28. I consider Facebook as a place to minister and counsel.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		13	34%
2	2		14	37%
3	3		3	8%
4	4		6	16%
5	5		2	5%
	Total		38	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	2.21
Variance	1.52
Standard Deviation	1.23
Total Responses	38

29. If you would, please provide an example of an experience of ministering/counseling on Facebook.

Text Response

words of consolation, assurance of prayers

I don't find Facebook a good way to do counseling.

I do not think FB is an appropriate forum for counseling

Almost too numerous to mention. Today I had a FB messaging session with a woman who had a bad experience in confession.

mostly i use it to keep in contacted and set up live meetings.

It generally happens in FB Messenger or chat. People will ask me a question. I think the ability to "chat" without being face-to-face makes it more comfortable for many people to inquire.

Scheduling appointments for counseling. Identifying people who are struggling via their posts.

Not applicable.

I prefer not to counsel on facebook

I do not do this actively. Perhaps what I post is a passive way of ministering, but I don't engage people individually in a pastoral way.

I don't think Facebook is a great place for counseling, and I would agree to ministering but only in this sense: as a Jesuit priest my whole life is ministry. So, my sharing pictures of hanging out with friends, or jokes, or pictures of normal life, or articles about Jesus & the Church or whatever - it's all ministry. The aim of my Facebook page is the same aim as my life (or The Jesuit Post), to help people see what it can look like to believe in God and participate in the Church in the postmodern West.

I don't understand the privacy settings and in general do not trust this kind of media to be an adequate place for ministering or counseling.

A friend of mine (married man) is seriously considering becoming a permanent deacon, but exploring the deacon formation program in his diocese he discovered it is extremely poorly run. So he was asking my advice about whether he should stay in his current location and go through the (apparently lousy) program; stay where he is but not become a deacon; or move his family to another diocese where the deacon formation program is much more comprehensive and faithful to the Church.

People reach out to me who normally wouldn't have the courage in person.

The idea of counseling on Facebook strikes me as completely ridiculous.

A girl who I was in philosophy studies with was recently broken up with by her boyfriend of 5 years who she had been living with for 3 years. She wanted to talk about how she felt, so we chatted for a while.

Periodically, people share (generally via private message of FB Chat) a struggle they are having with a Church teaching, or trying to understand how it fits their particular experience. I think this medium allows them to feel a bit "confessional" there is anonymity, and yet familiarity. So a concrete example from a recent conversation was a young man wondering how missing a single mass is really a mortal sin, that left unconfessed could lead to his eternal damnation. It provided an opportunity to explain the teaching in context. That he was working backwards, no forwards.

I do not engage in counseling per se on FB.

I have had countless people asking for spiritual guidance or seeking some advice on where to start for spiritual direction, finding a confessor, spirit reading, etc. Though the in depth conversation usually isn't on Facebook, it is often used as a touching point to help make things happen when they might otherwise fall through the cracks for lack of opportunity to connect with me or another priest.

Dealing with drug dependent and alcohol dependent students for whom I am a mentor.

Question I received via Inbox from a student yesterday: Hi Father, Would you be willing to read and critique this document I wrote about the defense against female priests? I want to send it to a friend of mine but don't want to send something stupid or heretical.

Well, I'd define minister in a very broad context here. I post the occasionally link about Pope Francis doing something great or a challenging social justice article, re. immigration, poverty. I want people to think about these issues as Catholic and Christian issues. I really don't use FB for one-on-one ministry or counseling. Every once in a while, I'll receive a prayer request or a request for faith/peace/justice oriented reading material, which I'll respond to (obviously!)

None comes to mind.

Messaging with parishioners about specific questions regarding the spiritual life or parish life. For ministry I essentially use Facebook as another forum of communication to occur (kind of like Email but more interactive)

It could be....I do not use it for that...except for about once a year when I get random emails on Facebook asking for guidance. I rarely use facebook and I strive to keep it limited to family and friends. They may even contact me on Facebook, but then I call them on the phone. I am thankful that it tells me their birthdays and shows pictures of their newborn children, etc. It could be used for ministry....but I just do not have that kind of time.

The only one that I've had was a relative of a parishioner having a conversion experience to the Church. Generally, if they aren't close to me, I don't let them message me.

I have been involved in discussions on facebook regarding church teaching, HHS mandate, interpretation of Scripture, etc. -- not with strangers -- but usually former students who I taught when I was a high school teacher (first assignment after ordination).

I don't generally provide counseling on Facebook, since I prefer a face-to-face opportunity whenever possible. Occasionally, I will offer counsel on vocations or difficult life decisions when no other possibility for communication is available.

I regularly get faith questions or I am asked to pray for someone.

Often times students will "approach" me on Facebook asking a question, or a comment as a way to "break the ice". For Example "Hey Father I've always wanted to know.... Why do Catholics think it's not okay to have sex before marriage?" I'll usually give them a catechetical response with a pastoral sensitivity - assuming that there's a reason they're asking this question and leaving the door open for some follow up. If they start to open up, I'll say something like "hey would you like to meet up to chat about this?"

I do vocation ministry so talking about discernment and prayer are most common.

Nothing really complex. More info sharing.

Brief comments about the lives of Saints for encouragement

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	33

30. I consider Facebook an important place to evangelize.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	1	6	17%
2	2	8	22%
3	3	4	11%
4	4	12	33%
5	5	6	17%
	Total	36	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	3.11
Variance	1.93
Standard Deviation	1.39
Total Responses	36

31. If you can, give reasoning for your answer. Provide an illustrative example, if possible.

If evangelization includes showing what it means to live a life of faith in the modern world (and I think it does), then Facebook is a way to do that in a public way.

See above. Facebook is just another location in the world. To the extent that I want to share a joyful life with others in each location to which I'm sent I also want to do this on Facebook. That said, the way I find to evangelize effectively is simply to live a thoughtful, reflective, prayerful, believing life. In our age of celebrity, Facebook just makes this effort visible and (hopefully) therefore consoling.

I do think that this medium in that it is passive, can allow a person to post and others to read and then think about things going on in the culture.

I don't think it is all that great, simply because what (I suspect) happens for many of us is that most of our facebook friends are already strong Catholics (or at least, Catholics in some sense of the word). In general I find facebook is much more useful as a way of catechizing, and perhaps strengthening the faith of, fellow Catholics than it is evangelizing those who are not already believers. At least that has been my experience up until this point. I think the *potential* is there for facebook to be a great tool for evangelization. But if one is going to evangelize many non-believers, one needs to become facebook friends with many non-believers. And at least a priest, that is not the easiest thing to do.

I reach people who don't set foot in church. Also people who do love the connection online as well

Seems like a dumb place to evangelize. My posts would show up to my friends who aren't in much need of evangelization.

Most of my friends are Christian, so the "evangelizing" I do I suppose is to try to help Catholics better understand their faith. I often post articles on what it means to be Catholic that target either my ultra rightwing or ultra leftwing friends. I consider it my job to build understanding of one another and bring the Church together.

I think by sharing what is going on in my life I am giving witness to a lived, devout life. (I use devout in the Salesian sense, meaning true devotion is the love of God.) People get a chance to see all that I do, both in terms of "regular" ministry and other things, like giving the invocation at NASCAR races. It witnesses to the idea that we live our faith at all times in all places.

I have my own website and blog; and I publish quite a bit in Catholic and secular media. These publications are normally in the line of evangelization and Catholic commentary on current events. When I publish them, I normally post them on my FB page. This was my most recent blog post. <http://fatherberg.com/why-are-so-many-catholics-afraid-to-talk-about-jesus/>

providing clear teaching and explanation of church teaching

I like to post quotes from the saints and notable writers, articles about things of faith that connect with daily life, and other similar posts. I also use it to post links to my blog with my Sunday homilies. On several occasions I have been contacted when I didn't post homilies in a timely manner because people were relying upon Facebook to get the links to it to aid their reflection for the week.

Sometimes facebook is the fastest and cheapest way to get in touch. I spent the summer in London. My students were in US

Video: How Ryan Anderson Responded to a Gay Man Who Wants to Redefine Marriage

Again, "evangelize" I'd use in a very broad sense -- and would almost hesitate to use it to describe my activities on FB: I think it's important for my non-believing, progressive friends to see that a Catholic priest is concerned about issues they're concerned with: poverty alleviation, immigration, and the like. I think it's also important to challenge some of my more conservative Catholic friends to a broader understanding of what faith demands. I also stay connected to a bunch of former and current students on FB, as well as to friends from well outside the boundaries of organized religion. I just try to be myself on FB -- post about the things that interest me (music, sports, justice, politics, family vacations) and I guess I might look at this as a very subtle attempt at de-clericalizing or de-mythologizing the priesthood. My operative model of priesthood is: I'm here to serve, I'm here to listen, I'm here to accompany. And I do all this by trying to be me as best as I can be me. That's what my priesthood is about. In other words, I'm not here to put on a collar and pontificate from a FB pulpit, or to use FB with an agenda of convincing people of the truth of my beliefs. I see myself as participant in the dialogue, one who, yes, happens to be a Catholic priest.

I'm not entirely convinced people really encounter Jesus through facebook. I think's it's more of a means to announce and promote events.

I believe it is paramount to use Facebook to evangelize since most people (especially the younger generations) are there. However, I am skeptical regarding the lasting efficacy of online evangelization especially if such an effort is unmoored from real personal encounters with real Christians and from a sincere attempt to seek the Lord in prayer. I also don't see very many people who do it well.

It could be....I just do not use it for that. It is solely for connecting and feeling close to past friends and family....but it rarely goes beyond posting pictures and reading the comments posted on those pictures.

I have had a number of people who have appreciated my postings. I wish FB made it easier to direct people to a "page" and let me keep a good distinction between the personal and public. Consequently, I never post anything privately, and I rarely accept any friends.

In particular, I think Facebook allows us to share what exactly the Church really believes. The last two years of Obama's oppression against our religious liberty is a great example. Between the HHS mandate, the Hobby Lobby case, contraception, etc., there are a lot of ways that we can speak to these important issues and allow people to understand what we believe. I think facebook has helped move Catholics from dealing with superficial (and simple) issues like why we revere Saint Mary to the more complex and developed things like our teaching on life, dignity, and the human person.

Person to person evangelization will always be primary. But there are some who have no other contact with the church, people of faith, than facebook. Facebook can help put faith on their radar.

I get a lot of comments from people that they changed thinking and behavior from things they have read. I often remind people of confession times and Mass times. Not only of our parish but surrounding parishes so people can use all the options.

I think that facebook can truly be a sort of "court of the gentiles" in which those of no faith or other faiths can have a conversation about who Catholics are and why they do what they do. Since so many are involved in social media, Facebook can provide an outpost in which to share the reasons for joy and hope as a Catholic.

Facebook is a good way to connect with people and an easy place to share the joy of the Gospel. For example, I had a high school classmate who I haven't seen or talked to since graduating contact me. She saw I was a priest and asked me to pray for her family member.

It is where people are are present and relaxed. They can see how you think and what is important to you. While many are only writing about themselves, and reading others who only write about themselves, they often find it refreshing and stimulating to enter the world of ideas and concerns far beyond what they normally think about.



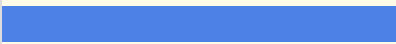
It's the most "open square" we have these days. I post links to homilies, or quotes or articles on the Church and will often interact with comments that are posted in response. Definitely effective in explaining Church teaching as well as defusing misconceptions on things

I'm not much of an evangelizer in this media. I prefer to preach and allow my actions to evangelize. I suppose my FB posts are ways to evangelize. Evangelization has never been my goal though.

There are a lot of people there and it provides another, less formal, means of encounter - particularly for those who only attend Mass or may not regularly attend.

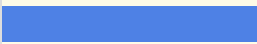




Statistic	Value
Total Responses	36

32. My identity as a priest is clearly visible to others on Facebook.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		0	0%
2	2		2	5%
3	3		0	0%
4	4		5	12%
5	5		34	83%
	Total		41	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	2
Max Value	5
Mean	4.73
Variance	0.50
Standard Deviation	0.71
Total Responses	41

33. Facebook is integral to my priestly ministry because the Holy See says that social network sites like Facebook are important in ministry.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		15	54%
2	2		6	21%
3	3		2	7%
4	4		3	11%
5	5		2	7%
	Total		28	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	1.96
Variance	1.74
Standard Deviation	1.32
Total Responses	28

34. Please explain your response.

Text Response

I'm glad the Holy See thinks so, but that's not why I'm there.

I primarily use FB to connect with friends and family. But those same friends and family do need ministry in the form of being linked to thought-provoking articles about the faith. I see social media as important, yet I'm also very aware of its limitations.

Indeed. As the Vatican understands, we need to use all media to help spread the Gospel.

This simply is not my reason for being on Facebook.

I'm not really sure it's "integral." It's just one more tool.

I think it is important to another generation so I participate.

The Holy See's opinion or advice on this matter doesn't impact my use of Facebook.

It would be integral anyway because it a place where people can be found, and God seeks out people where they are. I'm just doing the same.

I don't agree that social media are that important to ministry.

It's hard for me to answer this. On one hand, as a priest I always want to be doing what the Holy See is asking of us priests. On the other hand, I was using facebook as a priest--and rather extensively--far before the Vatican said anything about the topic. So it was integral to my priestly ministry before the Holy See encouraged us to make it so.

I am using Facebook blog twitter and consider it a call within a call to use the social media.

This is not a reason that I'm on Facebook.

While I love the Holy Father, and am obedient to my superiors, I don't subscribe to the "because they said it, it's important." True is true, no matter what. Maybe I'm just splitting hairs, but I don't find this an important factor. I am glad however that the Holy See is saying it!

Well, even if the most recent Popes has not encouraged use of social media, I would still be using FB, but their encouragement has motivated me at least somewhat.

we must bring a soul to the internet. i must go to where my people are, bc they are more and more not in church!

I see Facebook as an important point of my ministry because it allows me to remain connected with people from previous assignments and with my family and friends. I don't believe that every priest needs to make use of it though, as it can easily become a time-consuming place and some simply don't have need of it.

Everyone I am friended with of facebook knows I am a priest

The Holy See has taught us priests to use the new media for evangelizing. I utilize Facebook to try and do my part.

I'm glad they said it, and I agree. But that does have any bearing one way or another on my social media participation.

I wouldn't say that Facebook is integral to my priestly ministry, but I do work with it more because of the Church's emphasis on the new evangelization.

Couldn't care less if the Holy See recommends it or not; I use FB to keep in touch with family, friends and colleagues

I believe the Holy See is totally correct and I believe it is important to follow suit.

I do not use Facebook for ministry, but one reason that I have it is so I can understand it and preach from the pulpit to those that use it. It is not integral to my ministry, but understanding it is.

I have a *lot* of other things to do with my time. Personal / proximate / physical ministry is much more productive.

I'm glad the Holy See is on board, but my decision and means of ministry is in no way directed by that particular piece of her direction.

No, this is not really a consideration for me. I joined facebook and used facebook as a priest before I heard anything from the Holy See about social media, etc.

I have read anything about this from the Holy See. I began on social medio many years ago, even before facebook. I began on Xanga, and I don't even know if that format still exists.

As a priest, I maintain a Facebook page to witness to the reality that priests are people too. We have rich, full, lives and a facebook page can be a place in which vocations are fostered because the priest is able to be recognized as a person, albeit one with a radically different call to serve Christ and His Church.

The Holy See is encouraging but it is not my main motivation. My main motivation is to connect with people.





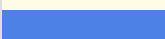
I appreciate the Holy See's encouragement on this, but to be honest, I was utilizing it before there was greater interest from the Holy See on this. Quite simply, I needed to go and meet students on campus and I knew this was where they all could be accessed, quite quickly and effectively. More so 7 years ago than today, but still worth the effort today

They said it WELL after I had been using FB in ministry.

It would be important regardless.

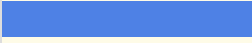



Statistic	Value
Total Responses	32

35. I spend most of my time on Facebook reading and browsing versus posting content.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		3	9%
2	2		6	19%
3	3		2	6%
4	4		10	31%
5	5		11	34%
	Total		32	100%

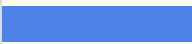




Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	3.63
Variance	1.92
Standard Deviation	1.39
Total Responses	32

36. I use Facebook to evaluate the public opinion on current issues (e.g. gay marriage, abortion issues, etc.).

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		20	53%
2	2		9	24%
3	3		0	0%
4	4		6	16%
5	5		3	8%
	Total		38	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	2.03
Variance	1.92
Standard Deviation	1.38
Total Responses	38

37. Remaining visible on Facebook allows me to engage with people suggesting ideas contrary to Catholic teachings or doctrine.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		14	40%
2	2		5	14%
3	3		3	9%
4	4		8	23%
5	5		5	14%
	Total		35	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	2.57
Variance	2.43
Standard Deviation	1.56
Total Responses	35

38. If you can, please provide an example from your experience.

Text Response

Fr. Nicolas, superior-general of the Jesuits coined a term, "the globalization of superficiality." i do not think that social media, something a person may do little more than glance at, is a good place to engage people at any depth.

That's certainly true, but again, I think the question shows a very limited understanding of most priests' humanity.

I do encounter such people, but avoid using FB to engage them. FB is simply too limited a platform for any meaningful dialogue. I prefer face-to-face conversation or a phone call. Even an email exchange is better than FB which is in the public forum.

I often rebut people who have the wrong idea of what the church teaches. So, for example, reminding people about the sacrament of confession not simply being about sin but about forgiveness.

I don't usually do this.

Certainly the current "hot button" social issues are engaged on Facebook...abortion, same-sex marriage, etc.

It is helpful to see the approach people are taking with issues whether I agree or disagree with them

This is almost useless in my experience.

I recently posted a reflection about immigration and I try to counter the movement towards re-defining marriage on facebook.

Why would I want to be divisive?

Up to a certain degree, yes.

It's exhausting but most recent example is

<http://www.theprodigalfather.org/2014/08/als-ice-bucket-challenge-challenge-als.html> I get as many or more coming in from fb than through blog, email, twitter, etc.

Sometimes. I had a long discussion a while ago about gay marriage and what I believe about it.

I have many FB friends of different religions, or no religion at all. I don't see these engagements generally as confrontational. What I hear a lot from people is, "If more priests were like you, I might be more interested in church."

I do not encounter this very often on FB but very occasionally in the past I have been involved in conversations with individuals who might disagree with Church teaching on something, but it is really a rarity.

I have taken part in a number of interesting debates on abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, gay marriage, pornography, and many other topics that aren't so frequently discussed. Often my discussions are not with people of other faith or no faith, but rather with Catholics who espouse beliefs contrary to those of the Church. I see it as a sort of digital pulpit to preach the truth of faith in a beautiful way that helps others to see the truth for what it is.

Dealing with people who are right wing and pro violence

I post articles and videos all the time on things like the persecution of Christians in Iraq, the effects of same-sex laws on culture, the reality of abortion, etc.

Well, I wouldn't frame it like that. I think it's good for priests to be connected to where people are -- they out to "smell of the sheep" as Francis put it memorably. Each week, I have to preach to the concerns, hopes, fears, challenges of my congregation. I have to understand where they are faith-wise, which may be at a different place than I am -- or where the church is. So I find FB can be helpful in getting a pulse of what's on people's minds these days, where they are "at".

I'm sure people see the posts and links that I post about Catholic teaching, but I didn't to ignore comments or people who want to argue over doctrine. I'd much rather have that conversation in person. I don't think internet arguments are very helpful when it comes to evangelization.

I generally avoid postings which are try to convey religious teachings or content

Yes. Sometimes people respond to various articles I post. I try engage people with their disagreements if I have time.

I am pretty invisible on Facebook...and even rarely get on it. But I am there and friends have found me...so that is something. To be honest...I did it for my mom primarily so she could follow my pictures and see where I went and what I did as a Religious in formations....but then others followed me too.

Posting intelligent and meaningful articles about theology or doctrine is one way to include dialog.

Yes, I have corresponded with people about gay "marriage," contraception, etc.

I will have discussion questions and many people will come and discuss. It has been very positive and people realize there are solid catholic answers to our current issues.

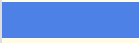



It may just be my personality, but I generally don't engage "trolls" on social media. I simply present the truth of the Catholic Church rather than get involved in a comment box war which usually bears no fruit and can sometimes cast a bad light on the priesthood.

Have definitely had spirited "conversations" on "Gay marriage" and abortion - as well as some apologetics on Mary and the Saints

I am not comfortable doing that on social media. I prefer face to face conversations in this regard.

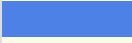



Statistic	Value
Total Responses	29

39. I feel as though by using Facebook on a regular basis I maintain social relevance as a priest.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		10	29%
2	2		9	26%
3	3		0	0%
4	4		9	26%
5	5		6	18%
	Total		34	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	2.76
Variance	2.43
Standard Deviation	1.56
Total Responses	34

40. Facebook allows me to be perceived by the younger generation as significant.

#	Answer		Response	%
1	1		9	28%
2	2		10	31%
3	3		0	0%
4	4		9	28%
5	5		4	13%
	Total		32	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	2.66
Variance	2.17
Standard Deviation	1.47
Total Responses	32

41. Are you willing to be interviewed either in person, over the phone, or video conferencing based on the responses of this survey?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		24	52%
2	No		22	48%
	Total		46	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.48
Variance	0.26
Standard Deviation	0.51
Total Responses	46

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

During this interview you will be asked about your role as priest and your use of Facebook. The first part of the interview will focus on general questions about yourself, your daily activities as a priest, and general usage of social network sites. Next, you will be asked about your general use of social network sites. Finally, you will be asked about your motivation or intentions for using Facebook. All information used in this interview will be held confidential. Please know that you have the option to refuse to answer any question ask and you may end the interview at any time.

In order to maintain confidentiality, a pseudonym will be used in any research report that draws on this interview. What pseudonym would you like me to use?

Part 1. Background Questions

1. How long have you been ordained a priest?
2. Could you describe your ministerial roles as a priest?
3. How you understand your role as one who evangelizes offline? Ministers offline?
4. How is your profession as priest conducted through social media?

Part 2. Motivations and intentions for using Facebook

1. Do you use Facebook for personal reasons or your public profession as a priest?
2. How does your use of Facebook for personal use compare to professional use?
3. The Holy See has issued a few statements and documents about the importance of being present online. How influential are documents like the

Pontifical Council Social Communications' document on Ethics and the Internet and the Pope's World Communication Messages on your use of Facebook as a priest? In general, how do you think they impact the Church, at large?

4. How has the pope's social media usage motivated you to utilize social media like Facebook? Has it changed the way you view social media as a priest?
5. Do you see your participation on Facebook as an extension of your ministry offline? How so? How is ministry on Facebook different than offline?