

# From Pope John Paul II to Pope Francis: The Catholic Church's Views of Internet in the Light of “Risk Society” Theory

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## ABSTRACT

This article discusses the Catholic Church's views and responses to the existence and use of internet in society in the light of "risk society" theory. Using library research, this study seeks to gather and analyze data and information about the topic in the Church documents using Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens' theory of "risk society." The results of this study show that the Catholic Church, through some official documents expresses its awareness of the existence and use of the Internet both within the Church and in society at large. The Catholic Church also appreciates the invention of this information and communication technology recognizing its positive contribution to the church and society. However, it also reminds the Catholics as well as the whole society of the challenges and dangers of internet misuse both for humanity in general and for the Christians in particular and because of that, necessary policies are needed as ethical guidelines for mankind but specifically for various parties in the church to use the internet wisely by preventing negative impacts or risks and take advantage of its usefulness for the preaching of the Church and good and true communication among people.

**Keywords:** Catholic Church, internet, risk society, ethical guidance.

## INTRODUCTION

We are currently facing the revolutionary development of modern communication technology. This development has affected humans in all dimensions, levels, social classes and other backgrounds. The development of modern communication technology today can be seen in the presence of the internet which greatly facilitates communication and dissemination of information with the peak of its development through digital technology today.[1] No one can avoid its influence, consciously or unconsciously. Religious institutions, including the Catholic Church, were also not spared. The Catholic Church realizes that it has also been a party that has taken advantage but has also been affected positively and negatively. The negative impacts give rise to concerns within the church and therefore urgent policies and actions are needed to manage the risks and negative impacts of Internet misuse in the lives of humanity in general, believers (religious people) in particular, especially when this technology actually becomes an arena for challenging the teachings [2] and essence of religion as well as the existence and essence of God. [3]

This paper aims to present the views of the Catholic Church regarding the Internet and cyber space and how it manages the risks of this progress in the light of Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens' "risk society" theory both in policy and recommendations for concrete action. For this purpose, the views of three Catholic church leaders: -- Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis,-- and two other documents will be explored and analyzed.

The discussion begins with an explanation of the internet and cyber space. It will be followed by a brief

presentation of Ulrich Beck's and Anthony Giddens' theory of "risk society." The third part reviews the Catholic Church's position in relation to the existence and use of the internet found in some documents on Catholic Church and the Internet. The fourth section discusses these responses and attitudes of the Church leaders in the light of "risk society" theory. The fifth section is the closing which contains conclusions and some recommendations.

## **A GLANCE ABOUT THE INTERNET AND CYBER CULTURE**

This section discusses two important points, namely the internet in general and cyber space. Understanding both is substantially important so that people have the right and correct attitudes and views regarding the presence and benefits of both.

### **Getting to know the Internet**

Studies about internet have been numerous. But what is internet? According to Manuel Castells, internet as life space is a computer network discovered by the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) in September 1969. This network is called ARPANET. ARPA is the name of the institution that discovered it, while NET is taken from the word internet. ARPA was formed in 1958 by the United States Department of Defense with the task of mobilizing research resources, especially from the world of universities. The main purpose of this mobilization was to establish military technology superior to that of the Soviet Union. [4][5]

Furthermore, Castells explained that ARPANET was designed by Bolt, Beranek and Newman (BBN), an acoustic engineering company located in Boston, USA. The results of this engineering were demonstrated successfully and smoothly for the first time at an International Conference in Washington, D.C. In 1975, ARPANET was transferred to the Defense Communications Agency (DCA). This move intended DCA to provide a network that communicated all the computers in the various branches of the American Armed Forces. DCA therefore decided to create connections between the various networks under its control. [5]

In 1983, the USA Department of Defense decided to create the MILNET (Military Network) network which aimed to minimize the possibility of security breaches of existing communications networks. Since then, ARPANET became ARPA-INTERNET. In 1990, this new innovation was commercialized but on a limited basis only to the United States and its allies in Europe. In 1994, this new technology developer developed several web programs such as Netscape Navigator, Microsoft. A year later Internet Explorer appeared. [6]

Since its emergence, the internet has been a discovery that both excites and challenges. The internet arouses people's interest in using it, because this innovation provides many benefits for human life. The presence of this technology has made it easier for humans to carry out various forms of activity. People no longer need to go far away to buy something. He can buy it through online stores. Various systems in government and religious organizations have used the internet. We know that there is e-banking, e-government, e-politics, e-catholicism, and others. Here the internet has shortened and even eliminated distances and boundaries. [5]

Apart from being inspiring, the internet has also challenged all existing establishments, whether the establishment in society or the establishment in religion. In society, there are many aspects of life that are challenged and thwarted by the presence of the internet, for example there are many cultural values that are being shifted or even evicted by the new values brought by digital culture. Likewise in the realm of religion. There are many religious teachings that are questioned. In fact, the internet has become a kind of attractive new religion so that its devotees can spend hours in front of computers, cell phones, iPads and tablets. The internet has become a new addiction that stimulates human motor nerves to be creative. [5]

The internet has formed a space, which is called cyber space. Cyberspace is a public space and not a hallucination space. Habermas, as quoted by Agus Duka, understands public space as a coffee room where people or groups of people can critically discuss various government or state policies. This public space is

characterized by disregard for status, similarity of ideas and ideals and is inclusive. The relationships built in public space are symmetrical relationships. [6]

In this space, humans express themselves. Many things in humans that are not explored in the real world become open in virtual space. Here, the internet does not become an anonymous and sterile context, but becomes a space that is anthropologically qualified. Therefore, the internet is not just a communication instrument that can be used or not, but has become a cultural space, which determines the logic of thinking, creates new territories, educates in new ways, stimulates intelligence and strengthens relationships. [6]

The Catholic Church is truly aware of the fact that the internet is a living and cultural space. The presence of the internet, which enables interpersonal communication, society and people, has received appreciation from the Church. This appreciation is manifested in the Church's participation in utilizing this technology. Several years ago Pope Benedict XVI launched Twitter. Likewise with Pope Francis, his successor. [6]

The Church appreciates this not primarily because the internet is useful in conveying the Good News of God. However, the Church believes that the presence of this sophisticated communication technology reflects Christianity which is fundamentally a communicative event.

The challenge for the Church from the existence of the internet is not a matter of how to use this technology appropriately, but how Christians live correctly in the digital era. In this context, the internet network is not a means of evangelization, but specifically a context in which faith is called to explain itself.

### **Cyber Culture**

The internet has given birth to a new culture, namely cyber culture. Cyber culture is a way of living in a virtual space.[7] Or another definition, cyber culture is a set of new understandings, habits and values that regulate how humans interact by utilizing existing digital technology instruments. There are many types of user lifestyles, such as simultaneity, non-sequence, sedentary style, instantaneous, simultaneous and non-sequential lifestyle. In cyber space, space, time and distance disappear because there are no longer any separation barriers between them. There are many values lived in this culture, for example the values of equality, networks, and solidarity.[7]

The formation of self-identity in the virtual world occurs through impression management. People who are good at displaying cyber text and symbols will form or influence the identity known in the cyber world. Identity depends on the cyber symbols used by the user. [7] The identity displayed is a social identity, while personal identity is reserved. There are many identities of a person in the cyber world. Cyberspace allows people to be several people at the same time. What happens in the cyber world is the death of the real "I" (self).

### **ULRICH BECK AND ANTHONY GIDDENS' "RISK SOCIETY" THEORY**

To understand the attitude and views of the Catholic Church towards the world of the internet, we need to know Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens' theory of the "risk society". The term "risk society" (or Riskgesellschaft) appeared in 1986. What is meant by "risk society" is the way in which modern society organizes in response to risk. The term is closely associated with several key writers on modernity, especially Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens.[8] The term was coined in the 1980s and its popularity during the 1990s was a consequence of its association with broader trends in thinking about modernity, as well as its association with popular discourse, particularly environmental concerns that developed during the period. [9]

#### **Definition**

According to the British sociologist Anthony Giddens, a risk society is "a society increasingly preoccupied

with the future (and also with security), which generates the idea of "risk", [10] while the German sociologist Ulrich Beck defines it as "a systematic way of dealing with the dangers and insecurities caused and introduced by modernization itself." [8] Beck defines modernization as, surge in technological rationalization and changes in work and organizations, but beyond that it includes much more, namely changes in the characteristics of society and normal biographies, changes in lifestyles and forms of love, changes in structures of power and influence, in the form of political repression and participation, in the view of reality and norms of knowledge. In the social science understanding of modernity, plows, steam locomotives, and microchips are visible indicators of much deeper processes that structure and reshape entire social structures. [8]

### **Modernity, Realism in Science, and their Implications**

Beck and Giddens both approach risk society firmly from the perspective of modernity, "a shorthand term for modern society or industrial civilization. ... Modernity is much more dynamic than previous types of social order. It is a society ... that is unlike any previous culture who lives in the future and not in the past." [10] They also draw heavily on the concept of reflexivity, the idea that when society examines itself, it in turn changes itself in the process. In classical industrial societies, modernist views were based on assumptions of realism in science that created a system in which scientists worked in the exclusive and inaccessible environment of the modern period.

In 1986, just after the Chernobyl disaster, Ulrich Beck, a professor of sociology at the University of Munich, published an original German text, *Riskgesellschaft*, about his highly influential and catalytic work (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt 1986). *Riskgesellschaft* was published in English under the title *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* in 1992. The ecological crisis is at the heart of the social analysis of this contemporary period. Beck argues that environmental risks have become a mainstream product, not just an unpleasant, manageable side effect of industrial society. [10]

Giddens and Beck argue that while humans have always experienced some degree of risk – such as natural disasters – these are usually thought to be generated by non-human forces. Modern society, however, is faced with risks such as pollution, newly discovered diseases, crime, which are the result of the modernization process itself. Giddens defines these two types of risk as external risk and artificial risk. [11] Artificial risks are characterized by a high level of human agency involved in producing and mitigating those risks.

Because artificial risks are the product of human activity, authors such as Giddens and Beck argue that society can assess the level of risk that is produced or will be produced. This kind of reflexive introspection can in turn change the planned activity itself. For example, due to disasters such as Chernobyl and the Love Canal Crisis, public trust in modern projects has declined leaving the public distrustful of industry, government and experts. [12]

Social concerns led to increased regulation of the nuclear power industry and some expansion plans to be abandoned, and this changed the course of modernization itself. This increasing criticism of modern industrial practices is said to have resulted in reflexive modernization, illustrated by concepts such as sustainability and the precautionary principle that focus on preventative measures to lower risk levels.

There are differing opinions about how the concept of risk society interacts with social hierarchies and class distinctions. [9] Most agree that social relations have changed with the introduction of artificial risks and reflexive modernization. Risk, like wealth, is distributed unequally in a population and will affect quality of life.

Beck argues that older forms of class structure – primarily based on the accumulation of wealth – atrophy in modern risk societies, where people occupy positions of social risk achieved through risk aversion. Beck

states that "in some of its dimensions these follow from the inequality of class and stratum positions, but they play out fundamentally different logics of distribution". [8] Beck argues that widespread risks contain a "boomerang effect", in which the individuals who generate the risks will also be exposed to them. This argument suggests that wealthy individuals whose capital is largely responsible for creating pollution must also suffer when, for example, contaminants seep into water supplies. This argument may seem oversimplified, as rich people may have the ability to reduce risk more easily, for example by purchasing bottled water. However, Beck argues that this kind of risk distribution is the result of knowledge, not wealth. While a rich person may have access to resources that allow him to avoid risk, this would not even be an option if the person were not aware that the risk exists. However, risks do not only affect certain social classes or places, as they do not go unnoticed and can affect everyone regardless of social class; nothing is free from risk.[8]

In contrast, Giddens argues that older forms of class structure retain a stronger role in risk societies, which are now partly defined "in terms of differential access to forms of self-actualization and empowerment". [13] Giddens also tends to approach the concept of risk society more positively than Beck, when stating that "there is no question of simply taking a negative attitude towards risk. Risk needs to be disciplined, but active risk-taking is a core element of a dynamic economy and an innovative society." [14]

## THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S VIEWS ON THE INTERNET AND THE CYBER WORLD

The development of information technology through the use of the internet and cyberspace has apparently attracted the attention of the Catholic Church since at least the end of the 20th century. Specifically for the internet, the Catholic Church's official response globally and universally can be found in several documents issued by Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, and two other documents -- "Church and the Internet" and "Ethics and the Internet" issued by the Pontifical Council for Social Communication. This section will discuss the Catholic Church's views on the internet and cyberspace in these documents and messages.

### Pope John Paul II about Internet

Pope John Paul II responds to the existence of communication technology (internet and cyber space) in some documents and messages during his lifetime in early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Following are some of them.

As one of the Catholic Church's official responses to the development of the world of digital communications, Pope John Paul II issued the Apostolic Letter "Rapid Development" (*Il Rapido Sviluppo*) on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2005. This document is divided into five main parts. The first part discusses the rapid and prolific development of the use of communication media and its challenges. Apart from that, it was touched on the importance of integrating the good news of salvation with what is called a "new culture" through digital communication means in the third millennium through new steps for evangelization, catechesis, formation of pastoral workers, and education of recipients and users of modern communication media. [15]

Through this document, Pope John Paul II reminded what had been established in the *Inter Mirifica Decree* (a document produced at the second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church, which talks about the tools/means and efforts of social communication in the modern era) [16] and urged church members and humanity to pay attention to the increasingly rapid advances in social communication technology. In order to carry out the task of universal proclamation about the Kingdom of God, the Church must take advantage of the opportunities provided by advances in the world of social communication. Pope John Paul II further emphasized:

Don't be afraid of new technology! They are 'among the wonderful things' – *inter mirifica* – that God

has given us to study, use and convey the truth, also the truth about our dignity and destiny as children of God and heirs of His eternal Kingdom.[15]

The development of the attitudes and views of the Catholic Church from *Inter Mirifica* to "Rapid Development" illustrates the Catholic Church's appreciation for the development of social communication media, even though the principle of caution is found in it. Over time, the Catholic Church began to participate in promoting the use of communication media as a means, and encouraged church members to carry out the work of evangelization integrally with social communication media in the third millennium.[15]

The presence of the Internet as a new social communication medium challenges the Catholic Church to take the right stance. In the beginning, the Catholic Church was very careful about the internet world. However, John Paul II encouraged all members of the Church to enter the virtual world, the world of networking, in order to develop dialogue with culture and proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ to humanity worldwide. Furthermore, John Paul II viewed the internet as "a new land opening up at the beginning of this millennium... the challenge of the beginning of this millennium in the message to follow God's commandment 'Go out into the deeper': *Duc in altum!* (Lk 5:4)".[16] He emphasized that the Catholic Church needs to be present in the internet world, so that Christ can be increasingly proclaimed in the midst of this new life by dialogue with today's people.

Why did John Paul II emphasize the importance of the internet in the Church's proclamation through these messages? He called the internet "a 'forum' as it was understood in ancient Roman times... a space open to the public, a place for political debate, business activities, religious rituals, a place for interaction in the social life of the city, and also a stage where various aspects of the city are displayed." both the best and the worst of human nature."[16] A forum is an open place, a meeting place for various things, a forum that is located in the most densely populated area, so that it becomes a meeting point for various things, ranging from political, economic, social, cultural, religious, to other private life issues. The internet has become a new medium that has become a means of communicating various issues faced and experienced by humans, including Catholics.

Pope John Paul II specifically mentioned social networks as one of the most striking phenomena in the internet world. It becomes a field of communication for many people. This new, open space is characterized above all by social networks that "create a new 'agora', a public square where people share ideas, information and opinions, and in which new relationships and forms of community can be created".[16] The 'agora' itself was a place for open meetings in the city-states of Ancient Greece. In early Greek history, free people and landowners who had the status of citizens gathered in the Agora to deliberate with the King or Council.[17]

The pope further stated that Communication in the digital world is no longer reciprocal communication between two parties but becomes open communication. Through social networks, communication can become very equal, because people are no longer limited by social status or various existing categories. People can freely express themselves, whether through posting selfies or status posts that can be easily changed. In this way communication becomes a form of sharing.

The development of the digital world, especially the internet, provides many opportunities for human life. Holy Father John Paul II immediately saw the internet as a new means for evangelizing, the internet "provides excellent opportunities for evangelizing, as long as it is based on competence and a clear awareness of its strengths and weaknesses." [16] And that opportunity is first of all the opportunity to store and provide information relating to matters of faith, it is even said that the internet can provide support that will lead people to meet Christ in the congregation. Holy Father John Paul II said this:

On the Network there are extensive sources of information, documentation and teaching about the

Church, about its history and traditions, doctrines and involvement in all areas of life throughout the world. Thus, it is clear that although the Internet will never be able to replace the deep experience of God, which can only be provided through the living liturgical and sacramental experience of the Church, it can certainly provide a unique substitute and support in preparing for the encounter with Christ in the congregation, and in supporting new believers at the beginning of their faith journey.[16]

Here, social networks can be a starting point that leads people to faith, which of course then requires meeting directly with the congregation and becoming part of the congregation. Communication via the internet is only the beginning to lead people to direct encounters, community experiences as a process of pilgrimage of faith. In this way the internet can form communities and direct people to form communities.

Pope John Paul II through the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* saw the new world of communication as a contemporary *areopagus* that also needs evangelization. Therefore, it is not enough to use new media for preaching, it is necessary to evangelize the new world and integrate the Christian message in the new world, because in this new world of communication, the content of the preaching and the media used are closely related. The internet world is always a multi-faceted world. Many positive elements of it are useful in developing life together, whether in building solidarity and loyalty, as well as friendship between people. The growth and development of various social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, shows how humans can unite and communicate with people from other parts of the world, without any time limits.[15]

Finally, John Paul II emphasizes that evangelizing the new world of communication means presenting authentic communication, which defends the full person and human dignity, and not manipulating reality. So, evangelizing the world of the internet means making this network a means of promoting human solidarity, building brotherhood and friendship between people. In order to make virtual communication a process for developing the human personality, it is necessary to have a dialogue with virtual reality itself, it is necessary to learn the virtual language itself. In this case, it takes courage to recognize the new world itself. From the beginning of his life, the success of evangelization was determined by the ability to learn new languages and cultures and integrate the Christian message into them. This has been experienced by the Church since the time of the apostles until now.[15]

### **Documents “The Church and the Internet” and “Ethics in the Internet”**

Prior to John Paul II’s “The Rapid Development”, the Pontifical Council for Social Communications of the Roman Curia issued a document called “The Church and Internet” on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2002. It describes the responses of the Catholic Church regarding the Internet as follows: first, the Catholic Church views all modern means of communication today as 'gifts of God', in accordance with the plan of Divine Providence, intended to unite humans in bonds of brotherhood, so that they become co-workers in His saving plans. That remains the church's view, and it is the view the church holds about the Internet. [18]

Second, modern social communication media is a cultural factor that plays a role in history. Social communication media is very helpful for refreshing the heart, developing the mind, and for broadcasting and strengthening the Kingdom of God. Specifically regarding the Internet it is emphasized:

Today this is especially true of the Internet, which is helping to bring about revolutionary changes in commerce, education, politics, journalism, the relations of nation to nation and culture to culture – changes not only in the way people communicate, but also in the way they understand their lives. . In the companion document, Ethics in the Internet, we discuss these matters from their moral dimension. In this case we consider the influence of the Internet on religion and especially on the Catholic Church.[18]

Three important things are stated in this section: first, that modern communication media is very important

as part of modern communication culture; secondly, it is beneficial for the mind, heart and preaching as well as various other dimensions of human life; and third, considering that communication media are not neutral, ethics is needed to show the importance of paying attention to the moral side of communication, as will be discussed in the Ethics and Internet Document.

The Catholic Church has a twofold aim in speaking about social communication media, including the internet: first, “encouraging their development and proper use for human progress, justice and peace – for the development of society at local, national and community levels in the light of the common good and in the spirit of solidarity” [18] and second, “to proclaim the saving truth of Christ to the entire human family.” [18]

The Catholic Church through this document is aware of the various opportunities and challenges in the use of modern communication media, including the Internet. Regarding the benefits/opportunities that can be obtained from modern communication media in general, this document points out several benefits, including: first, modern communication media helps communicate effectively with people, especially young people, who are filled with experience about new technology this, and also to use it well; [18] second, “social communication media carries news and information regarding religious events, religious ideas, and religious figures; media is a tool for evangelization and catechesis”; third, “social communication media provide information, encouragement and opportunities to worship for people who are forced to stay in their homes or their institutions.” [18]

Specifically regarding the opportunities or benefits of using the Internet, this document states that:

The Internet provides direct and immediate access to important religious and spiritual sources – great libraries, museums and places of worship, documents of the Magisterium, the writings of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and the religious wisdom of centuries. The internet has the extraordinary ability to overcome distance and isolation by connecting people with like-minded people who join in virtual communities of faith to encourage and help one another. The Church can provide an important service to Catholics and non-Catholics alike by selecting and conveying useful data via the internet. The Internet is important for many of the Church's activities and programs such as evangelization, including both re-evangelization, new evangelization and traditional activities of missionary *ad gentes*, catechesis and other forms – education, news and information, defense of the faith, government, administration and several other forms of spiritual and pastoral guidance. [18]

However, the Catholic Church is aware of several challenges that have been, are and may continue to be faced in the future by both the Catholic Church itself and society in general. These challenges include the un-clarity and hostility of the world of social media can sometimes to Christian faith and morals; [18] the presence of hate sites that are used to vilify and attack religions and ethnic groups, one of target of which is the Catholic Church; [18] pornography and violence on social media; [18] the spread of “eccentric doctrinal interpretations, excessive devotional practices, and the proclamation of an ideology labeled ‘Catholic’, which differs from the authentic position of the Church”; [18] and consumerism, where people easily consume various information in the virtual world without a critical attitude the unimportant and non-essential things, including matters related to faith and religious beliefs.

Based on the realities stated above, this document makes several recommendations to various stakeholders such as Church leaders, pastoral officers, educators and catechists, parents, children and young people, and to all people of good will with their respective duties and responsibilities, to be able to understand and utilize social communication media, especially the Internet, wisely and responsibly for the growth of Christian faith and virtue and the proclamation of love, goodness and truth. [18]

In addition to “The Church and the Internet,” the Pontifical Council for Social Communications issued the Document “Ethics in the Internet,” another document that can be considered a continuation of the document



“The Church and the Internet.” This document specifically focuses on how the use of the Internet is carried out in accordance with ethical and moral principles, namely how to utilize and promote good things and avoid bad things from the use of the internet and cyber space.

The second document taken to understand the Catholic Church's views of the Internet is “Ethics in the Internet”. This document extols the power of the Internet as an extraordinary advancement in technology and social communication media. It states, among other things:

The tremendous development of information technology has enhanced the extraordinary communication abilities of a fortunate few people and groups. The Internet can help people use freedom and democracy responsibly, widen the range of choices available in various areas of life, broaden educational and cultural horizons, eliminate divisions, advance human development in many ways....If it is based on values- shared values, rooted in human nature, intercultural dialogue, made possible by the internet and other means of social communication, can be a special means for building a civilization of love.[18]

On the other hand, this document reminds once again of the many ethical problems resulting from internet misuse regarding privacy, security and confidentiality of data, copyright and intellectual property rights, pornography, sites that incite hatred, the spread of gossip and slander under the guise of news, and many more other.[18] Of course, other problems can be added such as terrorism, human trafficking (including the sale of human organs), drug smuggling, rare animals and plants.

Next, raised in this document are some of the main concerns in relation to Internet use. The first is the digital divide, which is "a form of discrimination that differentiates the rich from the poor, between nations and within nations, based on access or lack of access to this new information technology." [18] The second concern is cultural domination where the dominant culture brings false values and is contrary to the true good of people and groups.

The issue of freedom of expression on the internet, which is complex and raises a series of further concerns, is the third concern. This document states:

It is regrettable that attempts by public authorities to block access to information on the internet or in other means of social communication, because it is considered threatening or difficult for them, to manipulate the public with propaganda and misinformation or to hinder legitimate freedom of expression and opinion....authoritarian regimes are the worst offenders, but the problem also exists in liberal democracies, where access to the means of social communication for politics often depends on wealth, and where politicians and their advisers show no respect for truth and loyalty, slandering their opponents and minimizing problems into unimportant dimensions.[18]

A fourth concern is that economic competition and the around-the-clock presence of online journalism contribute to sensationalism and the spread of rumours, the mixing of news, publications and performances, and to the apparent decline of serious chronicles and commentary. Finally, the question of the integrity and accuracy of news, as well as the sharing of ideas and information, is a set of concerns that arises from libertarianism. According to this document, the ideology of radical libertarianism is misleading and detrimental, especially for legitimizing freedom of expression in the service of truth.[18]

Seeing these two sides of the Internet as a blessing and a curse as described above, the Document "Ethics in the Internet" provides several ethical principles. The first and fundamental ethical principle is that the human person and human community are the goal and measure of the use of social communication media. Communication should be carried out by individuals to other individuals for the sake of complete personal development.[17] The second basic principle is the general welfare, namely "the totality of the conditions of social life, which enable both groups and individual members to more fully and smoothly achieve their own

perfection.”[18] To support the second principle, solidarity is needed, namely a strong and enduring desire to dedicate oneself to the general welfare, namely to the welfare of all people and each individual without discrimination.[18]

This document ends with several recommendations to the parties: first, to parents to pay attention to the guidance and education of their children in relation to internet use so as not to get caught up in misleading things; secondly, to Catholic schools and educational institutions, to provide sufficient digital literacy to students, so that they are able to understand properly and correctly how to use it in a beneficial and responsible manner; third, to the government, not to censor the use of the internet and social communication media which damages and harms the freedom of expression of every citizen; fourth, to all nations and countries, to promote mutually beneficial cooperation in the use of the internet and cyberspace, so that everyone participates well and fully without anyone being left behind.[18]

### **Pope Benedict XVI and the Internet**

In line with the views of Pope John Paul II as his predecessor, according to Pope Benedict XVI, humanity and members of the Church must utilize the internet as a shared space. According to him, this is caused by globalization which means "there is no scope of human life experience that escapes the influence of the media. Media has become an integral part of interpersonal relationships and the development of social, economic, political and religious life.”[19] The Internet is a new media that has become a place to communicate various things. One of the most striking symptoms in the internet world is the existence of social networks, which have become a field of communication for many people. This new, open space is characterized above all by social networks that “create a new 'agora', a public square where people share ideas, information and opinions, and in which new relationships and forms of community can be created”. [20]

Entering a new world, it is necessary to recognize what characterizes that new world. One of the characteristics of the new world built via the internet, both through social networks and other sites, is a new communication model, namely an open, fast-paced communication model, where information is easy to obtain.[21]

Communication in the digital world is no longer reciprocal communication between two parties, but becomes open communication. Through social networks, communication can become very equal, because people are no longer limited by social status or various existing categories. People can freely express themselves, whether through posting selfies or status posts that can be easily changed. In this way communication becomes a form of sharing.

Pope Benedict XVI stated that the development of the digital world has not only changed the way of communication, but also the way of behavior, especially for young people. It was emphasized thus: “This shift is especially experienced by young people who have grown up with new technology and have felt the digital world as their own home. They try to understand and take advantage of the opportunities it presents, something that for us adults often feels quite foreign.”[22] The younger generation is the generation most affected by developments in the digital world. They are the children of today who were born in an atmosphere of digital technology development.[22] In short, for young people in cyberspace, networking is already part of their daily lives. It is with this network that they form their communities.

Regarding the Internet as a medium for evangelizing, Pope Benedict XVI also emphasized the urgency of using this new communication model in evangelizing. He argued that digital communication, as a sensitive and important pastoral area, provides new possibilities for priests in carrying out their pastoral ministry for and for the Word and then challenged priests to proclaim the Gospel using the latest generation of audiovisual technology (pictures, videos, animated features, blogs and websites) side by side with traditional media which can open new and broader insights for the sake of evangelization and catechesis

dialogue.[23] In this way priests can respond to the needs of young people living in the new world. This is an urgent demand if the Church wants to influence the young people of this digital generation.

Pope Benedict showed that one form of testimony is to display an honest attitude in the communication itself. Christian witness in the digital world can take the form of participation in sites or networks that aim to develop humanity for the sake of achieving general prosperity. This is a new field to show the testimony of Christian life. In particular, he invited Christians to pay attention to opportunities for evangelization through social networks.[21]The internet world provides many opportunities to spread the Gospel.[23]

Just like his predecessors, Pope Benedict XVI also emphasized the importance of evangelizing the virtual world. He emphasized, among other things, that the new world of communication as an *areopagus* today also requires evangelization. Therefore, it is not enough to use new media for preaching, it is necessary to evangelize the new world and integrate the Christian message in the new world. He warned that the communication patterns of the internet world could "turn into a system that aims to encourage people to surrender to agendas dictated by the interests of today's powerful powers, namely if communication is used for ideological purposes or for the sake of aggressive advertising of consumer products".[19] Communication actually determines reality, not just spreading information, but spreading influence and building events.[19]

So, evangelizing the new world of communication means presenting authentic communication, which defends the person and human dignity as a whole, and not manipulating reality. So, evangelizing the world of the internet means bringing this network into a means of advancing human solidarity, building brotherhood and friendship between people.[22]

In order to make virtual communication a process for developing the human personality, it is necessary to have a dialogue with virtual reality itself, it is necessary to learn the virtual language itself. In this case, it takes courage to recognize the new world itself. From the beginning of his life, the success of evangelization was determined by the ability to learn new languages and cultures and integrate the Christian message into them. This has been experienced by the Church since the time of the apostles until now. Nowadays the Church must learn this new language and culture.[22]

Dialogue with new cultures is an inevitable process if the Gospel is to be preached throughout the world. And this is what the Church has experienced throughout its history. The church can live from age to age precisely because it is able to dialogue and adapt to every culture without losing the message of salvation that it wants to convey. So at this time, the Church is also called to enter a new world, dialogue and develop new ways of communication for evangelism. This means integrating the Gospel message in the new world.[22]

### **Pope Francis and the Internet**

Continuing the views of Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI, Pope Francis also emphasized: "Don't hesitate to become citizens of the digital world. It is very important for the Church's attention and presence in the world of communication to dialogue with today's people to lead them to meet Christ." [24] The Church needs to be present in the internet world, so that Christ can be increasingly proclaimed in the midst of this new life by dialogue with today's people.

Pope Francis emphasized that Internet and cyberspace are also new means of communication that "allow people to share their stories, to stay in contact with friends who are far away, to express gratitude to others or ask for their forgiveness, and to open the door to encounters." -new encounters".[25] Even Pope Francis emphasized that by entering the world of the internet, we can develop our responsibilities as citizens, "The Internet can help us become better citizens. Access to digital networks requires responsibility to our neighbors who we do not see, but who are real and have a dignity that must be respected. The internet can

be used to build a healthy and open society for sharing”.[26]

Regarding the Internet as a medium for preaching, Pope Francis is in line with the views of his two predecessors, who stated that this is an opportunity for the message of the Gospel to enter and penetrate the virtual world, the new world lived by today's generation of children. Pope Francis said more firmly that by networking, the Church can become an open home for everyone:

Also thanks to networks, the Christian message can travel 'to the ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8). Opening the doors of the church also means opening them to enter the digital world, so that people can enter whatever their life conditions, so that the Gospel can come out of the place of worship to meet everyone. We are called to introduce the Church as everyone's home. Are we capable of presenting a Church with a face like this? Communication also gives shape to the missionary vocation of the entire Church, and social networks are one of the places where this vocation is realized so that people experience the beauty of faith and the beauty of the encounter with Christ. In the world of communication, a Church is needed that is able to warm and inflame human hearts.[24]

Thus, according to Pope Francis, by bringing the Gospel into the digital world, the Gospel can meet everyone, so that the Church can also become a home for everyone. Social networks can be a means of uniting people in a warm encounter with Christ and each other. Thus, the Church views the internet only as a means to convey messages to society.

## DISCUSSION

### **Reading The Views Of The Catholic Church Toward The Internet Through The Lens Of The “Risk Society” Theory**

From the discussion about the internet, risk society and the Catholic Church's response to the advances in the world of social communication, especially the Internet and Cyber Space, several important points can be discussed further regarding the Catholic Church's awareness of the risks of developments in information technology, especially the Internet and the cyber world, to the Catholic Church itself and what attitudes, views and actions of the Church to manage the risks of these developments both for itself and for wider society. The first thing found in this study, and of course it can still be found in other Catholic church documents on similar matters, is that the Church leaders are not indifferent to the existence of technological developments and social communication media which are increasingly sophisticated and complex nowadays. The Catholic Church is aware of the presence and influence of the Internet for church members and humanity. He is aware of the benefits obtained as already stated, but also the potential for abuse to spread the seeds of hatred, hoaxes and various other forms of crime. The Church is also aware that government policies of censorship and blocking and wiretapping often threaten personal freedom of expression and democratic freedom. Apart from that, the Church realizes that the globalization that is being touted as bringing prosperity to all people through equal distribution of prosperity, including equal access to communications technology (the Internet), is not as beautiful as it is advertised. It turns out that the world is experiencing a "digital gap", where the rich are getting richer (because they have access and control over everything) and the poor are getting poorer (because they can only reach the simple things or cannot reach them at all because of extreme poverty they experience).[16][17][18][19][20][21][22][23][24][24][25]

Another emerging awareness within the Catholic Church was that technological progress as the pride of modernity was not sufficiently guided by ethical and moral values, so that society fell at risk of destroying its own creation. This can be proven by the rise of various crimes that use Internet technology to exploit fellow humans and fellow creatures in various ways such as online fraud, online gambling, terrorism and others.

Based on awareness of the positive things as well as the negative impacts of the Internet and modern

communication technology and media, the Church designed a "risk management" from the perspective of the Catholic Church, namely first identifying problems and instilling ethical and moral principles both to members of the Catholic Church and to all people of good will regarding the use of the Internet and information and communications technology. These ethical principles include promoting public welfare, respecting the dignity of the human person, and building a spirit of solidarity. Of course, the principles of sustainability, participation and non-discrimination can still be added. [16][17][18][19][20][21][22][23][24][25]

Along with the promotion and development of ethical principles, a number of practical recommendations have been provided for Catholics and other people of good will to follow up in accordance with their respective fields of work and involvement in society, from the family to the public sphere. The stakeholders specifically mentioned in the documents above are Catholic church leaders as directors and guides, families, educators and catechists, educational institutions, IT experts, and social institutions involved in humanitarian affairs. In this way, the Catholic Church tries to manage the use of the Internet and social communication technology in a way that can reduce or even prevent risks from occurring. Apart from that, in this way, the Catholic Church can utilize the Internet and social communication technology for positive things both for humanity and for the safety of planet Earth.[16][17][18][19][20][21]

Although views about the internet and the cyber world seem good, Church leaders need to be aware of the complexity of this problem and need to realize that the ethical and moral standards laid down by the Church for the Catholic faithful cannot necessarily be adopted by others. Therefore, as part of the world community, the Church must be open to the values and principles that are also adhered to by other parties in using the internet and cyberspace. For this reason, the Church needs to open itself to involvement in the public sphere and discuss openly with multi-stakeholders in order to reach agreement and collaboration on how internet communication technology and cyberspace can be used for the safety of humanity and planet Earth.

## CLOSING

This study shows that the internet has influenced the life of the Catholic church, and the church is aware of the existence of this modern technology both regarding its benefits and the risks of misuse and negative impacts on humanity and the environment. Documents and messages from the three leaders of the Catholic Church – Popes John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis-- illustrate the Church's awareness of the values of the internet as well as the risks of the development of modern communications technology as warned by Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck. Therefore, the Catholic Church wants to emphasize the collective and shared responsibility to prevent misuse of the Internet by implementing ethical principles -- promoting public welfare, respecting the dignity of the human person, building a spirit of solidarity, sustainability, participation and non-discrimination -- for its use and emphasizing the importance of awareness of the good goals to be achieved through the this means.

To implement and realize these principles, the Church must be able to collaborate and partner with various parties from the local to the global level to make the globalization of communications technology (the Internet) bring more benefits than harm. So, the church needs to identify people of good will to make this happen.

What no less important id the joint and collective responsibility of religious institutions, the state and civil society to guide young people, so that they use the internet and cyber space wisely and are able to avoid the dangers and risks arising from misuse of the internet and cyberspace. The role of the family and educational institutions is also absolutely necessary.

Finally, dialogue with other religions and stakeholders is very useful in building awareness and collective strength to fight all the negative tendencies of misuse of the Internet and modern communication technology that seem to befall people from various religions, beliefs and various other backgrounds. This is what is

called "risk management" in the theory of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck. In this way, shared and sustainable prosperity can be achieved by all humanity.

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