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## AGAINST RESIGNATION: THE CHURCH'S TASKS IN THE MEDIA WORLD

**Key Words:** CST-Catholic Social Teaching, ICTs-information and communication technologies, media development, human flourishing, media tithing

1. Reading Between the Lines. 2. An Overview on Technological Developments. 3. Testing Media Economies. 4. Shaping Political Action. 4.1. ICTs are Means, not Goals. 4.2. ICTs Uses and Responsibilities. 5. Conclusive Reflections

## PRZECIWKO REZYGNACJI: ZADANIA KOŚCIOŁA W ŚWIECIE MEDIÓW

### Streszczenie

Istnieje wiele perspektyw, zgodnie z którymi możemy badać media. Niniejszy artykuł analizuje je, mając na uwadze katolicką naukę społeczną i podkreśla, że technologie informatyczno-komunikacyjne stanowią narzędzia dla rozwoju człowieka i że nie są celami samymi w sobie. Ponadto stwierdza, że katolicka nauka społeczna nie określa, jakie instrumenty powinny być używane na rzecz rozwoju społecznego, lecz raczej skupia się na obserwacji kultury wytwarzanej podczas korzystania z technologii informatyczno-komunikacyjnych. Kultura ta powinna szanować osobistą wolność i odpowiedzialność każdej osoby społecznie aktywnej. Podczas gdy wiele publikacji często dotyczy literatury opisowej, w obecnej pracy skupiamy się na autorach analizujących koncepcyjną moc przemian społecznych wynikających z posługiwania się technologiami informatycznymi. Ta grupa autorów zazwyczaj odnosi się do trzech obszarów badawczych: ekonomii, polityki i technologii. Po przeanalizowaniu społecznego wpływu technologii informatyczno-komunikacyjnych w tych dziedzinach proponujemy wnioski końcowe. Wniosek dotyczący zadań, które powinny spełniać technologie informatyczno-komunikacyjne z punktu widzenia katolickiej nauki społecznej, to podkreślenie faktu, że ludzka motywacja pojawia się przed rozwojem technicznym i że praca ludzka stanowi najlepsze makro podejście dla rozwoju ludzkości.

**Słowa kluczowe:** katolicka nauka społeczna, technologie informatyczno-komunikacyjne, rozwój mediów, rozwój ludzkości

## 1. READING BETWEEN THE LINES

Describing the Catholic Church's task in a specific field of studies only seems possible after considering several nuances and definitions. To start, when referring to 'the Church' in the following pages, we do not mean to indicate the official *magisterium* of the ecclesiastic institution having a divine origin and spiritual goals, which offers guidelines to the Catholic faithful regarding matters of faith and morals. Rather, by 'The Church' we mean looking for the grounded opinion of theologians and experts, clergy and laypeople, what is commonly called 'Catholic Social Teaching' (CST). Teaching that regards the media world, would recall, for instance, that "the community of persons and the human person are the *end* and the *measure* of communication" (Gonzalez-Gaitano 2017, 143). Nevertheless, there are general principles and counsels summarized in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (LEV 1994), as well as in the more recently published *Compendium* of the Social Doctrine of the Church (LEV 2006) which can likewise be used to better understand the human dimensions of the media world. Yet, that world in itself needs to be defined for our purposes.

The 'media world' is a complex environment, and it's a broad concept standing for different realities: technological developments, economic trends, political motivations, anthropological consequences and philosophical debates regarding the use and development of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Since long ago, each one of those fields of study has been advanced thanks to specific lines of research and the work of scientists, scholars and practitioners. So, understandably it is not possible to summarize their results here in an comprehensive manner. Instead, our task will be to read what is between the lines, observing what can impact people and human values in the public sphere today through their inquiries and discoveries.

Further, CST has a macro approach for studying ICTs that is in sync with institutions' reflections aiming to build the development of our media world on values. From the World Economic Forum's global information technology report, to the United Nations' *millenium* development goals, to the reflections contained in recent Papal encyclicals, the commonly accepted macro approach is that work develops us as individuals and society as a whole: "Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have completely transformed the way people live, work and communicate. Their role and importance continue to expand thanks to technological progress, expanding networks, falling prices and growth in applications and content" (United Nations 2015, 69). Within this framework, we assert that when someone has an effective desire to work, looking for instruments that make his job better is a natural move. Human activity is never done in isolation. So, bringing about integral human development entails understanding work as a paradigm of mutual collaboration and common understanding of reality.

In western society, this macro approach is consistent with our civilization's foundation: the Roman's juridical organization, classic philosopher's reflections and the social contents of the Judeo-Christian Tradition. Institutions born out of the latter, such as schools, hospitals and universities "constitute a moral dynamic, as they

have not only supported the passing of time but have actually configured the ethos of the whole western tradition” (Scruton 2016, 57). In other words, at the base of current reflections regarding ICTs flourishing, we are usually reassured by the human capacity to create instruments that better our human condition.

Finally, this study will look at the reflections of CST experts. The scope of CST is not to indicate the use of specific instruments for governing society. Those instruments have economic and political drives, which are sometimes also born from non-profit initiatives or groups of power holding private interests. CST reflections could contribute elsewhere, but when referring to the media world, three fields of study summarize most reflections: the economic, political and technological spheres. The scope of this paper aims to synthesize them, and to define how CST reflections could become a greatly complement ICTs understanding and improvement. Therefore, we will consider two arms:

- First, we seek to understand *if* and *how* the use of ICTs creates common behaviors in society. And, if those behaviors provide citizens with publicly shared ideas that define us as human beings. Next, by understanding ICTs, we want to identify some action and thought based paradigms in current society which have embedded values. The inherent thesis is that ICTs are not instruments just like any other, but are rather complex environments. Recent research underestimates how ICTs create systems, in which the idea of using valueless or value-aseptic tools is not enough to evaluate social dynamics today (WEF 2015). Common wisdom grasps that the same tool can save or kill someone, but in the case of ICTs, the moral decision may have been made even before possessing a ‘tool,’ it may be clear through the mere acceptance of the respective system. So, “institutions should feel an obligation to think about more than how to design and execute – they should engage in socially responsible processes from the very start” (Schwab 2017, 23). And, if the decision to be part of a media system is not free, we could have a case for a social ethics’ dilemma. Several scholars are already embarking down this road (Dean 2010, Lanier 2010, Morozov 2011).
- Second, after describing some of ICTs behavioral and conceptual paradigms, we will be in a position to say *if* and *how* CST can enhance ICTs, from comprehension to development. Our thesis is that ICTs will be attractive and effective to the extent in which their development corresponds to their true definition – means or tools, not ends or goals – and maintains our personal responsibility *in* and *for* society. Some scholars (Hartley 2010, Jarvis 2011, Jenkins et al. 2013) uphold that CST’s approach could be interesting to garner ICTs comprehensive appreciation. Considering the amount of material already published, and the different trends and opinions, we will necessarily focus on mainstream publications regarding relevant research fields, mostly considering authors who write with a sensitivity to human flourishing in society.

## 2. AN OVERVIEW ON TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT

Technological development is becoming a sort of celebration of humanity, where we are so proud of our technological capacities without always realizing how important it is to ‘train’ social drivers. ICTs develop ever faster, thanks to hardware advancement like high-density low-power standard cell architectures, the discovery of new properties for controlling temperatures or saving energy structures. Transistor development is a good example, as these pieces constitute the minimal base for ICTs data storing capacity. “Moore’s law, first articulated in 1965, predicted that the number of transistors on a silicon chip would double approximately every twenty-four months. Moore’s law still holds today”. (Edwards 2010, 146). Transistors are not bigger than viruses, as their average commercial size is of 14 nanometers (nm), so a human hair with a diameter of 50,000 nm could locate 3,500 of them. And “research aimed at the 7 and 5 nm nodes shows that new techniques can resolve smaller features using different mask magnification and anamorphic systems” (Clark et al. 2016, 110).

The production of micro transistors cannot be done by human beings. So, less promising perspectives posit that while the world’s population will be increasing in the near future, less jobs will be required due to robot technology development. The Pew Research Center in Internet and Technology reports that by 2025, “autonomous robots and systems could impact 50% of our jobs, and perhaps 70% of cars in urban areas would go away,” but “what are people for in a world that does not need their labor, and where only a minority are needed to guide the ‘bot-based economy’?” (PRC 2014, 17). Understandably, technological development, as fascinating as seems, is often criticized.

Further, Nicholas Carr brought attention to the effect ICTs is creating in our brains, and the way in which we perceive ourselves when interacting with others: “We like to be in touch with friends, family members and colleagues. We like to be connected—and we hate to be disconnected. The internet does not change out intellectual habits against our will. But change them it does” (Carr 2010, 92). Sherry Turkle, an MIT professor, likewise stresses that human behavior has been restrained through our use of media technologies. This restraint is due to avoiding full human participation that occurs when we engage in conversation with others, “without eye contact, there is a persistent sense of disconnection and problems with empathy” (Turkle 2016, 43). While for Carr, the internet affects our correct biological development, for Turkle, human flourishing is bounded by a sort of media standardization when we interact in society today. She states: “conversation is on the path toward the experience of intimacy, community and communion. Reclaiming conversation is a step toward reclaiming our most fundamental values” (Turkle 2016, 7). For the former author, the human being is in a trap without freedom while, for the latter, we are aware of being trapped, but settle in it because we find the media trap to be rather comfortable.

Although Turkle and Carr do not deny the importance of ICTs development, even stressing their incredible value in maintaining the presence our significant

others, they mostly focus on what we lose when abusing technology. Yet, even the authors that celebrate technological developments, realize that we are not always ready for their consequent takeover. Nicholas Carah and Eric Louw focus on the positive side of ICTs technological development, asserting that it flourishes to the extent in which it is attractive to human beings, fostering our human interactions and reaching easiest interpersonal relationships. For these authors, “there is no conspiracy of elites sitting in a closed room engineering social meanings” (Carah et Louw 2015, 16). Henri Jenkins also celebrates the great capacity that ICTs have for a better understanding of the world, “using participation as a term that cuts across educational practices, creative processes, community life and democratic citizenship. Our goals should be to encourage youths to develop the skills, knowledge, ethical frameworks and self-confidence needed to be full participants in contemporary culture” (Jenkins 2009, 9). While the first authors stress the obvious relational goodness that ICTs has created, minimizing the still-not-yet-confirmed disadvantages, our last author recalls that participating in the media system is indeed necessary for full human development. ICTs advancement will not solve all educational problems, but the way in which ICTs impact our behavior is creating several issues.

“A quarter of American teenagers are connected to a device within five minutes of waking up. Most teenagers send one hundred texts a day. Eighty percent sleep with their phones. Forty per cent do not unplug ever, not even in religious services or when playing a sport or exercising” (Turkle 2009, 42).

CST experts focus on tools' impact on humanity. They assert, for instance, that since the invention of Gutenberg's printing press, people have managed not to memorize everything. Likewise, on current trust in new ICTs, we might not need to adopt a critical analysis of reality. Five hundred years ago, people trusted the written text as much as we trust digital content on the internet. Human trust has been put in the designers of those contents, believing that they want to facilitate our lives, not to make us miserable.

Behind these instruments, there seems to be a shared confidence in human goodness taken for granted. The same kind of reliance on humanity is also behind the use of other instruments that we use for organizing society, such economic and political ones. After the 2008 crisis, massively affecting some free market economies and the financial system in general, human trust has been put to a test. What becomes key for understanding the social interactions is not the social tools themselves, as much as the reasons we have for using them. If one day, we stop thinking that scientists and economists, or that politicians and social shapers, are all trying to enhance our personal development, then we would only have the road to dissatisfaction as an engine for social change.

If we bring the case to the use of ICTs, the road for analysis is on the same line. We can understand social media, and most of the new apps and ICTs. Perhaps understanding their dynamic and logic, often based on human wants, like passions and trends, and financial advantages, we can then think about the motivations behind creating new ICTs. Among those motivations is our desire to establish human relationships and to make ourselves more attractive to others.

Simple motivations, such as saving time and money or keeping up with our communication paradigms, can also lead us to be active on social media. For instance, an unanswered message is impolite, if not an offense. Critics stress that the result very often could be a general anxiety, lack of attention and distractions, happening in all the spheres of human life. Understanding these areas of concern, helps understanding how intimate and important human interactions can be interrupted by media, having negative consequences on human flourishing. It is also true that these criticisms are usually communicated as a call for change, but not as a proposal.

Apart from the very good insights we find through quality publications referring to media and society, we do not always find the deepest reasons for using media technology as we do. And, recent publications analyzing organizational behavior shows that those reasons can be called motivations, specifically when applied to the human individual aiming to better a specific group or community. The common goal, mutually shared and understood, does not necessarily differ from the individual's goal. Human flourishing requires personal, common, philanthropic and spiritual motivations that are not exactly the same, but that are rather like degrees of intensity in our daily activities. When using ICTs, human motivations could be enhanced by media.

For the individual, the use of media improves our "being present" to others, and other's presence in our life. Likewise, for society, media can constantly recall what really matters to us while being together, and the importance of solidarity and mutual respect. At the same time, media can enhance our capacity to help others when matters of justice emerge, calling the police or rescuing someone from a fire, as well as in matters that have a philanthropic aim. For instance, thanks to social media, the natural disasters happening in remote parts of the world mobilize means and support from very different groups very quickly. Philanthropy becomes a global phenomenon and, although it may have its risks, it is not the result of strategic campaigns with economic aims, but rather the result of individual generosity, highlighting the potential of our digital society.

Finally, spiritual motivations can be driven by media. The importance of media use to transmit the faith relies not only on the capacity of ICTs to convey relevant concepts in minimal text and images, moving passions and providing insightful information. The impact that media can have in terms of transmitting faith to other generations is also key to the new understanding of society, where youth are often not able to fully perceive the importance and significance of what it means to be offline. What is not in the World Wide Web may not even be considered, and if it does make an appearance, it matters very little. Yet, a religion unable to change human behavior, would refer to a God that has no place in the real world: mattering in the real world and daily activity grounds our need for believing. Spiritual motivations, just like philanthropic, social or personal ones, can be enhanced by media as it can achieve intimate human expression, becoming a matrix for social, political and economic activity.

### 3. TESTING MEDIA ECONOMIES

Decades ago, Alvin Toffler affirmed that “the rise of prosumer will decisively alter our economic thinking” (1980, 280). By ‘prosumers,’ Toffler meant the combination of a producer and a consumer. Today ICTs are confirming his intuitions more than ever. Venture capitalists investing in three relatively small cities of California, such as Palo Alto, Atherton and San Jose, know that ICTs constitute a promising future, at least for the concentration of wealth. Thousands of millionaires and dozens of billionaires live in these three towns. Nicholas Carr explains that when the creative group of young visionaries made the YouTube platform, “people all over the world watched over 100 million YouTube video clips and uploaded 65,000 new videos to the site”, but “it was just ten months later that Hurley and Chen sold the site to Google for a staggering 1.65 billion” (Carr 2008, 130). Google is a company worth 169,380 billion in 2009, and that did not report losses in the financial crisis, actually reaching its highest profit level in 2012, 10.79 billion.

Critical authors, such as Christian Fuchs, argue, “that data is the key driver to sustainable digital growth is marketing language for saying that capital accumulation on social media requires massive surveillance of users” (Fuchs 2015, 379). Interaction is information generating data, and the last is very valuable in the public square. If this data aims to generate profit, it is nonetheless true that ICTs foster human interaction, considering that “95 percent of the global population is covered by a cellular network, while mobile-cellular subscriptions have grown to over 7 billion” (UN 2015, 12). International institutions assert that technological connectivity is not a guarantee for human communication. In fact, connectivity can create divisions and barriers:

“The digital divide is particularly pronounced with respect to Internet use and quality of access. For instance, just over one third of the population in developing countries uses the Internet, compared to 82 percent in developed countries. The contrast is even more dramatic in sub-Saharan Africa, where less than 21 per cent of the population uses the Internet, and in LDCs (Least Developed Countries), where the figure is less than 10 per cent” (UN 2015, 70).

CST experts would also agree that our connectivity instruments could lead to inequality, as “while the global mobile-cellular penetration rate was 97 percent in 2015, it reached only 64 percent in least developed countries. An estimated 450 million people living in rural areas still live out of reach of a mobile signal” (UN 2015, 70).

But ICTs critics go further, affirming that when ICTs are driven by economic goals, human freedom is at stake, especially for less educated people or children. Harvard professor Michael Sandel recalls that “in 1983, US companies spent \$100 million advertising to children. In 2005, they spent \$16.8 billion. Since children are in school most of the day, marketers work aggressively to reach them there” (2015, 199).

When we are forced to use a specific technological system, offering no way to reach others otherwise, then there is a risk of creating ICTs profitable monopolies (Hindman 2009, Pariser 2011, Turow 2011). One consequence is dissatisfaction, to which the large amount of free software proclaimers attest. Business models



would promote the creation of appealing new ideas, and some of those businesses might also design environments that keep their customers in a circle of production and consumption, where, at the end, “the freedom of the culture industry is the freedom to choose what is really the same” (Carah et Louw 2015, 50).

On the other side of the spectrum, authors who stress the importance of ICTs for economic development and human growth affirm that the latter is sustained by a certain level of the former. Some of these authors recall the image of the timber line in most mountains: life only reaches a certain high, as human flourishing only reaches a certain level of economic drive. Not every economic accumulation is good, or even neutral for human flourishing, but we cannot deny the power of economic trends for making our life easier. Economic reflections regarding ICTs reveal that ‘commodifying our comfort’ is typical of our liberal democracies. People can hardly resist when faced by such great offerings of goods and services, apparently for free, by media markets. Working against resignation can be done in the spirit of contradiction, like revolutionaries of past times, or trust of long-term traditions, like philanthropic or religious people.

ICTs development done on economic grounds raises alarming questions. Though, urgent matters are rarely resolved by immediate responses, but rather by long term concepts and practices developing humanity for centuries. Resignation is not possible when the system we live in does not answer our urgent questions. ICTs are becoming a system which needs to be tempered, tested against the measure of people, not merely celebrated or ignored. CST experts seem to be aiming at overcoming social resignation to the new algorithmic culture: “what does culture mean, and what might it be coming to mean, given the growing presence of algorithmic recommendation systems?” (Hallinan and Striphas 2014, 119). The lack of awareness in terms of ICTs influence, could lead us to a point where we think uniformly, or where the transmission of media content completely overtakes real engagement with others.

#### 4. SHAPING POLITICAL ACTION

ICTs are in sync with democratic movements, as everyone can participate and join others on a relatively easy base. ICTs are fully part of social interactions deserving civic approval, as they constitute the golden instrument for human communication. In the words of one author, “technology diffusion and democratic values reinforce each other and spread together” (Howard 2015, 8). As the fastest growing market in the world, ICTs represent a source of freedom of expression for millions of inhabitants on our planet. The same author continues: “in many modern democracies, media infrastructure makes politics, economics and culture possible” (Howard 2011, 7). Other authors, however, would not wish to concede too much to media infrastructures. ICTs can be in sync with democracy, free market economy and social development, but they are just instruments to achieve the ideals of western society (Polletta 2006). They are not the values, goals or ends, just the way to get human

flourishing. “There is no understanding of reality outside of our social interactions and cultural practices. The ‘re’ prefix in representation is important,” insightfully states one author (Carah 2015, 27).

The political sphere’s use of ICTs is an effort to have a comprehensive understanding of the future of society. Governments and political institutions are, “appreciating the dynamics by looking at the trends and linkages across emerging technologies to understand how they relate to one another and will cumulatively impact our world” (Schwab 2017, 14). Political action means combining the understanding of social functioning and promoting what is behind embedded values. Authors observe that the social institutions long term in place may not be the ones always providing better transactions of goods or services, but they are ones able to change lives. ICTs critics are calling for renewed thinking, and thereby action, stressing that, “as markets reach into spheres of life governed by nonmarket norms, the standard price effect may not hold” (Sandel 2015, 90).

For others, however, ICTs use in the political sphere is based on a positive conception of human beings, with freedom of action and highly creative. Within this field, several authors (Salmon 2008, Pinaridi 2014, Langlotz 2015) consider work as the best way for integral human development, while leaving space for two possible nuances when referring to communication and our use of ICTs. First, it seems important to stress technologies as instruments, not ends in themselves, despite the complexity and attraction they have as social development systems. Second, when making use of ICTs, it seems important to distinguish who is responsible at every single step of content circulation. Understandably, technology creators focus on the quality of the instruments, but the State, families and other ethical institutions should be attentive to the reasons for using ICTs: the quantity of time and effort devoted to them, their purpose and meaning for human beings. What can develop humans is not technology itself, but how and why that technology is used.

#### 4.1. ICTS ARE MEANS, NOT GOALS

Often, technology is understood more as a goal than as an instrument. Moreover, it is reasonable to think that ICTs can change us to the point of becoming integral to our lives, especially when observing very exciting projects and their potential for future generations. Yet, ICTs could become identified as an extension of our humanity at the cost of not being instrumental anymore. In other words, when technology becomes considered as part of our passions, feelings and creativity, we are no longer treating it as an instrument that helps us to reach our goal, but rather humanity technologically enhanced. What matters is not that we can go faster, but that we need to go faster, and that we know how to go forth at that speed.

Politicians observe, for instance, that we need to take care of our natural resources, not because of natural catastrophes or pollution issues, or not only. We take care of nature because we understand ourselves living with others on a planet that also belongs to future generations. The attraction to technology is not based

on error or fear, but on the greatest values of humanity. We are stewards of the world. And, if natural preservation fostered by humans is valuable for science and technology, it is likewise valuable for classic philosophy, politics, economics and faith-based institutions. The human acting on earth is attractive when observed under a unified vision of reality, combining its highest good with its true capacity for solidarity, subsidiarity and respect of other's rights

When technology, and so also ICTs, impedes or limits our capacity to reach others, to take care of nature or to respond to human aspirations striving for the common good, then technology is no longer an instrument, it is a end in itself. It is de-natured and thus not appealing anymore. In other words, technology serves humanity when it is approached and used as an instrument for human purposes or when it becomes immersed in human life, like electricity, as the internet is now becoming. On the other hand, when we feel that technology is trapping us into closed systems, we tend to abandon it, looking for freedom elsewhere.

#### 4.2. ICTS USES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Studied from a political vantage point, ICTs provides us with elements to consider regarding the future state of the world. As mentioned before, some authors assert that a real issue is that technologies are developed in a way that give place not only to instruments, but also to real parts of our lives which requires thought and action in consideration of the future. And, we could perhaps stop working, if we find the world around us already stopped, and laziness is a source of decadence, as “we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts”. (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, b. II, ch. I [1103a, 1103b]). We develop ourselves through our work, in the process of achieving perfection, not by finding that someone else, human or robot, has done everything for us. CST thinkers would observe this same risk in the misuse of natural resources: we will not want to work if there are not enough natural resources to produce more wealth than the one we already have, or if the social context is so violent that work would be impossible to achieve.

ICTs have reached the point of global presence and universal usage, the “internet penetration has increased to 43 per cent of the world's population, linking 3.2 billion people to a global network of content and applications” (United Nations 2015, 12). In other words, 4 billion people today have no internet access. Further, the global media network is American built, so, “in a sense, western economic and cultural power is so overwhelming in the early twenty-first century that westerners do not have to conspire to be dominant” (Carah 2012, 173). It is a dominance coming from highly educated elites, transmitting specific paradigms of behavior and morality. When ICTs promote alcohol, drugs or pornography, they put human development at risk. A risk that may not affect highly educated people, who will not put their own success and reputation in danger. Today, Politicians should face a trickling down immorality affecting the flourishing of humanity. Technological development driven by economic forces might be politically regulated, as, for instance, those able

to develop new organs, by printing living cells, will have immense control. Keeping Mozart alive forever sounds delightful, quite different from having Hitler among still today. So, further debate and better founded answers for the future of society need our attention.

## 5. CONCLUSIVE REFLECTIONS

Some observations that scholars currently devote to ICTs' development could be nuanced when understanding ICTs' nature. Religious believers, and so also CST, have usually accepted and even promoted technological development. Hundreds of inventors and scientists in the past were also clergymen, with access to higher education and ideas. Today, thousands of scientists are religious believers, highlighting that technology can protect human life, human expression and personal freedom for being better individuals in society.

While every member of society recognizes and accepts technological development as a significant good, its qualities and service to all, there are differences in the appreciation of what sometimes gets lost with the use of technology. It is true, for instance, that electronic mail has made – and is making – human interaction easier and faster. It is also true that time and effort is lost due to the lack of reasoning when people write messages sent with partial information, poorly written or even erroneous. Technological development is not always synonymous with human flourishing.

For humanists, like philosophers, sociologists, or theologians, what is lost today in human communication could mean much more than for other professionals. The use of lexicons online and the capacity to translate almost everything, even if poor translations, can certainly enhance several philosophical discourses. Yet, deep thinking and long term reflection is not built under pressure, or aims to fit into a word codification to have better results in search engines. Reflection requires time and effort, thoughtful reading, the closest and farthest realities crossing our minds. ICTs are not designed for that. They are a platform for interacting, transmitting very valuable information about ourselves, and even for analysis. ICTs do not aim to promote contemplation and theorizing.

Tolstoy began his novel, *War and Peace*, observing that every single family is equally happy, but that each one of them is unhappy in its own way. Likewise, we can note that every single field of thought quickly recognizes the importance of ICTs development, as we have just briefly demonstrated through the economic, political and technological spheres. Nevertheless, each field of research could suffer in a different way from the consequences technology bring about with it.

For CST reflections, and the mission of the Church in general, the benefit of emerging technologies are immense. New online initiatives for evangelization come to life. Apps and attractive websites promoting the faith are in place, at a growing speed for everybody. Songs, religious texts and videos are distributed and assimilated faster and better. Media and ICTs have also been developing a demand for

professionalism in the self-presentation of local churches, parishes and movements. Further, all those benefits are accompanied by issues, the same we just vocalized in other fields: the tendency of high speed to make important issues appear as superficial news; low quality images and videos; poorly presented interviews and ceremonies, poorly reflecting the meaning of a celebration of faith.

What is at stake here is not the professionalism of Church communicators; rather, it is the great loss that can come when we do not understand ICTs potential as means of evangelization, but instead as evangelization by themselves. Excellent videos and films can never substitute visiting a sacred place, as personal others should not be exchanged by communicating through a WhatsApp group or doodle. We should not forget that in the booming of ICTs, the yoga industry has grown to become a business of 6,5 billion USD per year (Laudicina 2012, 60).

At the end of the day, the deepest sense of ICTs regards our communication capacity, grounded on our self-representation. When we are not able to present ourselves with our full human dignity, we are unable to communicate as human beings. Some contents transmitted through ICTs are not true to a correct human representation, and many do not even strive for personal communication. They indeed communicate something, but not based on human dignity and rights. When, for instance, the Romans did not accept crucifixion for their citizens, it was precisely because “this confrontation lacks the self-disclosing character essential for personal communication” (Spaemann 2012, 54). Likewise, current regulations include a “right to be forgotten”, or protection from pirates or other digital abusers. We strive to stop these activities, making them illegal, because they “represent” content that does not accurately convey the human person, and not because we aim to change freedom of expression.

In the same token, protection against web infant abuse could also be fostered by circulating contents in accord with human dignity, or sharing more positive contents in order to distracting from the evil ones. While that can be done on personal level, it can also be promoted by institutions aiming to promote values. Perhaps other international institutions will start this process soon, as it has already been set in motion by the Catholic Church. Some local communities, like the Church in Boston, has already invited the faithful to circulate contents regarding the faith life of the believers, or the celebration of the sacraments or witness of faithful families. The appeal of being part of something, with a spiritual character, is communicated by digital campaigns inviting the faithful to a media tithe. It is not about giving away financial earnings, but rather about sharing time, effort and creativity for promoting positive contents online regarding the life of the Church. Catholics are digital natives, so it is natural for them to devote part of their digital life to promote something that is part of their life. Undoubtedly, this media tithing project will prove to be a positive endeavor for the Catholic Church in the years to come – a project in complete accord with the different fields of research, and expertise of very talented media practitioners.

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## AGAINST RESIGNATION: THE CHURCH'S TASKS IN THE MEDIA WORLD

### Summary

There are many perspectives from which we can study the media. This paper does so with an eye on Catholic Social Teaching (CST) reflections, stressing that information and communication technologies (ICTs) are instruments for human flourishing, not goals in themselves. Moreover, we assert that CST's scope is not to indicate which instruments people should use for social development, but rather to observe the culture we create when using ICTs; a culture that should respect the personal freedom and responsibility of each individual acting in society. While a vast number of published works often regard descriptive literature, we here focus mostly on authors looking at the conceptual power of social changes when making use of ICTs. The last group of authors usually refer to three fields of studies: economy, politics and technology. After considering their descriptions of ICT's social impact in these fields, and striving to understand not only the instruments but also the theories behind them, we offer a final proposal. A proposal that regards the task that CST could have when studying ICTs: to stress that human motivations appear before technological developments, and that human work is the best macro approach for developing humanity.

**Key words:** CST-Catholic Social Teaching, ICTs-information and communication technologies, media development, human flourishing

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