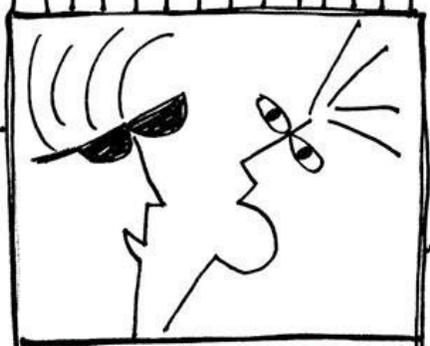


if these tools could talk  
you scare me.



FIND the TRIBE

We're wired to connect

We care about you. deeply.



# theology of Social Media

Preach the Gospel always [all-ways] ... if necessary use words.



ReMessage the Message

to the CYBER Body of CHRIST

LISTEN!

A culture that doesn't change is dead.

A church that doesn't change is empty.

Power = Social media



elaine Menardi

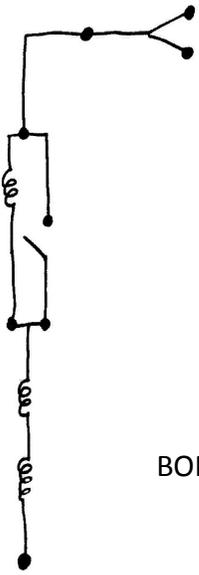
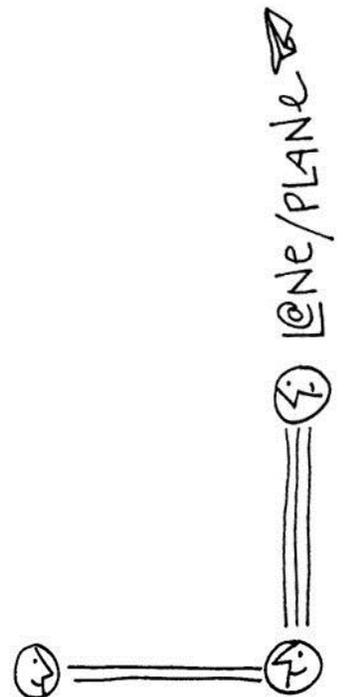
LINE/PLANE

# Theology of Social Media

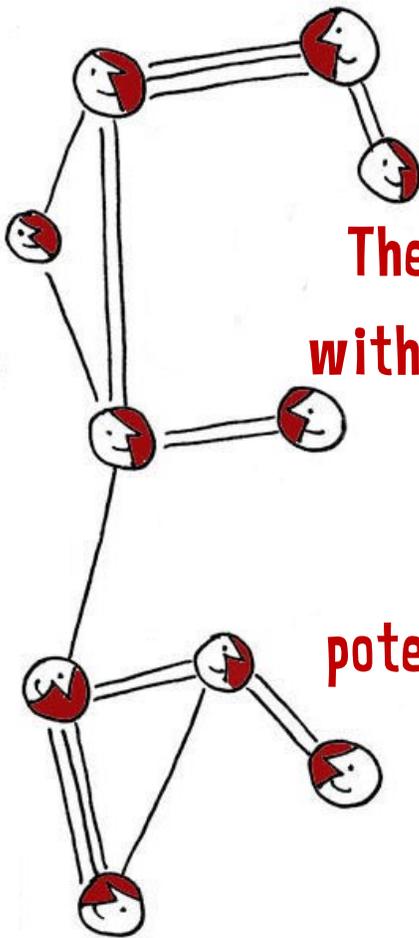
BORN ON: 1 December 2012 in a wide variety of locations in the US.

## COPYRIGHT INFO

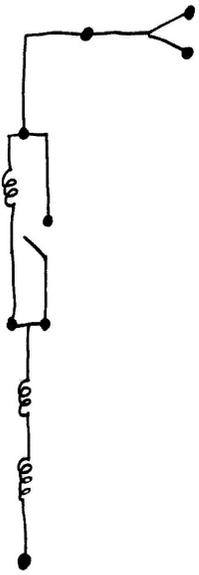
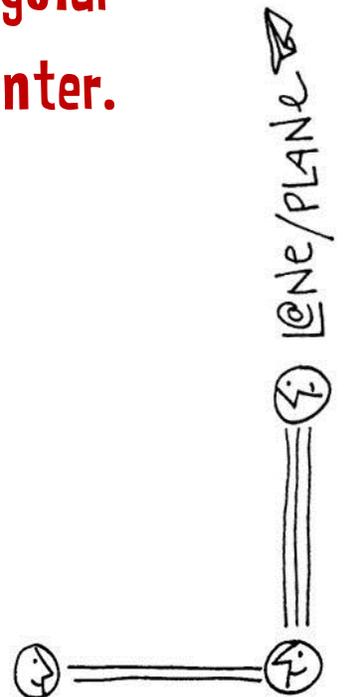
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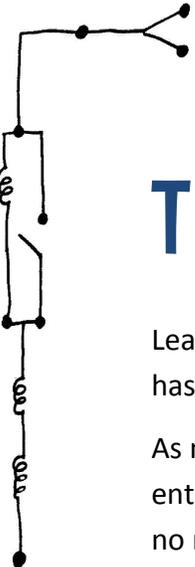


## Our Goal



The real goal here is to connect with people that we never see in person so we can build a relationship that could potentially result in the regular face-to-face encounter.





# Two Gaping Questions

Learning and living faith just don't seem to be priorities anymore. The ministry landscape has shifted under our feet and it's hard to know what to do next.

As ministers, we are always on the lookout for the perfect program that will renew enthusiasm for God and church in people's hearts. But the answers aren't easy. There are no magic programs or ideas that will instantly set people on fire for faith again.

Two huge questions consume the forefront of our ministry thinking these days. The first:

*How do we connect with people and get them excited about faith?*

It's a matter of going back to the basics. We have to reach out to people one by one just like Jesus did and build the relationships. Relationships are key.

The second question is:

*Why should we use social media to do this?*

Social media helps us connect. It's an effective and easy way for us to reach into people's lives to hear about what they experience daily. If they allow us in, we have an intimate opportunity to listen and be present to people. Plus, it's inexpensive. Social media tools fit quite nicely into tight church budgets.

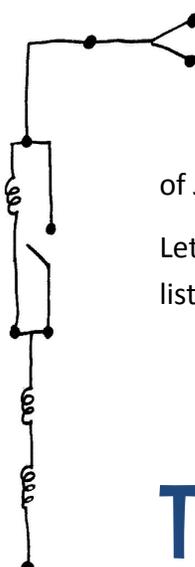
More importantly, social media is where people of all ages hang out these days. It is not just reserved for the 20-something crowd and younger. The second fastest growing age group on Facebook is 55+ years-old. Couple that with the average age of an American Catholic parishioner—64 years-old—and we can conclude that many in our parishes are connecting and conversing on Facebook.

## Connection is vital.

Social media connects us with others so we can share our stories. Jesus told stories that changed people's hearts and minds and that made them fall in love with him. For 2000 years, the Church has retold these stories in creative ways—cathedrals, music and art—that captured people's imaginations and engaged their spirits. Today, we have an amazing opportunity to tell these stories anew through the use of social media.

This book will help you explore what social media is and how it can be used to tell the stories





of Jesus and the Church to a new generation and an old one.

Let's go to where people are. Let's meet them in a new context so we can earn the right to listen in on the conversation and be part of their lives.

## The 1st WHY

This book is for any disciple in ministry who works to spread the Gospel in these post-modern times of culture and church. If you are new to this calling, you see and understand a world of people who are submerged in an ocean of technology and social media, and you instinctively know the route to get to them.

If you are a seasoned veteran in ministry, then this landscape has shifted under your feet, perhaps quite significantly. Gone are the days of packed Sunday pews and knowing every person in the parish. The up-close-and-personal encounter has changed to hit-and-miss conversations where there are typically more misses than hits.

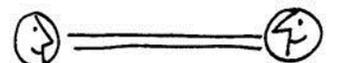
The task at hand is to know, understand, and meet the Body of Christ in this new context. We must learn how to reconnect because the rules—and tools—of engagement are changing, and will continue to change. Not if, but when. In and of itself that knowledge can scare us.

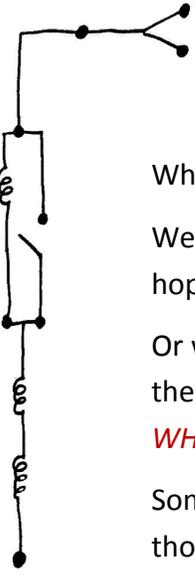
### The time to act is now.

We don't need statistics to tell us that overall participation in church is dropping. We see it with our own eyes. But the data confirms it.

- Regular Sunday worship attendance is about 22% in the US.
- Most people who leave the Catholic Church walk away between the ages of 18 and 23.
- 50% of those who leave go to other religions.
- More alarming: 50% become un-affiliated with any religion.

[Find this data at Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life: <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports#> and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate: <http://cara.georgetown.edu/index.html>.]





Why do they leave? Their spiritual needs aren't being met. Basically... they're bored.

We have two options. We can get defensive and say to ourselves—*We're not boring!*—and hope that the situation will self-correct... eventually.

Or we can admit out loud—*We've got to make a change!*— and step up to the plate. Go find the tribe and help them connect to us and to each other. [Read more about tribes in *The WHY.*]

Some may want to complicate the matter with if's/and's/but's... we will still be left with those two options: We either connect or don't connect.

You can read this book in about an hour. It is meant to be shared with anyone and everyone. This is for priests and deacons and bishops; paid and volunteer parish staff; youth ministers and DREs; catechists, teachers and parents; parish, finance and stewardship councils; Altar and Rosary societies; sacramental prep and RCIA teams; candidates and catechumens; Catholic school principals, teachers, parents and families; ministries to all language groups—English, Spanish, Korean, Filipino, Chinese, Russian, Polish and more; Eucharistic ministers, lectors and altar servers; music ministers and choirs and liturgists; and adults of all ages—all the people in the pews.

The ministry of being the Body of Christ involves us all.

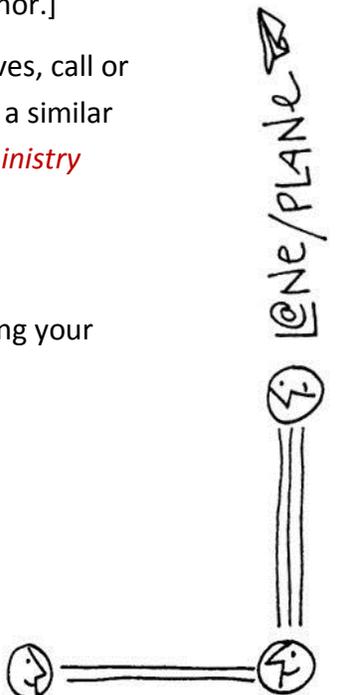
Share these ideas. Chew on them. Disagree with them. Talk about them in your particular context. Have heated discussions.

[Just don't change the original text... and please do give proper credit to the author.]

Once you've had a chance to digest and shape your own opinions and perspectives, call or email and share your discovery so that your insight can be shared with others in a similar situation. Send in your answer to this question: *How will this play out in your ministry setting?*

We can all work together to teach the message and create strategies for achieving your parish ministry goals. Go to [LanePlane.com](http://LanePlane.com) for more.

LanePlane





Elaine Menardi is a tech-geek and Catholic ministry social media strategist. She solves problems and makes ideas happen. Her prime directive is to connect the Body of Christ online.

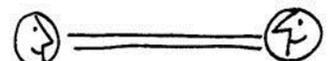
She is a seasoned ministry veteran who has served in Catholic parish/diocesan/national youth ministry circles for 23+ years.

She has great expertise working in mission dioceses in rural and small town ministry.

Elaine works with Catholic parishes teaching the theology of social media to help them create strategies that connect the Body of Christ locally and globally.

The ministry ground has shifted significantly during her time in ministry... but she's quick on her feet. She is married to a youth minister/junior high math teacher and they have two Millennial daughters who constantly challenge them to keep up.

You can reach her at: [LanePlane.com](http://LanePlane.com).



# The Parable of the Tech-Geek

(if we told it today...)

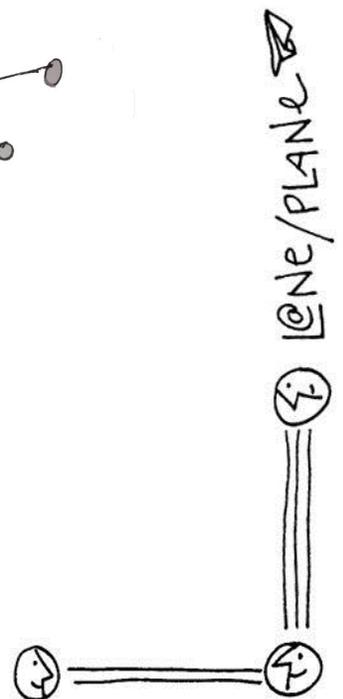
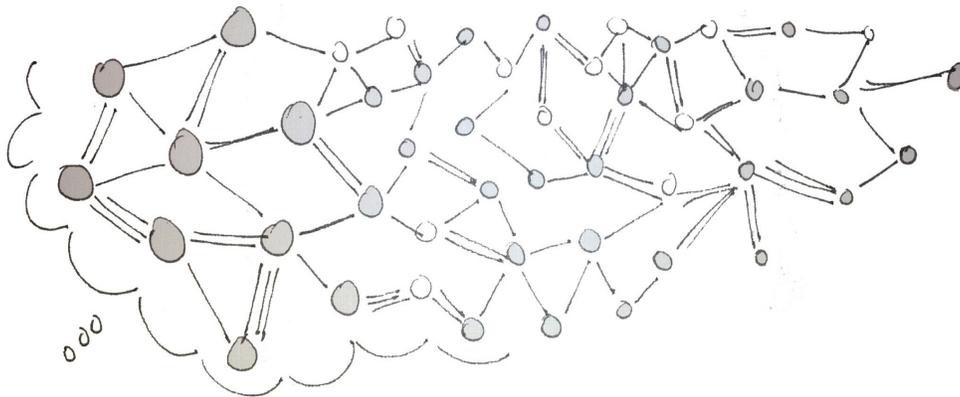
That same day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down at the neighborhood Starbucks. Such great crowds of coffee-enthusiasts gathered around him that he climbed up on the barista's counter and began teaching them as they sunk into the comfy couches around the cozy room. And he told them many parables.

# LISTEN!

*Listen! A techie logged onto Facebook.*

*And as he Facebooked, some status updates uploaded onto Twitter where trolls retweeted them using inappropriate hashtags and ate them whole. Other status updates were Instagramed and linked to mobile upload photo albums which had no depth and so they were quickly ignored. Other posts were shocking with foul language and innuendo so they were reported and blocked by FB friends. But some updates were meaningful and uplifting and encouraged many 'Likes', comments and RT's—30, 60 and 100 times over—and went viral!*

*Let anyone with fingers type and click away!*





# Connection = Pre-Evangelization aka, Fostering Interest in the Gospel

## Evangelization and catechesis are by-products of connection.

If we want to put this in terms of evangelization and catechesis, we should look at the work of connection as missionary work/pre-evangelization/fostering interest in the Gospel. [Read at paragraphs 46-58 in the *General Directory of Catechesis*.]

*The process of evangelization, consequently, is structured in stages or “essential moments”: missionary activity directed toward non-believers and those who live in religious indifference; initial catechetical activity for those who choose the Gospel and for those who need to complete or modify their initiation; pastoral activity directed toward the Christian faithful of mature faith in the bosom of the Christian community. (GDC 49).*

We can make a great case that the “essential moment” in play now is “*the missionary activity directed toward those who live in religious indifference.*”

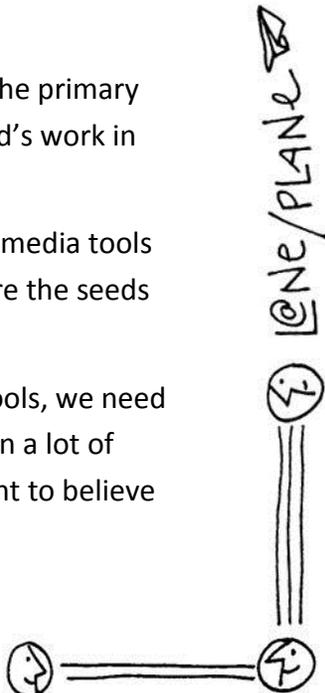
When we help people connect, they evangelize each other. Our goal is to provide the means to connect in the first place.

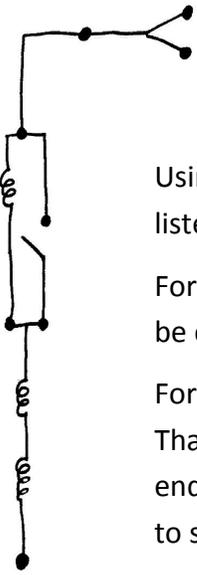
This goes against the grain for people in ministry because we think that we are the primary evangelizers... that we hold the keys to knowing and understanding God and God’s work in our lives. But really we don’t. We’re just mostly preparing the soil.

And in the context of technology and cyberworld, the internet is the soil. Social media tools are the seeds. The blogger/social media editor is the sower. The connections are the seeds sprouting in good soil.

Using these tools for the ‘New Evangelization’ is the HOW. Before we use the tools, we need to focus on the WHY: *We are the Body of Christ and we need to be connected.* In a lot of cases, we have either lost or not yet earned the right to be heard. We don’t want to believe that’s true but it is.

@ONE/PLANE





Using social media for evangelization and catechesis will only be successful once people are listening again.

For those who are already listening, we have a pretty good reach. However, we still need to be creative and relevant.

For those who aren't listening, we need to connect. Remember, belonging leads to believing. That's a fundamental shift in attitude for anyone working in ministry because it totally up-ends what we have always done in ministry and how we have done it. As ministers, we need to shift our approach as well.

### Connect by telling our stories.

We can use social media to tell our stories. It's really not any different than telling a joke or personal story in a homily or small group. It's almost the same as Jesus sitting around the fire telling parables to the disciples.

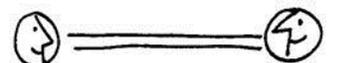
We do it all the time in our own lives at family celebrations and holidays... on camping trips with roasted marshmallows... in religious education classrooms and youth ministry groups and a whole gamut of other parish events when we gather as the Body of Christ. The only difference is the platform... it's online storytelling.

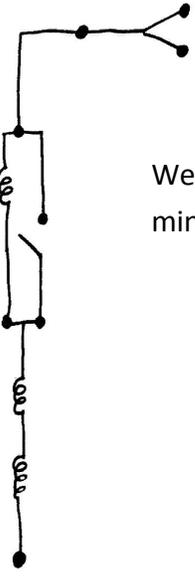
As Catholics, we are great storytellers! It's in our DNA. If people hear our story and are enticed by it, they will come and see.

### Share the Extraordinary Product

"We have a product which is extraordinary and we have to get our act together to bring it to as many people as possible. The way we [communicate] things at times is a total disaster and we have to be humble and say, 'we need to do better'. We need to start using language that people understand... We need to tell people we are not here to impose, but that we are here to propose."

Charles J. Scicluna  
 Auxiliary Bishop-elect of Malta  
 Interview with The Sunday Times  
 14 October 2012





We tell stories in order to share our extraordinary product. Spend some time with your ministry team answering these questions:

*What extraordinary product do we have to offer?*

*Why is it so compelling that we want to share it with others?*

*What do you want to propose?*

# We're NOT Using Social Media to 'Do' Theology

## What is the primary task of Catholic ministry today?

Some would argue that first and foremost, we need to be about evangelization and catechesis.

If people just knew the basic prayers and teachings... if people would just understand why it's important to go to Mass and confession ... if people would just believe in the Real Presence ... then they would have deep faith and know God and we could all return to the full glory of the Catholic Church's yesteryears. Too often the proper solution is thought to be: *Reach out to them and teach them the contents of the Catechism of the Catholic Church.*

I would argue differently. I think the primary challenge today is inviting people to the relationship... with Jesus Christ and with each other.

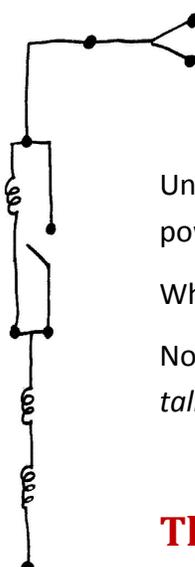
The ultimate goal is to help people get connected or re-connected, as the case may be.

Even without the hard data, anecdotally we can tell that regular participation in weekly liturgy and other parish activities is declining. People just aren't there anymore. The numbers don't lie.

It's tempting to view social media as another platform to preach. It's easy. It's free. And it's everywhere. Use it this way and we will miss the boat.

LONE/PLANE





Unless we approach social media with a different mindset we won't be able to harness its full power for the work of our ministry.

What are we talking about here? First what it's not.

Not: theology *and* social media. Not: theology *on* social media. Not: using social media to *talk about or do* theology.

## The theology of social media is very simple.

It's Body of Christ theology. As Catholic Church, we know Body of Christ theology. It is all about relationship. We should be able to do social media well because we know how to do relationship.

We are all connected. One bread... one body... one community.

That is a simple idea in theory... but a very hard idea in practice.

Social media itself is just the tool. But the theology of social media reaches to the heart of our faith: *We are connected through Jesus in the Body of Christ*. And how does the Body of Christ live and express itself in the world today? Largely through social media.

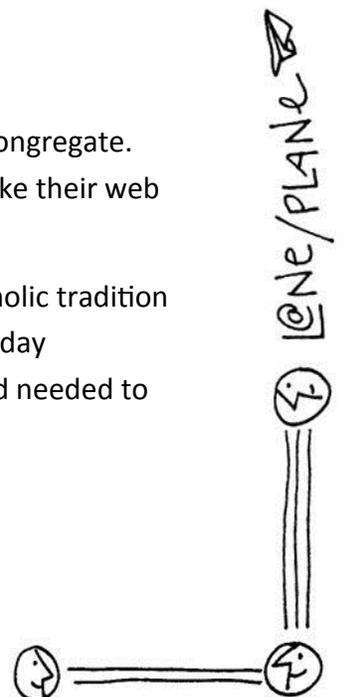
Technology and social media give us unprecedented ways to connect with people in our parishes, across our dioceses and even across the world.

As we delve into the greater implications about how to use these tools to accomplish the tasks of ministry, we start to see the greater possibilities for spreading the Good News. The potential is virtually unlimited.

## But it all comes down to the connection.

It's about being a relevant presence in people's lives in the places where they congregate. Today... that's online more than it is in the traditional parish settings. People take their web connection with them wherever they go via smartphones, iPads and tablets.

The theology of social media is really what we have known and lived in our Catholic tradition from the very beginning. It is all of us acting as simple evangelizers in our everyday interactions with people. It's the understanding that everyone is connected and needed to complete the mystical Body of Christ on earth.



The classic quote from St. Teresa of Avila fits here:

*Christ has no body but yours. No hand or feet on earth but yours.*

When we illustrate that with technology and social media tools, it makes the universal Body of Christ dynamic and vibrant in our midst in a totally new way. It is simply amazing.

The gift of social media is a fresh new entry point in people's everyday lives. The opportunity to meet them where they gather—in their homes, activities, friendships—in the places and spaces where real life happens.

That is a tremendous opportunity... and responsibility.

If we show up in their living rooms with pious, preachy words... even online... we are nothing short of the Bible-thumping, door-to-door evangelists who get doors slammed in their faces, rejected without a second thought. On Facebook you will be unfriend-ed or block-ed, on Twitter you will be unfollow-ed, and on LinkedIn you will be unconnected. At the very least, you will be the ignored, unopened email.

If we are to use social media to our greatest benefit, we have to go in with the mindset of creating and nurturing real relationships. We have to earn the right to be heard.

It's back to the basics of Relational Ministry 101. The connections we create can be supported by social media and potentially help open up a personal one-on-one relationship.

Just for a moment, let's compare traditional ways we have connected with people to the new ways:



Should we abandon the traditional ways? Absolutely not! But we do need to make some intentional connections between the two columns.

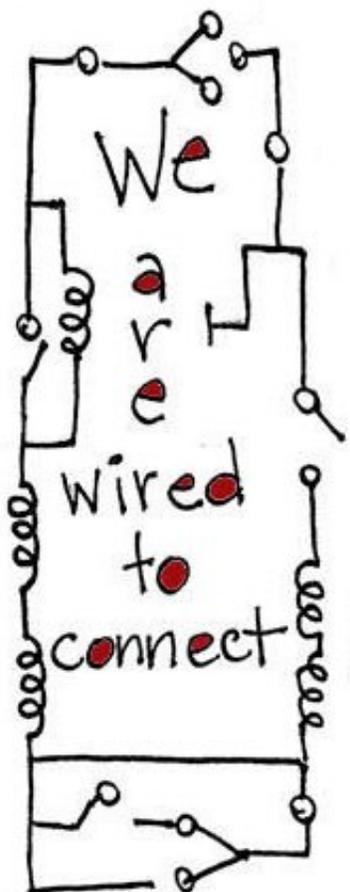
We need to reimagine, maybe reinvent how to reach people when we can't connect in the traditional ways. We must be aware that when they are not gathered with us in person, they are present—and can be reached—in the new ways.

## We Are Wired to Connect

### Why is relationship so important today?

For two reasons I think.

First, we are more isolated than ever these days in spite of these social media tools. A lot of people will be quick to point to the evils of technology as the culprit, illustrating the



ridiculousness of seeing two teenagers texting each other in the same room... or a couple at dinner together glued to their smartphones instead of engaging in conversation. No doubt, technology's accessibility has changed the nature of our relationships in profound and sometimes not altogether healthy ways.

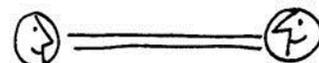
But I think there's also a higher level factor at work here.

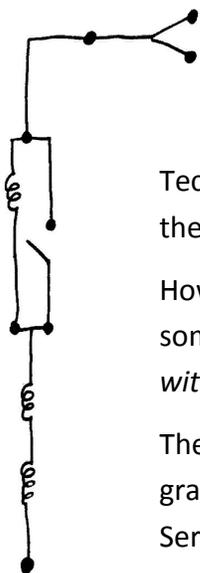
Instant access via technology has made the world a global village. We know this and experience it daily. More easily than ever before we are able to peek right inside someone else's life to see, to hear, to vicariously experience another world viewpoint. That can be a really cool thing... and it makes us feel educated, intelligent, cultured, and virtuous.

But at some point it becomes overwhelming.

Too often we compare our own lives with someone else's and when we fall short, we feel inadequate. When we supersede, we become arrogant. If we are honest, seldom is it a comparison to search for common ground.

LONE/PLANE





Technology has given us so many entry points to highlight our differences that its effect on the psyche has been to show us how uniquely individual each of us are.

How often do you see a homemade video or a photo or a status update proclaiming someone's amazing awesomeness? [Google "I am awesome" to do a quick research study with over 1 billion hits.]

The paradox here: we feel more isolated than ever in our own uniqueness. There is a grander, higher, deeper level of competition between people via technology than any World Series/BCS/World Cup game could match. The tool that should be helping us to feel connected might actually be making us feel more alone.

[Read more from Pew Internet and American Life Project: <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/18--Social-Isolation-and-New-Technology.aspx>.]

The second reason is simple: Human beings are wired to connect. We are wired for meaningful relationships, yet too often social media is used to create superficial relationships.

Outside of any relationship we don't really know who we are or what or why we're created. We find our identity through our relationships. Other people mirror us back to ourselves... in good and bad ways... and we either accept this image or reject it. We grow from someone who mirrors back a loving image or we wither from a negative image.

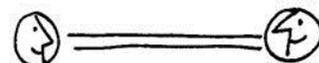
## The Significant Other

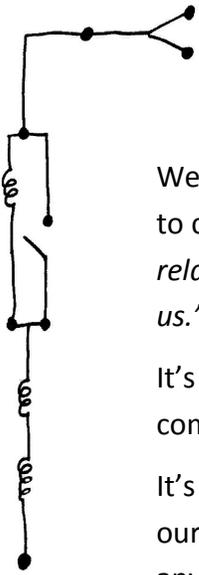
This is why it's so important and valuable to have a significant other in your life.

*"Without 'some significant other' naming us, we have a very fragile sense of ourselves. Without a significant other who is also 'The Significant Other' we are burdened with being our own center and circumference." (Things Hidden 57)*

If we have no grounded center, then our own center shifts every time a new superstar of our favorite variety shows up on the scene... be it an athlete, a singer, an author, an actor, etc., and we fall back into isolation.

There is one face that we can turn and re-turn to for definition and validation—the face of God. That desire sets up the whole relationship thing... because God is Trinity, *the* connection, *the* relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.





We are made in this image. We are wired to connect with each other because we are wired to connect with God. *“How we relate to God reveals how we relate to people. And how we relate to people is an almost infallible indicator of how we relate to God and let God relate to us.” (Things Hidden 56)*

It’s basic to our Catholic faith. Connection comes from the image of the Trinity. God is a communion of persons—Father, Son and Spirit.

It’s a huge risk to live in communion. We open ourselves to accountability and make ourselves vulnerable to heartache. And still we enter into relationships. Most people do anyway. Because we have that inherent, human-nature need to connect with each other. That is so important to us that we’re willing to risk being in relationship with a significant other and The Significant Other.

We can and should use technology and social media to help people make those connections deeper and more meaningful.

## Communication vs. Connection

Experts say we receive upwards of 35,000 messages each day. Most people speak about 16,000 words per day. Then add in how many more come in texts/emails/snail mail, etc.

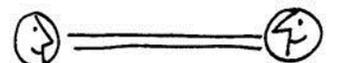
Talk is easy. Everybody talks. Talk is cheap. So is preaching. The question is: How do you make it count?

How do we really communicate with others? More than just passing on information, how do we connect?

### Back in the Day

In the early days of social media, we had Web 1.0. Basically, everyone rushed to create some sort of web presence and typically that involved giving the world general information about who you were and what you did. Websites were really more like electronic bulletin boards. Information was communicated in plain vanilla ways.

Then the internet evolved, and along came Web 2.0. The whole medium changed with the



invention of online buying, social media and blogs. Suddenly, people were able to respond to the information, not merely consume it. It became a two-way conversation. It became connection.

Web 1.0 was the one-way communication or 'push' of information. Web 2.0 changed the dynamic to a two-way connection by allowing people to talk back and engage in the conversation.

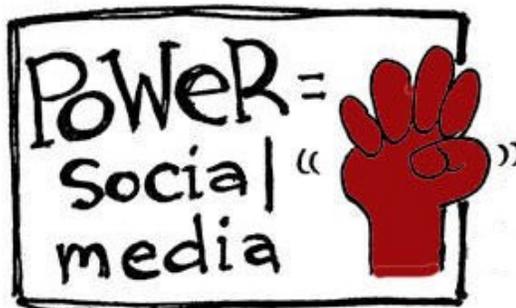
Social media took us from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0.

*We shifted from monologue to dialogue to multi-logue.*

## The Power of Social Media

We have witnessed firsthand the power of social media as it helped to :

- Overthrow governments. In February 2011, the Egyptian people told their president of 30 years, Hosni Mubarak: *It's time for a change.*
- Scoop the news. In May 2011, news of the death of Osama bin Laden raced across Twitter before it appeared on CNN several minutes later. Tweets were already being sent at a rate of 4000/minute while President Obama was announcing the news to the world on television.
- Topple public figures who make bad choices, i.e., Congressman Anthony Weiner scandal in June 2011 and Australian Olympic swimmers who were punished for posting inappropriate Facebook photos in June 2012.

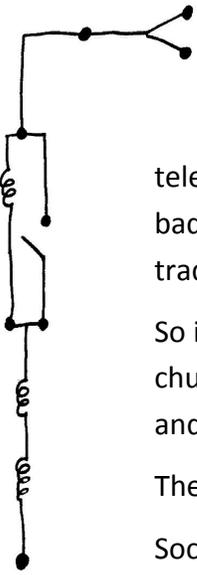


There is a lot of fear among ministry professionals about what can happen on social media because of stories like these.

So we need to pay attention to what we are doing: to think carefully before we click *Send* or *Post*; to try to envision how other people will react/respond/interpret what we put out there. If we use care and prudence, then we can minimize the impact and the fear.

Like any kind of tool—face-to-face conversations, newspapers, parish bulletins, homilies,





television, radio, advertising, phone calls and the like—social media can be used for good or bad. We have to use the same kind of care with social media that we already use with traditional media.

So if we want to reach people—all people, but especially those that we want to see in our churches and parishes but don't—we need to be using social media to connect with them and to talk with them.

The modern-day call is to be fishers of people... to go get them one-by-one. Like Jesus did.

Social media gives us an effective and inexpensive option for trying to reconnect with people. It's the new 'drop-your-nets-and-come-follow-me' call.

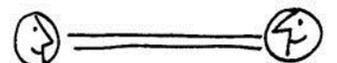
## An Integral Part of Human Life

Pope Benedict also recognizes that the internet is “contributing to the development of new and more complex intellectual and spiritual horizons”. The internet has opened up a higher level of personal sophistication to everyone. New media challenges all of us in ministry to evolve in our understanding as well as our practices.

*New horizons are now open that were until recently unimaginable; they stir our wonder at the possibilities offered by these new media and, at the same time, urgently demand a serious reflection on the significance of communication in the digital age. This is particularly evident when we are confronted with the extraordinary potential of the internet and the complexity of its uses. As with every other fruit of human ingenuity, the new communications technologies must be placed at the service of the integral good of the individual and of the whole of humanity. If used wisely, they can contribute to the satisfaction of the desire for meaning, truth and unity which remain the most profound aspirations of each human being.*

*I would like then to invite Christians, confidently and with an informed and responsible creativity, to join the network of relationships which the digital era has made possible. This is not simply to satisfy the desire to be present, but because this network is an integral part of human life. The web is contributing to the development of new and more complex intellectual and spiritual horizons, new forms of shared awareness. In this field too we are called to proclaim our faith that Christ is God, the Savior of humanity and of history, the one in whom all things find their fulfillment.*

Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the 45th World Communications Day  
June 5, 2011





# Marketing Is a Dirty Word

Say the word 'marketing' and many people will finish your sentence with 'and sales'. Unfortunately, our society's mindset has come to associate marketing almost exclusively with promoting a product for profit. And using 'church' and 'marketing' in the same breath, can make us cringe. We cry out: *"We have never, do not now, nor will we ever be 'selling' faith."*

And yet... we are selling faith. Not for money. Not for profit. But we would like people to invest some time and energy... right?

Marketing makes us cringe as ministry people because we immediately think of deceptive tactics, dishonest methods, annoying salespeople. We want none of that represented in our churches. Agreed. But those are merely stereotypes that hopefully we have not experienced in parishes during our years of church ministry.

Our goal isn't to use slick and shiny business marketing that drains people's wallets or cashes in on their souls. Our goal is to communicate and connect with people. Our goal is to be authentic in faith.

## **Our goal is to tell people how being part of the church makes their lives better.**

We shouldn't do bad marketing and we really shouldn't do poor marketing... like bulletins with typos or glossy photos of people who don't actually belong to our parishes. But we still need to communicate with our people.

Marketing is an inherently business term and, as such, is linked to the idea of making money. So it doesn't feel like it fits with church work or language. But what if we were to look at it from the angle of making disciples?

Our marketing goal is to communicate and draw attention to the act of disciple-making. We are not selling a product.

*We are introducing the person of Jesus.*

And we want that person to be real. Could we use our God-given creativity to put out an effective, clear, and beautiful message about Jesus?



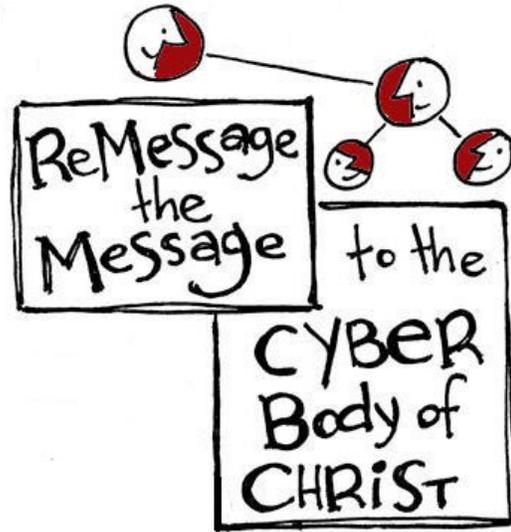
## Afraid the Message Will Change

The staunchest opposition to change in the Catholic Church... any kind of change... is:

We are afraid that *the message will change*.

The message, aka, the Good News, doesn't change. Never has. Never will. The Good News always stays the same.

But the presentation of the message has to change with the signs of the times.



*We must: Re-message the same message!*

*To carry out such a task, the Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel. Thus, in language intelligible to each generation, she can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics.*

*Pastoral Constitution On The Church In The Modern World*

*Gaudium Et Spes*

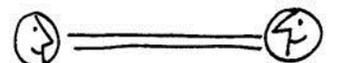
Promulgated By His Holiness, Pope Paul VI On December 7, 1965

[Did you catch that date? 1965! What a prophetic statement.]

To do this we will need a new marketing and advertising strategy.

Yes. It actually boils down to marketing and advertising the faith. We know we're not 'selling' faith. But it is about motivating people to give you their time, energy and attention to hear the Gospel and to encounter Christ. That's almost the same as trying to exchange money for a product. Think about it.

LONE/PLANE





# Churches Are Conversations

Go back in time to 1999 when a great piece of business writing emerged: *The Cluetrain Manifesto* by Doc Searles and friends. It set the stage for a good chunk of business strategizing and leadership writing today. [Learn more by going to their website: <http://www.cluetrain.com/>.]

*Cluetrain* posed 95 theses for how to market products better. The number one insight—and one that rocked the business thinking of that time—was this: *Markets are conversations*.

## Revolutionary Ideas

This was a revolutionary idea for its time because those were the days of Web 1.0. The internet was just beginning to work its way into people's everyday lives and it was basically a one-way communication or 'push' of information. Until then, customers only bought products after having a face-to-face interaction with a salesperson. If you were a good salesperson, employing honest and open tactics, then you sold a lot of products. And while there may have been conversation in the act of selling, to think of these markets as conversations with customers was an entirely foreign idea.

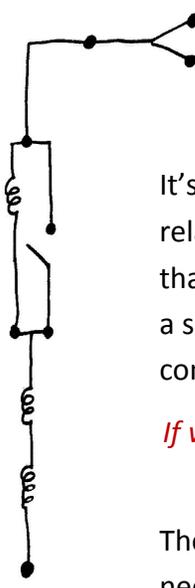
The idea of forming relationships with customers totally changed how business was done. Speaking with customers also made business more successful. Traditional marketing strategies began to shift... at least for the smart companies.

## Global Conversations

The internet created a powerful new global conversation. People quickly discovered how to share what they learned and experienced, and as a result, they got collectively smarter. Businesses caught wind of the undercurrent conversations and they too, had to get smarter to keep up with their customers. Their top priority was to start listening to what people were saying about them and the internet gave greater access to hear honest dialogue about how customers felt about companies and their products.

Where people talk naturally in genuine, open and direct language, many businesses still can only communicate in their mission-statement-brochure sound-bites.





It's really not any different today than it was back then. Same old tone, same old inauthentic relationship with customers. Is it any wonder that people have no respect for companies that don't speak their language? We crave the real human conversation... but only when it is a sincere, friendly voice that we encounter. How exasperated do you get when a computerized customer service voice asks you to press 1 or 2 or 3 for the right department?

*If we asked the same question about the reception or connection that the general public have with our churches, would we be disappointed in the answer?*

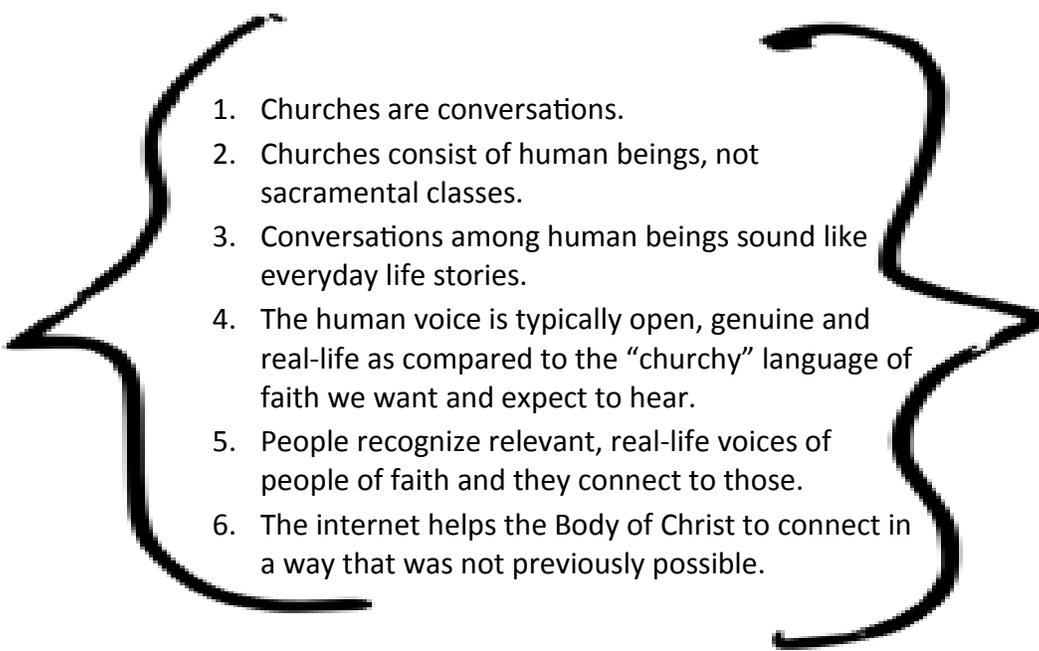
The top six theses in *Cluetrain* lay a strong foundation for all of us to build on in ministry. We need to pay attention.

1. Markets are conversations.
2. Markets consist of human beings, not demographic sectors.
3. Conversations among human beings sound human. They are conducted in a human voice.
4. Whether delivering information, opinions, perspectives, dissenting arguments, or humorous asides, the human voice is typically open, natural, uncontrived.
5. People recognize each other as such from the sound of this voice.
6. The Internet is enabling conversations among human beings that were simply not possible in the era of mass media.

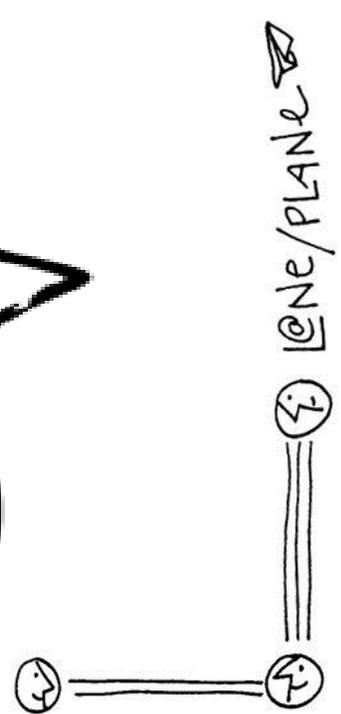
*From The Cluetrain Manifesto*

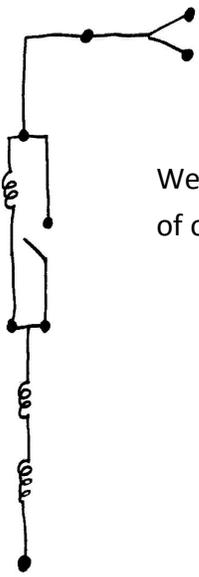
## Are we listening?

Let's translate these for use in our ministry settings.

- 
1. Churches are conversations.
  2. Churches consist of human beings, not sacramental classes.
  3. Conversations among human beings sound like everyday life stories.
  4. The human voice is typically open, genuine and real-life as compared to the "churchy" language of faith we want and expect to hear.
  5. People recognize relevant, real-life voices of people of faith and they connect to those.
  6. The internet helps the Body of Christ to connect in a way that was not previously possible.

LONE/PLANE





We have always known this. It has been part and parcel of our tradition from the early days of oral storytelling and everyday living. Look at Acts 2:42-47 for just one example.

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Conversation takes the form of prayer and worship, faith-sharing and community-building, living as the Body of Christ.

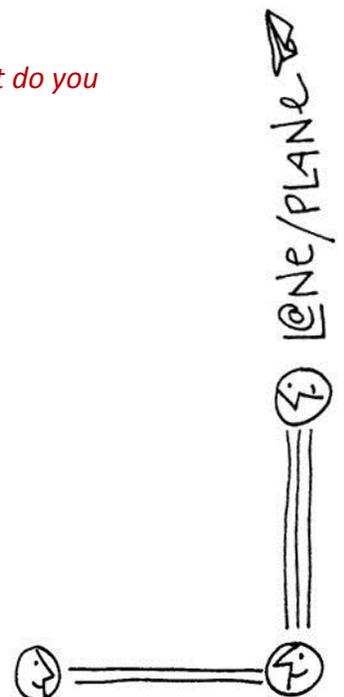
And yet somewhere along the way we lost the ability to really engage the response across the board. Churches turned into one-way communication “pushes” in a lot of cases. The conversation was broken. We lost the connection.

*If we want to re-engage the connection  
then we have to re-establish the conversation.*

If our people are not physically present in our churches, parishes, and programs—then where can we talk to them?

On social media, where the data tells us they are.

We need to ask people what they want. A great question to start with is: *What do you struggle with?*



# If These Tools Could Talk...

## Oh wait a minute... they do.

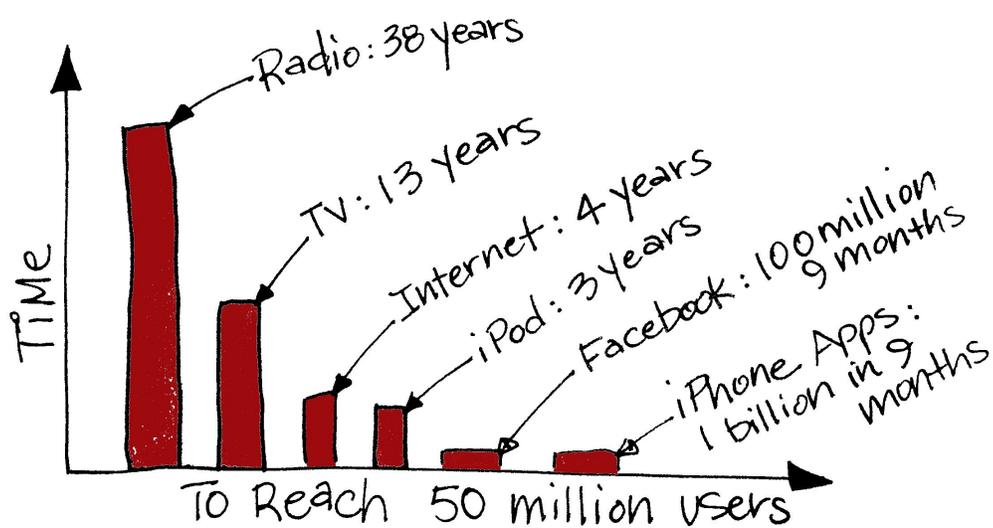
Here is a short list of the top seven types of traditional media we have used in Catholic ministry.

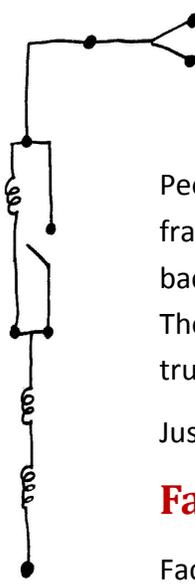
### Traditional Media

1. TV
  2. Radio
  3. Newspaper
  4. Billboards
  5. Sunday bulletins
  6. Conferences and vendor exhibits
  7. Direct mailings
- {We can add websites, although estimates suggest that less than 40% of parishes have an actual website. Does your parish have a good one?}

Here is the number of years it took each type of media to reach 50 million users:

- Radio: 38 years
- Television: 13 years
- Internet: 4 years
- iPod: 3 years
- Facebook: 100 million users in 9 months
- iPhone Apps: 1 billion downloads in 9 months





People have a hard time accepting that social media is real and worthwhile because it took a fraction of the time traditional mediums took to develop. We didn't have a chance to sit back and watch and learn the way we did with television, radio, or even the first websites. Therefore, most people have an inherent and reasonable skepticism and tendency to not trust social media.

Just because it happened so fast doesn't mean it's a fad.

## Facebook

Facebook has now grown to over 1 billion users—150 million of those are in the US. More than 50% of users log in every day on multiple devices, i.e., desktop, laptop, smartphone, iPad, tablets.

The fastest growing age group of users is 18 to 24-year olds. But the second fastest growing age group is 55+! Couple that with the statistic that the average age of a Catholic parishioner across the US is 64 and we can conclude that many in our parishes are active on social media.

The average user is connected to 130 friends and 80 pages and groups. That means the potential reach of a single message is in the 1000s.

Facebook is a huge and vast vineyard. Send in the harvesters!

## Twitter

Twitter has approximately 500 million accounts—27 million users in the US. The average age of a Twitter user is 39.

## LinkedIn

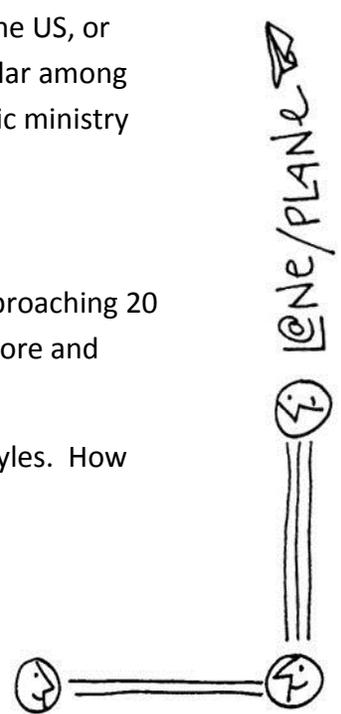
There are 175 million users worldwide and approximately 43% of those are in the US, or nearly 75 million. The average age of LinkedIn user is 44. LinkedIn is very popular among business professionals and is a great resource for connecting to national Catholic ministry organizations.

## Pinterest

Pinterest is an online pinboard with pictures, quotes, designs and graphics. Approaching 20 million users in 3 ½ years, it is used mostly by women but men are signing on more and more.

What is unique about Pinterest? It is feeding the visually stimulated learning styles. How could we use it for catechesis?

LONE/PLANE



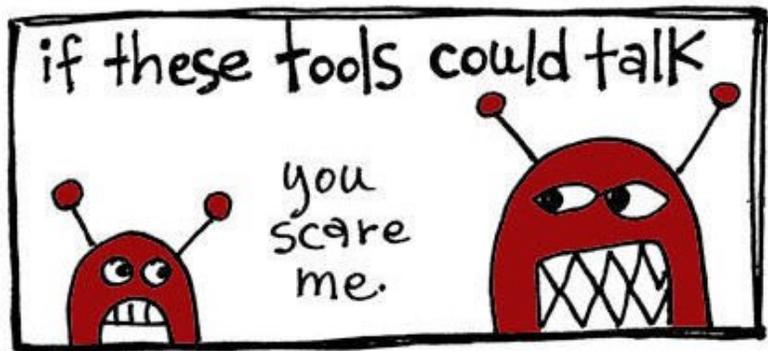
## Broad Use Numbers

- 77% of people in the US have internet in their homes.
- 66% of US adults with internet use social media.
- 2 billion people worldwide are online.

These numbers are staggering. And the trend will only continue to deepen as more and more people gain access to technology and the internet. The use of these and other social media tools are changing the whole landscape of how we live/breathe/communicate. It's changing the nature of our relationships. It's changing the ways we think and learn.

Gatekeepers are no longer in control of what information is released and where it goes. We

can choose what we read, when and where we read it, and how we want to respond or not respond. More importantly, we can choose more easily what we want to ignore.



## What should we do with these tools?

Use them to connect with people and begin the relationship.

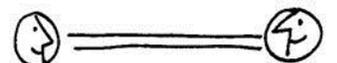
On any given day, there are upwards of 5 million Google searches on the word 'God'. That is huge!

Today's Millennial generation *expects* a two-way conversation. They want a connection, not just information. They want to dialogue, to talk with someone about the meaning and purpose of their lives.

[Read the article How parish websites can better connect with Catholics: <http://www.osv.com/tabid/7621/itemid/6084/How-parish-websites-can-better-connect-with-Cathol.aspx>.]

Individually and collectively, these social media tools offer tremendous access to reach and teach people and engage them in new ways. The possibilities for evangelization are virtually unlimited. What can we do with these tools?

LONE/PLANE



## 10 Simple Ideas for Evangelization

1. Connect to international and national events and news in the Church.
2. Link to church leaders' speeches, blogs, teachings, etc.
3. Follow the Pope, cardinals, bishops and priests as they meet and work in ministry.
4. Write our own blogs that address questions from teens and other parishioners.
5. Make videos that highlight the good work happening in our parishes.
6. Create spiritual resources for people to use in their homes.
7. Upload photos/homilies/reflections from local leaders and staff.
8. Promote and advertise parish events and activities.
9. Give parents ideas for building faith at home and post activity plans that you use in parish programs for them to do at home with their families.
10. Pose discussion questions and prayers inviting people to engage the two-way dialogue/multi-logue.

This is a short list of ideas that you can use to evangelize on social media. What else would you add?

# The Cyber-Body-of-Christ

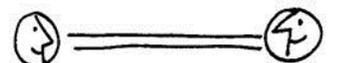
## What does the Body of Christ look like?

Whenever I ask this question, I get two responses: a small round piece of bread with or without a monstrance; and the People of God. More often than not, the People of God is imaged as a large group of faces sitting inside a church building.

I would suggest that these are inner circle images of the Body of Christ. It's the image of the host that you receive at Communion at your parish... or it's the group of faces that you see at Sunday Mass every week.

If we stretch our imaginations, we might begin to include groups of faces in all kinds of places... from all kinds of cultures... speaking all kinds of languages... maybe even other denominations... if we really stretch ourselves.

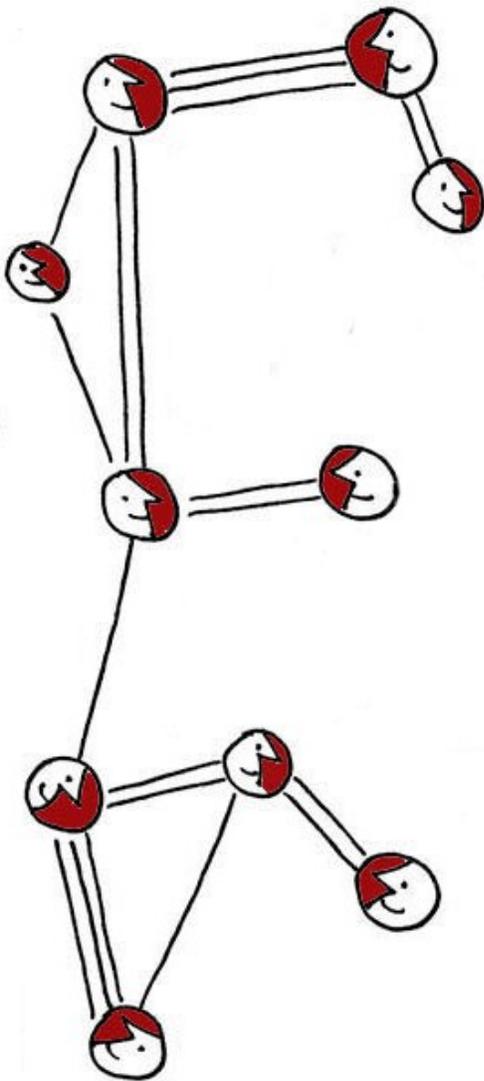
For many people, the information superhighway is difficult to imagine because it doesn't have a singular tangible image. It is a vast network of wired and wireless computers and



devices that mysteriously talk to each other and exchange information at super-fast speeds. The Cyber-Body-of-Christ is equally as difficult to imagine.

## The Body of Christ is a vast network.

Try to envision the Body of Christ in the cybersphere, living and breathing. Not some holographic/science-fiction/futuristic image... but a larger version of the mental picture you have of the people in your Sunday congregation.



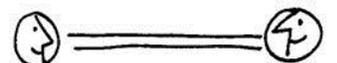
The cyber-church is every bit as real as the people who gather in person in our parishes. The Cyber-Body-of-Christ is made of human flesh-and-blood people who simply congregate in cyberspace. Our job is to foster deeper connections between all of them—across the spectrum from physical church buildings to the cybersphere.

The greater implication is that the Body of Christ exists in a wider plane. We know for certain that there are plenty of good Catholic believers that are never seen in a church building and yet, they too belong to the Body of Christ. They are easy to forget because they are seldom seen in person. There may be people that we only see at Christmas and Easter... or the children we lose track of between First Communion and Confirmation... or the families who get over-extended with weekend activities. These are our “parishioners” as well. Our ministry is incomplete if we only serve the right-in-front-of-our-noses Body of Christ.

We need to begin to integrate the Cyber-Body-of-Christ into our ministry thinking and expand our circle of thought beyond the immediate image of who the Body of Christ includes. This is the deeper task of the New Evangelization. Why? Because the New

Evangelization is about calling back those who left... the ones we used to see but don't anymore... the ones we used to have regular contact with but don't anymore.

LOVE/PLANE



If we can begin to envision a modern Cyber-Body-of-Christ then the New Evangelization has a brand new, fresh access point into people's hearts and lives. The key is that we have to be relevant without being preachy. Otherwise, we'll be ignored just like before.

Can we help people experience conversion moments through online ministry?

Sure. It's happening now. God works in mysterious ways... in all times and places and spaces. Some will come to us in our church buildings seeking change. But we also need to go out to them.

## If We Don't or Won't Reimagine

### Technical vs. Adaptive Change

Are you satisfied with how your ministry is going now?

If so, then keep doing what you're doing. More power to you!

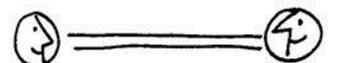
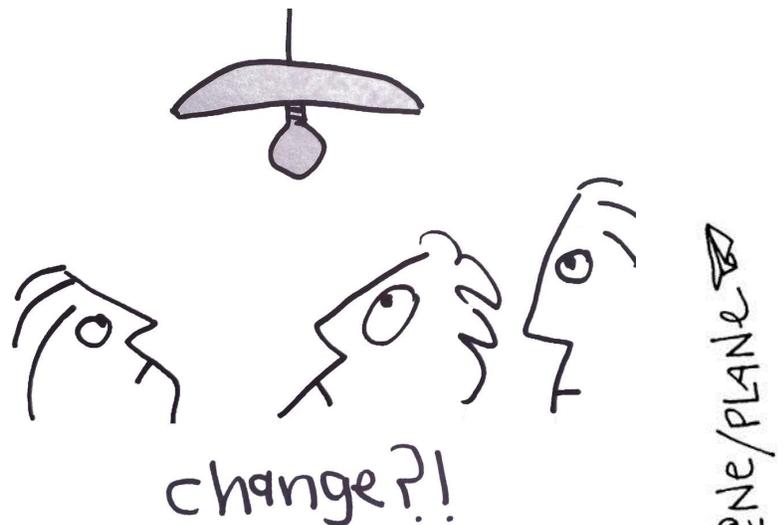
If you're not satisfied, then gear up... because you're going to have to make a change. *What are you willing to do differently to achieve the results you want to see?*

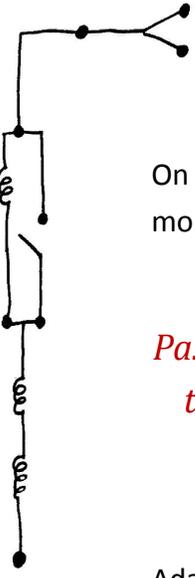
It's the difference between technical and adaptive change.

Technical change means refining or making practical changes that will improve a program or process. It sounds like this:

*If we move the youth ministry meetings from Friday nights to Wednesday nights then I think more teens will come because it won't conflict with the high school football games.*

Technical change usually involves strategic thinking to streamline processes for efficiency... more like tweaking the fine points.





On the other hand, adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behaviors... mobilizing people to learn new ways. Adaptive change might sound like this:

*Pastor to the people: These social media gadgets are great! I think we can use them to help us connect better with our parishioners. Let's have a meeting next week to start working on a social media strategy for the parish.*

Adaptive change requires some major shifts in thinking and acting on the parts of everyone involved. You might think of it as an investment in personal currency. Adaptive change is big and usually requires creative thinking to find new solutions to problems.

The theory of the long tail in business marketing teaches that small incremental change does not lead to greater success. If you want to catch people's attention, it won't be because you changed one button on a product or altered a single ingredient in the recipe. People respond more fervently to a totally new product.

The same will be true in ministry. Our greatest success will come when we visibly show that we are adapting to the changing reality of our world that has been initiated by technology and social media. When people see that we are using social media to reach out to them, it will catch their attention. When they see we are using it to talk about relevant questions and matters of faith, they will be more inclined to enter the conversation.

## The Real Urgency

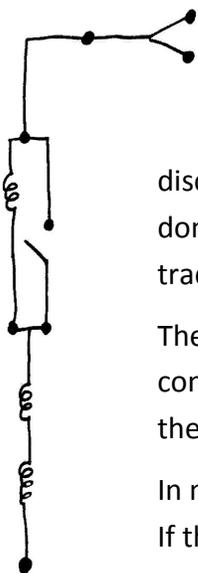
The real urgency for us in ministry today is simply that people aren't coming around anymore. They're not connected to church like they used to be. One-third of Catholics have left the church, most between the ages of 18 and 23. Of those who leave, 50% go to other religions. Even more alarming: 50% become unaffiliated with any religion. Why?

Researchers gleaned an insightful conclusion from the data. Most of the people who left did not have any deep conflict with Church teachings. For the most part, their sense of Catholic Tradition and tradition remained solid... they continued to believe in Catholic teaching.

So what's the problem? Why do they leave? Their spiritual needs are not being met. Basically... they're bored.

Many still feel deeply Catholic at the core... but for a variety of reasons, they have





disconnected from the physical community. If they are physically disconnected—i.e., they don't have a face-to-face presence in the parish—and we are only connecting with people in traditional media formats, then we lose the opportunity to reach this group.

They still believe. They still have deep faith. We have lost the personal and physical connection... but it's not so broken that we can't fix it if we try. We have to stop waiting for them to come back to us and instead, go out to them.

In ministry terms, getting connected with people is not simply about creating a new program. If that's all it took, we would have solved the problem a long time ago.

This is a systemic issue that will require deeper change.

There's definitely a choice involved. We can choose to use or not use technology and social media for ministry. We can choose to reimagine or not reimagine the Body of Christ. But we'll need to consider the consequences of that choice.

Most importantly, what outcome do you desire? More people showing up at the parish? More engagement from the ones who do?

These are signs that adaptive change is needed. A good first step is to address the fear. Here are some common ones that many in ministry share.

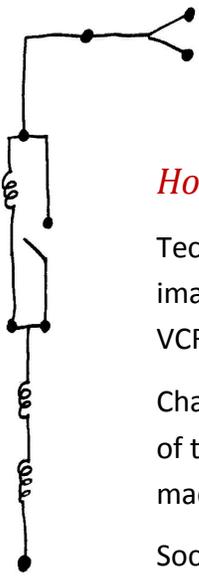
## Big Q's and Fears

*I don't want to lose face-to-face connections.*

We will still have face-to-face connections with the ones who show up. That will not stop until we stop being in the same place at the same time. No one will ever say "Stay home so we can meet on Skype instead." Unless, of course, there's a blizzard going on or some equally good reasonable excuse why we should meet online. No.



LONE/PLANE



### *How does anyone have enough time to spend on social media?*

Technology has been a gift. Agreed? In a lot of ways, it has made our lives easier. Just imagine your life without refrigerators, microwaves, televisions, cars, washers and dryers, VCRs and now DVRs, desktops and laptops, iPads, smartphones... any phone!

Chances are good that you would be lost without several items from this very short list. Each of these modern advancements replaced some previous piece of equipment because they made our daily life easier to live and probably more fun.

Social media in ministry is the same thing. We just have to learn it and figure out how it can streamline our ministry. We bit the bullet and learned how to program our DVRs and fancy televisions with satellite dishes. We figure out how to sync up our cell phones to work with Bluetooth and Spotify. And we're even beginning to understand smartphone apps. Like all these, social media in ministry has a do-able learning curve.

### *I am afraid of negative backlash.*

The perception is that if we use a blog or other social media then people have more opportunity to say bad things about us. So why risk it?

People have been saying bad things for years. We just never heard it. Water cooler talk has been around longer than the actual water coolers. The difference today is that the water cooler is online and there are a million people standing around it talking and comparing notes.

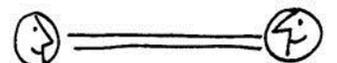
People are going to complain about things. It's part of the human condition. The paradox is: *There is no better place for them to complain than on your website and social media.* Why? Because you have the chance to respond to them immediately there.

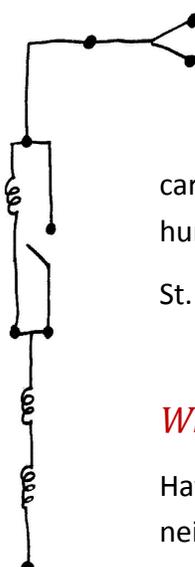
If the water cooler talk stays at the office, then you can't help people solve their problems or change their perceptions. If you engage them in conversation—even online—then you can resolve their issues and in the process show onlookers that you care enough to make things right. In the business world that's called customer service. In Catholic-world, that's called *relational ministry*.

### *What if I make a mistake?*

We never learn anything without making mistakes. It doesn't matter what media platform we are talking about... television/radio/print media or online media. We have to use great

@ONE/PLANE





care and caution when we communicate. We've always made mistakes—and we're human—so we will always make new ones. Fix them. Learn from them. Move on.

St. Peter made some huge mistakes and yet...

### *What if I go somewhere bad on the internet?*

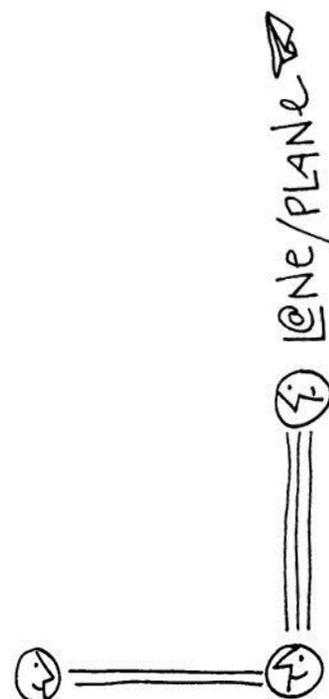
Have you ever gotten lost while driving and ended up in an unfamiliar or even scary neighborhood? Gather your wits. Back-track and get out of there.

### *This is just a fad.*

At one point in history, people probably thought the same thing about printed books and horseless carriages... about televisions and microwave ovens and computers, etc. While specific programs will certainly disappear, social media and how it connects us is not going away. Social media is not a fad. Accept that it is changing our world in a profound way.

### *Change?!?!*

The real crux of the issue is that we resist change. In some cases, we're downright afraid of it. It's definitely your prerogative to keep your push-button-long-curly-corded phone if you want to. But if you are the gatekeeper in your area of ministry... or even the whole parish... don't let your own resistance to change handcuff what others could be doing with technology and social media. Give them the freedom and support to use these powerful tools for the work of ministry and evangelization.



## 4 Things to Understand about Social Media

The corporate business world is finally learning some valuable lessons about how their customers are using social media. As ministry professionals, we would be wise to stand up and take notice.

1. Social media is the wave of the future. It's not going away.
2. The companies (churches) that will succeed over the next 10 years are the ones that embrace social media.
3. The companies (churches) that will fail over the next 10 years probably won't embrace social media—most likely because of fear.
4. Social media marketing is real. It can be actionable. And it can be measured... which will give you clues about when to adjust the course.

[Read more about this in *No Bullshit Social Media* by Jason Falls and Erik Deckers. The website: <http://noblshitsocialmedia.com/buythisbook>.]

## Keys to Success

*Be intentional. Know why you're doing it.*

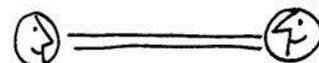
Before you start, have a conversation with staff and volunteers to figure out: *What do you want to say? And who do you want to say it to?*

These are extremely valuable questions to talk about at the very beginning of your brainstorming process. The clearer you are about what you want to do, the better your connection strategy will be.

*Don't go half-way. But divide and conquer.*

If you are going to learn how to swim you can't just stick your big toe in to feel the water temp. You've got to jump in all the way and splash around a while to let your body warm up. Social media is the same way. You must make a long-term commitment in order to see how social media works for your ministry context.

Use ministry staff and other people you trust to create a social media team and divide the responsibilities. Don't expect that three or even six months will give you an accurate



reflection of the effect of social media on your ministry. Plan to give social media strategies a minimum of one year of strong, dedicated effort to assess their impact on creating wider connections with people.

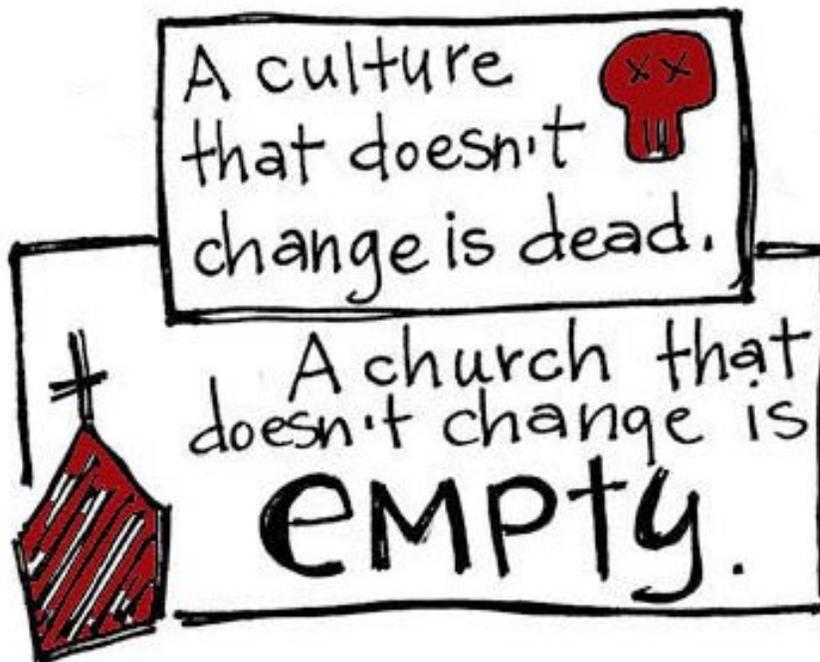
*Have a plan. Stick to it. Adapt when necessary.*

Create a strategy. Devise a list of topics and themes for 3 or 4 or 6 months. Then make it happen. When you get near the end of your plan, evaluate and if necessary, change it. Set some measurable goals and then revise upward when you reach them.

*Be consistent.*

Consistency and quality are the keys to keeping your audience active and engaged with you on social media. Like anything else in life, routines create habits. When the Cyber-Body-of-Christ knows your regular routine of posting updates and content, they will be more likely to stay connected. How often you decide to post blogs/status updates/tweets/videos, etc., should be built into your social media strategy. Start small and then grow as you and the team get more comfortable and gain experience.

*What happens if we don't or won't reimagine...*



This is real. Take it or leave it.

# The WHY

Some in Catholic ministry have embraced social media and are using it effectively to spread information and connect with people. Others are still thinking about it, while even more are digging in their heels and resisting. But largely these platforms have been about creating a traditionally Catholic presence and preaching. We use these tools to show people that the church is alive in the cybersphere. Here... let's be 'friends'. And we use these tools to proclaim the Good News—to spread the Gospel. But these actions are really the HOW and the WHAT. Neither are the WHY.

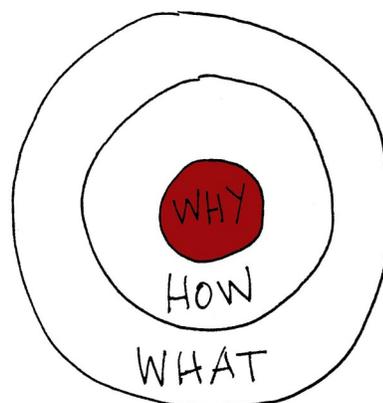
What do I mean?

Let's look at the WHY / HOW / WHAT... in that order.

## The Golden Circle

Business leader Simon Sinek uses a model called the Golden Circle: Why / How / What.

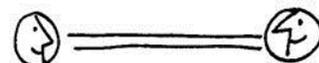
- WHY do you do what you do? What's your purpose? Describe the unifying, driving, inspiring force behind individuals and organizations.
- HOW do you do what you do? Give details about the guiding principles or actions that bring the WHY to life. The verbs. The strategies.
- WHAT do you do? Define the actions that bring the WHY to life.



Our first thought is that the priority is to proclaim the Good News... that the primary outbound message should be the Gospel. That's a great objective. But it's actually the WHAT. We really need to focus first on the WHY... this message:

*We care about each and every one of you. Deeply.  
You are important because you are the Body of Christ.*

The theology of social media is Body of Christ theology... Trinitarian... communal. We are wired to be together in everyday life, prayer, worship and service.



The social media cybersphere is where we have the best opportunity to meet people. That's where they live anymore.

Sinek is a business marketer. The reason why his Golden Circle model is gaining traction in the corporate world is because it flips our whole set of assumptions upside down about how to reach people. Traditionally, the marketing philosophy has been:

1. *Here's a great product.*
2. *It can make your life better in this way. You need it.*
3. *We sell it. Come buy one.*

In Catholic-world it would sound like this:

1. *Register for RE classes and sacraments so we can teach you the Catholic faith.*
2. *We need you to use your gifts to support our parish.*
3. *If you believe in Jesus and follow his teachings, then you will live a better life.*

It's exactly opposite of how we need to be reaching out to people today because the world has changed. It used to be that believing led to belonging... if you believe what I believe then you belong with us. But today, it's been flipped upside down... belonging leads to believing... if I belong to your group then I'll start to believe what you believe.

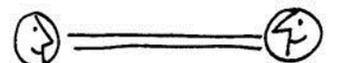
What could happen if we put the relationship first? What if it sounded like this?

1. *You are an important and valuable member in the Body of Christ. We care about you... deeply. Let's build a relationship.*
2. *Let me introduce you to my friend Jesus. He is our Lord and Savior.*
3. *Come be part of our church community. We'll teach you more about Jesus and Catholic faith.*

That's putting the WHY first. It is probably the harder path because it calls us to greater vulnerability in initiating the relationship without a guaranteed return for our time and energy.



LONE/PLANE



We have traditionally started with the teaching piece. It is easier because we can use more of our head knowledge and less of our heart investment. But our example and model should be Jesus. Jesus always began with the relationship. That is our call too.

The WHY comes first because it is about building the relationships. Without an established relationship, everything we say falls on deaf ears. Even our best Catholic doctrine is lost if it's not first rooted in relationship and community.

### **Find the tribe and help them connect to you.**

Seth Godin—another business marketing guru—talks about people as tribes. That all people gather around common interests and that humans are inherently tribal are both true statements. We meet in religious tribes (Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, non-denominational, Mormons, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Christians), sports tribes (soccer moms, football dads, fantasy league general managers, Little League parents, boosters), hobby tribes (crafters, quilters, bakers, brewers, card players, billiards and bowlers, gamers and programmers), and social tribes around causes (preschool moms, home-school co-ops, Respect Life advocates, social justice promoters, soup kitchen ladlers, rosary makers and pray-ers, Bible study-ers and catechists).

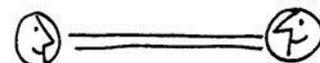
We all belong to a multitude of tribes. And it's our common interests and our connection to a particular tribe that keep us coming back. We find a sense of identity by maintaining our connection to a tribe.

Technology and social media help us to find the tribe and connect them to us. We would like to find the Catholic tribe. But where are they?

In the cybersphere.



LONE/PLANE



## Help the tribe connect to each other.

Helping people to connect is pretty easy on social media. In fact, it is the reason social media exists. People are already massively Friend-ed/Follow-ed/Linked-in. Our job is to help the tribe discover common ground between them and get them talking to each other.

People today—especially young people—have a great desire to engage big and deep questions. There are so few safe spaces anymore to talk about the meaning and purpose of life in spiritual and religious contexts. If we could instigate that kind of talk in the tribe and then facilitate and fuel the conversation that would be a most worthy ministry adventure.

## The HOW

Now you have a clearer understanding of WHY you want to use social media for ministry:

*To build relationships that connect people in the Body of Christ.*

The next step is to create an effective and efficient path to follow that works for your context. Be intentional and thorough in setting up these four HOWs and you will pave a smoother road for greater success.

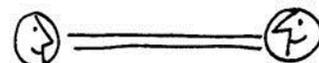
### HOW to find the tribe and connect

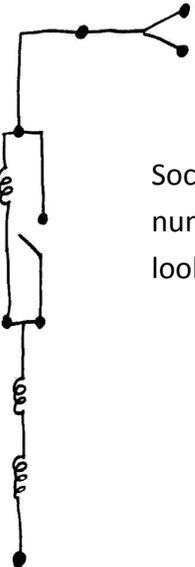
*Identify your goals and outcomes.*

Build your strategies around goals and outcomes. Real goals that can be evaluated and measured. Initially that will be numbers—quantifiable as related to program participation such as hits on blogs and Facebook ‘Likes’. These will quickly translate into measuring the quality of content and conversation as well as what people are learning and taking away to integrate into their personal and spiritual lives.

So the first question to ask is: *What are you trying to achieve? What initial connection strategy makes sense for your context?* It doesn’t make sense to stop printing paper bulletins and switch to posting them online if half of your regular church attendees have no idea what the internet is.

LOVE/PLANE





Social media strategy goals will be different than traditional ministry goals like increasing the number of RE students or how many teens receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Instead, look at goals such as answers to these questions:

1. *What is the 'reach' of our Facebook page?*
2. *What age group of people are we most effectively engaging? How does this match with the demographics of our registered parishioners?*
3. *What kinds of issues and questions of faith seem most important to our people?*

Get feedback from multiple parish groups and voices about important goals you want to work toward.

### *Set a realistic first goal.*

No one is motivated to work toward a huge out-of-reach goal. The first goal needs to be realistic and reasonably easy to accomplish. If you can get some quick success under your belt, then a leadership team will be more excited to set a new goal and work toward that one. Success begets more success.

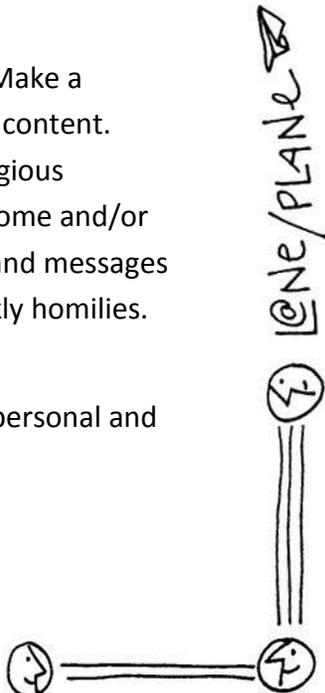
What is your first measurable milestone? Number of Facebook Likes or Twitter followers? Number of blog hits or comments? Number of verbal comments from weekend Mass-goer's? Choose a measurable goal and focus all your team's efforts on achieving that single result.

### *Create Quality Content*

Set up a blog. Create an organization Facebook page. Register a Twitter feed. Make a LinkedIn profile. Post links to resources and other organizations that offer good content. Free can be great! Put up you own lesson plans and activities that you do in religious education classes and youth ministry gatherings. Invite parents to do them at home and/or talk with their children about what happened in classes or activities. Put flyers and messages online about activities and events going on in the parish. Post the pastor's weekly homilies. Make podcasts and videos about life in the parish and in the larger community.

Don't forget to monitor the dialogue and reply to people's comments. Make it personal and people will respond.

LONE/PLANE



### *Create a weekly checklist of tasks that anyone can do*

It's not necessary that everyone creates the content. In fact, in order to maintain a high level of quality, you want to be selective in who actually creates it. But you can find dependable people to do the posting and following the dialogue with comments and questions.

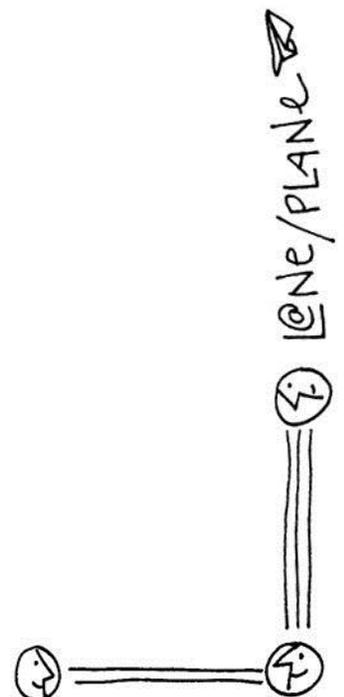
Give them a list. Make a document that contains status updates, discussion questions, blog posts, etc., and details about where and when to upload these online.

Consider opening the invitation to anyone in the parish to contribute content and links to resources. Then create a small committee to review and post what is appropriate.

Once you've set up these initial HOW's, start telling the world. Talk about your social media platforms every chance you get. On the bulletin cover... on your website... in homilies... on registration flyers... on business cards... on voice mail greetings... at the bottom of email signatures... on the community bulletin board at the grocery store... in local coffee-shop hangouts... in the front offices of parishioner-owned small businesses... you get the idea.

As you gain experience and learn from mistakes, adapt / revise / reinvent your strategies as needed. Use free media tools so that changing something doesn't require an expensive outpouring of money.

If you've gotten this far in real action steps for your social media strategy... keep going! Don't be afraid to try something new and different!



# The WHAT

As people in ministry, we really want the WHAT—spreading the Good News of the Gospel—to be the first priority. And it is. It's just not the first task... at least not in the sense of preaching with words. We need to remind ourselves of St. Francis' great wisdom:

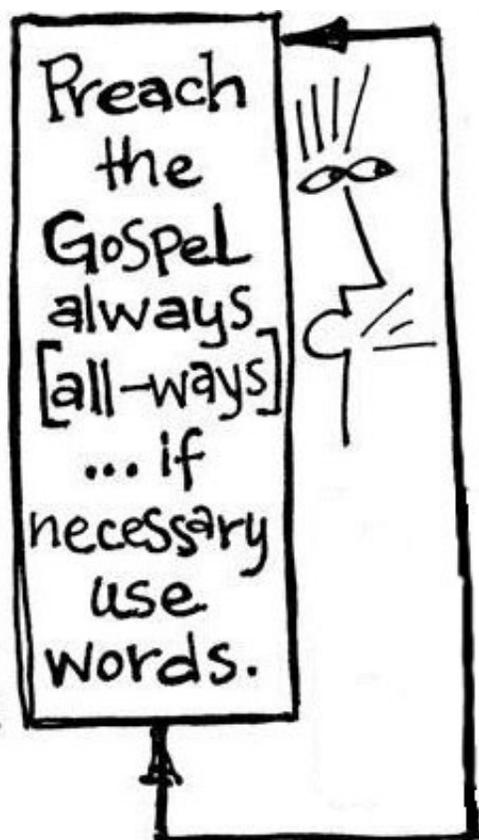
*Preach the Gospel always [all-ways]... if necessary, use words.*

Okay... I added 'all-ways'. According to St. Francis, preaching in words doesn't come first. In fact, it might even come last.

## Preaching on social media = Boring!

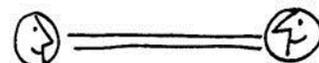
And the kindest result will be that we are ignored... not by all, but by many.

Preach too much and we'll likely be Block-ed / Unfriend-ed / Un-Followed / Unlink-ed / Uninvite-ed. And we certainly don't want to break the connections we have worked so hard to build.



It's really not any different than meeting a new person and building a face-to-face relationship. When we truly want to know someone, we focus on common ground likes and dislikes/what kind of work we do/what our family is like/where we come from and how we have experienced life along the way. If we make the introduction process all about preaching, we don't tend to get very far.

*The WHY of social media—connecting the Body of Christ in relationship—is the first task. Building those relationships online is nearly the same as building them in person.*



## More about the WHAT

As Catholic Church, WHAT are we all about? Easy... spreading the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. Phrased another way: What is the mission of the Church? Easy again... the Church exists to evangelize. [Read this in Evangelii Nuntiandi #14.]

*Our century is characterized by the mass media or means of social communication, and the first proclamation, catechesis or the further deepening of faith cannot do without these means, as we have already emphasized.*

*When they are put at the service of the Gospel, they are capable of increasing almost indefinitely the area in which the Word of God is heard; they enable the Good News to reach millions of people. (EN 45)*

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*

*Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness Pope Paul VI issued on 8 December 1975*

[Another prophetic thought from 1975!]

It is a subtle difference nuanced only by the use of specific words. One is an individual approach and the other a collective task. We operate and work as single disciples and also as the larger Body of Christ to evangelize.

## Why is the distinction important?

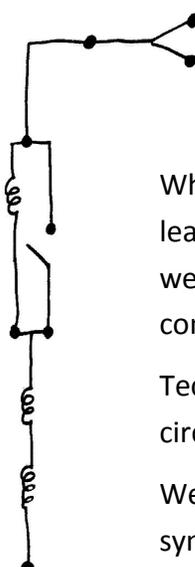
In the context of social media, we are reminded of the power that each member of the Body of Christ holds in hand... that is the power to evangelize by making the simple connections... Friends / Followers / Peeps / Links and the like.

But it's a deeper, more relevant connection than merely using social media to preach. It is about knowing people as they truly are... the in's and out's of everyday life.

Each of us individually holds a singular unique power through our own personal connections. We have always had this power when we act as disciples whose lives are witness to living a Gospel-life. Social media expands our reach to the larger world.

Collectively as the Body of Christ, we have the power to change the world on a global scale. Our regular participation in Sunday liturgy and other parish activities gives witness in our local communities. Social media give us an opportunity to do that same kind of witness to the world community.





When we 'Like' or 'Subscribe' to our church on Facebook/when we 'Follow' our church leaders on blogs and Twitter/when we 'Link' to our church organizations on LinkedIn/when we enter into the collective conversations of these larger groups, we give our personal connections access to the same dialogue. We evangelize as the larger Body of Christ church.

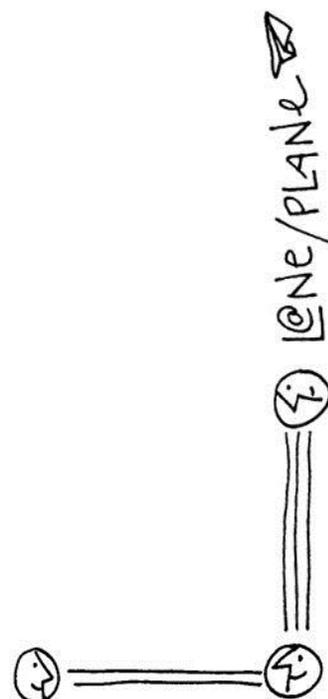
Technology and social media provide unprecedented access and entry points to the inner circle discussions of prominent authorities and leaders.

We can follow along as Bishops / Archbishops / Cardinals and the Pope dialogue during a synod on the New Evangelization.

We can see firsthand pictures of Cardinal Dolan praying with hurricane victims who have lost homes and loved ones.

We can exchange Tweets with ministry leaders in real time during conferences and workshop presentations thousands of miles away.

We have tremendous opportunity to evangelize the Body of Christ... if we do it wisely.





# The Simple Connections

## A Quick Recap

### *Two Gaping Questions*

The two gaping questions that face all of us in ministry are:

1. *How do we connect with people and get them excited about faith?*
2. *Why should we use social media to do this?*

Because our primary goal is to connect people in the Body of Christ and the cybersphere is where they gather these days. Social media gives us an entry point.

### *What can The Parable of the Tech-Geek teach us today?*

That we need to shift our old ways of doing ministry to reach a new generation.

### *We are wired to connect. It's in our Catholic DNA.*

The theology of social media is the heart of Catholic faith: *We are all members of the Body of Christ and we need to be connected.*

### *Connection is vital.*

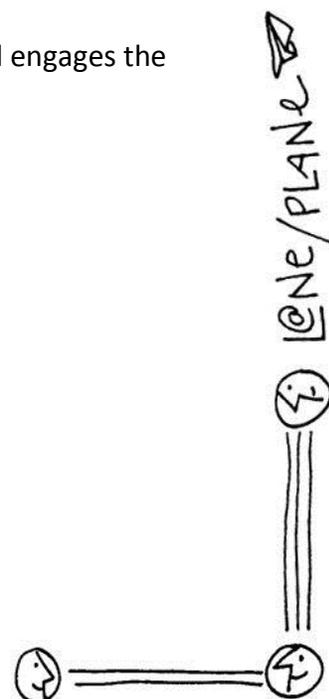
Communication conveys information but connection initiates a relationship and engages the conversation. Connection is vital to evangelization today.

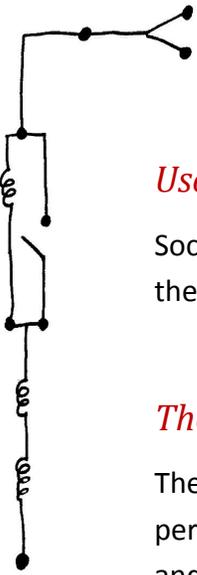
### *We must re-message the message.*

... to propose our extraordinary product anew.

### *Churches are conversations.*

If we want to build relationships, we must enter the online conversation.





### *Use it wisely.*

Social media gives us an unprecedented entry point into people's lives. We must learn to use them effectively and wisely to gain people's attention and interest.

### *The Cyber-Body-of-Christ*

The cyber-church is composed of real flesh-and-blood people. Sometimes we meet them in person in our churches; sometimes we don't. But they do often gather in the cybersphere and we *can* meet them there.

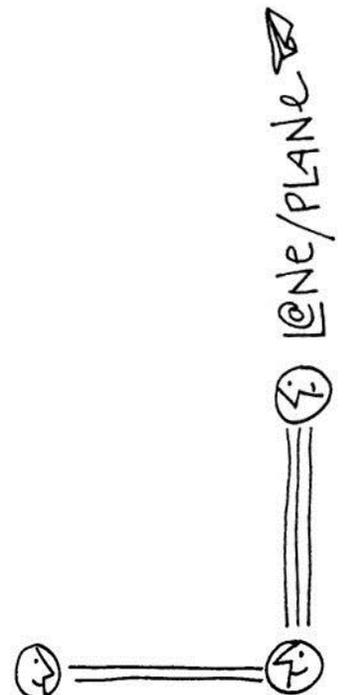
### *If we don't or won't reimagine...*

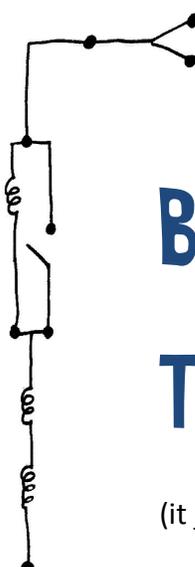
Unless we intentionally try to meet people in the cybersphere, we will continue to see declining participation in our parishes. *A culture that doesn't change is dead. A church that doesn't change is empty.*

### *The WHY of social media is the first task.*

1. The WHY: *We are the Body of Christ. We want to connect and build a relationship with you.*
2. The HOW: *Whenever possible, we will meet you face-to-face. When that's not possible, we will meet you online through our social media.*
3. The WHAT: *We want to share Jesus and the Good News with you.*

*Preach the Gospel always [all-ways]... if necessary, use words.*





# Back to the Parable of the Tech-Geek

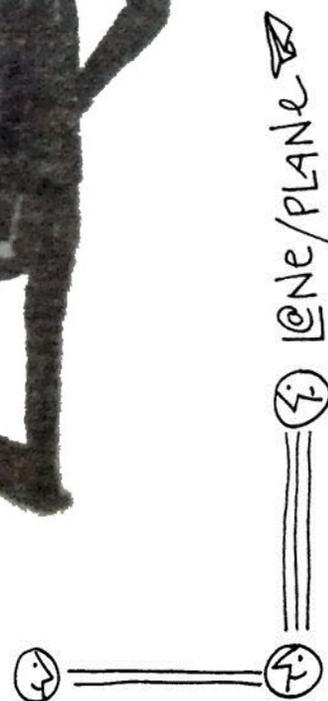
(it just gets better with every reading...)

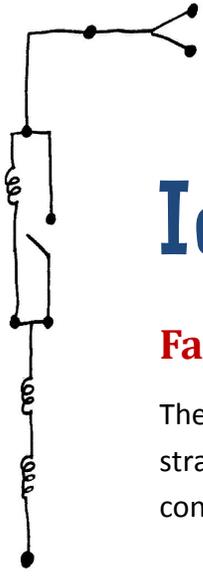
That same day, Jesus went out of the house and sat down at the neighborhood Starbucks. Such great crowds of coffee-enthusiasts gathered around him that he climbed up on the barista's counter and began teaching them as they sunk into the comfy couches around the cozy room. And he told them many parables.

*Listen! A techie logged onto Facebook.*

*And as he Facebooked, some status updates uploaded onto Twitter where trolls retweeted them using inappropriate hashtags and ate them whole. Other status updates were Instagramed and linked to mobile upload photo albums which had no depth and so they were quickly ignored. Other posts were shocking with foul language and innuendo so they were reported and blocked by FB friends. But some updates were meaningful and uplifting and encouraged many 'Likes', comments and RT's—30, 60 and 100 times over—and went viral!*

*Let anyone with fingers type and click away!*





# Ideas to Chew On

## Faith-sharing for parish teams

The Parable of the Tech-Geek is a great story to jump-start your parish staff in social media strategizing. Use these questions for beginning your conversation about how you want to connect and re-connect with the people in your parish.

- *Who are you in the story?*
- *Are you sitting on one of the comfy couches at Starbucks? What do you hear?*
- *Are you the techie logging onto Facebook? What do you post?*
- *Maybe you know trolls who have no good thing to say online... or even in person for that matter. How do you handle them?*
- *Perhaps you're tired of hearing about your friends' breakfast-eating-habits or other inane activities. How can you create meaningful and relevant content?*
- *There are probably people that you choose not to hang out with on a regular basis—either in person or online—because their values just don't mesh with yours. How can you help others find people with similar beliefs and values?*
- *And then there is your circle of true family and friends that give happiness, joy, laughter, hope and meaning to your life. You like to be with these people because they add value to your existence. How can your staff add value to the lives of people in your parish?*
- *Where does the Cyber-Body-of-Christ fit in here?*

Let anyone with a heart for disciple-making type and click away!

# LISTEN!

LONE/PLANE



# Where do I start?

## There was a lot of info in here.

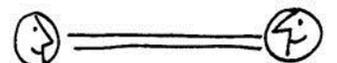
Not sure where to start or what to do? Think about what answers you are seeking:

- *What are the practical steps for online evangelization?*
- *Can we really use social media for catechesis?*
- *Want to begin the social media conversation with your pastor / pastoral ministry staff / leadership teams but aren't sure how to start or what to say?*
- *Need help identifying your goals and defining some measurable outcomes for evaluation?*
- *Ready to set up a blog / website / social media tools but have no idea what to do?*
- *Creating and implementing a social media strategy sounds way too far above your pay-grade?*
- *Just want to chat more about any of this?*

Go ahead and call or email. I'll help you. I work with parishes to solve problems and make ideas happen. Let's create a Catholic-social-media-techie-dream-team!

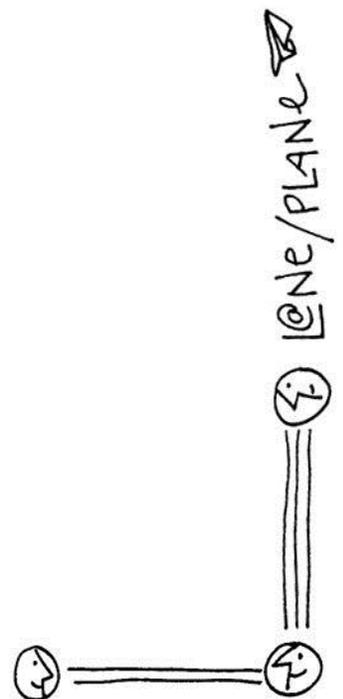
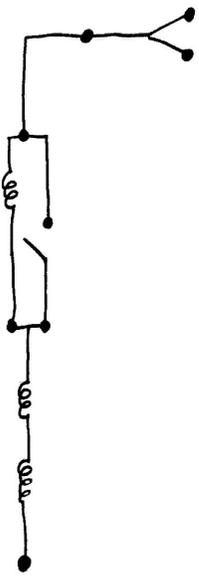
Looking forward to hearing from you.

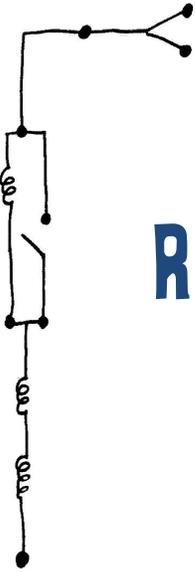
Peace.



# Theology of Social Media

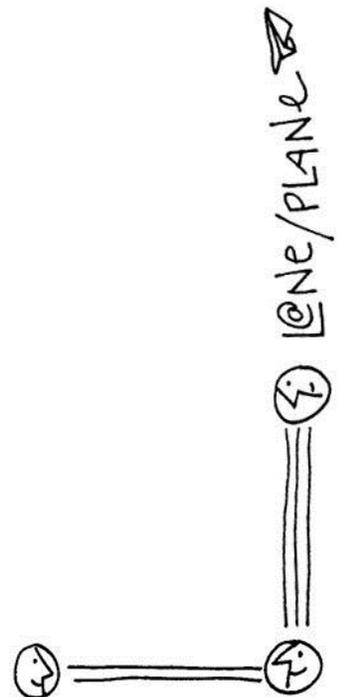
- 4 Two Gaping Questions
- 5 The 1st WHY
- 8 Parable of the Tech-Geek
- 9 Connection = Pre-Evangelization, aka, Fostering Interest in the Gospel
- 11 We're NOT Using Social Media to 'Do' Theology
- 14 We Are Wired to Connect
- 16 Communication vs. Connection
- 19 Marketing Is a Dirty Word
- 21 Churches Are Conversations
- 24 If These Tools Could Talk
- 27 The Cyber-Body-of-Christ
- 29 If We Don't or Won't Reimagine
- 36 The WHY
- 39 The HOW
- 42 The WHAT
- 45 The Simple Connections
- 47 Back to the Parable of the Tech-Geek
- 48 Ideas to Chew On
- 49 Where Do I Start?





# Reading list

- Bible: Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9) and 1 Corinthians 12
- *Everyone Communicates, Few Connect* by John Maxwell
- *The Cluetrain Manifesto* by Doc Searles and friends
- *Start with WHY* by Simon Sinek
- *Tribes* by Seth Godin
- *General Directory for Catechesis*
- *No Bullshit Social Media* by Jason Falls and Erik Deckers
- *Evangelii Nuntiandi*
- *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality* by Fr. Richard Rohr, OFM
- *Leadership Without Easy Answers* by Ron Heifetz
- [LanePlane.com](http://LanePlane.com)



# - Notes -

