



IJSRIS
journal
ISSN: 2820-7157

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF

**SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND
INNOVATIVE STUDIES**

Advancing Knowledge, Inspiring Innovation

www.ijsrisjournal.com



**INDEXED
JOURNAL**

 **PEER REVIEWED**
Rigorous & Transparent

 **DOI: CROSSREF**
Member

 **OPEN ACCESS**
For Global Visibility

 **BI-MONTHLY**
Timely Publication

 **WIDE READERSHIP**
High Impact & Visibility

 **AUTHOR FRIENDLY**
Fast | Supportive | Reliable



RECEIVED
17 August 2026



ACCEPTED
09 September 2026



PUBLISHED
1 October 2026



October 2026



Volume 5



Number 5

749 to 754

**Consecrated Life and the Digital Age: Issues, Opportunities and Challenges in
Contemporary Evangelisation**

Angélique IBANGU KUDIDILA¹

¹Higher Institute of Education – Gombe, Kinshasa, DRC, angelaibangu@gmail.com, (+243) 84 72 04 154

LICENSE



This article is licensed under the
Creative Commons Attribution
4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



PREFIX :

10.63883

IJSRIS JOURNAL

OPEN ACCESS



This is an open access article
distributed under the terms of
open access.

ABSTRACT

Digital technologies open up new possibilities for communication, formation and evangelisation, whilst altering the conditions of spiritual and community life. This article examines their integration into consecrated life through a documentary and theological-pastoral analysis. It draws on the initial bibliographic corpus and supplementary institutional documents concerning the Christian presence on social media,

communication in the age of artificial intelligence, and platform governance. The analysis distinguishes between missionary uses, training resources, fraternal relationships, and risks relating to attention, confidentiality and vocational identity. The proposed artefact is a discernment framework that combines pastoral objectives, conditions of use, responsibilities and evaluation indicators. The results take the form of a conceptual synthesis and a follow-up plan; no quantifiable impact on spirituality or pastoral effectiveness has been measured. The discussion highlights the importance

of distinguishing between digital visibility and the quality of the encounter. The study concludes that a coherent digital presence requires training, community governance and respect for the dignity of individuals. The evaluation of these proposals requires observation and dialogue with the communities concerned.

Keywords: Consecrated life; digital; evangelisation; spirituality; discernment; community; digital ethics; pastoral formation.

1. Introduction

1.1. Context and rationale

The spread of digital tools is transforming communication, access to knowledge and interpersonal relationships. The Christian mission is encountering these transformations in catechesis, pastoral care, formation and community communication. The initial document highlights, in particular, social media, messaging apps, video conferencing, podcasts and digital libraries as means capable of supporting these activities.

Consecrated life is rooted in a tradition of prayer, fraternity and mission. The evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience serve as guiding principles for examining choices regarding communication and technology. The body of doctrine, including **Vita Consecrata** and the **Code of * Canon Law**, provides the general ecclesial framework for this reflection (Catholic Church, 1996; **Code of Canon Law**, 1983).

1.2. Issues

An online presence can facilitate the dissemination of teachings and maintain a connection with those who are far away. It can also lead to an increase in demands, encourage excessive exposure and disrupt community life. The problem, therefore, lies in striking a balance between missionary openness and the preservation of the concrete conditions of consecrated life.

The main question is formulated as follows: how can digital technologies be integrated in the service of the evangelical mission whilst preserving the interior life, fraternity and vocational identity? Three sub-questions clarify this issue: which uses serve an identifiable pastoral purpose? Which risks must be anticipated? Which criteria would enable us to assess the quality of these uses beyond their audience?

1.3. Objective and contribution

The objective is to propose a framework for discernment for religious communities. The intended contribution is a matrix linking objectives, practices, risks and governance conditions. It does not aim to establish a uniform rule for all congregations, whose missions, resources and community rhythms differ.

The reflections of Benedict XVI on social media and of Francis on communication in the service of encounter guide the examination of digital relationships (Pope Benedict XVI, 2013; Pope Francis, 2014). Recent supplementary documents enable this inquiry to be extended to social media and AI, without assuming that technologies in themselves guarantee pastoral closeness.

2. Methodology

2.1. Documentary and theological-pastoral approach

The study adopts a targeted narrative review and a conceptual analysis. It examines the themes developed in the initial document: evangelisation, community communication, theological resources, spiritual life, ethics, formation and balanced use. It compares these themes with ecclesial texts and an institutional framework for digital governance.

The initial corpus comprises twelve bibliographical entries. Four verified supplementary references have been added: a reflection by the Dicastery for Communication from 2023, a message from Pope Francis from 2024, the note **Antiqua et nova** from 2025, and UNESCO's principles on platform governance from 2023. The original entries are retained in a separate section of the bibliography in order to preserve their content and to highlight the additions.

This is not an exhaustive systematic review. No specific number of texts selected from scientific databases, nor any surveys or interviews, is claimed. Doctrinal texts and pastoral express normative guidelines; they should not be equated with empirical evidence of effectiveness.

2.2. Analytical procedure

The analysis is organised around five dimensions: missionary purpose; spiritual life and inner life; community relations; the protection and dignity of persons; and skills and governance. For each dimension, the analysis identifies potential applications, tensions and the conditions for support. It distinguishes between documentary findings, interpretations and practical proposals.

The sociological and cultural references within the initial corpus provide avenues for contextualisation. Some records contain generic titles or insufficient editorial information; they are not used to support specific findings without further verification. Their inclusion does not constitute validation of all their metadata.

2.3. Artefact and indicators

The artefact is a framework for assessing digital practices. It focuses on practices such as the dissemination of content, remote meetings, access to training resources and support. The proposed units of assessment are pastoral activity and the community, taking into account the people participating in these interactions.

The indicators detailed in the 'Results' section combine quantitative elements with qualitative assessment. They do not measure a person's faith or spiritual value. Their purpose is to inform the organisation of activities, accessibility, protection and the quality of relationships.

3. Analyses

3.1. The digital world as a mission field

Digital tools can be used to share meditations, biblical teachings, lectures, retreats and catechetical content. Their value lies in the possibilities they offer for access and for maintaining a continuous connection. Someone who is unable to travel can receive information or take part in a discussion, provided they have the necessary resources.

A presence in these spaces requires an understanding of the audience and the formats involved. Brief content can introduce a question, whilst a structured course requires a progressive approach and interaction. Discernment therefore focuses on ensuring a good fit between the pastoral objective, the medium and the support provided (Pontifical Council for Social Communications, 2002).

3.2. Communication and fraternal relationships

Messaging services and videoconferencing can facilitate coordination between distant communities. They support the sharing of information and the preparation of projects. However, they do not eliminate the need for listening, presence and attention to members of the community.

The reflection **Towards a Total Presence** proposes that social media be considered in terms of the quality of presence and relationships, rather than merely the dissemination of messages. It calls for attentive participation rather than

passive consumption of exchanges (Dicastery for Communication, 2023). In the context of this article, this approach leads to the provision of ways to listen and respond.

3.3. Training and access to resources

Digital libraries, online courses and Church documents can support theological and pastoral formation. Access to resources must be accompanied by the ability to identify authors, context and the quality of content. Technical proficiency and critical discernment are complementary skills.

Community-based training may cover the use of tools, verifying information, creating accessible content, managing accounts and data protection. Needs vary according to experience and ministry. Practical exercises and peer support enable these skills to be developed without reducing training to a mere list of applications.

3.4. Mindfulness and the inner life

Notifications and constant availability can fragment one's attention. The original document highlights potential tensions with prayer, silence and spiritual reading. These tensions must be examined as risks linked to specific practices and contexts, rather than as an inevitable consequence of all technology.

A balanced approach involves defined times for use, periods of silence and rules for dealing with genuinely urgent requests. The arrangements must be discussed within the community. The aim is to support a state of readiness and the continuity of the mission, rather than increasing the obligations to stay connected.

3.5. Ethics and the protection of individuals

The sharing of a photograph, a testimony or a pastoral exchange may disclose personal information. Prudence requires clarifying permissions, limiting identifying details and protecting accounts. Situations involving vulnerable individuals require particular scrutiny prior to publication.

UNESCO's principles on platform governance link access to information, freedom of expression and the protection of rights. They provide a framework for reflecting on the responsibilities and risks of the digital ecosystem (UNESCO, 2023). Their application within the community, as proposed here, relates in particular to moderation, transparency and reporting procedures.

3.6. Vocational identity and visibility

A community may wish to raise the profile of its activities without making audience size an end in itself. The pursuit of recognition, comparisons between accounts and the pressure to post frequently can divert attention from pastoral objectives. The assessment must therefore distinguish between visibility, participation and genuine support.

The principle of simplicity also calls for a review of expenditure and the renewal of equipment. The usefulness of a tool depends on its contribution to the mission, its cost and the skills required. A technological choice is not justified by novelty alone; it must meet a concrete need.

3.7. Artificial Intelligence and Human Responsibility

AI can assist with the preparation of documents or the generation of ideas, but content must be verified before publication. A plausible text may contain errors, inaccurate attributions or inappropriate phrasing. Editorial responsibility remains with the individuals and communities that publish.

Pope Francis's message of 2024 calls for communication centred on the person to be maintained in the face of the transformations brought about by AI (Pope Francis, 2024). The document **Antiqua et nova** distinguishes human intelligence from the capabilities of artificial systems and highlights the issues of dignity and responsibility (Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and Dicastery for Culture and Education, 2025). The extension proposed here involves providing for a human review of AI-assisted pastoral content.

4. Discussion

4.1. Scope of digital pastoral presence

The summary findings detailed in the Results section show that the value of these tools depends on their alignment with a specific purpose, on support, and on explicit responsibilities. A publication may reach an audience without fostering dialogue; conversely, a limited audience may reflect attentive support. Pastoral impact cannot therefore be deduced from the number of views alone.

The value of the framework lies in prompting discussion about how these tools are used. It enables us to ask who is being reached, how information is verified and what opportunities for response exist. This approach builds on the concern for relational quality found in pastoral guidelines, without claiming to measure communion or spiritual fruitfulness numerically.

4.2. Complementarity and Inclusion

Digital support can complement face-to-face meetings. Remote interaction remains limited by access to equipment, internet connectivity and digital skills. A community must therefore maintain alternative channels of communication for those who are unable to use digital platforms.

Digital activities must be distinguished according to their function: to inform, educate, facilitate discussion or provide support. The live streaming of a service allows for mediated access; it does not imply that all dimensions of community participation are equivalent. The choice of methods is a matter of pastoral discernment adapted to specific situations.

4.3. Governance requirements

A term of use policy may specify the roles of publication, approval, response and moderation. It must set out realistic deadlines and procedures for handling sensitive content. Account security and the backing up of documents form part of this organisational framework.

Governance must not become a form of constant monitoring of personal behaviour. It can be focused on collective activities, risks and support needs. The indicators in the scorecard are proposed with this in mind and require agreement on their usefulness, their limitations and the conditions under which they are collected.

4.4. Limitations and prospects for validation

The documentary approach does not allow for an assessment of the frequency of difficulties or the effectiveness of a charter within a congregation. The recommendations are design proposals. Ecclesial sources describe guidelines; they do not demonstrate causal effects on behaviour.

A subsequent investigation could combine interviews with consecrated persons, observation of public activities and analysis of community documents. It should specify the contexts, the procedures for obtaining consent and the conditions of confidentiality. The expected results would be a description of practices and a comparison of the framework with the needs expressed.

5. Results

5.1. Summary of the dimensions of discernment

The literature review identifies five complementary dimensions: mission, inner life, fraternity, protection of persons and formation. For each activity, the framework

requires defining the purpose, identifying the target audience, anticipating risks and specifying responsibilities. These dimensions constitute a conceptual outcome, without any empirical ranking by importance.

5.2. Proposed deliverables

Three deliverables are proposed: an activity analysis grid; a community charter setting out practices and responsibilities; and a training programme combining technical skills, discernment and safety. None of these deliverables was implemented or evaluated in the field as part of this study.

Table 1: Proposed discernment framework and indicators.

Dimension	Discernment question	Indicators to be documented
Mission	Does the activity meet an identified pastoral need?	Explicit objective and feedback from beneficiaries
Inner life	Are periods of silence and prayer maintained?	Organisation of activities and reported difficulties
Community	Do the tools support community interaction?	Opportunities for dialogue and qualitative assessment
Protection	Are content and data handled with care?	Checks, authorisations and reported incidents
Training	Do those in charge have the necessary skills?	Training completed and support requirements

5.3. Monitoring plan and possible calculations

The following calculations can only be carried out once data has been collected in a defined manner: training participation rate = number of participants / number of people invited $\times$ 100; rate of content reviewed prior to publication = number of items reviewed / number of items published $\times$ 100. The sample size, time periods and counting rules must be specified for each indicator.

The monitoring of enquiries can distinguish between their receipt, routing and processing. Response times will be calculated using consistent timestamps, distinguishing between urgent cases and routine enquiries. Quality assessments will be gathered through open-ended and context-specific questions.

No figures are calculated in this article, as no original dataset is provided. Views, subscriptions and session duration are not considered sufficient measures of evangelistic effectiveness. The available results consist of the summary, the criteria and the proposed monitoring plan.

6. Conclusion

Consecrated life can harness digital technology to communicate, educate and maintain relationships, provided that its uses are examined in the light of its spiritual and communal aims. The analysis distinguishes between missionary opportunities and the risks of distraction, overexposure and the weakening of relationships.

The conceptual findings presented in the ‘Results’ section propose a framework, a charter and a training programme. They do not demonstrate a measurable pastoral benefit. Their value lies in making explicit the aims, responsibilities and conditions for protection, whilst maintaining a qualitative assessment of the encounter.

Further work will need to test this framework against the practices of diverse communities. A coherent digital presence requires skills, shared discernment and opportunities for review. Technology remains a means whose use is assessed in terms of its service to people, fraternity and mission.

Bibliographical references

1. Pope Francis (2014). Message for World Communications Day: Communication in the Service of an Authentic Culture of Encounter. Vatican.
2. Pope Benedict XVI (2013). Social Networks: Gateways to Truth and Faith. Vatican.
3. Catholic Church (1996). Vita Consecrata. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
4. Pontifical Council for Social Communications (2002). The Church and the Internet. Vatican.
5. Lévy, P. (2017). Cyberculture. Paris: Odile Jacob.
6. Castells, M. (2010). The Network Society. Paris: Fayard.
7. Spadaro, A. (2014). Cybertheology: Thinking about Christianity in the Age of the Web. Paris: Bayard.

8. Breton, P. (2018). *The Cult of the Internet*. Paris: La Découverte.
9. UNESCO (2021). *Digital Transformation and Society*. Paris.
10. Musso, P. (2020). *Industrial Religion*. Paris: Fayard.
11. United Nations (2022). *Report on Digital Technology and Human Development*. New York.
12. Code of Canon Law (1983). Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
13. Dicastery for Communication. (2023). *Towards a Total Presence. Pastoral Reflections on Engagement on Social Media*. Holy See. <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2023/05/29/0404/00890.html>
14. Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and Dicastery for Culture and Education. (2025). *Antiqua et nova. Note on the relationship between artificial intelligence and human intelligence*. Holy See. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20250128_antiqua-et-nova_fr.html
15. Pope Francis. (2024). *Artificial Intelligence and the Wisdom of the Heart for Fully Human Communication*. Message for the 58th World Day of Social Communications. Holy See.
16. <https://press.vatican.va/content/francesco/fr/messages/communications/documents/20240124-messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html>
17. UNESCO. (2023). *Guidelines for the governance of digital platforms: Safeguarding freedom of expression and access to information through a multistakeholder approach*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf000038733>