



Holy Father,

Brothers and Sisters,

In this intervention, I refer in particular to the second chapter of the third part of the *Instrumentum Laboris*, entitled “immersed in the fabric of everyday life”, and more precisely in paragraphs 160 and 161, which have the subtitle “learning to inhabit the digital world”. I underline, in particular, the affirmation of the need for the Church to deepen her understanding of technology – and in particular of the Internet world – in order to discern how to inhabit it and live it as a fertile ground for the New Evangelization.

In the message of the World Communications Day in 2014, Pope Francis had already declared that «the digital network can be a place rich in humanity, not a web of threads but of human persons». Considering that «young people are totally immersed in the digital environment» and that one of the first steps in evangelization is to create human relationships as a condition to bring the salvific proclamation of Jesus Christ, this shows that being present especially in digital networks means to open paths that are now essential in this horizon.

Although there are aspects to watch with caution in the digital environment, it is not in itself a threat but rather an opportunity for the Church. It is an excellent channel for approaching the young, but only if we do not see it as a reality in opposition to the physical world, but rather as complementary to it and, as such, also propitious for Christian witnessing.

In fact, Pope Benedict XVI in the Message of World Communications Day 2011 affirmed that there is a Christian style of presence in the digital world as well. And he added: «To proclaim the Gospel through the new media means not only to insert expressly religious content into different media platforms, but also to witness consistently, in one’s own digital profile and in the way one communicates choices, preferences and judgements that are fully consistent with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically».

Perhaps we could, as a specific action of youth ministry, help young people to be present in the digital environment with freedom, prudence and responsibility! Maybe we could also motivate them to be themselves protagonists of evangelization, and not just recipients of the action of the Church! Young people are the ones who know better the language and the “grammar” of networks and social media, and therefore they are the ones who can best enculturate the Gospel in this particular environment.

If many young people do not go to Church, then it is the Church – through modern technologies – that must go to them, as Blessed James Alberione, Founder of the Pauline Family, already observed at the beginning of the 20th century. This attitude cannot be optional only, but it must be an integral part of the way of being a “missionary” Church, that is “outgoing”, today, called to bear witness to the Gospel in a culture that cannot be properly and completely understood without seriously considering the complex reality of communication.

Thank you.