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Evangelizing Catholic Media Consumers in an Online Faith-Sharing Group

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Evangelizing Catholic Media Consumers in an Online Faith-Sharing Group

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In the six decades since the Second Vatican Council endorsed the evangelizing potential of traditional mass media in *Inter Mirifica,* successive popes have reaffirmed their value in a growing body of magisterial teaching. Yet when the digital revolution made wireless internet and smartphones commonplace in the early 2010s, it caused a shift from a packaged to a participatory media culture where every handheld device user became a potential influencer. Pew Forum surveys from 2014 and 2019 showed U.S. Catholics trailing other Christians in sharing their faith through the new media of social networking that privileges two-way interaction over one-way presentation, creating a pastoral disconnect with young adults who encounter religion online at significant levels before doing so offline.

America Media, a Jesuit communications ministry, has embraced this digital shift by rebranding from a magazine into a web portal with multiple digital platforms. In his documents *Gaudete et Exultate* and *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis has proposed the pastoral practice of accompaniment as essential to this sort of digital outreach, urging Catholics to build relationships more personally online with young adults who no longer see churchgoing as a cultural norm. Researcher Nancy Baym finds correlations between online interaction and offline social habits like visiting family or friends and having a non-kin confidant. Adapted for online faith-sharing, the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola* suggests a framework to study the quality of these online-offline dynamics.

This Project developed, implemented, and evaluated a "Spiritual Exercises Faith-Sharing Retreat Group" on Facebook as a pastoral model for Catholic media to evangelize their consumers through social networking. It used this digital medium to invite people into a 30-day retreat experience following the four themes of the *Exercises* to feel contrition for sin, follow Jesus in discipleship, suffer with him in his passion, and rejoice in his resurrection. Rather than just post videos for privatized consumption, as many online retreats do, it added daily faith-sharing prompts to encourage a sense of community through conversation. Facilitated as a private group, it targeted Catholic digital media consumers from existing Ignatian groups on *America's* page and elsewhere. This treatise reports results of pre- and post-retreat surveys showing the self-reported growth of 74 participants in relationship with each other, themselves, and God over four seven-day sessions of daily videos. The Project found that when Catholics go beyond individualized viewing of videos to discuss deeper questions in an online group setting, they become more comfortable with spiritual conversation and desire to share faith more deeply both offline and online, a hopeful sign for digital evangelization.

This treatise by Sean M. Salai fulfills the treatise requirement for the doctoral degree in Ministry approved by Rev. Msgr. Michael Clay, D.Min as Director, and by Rev. Frank DeSiano, C.S.P., D.Min as Reader.

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Chapter One: From Packaged to Participatory Communication

This opening chapter establishes a basis in existing research literature for the argument that social media allows people of all ages to have authentic community over the internet, potentially experiencing spiritual growth and change, when they use it in an interactive rather than purely programmatic way. It offers data-driven support for this Project's use of social media to create a faith-based virtual community following the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius* that communicated from personal experience, searching, and sharing. Finally, it supports the results of such a Project and the application of its results to a suggested pastoral approach for some dimensions of faith-based use of the internet. To contextualize the Project's implementation, results, and conclusions, it describes the shift from packaged to participatory communication that digital media has spurred in human relations, the generational disconnect it has fueled as a ministerial challenge to the Catholic Church, and the opportunity it created for this Project to explore evangelization defined as "the sharing of faith in Christ"[1] in a Facebook group.

At the outset of this exploration of a multigenerational faith-sharing retreat that discussed 30 days of reflections in an *America Media*-sponsored Facebook group, three presuppositions inherent to this first chapter must be described, recalling that all theology—especially pastoral theology—starts in a context of "present human experience."[2] These presuppositions shape the chapters that follow, giving the framework of this online faith-sharing retreat that followed the *Exercises*. They help set up an initiative that evangelized Catholic media consumers by helping them learn and share Ignatian prayer experiences together in a spirit of unity.

[1] Francis Cardinal Arinze, *The Evangelizing Parish* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2018), 16-18.
[2] Stephen B. Bevans, S.V.D., *Models of Contextual Theology*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 4.

First, this researcher holds that Catholic evangelizers in a post-coronavirus world face an urgent choice with new media as the mid-twenty-first century approaches: use it effectively or accept the fact of increasing social irrelevance in a digital age. Since not-choosing will itself be a choice to avoid engaging what has become a large part of ordinary human relations, especially since the March 2020 Covid-19 shutdown of public liturgies forced Catholics globally to celebrate Holy Week and Easter through videos streamed online, Catholics can either rationalize their neglect of social networking or engage it more effectively than in the past. Second, the digital revolution invites Catholics to recover and adapt the tools of small-group spirituality to new media as a response to the signs of the times, moving beyond the passive viewing of recorded Masses and talks to building community online. (The Ignatian format of this Project understands spirituality as a communal deepening of the threefold relationship with God, oneself, and others, rooted in Jesus Christ's great commandment to love God "with all your heart" and "love your neighbor as yourself."[3]) Third, the New Evangelization calls Catholics in a digital age to use social networking as a fresh tool in the perennial witness that Christian community offers to the existential peripheries of an ever-changing world.

The Shift of Digital Media: McLuhan's Insights

While traditional media remain influential insofar as they never entirely disappear, the world continually moves forward into new communications technologies, creating pastoral challenges for Christian outreach. The digital revolution has transformed electronic mass communication from a sender-receiver media culture of prepackaged monologue (e.g., recorded video lectures, radio advertisements, and mass-produced books) into a two-way participatory

[3] Matt 22:36-40 (New American Bible Revised Edition).

culture of dialogue (e.g., posting and discussing videos on social media) unprecedented in human history, inviting Catholics to embrace a parallel shift in how they share the message of Jesus. Understanding "faith-sharing" broadly as any discussion of religious topics or experiences, St. Ignatius of Loyola would have described this Project's online group retreat as an example of "spiritual conversation," a phrase well-suited to the digital revolution. In Ignatian spirituality, this term traditionally covers all grounds of faith-based interaction, as it may connote a conversation in the confessional as well as informal pastoral counseling or spiritual direction, in addition to people discussing faith casually.

Marshall McLuhan (1911-1980), a pioneering media scholar and philosopher who also happened to be a Catholic layman, prophesied this relational dynamism of a socially networked world when he wrote more than half a century ago: "The medium, or process, of our time—electric technology—is reshaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal life."[4] Penning these words in 1967, McLuhan saw the electric technologies of television, radio, and film as "new media" compared to the "old media" of the printed word, with mobile devices and touch-screen technology then existing only in the science-fiction world of *Star Trek.* As McLuhan elaborated on his bold claim that "we now live in a global village…a simultaneous happening" of "instant communication" and "active interplay,"[5] the Catholic Church had just committed herself at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) to use this "electric technology" in sharing the message of Jesus through catechesis and preaching. Yet even before the world's bishops saw the potential of mass communications, McLuhan had

[4] Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects* (Berkeley: Gingko Press, 1967), 8.
[5] McLuhan and Fiore, 63.

broadened the definition of "medium" to mean any technological extension of the human body or mind—for example, the stirrup, bicycle, and car as physical protractions of the human foot—that restructures social interaction. As a medium creates roles and renegotiates social norms to match the accelerated processes of the workplace which ensue, people must adapt to keep communicating effectively. In his 1964 *magnum opus*, McLuhan defined his thesis that "the medium is the message" (or the "massage," in his alternate spelling that stresses how "all media work us over completely") as such: "This is merely to say that the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology."[6]

In McLuhan's view, each new human technology, from language itself (the primordial medium) to the internet, creates a revolution that changes how people communicate, with the medium of television representing for him the most significant advance of his time. This restructuring does not make people throw out traditional technology; it just obliges them to keep adding onto existing technologies to function well in an increasingly complex global society. For example, many businesses still use fax machines to send documents today, but they would lag behind competitors if they did not also scan them digitally on smart devices.

Simply adding a new technology does not make it effective; people must adapt their ways of interacting to its rules. Not all media have equal influence and not all new media find skillful users who employ them effectively with the fresh mindsets they require. McLuhan distinguishes between *packaged technologies* (like a printed catechism) that render people passive consumers

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[6] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 3rd ed., ed. W. Terrence Gordon (Berkeley: Gingko Press, 2003), 19.

of whatever messages the creators program into their brains and *participatory technologies* (like a televised political debate) that engage people's active interaction to transformative effect. In the electric platforms that McLuhan described as "mere packaging devices for consumers"—the now-traditional media of press, film, and radio—social communication remained relatively static compared to television, his prime example of the powerful electronic interdependence people form by sharing experiences across vast distances to feel like conversation partners in an invisible community of likeminded people.[7] (By watching a live televised sports game in team apparel, for example, a fan may feel like an active part of that communal interaction.) While packaged technology silences and isolates consumers in their own minds, participatory technology inspires them to communicate freely, connecting them viscerally through their senses to a larger networked sense of community.

Technology builds up this communal interdependence only to the extent that participants engage it actively, as people may use passive technology creatively to interact in an engaged way just as they may use digital technology unimaginatively in an isolated way. Printed religious books felt participatory in their day due to the conversations they inspired; they only seemed passive over time relative to how people came to use them and to later technologies. Judging the participatory nature of a medium by how deeply it engages the physical and intellectual senses, McLuhan contrasts several examples of low-participation media (radio, print, photographs, movies, lectures) against their corresponding forms of high-participation media (telephone, speech, cartoons, television, seminars) to illustrate this point. While the low-participation medium of radio produces a high level of information and asks little of users, to take the first

[7] McLuhan and Fiore, 125.

pairing, the high-participation medium of the telephone gives little information and asks users to fill in the gaps by speaking as well as listening. Along these lines, a telephone call between two actively engaged people remains objectively more embodied than viewing a cartoon, even as the cartoon remains a more imaginative extension of the human eye than a photograph.

By this logic, internet communication offers the most dynamic and participatory form of media yet: Social networks like Facebook, available instantly on a handheld smart device, allow consumers to project multiple bodily senses (e.g., eyes, ears, hands, face, vocal chords, etc.) in generating their own multimedia content at the touch of a button through a variety of digital communications tools ranging from picture and sound to video and digital art. It creates new possibilities for religious interaction to engage participants in very active ways. By letting participants discuss content rather than simply consume it mentally in their isolated thoughts, social networks like Facebook can easily facilitate the kind of interactive processes which foster authentic faith-sharing and even spiritual growth.

This digital revolution of simultaneous global interaction, available at any instant, seems to validate more clearly than ever McLuhan's idea of media as extensions of the human senses (touch, taste, smell, sight, sound) which reshape the pattern, pace, and scale of human relationships. With social media, human relations have attained their most embodied technology yet for real-time global conversation, reshaping people's sense of community and the possibility of communicating religiously in a more intensely interactive way. That makes this Project, which accepted participants from all over the world into an asynchronous faith-sharing group, a timely response to the digital revolution's impact on the religious and social habits of Christians.

Even before the digital revolution, Christians used new media from the very beginning to share their faith by extending their bodily senses technologically. In its earliest days, Christian witness to the word of God began with Jesus forming relationships at dinner tables and hillsides where people on the margins of society like tax collectors, the poor, the sick, and prostitutes shared their deepest concerns while listening eagerly to his words. Teaching with an authority people recognized as more personal than positional, this humble carpenter with a rabbi's eloquence established friendships based on attraction rather than compulsion, inviting them with passionate urgency to "come, and you will see" as he shared his unique gift for community at meals and fellowship. [8] After his departure from their midst, the earliest Christians nurtured their faith in Jesus domestically in the context of their families, meeting in private homes (house churches) after the synagogues expelled them and Roman law forbade them to assemble publicly. Soon they used the medium of the written word in letters that extended their voices and shared their faith more widely. After Constantine legalized Christianity with the Edict of Milan in AD 313, gradually the early Christians erected parish churches and assembled various papyrus scrolls into the canonical Holy Bible—a collection of their sacred writings that became fixed into one book—to supplement the oral tradition of reciting holy words from memory.

Seen through McLuhan's lens, Christianity grew through and with the new media which emerged over time, helping unite its disconnected house churches into a global network of believers who considered themselves one faith community. Subsequent centuries introduced technologies ranging from illuminated manuscripts to the electric light bulb, further enhancing opportunities to share faith in ways that unified Catholics in parishes and dioceses as well as

[8] John 1:39 (New American Bible).

under the Roman papacy. Just as the early believers developed their house churches into a global communion through the help of the written word, twenty-first-century Christians now have a chance to evangelize through new media, using social networks like Facebook as digital extensions of faith-based communities.

This opportunity for digital forms of community-building outreach has become especially timely in light of data showing that people living in historically Christian nations no longer experience churchgoing as the cultural norm in their families, yet continue to interact with believers all over the globe on social media. In a 2014 study of declining religious observance in Great Britain, Bex Lewis reported that her countrymen increasingly engaged Christian religious conversation online before seeking out offline experiences: "For churches, websites and social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Pinterest have now effectively become the 'front door' to billions of digital users."[9]

Intergenerational Pastoral Challenges

This migration of people's first encounter with Christianity from the Sunday family pew to online platforms also holds true in the United States. In 2018 and 2019 telephone surveys of 12,738 Americans, a Pew Research Forum religious identity and attendance study reported that the number of self-identified Christians among Americans dropped from 77 percent in a 2009 survey of 12,529 people to 65 percent in 2019. In that same ten-year period, the religiously unaffiliated "nones" (people self-reporting as agnostic, atheist, or "nothing in particular") grew from 17 to 26 percent. Self-identified Catholics dropped from 23 to 20 percent of the overall

[9] Bex Lewis, "The Digital Age: A Challenge for Christian Discipleship" (unpublished paper, The Proceedings of the European Conference on Social Media, July 1, 2014).

population while Americans attending religious services a few times a year or less (54 percent) suddenly outnumbered regular attendees (45 percent attending at least monthly) for the first time. These results reinforced the common observation that "too many Catholics do not feel deeply involved in their worship."[10] Analyzed generationally, the numbers become even more revealing of communal breakdown, exposing the intergenerational pastoral challenges of a digital age.

While the above trends held true across all races, religions, and regions, the one notable discrepancy occurred across generations, with only 49 percent of Generation Y Millennials born 1981-96 identifying as Christians compared to the majority of older generations: 67 percent of Generation X born 1965-80, 76 percent of Baby Boomers born 1946-64, and 84 percent of the Silent Generation born 1928-45.[11] Millennials proved least likely to attend religious services, with the same number (22 percent) saying they never attended as those who attended weekly, and 64 percent saying they attended only "a few times a year" or less often. While the same 62 percent of self-identified Christians across all generations attended religious services at least monthly in 2019 as did in 2009, Pew noted practicing Christians shrinking as an overall segment of the population: "While the trends are clear–the U.S. is steadily becoming less Christian and less religiously observant as the share of adults who are not religious grows–self-described Christians report that they attend religious services at about the same rate today as in 2009."[12]

Even as young Americans increasingly grow up without attending church, additional Pew findings confirm they encounter faith-based witness online when they encounter it at all,

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[10] Frank P. DeSiano CSP, *Reactivating Our Catholic Faith: Reflections to Get Real About Faith* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 41.

[11] Although this study does not break down Millennials into sub-groups, trends like decreased religious affiliation intensify across generations as age decreases, making the oldest Millennials born in 1981 likelier to self-identify as Christians than the youngest born in 1996. The same holds for religious observance.

[12] Pew Research Center, Oct. 17, 2019, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace."

illuminating an area of outreach where Catholics lag behind other Christians. A Pew religion and electronic media survey of 3,217 U.S. adults in May and June of 2014 found 20 percent of them sharing their religious faith online in an average week—roughly the same number as watched religious television, listened to religious talk radio, or listened to Christian rock—and 46 percent seeing others share "something about their religious faith" online. Millennials, then aged 18-29, proved twice as likely to encounter online faith-sharing as Americans older than 50, who proved likelier to watch religious television than Americans under 30 at that time. White evangelicals and black Protestants proved likeliest to share their faith both offline and online, with Catholics being third-likeliest (38 percent) after them to share in person and tying for least likely (15 percent) of five Christian faith groups to share online. Underlining the problematic nature of this statistic for Catholics who wish to engage young people, Pew noted a link between online faith-sharing participation and offline religious observance: "The survey suggests that religious engagement through TV, radio, music and the internet generally complements–rather than replaces–traditional kinds of religious participation, such as going to church." [13]

With older Catholics likelier to be in church than online, and with young adults likelier to be online than in church, digital evangelization becomes an essential first step to address an even broader generational challenge. Analyzing the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) that surveyed more than 3,000 U.S. Catholic Millennials as they transitioned from ages 13 to 17 in 2002 into young adulthood at ages 18 to 23 in 2007,[14] sociologist Christian Smith noted the

[13] Pew Research Center, Nov. 6, 2014, "Religion and Electronic Media: One-in-Five Americans Share Their Faith Online."

[14] Although the U.S. Catholic bishops have traditionally identified people aged 18 to 39 as "young adults," Smith's summary of data on "young Catholics" actually limits itself to "emerging adults" aged 18 to 23.

collapse of the intergenerational system whereby Catholics pass on the faith to their children. This system characterized the postwar period from 1945 to 1970, the formative decades of the Baby Boomers, a generation that rejected authority as well as many childhood beliefs and habits. In his 2014 NSYR analysis, co-written with three colleagues, Smith observed that during these key Vatican II transition years "no alternative approach to effective intergenerational Catholic faith transmission had been devised and instituted to replace the old system—and indeed it is not clear that any such effective system has yet been put in place even today."[15]

Although many Boomers have followed a statistical pattern of returning to their faith later in life, the NSYR study confirmed that their parental influence over children diminishes after the latter leave home, with Smith observing that whether Catholic Millennials continue to attend Mass or pray as emerging adults "depends to a large extent" on whether they experienced a strong Catholic culture in their families as teens. Emerging adults in the study practiced their faith at ages 18 to 23 only if parents modeled it seriously (through relationships, practice, and identity) during those crucial adolescent years.[16] Where parents did not provide a strong Catholic culture for Millennial teenagers, discussing and sharing their faith authentically, those children left home with little likelihood of ever returning to religion later in life.

The statistics offer no support for a strategy of waiting passively for them to come back. Whereas Boomers and even Generation X Catholics followed a statistical pattern of disappearing from church after confirmation, then returning when they settled down, that cycle has broken down among Millennials as marriage rates have declined in their age group. In a 2017 book-

[15] Christian Smith, Kyle Longest, Jonathan Hill, and Kari Christoffersen, *Young Catholic America: Emerging Adults In, Out of, and Gone from the Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 26.
[16] Smith, Longest, Hill, and Christoffersen, 66.

length study of U.S. parishes, Georgetown University's Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) said no evidence existed even at that time that Millennials would one day return to religious participation of their own accord: "A key question not answered by these data is to what extent the millennials, a larger proportion of whom have been identifying as nonreligious than previous generations…will follow the path of previous generations and become more active in their parishes as they age, get married, and have children."[17]

Millennials have proven almost as unlikely to encounter Catholicism online as to show up at a parish. From the earliest years after Facebook launched in 2004 and Apple released its first iPhone in 2007, Catholics have struggled to establish an attractive online presence, particularly on the social networks Millennials use. In a September 2012 new media survey of 1,047 self-identified Catholics aged 18 or older, commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), CARA found that 53 percent of respondents said they were "unaware of any significant presence of the Catholic Church online." Another 11 percent said it was "not very visible," 12 percent said it was "only a little visible," 16 percent said it was "somewhat visible," and eight percent said it was "very visible."

While 23 percent of Catholics in this survey reported viewing religious or spiritual content on television, only eight percent reported viewing religious or spiritual video content online (e.g., YouTube). Just six percent said they read content from a religious or spiritual website or blog, three percent read a religious or spiritual magazine or newspaper online, two percent read a religious or spiritual e-book (e.g., for Kindle, Nook), four percent listened to

[17] Charles Zech, Mary L. Gautier, Mark M. Gray, Jonathon L. Wiggins, and Thomas P. Gaunt, S.J., *Catholic Parishes of the 21st Century* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2017), 96.

religious or spiritual programs on a mobile device or online, and one percent followed religious or spirituality related tweets on Twitter. The survey also noted Google Trends showing a declining occurrence of the word "Catholic" in broader religious content search volumes.

Despite their popularity with niche audiences, young adult Catholic blogs and webzines aimed at this generation—including Busted Halo, founded by the Paulist Fathers in 2000, and The Jesuit Post (now a platform of *America*) founded by Jesuit seminarians in 2012 around the time of the CARA study—evidently did not impact these survey results. That becomes an issue when one considers how Millennials go online as their primary source of information about the world. Compared to 38 percent of respondents overall who preferred online content in this study, a majority of Millennials (52 percent) preferred it, reporting lack of interest as the primary reason they did not engage Catholic media online. Noting the need for Catholic digital outreach to cast a broader net, CARA concluded: "The challenge for the Church in this second decade of the twenty-first century is to reach more Catholics outside of this core which is more often populated by infrequent Mass attenders and a sizeable number of Millennials who use technology and new media but who say they are not interested enough in Catholic content to seek it out."[18]

Fortunately, when Catholics model their faith with authenticity and a spirit of invitation, it remains as deeply attractive to people of all ages as in the time of Jesus and his first disciples. This online faith-sharing Project will show that when Catholics share their religious experiences in a Facebook-based retreat with a focus on relationship, inviting people of all ages into spiritual conversations on the digital turf of young adults, people respond. Catholics must simply want to

[18] Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, November 2012, "Catholic New Media Use in the United States, 2012," 6.

be in relationship badly enough to talk about it; then they must learn and master the participatory style of social media communication to talk about it in a way that interests young people.

However much U.S. Catholics have used the internet and social media, including more recent standouts like Bishop Robert Barron's laudable efforts to engage people in direct dialogues over his videos and podcasts at Word on Fire Ministries, few have used it successfully to reach beyond their generational bubbles. This Project in Ministry, building on the good start of the digital efforts just named, offers Catholic media consumers a way to engage in a higher-participation style of faith-sharing than even these initiatives have provided. Far from considering his own videos and public dialogues the apotheosis of digital ministry, Barron himself points to this need to develop more participatory online faith dialogues when he writes: "From fairly extensive experience on Facebook and other social media websites, I know that people are adept when it comes to shouting about religion, but that very few know how to constructively, rationally, and helpfully enter into conversation about religious matters."[19]

To converse effectively about religious faith, as Barron suggests, one must embrace an open mindset. The above statistics on the participatory shift of the digital revolution and the intergenerational disconnect it creates for Catholics all point to inclusivity as a key pastoral ingredient to make online evangelization more engaging. Millennials need pastoral accompaniment and sensitivity. Countering a pre-digital mindset that favors marketing prepackaged catechetical programming and waiting for Millennials to find it, Jared Dees notes:

[19] Robert Barron, *Arguing Religion: A Bishop Speaks at Facebook and Google* (Park Ridge: Word on Fire, 2018), iv.

"For young-adult ministry, though, people have to be convinced to join. They will not have any motivation to come on their own. They will have to be invited."[20]

Understanding Millennials

Building on this conviction that Catholics must reach out to young people on the margins of religion, Pope Francis has challenged believers to hear God's call "to go forth from our own comfort zone in order to reach all the 'peripheries' in need of the light of the Gospel."[21] To answer this call with Millennials, Catholics must listen to their distinctive pastoral needs. While Catholics might want to reach disaffiliated young people, and even to do so using new media, studies infer it will be progressively more difficult because "the already-large share of religiously unaffiliated millennial adults is increasing significantly" over time as this generation drives the growth of the "nones" across all age groups.[22] The Covid-19 shutdown of churches deepened this trend, with only 25 percent of 2,214 self-identified U.S. Catholic from ages 18 to 35 (covering most Millennials and some older iGeneration Catholics) reporting to CARA in July and August 2020 that they participated in a televised or online Mass "somewhat" or "very often" during summer quarantine, and a full 36 percent of young respondents planning to attend Mass less often when parishes reopened.[23] Far from simply posting videos of religious events like

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[20] Jared Dees, *To Heal, Proclaim, and Teach: The Essential Guide to Ministry in Today's Catholic Church* (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2016), 265.
[21] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* [The Joy of the Gospel], Nov. 24, 2013, no. 20, Holy See, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.
[22] Michael Lipka, "Millennials Increasingly Are Driving Growth of 'Nones,'" Pew Research Center (May 12, 2015), https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/12/millennials-increasingly-are-driving-growth-of-nones/.
[23] Mark M. Gray, "New Poll: 36 Percent of Young Catholics Say They Will Attend Mass Less Often After Pandemic," *America: The Jesuit Review* (Sept. 14, 2020), https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2020/09/14/poll-catholics-attend-mass-less-often-covid-19.

Mass, a special kind of outreach will be needed with young people, one of an enhanced inclusivity involving highly participatory media that accompanies them and their concerns.

At the time of this writing, "young adults" and "Millennials" remained largely equivalent terms. While some members of the iGeneration (Generation Z, born 1997-2012) had entered legal adulthood by the time of the Project's Facebook faith-sharing retreat in October 2020, the respondents aged 18-29 that Pew reported likeliest to engage online faith-sharing in 2014 all came from Generation Y, the Millennials, and most existing research on "young Catholics" still covered just this generation. Pew has fixed Generation Y birth years at 1981-1996 for "key political, economic and social factors," including the 9/11 terror attacks.[24] At these ages, placing them between college graduation and age 39 during the time of this Project, digitally literate Millennials comprise the majority of young married couples and potential Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) candidates that U.S. Catholic parishes need most badly. They also face stronger obstacles than any prior generation to sitting down in the pews, manifesting a trend that research suggests will intensify in the iGeneration coming after them.

Research suggests that only a firm decision by Catholics to use social media, and to use it in an authentic way that makes young people feel invited and included in their faith community, will change this trend. To master the highly participative interaction that attracts Millennials in conversations both offline and online, it helps to start with the *via negativa* of what they do not like about the more packaged forms of community they find in institutional religion. Pro Church Tools, a free design resources hub for Christian congregations, gives five research-based reasons

[24] Michael Dimock, "Defining Generations: Where Millennials End and Post-Millennials Begin," *Fact Tank: News in the Numbers* (March 1, 2018), http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/03/01/defining-generations-where-millennials-end-and-post-millennials-begin/.

Millennials do not attend church: Millennials find the church fake, exclusive, uncaring, aggressive/hyper-critical, and ignorant of issues relevant to their lives.[25]

More specific to Roman Catholicism, a 2017 collaborative study of disaffiliated young Catholics by Saint Mary's Press and CARA breaks them into the categories of drifters, injured, and dissenters who leave the Church because of six distinct dynamics: some precipitating event or events; cultural secularization; a sense of freedom in leaving; a desire to make religion a choice rather than something forced on them from above; a desire to be ethical without religion; and a need for rational proof to justify the parts they do not believe. Confirming Smith's emphasis on adolescence as a key period, this study identified 13 as the median age for Millennials leaving the faith in 2013, and argued that initiating deeper conversations about faith would be the only way to address this trend. It concluded that the only way for Catholics to "articulate a compelling and convincing rationale for why religious affiliation and practice matters," especially to the growing number of families on the margins of Catholic parish life, would be to make their "primary pastoral motivation and action…to accompany young people on their spiritual journey" in an ongoing relationship that engages their questions and doubts.[26]

Other studies show that Millennials respond well when they feel accompanied this way, so long as there's some informality to make them feel comfortable about opening up. An MTV "No Collar Workers" survey reported that in their quest for work-life balance, 89 percent of Millennials want "to be constantly learning on the job" and 79 percent "want to be able to wear

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[25] Brady Shearer, "5 Research-Backed Reasons Millennials Are Done With Church," *Pro Church Tools* (Aug. 16, 2017), https://prochurchtools.com/millennials-stop-attending-church/.
[26] Robert J. McCarty and John M. Vitek, *Going, Going, Gone: The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics* (Winona, MN: Saint Mary's Press, 2017), 34.

jeans to work sometimes."[27] For a generation that wants to engage deep issues in non-institutional settings, online interaction offers an ideal starting place for them to discuss faith.

Although no study yet exists proving that Millennials will start attending church after interacting online with a religious community in this way, the data suggests Catholics have much to gain by making a more determined effort. The one guaranteed way to not have Millennials at Mass will be to do little or nothing online. More than any prior generation, Millennials have shown a tendency to socialize offline with people they encounter online through dating websites like CatholicMatch.com (where many have met spouses) and through the "meetup group" phenomenon of young adults discussing common interests on social media to organize offline gatherings, giving further reason to hope their online habits will impact offline practices.[28]

Although the rise of agnosticism and atheism has driven the growth of the "nones," online evangelizers will also do well to appreciate that religiously unaffiliated Millennials tend to be differently religious rather than areligious, maintaining some belief in a higher power and in spiritual practices like prayer. Noting how the period of emerging adulthood between self-identified child and self-identified adult has lengthened for Catholic Millennials, who have not followed traditional benchmarks of maturity (i.e., graduation, career, marriage, children, financial independence) due to sociological changes propelling them through years of uncommitted wandering, Smith likewise prefers to think of the "nones" as differently mature rather than immature, rejecting the popular phrase "extended adolescence" as imprecise due to

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[27] David Mielach, "Gen Y Seeks Work-Life Balance Above All Else," *Business News Daily* (March 30, 2012), https://www.businessnewsdaily.com/2278-generational-employee-differences.html.

[28] One internet search for "meetup groups" in the St. Louis area revealed bagels, yoga, dancing lessons, swim lessons, and philosophy discussions available in summer 2020 even amidst the Covid-19 quarantine.

their not being under the authority of educational institutions which regulate real adolescents.[29] When different generations mix in a social media setting like this Project, more mature believers will thus do well to appreciate that the world has changed rapidly in recent decades, requiring a non-judgmental sensitivity toward Millennials.

One key generational difference is that Millennials grew up with more influence from the internet than from traditional educational sources like classrooms and libraries. That leads them to filter the people and content they encounter to receive what makes them feel part of a group and to resist what seems like argumentative individualism. Sister Patricia Wittberg, S.C., an American sociologist, observes that social media now pushes people of all ages toward the "social desirability bias" of consuming only what confirms the generational opinions and mindset they formed at age 20 to get along with peers and avoid fights. "We disproportionately pay attention to information that supports our point of view and resist information that disconfirms it," Wittberg writes, adding that Facebook links from friends and context-free Tweets make it "less likely that we will even *hear* viewpoints which differ from our own."[30]

Precisely because many Millennials continue to believe in a higher power and pray even after severing congregational ties, they maintain some level of positive bias toward receiving the authenticity of Christians who pray rather than just talk about prayer, who act on their beliefs by talking to God and to them in a participatory way. That emphasis on experiencing and sharing faith, rather than simply exchanging information in an self-aggrandizing way, typifies the

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[29] Even though the NSYR focused on ages 18 to 23, no consensus yet exists on the age range of emerging adulthood, defined as the period when young people consider themselves neither children nor full adults.

[30] Patricia Wittberg, S.C., *Catholic Cultures: How Parishes Can Respond to the Changing Face of Catholicism* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016), 56.

Spiritual Exercises that this Project followed. The U.S. bishops have likewise insisted that praying sincerely rather than in a perfunctory way–even in the planning phase of evangelization–remains a particularly effective tool: "A planning process is permeated with prayer before, during, and after the process. Prayer is the most important work that the planning team will engage in. This is often an afterthought in pastoral planning but must be kept at the forefront of pastoral planning efforts."[31]

A spirit of hospitality must ultimately permeate this prayerful spirit of invitation, accompaniment, and engagement in any successful faith-based outreach to Millennials. Observing how Catholic communities only move "from maintenance to mission" when they include outsiders as welcome friends, the Paulist priest Robert Rivers writes: "Hospitality is what we extend to invited guests: family, friends, and business associates."[32]

Understanding Social Media

So how can Catholics use the youth-oriented platforms of social media for a dialogue that invites and unites people, rather than isolating and dividing them? Many Catholic institutions employ a paid webmaster or public relations liaison to run social media accounts; it's not enough. The digital shift from packaged to participatory communication calls all believers to listen and speak from a more personal place, transcending any lingering notion of religion as solely a privatized devotion or channel of individual salvation to embrace a greater sense of communal responsibility for sharing the faith. By mixing generations in a faith-sharing retreat,

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[31] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Living as Missionary Disciples: A Resource for Evangelization* (Washington, DC: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2017), 20.
[32] Robert S. Rivers, C.S.P., *From Maintenance to Mission: Evangelization and the Revitalization of the Parish* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), 121.

this Project sought to promote just that, demonstrating that a skillful use of Catholic media on Facebook can nourish people's desire for deeper connections with God and each other.

Facebook, still the world's leading social network, provided the most fertile platform for mixing generations in this online faith-sharing Project on the basis of sheer numbers alone. In CARA's 2012 new media survey, 62 percent of Catholics representing an estimated 36.2 million U.S. adults reported having a Facebook profile in 2012, with 82 percent of Millennials using Facebook as the highest percentage of any generation.[33] Far more adult Catholics overall reported using Facebook than LinkedIn (17 percent), Google+ (15 percent), Twitter (13 percent), Pinterest (seven percent), Instagram (five percent), Tumblr (one percent), and other (one percent) social media networks. Yet only four percent of Catholics from all generations reported visiting a Facebook account associated with Catholics or Catholic institutions. Considering that Millennials reported spending three hours and 43 minutes online during an average day, the most of any generation surveyed, these numbers confirm that Catholics have a lot to gain from an enhanced outreach on Facebook in particular.[34]

Secular research shows that people who connect online through Facebook or another platform become likelier to connect socially offline. Synthesizing data from her own work and other surveys, digital media researcher Nancy Baym reported in 2015 that "media use and face-to-face communication were positively correlated" and that internet users proved "generally more social than non-users" in being likelier to have a non-kin confidant as well as to visit

[33] While Facebook remains the most-used social media among all generations born before 1997, making it the ideal intergenerational meeting place to attract Millennials (aged 25 to 39 at the time of this writing) for this Project, Snapchat passed it for first place among teenagers in 2016, making it likely that the iGeneration (aged eight to 24 at the time of this writing) may require different forms of digital evangelization when they come of age. For Millennials, Instagram has become the second-most used social media site after Facebook.
[34] CARA, "Catholic New Media Use in the United States, 2012," 5.

friends and family in person.[35] Baym, who moved from academic life at the University of Kansas to work as Principal Researcher at Microsoft Research, adds hard data here to the anecdotal evidence indicating that online habits feed offline behavior patterns in a way that provides lucrative data for digital advertising and business practices. Applying her findings to the Catholic Church, this Project hoped to see the same trend happening in the influence of its Facebook faith-sharing group on offline and online habits, an area that later chapters will explore.

Baym's findings add nuance to the books and articles of researcher Jean Twenge, whose cautions about the impact of internet use on children portray the emerging iGeneration (Generation Z) as "lonely, dislocated" youths sitting alone in their bedrooms for days on end,[36] relating to friends they only know online at the expense of offline relationships.[37] They likewise verify the anecdotal reports of U.S. parents that their children talk online largely with friends they have already met at school, or peers they know through mutual friends, and rarely if ever with total strangers. Viewed together as complementary lenses, these findings of Baym and Twenge imply that those Christians who use digital technology conversationally will reach out more effectively to these isolated youths and be more engaged socially as faith communities in the twenty-first century than those who do not do so.[38] To that end, a more recent survey suggested online discussion groups like this Project's Facebook retreat could offer a valuable

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[35] Nancy Baym, *Personal Connections in the Digital Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 166.
[36] Jean M. Twenge, "Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation?" *The Atlantic* (September 2017), https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198/.
[37] Pew defines the iGeneration, Generation Z, as beginning with people born in 1997. While some U.S. media outlets like Bloomberg end the generation with people born in 2012, there remains no consensus about when this generation ends, and most of it has yet to enter the U.S. workforce.
[38] Presuming, as this Project does in observance of safe environment boundaries, that said young people are legal adults at least 18 years of age or participating in a Catholic school program with appropriate supervision.

lifeline into supportive religious communities for maturing iGeneration youths who at ages 13 to 23 took solace in faith but experienced "heightened levels of loneliness and isolation as a result of social distancing" during March 2020 coronavirus lockdowns, leading the U.S. bishops to call for greater pastoral accompaniment online.[39]

To borrow a phrase from the secular communications expert Brittany Hennessy, Catholics will do well not to dismiss the influence of social networks on these isolated and lonely young people, but to internalize the insight that all digital media users become potential "influencers" in a way that helps young people feel a sense of social importance and agency. To engage them in that active way requires basic digital literacy. If Catholic evangelizers have not done so already, Hennessy hints that a first step in mastering Facebook for faith-based use will be to find a non-religious group that interests them and start participating: "There are so many Facebook groups for influencers categorized by location, vertical (fashion, beauty, style, parenthood, food, DIY, etc.), and just general interest. Join them, introduce yourself, ask people to follow you, and ask for feedback on your content."[40]

The keys here will be authenticity and freedom of expression, not controlled presentation. Whether Catholic Facebook users join Bishop Barron's Word on Fire community to watch his video commentaries on popular culture and dialogues with non-believers, or join an *America Media* discussion group, social media experts urge them to view Facebook as a digital extension of their existing personalities and relationships, an opportunity for spontaneous expression. Keith

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[39] Christopher White, "Study Finds Young Strong in Faith Amid Virus, But Increasingly Lonely," *Crux* (April 20, 2020), https://cruxnow.com/church-in-the-usa/2020/04/study-finds-youth-strong-in-faith-amid-virus-but-increasingly-lonely/.

[40] Brittany Hennessy, *Influencer: Building Your Personal Brand in the Age of Social Media* (New York: Citadel Press, 2018), 53.

Anderson, a Lutheran pastor from Generation X who coined the phrase "digital cathedral" to describe the online presence of Christian communities, sees social networks like Facebook as chances for Christians to "sacralize" the digital space by sharing their faith on it. Anderson challenges Christians to reimagine their smart phones as places, not things, and to envision social networks as extensions of their local faith communities which can feel as real to young adults as offline encounters felt to previous generations: "Although the digital networks like Facebook and Twitter are relatively new, networks themselves are not. They have always existed, whether we recognized or could name them as such."[41]

Reframing Facebook as a place for ministry, Anderson supports this Project's decision to adapt the traditional practice of a moderated faith-sharing group to a digital retreat rather than simply post videos or monitor an unmoderated topical discussion forum. In "Click2Save Reboot," Anderson and Catholic religious studies scholar Elizabeth Drescher of Santa Clara University present Christian participation in social media prayer events and digital worship as more than just a way to deliver canned information about offline activities. When Christian pastors strategically engage "digitally enabled relationships," responding to what Drescher calls the "Digital Reformation," online events strengthen people's ties to God and to the community. Anderson and Drescher write: "Multiply that by the healthy percentage of mainline Protestants and Catholics among the more than two billon Facebook users, and you get a sense of the impact of social media on the church and on Christian ministry today."[42]

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[41] Keith Anderson, *The Digital Cathedral: Networked Ministry in a Wireless World* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2015), 51.
[42] Keith Anderson and Elizabeth Drescher, *Click2Save Reboot: The Digital Ministry Bible* (New York: Church Publishing, 2018), 3.

Facebook's broad demographic reach also makes it ideal for digital outreach. At the time of this Project, Facebook remained the social network where Millennials and earlier generations crossed paths most often. In a guidebook for parish digital outreach, Archdiocese of Boston media strategist Scot Landry cited statistics that 166 million Americans already used Facebook in 2014, more than half (52.9 percent) of the overall population at the time. In response, Landry encouraged regular churchgoers to share faith-based photos, homily videos, and links online in a personalized way. He also asked parishes to train laypeople to participate directly on faith-based social media channels, making Catholic Facebook pages into spaces where all people (not just paid staff or volunteers) participate informally in a fun way: "For those not yet on Facebook but on the Internet, the parish can help them connect with friends, relatives, kids, and grandkids by training them on Facebook and then encouraging them to tithe 10 percent or more of their social media messages or likes to faith-related content. The parish can also encourage parishioners to connect with one another on Facebook, not just with their friends from youth sports, universities, high schools, and the like."[43]

Essentially an online bulletin board that allows people to respond to each other in real time with a variety of audiovisual tools like live-stream videos with comment discussion threads, Facebook also reaches across time zones by allowing asynchronous participation in a private group, making it more flexible than videoconferencing platforms like Zoom or Skype which require people to be in one place at the same time with a perfect internet connection. That flexibility carries both benefits and limitations, leading secular technology blogger Heather

[43] Scot Landry, *Transforming Parish Communications: Growing the Church Through New Media* (Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 2014), 116.

Mansfield to admonish non-profits in a 2012 book to stay humble in their expectations when using the platform: "Although Facebook has helped fuel revolutions (literally), this was not done through the use of the Facebook Page tool set. It was the people themselves, organizing and communicating with their friends and family on Facebook, who did it." [44] In other words, *who* uses Facebook and *how* they use it remain more determinative of its influence than the platform in and of itself, as the key ingredient for success remains the relational attitude people bring to it.

Reflecting McLuhan's insight that the quality of interaction determines the depth of a medium's influence, Facebook has wisely fine-tuned its mix of personal and branded content to avoid being swamped by advertisers pushing prepackaged content. As such, effective Facebook communication still seeks to connect rather than privatize people, and British social media consultant Andrew Macarthy praises the platform's efforts to achieve this balance: "It makes sense, given that Facebook users primarily visit the site to interact with their friends and family and they want to see their posts, but they *also* visit Facebook to be informed, inspired, to converse with likeminded people, and be entertained—which is where you come in."[45]

These secular best practices encourage Catholics to personalize Facebook interactions, dialoguing with people as fellow seekers. A personal touch fosters positive experiences of closeness in any online group. This Project will likewise showcase the value of a Facebook group that intentionally set itself up with this mix of branded content (the *Exercises)* and personal availability (a Jesuit priest facilitator) in a context of overt faith-sharing, a venture that

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[44] Heather Mansfield, *Social Media for Social Good: A How-To Guide for Nonprofits* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), 88.
[45] Andrew Macarthy, *500 Social Media Marketing Tips: Essential Advice, Hints and Strategy for Business* (Self-Published, 2018), 44.

turned out to be both possible and demonstrably helpful to increasing people's sense of spiritual connection with God, self, and others.

Chapter Conclusion: Shifting Catholic Attitudes

Summing up all of these trends in the above review of literature on new media from a Catholic perspective, Pope Francis said the following in his 2019 post-synodal apostolic exhortation to young people, quoting from the synod's final document in a lengthy comment worth quoting extensively as a frame for this Project:

> The web and social networks have created a new way to communicate and bond. They are "a public square where the young spend much of their time and meet one another easily, even though not all have equal access to it, particularly in some regions of the world. They provide an extraordinary opportunity for dialogue, encounter and exchange between persons, as well as access to information and knowledge. Moreover, the digital world is one of social and political engagement and active citizenship, and it can facilitate the circulation of independent information providing effective protection for the most vulnerable and publicizing violations of their rights. In many countries, the internet and social networks already represent a firmly established forum for reaching and involving young people, not least in pastoral initiatives and activities". Yet to understand this phenomenon as a whole, we need to realize that, like every human reality, it has its share of limitations and deficiencies…. Indeed, "the digital environment is also one of loneliness, manipulation, exploitation and violence, even to the extreme case of the 'dark web'. Digital media can expose people to the risk of addiction, isolation and gradual loss of contact with concrete reality, blocking the development of authentic interpersonal relationships.[46]

Behold the blessing and the curse of digital media, its ability to unite or to alienate, depending on one's participatory skillfulness. Like all media, Catholics may use it well (for dialogue, encounter, exchange, and engagement) or poorly. Later in this exhortation, Francis notes how the digital shift in media calls Catholics to embrace a parallel shift in evangelization:

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[46] Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* [Christ is Alive], March 25, 2019, no. 87, Holy See, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html.

> Youth ministry, as traditionally carried out, has been significantly affected by social and cultural changes. Young people frequently fail to find in our usual programmes a response to their concerns, their needs, their problems and issues. The proliferation and growth of groups and movements predominantly associated with the young can be considered the work of the Holy Spirit who constantly shows us new paths. Even so, there is a need to look at the ways such groups participate in the Church's overall pastoral care, as well as a need for greater communion among them and a better coordination of their activities. Although it is never easy to approach young people, two things have become increasingly evident: the realization that the entire community has to be involved in evangelizing them, and the urgent requirement that young people take on a greater role in pastoral outreach.[47]

To make Millennials feel welcome in a Catholic community, Francis affirms McLuhan's insight that media outreach must engage them as active agents, not passive recipients. Here he grasps the truth that young people want to be heard and understood, not only seen, in a way that fuels communion rather than division. Summarizing again the bishops' final report in the synod on youth, Francis identifies what young people can teach pastors about shifting from packaged to participatory media: "The young make us see the need for new styles and new strategies. For example, while adults often worry about having everything properly planned, with regular meetings and fixed times, most young people today have little interest in this kind of pastoral approach. Youth ministry needs to become more flexible: inviting young people to events or occasions that provide an opportunity not only for learning, but also for conversing, celebrating, singing, listening to real stories and experiencing a shared encounter with the living God."[48]

The phrase "not only for learning, but also for conversing" summarizes the choice of this Project to use faith-sharing as its primary mode of outreach to the digital frontier of Millennials. The digital revolution has created a participatory culture with anti-hierarchical structures (not

[47] Ibid., no. 202.
[48] Ibid., no. 204.

without their own inequalities, despite the apparent democracy of social networking culture) in online conversations. To move effectively beyond the "packaging devices" of McLuhan's terminology into a high participation outreach to emerging adults, Catholics must likewise shift their theology of communications—not merely their technology—in a way that embraces social media as a new ecclesial structure or expression of religious community.

Supporting this mental leap of insight that Francis sees social media demanding of Catholics, one key study defines the participatory culture of digital media as follows:

> As a set of ideals, we can define participatory culture in opposition to various forms of culture that limit access to the means of cultural production and circulation, that fragment and isolate the public rather than providing opportunities to create and share culture, and that construct hierarchies that make it difficult for many to exert any meaningful influence over the core decisions that impact their lives. People participate through and within communities: participatory culture requires us to move beyond a focus on individualized personal expression; it is about an ethos of "doing it together" in addition to "doing it yourself."[49]

Therein arises a paradox for the highly structured Catholic Church: Even as this "participatory culture" of social media frustrates all hierarchical efforts of thought leaders (e.g., bishops, politicians, and the so-called mainstream media of the journalism establishment) to control people's perceptions through prepackaged manipulations of sound and image, it offers a more dynamic way to unite people in community as Francis hopes, rather than fragmenting them further into the intergenerational and interpersonal silos that low-participation media feeds. Like earlier forms of new media, digital technology has shifted relational patterns in a way that may strengthen the global Catholic Church, but only if Catholics work together rather than alone.

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[49] Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Ito, and Dana Boyd, *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018), 181.

That will require older generations of Catholics, steeped in a more passive catechetical and media culture from childhood, to become more comfortable with sharing themselves online. Web researcher John Dyer noted in 2011 that when he asked Christians "Is online community *real* community," Millennials and others born after 1981 tended to answer "yes" while those of earlier generations said "online" and "community" did not "even make sense in the same sentence." Since "the function of social media is to connect physically distant people," Dyer concludes: "Our question then should not be 'Is it *real*?' because connecting online is just as 'real' as talking on the phone or sending a letter. The better question is, what are the rules of the medium and what are the underlying messages and patterns that emerge from these rules?"[50]

Dyer, who works at Dallas Theological Seminary, talks in detail from a Protestant perspective about how God himself (in the Ten Commandments, for instance) and Christians have used new media to share faith. Social media represents only the latest technology in a 2,000-year Christian tradition of media appropriations which have sought to engage young people, build up faith communities, and help evangelizers better witness publicly to their faith. In Chapter Two, a review of magisterial literature on mass communications will show how the Catholic Church since Vatican II offers three theological foundations for this Project's faith-based use of new media: *communio,* synodality, and New Evangelization. Chapter Three will summarize the pastoral methodology, design, and implementation of the online faith-sharing group, Chapter Four will analyze pre-retreat and post-retreat participant survey results, and Chapter Five will offer conclusions and recommendations to inform future outreach.

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[50] John Dyer, *From the Garden to the City: The Redeeming and Corrupting Power of Technology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2011), 167.

Chapter Two: From Packaged to Participatory Church

Chapter One examined four major goals to support the evangelizing potential of online faith-sharing when it unites rather than isolates participants. It 1) assessed the shift from packaged to participatory communication in digital media; 2) described the intergenerational pastoral challenges it exposes for Catholics; 3) examined how social networking serves as a front door for Christian communities; and 4) explored how understanding Millennials as well as the best practices of social media can help Catholics better evangelize people of all ages in initiatives like the Facebook group studied here. Reviewing secular and Christian literature on mass media, it argued that effective social media engagement promises much for the pastoral accompaniment that Pope Francis urges particularly with young people on the digital peripheries who remain open to faith despite not attending church. This second chapter describes the parallel shift from a packaged to a participatory Catholic Church, reviewing magisterial literature on mass media since Vatican II to outline a papal theology of communications. It presents *communio,* synodality, and the New Evangelization as theological foundations of these teachings which inform the efforts of this Project to create a more participatory digital extension of Catholic community in a Facebook faith-sharing group based on the Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*.

As Chapter One showed, the world of social communications has changed significantly since the Second Vatican Council, with the rise of high-participation and low-information social media (distinct from what media theorist Marshall McLuhan called non-participative, high-information, packaged media) bringing a new dynamism to spiritual conversations that calls out for Christian adaptation. To use social media for digital evangelization, Catholics need dialogue rather than monologue in all of their spiritual conversations, moving from formalized declamations (which tend shut down young people) into relationship-building conversations.

Theologically, this chapter argues that the shift to participatory communication in digital media parallels the post-conciliar papacy's creative retrieval of apostolic *communio* as "the personal union of each human being with the divine Trinity and with the rest of mankind," leading to more participatory forms of synodality and New Evangelization especially under Francis.[1]

The Shift of *Communio*: Ecclesial Retrieval

Following a parallel shift in the way they communicate to a digital world, secular mass media and the Catholic Church have developed, according to McLuhan's terminology, from a one-way style of depersonalized information-delivery that binds relationships in fixed categories into a multi-directional interpersonal dialogue that reshapes relational hierarchies more fluidly. Just as the digital revolution of social media has flattened the authority of traditional journalists by placing them on an equal footing with amateurs posting viral videos of news events online, it has diluted Catholic hierarchal authority, creating a global network of believers able to appropriate elements of faith for varied uses and converse instantaneously across vast distances. By developing the Vatican II emphasis on synodality, decentralizing magisterial authority to empower ground-level pastoral solutions particularly with family and youth issues, Francis has advanced the efforts of his papal predecessors to retrieve apostolic *communio*, modeling for digital evangelizers a participatory communications style well-suited to social media initiatives like an online faith-sharing group.

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[1] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*, May 28, 1992, no. 3, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_28051992_communionis-notio_en.html.

The idea of a participatory and networked media culture, although it may seem like an invention of the digital revolution with roots in McLuhan's 1960s writings, strongly evokes the ecclesial culture of early Christianity, where diverse faith communities spoke freely about their challenges to discern unified pastoral responses. In the Pauline epistles which dominate biblical records of the apostolic period, the paradox appears of a *patriarchal but not hierarchical Church* emerging gradually from its Jewish roots, scattered geographically but united by an open and messy spirit of dialogue. Some key aspects of this early Christian ecclesiology of *communio*, the theological term that Vatican II and post-conciliar popes have retrieved, will help contextualize the digital revolution's influence on recent synodal developments under Francis.

Forming community through conversation, the early Christians adapted their Jewish roots with creativity to the way they shared their faith in Jesus. Saul of Tarsus—that great Christian convert from Second Temple Judaism, with its caste of hereditary male priests offering cultic sacrifice—established a traditional patriarchal ecclesiology in communities he founded across Asia Minor. But he did so by traveling outside the Jewish clerical hierarchy to establish loose networks of house churches among Greek and Roman pagans, becoming the most innovative evangelizer of early Christianity in his wise use of written media to counsel and lead them.[2] While he stayed tied to a Mediterranean cultural milieu that identified clergy with *patriarchs*, married family men who led houses of worship, the Christian emphasis on his pagan Greek name "Paul" signaled Saul's departure from hierarchies tied to the Mosaic Law. In his domestic churches, patriarchs like Paul reserved the right to make the final decisions, but wisely allowed all stakeholders of any social rank or background to give input on issues facing the community.

[2] Of the 27 books in the Greek New Testament of the Bible, 13 are epistles (letters) of St. Paul to his communities.

Theologically, this participatory ecclesiology reflected the idea of *communio*, the unity in diversity that Vatican II saw as a key lesson of early Christianity to help the Church relate more effectively to the modern world. Ladislas Orsy, a Hungarian canonist who advised the bishops at Vatican II and continued into his late 90s to promote the Council's spirit, defines *communio* as "the inner life of God, who is one God in three persons," modeling the "unity in diversity, or diversity in unity" that calls Christians to live as a family of many believers in one "house of God." Orsy writes: "The one Spirit of Christ dwells in many and holds them together. Briefly but substantially, this is the theological reality of *communio.* All external manifestations of unity, such as collegiality and solidarity, flow from it. Among human beings, composed of spirit and matter, the internal and invisible mystery needs to manifest itself externally and visibly. One cannot exist without the other, not in this universe where the Word has become flesh."[3]

For Orsy, this spirit of *communio* permeates the relationships of all participatory Christian communities since the apostolic age. Therefore, he asks: What external structures best express, promote, and sustain this internal bond of unity in diversity? Synodality has traditionally dominated Eastern Christian ecclesiology as the preferred response to that question, but Orsy laments that Western Christianity gradually neglected it due to the papacy's top-down policies. As the Roman Catholic Church became centralized under the papacy, she increasingly embraced a packaged communications style of monologue over bottom-up synodal dialogue, privileging the one-way pronouncements of media like papal bulls. As synods grew infrequent in the West especially during the three centuries between the Council of Trent and the First Vatican Council,

[3] Ladislas Orsy, S.J., *Receiving the Council: Theological and Canonical Insights and Debates* (Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 2009), 5.

Roman Catholics came to forget this privileged apostolic expression of collegial solidarity, a profound act of *communio* first seen in the Council of Jerusalem's decision that Gentile converts needn't follow the Mosaic Law.[4]

It seems a historical irony, then, that post-conciliar popes have gradually restored and developed Western synodality from the very office that neglected it for so long. This papal restoration of synodality began at the Second Vatican Council, itself a profound exercise of communion, with a call back to St. Paul's ecclesiology. In the documents of Vatican II, the idea of *communio* as inspiration for renewing ecclesial structures appears in multiple references to the Church as "the Body of Christ," an image from Paul's words to the community in Corinth:[5] "As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ."[6] Reflecting its own ecclesial witness of this Pauline unity in diversity as an assembly of episcopal collegiality modeled on the early Church, the Council refers to itself throughout its documents as "this Sacred Synod."[7]

Suggesting a theological model for how Catholics might interact on social media today, Paul expands on *communio* elsewhere, emphasizing the humble collegiality Jesus embodies. Urging believers to base their unity in diversity on the Triune communion of divine persons, Paul tells the Philippians: "If there is any encouragement in Christ, any solace in love, any participation in the Spirit, any compassion and mercy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, with the same love, united in heart, thinking one thing. Do nothing out of selfishness or

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[4] See Acts 15:2-35 (New American Bible).
[5] Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen gentium* [On the Church], Nov. 27, 1964, no. 8, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.
[6] 1 Cor. 12:12 (New American Bible).
[7] Second Vatican Council, *Lumen gentium*, no. 1.

out of vainglory; rather, humbly regard others as more important than yourselves, each looking out not for his own interests, but [also] everyone for those of others. Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus…."[8]

Commenting on this passage, the American biblical theologian Robert F. O'Toole notes how Paul exhorts his community to think the same things in the Lord, with the imperative of fellowship (a sense of solidarity among equals) driving an authentic consensus about Christian unity that arises from genuine concern for the good of all in the group: "What interests us is the moral directive to the members of the community to think the same thing and the approval given to the various expressions of fellowship noted in the epistle."[9] If unity of thought and action remains supreme in the Christian moral life for Paul here, it still does not destroy the diversity of what O'Toole calls the Philippians' "various expressions of fellowship."

Theological images of *communio* in this chapter have thus far included collegiality, synodality, solidarity, the body of Christ, and fellowship, but a particularly apt one comes from Pope Benedict XVI. In a brief but influential 2009 address, Benedict XVI promoted a relational model of "co-responsibility" between clergy and laity in Catholic communities, rooting ecclesial *communio* in the early Christian witness of fraternal charity that he will also insist upon as a model for internet exchanges: "Lastly, the witness of charity that unites hearts and opens them to ecclesial belonging should not be forgotten. Historians answer the question as to how the success of Christianity in the first centuries can be explained, the ascent of a presumed Jewish sect to the

[8] Phil. 2:1-5 (New American Bible).
[9] Robert F. O'Toole, S.J., *Who Is a Christian? A Study in Pauline Ethics* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1990), 46.

religion of the Empire, by saying that it was the experience of Christian charity in particular that convinced the world."[10]

Comparing this co-responsible charity of the early Christian communities to the more hierarchical structures they developed into, for good and for ill, the Australian Jesuit systematic theologian Gerald O'Collins concludes that the biblical witness creates an "issue of public credibility" challenging today's Catholic clergy to adopt a more collegial attitude toward others: "No amount of scriptural and theological argument about continuity in apostolic faith in Christ will prove successful apologetically, without the visible witness to that faith being embodied in the life and worship of those exercising the ordained ministry and the episcopal office."[11] Since Vatican II, popes from Paul VI to Francis have labored to foster this witness, using mass media in varied ways to help express *communio* through synods.

Synodality from Paul VI to Francis

At Vatican II, the Catholic Church's *ressourcement* (return to the sources of faith) unfolded paradoxically in the context of the *aggiornamento* (bringing up to date) that Pope John XXIII introduced to "throw open the windows" of the hierarchical Church to the modern world. To move forward in an age of mass media, the Church went backward, looking to early Christianity for guidance. Even before the Council authorized sweeping reforms to every aspect of Catholicism, observers felt fresh ecclesial winds blowing in the novelty of press, film, radio, and television covering an ecumenical council for the first time in history. It reflected a more

[10] Benedict XVI, Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI *Opening of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome on the Theme: "Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility,"* May 26, 2009, Holy See, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090526_convegno-diocesi-rm.html.
[11] Gerald O'Collins, S.J., *Rethinking Fundamental Theology: Toward a New Fundamental Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 290.

inclusive way of communicating that softened the authoritarian style dominant since the counter-reformation polemics of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and the definition of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council (1869-1870) that confirmed the pope's authority over faith and morals in dogmatic definitions without requiring any recourse to episcopal consensus.

Thanks to this mass media coverage, Vatican II became the most transparent ecumenical council in history, inviting people across the globe to follow its conversations as participatory witnesses of unity in diversity. In its short Decree on the Media of Social Communications *(Inter Mirifica)* that Paul VI promulgated at the end of 1963, the Council endorsed the catechetical value of four media platforms, urging episcopal conferences to use them with moral responsibility to form people's consciences: "Since an effective apostolate on a national scale calls for unity of planning and resources, this sacred Synod decrees and orders that national offices for affairs of the press, films, radio and television be established everywhere and given every aid."[12] These four platforms (notably including McLuhan's participatory exemplar of television, where Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen had become an early televangelist)[13] enabled the Catholic hierarchy to deliver prepackaged catechesis in the sender-receiver style of a theater production or advertising piece, evangelizing people through canned programming that still went far beyond the reach of more traditional media. Near the Council's end, on September 15, 1965, Paul VI created the Synod of Bishops as a permanent advisory body to the pope, a tool of

[12] Second Vatican Council, Decree *Inter Mirifica* [On Social Communications], Dec. 4, 1963, no. 13, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19631204_inter-mirifica_en.html.

[13] Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, an early Catholic evangelizer on radio and television, hosted the inspirational television program "Life is Worth Living" on DuMont (1952-1955, during which it won the network's only Emmy) and later ABC (1955-1957) as well as two other series from 1958-1968. The original television show competed with Milton Berle as the top-rated U.S. network television program of its day.

collaboration-at-papal-discretion (as distinct from collegial governance) that would soon use mass media for ecclesial consultations like the two *Humanae Vitae* commissions of 1968.

After Vatican II, Paul VI's annual World Communications Day addresses from 1967 to 1978 kept highlighting these four platforms as instruments of *communio*, and he called in documents like the 1971 Instruction on the Means of Social Communication *(Communio et Progressio)* for Catholics to acquire basic media literacy. Modeling that literacy, he favored a standard media blueprint for his synods (1967, 1969, 1971, 1974, and 1977) of bishops: The Vatican would consult global stakeholders on a topic; the bishops would gather for collaborative dialogue amplified in press, radio, television, and film; then the pope would issue a post-synodal apostolic exhortation for pastoral guidance to the Church. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* his 1975 exhortation on evangelization that John Paul II later cited as wellspring of the New Evangelization and that Francis credited as inspiration for *Evangelii Gaudium*, Paul VI affirmed an essential link between evangelization and mass media, building on Vatican II's reframing of the Church from an inward-looking fortress of declamatory monologue to an outward-looking Gospel witness seeking faith-based dialogue with modernity: "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."[14]

Subsequent popes built steadily upon this magisterial zeal for evangelizing through mass communications. Pope John Paul I did not live long enough to give a World Communications Day address. But Pope John Paul II took Paul VI's link between media and evangelization a step

[14] Paul VI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [On Evangelization in the Modern World], Dec. 8, 1975, no. 45, http://w2.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

further, asking believers in a prophetic 1990 passage to integrate the Gospel message into the increasingly participatory culture of mass media itself: “There is a deeper reality involved here: since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the ‘new culture’ created by modern communications.”[15]

This transition to a more participatory Church remained limited under John Paul II by the pre-digital culture of mass media. The Holy See began its website www.vatican.va under his long papacy, during which the Synod of Bishops assembled 15 times. But the digital age with its less packaged media platforms had barely started when he died in 2005. Moving ahead into the digital revolution, his successor Benedict XVI became the first pope to use a Twitter account and to discuss social media explicitly in his annual World Communications Day messages, further integrating evangelization into mass media culture.

In 2011, at a point relatively early in the digital revolution when Facebook was thriving and early-generation smartphones had appeared, Benedict focused his annual communications address on the need for Christians to bring authenticity to their faith witness on social networks: “It follows that there exists a Christian way of being present in the digital world: this takes the form of a communication which is honest and open, responsible and respectful of others. 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

[15] John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* [Mission of the Redeemer], Dec. 7, 1990, no. 37, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_jp-ii_apc_15081990_ex-corde-ecclesiae.html.

in the way one communicates choices, preferences and judgements that are fully consistent with the Gospel, even when it is not spoken of specifically."[16]

The Gospel witness of charitable *communio* remains central for Benedict XVI to any participatory Christian interaction on digital media. Ecclesiastically, he still relied on traditional media strategies in the assemblies he called of the Synod of Bishops, with the increasingly outdated Holy See Press Office operating on a news release and press conference model of one-way communication. But after Benedict resigned the papacy in 2013, the digital revolution intensified under his successor Francis, who merged all the communications offices of Vatican City and the Holy See into the digitally minded Dicastery for Communication in 2015.[17]

Developing the magisterial teaching of Benedict on evangelizing through digital charity, Francis chose a *communio*-infused theme for World Communications Day 2019, consciously echoing a similar motif from his 2014 address that urged Christians to be examples of human solidarity online: *"We are members one of another" (Eph 4,25). From network community to human communities."* In this 53rd World Day of Communications text, Francis returned to the body of Christ image from Vatican II as a synodal model for Christian digital relations, evoking McLuhan's participatory criteria of embodiment: "The image of the body and the members

[16] Benedict XVI, *Truth, Proclamation and Authenticity of Life in the Digital Age* [Message of His Holiness on the 45th World Communications Day], June 5, 2011, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20110124_45th-world-communications-day.html.
[17] This merger of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, the Vatican website, Vatican News (including the former Vatican Television Center), the Holy See Press Office, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Photograph Service, Vatican Radio, Vatican Press, and the Vatican Publishing House updated papal media for a digital age.

reminds us that the use of the *social web* is complementary to an encounter in the flesh that comes alive through the body, heart, eyes, gaze, breath of the other."[18]

Like his predecessors, Francis strives to model *communio* in his use of mass media and synods, but with a more digitally fluid sense of participation. Keith Anderson, the Lutheran media analyst, says the "personal leadership stance" of Francis "lends itself to a social media world," and he praises the shift from packaged to participatory communication that manifested itself when Francis posed for a viral selfie with young admirers shortly after his election:

> Contrast Francis' selfie with the scene of Benedict XVI sending out the first papal tweet, sitting at a large desk, typing on the papal iPad, surrounded by cardinals and courtiers, captured by a staff photographer. Hey, that wasn't bad for an eighty-five-year-old pontiff. But it reveals something of Benedict's approach to social media, which resembled more broadcast media than social media, more one-to-many communication, rather than a many-to-many conversation—tweets as one-hundred-and-forty-character pronouncements from the pope, rather than a platform for relationality. Pope Francis expresses through his words, actions, and, yes, selfies, a desire to be in relationship, to be connected.[19]

This "desire to be in relationship, to be connected" even digitally belies the pope's status as a member of the Silent Generation born in 1936. Oriented by nature to conversation and community, Francis shares his faith in a way that pushes the papacy beyond repetition of past forms into a receptive encounter with new existential realities. At his opening addresses for the two synods on the family, Francis sounded a participatory note in discussing the synodal process, as the American moral theologian Thomas Massaro observes:

> Francis used the Greek word *parrhesia*—meaning openness, frankness, even boldness—which captured his hopes for how the delegates would approach the proceedings. He

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[18] Francis, *We Are Members One of Another (Eph 4:25): From Social Network Communities to the Human Community* [Message of His Holiness on the 53rd World Communications Day], Jan. 24, 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco_20190124_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html.

[19] Keith Anderson, *The Digital Cathedral: Networked Ministry in a Wireless World* (New York: Morehouse Publishing, 2015), 63.

> encouraged the deliberations on the most sensitive issues regarding family life to proceed as a true dialogue, not as the tightly scripted monologues and ceremonial set pieces into which too many previous synods had devolved. No topic should be considered off the table; no one should be afraid to disagree with others, Francis advised. His sincere appeal to the delegates to speak their minds—sharing what was in their hearts rather than merely mouthing words they might suppose their peers or superiors would prefer to hear—changed the dynamics of the meeting in remarkable ways and by most accounts produced highly constructive results.[20]

The fact that Francis listened to people from all over the world in these meetings not only softened the distinction between clergy as "teaching church" and laity as "learning church" that reinforces a preference for monologue over dialogue, but also strengthened the synods' results. Rooted in participative discussions which included faith testimonies from married couples, the synods discerned creative pastoral ways to accompany families. They urged Catholics toward co-responsibility for implementing pastoral solutions at lower ecclesial levels, empowering dioceses and regions to craft pastoral plans in collaboration with Francis rather than wait passively for a Roman dicastery like the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (C.D.F.) to issue top-down decisions for them in packaged decrees.

Francis wants all Catholics to practice this spirit of synodality in their interactions both offline and online, building unity through spiritual conversation. Defining it as "walking together," Francis chose synodality for the theme of the World Synod of Bishops in October 2022, giving it this title: "For a synodal church: Communion, participation, and mission." By placing *communio*, collaborative discussion, and evangelization in the spotlight, this "synod on synodality" promised to develop a key idea of the pope's post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the family. Arguing for a collaborative diversity of pastoral interpretation within the unity of

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[20] Thomas Massaro, S.J., *Mercy in Action: The Social Teachings of Pope Francis* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 104.

Catholic teaching, Francis writes in that document: "Since 'time is greater than space', I would make it clear that not all discussions of doctrinal, moral or pastoral issues need to be settled by interventions of the magisterium. Unity of teaching and practice is certainly necessary in the Church, but this does not preclude various ways of interpreting some aspects of that teaching or drawing certain consequences from it."[21] Echoing the varied expressions of fellowship that O'Toole saw St. Paul approving in his letter to the Philippians, Francis draws from synodality the lesson that Catholics must recover a healthy respect for diverse perspectives in spiritual conversations if they wish to walk together in a truly communion-building way.

Applying the Catholic social justice principle of subsidiarity to the hierarchy itself, Francis insists on localized discussion before people ask the Vatican for input. By consulting widely at lower levels before making decisions, leadership consultant Chris Lowney sees Francis exporting the Ignatian governance of his religious order to the whole Catholic Church, adapting the *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* that guided him especially as Jesuit provincial superior of Argentina from 1973 to 1979: "Both as provincial and as seminary head, Fr. Bergoglio was required to convene his 'consultors' regularly, a handful of Jesuit colleagues representing varying expertise, age groups, and points of view. When the system works well, decision quality invariably rises. Leaders must articulate their rationale, say, for wanting to launch a new ministry or replace a key lieutenant, and consultors can probe for blind spots or derailing 'attachments' that might be clouding the manager's judgment."[22]

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[21] Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* [The Joy of Love], no. 3, https://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf.

[22] Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis: Why He Leads the Way He Leads* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2013), 118.

When he created a Council of Cardinals in April 2013 as the papal equivalent of these Jesuit consultors, Francis insisted on hearing unfiltered clashing perspectives rather than just his own voice or the voices of flatterers. Extending this subsidiarity to his use of synods, he has repeatedly shown a special pastoral concern for the family, the domestic church that remains the foundational structure of *communio* centuries after the apostolic age, but strains under the contemporary pressures of rising divorce rates and irregular marital situations to confront the intergenerational challenges of faith transmission that Chapter One described. Accompaniment of families in difficult situations, in dialogues open to hearing their generational and cultural perspectives without any pre-judgment, has become a pastoral touchstone of this pope's highly participative understanding of Church as *communio*.

Francis further applies his image of "journeying together" on pilgrimage to the restlessness of digitalized youth, calling for a synodal way of interacting with them. To reach young people, the Church must move with them in a spirit of missionary flexibility, not cling to comfortable habits. In his post-synodal apostolic exhortation on youth, Francis demands a restless "pastoral care that is synodal," calling explicitly for "a participatory and co-responsible Church" of unity in diversity as he quotes the Final Document of the synod fathers:

> Youth ministry has to be synodal; it should involve a "journeying together" that values "the charisms that the Spirit bestows in accordance with the vocation and role of each of the Church's members, through a process of co-responsibility... Motivated by this spirit, we can move towards a participatory and co-responsible Church, one capable of appreciating its own rich variety, gratefully accepting the contributions of the lay faithful, including young people and women, consecrated persons, as well as groups, associations and movements. No one should be excluded or exclude themselves."[23]

[23] Francis, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* [Christ is Alive], March 25, 2019, no. 206, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20190325_christus-vivit.html.

So far, the magisterial literature reviewed in this chapter shows how Francis has advanced the work of his predecessors to retrieve *communio*, presenting synodality as the key expression of a "participatory and co-responsible Church" in which laypeople transition from passive consumers of packaged content into active evangelizers of collaborative dialogues. Reflecting the digital shift from prepackaged pronouncement to participatory dialogue, Francis has developed several elements of *communio*-as-synodality (solidarity, collegiality, subsidiarity, co-responsibility, charity, and authenticity) with an innovative leadership style that promotes personal witness, fellowship, consultation, and accompaniment as key evangelization skills in a digital age. He has led by example, embodying the theological foundations of participatory conversation essential to any online faith-sharing initiative.

Francis calls all Catholics–clergy and lay, young and old–to collaborate with him in this mission of outreach as part of their baptismal calling. This call requires Catholic evangelizers in a digital age to rethink how they approach young people in group interactions offline and online. To make the "synodal pastoral care" of emerging adults a reality in this digital age, especially as they continue to abandon institutional religion, Francis asks Catholic adults to stop preaching at young people and start inviting them into roles of co-responsible leadership which use social media to engage their peers more interactively: "As for *outreach*, I trust that young people themselves know how best to find appealing ways to come together. They know how to organize events, sports competitions and ways to evangelize using social media, through text messages,

songs, videos and other ways. They only have to be encouraged and given the freedom to be enthused about evangelizing other young people wherever they are to be found."[24]

The spontaneous zeal of young people defies traditional media packaging, emerging more from interpersonal sharing than from scripted exchanges, and evokes the participatory style of interaction that online faith-sharing requires to succeed. Francis encourages this effort by developing *communio* beyond his papal predecessors, building on their good work in adapting the perennial Catholic message to the signs of the times. Francis speaks to the digital age as a brother who has begun to empower synods to collaborate actively with him on pastoral strategies. For example, he encouraged the Pan-Amazonian synod to speak its mind about indults to consider ordaining women as deacons and older men of proven virtue (so-called *viri probati*) as married priests in remote regions of the rainforest, insisting that every idea be on the table. Though he ultimately passed on these proposals in favor of calling for a stronger permanent diaconate and more formalized lay ministries for women, his openness to hearing them illustrated his persistent belief in the ability of synodality to bring people together in one community of respectful dialogue.

In all of his synods, Francis retains hierarchy, but softens it to hear the perspectives he needs to lead wisely. His decentralizing trend to redirect pastoral questions away from the dogmatically oriented C.D.F. and toward synods may thus represent a fuller implementation of the ecclesiology of *communio* that popes since Vatican II have retrieved from apostolic Christianity as a theological foundation for a more participatory and co-responsible Church. His emphasis on diversity in unity can also fruitfully informs the digitally enabled faith groups that

[24] Ibid., no. 210.

arise on social networks as initiatives of the New Evangelization, a final theological foundation of this Project that the post-conciliar popes have developed in their magisterial teachings.

From Evangelization to New Evangelization

The first parts of this chapter described the rich theological imagery of synodality as an ecclesial structure of *communio,* exploring the collegial discourse that has developed from Vatican II to Pope Francis as a model of charity for online faith-sharing. But synodality unexpressed remains conceptual; it needs works of evangelization, or more precisely of the New Evangelization tailored to the "nones," to incarnate the sort of conversational faith communities it promises. That requires some understanding of the history and meaning of evangelization, and of the New Evangelization in particular, as a final theological foundation for online faith-sharing.

The English word "evangelization" comes from *evangelium,* the Latin word for "gospel" or "good news," and so the English word "evangelist" (proclaimer of the Gospel) originally referred to the four biblical authors Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In "Against the Heresies," the second-century church father St. Irenaeus of Lyons, who claimed to have touched the apostolic age by hearing St. Polycarp speak of St. John the Apostle, relates how the apostles proclaimed the Gospel to people who had not yet heard of Jesus with a personal and communal joy even before written gospels existed. In Book 3, Chapter 1.1, Irenaeus recalls the first evangelization of the apostles arising from youthful zeal for what they shared:

> First they proclaimed it publicly and subsequently, by the will of God, handed it down to us in the Scriptures to be the foundation and support of our faith. It is wrong to assert that the apostles preached before their own knowledge was perfect, as some persons boast that they improve on the apostles. After our Lord rose from the dead, when the Holy Spirit came down upon them, the apostles were invested with power from on high; they were filled with all his gifts; they had perfect knowledge. Then they went out to the ends of the

> earth; they preached the glad news of the good things which come to us from God; they proclaimed heaven's peace to humanity.[25]

Zeal to share faith through any medium possible characterizes this initial proclamation, expressed peacefully through a witness of gladness, and infuses the apostolic discourse with co-responsible and participatory qualities. Noting how this first evangelization began with proclamation of the Good News rooted in personal and communal witness before proceeding to catechesis as a second stage, the late systematic theologian Cardinal Avery Dulles writes: "Because faith flowers into testimony, the theology of faith is inseparable from a theology of witness. All the truths of revelation draw their meaning and power from their relationship to Christ's redemptive action, which comes to expression in the Gospel, the *evangelium."*[26]

Conversion as a fruit of this witness remains a key element of evangelization in *Ad Gentes,* where the Second Vatican Council urged Catholics to "spread everywhere the reign of Christ" on the basis of the Church as "a universal sacrament of salvation."[27] Because mass communications had connected the world in a way that allowed Christian evangelists to reach most non-Christian countries by 1962, the Council revisited traditional images of European priests baptizing pagans by emphasizing evangelization as the whole Church's mission even in Christianized nations. The decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* further noted a "manifold and pressing need" for laity to become active Catholic evangelizers, especially by serving as

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[25] Irenaeus of Lyons, "Against the Heresies," in *The Holy Spirit,* ed. J. Patout Burns and Gerald M. Fagin, S.J., (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 32.
[26] Avery Cardinal Dulles, S.J., *Evangelization for the Third Millennium* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2009), 79.
[27] Second Vatican Council, Decree *Ad gentes* [On the Mission Activity of the Church], Oct. 11, 1962, no. 1, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.

catechists in Christian regions with few clergy.[28] Much like the early Christians among Gentiles and Jews, this renewal of evangelization for the modern world focused on lay outreach to people who blurred the distinction between ministry *ad intra* and *ad extra*, prefiguring today's attention to the religiously unaffiliated "nones" and non-practicing believers.

Other post-conciliar developments pushed Catholic evangelization much further. In 1974, the Third Synod on Evangelization ("Evangelization in the Modern World") expanded on the Council's call to adapt the witness of faith to modern circumstances, endorsing a contextual perspective that demanded greater pastoral appreciation of cultural diversity. Summarizing the synod's findings, Paul VI argued in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (December 8, 1975) that evangelization must "transpose" the Good News to different languages and cultures:

> Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they ask, and if it does not have an impact on their concrete life. But on the other hand, evangelization risks losing its power and disappearing altogether if one empties or adulterates its content under the pretext of translating it; if, in other words, one sacrifices this reality and destroys the unity without which there is no universality, out of a wish to adapt a universal reality to a local situation.[29]

This principle of transposing the Christian message to diverse contexts, making a more flexible application to evangelization of *communio's* unity in diversity, suggests how Catholics might ideally approach faith-sharing in a digital age. The truth remains the truth. But Catholics must adapt how they share their faith to the new media culture (language, signs, symbols, and lived reality) of a digitally networked world. If those evangelized in this process evangelize

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[28] Second Vatican Council, Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* [On the Apostolate of the Laity], Nov. 18, 1965, no. 1, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html.
[29] Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 63.

others, Paul VI says it will be because witnesses show them the way: "Modern man listens more to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."[30]

Paul VI saw with unique foresight the need for these witnesses to evangelize the baptized faithful who no longer practice their faith.[31] In the year of three popes, 1978, a successor emerged who developed his call for "a new period of evangelization" to such Catholics,[32] establishing the last theological foundation of this Project. After the death of Paul VI and the 33-day reign of John Paul I, Karol Wojtyła ascended to a 27-year papacy, stamping the Catholic Church with his forceful emphasis on missionary outreach to the growing number of religiously disaffiliated people in historically Christian nations like his own Poland. On his first papal trip home in 1979, John Paul II coined the phrase "new evangelization" to distinguish this focus on post-Christian societies from traditional outreach to pagan societies ignorant of Jesus. Preaching to his fellow Poles, the pope introduced this New Evangelization as he stood in the shadows of *Nowa Huta*, the so-called "New City" outside Krakow that atheistic Communist officials had designed as a workers paradise without God by forbidding houses of worship. (Before becoming pope, Archbishop Wojtyła supported the faithful in erecting a cross near this atheistic city, celebrating illicit Masses on the site of what became a shrine.) It was in this context of desiring to restore faith to his traditionally Catholic homeland under atheist rule that John Paul II said in his homily: "A *new evangelization* has begun, as if it were a new proclamation, even if in reality

[30] Ibid., no. 41.
[31] Ibid., nos. 52-53; 56-57.
[32] Ibid., no. 2.

it is the same as ever."[33] He called it the evangelization of the third millennium, arising from the cross of *Nowa Huta* as a guiding beacon into the present century.

In 1983, John Paul II expanded on these remarks, telling Latin America's bishops: "La conmemoración del medio milenio de evangelización tendrá su significación plena si es un compromiso vuestro como obispos, junto con vuestro presbiterio y fieles; compromiso, no de re-evangelización, pero sí de una evangelización nueva. Nueva en su ardor, en sus métodos, en su expresión."[34] These words clarified his idea of a New Evangelization for the third millennium, fulfilling his pledge to bring it from the cross of Communist Poland's suffering into the rest of the world. This New Evangelization was to be a collaboration of bishops, priests, and laity. Although he described it as the same proclamation of faith as traditional evangelization, he said it would not be a "re-evangelization" because it would be new in its "ardor," "methods," and "expression," adapting the traditional content of the faith to contemporary circumstances.

For John Paul II, the New Evangelization demands a renewed effort of the whole Church to share the Good News particularly in secularized nations like the United States, using all available media to reach the baptized who no longer practice. Prefiguring the emphasis of Pope Francis on reaching people at the margins of Catholic life, John Paul II saw new media as the next existential periphery of this outreach. In his 1988 exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, he calls the whole Church to enter this new media frontier where lay professionals take the lead:

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[33] John Paul II, Apostolic Pilgrimage to Poland, *Holy Mass at the Shrine of the Holy Cross, Homily of His Holiness John Paul II*, June 9, 1979, no. 1, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/homilies/1979/documents/hf_jp-ii_hom_19790609_polonia-mogila-nowa-huta.html.

[34] John Paul II, Apostolic Pilgrimage to Central America, *Discourse of the Holy Father John Paul II to the Assembly of CELAM*, March 9, 1983, no. 1, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/es/speeches/1983/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19830309_assemblea-celam.html. The pope calls here for a "new evangelization" in the third millennium, "not a re-evangelization," "new in its ardor, in its methods, and in its expression" (translation mine).

> The world of the mass media represents a new frontier for the mission of the Church, because it is undergoing a rapid and innovative development and has an extensive worldwide influence on the formation of mentality and customs. In particular, the lay faithful's responsibility as professionals in this field, exercised both by individual right and through community initiatives and institutions, demands a recognition of all its values, and demands that it be sustained by more adequate resource materials, both intellectual and pastoral.[35]

This vision of co-responsible media collaboration between supportive clergy and lay professionals in the New Evangelization further informs how Catholics might share faith through digital media in a way that eventually appeals to the religiously unaffiliated. In his 1990 encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, he stresses that traditionally Christian nations need the New Evangelization *ad intra* in order to credibly evangelize *ad gentes* those nations where Christians remain a minority: "The churches in traditionally Christian countries, for example, involved as they are in the challenging task of new evangelization, are coming to understand more clearly that they cannot be missionaries to non-Christians in other countries and continents unless they are seriously concerned about the non-Christians at home. Hence missionary activity *ad intra* is a credible sign and a stimulus for missionary activity ad extra, and vice versa."[36]

Reflecting these developments under John Paul II, the U.S. bishops' document "Go and Make Disciples" (1992) updated the language of evangelization to address the ongoing de-Christianization of society after Vatican II. Choosing to "rephrase" Paul VI's understanding of evangelization as converting "the personal and collective consciences of people,"[37] the document declared that "evangelizing means bringing the Good News of Jesus into every human situation

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[35] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* [On the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World], Dec. 30, 1988, no. 44, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_30121988_christifideles-laici.html.
[36] John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 34.
[37] Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, no. 18.

and seeking to convert individuals and society by the divine power of the Gospel itself."[38] The bishops here develop Paul VI's post-conciliar emphasis on forming people's collective moral compass, extending it to include the conversion of society that John Paul II talked about.

For the United States in particular, the diversity in unity of New Evangelization means including Protestants in spiritual conversations, exchanging personal and communal witness in faith-sharing rather than seeking to convert one another. In his 1999 exhortation *Ecclesia in America*, John Paul II insists on this ecumenical spirit of witness, supporting the decision of this online faith-sharing group to invite "Catholic media consumers" from all religious affiliations. With declining religious observance in secularized nations surviving Communism's fall, one hears John Paul II's respect for evangelicals here: "The presence of other Christian communities, to a greater or lesser degree in the different parts of America, means that the ecumenical commitment to seek unity among all those who believe in Christ is especially urgent."[39]

Following the death of John Paul II, the New Evangelization has continued developing as an inspiration for new media evangelization, putting flesh on the bones of *communio* and synodality by pushing Catholics repeatedly to focus on forming communities of faith where dialogue centers on the common good rather than on private concerns. Presenting evangelization as a service of charity to society, Benedict XVI wrote in his 2005 encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*

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[38] United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*, Nov. 18, 1992, no. 10, http://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/evangelization/go-and-make-disciples/introduction_go_and_make_disciples.cfm.

[39] John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* [On the Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion and Solidarity in America], Jan. 22, 1999, no. 14, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_22011999_ecclesia-in-america.html.

that the "entire activity of the Church is an expression of a love that seeks the integral good of man," one that "seeks to promote man in the various arenas of life and human activity."[40]

These words underscore that genuine Christian outreach always supports authentic human development above partisan interests in faith-based exchanges. In his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict says care for others represents "an essential element of evangelization," highlighting the importance for Catholics to share experiences of service as well as prayer in online conversations: "Testimony to Christ's charity, through works of justice, peace and development, is part and parcel of evangelization, because Jesus Christ, who loves us, is concerned with the whole person."[41]

More specific to the New Evangelization, Benedict XVI's curia later tweaked the definition of that idea in a 2007 doctrinal note from the C.D.F., the office he had led under John Paul II. Responding to the challenges of pluralism and relativism that informed much of his papacy, the note contextualizes as a work of New Evangelization this Project's hope of forming Catholics in a participatory style of faith-sharing for digital outreach to disaffiliated Catholics. It states: "In a wider sense, [evangelization] is used to describe ordinary pastoral work, while the phrase 'new evangelization' designates pastoral outreach to those who no longer practice the Christian faith."[42]

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[40] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est* [God is Love], Dec. 25, 2005, no. 19, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html.

[41] Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* [Charity in Truth], June 29, 2009, no. 15, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html.

[42] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelization*, Oct. 6, 2007, no. 12, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20071203_nota-evangelizzazione_en.html.

Benedict himself clarified this understanding of the New Evangelization in his 2010 exhortation *Verbum Domini* on the role of God's word in the Church's mission:

> In a number of cases, nations once rich in faith and in vocations are losing their identity under the influence of a secularized culture. The need for a new evangelization, so deeply felt by my venerable Predecessor, must be valiantly reaffirmed, in the certainty that God's word is effective. The Church, sure of her Lord's fidelity, never tires of proclaiming the good news of the Gospel and invites all Christians to discover anew the attraction of following Christ.[43]

Also in 2010, Benedict XVI established the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization in his apostolic letter *Ubicumque et Semper*, once again calling the Church in progressively secularized societies like his native Germany to a "renewed missionary impulse, an expression of a new, generous openness to the gift of grace."[44] In 2012, Benedict then called a Synod on the New Evangelization for October 7-28, appointing fellow theologian Archbishop Rino Fisichella as the first president of the new pontifical council. Fisichella, who continued in this role under Francis, wrote in a book after the synod that the New Evangelization calls Catholics to share their faith particularly in the secularized "mediapolis" or "authentic culture" of digital media: "For good and for bad, from wherever we look at this media world, it appears more and more like a modern market place from which the Christian cannot remain estranged. The language which is being built up through the new form of communication, therefore, deserves to be known, studied, and, insofar as this is possible, used, without betraying the

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[43] Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* [On the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church], Sept. 30, 2010, no. 96, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html.

[44] Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter in the Form of *Motu Proprio Ubicumque et Semper* of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI Establishing the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization, Sept. 21, 2010, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20100921_ubicumque-et-semper.html.

message we bear, in view of fostering a clear and effective understanding of that message."[45] Like recent popes, he worries only about the potential of social media to betray the gospel by fueling individualism and egoism.

Like Francis, Fisichella finds an antidote to the self-seeking individualism that can fragment rather than unite people online in the joy of connecting to a community beyond oneself. Looking again to the origins of faith, Fisichella identifies the theological roots of evangelization in Old Testament references to announcing a message of joy and in New Testament references to the proclamation and teaching of Jesus. Historically, he notes Erasmus (1466-1536) likely coined the derivative verb "to evangelize" in describing a certain kind of early Lutheran fanaticism,[46] but even that phrase takes on a happy meaning when it unites rather than divides people.

Benedict XVI never finished his report on the 2012 synod. After Benedict resigned the papacy in February 2013, Francis completed and published the encyclical *Lumen Fidei,* calling it the work of two popes. Francis then wrote the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* for the Synod on the New Evangelization, calling upon all Catholics to go out from their comfort zones with renewed apostolic zeal: "The new evangelization calls for personal involvement on the part of each of the baptized. Every Christian is challenged, here and now, to be actively engaged in evangelization; indeed, anyone who has truly experienced God's saving love does not need much time or lengthy training to go out and proclaim that love."[47]

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[45] Rino Fisichella, *The New Evangelization: Responding to the Challenge of Indifference* (Leominster, England: Gracewing, 2012), 75-76.
[46] Ibid., 17.
[47] Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* [The Joy of the Gospel], Nov. 24, 2013, no. 120, Holy See, https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

Just as the digital revolution has accelerated secular development of more participatory media, Francis has accelerated papal development of a more participatory Church. He sees the New Evangelization calling Catholics to respond lovingly to the indifference of secularized Christians by reaching out, without "much time or lengthy training," as witnesses to God's love. To incarnate this faith-sharing retreat's witness to the New Evangelization, *communio,* and a synodal style of dialogue, this Project requires two final theological sources that the present chapter will describe as it comes to a close: prayer material to spark participatory dialogue and leadership principles to help a facilitator guide the group toward more interactive exchanges.

Ignatius and the *Spiritual Exercises*

The New Evangelization remains an abstraction without a framework in which to implement it as a synodal expression of *communio*. For an online faith-sharing group to form Catholic media consumers into one community, it likewise needs reflection material that not only unites people in conversation around a common vocabulary, but challenges them to go deeper in sharing their lives with each other. In terms of conversational and relational depth, Ignatian spirituality offers an ideal tool for this sort of New Evangelization initiative. Inspired by the burning desire to know and do God's will in his life, and to live his inherited Catholicism more intentionally in commitments big and small after cannon fire wounded him in battle at Pamplona, St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) underwent a religious conversion that filled him with zeal for sharing his prayer experiences with others. Emerging from his own anguished dialogues with God in a cave on the banks of the Cardoner River in Manresa, Spain, his *Spiritual Exercises* retreat manual challenges retreatants on a deep personal level to move from packaged to participatory conversation with themselves and others as well as with the divine.

Consider as an example the contemplation on the Incarnation from #101-109 of the *Exercises,* a text participants reflected on in this faith-sharing Project, where Ignatius asks retreatants to imagine the Holy Trinity gazing from heaven on the whole surface of the earth. Here the Triune God sees all of the earth's diverse peoples struggling to survive and going down to hell as they hurt each other on purpose. As God contemplates this world that he gives up his only Son to save, Ignatius asks retreatants to imagine the Holy Trinity sending the Second Person to become human as Jesus, taking flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Peering with God at the messy human relations of their own time and place, St. Ignatius invites retreatants in this exercise during the Second Week of his four-week structure to ask for the grace of "an intimate knowledge of our Lord, who has become man for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely" (#104).[48] As with all key exercises of the retreat, the ensuing silent contemplation ends with Ignatius inviting retreatants to talk with God in a colloquy, apply the subject matter to their own lives, and share any thoughts or feelings which arose during the hour of prayer. Far from being a solely privatized religious experience, exercitants making the retreat individually will discuss their prayer over such texts (including more often the Scriptures themselves) with a spiritual director daily. On a preached group retreat, as this Project in Ministry replicated online, they may instead talk about their prayer experiences with a faith-sharing group each day.

The basic evangelizing arc of the *Exercises* invites each person to move from focusing on oneself (one's needs, sinfulness, struggles, etc.) to placing God and the good of others at the center of one's awareness. As this participatory shift unfolds gradually in conversational

[48] St. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius: Based on Studies in the Language of the Autograph,* Translated by Louis J. Puhl, S.J. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1951), 49.

engagement with God, others, and oneself, Ignatius fulfills McLuhan's embodied criteria for high participation dialogue by asking retreatants to use their imaginations to place themselves in the scenes of his freely composed exercises and in various Gospel passages. He invites retreatants throughout the *Exercises* to imagine what it looks, sounds, smells, tastes, and feels like to accompany Jesus as disciples. Evangelization unfolds in the *Exercises* primarily through the spiritual conversations (including the "colloquy" with God or a saint that ends each exercise, as well as regular chats with one's spiritual guide or group) they facilitate, "converting" the retreatant's heart in the sense of uniting it more deeply in communion with God, others in the person's life, and oneself.

During the sixteenth century, most of the people Ignatius led through these *Exercises* were not unbaptized Gentiles and Jews like the recipients of the first apostolic proclamation. Like himself, they were Catholics in various stages of affiliation whose "conversion" meant more deeply integrating their diverse individualities within the unity of their inherited faith community, rather than making a formal decision to become Roman Catholic. Indeed the spiritual conversations of the *Exercises* reflect the dialogical search for God of Ignatius himself, a nominal Catholic who enjoyed gambling and womanizing more than churchgoing in his pre-conversion life. As an ideal candidate for New Evangelization before it was so-called, Ignatius rose from his sickbed after being crippled in battle at Pamplona to become the respected founder of a missionary religious order who led recruits through the *Exercises* and send zealous priests to evangelize new lands during the age of exploration. In this work he displayed certain leadership qualities which Pope Francis, his spiritual son, also models in his approach to evangelization and synodality as an expression of *communio*. It may be said here that Ignatian literature reveals

three key leadership virtues to help facilitators encourage synodal dialogue in an outreach like this Facebook faith-sharing group: gratitude, self-awareness, and listening.

Chapter Conclusion: Ignatian Leadership Qualities

In going back to Scripture for his *Exercises*, St. Ignatius recaptured the participatory style of dialogue with God and others that marked the first evangelists. Ignatius stresses gratitude as a fundamental biblical theme of the first and last weeks of the *Exercises*, and one cannot overstate the importance of gratitude in Ignatian spirituality as a key leadership virtue. Gratitude begins (in the Principle and Foundation, #23) and ends (in the Contemplation to Attain Divine Love, or *Contemplatio,* #230) the *Exercises* as a grace of the relational style one learns from conversing with Jesus Christ, others, and oneself. Gratitude appears this way in the writings of Joseph Tetlow, a Jesuit theologian who once worked as the international assistant for Ignatian spirituality to former Jesuit superior general (1983-2008) Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, supervising more than 200 retreat houses and spirituality centers worldwide. In a book on the foundations of Ignatian spirituality, Tetlow writes of the *Contemplatio* that closes the *Exercises*:

> Everything you have and are is God's gift. The whole universe, and everything in it, is a gift given. And God's giving continues, since all things are continually coming to be—and not only things, like rain and music, but also happenings, like a phone call or a visit with a friend. Here is the deepest foundation for the desire that spiritual people feel to give themselves and everything back to God. The yearning is not a kind of self-murder or abasement; it is desiring to love in the way of God, who gives and gives.[49]

Tetlow captures well the mutuality of gratitude that can shine forth relationally in a participatory communications medium like Facebook. Ignatian leaders like Francis, formed by the full 30-day *Exercises* as a standard part of their Jesuit training, model how to give and

[49] Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J., *Making Choices in Christ: The Foundations of Ignatian Spirituality* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2008), 119-120.

receive in this way. Facilitating an online faith-sharing group, Ignatian leaders steeped in the practice of grateful spiritual conversations strive to be comfortable enough to act with a spirit of authentic sharing, not of one-sided control.

Besides gratitude, the corporate leadership consultant Chris Lowney sees self-awareness as another leadership virtue St. Ignatius insisted on for Jesuits as a fruit of the *Exercises*, one that any facilitator of an online Ignatian faith-sharing retreat will want to practice. A former Jesuit seminarian himself, Lowney calls the *Exercises* the "key self-awareness tool" of Ignatius. He adds that Ignatian leaders teach this virtue self-awareness most effectively through their own behavior as spiritual guides in communal settings: "Leaders 'finger the vein' for others: their children, employees, coworkers, and friends. But first they make their own lifelong commitment to pursue self-awareness. All leadership begins with self-leadership, and self-leadership begins with knowing oneself."[50]

Francis, the world's most visible Jesuit, integrates the gratitude and self-awareness of his synodal media style within a third quality of Ignatian leadership that will help an online faith-sharing moderator: the ability to listen to every aspect of people's experience, even at the risk of unsettling those who feel content with the status quo, and to prioritize accompaniment over speaking during difficult conversations. In his second book on Ignatian leadership, Lowney takes Pope Francis as his subject, stating the premise that leaders operate out of principles formed long before taking on their public roles. He devotes six chapters to the leadership habits he says Francis acquired from his long Jesuit formation in the spiritual ideals of St. Ignatius: Know

[50] Chris Lowney, *Heroic Leadership: Best Practices from a 450-Year Old Company That Changed the World* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2003), 97-98.

oneself deeply; live to serve others; immerse oneself in the world; withdraw from the world daily; live in the present with reverence for tradition (gratitude); and create the future.

Noting how each pair of habits verges on contradiction, Lowney sees Francis holding these paradoxes together in "dynamic tension" through his Ignatian approach to discerning God's will for the long term amidst the conflicts of the present. In the tradition of the *Exercises*, discernment primarily consists of listening for God's voice speaking through one's experiences, even if it creates paradox. While unilateral leaders may view the habit of praying before making decisions as weakness, creating too much unpredictability for people who expect unvarying routine, Lowney sees it helping Francis: "Well, there is something paradoxical and challenging about leading in this era of complexity and tumultuous societal changes. Leaders need the good judgment to distinguish, for example, between an inviolable organizational value that can never be changed and a once-useful tradition that now must change."[51]

This ability of a listener to hold things in tension without judging or resolving them applies for Francis to others as well as to God. In Ignatian spirituality, a necessary fruit of the *Exercises* becomes the ability to hear God speaking through others, even when their words come across as unsettling or challenging. Just as in the digital world of social media, good leaders of an Ignatian faith-sharing group remain open to adaptation and necessary change, but only after sitting with what they hear others saying. Repeatedly advising Catholics to practice an "apostolate of the ear," Francis radiates this Ignatian openness to hearing new things, especially in these words from his 2019 exhortation on holiness:

[51] Chris Lowney, *Pope Francis,* 10.

> Complacency is seductive; it tells us that there is no point in trying to change things, that there is nothing we can do, because this is the way things have always been and yet we always manage to survive. By force of habit we no longer stand up to evil. We "let things be", or as others have decided they ought to be. Yet let us allow the Lord to rouse us from our torpor, to free us from our inertia. Let us rethink our usual way of doing things; let us open our eyes and ears, and above all our hearts, so as not to be complacent about things as they are, but unsettled by the living and effective word of the risen Lord.[52]

Francis stresses how Ignatian leadership requires an attitude of open eyes, ears, and heart to whatever God offers. A good Ignatian guide accordingly approaches an online faith-sharing retreat group with a basic orientation toward listening for God speaking in others, a preference for hearing before talking that builds up trust. Jesuit William Barry, an expert spiritual director, notes: "Relationships develop only when the persons involved pay attention to one another."[53]

In these qualities of Ignatian spirituality, one sees how a group of people engaged in an online faith-sharing retreat following the *Exercises* might experience a more participatory form of ecclesial dialogue than more packaged Catholic media might allow. For St. Ignatius, one must first be led to become a leader, and in this Project that means people must first learn how to share their faith more authentically with other Catholics online before reaching out to people beyond the bubble. If an online group wants the virtual faith-sharing process to be a self-aware expression of New Evangelization, a theological act of synodal *communio* manifesting a co-responsible and participative Church in its sharing of religious experiences, it must learn a new way of listening before speaking and lead by example. The next chapter will apply these principles as it covers the methodology, design, and implementation of this Project.

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[52] Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exultate* [Rejoice and Be Glad], March 19, 2018, no. 137, Holy See, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20180319_gaudete-et-exsultate.html.

[53] William A. Barry, S.J., and William J. Connolly, S.J., *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* (New York: HarperOne, 2009), 48.

Chapter Three: Project Methodology, Design, and Implementation

Chapter One described the participatory shift of digital media and the intergenerational pastoral need it creates for Catholics to share their faith on social networks. Chapter Two described the parallel participatory shift of Church communications, sketching the theological foundations of magisterial teaching to support evangelizing through new media. It pointed toward a way to use the internet for religious purposes that allows people to get beyond the divisiveness of much online communication; to be a model of evangelizing interchange; and to show how all generations of Catholic media consumers may grow in the ways they discuss faith online despite their different technological literacies. This third chapter uses the thinking of the Canadian philosophical theologian Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J. to provide a pastoral methodology for understanding deeper elements of these shifts. It applies Lonergan's insights and then describes the design and implementation of this online faith-sharing group itself, sketching an overview of who participated and how each session unfolded.

This Project had a sound methodology, manifested pastoral consequences, and played out in a way that might be of benefit to the wider Catholic Church and culture. Throughout September and October 2020, this researcher moderated a *Spiritual Exercises* faith-sharing retreat group of 74 survey respondents from around the world and hosted it on Facebook in cooperation with *America Media*. It was set up as a "secret" discussion group of Catholic media consumers—defined as existing *America* Facebook group members, friends they themselves invited, and others from Ignatian groups—who during the second month participated in 30 days of daily guided reflection videos with faith-sharing prompts over the course of four seven-day

sessions, following the four Ignatian "weeks" of the *Exercises*.[1] The Project in Ministry began with a month-long preparatory period of daily introductory videos and a pre-retreat survey; it ended with a transition video and post-retreat survey. Did the group answer Chapter One's concern that different generations interact digitally? Did it unfold in a participatory way? This chapter answers these questions in the affirmative, reflexive of Lonergan's insights on how participants in such a group might have a religious experience and conversion, organized in the apprehension and communication of material.

The Shift of Consciousness: Lonergan's Pastoral Method

Lonergan's pastoral method elaborates a way of coming to authentic consciousness by attending to the structures of knowing, a process that presumes conversation. Offering a framework for knowledge and communication, Lonergan proposes in *Insight* and *Method in Theology* four transcendental precepts which help to explain pastorally how online-faith sharing could be fruitful for Catholics as an act of evangelizing dialogue outside of in-person settings.[2] By paying attention to experience and reflecting on it through conversation, Lonergan contends that subjectivity can become authentic—a process whereby the conscious self comes to terms with external realities—insofar as participants embrace the fourfold task of being attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible about their knowledge. These four precepts can mediate

[1] Facebook offers three kinds of groups: public, closed, and secret or private. Any user may find and join a public group by clicking into it. Anyone may also find a closed group, but must ask to join it and await moderator approval. By contrast, secret groups remain invisible to the general population on Facebook, with users only being able to join by receiving and accepting a direct invitation from the administrator. After an initial month as a closed group with an invitation posted in other groups, *America's* editors suggested making this group secret for the sake of privacy.

[2] For Lonergan, these epistemological innate norming processes are "transcendental" insofar as they lift people out of their subjectivity, with the self as a knowing subject seeking itself through personal appropriation of one's own rational self-consciousness. In the context of this Project in Ministry, that makes the relationship with oneself (the self-knowledge revealed in faith-sharing questions) essential to grow in relationship with God and others.

the significance and role of religion when using social media as the matrix, as Lonergan implies in *Method in Theology,* his 1971 mature development of them.[3]

Following this transcendental turn to the human subject as a starting point of knowledge, one becomes aware of the innate structure of knowing that forms part of a rational person's functioning, pushing one to engage others to escape the limits of one's own mind. By knowing their religious experience through self-reflection and testing its authenticity conversationally, retreatants in a faith-sharing group can base their judgments on shared insights about the true and the real. Yet Lonergan admonishes that the qualities of inattention, obtuseness, unreasonableness and irresponsibility lead to inauthenticity and alienate a person from his or her true being—a cognitive bias that might thrive when someone engages a retreat as an isolated individual who simply sits and thinks about things without conversing directly with God or another person. Lonergan reinforces here the importance in a social media setting of providing opportunities for engaged interaction. Because this Project's *Spiritual Exercises* retreat encouraged people to share their faith with each other in a Facebook group, posting their responses to evocative questions rather than merely reflecting upon the daily videos in isolation, it heeded Lonergan's four precepts insofar as they operate in conversation as dimensions of authentic consciousness.

[3] "They are the radical intending that moves us from ignorance to seek what we do not know yet. They are unrestricted because answers are never complete and so only give rise to still further questions. They are comprehensive because they intend the unknown whole or totality of which our answers reveal only part. So intelligence takes us beyond experiencing to ask what and why and how and what for. Reasonableness takes us beyond the answers of intelligence to ask whether the answers are true and whether what they mean really is so. Responsibility goes beyond fact and desire and possibility to discern between what truly is good and what only apparently is good. So if we objectify the content of intelligent intending, we form the transcendental concept of the intelligible. If we objectify the content of reasonable intending, we form the transcendental concepts of the true and the real. If we objectify the content of responsible intending, we get the transcendental concept of value, of the truly good." Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 11-12.

Within the exchange of teaching and learning that conversation partners experience in a group, Lonergan sees personal witness (recalling the definition of evangelization in Chapter One as the sharing of one's faith in Christ) helping them share the communal wisdom and common sense of their traditions. The ensuing interpersonal exchange of perspectives challenges their individual biases. In a key passage from his 1957 book *Insight*, Lonergan describes conversation as the engine that drives diverse individuals to achieve an authentic unity of consciousness. His words in the following excerpt offer a pastoral grounding for the data of Chapter One that showed the power of digital media to unite people, as well as for the conciliar retrieval of *communio* that Chapter Two noted supports the spontaneity of participatory ecclesial interaction:

> Talking is a basic human art. By it each communicates to others what he knows, and at the same time provokes the contradictions that direct his attention to what he has overlooked. Again, far more impressive than talking is doing. Deeds excite our admiration and stir us to emulation. We watch to see how things are done. We experiment to see if we can do them ourselves. We watch again to discover the oversights that led to our failures. In this fashion the discoveries and inventions of individuals pass into the possession of many, to be checked against their experience, to undergo the scrutiny of their further questions, to be modified by their improvements. By the same token, the spontaneous collaboration of individuals is also the communal development of intelligence in the family, the tribe, the nation, the race. Not only are men [sic] born with a native drive to inquire and understand; they are born into a community that possesses a common fund of tested answers, and from that fund each may draw his variable share, measured by his capacity, his interests, and his energy.[4]

Emphasizing the communal "development of intelligence" that unfolds in the "spontaneous collaboration of individuals" within a group setting, Lonergan offered a methodological grounding for this facilitator to lead the online faith-sharing group into a more interactive exchange about their religious experiences of the distinctive material of the *Exercises*. As members of this Ignatian faith-sharing group became comfortable logging on to view a daily

[4] Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 175.

video and post comments below it in response to reflection prompts, they shared wisdom about how to integrate the online experience into offline routines during the retreat. This process let them build communal intelligence from their different generational and other cultural lenses, implicitly and unconsciously developing unity rather than division by interacting freely as active partners. In Lonergan's terms, "be attentive" in this group referred to what the internet allowed participants to do on an unparalleled level as they got exposed to the thoughts and impressions of others; "be intelligent" connoted the questions they considered as part of their prayer experience; "be reasonable" meant the conclusions or judgments people came to as a result of the exchanges; and "be responsible" denoted the changed behaviors they evinced as a result of participating.

Lonergan would also emphasize the imaginative content that formed the subject of knowledge and communication in this online retreat. Chapter Two noted that St. Ignatius proposes in his *Exercises* the use of sensory imagination to contemplate the rich imagery of the Bible itself, elaborating on it with his own freely composed narrative scenes. Citing Paul Ricoeur's combination of phenomenological description with hermeneutics, Lonergan suggests in a 1965 address at Marquette University how a group of retreatants praying with their imaginations over Gospel stories in this way could learn an authentic felt knowledge of reality:

> From the affect-laden images within us and from the many interpretations that illuminate them, one may turn outward to the phenomenology of intersubjectivity. Human communication is not the work of a soul hidden in some unlocated recess of a body and emitting signals in some Morse code. Soul and body are not two things but coprinciples in the constitution of a single thing. The bodily presence of another is the presence of the incarnate spirit of the other; and that incarnate spirit reveals itself to me by every shift of eyes, countenance, color, lips, voice, tone, fingers, hands, arms, stance. Such revelation is not an object to be apprehended. Rather it works immediately upon my subjectivity, to make me share the other's seriousness or vivacity, ease or embarrassment, joy or sorrow;

> and similarly my response affects his subjectivity, leads him on to say more, or quietly and imperceptibly rebuffs him, holds him off, closes the door.[5]

To be intelligent and reasonable about sharing one's interpretation of religious imagery entails a questioning that leads to the foundations of judgment, a conversion of consciousness. Lonergan uses conversion as a systematic thread in *Method in Theology,* citing Paul's words in Romans 5 that "the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us" as a key turning-point in that work.[6] This Project could not presume or prove in its methods that online retreatants experienced a fundamental religious conversion of this kind. But it did ask participants in the daily faith-sharing prompts, as well as in surveys before and after the retreat, to self-report their sense of growing in the graces Ignatius proposes for each week of his *Exercises* retreat that Chapter Two noted begins and ends in God's love.[7] Keeping conversion in mind as a hoped-for outcome of evangelization, the remainder of this chapter will show how this Project's design and implementation sought to elicit a shift of consciousness for retreatants, disposing them better for deeper spiritual movements.

Project Design: Principles of Digital Culture

This chapter has attended to Lonergan's notion that intelligence self-corrects itself by raising questions, forcing people toward insight and judgment. Defining knowledge as the intellect judging the reality of something, or more particularly of "what is" and "what is not" on the basis of experiential data and the questions it raises for conversation, Lonergan notes that this

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[5] Bernard J.F. Lonergan, S.J., "Dimensions of Meaning," 1965, in *The Lonergan Reader*, ed. Mark D. Morelli and Elizabeth A. Morelli (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 398.

[6] Romans 5:5 (New American Bible). For the sake of consistency, this citation comes from the same Bible translation used in earlier chapters. Lonergan paraphrases this passage on p. 105 of *Method.*

[7] The Ignatian retreat begins with the First Principle and Foundation (no. 23) and ends with the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God (no. 230). Appendix Three indicates the dates this group reflected on these two exercises.

process draws people to make judgments and act on them. That brings them to the possibility of religious conversion, as in the Pauline image of God's love pouring into their hearts.

So how did this Project, understood pastorally in terms of Lonergan's method, contribute to the intergenerational and ecclesial challenges the first two chapters raised in relation to the participatory use of digital media for evangelization? An overview of the Facebook faith-sharing group will be necessary to set up a response to this question. The last two sections of this chapter will sketch the principles of online culture which informed this Project's design, describe those invited to participate in the group, and narrate how its four sessions progressed. The full technology plan of this Project, outlining its design details, will be found in Appendix One for reference. All raw data referenced in this chapter will be found in Appendix Six.

This faith-sharing retreat group based on the *Spiritual Exercises* was hosted on Facebook in collaboration with *America Media*, a U.S. media ministry of the Society of Jesus of which the investigator is a member. As a Jesuit priest from the end of Generation X (born 1980) he brought his experiences of directing retreats and leading Catholics through offline faith-sharing groups. As someone who has used Facebook since 2007 for ministry purposes, he also brought a basic literacy with this platform that helped face the challenge of adapting traditional Ignatian spirituality to a contemporary media setting. Gradually an adaptive design emerged for this electronic outreach that began with attentiveness to key principles of Catholic culture, literature about online group dynamics, and competencies of digital culture for a deepening shift of consciousness toward intentional discipleship. The resulting design sought to enable older Catholics familiar with faith-sharing culture to better engage the social media culture of younger Catholics with no adult memories before cyberspace.

Chapter Two quoted Paul VI on cultural adaptation, John Paul II on the culture of mass media, and Archbishop Rino Fisichella on the authentic culture of digital media. What definition best contains all the meanings of culture as proposed for evangelization in this Project? The sociologist Patricia Wittberg, S.C., quoted in Chapter One, defines culture broadly as "what makes us human"[8]—a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterize an institution, organization, or group to help the people in it to discover meaning. She says of the Millennials on social media: "They are digital natives: accustomed to personal computers, email, and cell phones from childhood, they spend more time online than they do watching."[9]

Wittberg presents the key difference between traditional Catholic culture and digital media culture as a distinction between watching something unfold as an interested spectator (the primary mindset of pre-digital communication) and the more participatory online interaction this Project sought to encourage by adapting the high-participation *Exercises*. While Millennial and Post-millennial cultures have been formed by the participatory exchanges of the internet, which engage their judgment directly about what to take in or reject, twentieth-century parochial cultures revolved around programmatic rituals (Mass, Eucharistic adoration, etc.) that resembled the relatively passive media consumption habits of that time. As a result of this disconnect, older Catholics who go online often find themselves a "cognitive minority" lacking the experiential knowledge to engage digital interactions well, even as emerging adults lack the same fluency with traditional spirituality in offline religious settings.[10]

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[8] Patricia Wittberg, S.C., *Catholic Cultures: How Parishes Can Respond to the Changing Face of Catholicism* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2016), 2.
[9] Ibid., 65.
[10] Ibid., 75.

According to Wittberg, engaging both sides of this digital cultural divide with a sophisticated electronic outreach can paradoxically help Catholics on both sides of this digital divide connect with their shared need for quiet reflection and deeper interpersonal connections. She stresses that the burden lies more on older generations—who, with stable lives and relatively stronger ecclesial bonds, will be likeliest to dominate membership of a faith-based group even online—to learn online culture than on younger generations to learn traditional Catholic culture. Wittberg notes: "There remains a window of opportunity to strengthen these remaining, if tenuous, ties to the Catholic Church among millennials. But this window is closing."[11]

Based on these insights, the design of this online faith-sharing group arose from a conscious decision to be as flexible as possible for younger members, even as this investigator remained mindful that a majority of participants would likely come from older generations with a focus on sharing their wisdom in a digital setting. As a potential obstacle to this intergenerational openness, Wittberg warns of a trend in contemporary culture toward "social desirability bias," whereby people consume only whatever content confirms their views to get along with peers rather than argue. This trend tends to segregate people among like-minded peers, excluding any generational minority. "We disproportionately pay attention to information that supports our point of view and resist information that disconfirms it," Wittberg writes, adding that links from friends and ideological news sources that Facebook tailors to people's online habits make it "less likely that we will even *hear* viewpoints which differ from our own."[12]

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[11] Ibid., 82.
[12] Wittberg, 56.

With that in mind, research into digital group dynamics revealed several principles of online culture that challenge this social desirability bias, offering a basis for older generations to communicate online in a new way. First, online groups work better in a spirit of teamwork than of argumentative competition, perhaps distinguishing them from pre-digital communication. Five British medical education researchers found that online small group collaboration succeeds through its convenience, engagement, documentation, democratization, and social interaction: "It is important for potential online collaborators to be mindful of these and be aware of the plethora of online collaborative tools, each with their different attributes and limitations."[13] To foster such awareness in a way that stayed flexible for younger participants, this Project opted for an asynchronous group, allowing global retreatants to log in at any time to follow and discuss videos rather than worry about participating on a fixed schedule with perfect internet connection. Predisposed to encourage conversation about prayer, rather than the arguments which characterize much of Catholic online interaction, the design also chose the imaginative self-reflections of the *Exercises* over the apologetic focus of evangelizers like Bishop Barron on the more basic question of God's existence.

Secondly, this collaborative spirit fails to form in groups which do not communicate openly about the online culture into which participants enter, and that failure to exercise critical judgment in relation to the experience itself may block authentic unity from forming. To evaluate the collaborative effectiveness of an online small group, researcher Namsook Jahng offers three quantitative indices to observe during online discussion: quantity (number of words exchanged in

[13] Al-Amodi, Sarah, "Collaborate Online As a Small Group," *Education for Primary Care* 26, no. 2 (2015): 129, https://doi: 10.1080/14739879.2015.11494327.

the group), equality (participation variability among members), and shareness (team-spirit/teamwork measured by the portion of posts addressed to all group members). In a healthy group, Jahng says, online collaboration fosters a messy learning process that helps participants seek a new knowledge and interconnectedness rooted in sharing the same experience: "The goal and genuine outcome of a collaborative learning process can be said to be members' constructed knowledge. Throughout the collaboration process, group members presumably have contributed to members' constructing knowledge as well as establishing group membership."[14]

As this online group grew in knowledge of Ignatian spirituality, the moderator maintained basic awareness of these factors to better guide those participants who stayed for the entire retreat despite seeming initially passive, bereft of spontaneity in their interactions, and resistant to the level of agreement necessary to form a community. They also helped him track the group's shrinkage down to a relatively small core of 74 post-retreat survey respondents, another essential principle of success with online groups. Research into online learning has shown that when participants get winnowed into smaller discussion groups to make discussions less "busy" and repetitive, group members begin to speak and think critically at a higher level.[15]

To help the group gradually self-select its final membership in this way, the Project spent September 2020 on its preparatory discernment month of daily introductory videos and discussion prompts on the *Exercises*. This month gave invited members time to discern whether they wished to proceed and to invite friends to join. Accompanying group members in this

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[14] Namsook Jahng, "Collaboration Indices for Monitoring Potential Problems in Online Small Groups," *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology* 39, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 5, https://doi: 10.21432/T2Z30Q.
[15] Kerstin Hamann, Philip H. Pollock, and Bruce M. Wilson, "Assessing Student Perceptions of the Benefits of Discussions in Small-Group, Large-Class, and Online Learning Contexts," *College Teaching* 60 (2012): 67, https://doi: 10.1080/87567555.2011.633407.

discernment process, the moderator observed how their engagement deepened in proportion to their commitment to continuing, and he encouraged them to participate without pushing anyone to stay or go. Despite an initial period of shyness and some members remaining silent during the 30-day retreat, this positive encouragement ultimately helped a self-selecting core of more committed retreatants interact freely with each other in an open dialogue.

As digital media communities form in this way, they develop settled ways of interacting unique to each one. In a study of online group formation and development, digital media researchers found that "shared repertoires" (common patterns in participant behaviors) emerge naturally when members apprehend the reality of a new experience and begin to converse about it: "The more familiar the metaphors and tools are to participants, and the more intuitively adaptable the tools are, the more quickly community is able to form."[16] To make this process go smoothly, the online moderator must also serve as a resource person. One study of problem-based learning by medical students in an online small group admonished moderators to be available to help participants with "particularly their usage of information technology to answer questions as they arise."[17] Such questions did arise particularly during this Project's invitation month of daily introductory videos, when newcomers settled into the format and discussed how to integrate the Facebook tool set with their offline prayer habits and readings. Reading from his devotional edition of the *Exercises* with explanations and faith-sharing prompts, this investigator

[16] Sean P. Goggins, James Laffey, Michael Gallagher, "Completely Online Group Formation and Development: Small Groups as Socio-Technical Systems," *Information Technology & People* 24, no. 2 (June 2011): 129, https://doi: 10.1108/09593841111137322.
[17] Christopher B. Reznich and Elizabeth Werner, "Facilitators' Influence on Student PBL Small Group Session Online Information Resource Use: A Survey," *BMC Medical Education* 4, no. 1 (15 June 2004): 5, https://doi: 10.1186/1472-6920-4-9.

soon posted a free PDF file of the book after some people who wanted printed copies started buying it. He also posted a free online translation of the *Exercises*[18] among other resources.

Finally, successful online groups stay flexible about how discussion unfolds, allowing it to do so naturally rather than trying to control it or enforce a mere replication of offline patterns. In an intensive study of how students progressed from multiple perspectives to a shared understanding of their research questions in a small online group, Kati Makitalo-Siegl found the nature of online discussion to be cyclical rather than linear, suggesting the futility of a facilitator trying to project rigid rules of order from offline groups onto a digital platform. Makitalo-Siegl notes the participatory value of this cyclical discussion: "The learners' shared knowledge became the group's tacit knowledge, reused to build new understanding." [19]

With such flexibility in mind, this Project kept its daily live-stream reflection videos with faith-sharing prompts available for participants to access at any time, rather than insist on a series of rigidly scheduled video chat meetings. Having all of the recorded videos with conversation threads permanently available allowed participants from around the globe to follow multiple timelines (so that Day 30, despite being recorded on October 30, could occur whenever someone viewed the video) and share their responses to the material by posting or interacting at any time in the comment section below each video. In particular, younger participants with active families and jobs posted words of gratitude for this decision, as it allowed them in the midst of their routines to feel freer about following at their own pace and engagement level.

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[18] That would the translation of Louis J. Puhl, quoted earlier in Chapter Two and listed later in this bibliography.
[19] Kati Makitalo-Siegl, "From Multiple Perspectives to Shared Understanding: A Small Group in an Online Learning Environment," *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 52, no. 1 (February 2008): 92, https://doi: 10.1080/00313830701786677.

Applied to this sort of Catholic digital outreach, the above research paints a hopeful picture for evangelizers seeking to encourage believers toward more participatory habits of spiritual conversation. For Christians more particularly, certain skills will be necessary to engage online culture effectively and to help others deepen their conversion toward the radical intending Lonergan envisions. To that end, the late Sister Caroline Cerveny, S.S.J.-T.O.S.F. (+2020) at the Digital Disciple Network collaborated with the International Society for Technology and Education (ISTE), National Association of Catholic Media Partners (NACMP), and the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) to identify six competencies of digital discipleship:[20]

1. Community Discipleship –Ministers employ technology for creating faith relationships with others.
2. Digital Citizenship–Ministers recognize the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of living, learning and working in an interconnected digital world, and they act and model in ways that are safe, legal, and ethical.
3. Digital Communicator–Ministers use a variety of platforms and digital tools to evangelize and share faith.
4. Mobile Evangelization and Catechesis–Ministers can "sow the seed" of faith, engaging others in sharing their faith online through mobile tools.
5. Collaborative Disciple –Ministers foster digital collaboration, both with students and colleagues.
6. Digital Curator–Ministers critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to provide meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.[21]

These six competencies summarize the design principles of this Project. They presume an approach to online ministry that bridges the divisions between various kinds of Catholics, uniting them in their diversity as members of one faith-based virtual community. They challenge Catholic media to go outside of their comfort zones and to create digital spaces for people to

[20] The phrase "digital discipleship" or "digital disciples" has arisen from obscure origins to become a buzz word among Christians online, finding a home everywhere from the Seventh-Day Adventists to the Roman Catholic Church, where the Digital Disciple Network represents one collaborative effort of Catholic parishes to adapt traditional Catholic cultures of evangelization to online culture.
[21] Caroline Cerveny, "Digital Disciple Network" (Digital Disciple Network), Accessed July 13, 2020. https://digitaldisciplenetwork.wordpress.com/.

grow more comfortable with sharing their faith. In Lonergan's terms, they push Catholics to move from knowledge to judgment in their use of social media, and to act on that judgment. The next section will describe who took up that challenge in this faith-sharing group.

Description of Invited Participants

Collaborating with a layman and a fellow Jesuit priest from the *America Media* editorial staff as co-administrators of the Facebook group, this investigator reached out to "Catholic media consumers" who consisted of existing *America* Facebook group members as well as young adults from Jesuit institutions. As a member of the *America* staff, the investigator received special access to its Facebook page, allowing him to post an invitation (Appendix Two) to this new "Spiritual Exercises Faith-Sharing Retreat Group" in four existing closed discussion groups which had the following membership numbers at that time on August 30, 2020: U.S. Politics Catholic Discussion Group (2,550 members); Jesuitical: A Podcast for Young Catholics (4,463 members); Catholic Book Club (6,212 members); and the America Catholic Movie Club (3,634 members). The members of these groups represented a committed inner core of the 110,138 followers on the America: The Jesuit Review Facebook page. Responding to a request by his editors to include people unfamiliar with *America's* platforms, the moderator also invited members of his public Sean Salai, S.J., Author Facebook page (722 followers), and the SLU Catholic Studies Program Facebook page (734 followers) at Saint Louis University.

After the retreat, this moderator downloaded on October 31 the following Group Insights from Facebook's internal analytics describing the participants.[22] The group finished with 395 total members including active participants, the three Facebook group co-administrators, inactive

[22] This information cannot be sourced with a web link because it remains internal to the group's confidential page.

observers who had not followed through on an initial intention to participate, and people who had ended up auditing after neither completing the pre-retreat survey to indicate full participation nor accepting the invitation to depart the group. Of that number, 212 people completed the pre-retreat survey that committed them to follow the entire retreat, and the group hit a peak during the actual retreat of 277 members engaging the content on October 2. The retreat concluded with 139 members engaging the last post on October 30. Of those who ended up completing the full retreat, 74 finished the post-retreat survey. Pre-retreat and post-retreat survey results offering a before-and-after comparison of these 74 respondents will be analyzed in the next chapter.

Even with this gradual self-selection process that narrowed the retreat down to these active participants and broader swath of semi-engaged auditors, the strong privacy settings and etiquette policies of Facebook ensured a safe space for sharing. During the invitation period in September 2020, the moderator rejected five membership requests from Facebook accounts that lacked photographs or otherwise appeared suspect, and only after he received no response to a message of inquiry to each one. The vast majority of people who remained fell into comfortable patterns of participation, with the group overall engaging the faith-sharing prompts most often during weekend nights. The most popular times for members to post, comment, or react to the daily video posts in both September (introductory period) and October (the retreat proper) turned out to be 6 pm on Saturdays and 9 pm on Sundays, U.S. Central Time, and the evening proved more active than in the mornings when this moderator live-streamed all videos and left them posted with introductory texts that contained the verbal discussion prompts at members' request.

The most popular days of the week for participants to interact as ranked by posts, comments, and reactions turned out to be Monday (155), Tuesday (147), Wednesday (142),

Sunday (141), Thursday (132), Friday (131), and Saturday (129). The top ten posts ranked by this same metric turned out to be Days Four (66 comments and 185 views), Three, Five, Seven, Eight, Six, Fourteen, Thirteen, Twenty-One, and Ten. Large numbers of people still viewed videos which did not elicit equally large numbers of comments or emoji reactions, as for example when 209 people viewed the Day Seven post and only 52 commented on it. By the last day of the retreat on October 30, there had been 120 total posts, consisting of the moderator's daily videos and announcements in addition to spontaneous participant threads and personal posts in September. Overall, this September to October period of daily videos generated 2,214 comments in the discussions and 6,036 reactions (standardized emojis indicating like, love, haha, sad, wow, and angry) to the posts and comments. At the request of members, the group remained secret and active after the retreat, allowing participants to continue using it as recently as a February 2021 conversation about Lenten resolutions, and protecting the privacy of personal things they had shared by not opening it to new members. That speaks to their depth of sharing.

All of this data implies that an active, healthy, and productive social media experience occurred on this retreat as defined by McLuhan's participatory criteria and the social media literature quoted in these chapters. Reinforcing that indication from an etiquette standpoint, Facebook did not flag any violations of its community standards or censor any posts for what it calls "false news," and participants made no report of any negative interactions to the moderator or to the group at large. Despite coming from 101 cities on six continents, both the passive and active members stayed respectful of each other, sharing experiences rather than opinions.

Generationally, Facebook confirms that no one under the age of 18 participated in the group as silent or active members, and a good mix of genders and locations coexisted. Recalling

the categories of Chapter One which informed the two questionnaire designs, a precise generational breakdown of the 74 respondents to both 20-question surveys will be considered in Chapter Five. Of the 390 people total who existed in the group as participants or auditors at some point, 146 (37 percent) were men and 244 (63 percent) were women, reinforcing the anecdotal observation that women tend to dominate participation in Catholic spirituality groups.

This summary of quantitative information offers a clear description of the "Catholic media consumers" who accepted the initial invitation to join. It contextualizes the diversity of age, religious involvement, and digital literacy that the next chapter will examine more closely in the survey questions, where the 74 respondents addressed the issues this Project set out to study. But given the above methodology, online design principles, and participants, how did the invitation month and the four sessions of the 30-day-retreat unfold? Before concluding, this chapter will narrate the implementation of this Project's participatory methodology and design. Anonymous quotations from participant comments in the next section will imply their qualitative engagement along the lines of Lonergan's four precepts to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible about the knowledge they gained. The chapter will then close with some thoughts on the deeper conversion toward God and community this Project hoped to support.

Project Implementation: Description of Sessions

The present chapter has explained how this "Spiritual Exercises Faith-Sharing Retreat Group" consisted of a month-long period of invitation, introductory videos, discussions, and a pre-retreat survey on August 30-September 30, 2020; continued with the 30-day retreat of daily videos with faith-sharing prompts averaging 30 minutes on October 1-30; and then concluded in a farewell video on October 31 with daily invitations through November 7 to take the post-retreat

survey. This next section narrates the implementation of the Project, sketching details of the four seven-day sessions and two bookend periods. In that process it quotes anonymous highlights from participants' faith-sharing comments to illustrate hopeful signs of how the group may have prepared them to establish deeper connections to God and to each other as they grew in self-knowledge through sharing the prayer materials of the *Exercises* online.[23]

Because a secret group does not allow people to apply to join it, this one started as a closed group until September 30, allowing people to join and introduce themselves as well as take the pre-retreat survey posted under announcements. It also allowed members to invite friends not included in the original invitation, including some newcomers to Ignatian spirituality. During this time the moderator posted daily introductory videos throughout September, orienting participants to the digital format and flow of the retreat as well as to the *Exercises* proper.[24] As the group attended to relevant data in this month-long preparation for the retreat, the moderator invited people to post introductions and get to know each other, using the videos to help discern whether they felt called to take the pre-retreat survey and move ahead with the 30-day faith-sharing retreat in the proposed format.

For each day's live-streamed guided video, this investigator used his 2020 devotional edition of the *Exercises,* which updates a nineteenth-century pastoral paraphrase translation with added reflection materials "to share the text more generously" among people who can't easily pray through it in a traditional retreat house setting. In his role as moderator, the investigator

[23] This Facebook group did not give the full 30-day *Exercises,* which involves four to five distinct hours of daily prayer. It instead offered one daily prayer period for 30 days. Ignatius himself favored such adaptations in #18-19.
[24] A detailed timeline of topics for all videos posted in the September pre-retreat period and the October 30-day retreat period with post-retreat day will be found in Appendix Three.

adapted supplementary material from St. Ignatius on preparing for a retreat to his September videos, inviting discussion of faith-sharing prompts and feedback on the digital format in the comment box below each video.[25] That set the pattern of the October retreat videos as well.

The introductory month videos posed questions which encouraged retreatants to be intelligent about the supplemental materials of St. Ignatius on topics like prayer routines, penance, eating, the saint's own introductory notes to the *Exercises,* spiritual reading for the time of retreat, and the saint's recommendations for different parts of the four-week structure. For example, in the September 13 video on St. Ignatius's subtitle (#21) to the *Exercises* that drew 18 participant remarks, the moderator proposed after his "prelection" explanation of it the following faith-sharing reflection prompts for people to share about in the comment section below: "What compulsive fixations leave me feeling disconnected from God, myself, and others? What helps me to stop obsessing over sin and focus instead on Jesus at the center of my awareness? What do I want from God that might help me with that?"[26] In response, one Louisiana Baby Boomer woman born in 1949 shared the desire for connection that she brought to the group, writing: "The questions on this video exactly target my long-standing feeling of unease and disappointment with myself for living my live in a very 'detached from others' way. Thanks for offering this retreat prep. You give me hope that if I honestly apply myself to this process, God might guide me toward a more deeply-felt caring for others."[27] This comment typified the

[25] St. Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola: With Points for Personal Prayer from Jesuit Spiritual Masters,* ed. Sean Salai, S.J. (Charlotte: TAN Books, 2020), xxxii.
[26] Ibid., 11.
[27] Please note that because this group remains private, i.e. not accessible to the public, no web address can be cited for these anonymous quotes of faith-sharing comments. Participants gave explicit permission to use these quotes.

yearning for connection that brought people into the group, and to confront any obstacles to their relationships with God, themselves, and others.

During the first seven-day session of daily reflection videos from October 1 to 7, the *Exercises* challenged participants to seek greater self-knowledge of the brokenness in their relationships caused by such obstacles, inviting each to pray for the first week grace of St. Ignatius to grow in "a deeply felt sense of God's love for me, even though I am a sinner."[28] In the October 7 video that drew 52 comments, the moderator read a guided meditation on death from his edition's original translator, Fr. Charles De Place. Based on #71 from the *Exercises,* it included the moderator's own prelection explanation that quoted from a letter of St. Ignatius on God's love and offered context from the saint's life story. Before and after reading this guided imaginative meditation, in which he gave the usual Ignatian instructions for settling into a prayerful bodily posture with deep breathing to ensure the sort of embodied engagement that Chapter One noted McLuhan insists upon, he invited retreatants to post comments below the video on these faith-sharing prompts: "How have I failed to trust in God's love by trying to force perfection in my life according to my own timeline or designs? What deceptive thoughts keep me from accepting myself in all of my messiness as a loved sinner? What helps me accept God's unconditional love for me?"[29]

During the live stream, as the moderator paused between these questions and the text of the exercise, an 81-year old Illinois man from the Silent Generation made this comment that others appreciated with reactions (i.e., the thumbs up emoji) for its generational wisdom: "When

[28] This wording comes from the pre-retreat and post-retreat questionnaires, reprinted in Appendix Five, which Chapter Four will show asked specific questions about each of the four graces St. Ignatius proposes.
[29] Ibid., 62.

I was growing up and on into the late 1970's the Church emphasized doing good and avoiding evil. It was Pelagian. I thought I needed to earn brownie points with God. I needed to earn God's love. I now accept totally that God does love me, even in my sinfulness. It's freeing on a spiritual level. It actually motivates me to love." This man's comment displayed attentiveness to the material, intelligence about the questions it raised, reasonableness in the judgment he reached about God's unconditional love, and responsibility in his desire to love in the same way.[30]

Between October 8 and 14, the moderator presented seven daily video reflections on the second week theme of following Christ, praying for the grace of Ignatius that each person might grow in a desire to accompany Jesus and labor with him in his ongoing ministry. On October 8, in the Day Eight video (the days always matched the dates on this retreat, making it easier for people to find old videos if they fell behind) that drew 51 comments, he read a guided meditation on the Call of the King exercise (#91) in which St. Ignatius invites retreatants to contemplate Jesus as the one who calls them to follow him, adding suggested readings as always for those who desired more material for personal prayer. After reflecting on the video and praying however they pleased over the material, participants shared on the following questions: "What qualities of leadership do I see in Jesus Christ? To what sort of 'kingdom' does Christ the King call me? If I were to imagine a Christlike political leader today who called me to assist in establishing a more just world, what might that person look and sound like?"[31]

[30] For people wishing more material to pray over, the moderator also shared suggested additional readings from the translation in his edition of the book (in this case Mt 25:31-46 and The Imitation of Christ book 3, chapter 14) and continued to do so during the four seven-day sessions of the retreat proper.
[31] Ibid., 87.

A Millennial mother and wife born in 1985, who works for a U.S. Catholic diocese, responded by emphasizing judgment and action: “So much of this spoke to the depths of my heart where there is this desire to be a soldier for Christ. His crusader following Him into battle to fight for souls. He never sends me alone but always goes before me. He leads by first taking on every pain, suffering, unknown there is...but never for no reason. His vulnerability, mercy, servant leadership has never been without purpose. He does it for me. For you. For souls.”

During this second session of seven daily faith-sharing videos, as the moderator invited participants to take up some spiritual reading or movie and think about any decision or particular grace they wished to bring to prayer during the retreat, a Millennial woman from the Philippines spontaneously started an October 11 (Day 11 of the retreat, on which the moderator posted a video praying with the hidden life or childhood of Jesus from #132-134) discussion thread in which she shared that she was reading *The Cloister Walk* by Kathleen Norris. She shared a photo of the book in her post with these words, indicating her intelligence in raising a community-building question: “What’s everyone reading or watching for retreat? I am enjoying this book very much.” The nineteen comments that ensued indicated the participatory success of the group up to that point. Moreover, participants continued throughout the retreat to share photographs and other media (including songs and poems) in spontaneous discussion threads which helped people feel more connected to the virtual community.

Amidst the third seven-day session of daily videos on October 15-21, as retreatants prayed for the third week grace of Ignatius to experience a stronger desire to suffer compassionately with Jesus in his passion, the moderator invited retreatants to use their imaginations to place themselves in the Gospel stories of the passion using points provided by St.

Ignatius in #261-312 for the last three weeks of the *Exercises.* On Day Twenty, October 20, he shared a guided contemplation on the death of Jesus using the points from #297 and Luke 23:39-49. In response to his invitation for participants to share where the Spirit led them in the exercise, where they encountered resistance, and what words or phrases struck them as they used their imaginations to place themselves in the scene, a Millennial Latina single woman from Texas born in 1986 shared some aspects of religious conversion in her desire to suffer with Jesus:

> I sense the Holy Spirit leading me to stay in front of the cross with Mary Magdalene, Mary, St. John. We are where Jesus is hanged I stay there with them. I am at a loss for words because in that moment filled with anger, tears, sadness and grief. We console each other in those emotions but in this meditation a point I ponder was no one comforts Jesus when he dies and is on the cross and that made me feel a connection to him when no one comforts me if I am sad, [in] pain. Jesus took it all. I found myself having resistance when we actually prayed the Our Father prayer, because he felt abandoned and still forgives those who have hurt him out of love. Love is stronger than death…. Another image I absolutely love is the blood and water flow when he gets pierced that is pure love and a love that is transformative, merciful, and a love that [is] cleansing and that makes me always want to be near him and with him in the midst of my sufferings and others who might be suffering.

The October 20 video that elicited this sharing drew only 27 comments, signaling a phase of the retreat where some people struggled to enter the most painful stories or else fell behind and started catching up with the videos later. Conversely, as this chapter denoted earlier tends to happen in online groups, this period also brought the most active participants closer together as a smaller number interacted more deeply. On October 27, one woman started a discussion thread checking in with how people found themselves wrapping up the retreat. This prompted another woman, a Baby Boomer from the Chicago area born in 1959, to share that she had just returned to the retreat after dropping out for a while when a close family member died. A third woman from the Philippines then shared that she had also fallen behind by two weeks and asked that the

group remain active with the videos following the retreat, affirming the wisdom of making the group asynchronous due to the length of the commitment. Given the avowed invitation of the online retreat to be a "take what's needed and leave the rest" experience, focusing on relationships rather than tasks, the moderator encouraged participants in daily videos at this point to not worry about finishing every video like a homework assignment but simply to reflect on what they had received where they did engage.[32]

During the fourth and final seven-day session from October 22 to 28, retreatants prayed for the fourth week grace of Ignatius to rejoice more deeply with the risen Jesus Christ in gratitude for all he had given them. On Day Twenty-Four, October 24, the video drawing 27 comments presented a guided contemplation with the points of St. Ignatius (#306) on what he numbers as the Eighth Apparition of the Risen Christ in Jn 21:1-25. Responding to an invitation to share where the Spirit guided her in this prayer, a single San Antonio woman from Generation X born in 1977 shared the following insight from her own self-knowledge: "As I hear about the disciples fishing, I am drawn to a modern image of me 'fishing' for good things in my life—perhaps the fruits of the Holy Spirit, particularly joy. I am unable to catch it on my own, but if I follow His way, my life may be overfilled with joy."

On October 29 and 30, the retreat concluded with two transition days focusing on how participants might shift from consciousness to action by taking the graces of the retreat back into their offline lives, as the moderator posted videos on the Rules for Giving Alms (#337) of St. Ignatius to invite insights on how to serve the poor and his Rules for Thinking with the Church

[32] In response to moderator inquiries during the retreat, several participants indicated they followed the daily videos without commenting on them, suggesting their desire to pray privately and further helping to explain why a given video might have 150 views and only 27 comments.

(#352) to invite participants to reflect on the quality of their connection to a faith community outside the virtual space. In the Day Thirty video presenting the latter rules with an introductory quotation from Pope Francis about them, posted October 30, the moderator invited retreatants to reflect on their future connection to a worshipping community by posting their responses to these questions: "Which of these rules speak to my experience? Which of these rules challenge or confuse me? In what ways do I strive in my life to think with Holy Mother Church, rather than against her, even when I disagree with the actions of her leaders?"[33]

In response, an American wife and grandmother from the Silent Generation shared a glimmer of conversion insofar as the rules for thinking with the Church had challenged her to stay connected to the institutional Catholic community in the future, recognizing God's continuing presence there despite her ongoing doubts:

> I felt like I entered a time machine which took me back to Catholic grade school in the 50's and high school of the early 60's. With the exception of the direction of Mass, reception of Eucharist and Confession they all challenge me to flee the institutional Catholic Church…. I found the effect of Vatican 2 to be life giving and empowering. As a woman I saw hope in a Church who strove to see me as holy, worthy to be a participant rather than a somewhat needy recipient…. The continuing revelations about clergy abuse defeats the faithful efforts of our good, holy, and faith-filled priests and bishops. I take these feelings to prayer daily because I truly know that somehow our Loving God remains in our Church.

On October 31, the moderator shared a farewell and thank you video, encouraging people to keep using the group. He then invited participants to share any points of gratitude at the end of the retreat and to complete the post-retreat survey questionnaire pinned at the top of the group's announcements page, continuing to post daily reminder videos about it until November 7. Among the 26 comments posted by that evening, Halloween, one 77-year old New Jersey

[33] Ibid., 328.

woman from the Silent Generation who had felt isolated by Covid-19 quarantines shared the following insight of gratitude: “I add my gratitude and thanks to all those thoughts expressed by others. This experience certainly has been a wonderful blessing especially during these difficult times. The sense of connection to God and to others added a special dimension to my life.”

These quotations from participants of different generations and time zones highlight the qualities of mutuality and unity that characterized this group, hinting at a participatory dialogue that drew people together amidst their diverse perspectives ranging from Catholics who recall Vatican II and 1970s catechesis to younger people with more pietistic images of soldiering and suffering. By praying for the graces Ignatius proposes in the four weeks of the *Exercises*, retreatants learned a common language, practicing reasonable intending as they progressed from a shift of consciousness to the point of religious conversion. They found unity in diversity.

Chapter Conclusion: Conversion to God and Community

Applying Lonergan’s method pastorally, this Project envisioned itself as a participatory exercise in 1) sense perception through the medium of the internet; 2) inquiry on the basis of listening, watching, reading and conversation; 3) judgment in any particular experience of conversion participants shared; and 4) responsibility in terms of changes in subsequent behavior. It labored to address the key concern of these chapters: How can Catholics use the internet to provide a forum for communicating God’s word in an active, participatory, inter-subjective way? To put it more simply, how can Catholics share their faith more engagingly online?

In response, this Project sought in a digital format to create the conditions for participants to experience some shift toward God and community, however small those signs of hope might seem in the above description of design principles and narration of participant experiences.

Accepting Lonergan's premise that listening to the word and communicating the word constitute two processes of theology, this Project offered a digital mini-study of these two dimensions through which individuals overcome cognitive bias in a group setting: how people listen to the Word filtered through the *Exercises*, and how they communicate on the basis of the Word with each other. That process demands openness to conversion, a traditional evangelization goal.

For St. Ignatius, who wrote the *Exercises* in the midst of his own conversion from disaffiliated Catholic to zealous disciple, the purpose of his retreat will always include the conversion of heart that results from making a firm decision on the basis of one's experiences of God in prayer to know and do his will. For many of the members of this Facebook group, that decision arose from a deepening awareness of their desire for interpersonal connection, moving them from passivity to a more active desire to share their faith online as well as online. Chapter Four will analyze the retreat surveys for signs of this movement; Chapter Five will then offer some tentative conclusions and recommendations for future digital outreach. The Project could not and did not fully resolve all of the issues these chapters have raised. It did make a full effort to address them and push an evangelizing response as far as it could go in the digital realm, within the limits this chapter sets out. The next two chapters will give reasons for this partial and limited effort to inspire more like it. As the English Catholic wag G.K. Chesterton once observed, "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult; and left untried."[34]

[34] Gilbert Keith Chesterton, "What's Wrong with the World," 1910, in *The Wisdom of Mr. Chesterton: The Very Best Quotes, Quips, & Cracks*, ed. Dave Armstrong (Charlotte: Saint Benedict Press, 2009), 167.

Chapter Four: Results and Analysis

The Facebook analytics and testimonies of the last chapter give hope for Catholic media to continue transforming itself and the consciousness of its users toward a more participatory sense of faith-based community. Rebranding itself in 2014 from *America Magazine* (a print platform founded by U.S. Jesuits in 1909) to *America Media*, a portal with multiple platforms, *America* in particular has worked to do that on Facebook. On one hand, a steadily growing number of people from around the world engage its page, and they formed the bulk of Catholic media consumers who participated in the Project and in the surveys this chapter will now report. On the other hand, they generally come from retired and semi-retired generations of Catholics who bring an individualist mindset from their passive faith and media habits to social networks, leaving room for a deeper shift of consciousness toward unity in diversity. This chapter's analysis of 74 retreatant survey responses will show how this Ignatian Facebook retreat helped them to grow qualitatively in relationship with God, each other, and themselves as they conceived a desire to share faith more often on social media in the future.

Recalling the papal quotes on social media in Chapter Two, these results affirm the unifying role of charity in effective Catholic online faith-sharing. As Pope Francis has said, charity ensures that online dialogue supports rather than harms interpersonal relations. In his encyclical on ecology, Francis contrasts this digital charity with an attitude of egoism:

> Today's media do enable us to communicate and to share our knowledge and affections. Yet at times they also shield us from direct contact with the pain, the fears and the joys of others and the complexity of their personal experiences. For this reason, we should be concerned that, alongside the exciting possibilities offered by these media, a deep and

> melancholic dissatisfaction with interpersonal relations, or a harmful sense of isolation, can also arise.[1]

In his concern for the impact of digital media on "interpersonal relations," Francis rejects all privatized notions of religion for Catholics that embrace a purely individualist mindset of personal salvation detached from interaction with others. Here Francis takes a complementary approach to digital catechists like Bishop Robert Barron, who worries more about popular atheist comparisons between science and "the irrationality of Catholic faith" persuading the "nones" into religious disaffiliation.[2] Whereas Barron calls for a "new apologetics" to the "nones" by which Catholics can "argue them back" into faith,[3] Francis focuses on the need for all spiritual conversations to be grounded in care for others. Keeping that in mind, this Facebook faith-sharing retreat chose the *Spiritual Exercises* rather than the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas (Barron's preferred conversational reference point) to accompany Catholics from different generations. The survey data below further illustrates the diversity of existing "Catholic media consumers" who found themselves drawn to this experience.

Building on the insights of earlier chapters, this online Project showed a special concern to complement the depth of people's offline connections, a goal the survey questions below will highlight through their focus on relationality and interaction. Calling for human solidarity amidst the coronavirus pandemic, Francis warned again about the dangers of social media interaction fueling egoism in his 2020 encyclical *Fratelli Tutti'*, where he published these words in the middle of this Facebook group's 30-day faith-sharing retreat: "Digital communication wants to

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[1] Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si'* [On Care for Our Common Home], May 24, 2015, no. 47, Holy See, http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html.
[2] Bishop Robert Barron, *Renewing Our Hope: Essays for the New Evangelization* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2020), 17.
[3] Ibid., 28.

bring everything out into the open; people's lives are combed over, laid bare and bandied about, often anonymously. Respect for others disintegrates, and even as we dismiss, ignore or keep others distant, we can shamelessly peer into every detail of their lives."[4] Francis underlines here the risks to charity unique to online interaction.

Did the participants of this "Spiritual Exercises Faith-Sharing Retreat Group" disintegrate into this kind of disrespect, adding to the narcissistic isolation of Catholics hiding behind digital anonymity to lash out angrily at each other? The pre-retreat and post-retreat questionnaires, conducted on Survey Monkey and linked to the group page itself for completion, provide indications otherwise. Rather than disrespect, they evoke a hopeful story of spiritual growth in charitable relationships, evidenced primarily by retreatants reporting signs of a participatory shift in consciousness toward unity in diversity. To explore this shift, the present chapter will now compare the pre-retreat survey results to the post-retreat survey data on paired questions.

Data from Pre-Retreat and Post-Retreat Surveys

Full Survey Monkey graphics with charts and written texts from free response questions will be found in Appendix Five to contextualize this analysis. To begin the surveys, Question One asked people beforehand to indicate an intention to participate and afterward to attest they had logged in at least once. Since 74 people completed both surveys, this analysis reports only data from those participants, excluding two people who answered "no" to this first question as well as the 138 others who filled out the pre-retreat survey but did not submit the post-retreat survey. The text of the long first question from the pre-retreat survey, explaining the

[4] Francis, Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti*' [On Fraternity and Social Friendship], Oct. 3, 2020, no. 42, Holy See, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

commitment and asking people's intent to participate, as well as of the long first question from the post-retreat survey that asks them to confirm they logged in, will be found in Appendix Five.

The other nineteen questions in each survey give more information about who participated, quantitative data about their habits, and their qualitative interpretation of relational experiences which helped them arrive at new insights, comparing before and after questions in light of trends the research literature on digital media and religious media habits denoted in earlier chapters. This data makes it possible to analyze the findings of both surveys. That analysis in turn will set up Chapter Five's broader generational conclusions and suggestions.

The investigator linked these anonymous before and after surveys to each other through IP addresses that Survey Monkey recorded. Duplicating questions two and four on both surveys (regarding their age ranges and religious affiliations) further helped the investigator match participants whose IP addresses varied slightly between surveys. Question Two on both surveys identified participants' generations using the ranges of birth years that Pew has fixed for them, as the research literature of Chapter One reported.

Q2: In which generation were you born?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00%	0
1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	8.11%	6
1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	50.00%	37
1965-1980 ("Generation X")	24.32%	18
1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	16.22%	12
1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	1.35%	1
TOTAL		74

Exactly half of respondents came from the Baby Boomer generation, a familiar cohort for Catholic ministry and social media. Adding the Silent Generation, 58.11 percent of retreatants

were born before 1965. The next largest groups of participants after Boomers came from Generation X, whose 18 retreatants represented nearly one in four (24.32 percent) members of the group, and then the 16 Millennials who represented 16.22 percent of the group. Finally, a single member of the iGeneration represented 1.35 percent of the 74 respondents.

This identical data from Question Two of both surveys reflects what the research of the first two chapters suggested might happen in online Catholic media outreach: Older Catholic media consumers had the strongest faith commitment, interest level, and availability for sticking with a digital retreat lasting 30 days. Younger consumers of Catholic and Ignatian content on Facebook, while willing and interested enough to start the retreat or audit it silently in the larger numbers that Chapter Three reported, simply proved unable to sustain a commitment for so long. According to design, the group thus became an intentional opportunity for older churchgoing Catholics to form themselves as digital disciples, but in contact with a larger number of younger people than they might normally see at Mass. The fact that nearly one in five respondents (17.57 percent) were younger than 30 years old (born after 1980) and 41.89 percent of them younger than 56 (born after 1964, adding Generation X) fulfilled this Project's design for a more age-diverse group than the typical offline parish gathering of semi-retired and retired parishioners.[5] Addressing the question of whether people overcame generational differences to have a unified experience, Chapter Five will return to this question to draw further conclusions.

In addition to generational diversity, the digital format of this asynchronous group provided the desired flexibility for people to join from all over the globe, regardless of time zone or culture. Despite being offered exclusively in English, Question Three on the pre-retreat survey

[5] Given the Chapter One data showing age as the primary demographic category where people's religious habits diverge, this question sets up a key point of generational comparison for other survey questions that Chapter Five will revisit.

indicated that people from four different continents completed the full retreat, with 17.57 percent of the 74 survey respondents coming from outside the United States. Non-U.S. locations included elsewhere in North America/Central America as well as the three populated continents of Asia, Europe, and Australia or New Zealand.

Q3: Where do you live?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
United States of America and territories	82.43%	61
Elsewhere in North America/Central America	6.76%	5
South America	0.00%	0
Europe	4.05%	3
Asia	5.41%	4
Africa	0.00%	0
Australia or New Zealand	1.35%	1
Antarctica	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Rather than repeat this geographical inquiry, Question Three on the post-retreat survey asked how often respondents logged on to the group during its four seven-day sessions. Most retreatants reported doing so a few times or more each week. For the rest, a small number (nine out of the 74 respondents) logged on only weekly or less often. This result quantitatively supports the conclusion of a fairly strong level of participant engagement and interaction.

Q3: On average, how often did you log on to this Facebook faith-sharing group each week?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More than once a day	9.46%	7
Once a day	29.73%	22
A few times a week	48.65%	36
Weekly	6.76%	5
Less than weekly	5.41%	4
TOTAL		74

With the retreat invitation targeting existing "Catholic media consumers" of *America Media* and other Ignatian Facebook groups, it was expected that religious affiliation would be less diverse than the generational and geographic breakdown. That was indeed the case. Fully 91.89 percent of participants identified in Question Four as Catholic. The rest answered Protestant (3), Eastern Orthodox (1), and Other (2). The two "Other" responses came from a departing Catholic seeking to become Baptist (Protestant) and an unaffiliated individual who identified as "Indigenous." The post-retreat survey duplicated this question and got the same results, confirming no change in religious affiliation occurred on the retreat.

Q4: How would you describe your current religious affiliation?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Catholic (including the Eastern Catholic churches)	91.89%	68
Eastern Orthodox Christian	1.35%	1
Protestant (including Anglican Communion)	4.05%	3
Jewish	0.00%	0
Muslim/Islamic	0.00%	0
Nothing in Particular (Atheist, Agnostic, or "None")	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	2.70%	2
TOTAL		74

Nevertheless, this hoped-for target audience of 74 committed Catholics poised to go deeper in digital discipleship was not without its nuances. Reflecting the survey data of the first two chapters, even this predominantly Catholic group reported varying levels of religious identification and observance. Recalling the statistical slide of Catholics through various stages of institutional disaffiliation to self-identification as "nones," a journey in which they gradually feel more connected to God and prayer practices than to institutional religion, pre-survey respondents reported feeling more connected to a Higher Power than to a particular faith community before the retreat. That echoes the finding of earlier chapters that Catholics of all

ages remain in danger of drifting from communal faith practice into more privatized religiosity (the egoism Pope Francis noted) if digital evangelizers do not challenge them to interact with each other synodally as co-responsible members of a common faith community, as distinct from individual consumers of religious content seeking primarily self-satisfaction.

Data from both surveys indicated that respondents did not feel any more connected to this online form of religious community than to a particular community (meaning Catholic for most of them) before the retreat. Indeed, the levels of connection dropped. But the majority of respondents felt at least some connection to the online group, suggesting its power to complement and support offline ties. While only two respondents in Question Five of the pre-retreat survey they felt "no" personal connection to "a particular faith-based community," only three reported feeling "no" connection to this Facebook group on the post-retreat survey.

Q5: How strongly do you feel personally connected to a particular faith-based community?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	71.62%	53
Some	18.92%	14
A little	6.76%	5
Not at all	2.70%	2
TOTAL		74

Q5: How strongly did you feel personally connected to this online community during the 30 days of faith-sharing?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	29.73%	22
Some	41.89%	31
A little	24.32%	18
Not at all	4.05%	3
TOTAL		74

Question Six, comparing the self-reported quality of participants' relationships to God before and after the group, further supports this power of online evangelization to complement and enhance the quality of people's offline connections despite the limitations of a digital setting. It suggests digital interaction presented a greater obstacle to respondents connecting with other people in this group than with the invisible God, who remained almost just as accessible to them in personal prayer online as offline. This result evokes the connection-forming power of shared digital prayer, as distinct from mere apologetics, that Chapter One quoted Christian researchers Keith Anderson and Elizabeth Drescher promoting in their work. Whereas 87.84 percent of participants felt "a lot" of connection to a Higher Power before the retreat, 77.03 percent reported on the post-retreat survey feeling "a lot" of connection to a Higher Power during it.

Q6: How strongly do you feel personally connected to a Higher Power as you understand it?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	87.84%	65
Some	10.81%	8
A little	1.35%	1
Not at all	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Q6: How strongly did you feel personally connected to a Higher Power as you understand it during the 30 days of faith-sharing?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	77.03%	57
Some	13.51%	10
A little	9.46%	7
Not at all	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Although Questions Five and Six hint that some participants felt more connected to God and others outside of this online retreat than in it, the fact that so many people felt connected at

all in the Facebook group satisfied this Project's modest goal of helping people grow relationally through digital interaction. Building on the indications of earlier chapters that the primary challenge for Catholic online evangelization will be to provide a space for this relationality, rather than a mere dumping-ground of packaged religious content for passive reflection and privatized consumption, Question Seven on the pre-retreat survey sought a baseline understanding of participants' faith practices, casting the widest net possible to include online discussion and spiritual reading as "religious events." Even articulated this broadly to cover every possible faith-based activity, both private and communal as well as offline and online, fewer than half of respondents (44.59 percent) reported engaging a religious activity either offline or online more than once a week before the retreat, and roughly one-third of participants (31.07 percent) reported doing so less than weekly. That means a sizeable number of respondents did not represent weekly participants in religious events, despite their self-identification as Catholics who felt a strong sense of connection to God beforehand. Had the surveys asked just about Sunday Mass or church attendance, these numbers would likely be even lower.

Q7: How often have you been involved in a religiously sponsored event (funeral, wedding, church service, online discussion, spiritual reading, prayer or meditation group, etc.) in the past 12 months? Select the response that most closely approximates your attendance.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None	0.00%	0
1-6 times a year	13.51%	10
7-11 times a year	4.05%	3
Once a month	4.05%	3
2-3 times a month	9.46%	7
Once a week	24.32%	18
More than once a week	44.59%	33
TOTAL		74

Granting the reality that people always feel less connected in social media platforms compared to offline interactions, additional data suggests that even the weakened connections of this online faith-sharing retreat had a strong positive impact on participant attitudes toward offline religious observance. While this online retreat did not reach any self-proclaimed atheists or agnostics, even the 74 retreatants who participated from beginning to end represented (except for the "indigenous" response) Christians in varied stages of affiliation, weighted toward a slightly higher level of participation than the general Catholic population. That provided the mix this Project sought of fairly active Catholic media consumers who felt more connected to God than to the faith community, leaving room to grow in the latter bond. Retreatants from many generations, not all equally observant, grew together in a desire for interpersonal connection.

In perhaps the most significant finding of these surveys, respondents reported an intention to move toward greater religious practice after the retreat than before it. Question Seven on the post-retreat survey asked about their plans to engage in religious practices (construed in the same broad way as this question on the pre-retreat survey) moving forward. Twenty-five of the respondents (34.25 percent) who answered this question, more than one-third of the group, said they planned to do so "more often." The majority of respondents, 65.5 percent, said "about the same." Nobody said "less often" and one retreatant skipped the question.

Q7: How often do you intend to attend a religiously sponsored event (funeral, wedding, church service, online discussion, spiritual reading, prayer or meditation group, etc.) moving forward from this faith-sharing group into the future?"

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More often than I did before this faith-sharing group	34.25%	25
About the same as I always do	65.75%	48
Less often than I did before the group	0.00%	0
I don't plan to attend religious services in the future	0.00%	0
TOTAL		73

Even though this Project could not prove a causal relationship between online faith-sharing and offline attendance at church events, the fact that more than one-third of survey respondents left the retreat with a resolution to participate in religious activities "more often" conforms to the statistical correlation between online habits and offline behavior that the social media research of Chapter One reported. So does the fact that nobody left the retreat less inclined toward offline religious participation. The shift that occurred for these survey respondents in an explicitly Catholic digital community, as opposed to the secular online groups of Chapter One, will set up some hopeful conclusions and recommendations in Chapter Five.

The next questions clarify participants' digital media background and habits, showing promising signs of growth in digital fluency through the online faith-sharing retreat. Question Eight on the pre-retreat survey asked about the importance of online interaction in their lives before the retreat. As expected in a group of experienced social media users invited exclusively from existing Facebook groups rather than recruited offline, more than half (52.7 percent) said "important," with another large fraction of retreatants (21.62 percent) saying "highly important." Nevertheless, a sizeable number of participants landed somewhere in the middle on this question, with the second largest segment (22.97 percent) saying "neutral." These results indicated that room existed for participants' consciousness to shift on this issue during the retreat as they grew more comfortable with participatory digital interaction.

Q8: How important is online interaction (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, comment boxes, other social media platforms) in your life?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Highly Important	21.62%	16
Important	52.70%	39
Neutral	22.97%	17
Unimportant	2.70%	2
Highly Unimportant	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

In another promising result, these same participants reported higher levels of satisfaction with this particular use of Facebook on Question Eight of the post-retreat survey than the importance they afforded to digital communication in general beforehand. Whereas only 21.62 of these Facebook-using respondents described online interaction as “highly important” to their lives before the retreat, 36.49 percent described as “highly satisfactory” the use of Facebook to facilitate this thirty-day faith-sharing group. Although five retreatants found the use of Facebook “unsatisfactory,” slightly higher than the two retreatants who described social media as “unimportant” to their lives before the retreat, a larger movement of retreatants toward satisfaction with online interaction in this particular group appeared on the post-retreat survey. Compare Question Eight on the post-retreat survey in the following table with Question Eight on the pre-retreat table of results above.

Q8: This online retreat utilized Facebook. How satisfied do you feel about the use of Facebook to facilitate the group interactions?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Highly Satisfactory	36.49%	27
Satisfactory	36.49%	27
Neutral	20.27%	15
Unsatisfactory	6.76%	5
Highly Unsatisfactory	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Looking next at more specifically religious experiences of digital media, Question Nine on the pre-retreat survey asked about retreatants' frequency of using it for faith-sharing. An equal number of pre-retreat survey respondents (74.98 percent total) said "a lot" and "some," but 21.61 percent said "a little" and 5.41 percent said "not at all," indicating that more than one quarter of participants had little to no experience sharing their faith online. This result left room for this Facebook retreat to help members grow more comfortable discussing their religious experiences on social media, addressing the relative failure of Catholic online media to do so.

Q9: How much, if at all, have you shared your faith with others online during your life?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	36.49%	27
Some	36.49%	27
A little	21.62%	16
Not at all	5.41%	4
TOTAL		74

Once more reflecting the power of apparently limited digital relationships to influence people's social habits, Question Nine of the post-retreat survey asked how often these same participants intended to discuss faith-based content online moving forward from this Facebook retreat experience. A sizeable 39.19 percent (29 people) said they intended to do so "more often," while 59.46 percent (44 people) said "about the same" and just 1.35 percent (one person) said "less often." Overall this comparison implies that while this group's members had some

experience sharing their faith online before the Facebook faith-sharing retreat, their interactions in it had a noticeably positive impact on their resolve to do so in the future.

Q9: How likely are you to discuss faith-based content with others online as you move forward from this faith-sharing group into the future?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More often than I did before this faith-sharing group	39.19%	29
About the same as I always do	59.46%	44
Less often than I did before the group	1.35%	1
I don't plan to share my faith online in the future	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

As noted in Chapter One, researcher Nancy Baym found in her data that online interaction influences offline habits, and this Project gave indications that this influence might be true of faith-based as well as secular community. Question Ten on the surveys offered some particularly relevant data. As expected of a group that skewed older, participants claimed deeper experience of offline faith-sharing than online, with more than half of respondents (54.05 percent) saying they had “a lot” of it on Question Ten of the pre-retreat survey compared to the less than half (39.19 percent) who said the same of online faith-sharing in Question Nine.

Q10: How much, if at all, have you shared your faith with others offline (face-to-face) during your life?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	54.05%	40
Some	37.84%	28
A little	8.11%	6
Not at all	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Bearing in mind the positive correlation between online and offline social habits, comparing this result to Question Ten on the post-retreat survey suggests yet another positive impact. Even though retreatants began the online group with more offline than online faith-

sharing experience, Question Ten on the post-retreat survey showed the retreat having a slightly greater influence on their offline than on their online faith-sharing habits. Whereas 39.19 percent of respondents said in Question Nine of the post-retreat survey they intended to share faith online "more often" in the future, 43.24 percent (three more people) said in Question Ten they intended to do so offline "more often" in the future. No respondents intended to discuss faith offline "less often" and 56.76 percent intended to do so "about the same" as always. Considering the greater efficacy of offline evangelization than online outreach, it seems significant that participating in online faith-sharing may have increased respondents' confidence about sharing faith offline.

Q10: How likely are you to discuss faith-based content with others offline (face-to-face) moving forward from this online faith-sharing group?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More often than I did before this faith-sharing group	43.24%	32
About the same as I always do	56.76%	42
Less often than I did before the group	0.00%	0
I don't plan to share my faith offline in the future	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

The above results imply that a large number of respondents left the retreat with greater zeal for engaging others in both online and offline spiritual conversation. But what about their relationship to themselves as manifested in their desires for self-growth? In free response format, Question Eleven on the surveys asked participants to share what they wanted for themselves before the retreat and what they believed afterwards they actually received on it. As guides of the *Spiritual Exercises* know from experience, retreatants often receive a different grace from what they expected beforehand, signifying that they did not attempt to control or steer the prayer in predetermined directions. This discrepancy usually denotes authentic spiritual growth in one's relationships to God, others, and oneself, insofar as real change often occurs somewhere in this

shift of consciousness from expectation to experience. While Question Eleven on both surveys offered a free response format, with the full texts of individual responses available in Appendix Five to save space here, Survey Monkey provides a word cloud feature to illustrate the key themes in retreatants' responses by ranking the most commonly used words visually by font size from largest to smallest. The Question Eleven cloud in the pre-retreat survey appears as follows.

Q11 What particular hopes or desires do you bring to this online faith-sharing experience? Please write them in the space below.

Seventy-two participants answered this free response question and two skipped it. The most common word proved to be "faith," mentioned in 26.39 percent of responses. The next most common words in descending frequency of use were "others" (19.44 percent), "life" (18.06 percent), "share" (15.28 percent), "hope" (15.28 percent), "God" (15.28 percent), and "experience" (13.89 percent). Other phrases like "grow closer God" and "relationship God" appear smaller here, but may be lumped in with their larger cousins such as "God" and "faith" as relating to their personal connection with God. Grouped together, they reflect the reality seen in Appendix Five that most responses to this question expressed privatized religious desires for more faith for themselves and connection to God. That may seem ironic since they indicated on Questions Five and Six that they already felt significantly more connected to God than to the

Catholic Church (to which 68 of the 74 belong) before the retreat. A sizeable minority nevertheless expressed other-centered desires for deeper connections with others.

In light of these graces that they sought, what graces did participants actually receive in the online faith-sharing retreat? Signifying an authentic experience of spiritual growth through interaction with the prayer material and with each other, as opposed to what Lonergan might call an inauthentic experience of participants scripting God's role in their prayer within the cognitive biases of their isolated minds, the word cloud for Question Eleven on the post-retreat survey differed from the pre-retreat survey. This word cloud for Question Eleven of the post-retreat survey, again answered by 72 people and skipped by two, appears as follows.

Q11 What particular hopes or desires did you find were fulfilled in this experience? Please write them in the space below.

Visually, this post-retreat word cloud's enlargement over the pre-retreat cloud suggests an expansion of spiritual vocabulary, with a higher level of critical thinking (an ingredient of success in online group formation, as Chapter Three noted) appearing as a fruit of self-knowledge gained on the retreat. Note that interpersonal words like "help," "love," and "understand(ing)" appear larger after the retreat than before, being used more often, and suggest

respondents received more of these graces than they had asked for. The ranking and list of most common words here also differs from the pre-retreat cloud. The most commonly used word this time was “retreat,” occurring in one-fifth (20.83 percent) of responses even though it did not appear in the pre-retreat word cloud at all. That must reflect at least in part the expanded vocabulary the *Exercises* gave respondents to talk about their religious experiences, considering that the Ignatian material uses the word “retreat” often. But it also reflects the reality, seen in Appendix Five, of some participants who wrote that they discovered this Facebook group to be a true restful and restorative experience of being on retreat in a way they had not anticipated. This overall expansion of vocabulary and notable addition of a previously unused word (“retreat”) to the top of the post-retreat list seems to denote a shift (or what Lonergan might call a conversion) of consciousness among respondents toward a more community-centered mindset.

Question Twelve on the pre-retreat survey asked how often it occurred to participants to discuss their faith on Facebook before the retreat, narrowing the scope of Question Nine to the particular social media platform this Project adopted. Supporting the particular failure of self-identified Catholic evangelizers to master Facebook, still the world’s largest social media platform at the time of this writing, it showed participants less inclined to discuss faith on Facebook than online in general. Whereas 36.19 percent of respondents to Question Nine said they discussed faith online “a lot” before the retreat, only 6.76 percent of respondents to Question Twelve said it “always” occurred to them to do so on Facebook (and only 22.97 percent said “usually”) before the retreat.

Q12: How often, if ever, does it occur to you to discuss faith-based content on Facebook?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Always	6.76%	5
Usually	22.97%	17
Sometimes	41.89%	31
Rarely	18.92%	14
Never	9.46%	7
TOTAL		74

Looking back at their experience of Facebook to run this Ignatian faith-sharing group, which 36.49 percent of participants reported "highly satisfactory" on Question Eight above, Question Twelve on the post-retreat survey next asked them for free response feedback on any other social media platforms they might suggest for online faith-sharing in the future. Apprised that a non-response would be recorded as "no suggestion," 58 retreatants answered this free response question and 18 skipped it, indicating general satisfaction with Facebook. The following word cloud summarizes the key words in their responses to the question.

Q12 Other than Facebook, is there another digital media format you would suggest that America use for an online faith-sharing group? Please write your suggestion in the blank. If you do not write anything, your answer will be recorded as "no suggestion."

The size of these fonts again illustrates the most common word in descending frequency of use in the written responses that Appendix Five reprints in full. Sixteen participants, or 28.57 percent of responses to this post-retreat Question Twelve, mentioned "Zoom," a highly participatory technology that might have been a viable option for this group had it been mentioned in any of the social media literature or widely available during the design phase of the

retreat that occurred long before Covid-19 made it a household name. Another ten responses, or 17.86 percent, mentioned “Facebook” primarily in the context of expressing their approval of it with some minor quibbles. The next most common words “suggestion,” “worked,” and “well” proved incidental in mostly positive reports about Facebook. A smaller number of people mentioned YouTube, Microsoft Teams, Instagram, or a website as possible platforms. This result confirmed that most respondents felt satisfied with Facebook as the best format for this group at the time, although a minority showed interest in trying the emerging Zoom platform too.

Question Thirteen on both surveys repeated a question from researcher John Dyer, cited in Chapter One, about whether people consider online community a form of real community. It sought to see if the retreatants reflected his findings and whether the experience of this online faith-sharing group changed any of their minds about it. On the pre-retreat survey, more than half (55.41 percent) of retreatants considered online community to be real, with the next highest segment (37.84 percent) unsure and only a few respondents (6.76 percent) saying no.

Q13: Do you consider online community to be a type of “real” community?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	55.41%	41
No	6.76%	5
Unsure	37.84%	28
TOTAL		74

Question Thirteen on the post-retreat survey showed six folks moving out of the “unsure” response in both directions, with two more retreatants saying “yes” and four more saying “no” when asked about their experience of this Facebook group specifically. Reinforcing the role of discernment in helping reduce a faith-based group to its committed core of potential disciples, this data demonstrates that this Facebook space did help a small number of participants clarify

their opinions of its ability to form “real” community. Even though six out of twenty-eight “unsure” responses moving their position remains statistically insignificant, and perhaps underlines the limits of Facebook as a digital bulletin board to settle this question definitively, it did reveal one helpful result. From an evangelization standpoint, the two people who moved into the “yes” response in the following post-retreat data will be two more digital disciples likely to use Facebook as a place to establish a sense of real connection with faith groups. Also, as the next chapter will revisit in its conclusions about these results, younger participants moved from “unsure” to “yes” and older participants moved to “no,” perhaps revealing a lingering hint of the generational disconnect on this issue that Dyer found in 2011.

Q13: Do you consider this Facebook faith-sharing group to have been a type of “real” community?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	58.11%	43
No	12.16%	9
Unsure	29.73%	22
TOTAL		74

Returning to the difference between the graces sought and the graces received, Question Fourteen asked retreatants in a “choose all” response to identify with outcomes commonly experienced by people making the *Exercises* offline. These outcomes addressed their relationships with God, themselves, and others. The pre-retreat version of this question shows, in descending percentages of respondents who selected each one, that retreatants desired a better relationship with God, more knowledge about Ignatian spirituality, a stronger connection to a faith-based community, more knowledge about Catholic teachings, “other,” and “unsure.”

Q14: What outcome would you like to see from this online faith-sharing group? Please choose all that apply

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A better relationship with God	82.43%	61
Stronger sense of connection to a faith-based community	66.22%	49
More knowledge about Catholic teachings	47.30%	35
More knowledge about Ignatian spirituality	74.32%	55
Unsure	1.35%	1
Other (please specify)	4.05%	3
Total Respondents: 74		

Before the retreat, these participants prioritized their relationships with God and self (insofar as knowledge represents a form of self-relationship) over their relationship with others in a faith-based community as desired outcomes of this online faith-sharing group. That may seem strange in light of the aforementioned fact that many of them, before the retreat, reported already having a stronger connection to God and to self (in their self-identification as Catholic) than to a particular faith-based community and to an active sense of religious observance before the retreat. Recalling Christian Smith's data cited in Chapter One, it may simply reflect some of the institutional distrust that Boomers share to some extent with younger generations.

In a hopeful sign, Question Fourteen on the post-retreat survey reported a change in these relational priorities. Here the percentage of respondents seeking a better relationship with God dropped from 82.42 percent seeking it before the retreat to 68.49 percent who said afterward they received it. Paradoxically, the retreat experience also changed the way they prioritized its outcomes: Instead of only the percentages shifting while the order of priorities remained, Question Fourteen showed a shift of focus away from the outcome of a better relationship with God before the retreat to the outcome of growing in knowledge of Ignatian spirituality after it.

Q14: What outcomes did you see in your spiritual life at the end of this online faith-sharing group? Please choose all that apply

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A better relationship with God	68.49%	50
Stronger sense of connection to a faith-based community	28.77%	21
More knowledge about Catholic teachings	30.14%	22
More knowledge about Ignatian spirituality	91.78%	67
Unsure	5.48%	4
Other (please specify)	16.44%	12
Total Respondents: 73		

Unlike the pre-retreat survey's version of this question, the order of most commonly selected outcomes on this post-retreat inventory of received graces turned out to be more knowledge about Ignatian spirituality, a better relationship with God, more knowledge about Catholic teachings, a stronger sense of connection to a faith-based community, "other," and "unsure." This result affirms the usefulness of Facebook for building shared knowledge about Ignatian prayer methods in a way that bolsters rather than fragments interpersonal connections with God and others. They also imply that "Ignatian spirituality" proved to be a significant benefit as well as draw for the retreat, recalling the demographic of the group which took part: older, mostly active, American Catholics seeking the *Exercises*.

All three interconnected relationships of spirituality (God, others, and self) seemed to find support in the spiritual conversations of this Facebook retreat. Far from stifling real connection as Pope Francis warns happens too often on social media detached from any context of Christian charity, online faith-sharing supports these relationships by fostering interaction. Supporting this link, Question Fifteen on the pre-retreat survey revealed that the majority of retreatants' online relationships also figured in their offline lives, recalling the power of shared knowledge formation on social media to inspire additional growth outside of it.

Q15: How many of the people you know online also play a role in your offline life outside of the internet?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	29.73%	22
Some	45.95%	34
A few	18.92%	14
None at all	5.41%	4
TOTAL		74

Question Fifteen on the post-retreat survey amended this inquiry to examine respondents' interest in participating in more such groups at *America's* Facebook page. More than eight out of ten participants said "yes." Most of the rest reported feeling "unsure," with only one person saying "no." This result attested objectively to the generally positive nature of their retreat experience, as Chapter Three narrated anecdotally in their own words.

Q15: Based on this experience, would you be interested in participating in another online faith-sharing group at the America Media Facebook page?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	82.19%	60
No	1.37%	1
Unsure	16.44%	12
TOTAL		73

Exploring how this group impacted the attitudes of participants regarding their digital relationships, Question Sixteen indicated that they grew more comfortable sharing their faith and personal experiences (as opposed to exchanging opinions) online throughout the 30-day retreat. Their responses established another baseline to measure growth in participatory interaction from before to after the retreat. In this question on the pre-retreat survey, only 33.78 percent reported feeling "a lot" of comfort sharing their faith with others online before starting the retreat.

Q16: How comfortable do you feel with talking about your personal faith and religious experiences, as opposed to exchanging opinions, in an online faith-sharing group?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	33.78%	25
Some	44.59%	33
A little	21.62%	16
Not at all	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

For comparison, Question Sixteen of the post-retreat survey asked more specifically about how comfortable participants felt sharing their faith in this Facebook group. This time, 45.95 percent said "a lot," a gain of nine people over the pre-retreat survey that satisfied a major desire of this Project to help participants grow in an area where Chapter One reported Catholics traditionally lag. Compare the following table to the last one.

Q16: How comfortable did you feel talking about your personal faith and religious experiences, as opposed to exchanging opinions, in this Facebook group?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	45.95%	34
Some	33.78%	25
A little	14.86%	11
Not at all	5.41%	4
TOTAL		74

Finally, the last four questions on each survey explored the particular graces of the four weeks of the *Spiritual Exercises,* inspecting the quality of respondents' faith-sharing experiences of these themes. Question Seventeen asked about the first week grace of knowing themselves as loved sinners, the starting point of the *Exercises* for St. Ignatius. On the pre-retreat survey, 69.86 percent of participants "very much" sensed this grace in their spiritual lives before the retreat.

Q17: To what extent does this statement accurately describe your spiritual life? Statement: "I have a deeply felt sense of God's love for me even though I am a sinner."

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	69.86%	51
Somewhat	24.66%	18
Not Much	4.11%	3
Not At All	0.00%	0
Unsure	1.37%	1
TOTAL		73

On Question Seventeen of the post-retreat survey, the number of people saying they received this grace during the first week of the online faith-sharing retreat dropped to 50 percent. This comparison offers another reminder that online interaction never matches the depth of offline interaction. It also illuminates once more the paradox that while many participants entered the retreat seeking to grow in the areas where they already felt the strongest (i.e., their relationship with God) connection, the actual growth occurred in areas of weakness (i.e., knowledge of Ignatian spirituality) they had not foreseen. As Chapter Three found, this growth in knowledge of shared repertoires tends to be a positive sign of online group formation.

Q17: To what extent does this statement accurately describe the grace you received in Week One of the retreat? Statement: "I grew in a deeply felt sense of God's love for me even though I am a sinner."

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	50.00%	37
Somewhat	32.43%	24
Not Much	8.11%	6
Not At All	4.05%	3
Unsure	5.41%	4
TOTAL		74

Question Eighteen focused on the second week grace of desiring to follow Jesus, revealing stronger numbers than any other week. Fully 74.32 percent of participants "very much" felt this desire entering the group, far more than said they felt God's love for them in spite of

their sinfulness. Added to the 22.97 percent of respondents who answered “somewhat,” a fairly positive image emerges of how participants viewed their sense of following Jesus.

Q18: To what extent does this statement accurately describe your spiritual life? Statement: “I feel a desire to accompany Jesus and labor with him in his ongoing ministry.”

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	74.32%	55
Somewhat	22.97%	17
Not Much	2.70%	2
Not At All	0.00%	0
Unsure	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

In Question Eighteen of the post-retreat survey, this number shifted to 51.35 percent of retreatants who “very much” and 36.49 percent who “somewhat” experienced this desire during the faith-sharing group itself. Within the context of Ignatian spiritual practice, these numbers may suggest a move toward greater self-knowledge of one’s own limits in relation to God, insofar as it suggests people ended the retreat with a more realistic sense of their capacity for spiritual growth after encountering the challenging reflections of Ignatius. It may also denote again that retreatants grew more in unexpected areas and less in areas where they already felt strong before the retreat. As Chapter Five will conclude, retreatants experienced this growth together as they moved from diverse ages and perspectives into a shared understanding.

Q18: To what extent does this statement accurately describe the grace you received in Week Two of the retreat? Statement: “I grew in my desire to accompany Jesus and labor with him in his ongoing ministry.”

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	51.35%	38
Somewhat	36.49%	27
Not Much	2.70%	2
Not At All	0.00%	0
Unsure	9.46%	7
TOTAL		74

In Question Nineteen on the Week Three grace of suffering with Jesus in his passion, the largest increase in "very much" responses of any week occurred from before to after the retreat. Additionally, the smallest number of people reported experiencing this grace both before and after the retreat out of any week in the *Exercises*, highlighting it as a particular area of potential growth for this group. From an Ignatian perspective, that appears especially significant because of the lived experience that people bond together more closely when they share sufferings than when they share joyful moments. Only 16.22 percent of retreatants said this third week grace "very much" described their spiritual life before the retreat.

Q19: To what extent does this statement accurately describe your spiritual life? Statement: "I feel like I have suffered with Jesus on the cross."

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	16.22%	12
Somewhat	54.05%	40
Not Much	17.57%	13
Not At All	9.46%	7
Unsure	2.70%	2
TOTAL		74

On Question Nineteen of the post-retreat survey, 32.43 percent of retreatants reported experiencing a desire "very much" to suffer with Jesus during the retreat, doubling the number of people who reported having done so before it started. This third week grace carries particular

importance in the context of the *Exercises*, insofar as inexperienced retreatants find it easier to follow Jesus in his public ministry during Week Two than to do so in his suffering. While the number of participants who identified strongly with the graces of the first two weeks dropped from before to after the retreat, the opposite happened with this third week grace, suggesting this retreat helped them get in touch with their sufferings more deeply and bring them to the cross .

Q19: To what extent does this statement accurately describe the grace you received in Week Three of the retreat? Statement: "I experienced a stronger desire to suffer with Jesus on the cross."

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	32.43%	24
Somewhat	37.84%	28
Not Much	9.46%	7
Not At All	6.76%	5
Unsure	13.51%	10
TOTAL		74

In Ignatian spirituality, this ability to suffer with Jesus compassionately reflects an essential foundation of interpersonal connection to ground the ability to feel loved by him despite one's flaws and the ability to follow him when things go well. It evokes the Christian teaching that one must first suffer with Jesus in order to fully experience the joy of his resurrection, the subject of Question Twenty on the fourth week grace of rejoicing in the resurrection. Despite only 16.22 percent of participants entering the retreat saying they "very much" had suffered with Jesus, 51.35 percent entered it reporting that they had "very much" rejoiced with the risen Lord in gratitude for his gifts, suggesting less room for growth in this area.

Q20: To what extent does this statement accurately describe your spiritual life? Statement: "I feel like I have rejoiced with the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, in gratitude for all he gives me."

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	51.35%	38
Somewhat	36.49%	27
Not Much	10.81%	8
Not At All	0.00%	0
Unsure	1.35%	1
TOTAL		74

The same 51.35 percent of participants also said they "very much" rejoiced more deeply with the risen Jesus during the retreat itself. Meanwhile, the number reporting "unsure" on the post-retreat survey rose as "somewhat" and "not much" fell. One possible explanation, based on Facebook analytics of comments by participants provided in Appendix Six, could be that some of the 74 post-survey respondents struggled to keep up with the daily posts in the final week due to outside commitments. Another explanation might be the common observation among Ignatian faith-sharing leaders that retreatants who have a deep experience of suffering in the Third Week of the *Exercises*, as many on this retreat did, may ask for a little more time to sit with their current struggles alongside the suffering Jesus before switching gears to joy. Some here did.

Q20: To what extent does this statement accurately describe the grace you received in Week Four of the retreat? Statement: "I rejoiced more deeply with the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, in gratitude for all he gives me."

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	51.35%	38
Somewhat	25.68%	19
Not Much	5.41%	4
Not At All	1.35%	1
Unsure	16.22%	12
TOTAL		74

Chapter Conclusion: Catholic Media in a Digital Age

This Project in Ministry contends that online interaction, while not as impactful as face-to-face interaction, can be beneficial in motivating great zeal for both offline and online evangelization. The secular and theological research of the above chapters, applied to this group, suggests that online faith-sharing can build on and feed back into offline religious community. The survey data from this retreat showed how healthy Christian community can flow into and out of online interactions in a participatory way that strengthens existing faith bonds through a unifying exchange that digital media makes possible.

Writing to the Corinthians, Paul reminded them of the power of charity: "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."[6] Rooted in this selfless spirit, participants in this retreat grew in a healthy awareness of participatory connection to God and each other in a virtual community. Chapter Five will now summarize their intergenerational experience of this 30-day retreat group to draw some tentative conclusions and recommendations for the future.

[6] 1 Cor 13:4-8 (New American Bible Revised Edition).

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

This Project in Ministry hypothesized that a 30-day "Spiritual Exercises Faith-Sharing Retreat Group" on Facebook could address numerous, profound, and trenchant issues in the Catholic Church through a Lonerganian pastoral method. Testing this hypothesis, Chapter Four's analysis of participant surveys showed that some clear evangelizing goals could be achieved while others remained elusive. This final chapter shows what was successful, what did not go as well as expected, and what might be adjusted in future repetitions of this effort. It frames these conclusions around the Project's goals, objectives, and expected outcomes. This chapter contends that the Project fulfilled its general goals and objectives of uniting Catholic media consumers of all ages in an online faith-sharing community, but that some challenges remained to be overcome through additional modifications, in terms of reaching younger nonbelievers and achieving more specific outcomes.

The general goal of this Project was to explore one effort to evangelize Catholic media consumers through social media; more specifically, through a 30-day online faith-sharing retreat group recruited primarily from *America's* Facebook page and based on the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. Thus conceived, this broad goal succeeded, aided by the choice of an asynchronous design as a reasonable compromise between competing values. The general objective of the Project was to give *America* consumers the experience of an online faith-sharing group using social media to form a community across different generations which do not normally interact. This objective succeeded only partially because the group did not achieve a critical mass of Millennial and Post-millennial participants to make many solid generational conclusions along the lines of what Chapter One envisioned.

The general expected outcome of the Project in Ministry was to create a hidden multi-generational faith-sharing community through *America's* Facebook page, enabling Catholic media consumers to self-report how digital engagement with the *Exercises* could lead them to spiritual growth, to increased comfort with online faith-sharing interaction, and to new resolutions regarding participation at religiously sponsored events. For the 74 participants who completed the surveys, the Project succeeded at increasing their comfort with sharing faith online and offline. It also succeeded at boosting the intention, especially among younger members, to participate more often in sacred activities. The value of their online sharing manifested itself in the shift from expectations to results. While many began the retreat thinking about growing closer to God, in the end it was their internet exchange that seemed most valuable. Likewise, the more specific goals and outcomes for the four weeklong sessions—centered on the *Exercises'* prescribed graces of choosing to accept oneself as a sinner loved by God, to follow Jesus, to suffer with Jesus, and to rejoice with Jesus—succeeded more in helping these retreatants bring their sufferings to God and grow closer to one another than in helping them connect to God in the first, second, and fourth weeks. These results suggest necessary modifications to how this type of group might recruit members and define its hopes in the future, to better form an online community that reaches beyond the bubble of believers.

What Was Successful

Data gleaned from the surveys, presented in Chapter Four, indicate that online faith-sharing in this Facebook group encouraged and strengthened the 74 respondents' offline relationships without replacing them. As the secular research literature surveyed in Chapter One hinted could occur, most members reported achieving some level of connection (to God,

themselves, and others) through the 30-day faith-sharing format that moved them beyond privatized consumption of multimedia content into a participatory interchange about their prayer experiences. A substantial number intended to share their faith online and especially offline more often after the retreat. This implies the "Spiritual Exercises Faith-Sharing Retreat Group" was modestly successful in achieving its general goals, objectives, and expected outcomes for evangelizing Catholic media consumers by digitally enabling their spiritual growth, particularly in interpersonal relationships among those who completed the Project and surveys. Those 74 respondents indicated that they gained knowledge of Ignatian spirituality and grew in digital discipleship as they shifted their consciousness of an "online retreat" from passive reflection on videos to a participatory use of digital media for spiritual conversation.

First, the Project indicated that online interactive religious groups of various generations can be formed. Appendix Seven, summarizing key survey responses by age, denotes the group's basic success at uniting people of all generations in a group faith-sharing experience. No sharp divisions emerged to suggest discordant experiences among generations even though the number of Millennial respondents was too small to make a definitive conclusion about this cohort's experiences with other generations and other generations with them. The Project further showed through its absence of generational conflict—including a lack of any violations of Facebook community guidelines—that varied generations of Catholics can engage charitably in positive, respectful, and affirming conversation through a Facebook group. This emergence of unity amidst diversity, narrated anecdotally in Chapter Three and reported in Chapter Four's survey data, shows a basic fulfillment of the general goal, objective, and expected outcome to unite people in a common experience that fostered spiritual growth in a digital context.

Second, the Project demonstrated that a month-long commitment to explore and deepen faith is challenging but possible on social media. The 74 survey respondents fulfilled some clear goals of evangelization as Chapter Two presented it: a) people grew in articulation of their faith; b) people grew in a desire to share faith online; c) people grew in their desire to share faith offline. The pre-retreat and post-retreat survey responses showed the promise of an online faith-sharing group to address the significant pastoral need for Catholics to grow more comfortable at sharing their faith. In particular, the interpersonal awareness among retreatants of participating in a real community online stood out as noteworthy, transcending the tendency of pre-digital Catholic media to present prepackaged content in a sender-receiver fashion rather than in a way that invites a many-to-many interchange.

Third, these results made progress toward addressing several of the vital issues that Chapters One, Two, and Three set up. In framing the digital shift from packaged to participatory media communication according to the philosophy of Marshall McLuhan, of secular research literature on the youth-oriented culture of digital media, and of research on the recent breakdown in transmitting Catholicism to younger generations, Chapter One established the pastoral problem that arises from Catholics failing to share their faith effectively online. This Project offered a sound framework to address this challenge and to study the results.

Informing the Project's response to these issues, Chapter Two described the theological foundation of *communio*—the unity-in-diversity that the Trinity provides as a model for Christian community since apostolic times—that Pope Francis wants the Catholic Church to practice with a synodal spirit of openness at all levels of social communication. As an expression of the New Evangelization's call to discern fresh methods for sharing the good news in secularized contexts,

the Project strove to help participants make this shift from packaged to participatory ecclesial dialogue. Chapter Two then showed how the use of the *Spiritual Exercises*, as well as the Ignatian leadership principles Francis learned from them and from his experience of Jesuit governance, could provide models for the moderator of this online faith-sharing group to craft a productive social media environment for evangelizing interchange. The basic satisfaction that most of the 74 retreatants reported about the Facebook format in their survey results indicates the Project's interactive method helped promote more meaningful participation for this group through the addition of a faith-sharing dimension, something that is often missing from the Catholic online retreat experience.

Chapter Three narrated the design and implementation of the Project according to these principles for a meaningful use of faith-based media and according to some secular best practices for the formation of online community. It then presented some key elements of the theological method of Bernard J.F. Lonergan as a pastoral framework for this Project to encourage a participatory shift in consciousness, setting up a possible religious conversion to deeper faith in God as a possible outcome. This application of Lonergan's method proved partially successful, insofar as participants appeared to experience an authentic shift of consciousness from individuality to community. Rather than primarily seeking to boost retreatants' personal sense of connection to a higher power, the investigator had desired to move them through the faith-sharing dialogue from privatized to more communal attitudes about their use of Catholic media, and so this shift fulfilled a key aspiration.

Before this chapter draws conclusions about the corresponding limits of these successes and suggests additional adjustments for future repetition of this Facebook group, a generational

breakdown of crucial survey data will support the conclusion that the 74 survey retreatants achieved a noticeable degree of unity across all age cohorts. As Chapter Four noted, Question Two of both surveys asked for the birth year ranges of participants to help confirm that the same 74 people filled out both surveys. That also allowed this investigator to use the compare feature on Survey Monkey to correlate results on both questionnaires according to Pew's generational divisions, thus creating the data of Appendix Seven. A few examples will show how participants, even in this small sample size, moved in encouraging new directions after starting out more reflective of the age-based divisions that Chapter One's research literature indicated to be common with Catholics and digital media. Specifically, these examples imply the group's successful intergenerational unity in the following areas referenced in this chapter: a feeling of connection to the Facebook group; a desire to share faith more often in the future; and a sense of online community as real community.

In terms of generational attitudes toward faith, the pre-retreat survey reflected Pew's finding that younger generations do not evince religious behaviors the way older generations did and do. On Question Five of the pre-retreat survey, those claiming "a lot" of connection to a faith community declined steadily from the Silent Generation to the Millennials, as Chapters One and Two data on religious disaffiliation suggested it might. Millennial respondents had the highest percentage to report feeling no connection with their faith community (meaning the Catholic Church for all twelve of them) and the lowest to feel "a lot" of connection before the retreat.

By comparison, Question Five on the post-retreat survey showed generational attitudes shifting over the 30-day experience in ways that broke up these age-based trends somewhat. Here Baby Boomers reported the largest percentage of any age cohort to feel "a lot" of

connection to the Facebook faith-sharing group, followed by the Silent Generation and Generation X respectively. Most of the Millennials also felt some level of connection, although they struggled more than the Boomers to log in regularly during the Project. This suggests Boomer respondents were more adept in using the digital format of this group to feel connected to the Catholic community.

Building on this movement, Question Nine showed all generations of those who completed the Project and surveys reporting comparable growth in their desire to engage online faith-sharing after the retreat. While Millennials were the most likely on the pre-retreat survey to say they had "a lot" of experience with it, roughly the same percentage of each generation (excepting the sole Generation Z participant who completed the surveys) indicated on the post-retreat survey their intention to share their faith online "more often" afterwards. Comparing this question's results from both surveys indicates that diverse respondents generally arrived at the same resolution regarding future online faith-sharing.

Question Ten gave similar hints of unity arising from diverse starting points. Whereas younger participants had been the most likely to have online faith-sharing experience before the retreat, Question Ten on the pre-retreat survey found older participants most likely to claim "a lot" of experience with offline faith-sharing beforehand. On the post-retreat survey, however, Question Ten showed a comparable rise in the percentages of Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials intending to share their faith offline "more often" in the future. These responses indicate that members of all ages grew at about the same rate in their desires to share faith offline as well as online.

The above results show group members of all ages growing more comfortable about sharing their faith with others. Additional survey data support this conclusion. Question Twelve on the pre-retreat survey indicates that most respondents of all age cohorts shared a tendency to only "sometimes" think of Facebook as a venue for faith-sharing before the retreat. Recalling the indication of Question Nine that many respondents left the retreat more resolved to share their faith online in the future, a shift toward greater openness about using social media for spiritual conversation seems apparent.

Repeating the question of researcher John Dyer in Chapter One about whether online community constitutes real community, Question Thirteen sought to find if older generations of respondents would tend to answer "no" or "unsure" while younger generations would say "yes," as Dyer found in 2011. The 74 fully participating respondents in 2020 showed no clear generational division on this question in the pre-survey results, suggesting either that older generations had grown more open to online community or else this specific group included a high concentration of older people inclined in that direction. In another positive sign, the percentage of participants calling online community "real" before the retreat increased comparably across generations when the post-retreat survey asked if they considered this particular faith-sharing retreat group in particular to be "real" community. One Millennial even moved from "no" to "yes."

Question Sixteen showed the percentage of retreatants who felt comfortable sharing their faith with others online, as opposed to merely exchanging opinions, likewise increased across generations when asked after the retreat about their comfort with doing so in this group. Nevertheless, the successes reported in this chapter also reveal the Project's limitations. People

still felt less connected online than offline; young people remained few. Millennials were simultaneously the likeliest to change their religious habits and the scarcest retreatants. The next section unpacks what did not go as well as expected, especially with Millennials.

What Did Not Go As Well as Expected

Some inherent limitations of the Project's design necessarily constrain the conclusions of this final chapter, highlighting areas which did not succeed as well as hoped. Rather than reach out directly to the unaffiliated, the Project targeted self-identified believers with some degree of pre-existing religious observance and affiliation, following the apostolic insight that a committed group of disciples must be formed before reaching outside the circle of believers. Using the time-tested *Exercises* to help deepen their relationships conversationally, the Project hoped to form retreatants in the collaborative dialogue skills necessary to effectively evangelize others online. The primary limitations of this approach arose from the Project recruiting participants largely through *America's* Facebook page, an audience that skews toward older people with a pre-existing interest in Ignatian spirituality, and from the vertical focus of the *Exercises* on the relationship with God getting lost to some extent in the emphasis of the daily video prompts on horizontal faith-sharing. As a result, the retreat impacted older believers more than the coveted audience of younger disaffiliated Christians that Chapters One and Two discussed, making the Project more effective as a remote preparation for digital outreach than as an exercise of it.

For the sake of future learning and practice, it will now be important to identify the ways in which some aspects of the Project did not go as well as expected. Broadly, this Facebook group achieved a notable spirit of communion across generations in a way that simultaneously highlighted its dependence on an offline communal tradition (in this case, Ignatian spirituality, as

presented by a Jesuit priest moderator who served in the role of retreat guide) to ground its online interactions. Despite this intergenerational spirit of communion, the survey responses highlight the ongoing challenge of reaching young people, who struggled in this retreat to maintain a group commitment with the regularity of older participants.

To what extent did this Facebook retreat group impact coveted Millennials? As the last section indicated, it seems this group did largely integrate the twelve participating Millennials with older generations in a common faith-based experience, but the small sample size and some lingering generational differences in the surveys make it hard to generalize many firm conclusions about them. Chapters One and Two observed religious affiliation tends to decline and digital literacy to rise with each new Christian generation. That means a major goal of online religious outreach must be to form older participants in new forms of media interaction, preferably in contact with younger participants who for their part will grow in traditional Catholic wisdom. To that end, this Project indicated that older participants, especially among the majority Boomers grew in comfort with online faith-sharing, but it did not so precisely identify the positive effects of their interaction on Millennials and Post-millennials.

Question Three of the post-retreat survey found that older generations reported logging in more often than younger cohorts, a result that group conversations suggested may have been partly due to the greater free time that retired and coronavirus-isolated elders enjoyed. It may also have been partly due to the differently religious and unpredictable media habits of Millennials, qualities which defy the easy categorizations of traditional indicators. This investigator noted that older members of the Facebook group tended to participate at fixed times each day; younger members logged on at unpredictable intervals to view and discuss multiple

days' videos at once. This result implies that the Project's asynchronous design may hold promise for future interactions: As a middle ground compromise for both sides of the digital divide, the choice of Facebook for both videos and faith-sharing threads instead of Zoom (the live-time, scheduled extreme suggested by some older participants) or Instagram (the randomized, asynchronous extreme proposed by some younger participants) facilitated a reasonably interactive exchange broadly accessible to all ages. At the same time, these clashing generational styles of participation defy any attempt to judge one as better than the other, since participants of all ages reported positive experiences of the group regardless of whether they scheduled their logins or joined in at irregular intervals.

Based on the relatively small number of Millennials who remained for the entire Project, it remains impossible to say how this asynchronous flexibility impacted those who did not finish the retreat. As a result, the Project was unable to conclude anything definitive about methodology other than asynchronous presentation was a reasonable compromise between the competing values of younger participants who desired flexibility to participate spontaneously and older retreatants who preferred fixed meeting times with live video interaction. Synchronous presentation might have had clearer values, but not across all age groups.

Looking at the ideas of Chapters Three and Four in terms of generations, it will now be possible to conclude that the easiest cohort for this Facebook group to reach were English-speaking Baby Boomers, mostly women, with a pre-existing interest in Ignatian spirituality. The hardest to reach were younger internet users, men, people without a pre-existing interest in Catholicism or Ignatian spirituality, and people living in non-English-speaking countries. With only twelve Millennials completing the retreat and surveys, certain generational tensions left the

Project with more questions than answers. On the issue of shifting their atttitudes and habits toward a point of religious conversion, for example, a willingness to change their religious behavior was clearer among younger participants than older ones. Question Seven showed that larger percentages of younger respondents pledged to participate "more often" in religious activities offline and online after the retreat, whereas older members proved most likely to do so "about the same as always." This suggests older retreatants sought confirmation of their existing faith commitments more than outright conversion, a valid outcome envisioned by the *Exercises* that nevertheless did not intersect with younger members who sought greater personal change.

The fact that the two oldest generations reported the most "more than once a week" participation in offline and online religious events before the retreat suggests they felt less need to change in this area of religious participation. But the greater willingness of Millennial participants to change their faith practices suggests that more participants from this generation may bear encouraging fruit. Additionally, the paradoxes of Millennial experience that Chapter One sketched remained present in other areas, not yielding any clear successes. For example, Millennials reported the most neutral feelings about social media on Question Eight of the pre-retreat survey, despite Chapter One's report that they use it the most of any generation in existing research. Asked about their satisfaction with the use of Facebook for this faith-sharing retreat, a larger percentage of participants from the oldest two generations reported on Question Eight of the post-retreat survey feeling "highly satisfied" with the use of Facebook for this group than the percentage who described social media as "highly important" to them before it. Older generations evidently experienced a bigger shift from negative expectations of social media to positive experiences of the Facebook group than Millennials.

Because of the limited sampling of Millennials, the presence of only one Post-millennial, and the failure of the surveys to envision these paradoxical outcomes, the Project also generated scarce data to draw many firm conclusions comparing the generations to each other. Befitting their respective strengths, it might simply be concluded that Millennials entered the retreat with more fixed attitudes about their social media habits and Boomers with more fixed attitudes about their faith habits. It might also be said that the older generations, while not desiring strongly to change their religious habits, shifted their attitudes about digital media in ways that more clearly contributed to group unity on some points.

On some other aspects of spiritual growth, the Millennials nevertheless hinted at stronger spiritual growth than older participants. In Question Fourteen on the retreat outcomes, the twelve Millennial survey respondents reported the highest percentage of any generation to receive the grace of a deeper relationship with God. This also made them the only age group where more people connected on a deep level with God through the Facebook group format than reported seeking this outcome before the retreat. That represents a notable exception to the general conclusion that respondents connected more readily on this retreat with each other, and perhaps with themselves, than with God. At best, it may be speculated that perhaps Millennials had God less in mind before the retreat, allowing them more room to grow in this area just as they desired to attend religious activities more often afterwards.

Millennials also reported themselves as the most willing to participate in more online faith-sharing groups through *America Media*, with 91.67 percent of this generation (11 out of 12 respondents) saying “yes” on Question Fifteen of the post-retreat survey. Older generations, despite leaving the retreat with a more positive experience of the digital group and an increased

willingness to share faith online, seemingly departed with greater desires to share faith offline than to continue participating in online faith-sharing groups. On this point, the retreat may have moved some retreatants in different directions, deepening their generational tendencies rather than overcoming them. More specifically, it remained unclear whether younger participants overcame their well-researched generational mistrust of older authority figures in a way that made Boomers' online interactions with them an unqualified positive outcome, since the small number of Millennials made it impossible to discern a desire to evangelize their peers flowing out of the example of their interactions with older participants.

As this chapter suggested earlier, many of the Project's before and after survey results supported the conclusion that Facebook helped all generations grow more comfortable about sharing faith with people of different backgrounds in an online retreat setting. Since no generational differences arose in the last four questions of the surveys, which addressed the particular graces of each week of the *Exercises*, unity-in-diversity would seem to describe the particular outcomes of each seven-day session as well. In their exchanges around the subject matter of the four weeks of the *Exercises*, Chapter Three's narrative showed older participants sharing the wisdom of their past experience and younger participants sharing more current struggles. But at the same time, all generations struggled equally to actually receive the graces of each session, making it impossible to conclude much of anything about the specific goals and outcomes for each weeklong session of the *Exercises*. Besides the notable increase in a common desire to suffer with Jesus on the cross that Chapter Four reported for the third week, perhaps reflective of the painful isolation that all participants shared in their Covid-19 quarantines, respondents' sense of receiving the graces of the other three weeks dropped from before to after

the 30-day retreat, denoting a weakened sense of connection to God. This might speak to the limitations of the way of putting religious questions that the *Exercises* imposed on the moderator, insofar as St. Ignatius employs assumptions which challenge contemporary sentiments.

It might finally be concluded from this section that the Project's focus on reaching Catholics in various stages of affiliation succeeded more clearly at forming older retreatants in digital discipleship than at strengthening the faith bonds of large numbers of younger retreatants through contact with the communal spiritual tradition of the *Exercises*. Several older respondents shared their offline wisdom and experience of Ignatian retreats during the online discussion in ways that younger newcomers to the *Exercises* vocally appreciated; there were just too few Millennials and too few clearly secularized participants to foster any deep conversations about obstacles to faith. The group did help Catholics of varied affiliations deepen their faith and learn Ignatian prayer tools to more effectively share it with others; it just focused more on older people who already had some grounding in these areas than on younger people who did not.

This reality does not diminish the positive retreatant experiences that Chapter Three narrated anecdotally and that Chapter Four analyzed in the surveys: the formation of older disciples to interact more easily with younger people on their native soil of social media remains a success worth duplicating in future online faith-based groups. It simply shows the limitation that pursuing participants from a distinct community, in this case *America Media*, imposed on the generalization of results into conclusions in certain areas. Because the group drew from *America's* regular media consumers, it inevitably favored older, religious, educated women with an Ignatian interest. This made it difficult to get a broad sample of Millennials and Generation Z. This is not a criticism of *America*. It is merely an observation that future iterations of this Project

will likely benefit from engaging millennials not already involved with *America*—an essential discernment that *America* may wish to engage in terms of strategy, since translating Ignatian spirituality for larger numbers of young people could result in bringing them more into an active faith within the orbit of Catholic media online.

Chapter Conclusion: Additional Adjustments for the Future

The previous section of this chapter on unintended outcomes in this Project underlines the ongoing need to find more creative ways to evangelize religious outsiders through social networking, accompanying them conversationally in charity and empathy. Emerging adults increasingly excel at digital interaction but have not learned from their parents the art of spiritual conversation necessary to develop their faith. No matter what believers do for them online, it remains better to do something than nothing. Yet Catholics, mindful of digital trends, must continue to evolve beyond simply posting YouTube videos and calling the private viewing of them an online retreat. Creating ever more interactive ways in which younger generations can come to both deepen faith and share it will be important. To better reflect this participatory theology of social communications, this final section will suggest additional adjustments to this Project for future groups, ensuring a fuller communal witness to disaffiliated emerging adults.

The use of a Facebook group and of the *Exercises* remain sound elements of this Project that retreatants of all generations reported experiencing in a positive way. The *Exercises* provided a serviceable framework for the group's sharing of faith in Christ, Cardinal Francis Arinze's definition of evangelization that Chapter One adopted for this Project. The key adjustments will be that future repetitions of this Project recruit in other Facebook groups where young people hang out, including secular groups, and consider expanding beyond Facebook to

emerging platforms that will grow in popularity over time. This more complex outreach will require potential moderators to join such groups and platforms, beginning the process of learning and invitation to discern the most fruitful places of encounter. In the fast-moving world of social networking, where even the recent data of these chapters will soon represent only one current in the ever-flowing stream of participatory media trends, it will also require ongoing initiatives to adapt traditional Catholic spirituality like that of the *Exercises* in ever more-creative ways. One ongoing challenge will be to continue including older Catholics—honoring the research of Chapters One and Two that showed the need for more settled believers to model and invite younger people into the faith group they represent—in a way that does not drive off less religious emerging adults. Experimentation will be a critical but potentially beneficial way to hone this process of inviting the right mix of participants, guiding any effort to reach fruitfully into the digital enclaves of millennials who operate well beyond traditional Catholic social networks.

Further refinement to the surveys will need to happen. This tweaking will include finding better ways to help participants articulate their takeaways from the retreat. The relationship with God is a subtle aspect of spirituality that the existing survey questions in this Project may not have been allusive enough to capture; future surveys might refocus the outcomes for each of the sessions around how participants influence each other as older-younger conversation partners and as peers. That could involve an ongoing dialogue about the process and means of digital evangelization in itself. For now, Facebook remains the largest social media site, but that will change as newer platforms like Instagram continue to grow and reshape human interactions.

Quantitatively, this Project learned that sustained and serious online effort can impact behavior and attitudes more measurably in the interpersonal exchanges than in a personal sense

of connection to a higher power. This relational dimension of conversion merits careful scrutiny in an age of personal isolation. The Project showed that when Catholics engage in a digital faith-sharing community for an intensive period of retreat, they can develop the common experiences and knowledge necessary to lead such groups themselves. Future surveys might identify additional expectations related more specifically to this formation and where it leads.

Time will always constrain Catholic social media outreach, since newcomers must spend many hours honing the digital literacy needed to lead or participate effectively in a moderated group like this *Spiritual Exercises* retreat. At the same time, simply allowing people to use a Catholic digital platform unmoderated or without non-ideological reflection material has fostered toxic culture war encounters rather than evangelization. Social media calls out for intentional leadership by digital disciples who set examples of selfless charity in accompanying others to new frontiers, of zeal to discuss the essentials of faith in a unifying but challenging spiritual framework like that of the *Exercises*, and of a desire to collaborate online as part of a group. Daniella Zsupan-Jerome, a theologian and former media consultant to the U.S. bishops, noted in 2014 that the Pauline image of many parts united in one body will become a visible and convincing online witness if more and more Catholics willingly embrace a shared responsibility to communicate: "The digital presence of the Church likewise needs a unifying foundation, an element that moves these parts from interconnectedness toward an expression of communion."[1]

Regarding the radical change of life or the strengthening of existing vocational commitments that evangelization traditionally invites in texts like the *Exercises*, this chapter has

[1] Daniella Zsupan-Jerome, *Connected Toward Communion: The Church and Social Communication in the Digital Age* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2014), 127.

hinted that the Project was able to demonstrate some positive results in terms of personal conversion, but that, with reference to the Ignatian theme of each week, it could only show that people's expectations on entering the retreat changed during it. What might have been more "God-focused" language before the retreat seems to have become more "group focused" language in the post-retreat survey. In other words, vertical expectations became horizontal interactions. This is not a bad outcome because one of the Project's hopes was that Catholics would be able to interact in positive, respectful, and affirming ways. This Project showed that such life-sustaining interaction is possible online, a particularly hopeful sign in the midst of fairly divisive exchanges on social media that remain commonplace even among self-identified Catholics today, as earlier chapters noted.

To conclude this Project, it may be helpful to reiterate its partial success in addressing the sweeping concerns of these chapters offered as a case study. Chapter One surveyed secular media research to justify shifting from a packaged to a participatory media culture that engages emerging generations of digital natives. Outlining the pastoral crisis that sociologist Christian Smith sees in the breakdown of intergenerational faith transmission, exacerbated by the digital age, the first chapter set up Chapter Two's survey of magisterial literature and of post-conciliar papal invitations to shift to a participatory style of ecclesial communication that moves from proclamation to conversation. The ideas of *communio*, synodality, and New Evangelization provided theological grounding for this Spiritual Exercises faith-sharing group to engage 74 respondents' relationships with God, others, and themselves in this way. Chapter Three described Lonergan's notion of a shift of consciousness as the pastoral methodology for the relational spiritual growth envisioned in the design and implementation of this collaborative

initiative aimed largely at existing members of *America's* Facebook groups. Chapter Four then gave the survey results, setting up this final chapter's conclusions and recommendations.

This Project showed overall that, whatever reluctance Catholics might have in sharing faith, getting the opportunity to do so online can increase their capacity for such interchange. The Project's attempt to support this growth, rooted in Ignatian spiritual foundations familiar to the moderator and offering a big draw to the *America Media* consumers who participated, was far from perfect. Yet the basic experience of retreatants growing comfortable with spiritual conversation in the online group, deepening their interaction as they evolved intentionally into a smaller core of 74 participants, highlighted some key findings of these chapters. Digital evangelization can be efficacious when believers shift their mindset beyond the individualized consumption of prepackaged audiovisual prayer material to a more conversational approach that seeks to nurture communal religious experiences. As Chapter One reported, Smith found parents who discuss faith with their children in a Catholic environment do better at passing it on, witnessing to the power of faith-sharing to influence young people.

This Project supports the premise that Catholics can grow in their capacity to share faith through a method of dialogue. On social networks, the solution to Catholicism's generational crisis of disaffiliation may be found in evangelizing communities of discipleship who promote this interactive spirit of inclusivity that extends a spirit of hospitality to outsiders. In a participatory approach to Catholic media, dialogue partners work together as part of a team for the common good, allowing the fruits of their personal prayer to flow out to others online.

The final suggested adjustment of this Project, then, evokes the first proclamation of the early evangelists: Share the Good News. Nothing substitutes for the active, joyful, and selfless

desire to accompany people online and offline by all means possible. No digital outreach will succeed without a firm decision to support people's spiritual growth charitably as they strive to deepen their relationships with God, one another, and themselves. All people who go online seek connection. Online interaction by itself does not give them loving relationships with others, but it can extend and reflect the state of a faith community's offline unity in diversity, and that can be a very positive influence when digital disciples do it in an intentional way that brings others closer to God. For too long, Catholics have been behind the digital curve. But if twelve apostles could start a global religious movement, perhaps the ongoing efforts to develop digital disciples through a Project like this one may help renew it.

Appendix One: Project Technology Plan

The following outline presents this project's technology plan, including detailed features of design and implementation, the latter of which will be summarized to conclude this chapter. The project adapts this format from a sample technology plan provided to this researcher by the late Sister Caroline Cerveny of the Digital Disciple Network, who credited it to a Dr. Lebell Plath:

1. Introduction
    a. *Project Mission Statement.*
    "*America Media* is the leading provider of editorial content for thinking Catholics and those who want to know what Catholics are thinking. *America Media* leads the conversation about faith and culture by producing excellent, unique, relevant and accessible content across multiple platforms. Our contributors are the principal figures in the American church; the decision-makers and opinion leaders who lead the ecclesial and civic debate about religion, society, politics and the arts. Those with something to say to the American church say it in *America*: popes and presidents; Nobel laureates; Pulitzer Prize winners; world-renowned scholars; and distinguished men and women of letters. Our flagship magazine, *America*, has been published continuously since 1909, making it one of the oldest periodicals in the United States today."[1]

    To "lead the conversation about faith and culture" with these consumers of a Catholic digital platform, this online Ignatian faith-sharing group hosted in collaboration with the *America Media* Facebook page invited people to join the group under the condition of participation in its research. Based on research literature, this project predicted a qualitative improvement over the quality of *America's* usual online reader comments, moving from an angry exchange of opinions into a networked community of people sharing faith. By growing closer to God, themselves, and each other, participants seem likely to report an evangelizing experience in their survey responses.

    b. *Technology Philosophy.*
    In 2014, *America Magazine* became *America Media*, a web portal with the following platforms: *America: the Jesuit Review* flagship print magazine; *America Press* book platform; *America This Week* radio show on The Catholic Channel's SiriusXM 129; *America Films* video news reports, *America Person to*

[1] See https://www.americamagazine.org/about-america-media.

Person lectures and pilgrimages; four Facebook groups for discussion of topics like politics and books; podcasts; and The Jesuit Post young adult blog. Engagement with new media has driven this rebranding, making it essential to the mission that consumers engage content in discussion with staff on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other new media platforms. Current *America* staff and contributors have been required to master digital technology in an effort to engage readers with a more participative style.

c. *Vision for the future regarding technology*.
America hopes to use social media technology to evangelize the digital conversation by creating a more intentional space for conversation. Rather than allow toxic debates to continue in discussion forums, which the company has started removing entirely from digital articles about controversial subjects, *America* seeks to create a space for people to come together as community rather than treat its platforms as a battleground for warring factions that divide rather than unite.

2. Background Information
   a. *Demographics*.
      i. Including this researcher, *America Media* had 69 staff and volunteers in its masthead at the time of this project.[2]

      ii. *America: The Jesuit Review* Facebook page (one of several social media platforms including Twitter) reached about 110,000 followers when this project launched in September 2020.[3]

      iii. The project's audience consisted broadly of "Catholic media consumers," defined simply as people who consume Catholic media content like *America* and this group itself, invited primarily from existing Ignatian spirituality-based Facebook groups. They included people of several religions and none, old and young, from several continents.

      iv. To carry out this project with the support of *America's* editors, this researcher received editor's access to the Facebook page and authorization to create a closed Facebook group for the Ignatian faith-sharing retreat community. *America* had four closed Facebook discussion groups at the time of this group's launch on August 30: *America* Facebook page's U.S.

[2] See https://www.americamagazine.org/editors-and-staff.
[3] See https://www.facebook.com/americamag/.

Politics Catholic Discussion Group (2,550 members); Jesuitical: A Podcast for Young Catholics group (4,463 members); Catholic Book Club group (6,212 members); and the *America* Catholic Movie Club group (3,634 members invitation).

b. *Overview of technology planning process.*
America contracted a consulting firm to help us rebrand *America Magazine* (previously considered a print magazine with a web platform) as *America Media* (a Catholic media portal with multiple platforms) and this researcher attended a summer 2014 branding meeting at the company's Manhattan office. Here began the visioning process for a complete technology overhaul that included moving into state-of-the-art office facility elsewhere in Manhattan. As a special contributor on the masthead, this researcher writes a monthly interview series for the website in addition to other regular content and one-off pieces, occasionally for print.

c. *Pastoral Need.*
Based on branding data and analytics, engaging new readers online has become essential to growing *America's* print subscribership and helping it survive as a viable Jesuit evangelization ministry. Senior editors have mentioned the need to evangelize the discussion spaces like the Facebook page as an area for continued growth.

d. *Stakeholders and resources.*
Because so many people find Catholic online "discussions" (Twitter, article comment boxes, Facebook page comments) to be uncharitable exchanges of anger, *America* continues to wrestle with its digital resources: Should it follow the example of many secular media outlets by eliminating all comment boxes on digital media platforms like Facebook, tacitly accepting that civil conversation on new media has become impossible? Or does it continue developing new resources like the Facebook groups to evangelize these conversations with intentional small groups, creating a new model for online community by providing safe spaces for connection-building dialogue? Despite operating several closed Facebook discussion pages on the Facebook page, *America* hasn't formally studied their impact or monitored all of them closely. By creating and monitoring a faith-sharing group on Facebook, this projects seeks to deepen consumer engagement with the Ignatian spirituality brand that *America* represents, generating some targeted survey data to support this model and identify best practices for future closed discussion groups which staff would accompany in a more participatory way. Impact on resources proved minimal; this researcher merely needed permission to create the page and invite consumers from existing groups to

participate. Facebook and St. Ignatius himself provided adequate guidelines for digital etiquette; materials were provided free online, although some participants chose to purchase hard copies.

3. Goals
    a. *Introduction.*
    The project aimed to have one faith-sharing group of at least 25 people stick with a thirty-day virtual retreat from start to end, taking people from any background and any continent. Initiatives included conducting an anonymous pre-retreat survey of participants to gauge their experience of the Facebook discussion and a post-retreat survey at the end to gauge consumer experiences and resolutions moving forward in comparison to the pre-retreat survey.

    b. *Administrative and management goals and initiatives.*
    This researcher worked with two members of the *America* Facebook page administrative team (editors with supervisory access to the page) to monitor the internal analytics of consumer participation in the faith-sharing group. He used Survey Monkey to create the polls, vetting the polling questions with these other editors for feedback before rolling out the group. Finally, he consulted the editors to make sure his project goals aligned with *America's* overall administrative and management goals for digital technology engagements. It seemed important to conduct this faith-sharing project within the broader context of the institutional mission statement and rebranding process mentioned above.

    c. *Communication goals and initiatives.*
    As mentioned above, the project followed the structure of the *Spiritual Exercises*, with announcements made about surveys as well as dates for the retreat and an overview of the four sessions in introductory pre-retreat videos.

    d. *Staff and Volunteer competency goals and initiatives.*
    Fr. Sean Salai, S.J., Special Contributor at *America Media*, facilitated the group; other group administrators included Fr. Sam Sawyer, S.J., Executive Editor and Director of Digital Strategy at *America*, and Zac Davis, Associate Editor at *America*. Mr. Davis and Fr. Sawyer played an active role particularly in shaping the initial launch of the group, offering feedback and suggesting changes to the language of invitation and welcome texts as well as taking the surveys (results excluded from final data) to field test them. They and a couple of others connected to the project remained silent observers throughout the group itself.

4. Current Technology Status

a. *Assessment of staff and volunteers.*
Staff and volunteers interacted digitally, mostly via Facebook messages, to assess the progress and quality of the group.

b. *Inventory*.
America already had the aforementioned Facebook page and closed discussion groups operating, creating a foundation to build upon in proceeding with this new group and measure its results in a more intentional way. Major components of technology already in place include the following

i. Website: *America's* Facebook page, containing four groups with people already vetted as reliable consumers looking to take the conversation deeper, provided the primary field of people to evangelize in this group.

ii. Computers: In a networked digital world, the moderator and participants proved able to experience the group on any computer or smart device, whether at a public library computer or on an iPhone.

iii. Databases: *America* keeps internal data on Facebook analytics that proved useful for comparison in analyzing the results of this project's two surveys for comparison and future recommendations.

iv. Video access: The moderator livestreamed all videos through Facebook itself, without any issues arising for participants in accessing them.

v. Audio/Video equipment: The moderator used simple Apple earbuds with microphone for his laptop (a 2011-model HP Elitebook 2570p) and for his iPhone 8 when he needed to post videos away from home.

vi. Existing accounts on social media: This group drew from the existing *America* Facebook page to identify and screen people for participation. Participants needed only a personal Facebook page to access the group, in which they participated under their own names, kept confidential from outsiders through designating the group as "secret."

vii. Existing content in digital form: To avoid looking down at a printed book on camera when streaming daily videos through his laptop, the moderator placed a PDF copy of his edition of the *Spiritual Exercises* next to the Facebook window on his screen, enabling him to look directly into the

camera and speak more personally without appearing to read the meditations from a page.

c. *Status of current technology initiatives.*
As mentioned above, *America* has accomplished a lot with new media technology in recent years, maintaining an active Twitter account in addition to the Facebook page. The branding workshop in 2014 asked the entire staff to change its attitudes about Catholic media work, moving from regimented traditional roles (editor, writer, etc.) to fluid digital media roles (journalists who write, edit, interview, get interviewed on camera or by podcast, and even facilitate a Facebook group) in which everyone communicates on an equal playing field. Some long-timers who remembered cutting the magazine pages by hand well into the 1990s felt uncertain about the changes, pushing back on everything from terminology (for instance, not understanding the focus group preference for calling *America* a "smart" rather than a "learned" take on Catholic culture) to the sense that posting digital content now felt more real to people than writing things just in the print magazine. This project explored the possibility for deepening the sense of Ignatian community that *America* fosters through a more sophisticated experience of online group formation than the brand has provided even in recent years.

d. *Review of existing professional development activities.*
Although many *America* staff and volunteers work remotely, the company does host regular trainings (for things like the new film studio) and continuing education in its Manhattan home office, and staff members participate in the Catholic Press Association.

e. *List of current resources for ongoing training and technical assistance.*
Since this project relied primarily on our Facebook administrative team for supervision and technical support, it required only participation from editors as resources for this project, with IT support unnecessary. The trick moving forward will be to find a way to train others in facilitating an online faith-sharing group in a similar fashion.

f. *Support resources.*
America has access to various materials, software, and services like Catholic News Service (CNS) photographs for media work. Most of it proved unnecessary for this simple experiment in online faith-sharing, although this researcher did duplicate *America's* burgundy-and-white color scheme and borrow a masthead graphic for the surveys. For survey instrumentation, Survey Monkey provided detailed analytics and generated helpful graphics for the survey mechanisms used.

g. *Assessment of current technology support staffing.*
America had a "web editor" as recently as 2014, when it treated the website as a mere platform for the print magazine before rebranding, but it has since moved to a system where the entire staff must be conversant in the use of social media like Facebook. *America* still contracts with an outside IT firm for basic maintenance of such things as email accounts, but various editors direct the new media channels (Facebook, Twitters, The Jesuit Post young adult blog, etc.) in-house using the support structures of the platforms themselves. Father Sawyer coordinates much of the digital content and remained the primary point person on this project, able to answer most questions without needing Facebook's help desk.

5. Design
   a. *Strategy for digital outreach design*
   As mentioned above, it seemed important to respect visual and written consistency when discussing *America: The Jesuit Review*. Visual imagery for this Facebook "secret" discussion group thus included an approved logo and wording referring to *America's* brand at the top of the pre-retreat and post-retreat surveys.

   The actions of this plan emerged from a basic conviction that the quality of online spiritual conversation remains poor at best, calling for fresh approaches. Simply inviting people from existing Facebook groups proved an ample outreach to marginally engaged consumers poised to go deeper, as *America's* closed groups have drawn people in the thousands, well above what's needed for a useful digital consumer sample here. Timing considerations for the project included finding the ideal time of the year for participants to stay engaged; the facilitator settled on September for the preparatory evangelization period and October for the retreat based on the recommendation of several colleagues that people coming back from summer tend to be freshest before the holidays begin.

   b. *Hardware, facilities and network priorities.*
   No hardware or technology upgrades proved necessary to implement this plan on an existing social network. It also required no broadband internet connection since Facebook essentially represents a bulletin board, making the stress of trying to enforce synchronous participation unnecessary. Group members could post each week as able, so long as they participated in some form.

   c. *Internet/Web/Software priorities.*
   The top priority became establishing a workable daily format and "netiquette" for the Facebook group. With an excellent digital footprint and presence on social

networks, however, most members of the group arrived well-versed in civility. Although this moderator streamed videos live, members could watch anytime.

d. *Content creation priorities.*
Utilizing the *Spiritual Exercises,* a Catholic retreat program marked by 500 years of proven success, made it unnecessary to generate any original content other than the moderator's reflection prompts from his printed book and additional explanations in participant exchanges.

e. *Services, support and maintenance priorities.*
The *America* editors observing the group provided all of the support and maintenance help needed, including a source of feedback to discuss any questions that arose about how to best utilize the Facebook tool kit.

6. Benefits and Impact on Outreach Program
    a. *Integration of the technology into the current outreach program.*
    By promoting this online faith-sharing pilot group as a "secret" Facebook discussion page, *America* continued digital outreach to its consumers via its existing closed discussion pages. But with a more intentional goal of generating actionable data on what works and what doesn't work in this setting, it sought to evangelize readers in addition to informing them about Ignatian spirituality.

    b. How the new technology will enhance the outreach and inreach programs.
    Facebook has become a tested brand for online interaction; it engages a wide range of ages and allows for a greater variety of multimedia posting and ease of interaction than the limitations of a web article comment box or an exchange on Twitter. It also allows for the privacy and confidentiality (through its "secret" group format) essential to all faith-sharing experiences as well as internal systems for tracking metrics.

7. Implementation Plan
    a. Hardware, facilities, and network acquisition and implementation.
    The moderator received access to *America's* internal analytics and joined its existing four Facebook groups to familiarize himself with them in June 2020.

    b. Internet/Web/Software procurement.
    The moderator received editor-level access to *America* Facebook page in summer 2020 and invited members of existing groups into the new "Spiritual Exercises Faith-Sharing Retreat Group" in August 2020.

c. *Services, support, maintenance and upgrades.*
The moderator established a method of communication and supervision with the *America* editors in August 2020.

d. *Professional development and training.*
The moderator oriented participants to the format and sought feedback on the pre-retreat survey in September 2020.

e. *Staffing to support use of technology.*
America provided two staff point people to monitor the group as ghost observers.

f. *Funding sources.*
The moderator did not require any funding other than a monthly fee for Survey Monkey to conduct his research, which his religious order covered.

g. *Budget.*
The moderator created a budget from his religious order to cover Survey Monkey's monthly subscription fee of $28.46.

8. Monitoring, Evaluating and Revising the Plan
    a. *Process for plan monitoring, evaluation, feedback and revision.*
    The moderator ran the group in October 2020, but also included a September orientation period to discuss the format with participants and make adjustments to the group's needs.

    b. *Process for reporting to stakeholders.*
    This researcher gave a full report on survey results, implementation progress, problems, successes, and status reprinted in Chapter Four that he shared with the *America* staff in November 2020.

    c. *Timeline for plan revisions.*
    Acting on feedback from his editors, this researcher reported recommendations reprinted in Chapter Five aimed at tweaking the plan for future implementation and adaptation to different Catholic media contexts.

Appendix Two: Texts of Facebook Messages to Participants

The *America Media* Facebook page had 110,000 followers when the investigator created this "Spiritual Exercises Faith-Sharing Retreat" group on August 8, 2020.

Facebook Invitation to Group posted at *America* Facebook page's U.S. Politics Catholic Discussion Group (2,550 members), Jesuitical: A Podcast for Young Catholics group (4,463 members), Catholic Book Club group (6,212 members), *America* Catholic Movie Club group (3,634 members as of 8/30/20 invitation), Sean Salai, S.J., Author Facebook page (722 followers), and the SLU Catholic Studies Program Facebook page (734 followers):

> Hello everyone! I'm a Jesuit contributor to *America* who will be piloting a 30-day faith-sharing retreat on October 1-31 that follows the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. In a closed and private Facebook group, I'll be posting daily video reflections with faith-sharing prompts from my new devotional edition of the *Exercises*, inviting participants to share responses in writing or by video. Data from surveys, and possibly some anonymous quotes from the group, will be used for my Catholic University of *America* D.Min treatise that researches online faith-sharing. If you're interested in participating, we ask only that you complete a survey before and a survey after to help us study the possibility of future digital faith-sharing groups. All are welcome to join: https://www.facebook.com/groups/321654799075791

Group Description: Welcome to the *Spiritual Exercises* faith-sharing retreat group, an *America* Media-sponsored test project! From October 1 to October 31, *America* contributor Fr. Sean Salai SJ will post a daily guided video meditation with faith-sharing questions out of his new devotional edition of the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, inviting participants to write or post a video response to the questions each day. Participants are asked to take a survey before the group begins (it's pinned to the top of the group page) and one after the end (to be pinned then) to help *America* gather data for possible future digital communities. Fr. Salai is coordinating this group as part of his work for a D.Min. degree at Catholic University. His research focuses on

understanding how people can use digital communities as part of their faith lives. Data from the surveys and some anonymous quotes from the group will be used in his treatise. Thank you for joining us!

“Spiritual Exercises Faith-Sharing Retreat Group” Facebook introduction post 8/30/20:

> Welcome to our Ignatian faith-sharing retreat group that will follow the *Spiritual Exercises* with daily video reflections and faith-sharing prompts for 30 days! Please turn your notifications on for this group. A video introduction with instructions for participation will be posted soon. Data from surveys before and after the Oct. 1-31 retreat, as well as some anonymous quotes from interactions, will be used in my Catholic University of America D.Min treatise that researches online faith-sharing. At the end of September, the group will become "hidden" on Facebook to stop accepting new members and respect privacy. Please take this anonymous pre-group survey to help us get to know you a little before we begin: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LTSYC96

Announcement of 9/25/20 about end of introductory weeks and start of retreat:

> Next Wednesday 9/30, we will shift from being a private and visible ("closed") Facebook group into a private and invisible ("secret") group to undertake the Oct. 1-30 faith-sharing retreat with post-retreat survey (to follow up on the pre-retreat survey still posted under Announcements) on Oct. 31, during which we won't be accepting any more members into the group. Daily guided reflection videos with faith-sharing questions to share about in the comment box below each video will be posted during October. If you have any questions about the retreat that we should discuss as a group, please ask! I'm excited to see what the Lord has in store for us as we seek to grow closer to God, ourselves and one another.

Message of 10/3/20 providing PDF copy of *Spiritual Exercises* devotional edition:

> Hello everyone! Since some people have requested written copies of the prelections and reflection questions for each day's retreat video, and it would be too much to post everything, I'm attaching here a free PDF copy of my Spiritual Exercises devotional edition for those who find it helpful and don't wish to purchase a hard copy or look up other translations online by the section numbers I'm sharing. Enjoy!

Message of 10/30/20 providing post-retreat survey link:

> When you finish Day 30 of our 30-day Spiritual Exercises faith-sharing retreat, reflecting on the final video from October 30 and sharing your comments, please fill out this post-retreat Survey Monkey questionnaire to assist my research into online evangelization for America Media and for my Doctor of Ministry work at The Catholic University of

America. This survey on the October 1-30 retreat videos will remain open between October 31 and November 7. I may ask some of you to quote anonymously from your comments on certain videos in my final paper. Thanks be to God for this opportunity we have had to grow in relationship with ourselves, God, and one another through the group! https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SVDZJ5B

Appendix Three: Topical Timeline of Retreat Videos

Pre-Retreat Invitation, Discernment, and Orientation Period: August 30-September 30

August 30

The moderator creates the "Spiritual Exercises Faith-Sharing Retreat Group" and shares invitation text with a link to the Facebook group in existing *America* groups as well as two other Ignatian groups; he posts the Survey Monkey link to the pre-retreat questionnaire on the group page and pins it under the "Announcements" section.

August 31

The moderator posts a welcome note with instructions to complete the survey. Participants begin a daily practice of conversing and interacting with him and with each other about the topic and their experience of this Facebook format in the comment box below the video.

September 1-7

The moderator posts a short video each day reading through his historical preface to his edition of the *Spiritual Exercises*, section by section, and engages in conversation with participants in the comment box below videos as a template to follow. He announces that daily videos will be posted each morning sometime before noon U.S. Central Standard Time, with guided reflection and faith-sharing prompts to journal and then share about in the comment box.

September 8

Introductory video on the Anima Christi (Soul of Christ) prayer reprinted at the front of most editions of the *Spiritual Exercises.*

September 9

Introductory video on common traditional prayers used during the *Exercises.* The moderator begins sharing short introductions and reflection questions from his book, inviting participants to post their response to the prompts in the comment box below each video starting this day.

September 10

Introductory video posted on spiritual reading (or movies) to help focus during the *Exercises.*

September 11

Introductory video presents St. Ignatius's "Rules for Eating" (SpEx #210).

September 12

Video presents St. Ignatius's own introduction to the *Exercises*, the 20 introductory annotations (#1-20) which open the book.

September 13

Video presents the premise of the *Exercises* that St. Ignatius shares in his subtitle (#21) to the title of the book following his introduction.

September 14

Video presents the presupposition of the good that St. Ignatius articulates (#22) not only as a basis for charitable interactions between retreatants and their spiritual guides, but as a reminder to presume charitable intentions from others in general as a matter of etiquette.

September 15

Video presents the brief catechesis on morals (#32) that St. Ignatius provides for the First Week to help retreatants reflect on how to redirect their thoughts, words, and actions toward God.

September 16

Introductory video presents the recommendations of St. Ignatius for general confession and communion during the First Week (#44) for those so moved to this form of self-reflection.

September 17

Introductory video presents the meditation on hell (#65) as a sample of the topics St. Ignatius presents during the First Week, discussing a template for how faith-sharing retreat will proceed.

September 18

Video presents a reflection on God's love for sinners with a brief note from #71 of the *Exercises*, to be elaborated and repeated October 7 with a meditation on death at the end of the first week.

September 19

Introductory video presents additional recommendations St. Ignatius offers (#73) to help retreatants enter more deeply into prayer interiorly and exteriorly during the First Week.

September 20

Video presents the Rule of Penance St. Ignatius offers (#82) as his tenth additional recommendation for the First Week to guide retreatants seeking to practice more disciplined habits of eating, sleep, and other ascetical topics.

September 21

Video presents the First Week Rules for the Discernment of Spirits (#313) that St. Ignatius offers to help retreatants discern what comes from God and what comes from somewhere else in moments of consolation, desolation, and dryness in prayer.

September 22

Video presents the Application of Senses (#121) that St. Ignatius proposes as a method for using the sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste to reflect more affectively on the mysteries of the life of Jesus starting in Week Two.

September 23

Video presents the Second Week Recommendations (#127) St. Ignatius offers to help people shift from reflecting on human brokenness and God's love in Week One to reflecting on the life of Jesus beginning in Week Two.

September 24

Video presents introductory comments of St. Ignatius to discerning a vocation or state of life (#135) starting in the Second Week. Moderator reminds people that they may take what they like and leave the rest from these introductory videos, perhaps even returning to them as relevant during the retreat itself in October.

September 25

Video presents the Second Week Rules for Discernment of Spirits (#328) aimed particularly at helping people who face challenges after making inital progress in the spiritual life.

September 26

Video presents the reflection of St. Ignatius on the three kinds of people (#149) who respond to the call to follow Jesus in very different ways.

September 27

Video presents the thoughts of St. Ignatius on perfecting a state of life already chosen (#189) by finding a vocation within one's vocation, making a decision about how to live out a lifelong choice more intentionally each day in smaller ways.

September 28

Introductory video presents the simple meditation points which St. Ignatius offers in an appendix on the Mysteries of the Life of Our Lord (#261) which retreatants pray over in the Bible.

September 29

Video presents some introductory comments of Fr. Charles De Place, the original French-language translator and editor of this edition of the *Exercises,* to the Third Week theme of suffering with Jesus during the retreat.

September 30

Video presents some introductory comments of Fr. Charles De Place, the original French-language translator and editor of this edition of the *Exercises,* to the Fourth Week theme of rejoicing with the risen Jesus during the last session of the retreat. Moderator also announces that the group has officially gone "secret" by becoming hidden as well as private in preparation for the 30-day retreat beginning the next day.

FIRST SESSION: Week 1 of the Spiritual Exercises, October 1-7

October 1

First Principle and Foundation (SpEx #23) and suggested readings: Lk 6:30-33; *The Imitation of Christ* Book 3 chapters 9, 22, and 26.

October 2

Particular Examen (#24) and suggested passage: Mt 25:1-31; *Imitation of Christ* Book 1 chapters 21, 22; Book 2 chapter 6; Book 4 chapter 7.

October 3

General Examen (#43) and suggested reading: 2 Cor. 2: 7-9.

October 4

First Exercise on Sin (#45) and suggested passage: Ps 139 (Lord You Search Me and You Know Me).

October 5

Second Exercise on Sin (#55) and suggested reading: Lk 12:33-43

October 6

Third Exercise on Sin (#62) repetition of last two days and suggested readings: Rev. 3; Imitation of Christ Book 3 chapter 14.

October 7

Other Exercises: On My Death (#71) and suggested readings: Mt 25:31-46 and Imitation of Christ Book 3 chapter 14.

SECOND SESSION: Week 2 of the Spiritual Exercises, October 8-14

October 8

Call of the King (#91) bridge exercise into Week 2 and suggested readings: Jn 15; Col. 3; Imitation of Christ Book 3 chapters 13-32.

October 9

Exercise on the Incarnation (#101) and suggested readings: Lk 1:26-56; Imitation of Christ Book 2 chapters 1, 7, and 8.

October 10

Exercise on the Nativity (#110) and suggested readings: Lk 2:1-21; Imitation of Christ Book 3 chapters 1, 2, and 18.

October 11

Exercise on the Hidden Life of Jesus (#132-134) and suggested readings: Lk 2:40-52, Imitation of Christ Book 1 chapter 20; Book 3 chapters 44 and 53.

October 12

Exercise on the Two Standards (#136) and suggested readings: Mt 19; Imitation of Christ Book 3 chapters 23, 27, 31, and 56.

October 13

Three Kinds of Humility (#165) and suggested readings: Mt 10; Imitation of Christ Book 1 chapters 15-16; Book 3 chapter 4

October 14

Making a Choice of a Way of Life (#169) and suggested readings: Jn 1; Lk 5; Mt 4; Mk 1; Imitation of Christ Book 3 chapter 54.

THIRD SESSION: Week 3 of the Spiritual Exercises, October 15-21

October 15

Palm Sunday (#287) and suggested readings: Mt 21: 1-11; Mk 11:1-10; Lk 19:29-44; Jn 12:12-19.

October 16

Jesus preaching in the Temple (#288) and suggested reading: Lk 19:47-48.

October 17

Exercise on the Eucharist (#190) and suggested readings: Mt 26: 17-30; Imitation of Christ Book 4 chapters 1-2.

October 18

From the Last Supper to the Agony in the Garden (#200) and suggested readings Mt 26:31-46; Mk 14:27-42; Lk 22:24-46; Jn 13:31-38, 14-17, 18:1-2.

October 19

From Pilate to the Crucifixion (#296) and suggested readings: Mt 27:31-38; Mk 15:20-28; Lk 23:24-38; Jn 19:12-24.

October 20

The Death of Jesus (#297) and suggested readings: Mt 27:39-56; Mk 15:29-41; Lk 23:39-49; Jn 19:25-39.

October 21

The Burial of Jesus (#298) and suggested readings: Mt 27:57-66; Mk 15:42-47; Lk 23:50-56; Jn 19:30-42.

FOURTH SESSION: Week 4 of the Spiritual Exercises, October 22-28

October 22

Jesus Appears to His Mother (#218 and 299).

October 23

Second Apparition of the Risen Christ (#300) with suggested readings: Mt 28:1-7; Mk 16:1-11; Lk 24:1-11; Jn 20:1, 11-18.

October 24

Eighth Apparition of the Risen Christ (#306) with suggested reading: Jn 21:1-25.

October 25

Ninth Apparition of the Risen Christ (#307) with suggested readings: Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:14-20; Lk 24:46-53.

October 26

The Ascension of Jesus Christ (#312) with suggested readings: Acts 1:1, 11.

October 27

Contemplation to Attain the Love of God (#230) and suggested readings: Jn 17; 1 Jn 4; Imitation of Christ Book 3 chapters 5, 6, and 34.

October 28

Second Way of Prayer with the Our Father (#249) guided *lectio divina* method.

END OF RETREAT TRANSITION DAYS: October 29-30

October 29

Rules for the Distribution of Alms (#337) reflecting on how to serve the poor after retreat.

October 30

Rules for Thinking with the Church (#352) reflecting on belonging to the Catholic community and request to do post-group survey in Survey Monkey link pinned to announcements page.

POST-RETREAT DAYS TO COMPLETE SURVEY: October 31-November 7

October 31

Farewell and thank you video, invitation to keep using group, heads-up to watch for more *America* faith-sharing groups, and reminder to submit post-group survey from Survey Monkey that will remain pinned to the top of the announcements page for next seven days until November 7 as people running a few days behind on the asynchronous videos finish the retreat.

Appendix Four: Sample Reflection Texts from the *Spiritual Exercises*

Week One: Other Exercises (#71, On My Death, October 7)

Prelection: God's Love for Sinners

"There is nothing fuller I can tell you beyond what I wrote you and here reconfirm: that you should above all keep in mind that your Lord loves you, as I have no doubt that he does, and that you should respond to him with the same love, paying no heed at all to any evil, foul, or sensual thoughts, to any timidity or tepidity, when they are against your will. For not to have all or some of these thoughts come is something that neither St. Peter nor St. Paul ever achieved. However, even if it cannot be done completely, we achieve a great deal by paying no heed to any of them. For just as I am not going to be saved through the good angels' works, so I am not going to be damned through the evil thoughts and frailties that are brought before me by the bad angels, the world, and the flesh. God our Lord requires only that my soul be conformed to his divine majesty; so conformed, it makes the body act in conformity to his divine will, like it or not—wherein is our greatest struggle, and the good pleasure of the eternal and sovereign goodness. By his infinite kindness and grace may he hold us always with his hand."

—St. Ignatius of Loyola, Letter to Sr. Teresa Rejadell, O.S.B., September 11, 1536, translated Fr. Martin E. Palmer, S.J.

Editor: Praying over my sinfulness during this First Week of the Exercises, I notice in the words of St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) a counterbalancing emphasis on God's love for me, an invitation to center my focus on the reality of God's goodness without losing my awareness of my own sinfulness. By comparing my sins to God's love, St. Ignatius does not want me to despair by stewing in my own unworthiness, but to find hope by shifting my gaze from myself to Jesus. In this excerpt from a letter that St. Ignatius wrote to a struggling Benedictine nun, we glimpse his deep appreciation of God's unconditional love, a love that directs us outward so that we channel our own passionate energies into love rather than self-hatred. As St. Ignatius sees it, God loves us just the way we are, in our imperfection and striving that sometimes painfully reminds us of our need for a Savior. To recognize that I needn't perform for God's love, to embrace self-acceptance over self-improvement, means to patiently turn over my whole life and will to the Triune God—to trust him to work with me in his own time and way, not according to my own limited plans and schedules.

As you read the following suggestions for other exercises to pray during the First Week theme of our sinfulness and God's love, reflect in your journal: How have I failed to trust in God's love by trying to force perfection in my life according to my own timeline or designs? What deceptive thoughts keep me from accepting myself in all of my messiness as a loved sinner? What helps me accept God's unconditional love for me?

[071] [Other Exercises]

[Editor: St. Ignatius notes here that a retreat director may now add other exercises and prayer methods on death and other punishments for sin, judgment, and so on. Taking St. Ignatius at his word, Fr. De Place provides the following freely composed exercises for the retreatant to use as helpful, addressing the saint's themes in a way that removes the need for self-directed readers to find supplementary materials without the aid of a retreat director who would normally provide them. Please note that these "other exercises" below do not come from St. Ignatius, but De Place proposes them out of an Ignatian spirit of adaptation. Readers may choose to omit them. The text of the Exercises proper resumes at no. 072 following these exercises.]

First Exercise on Death

Preparatory prayer.

First prelude.
Transport yourself in thought to the bedside of a dying person, or beside a grave ready to receive a coffin or into the middle of a cemetery.

Second prelude.
Ask of Our Lord a salutary fear of death and the grace to be prepared for it every day.

1. What is it to die? It is to bid adieu to everything in this world—to fortune, pleasures, friends, family; a sad adieu, heart-rendering, irrevocable. It is to leave my house, to be thrown into a deep narrow pit, without any garment but a shroud, without any society but reptiles and worms. It is to pass to the most humiliating state, the nearest to nothingness, where I shall become the prey of corruption, where I shall fall to pieces, where I shall decompose into an infectious putrefaction. It is for my soul to enter in the twinkling of an eye into an unknown region called eternity, where I shall go to hear from the mouth of God in what place I am to make that great retreat that will last forever, whether it be in heaven or in the depths of hell.

2. Must I die? Most certainly. And what assures me of it? Reason, faith, experience. Yes; notwithstanding all precautions, all cares, all the efforts of physicians, I shall die. Where are those who preceded me in life? In the grave, in eternity. And from this grave, from this eternity, they cry to me, "Yesterday for me, and to-day for thee" (Sirach 38:23).

3. Shall I die soon? Yes. Why? Because ever since my birth I have been only dying. An action continued without interruption is soon accomplished. All other actions have some cessation; business, study, pleasure, sleep—all these have intervals; death is the only action never interrupted. How can I be long dying when I have been dying ever since I was born and every moment of the day and night? Where is now that portion of my life that death has already taken from me? As death has taken the past from me, so it will take the future; with the same rapidity, with the rapidity of lightning.

4. When shall I die? At what age? In old age? In mature age? Will it be after a long illness? Will it be from a fall, from a fire, beneath the knife of an assassin? In what place? In my own house or in a strange house? At table, at play, at the theatre, at church, in my bed, on a scaffold? What day shall I die? Will it be this year? this week? Tomorrow? Today? In what state shall I die? Will it be in a state of grace, or in that of sin? To all these questions, Jesus Christ answers me, "Watch; for ye know not the day nor the hour" (Matt. 25:13).

5. How often shall I die? Once only; therefore, any error in this great action is irreparable. The misfortune of a bad death is an eternal misfortune. And on what does this bad death depend? On a single instant. It only requires a moment to offend the Lord mortally. It, then, only requires a moment to decide my eternity. If I had died this year, on such a day, such an hour of my life, when I was the enemy of God, where should I be now?

Affections
Fear; desire; resolution.

Colloquy
Represent to yourself Our Lord dying on the cross, and recommend the hour of your death to Him.

Pater. Ave.[4]

Week Two: Call of the King (#91, October 8)

Prelection: The Call of the King

"Before any specific apostolic tasks, the first co-redemptive collaborative work of anyone will have to be achieved in one's own heart, by offering one's nature with its affections into a direct relationship with the work of universal salvation. . . . The offering of the Kingdom is not reserved to a privileged few. It is open to every Christian who will have made himself or herself aware of the full meaning of his vocation in its fullness, according to God's designs for him."

—Fr. Gilles Cusson, S.J., *Biblical Theology and the Spiritual Exercises*, p. 203–4

Editor: Father Gilles Cusson, S.J. (1927–2003), was a French-Canadian spiritual director who guided many thirty-day retreats. He studied theology, biblical studies, and spirituality at the Gregorian University, producing a famous dissertation on the biblical experience of salvation in the *Spiritual Exercises*. He turned this manuscript into a book, now revised and reprinted three times since 1968. Many Jesuit scholars consider it the most extensive and most thoroughly

[4] St. Ignatius Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola: With Points for Personal Prayer from Jesuit Spiritual Masters,* ed. Sean Salai, S.J. (Charlotte: TAN Books, 2020), 60-64.

documented commentary on the Exercises perhaps in any language. In this excerpt, Fr. Cusson explains that entering into the Kingdom exercise opens the doors both of a person's heart and also of the wide world where Christ works and suffers to bring redemption to all.

As we transition from the First Week of the Exercises into the Second Week, St. Ignatius now invites us to pray with this exercises on the Kingdom of Christ, also known as the "Call of the King," to reflect more deeply on this theme of Christ's reign that spoke so deeply to his knightly heart. Here he invites us to use our imaginations, recognizing that Christ's divine kingship remains a human analogy, to reflect on how we might respond to an earthly leader who rouses us to greatness. While we no longer have absolute monarchs with vast powers to move world events today, as St. Ignatius did in sixteenth-century Europe, we may best understand "king" as an ideal leader of our own time who inspires us deeply within the context of our contemporary political systems.

As you pray over the Call of the King contemplation of the reign of Christ, reflect in your journal: What qualities of leadership do I see in Jesus Christ? To what sort of "kingdom" does Christ the King call me? If I were to imagine a Christlike political leader today who called me to assist in establishing a more just world, what might that person look and sound like?

[091] On the Reign of Christ

Preparatory prayer.

First prelude.
Represent to yourself the synagogues, villages, cities of Judea, and the different places, the scenes of the preaching of Jesus Christ.

Second prelude.
Ask of God the grace not to be deaf to the calls of His divine Son but prompt to obey Him and follow Him.

[First Part]
[Editor: Please note that Fr. De Place glosses the text of Ignatius below by mentioning Napoleon, who lived centuries after the saint wrote the Exercises*.]*

[092] First Point
Let us suppose that the bounty of Heaven has sent on earth a monarch who unites in himself all the moral and Christian virtues, all the heroic qualities, every title of legitimacy, all the gifts of valor and fortune that can render a general or a king formidable to his enemies and dear to his subjects—a prince wiser than Solomon, greater than Charlemagne, more pious than St. Louis, more fortunate in war than Bonaparte in the days of his greatest prosperity—a sovereign to whom the Lord has given in an authentic manner, and acknowledged by all Christian people, the title of universal monarch, which Henry IV, Charles V and Napoleon aspired in vain to be; in

fine, a king to whom all the princes of Europe would willingly become tributary, and who had incontestable rights over the states of the infidels. Suppose, moreover, that this great man, this invincible general, this supreme monarch, should one day call around him all these princes—formerly independent but now considering themselves more fortunate in being his generals and his officers—and should speak to them thus:

"Kings, my friends and my subjects, who enjoy with so much happiness the peace that reigns throughout Christian Europe, you are not ignorant of the evils that weigh on a part of humanity still barbarous and savage. In one place absurd divinities exact and receive human sacrifices, in another place, cannibals feed on the hearts of their enemies, or even on the yet living flesh of their parents. Elsewhere, unhappy widows are obliged to burn themselves on their husband's funeral pile; officers and courtiers are buried alive with their dead prince. There are chiefs of tribes who punish with death any unfortunate being who should by chance cross their shadow, or cast a single look on them. Almost every where, the child who is too great a burden on its parents is condemned to perish at its birth, and the Chinese seas daily swallow up thousands of children. There and elsewhere the laws of natural morality, of the rights of man, of modesty, of humanity, are unknown or violated. Nowhere is there liberty, security, instruction, order, or true prosperity. By the announcement only of our approach, by the mere view of our armies, by the reputation of knowledge, wisdom and strength that Europe has acquired in the world, these unhappy people will feel that their subjugation will be their happiness and will submit to us without striking a blow. As they are our subjects by the order of divine power, we must spare their blood as we should spare that of our own soldiers. Thence we must take more precautions and run more perils; but I will be there at your head to set you the example of clemency and bravery; in so splendid an enterprise, I wish to undergo myself the greatest part of the privations and sufferings. No one in the army shall have anything to do, or to suffer, that I have not done and suffered before him. This, then, is the condition I impose on those who wish to take part in this great expedition; to accompany me in the midst of hazards and dangers, or rather to follow me into them, suffer with me but always less than myself. And behold the prize that I promise to the conquerors, and that shall be proportioned to the services rendered: I shall soon have a great number of crowns to distribute; the smallest reward I shall give to my brave and faithful companions will be a throne—a throne to occupy for the liberation, the civilization, the happiness of a whole people."

With what enthusiasm would this discourse be received! With what unanimous applause! The enterprise is so glorious; the end proposed so noble, so useful; the example of the monarch so encouraging; the rewards promised so magnificent! What generous ambition would fire every heart, and how on every lip would be heard the cry of our fathers marching to the conquest of the Holy Sepulcher, "*God wills it, God wills it!*" And if it happened that one of these princes, preferring an ignoble repose to this glorious labor, should dare to reply, without dying of shame, "For me, I prefer remaining in the midst of my idleness, enjoying the delights of the court," what a general hoot, what exclamations of disapprobation and contempt, would follow this cowardly and indolent refusal!

[093] Second Point
And now compare with this great monarch and his noble expedition another monarch, the King of kings, Jesus Christ, and the enterprise that brought Him from heaven upon earth.
Son of God, Creator and Savior of all mankind, King of the whole earth, He receives all nations as His inheritance; He is the way, the truth and the life, and no one arrives at the Father but through Him; there is no salvation possible to mortals but in Him and through Him alone. Full of grace and truth, He unites in Himself all virtues, all perfections, divine and human. And this is the discourse He addresses to all those who have become His subjects by baptism and His soldiers by confirmation: "My will, the most just of all wills, is from the height of My cross to draw all to Me; to enter into the possession of My domain, the world; to subjugate all My enemies for their salvation; and as a peaceful conqueror and master, universally obeyed by all the earth, to introduce with Me into the glory of My Father all these men redeemed by My blood. Let those who would share My crown accompany Me, follow Me; their eternal reward will be proportioned to their labors and their efforts."

[094] [Third Point]
Let us reason and understand that it would be folly to refuse to Jesus Christ the generous and fervent offer of our entire selves. Let us, moreover, conceive not only that we must offer to follow Him in bodily works and fatigues but also that we owe Him a more worthy and precious service—the struggle and the victory against our flesh, our senses, our self-love, the love of the world.

[095] [Second Part]
Let us say, weighing all the circumstances of this sublime vocation:

(1) *Who is it that calls us*? It is a God who has every right to our submission. *The right of His infinite perfections*. We cannot belong to ourselves; we must belong to God or to our passions. We have only the choice of the one yoke or the other. Which appears the most honorable? *The right of creation*. What are we? What have we? All that we are, all that we have, comes from God and consequently belongs to God. Shall we disown, violate, toward Him alone that right of property that reason and justice consecrate in human society? *The right of redemption*. A thing belongs to us if we buy it with our money, still more if we purchase it by long and hard labor; yet more would it appear so if bought with our blood. But what are we with regard to Jesus Christ? We are the price of all His wealth, the price of all His sufferings, the price of His blood and His death: "Know you not that you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price" (*1 Cor.* 6:19, 20). *The right of our vows and promises*. What more sacred than an oath dictated by gratitude and justice, sworn in the fullness of liberty and reflection, renewed so often and so solemnly in the face of heaven and earth? This is the oath that binds us to Jesus Christ.

[096] (2) *To what enterprise does Jesus Christ call us*? To the most noble and most heroic that can be proposed. In this enterprise all is great. Consider: *The enemies to be combated*; the devil, the world, our own hearts. *The weapons*; faith, prayer, humility, patience, self-denial, charity, zeal. *Our companions in the battle*; the most illustrious that the world ever saw; the apostles, the

martyrs, the penitents, in one word, all the saints. *Our leader*; Jesus Christ Himself; but Jesus Christ who combats in us by His grace and who, already a conqueror in so many saints, wishes to conquer in each one of us and in the hearts of all mankind. Lastly, *the motive and end of the combat*; to bestow on all the captives of Jesus Christ liberty, glory, happiness; to restore them to the way, the truth and the life.

[097] (3) *What are the conditions of the enterprise*? To partake in the labors of Jesus Christ, that we may afterward partake of His glory. But let us remark well, that *the sacrifices that Jesus asks of us He has first accomplished Himself.*

If He asks humility of us, He first humiliated Himself; if He asks renouncement of us, He first renounced Himself. He has done more. He has gone beyond what He asks of us; He humbled Himself even to annihilation; He renounced Himself even to the cross. *The sacrifices that Jesus Christ demands are sweetened by the unction of His grace.* The cross has been without alleviation for Him alone; for His servants He lightens the weight by consolations. He alone could say in the full force of the words, "My soul is sorrowful even unto death" (*Matt.* 26:38); He enables His servants to say, "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations" (*2 Cor.* 7:4). *The sacrifices that Jesus Christ asks of us are only passing.* A short period of combat, an eternity of reward. *If He asks humility of us, He first humiliated Himself; if He asks renouncement of us, He first renounced Himself. He has done more; He has gone beyond what He asks of us; He humbled Himself even to annihilation; He renounced Himself even to the cross.*

Let us consecrate ourselves generously to the service of so great and magnificent a master and say to Him,

[098] [Supreme Monarch of the Universe — Eternal Lord of All Things]
"Behold me at Thy feet, supreme Monarch of the universe. Without doubt I am unworthy to march after Thee; but full of confidence in Thy grace and protection, I consecrate myself to Thee without reserve. All that I am and all that I possess I submit to Thy holy will. I declare before Thy infinite goodness in the presence of the Virgin Mother of my Savior and of all the heavenly court that my desire, my unalterable resolution, my determined will, is to follow Thee as nearly as possible, detached in spirit from the things of the earth and, if Thou shouldst will it, really poor; humble of heart and, if that also is Thy will, partaking in all Thy humiliations and all Thy ignominies; living and dying at the post where the interests of Thy glory and my salvation and Thy divine call may have placed me."[5]

[5] Ibid., 85-93.

Week Three: Jesus Dies on the Cross (#297, October 21)

[297] [Jesus Dies on the Cross]
Jesus on the Cross (Matt. 27:39–56; Mark 15:29–41; Luke 23:39–49; John 19:25–39)

1. They blaspheme against Jesus Christ in different ways: "Thou that destroyest the Temple of God . . . come down from the cross," and so on. The soldiers divide His garments.

2. Jesus pronounces seven words on the cross. He prays for His murderers. He pardons one of the thieves crucified with Him. He recommends His Mother to St. John and St. John to His Mother. He cries, "I thirst"; then the soldiers give Him vinegar and water to drink. He complains to His Father of the abandonment in which He left Him. He says, "All is consummated." Finally, before dying, He pronounces these words: "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

3. At His death, the sun is darkened, the rocks rent, the graves opened, the veil of the Temple is torn from top to bottom. His side being pierced by a spear, blood and water flow from it.[6]

Week Four: Eighth Apparition of the Risen Christ (#306, October 24).

[306] [Eighth Apparition of the Risen Christ]
Eighth Apparition (John 21:1–25)

1. Jesus appears to seven of His disciples who were fishing. They had taken nothing all night; but having cast their net by the order of Jesus Christ, "now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."

2. John knew Jesus Christ by this miracle and said to Peter, "It is the Lord." Immediately Peter, casting himself into the sea, hastens to Jesus.

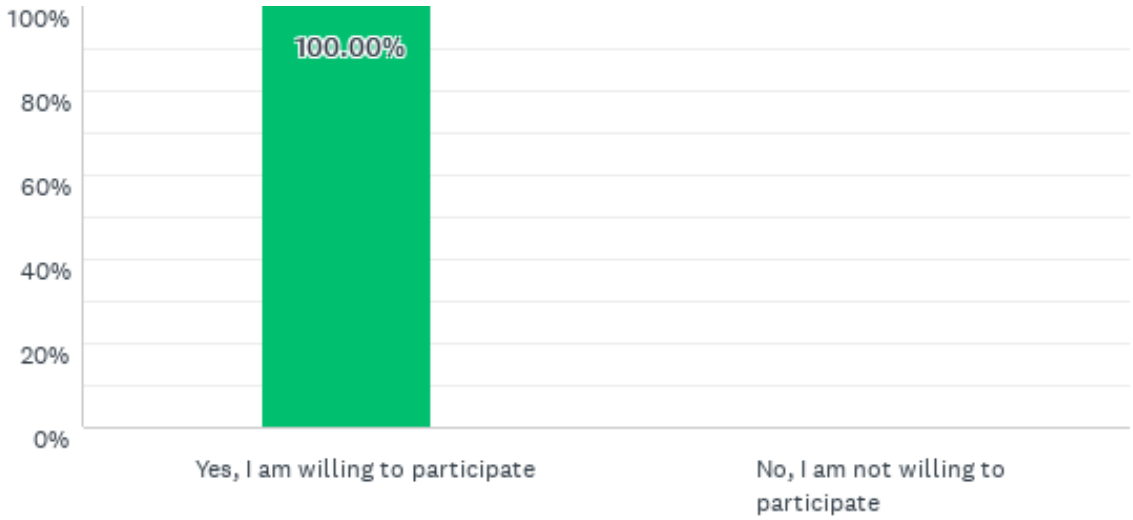
3. Jesus gives them bread and fish to eat. Then, having asked Peter three different times if he loved Him, He gives him the care of His flock, saying to him, "Feed My lambs, feed My sheep."[7]

[6] Ibid., 297-298.
[7] Ibid., 302.

Appendix Five: Pre-Survey and Post-Survey of Retreat Participants

Pre-Retreat Survey Results

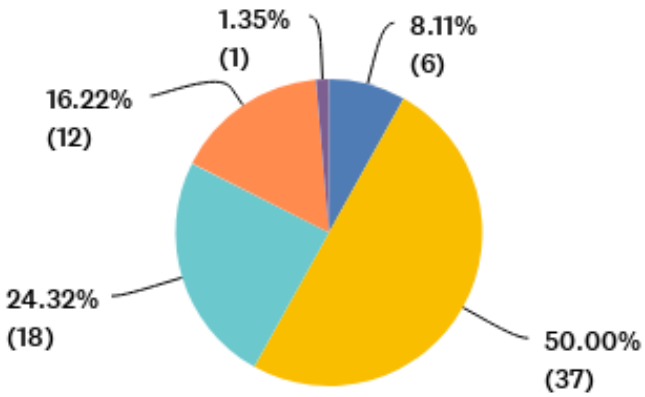
Q1: This anonymous survey asks questions about your background, online experiences, and religious habits. By continuing with this survey, you agree to participate in a 30-day online retreat faith-sharing group based on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius and hosted on Facebook in connection with America Media, as well as to complete a survey about your experiences after it concludes. If you select "no" in response to this first question, please do not complete the rest of the survey that follows, but submit it with only the first question completed.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I am willing to participate	100.00%	74
No, I am not willing to participate	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 1

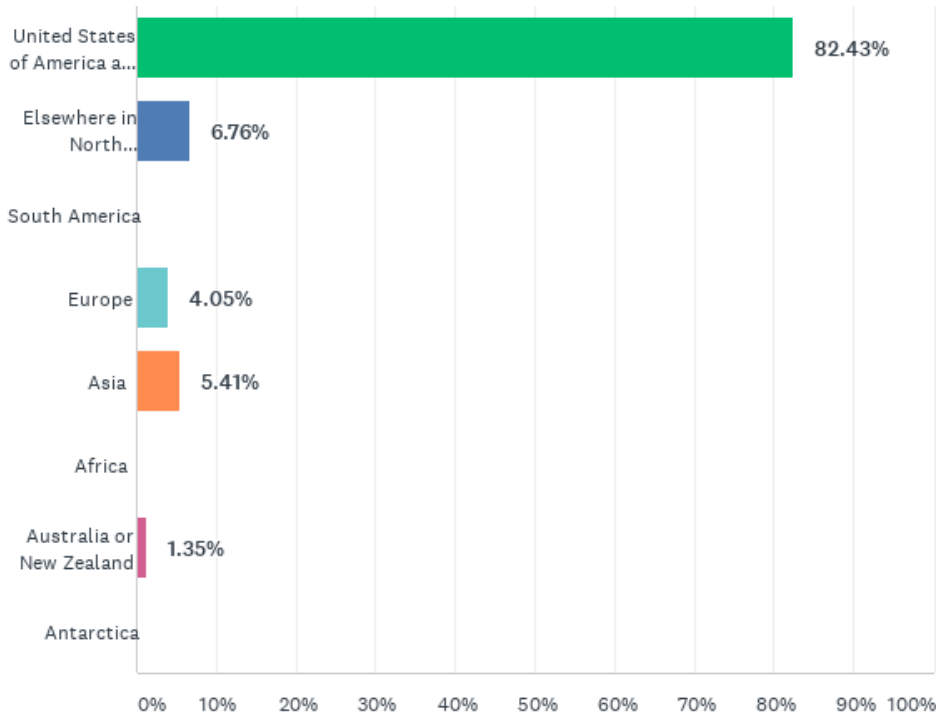
Q2: In which generation were you born?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00%	0
1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	8.11%	6
1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	50.00%	37
1965-1980 ("Generation X")	24.32%	18
1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	16.22%	12
1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	1.35%	1
TOTAL		74

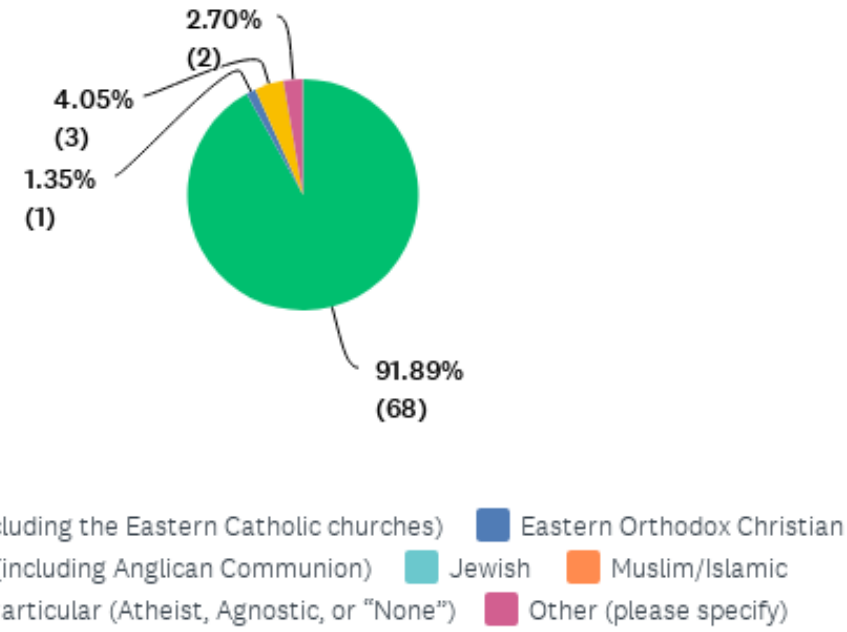
Pre-Retreat Survey 2

Q3: Where do you live?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
United States of America and territories	82.43%	61
Elsewhere in North America/Central America	6.76%	5
South America	0.00%	0
Europe	4.05%	3
Asia	5.41%	4
Africa	0.00%	0
Australia or New Zealand	1.35%	1
Antarctica	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Q4: How would you describe your current religious affiliation?

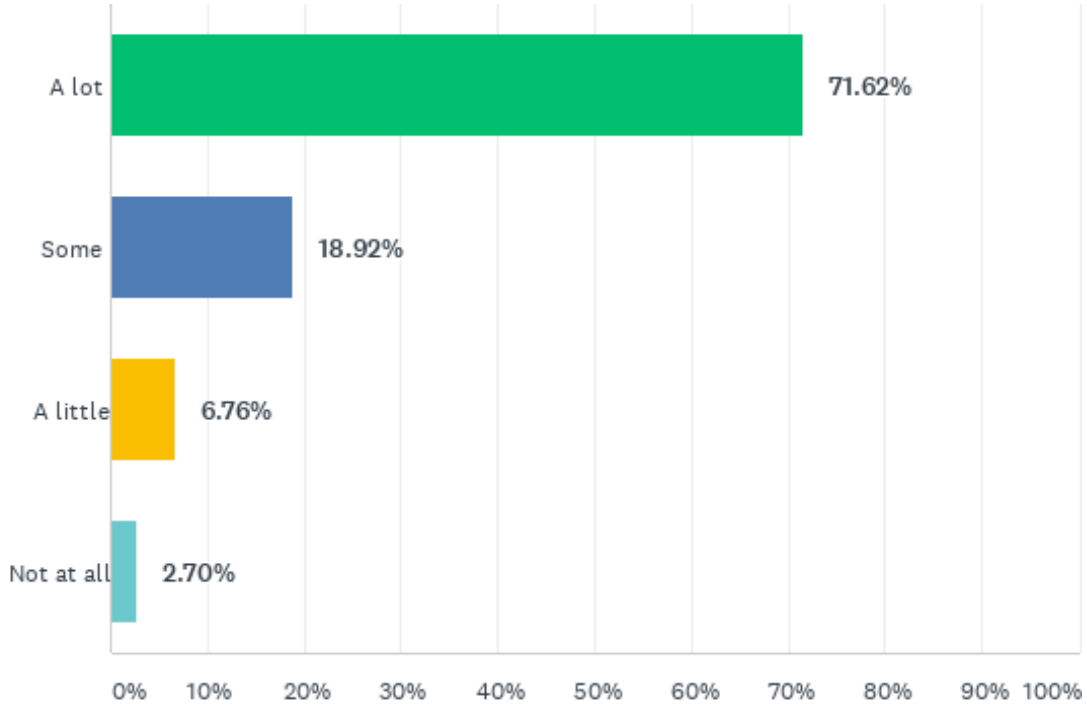


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Catholic (including the Eastern Catholic churches)	91.89%	68
Eastern Orthodox Christian	1.35%	1
Protestant (including Anglican Communion)	4.05%	3
Jewish	0.00%	0
Muslim/Islamic	0.00%	0
Nothing in Particular (Atheist, Agnostic, or "None")	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	2.70%	2
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 4

Other: Questioning to former Catholic recently attending American Baptist services; Indigenous

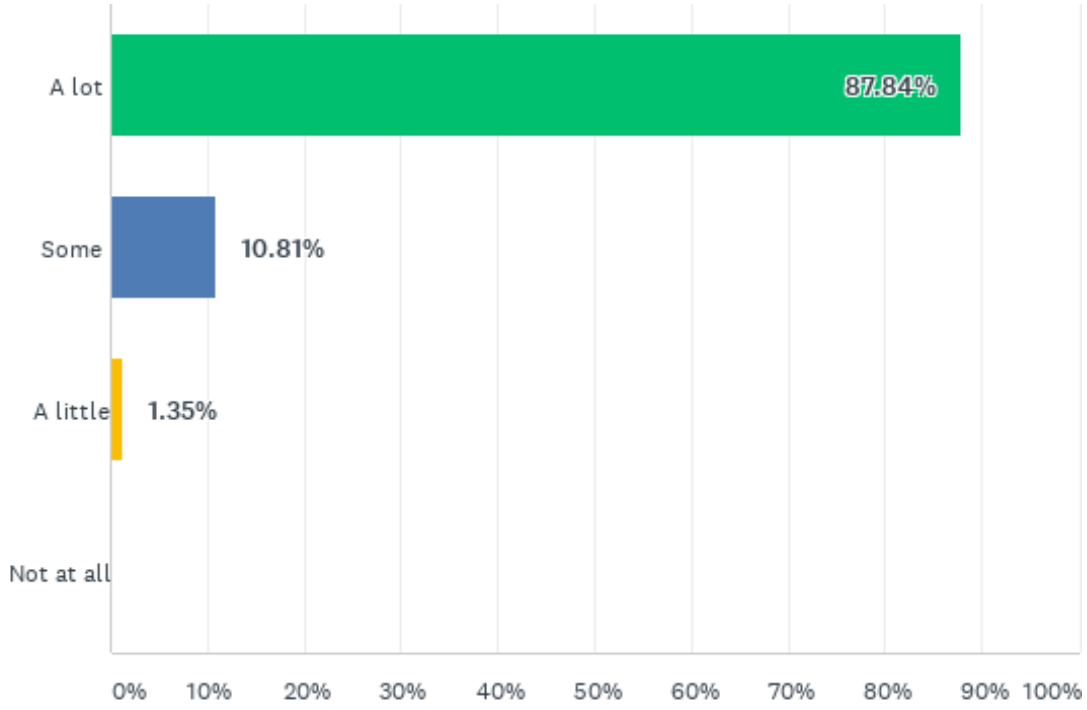
Q5: How strongly do you feel personally connected to a particular faith-based community?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	71.62%	53
Some	18.92%	14
A little	6.76%	5
Not at all	2.70%	2
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 5

Q6: How strongly do you feel personally connected to a Higher Power as you understand it?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	87.84%	65
Some	10.81%	8
A little	1.35%	1
Not at all	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

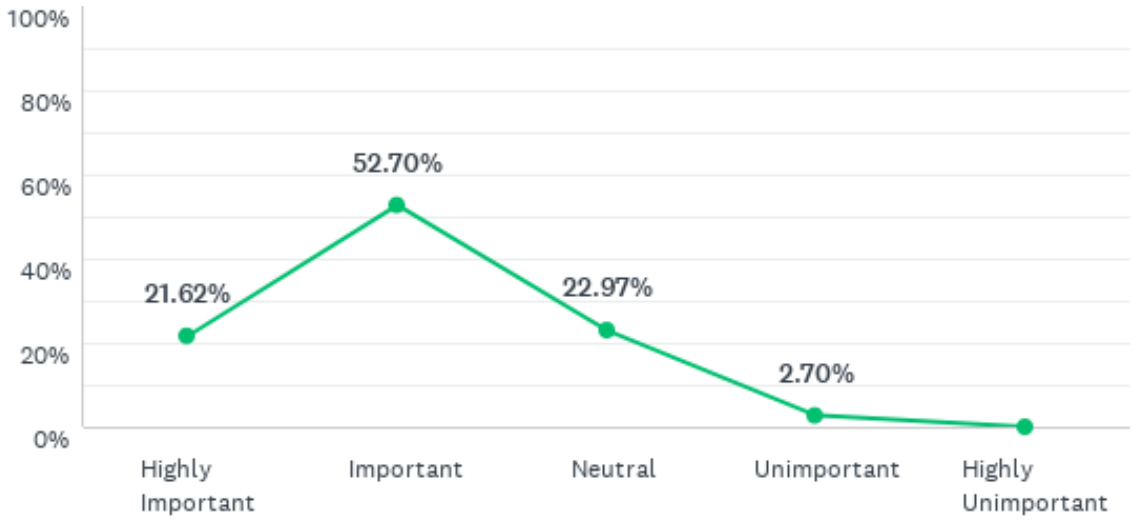
Pre-Retreat Survey 6

Q7: How often have you been involved in a religiously sponsored event (funeral, wedding, church service, online discussion, spiritual reading, prayer or meditation group, etc.) in the past 12 months? Select the response that most closely approximates your attendance.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None	0.00%	0
1-6 times a year	13.51%	10
7-11 times a year	4.05%	3
Once a month	4.05%	3
2-3 times a month	9.46%	7
Once a week	24.32%	18
More than once a week	44.59%	33
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 7

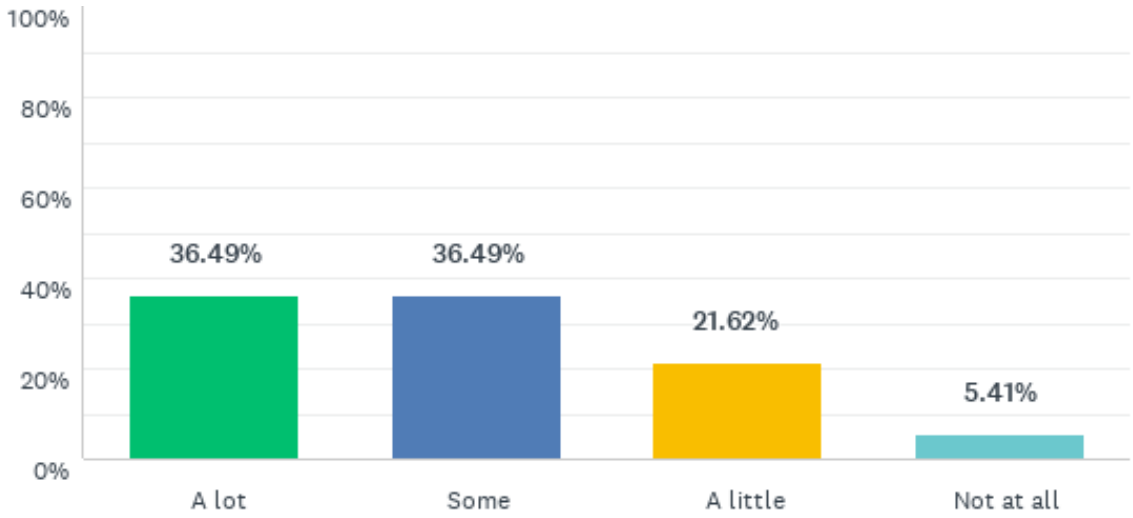
Q8: How important is online interaction (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, comment boxes, other social media platforms) in your life?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Highly Important	21.62%	16
Important	52.70%	39
Neutral	22.97%	17
Unimportant	2.70%	2
Highly Unimportant	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 8

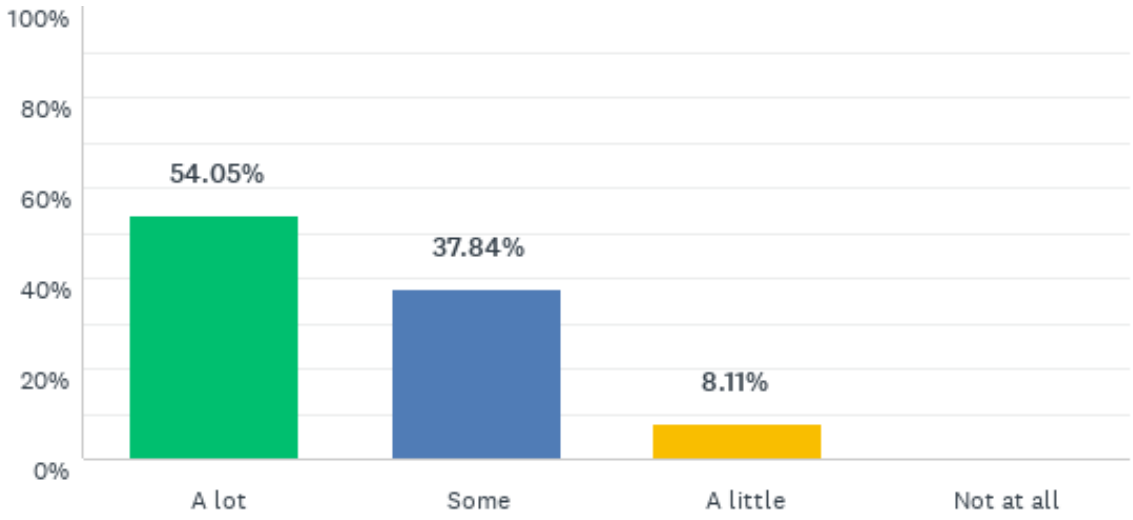
Q9: How much, if at all, have you shared your faith with others online during your life?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	36.49%	27
Some	36.49%	27
A little	21.62%	16
Not at all	5.41%	4
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 9

Q10: How much, if at all, have you shared your faith with others offline (face-to-face) during your life?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	54.05%	40
Some	37.84%	28
A little	8.11%	6
Not at all	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 10

Q11 What particular hopes or desires do you bring to this online faith-sharing experience? Please write them in the space below.

Pre-Retreat Survey 11

Survey Monkey generated the above Word Cloud to summarize the results of this question. Seventy-two participants answered this free response question and two participants skipped it. Here is the full text of all 72 individual responses to Question 11; all spelling and grammatical errors are original to the texts as respondents typed them out.

1. Making some friends that support me on my path with God.

2. I have felt very cut off from my faith during the pandemic—I had been meeting with a spiritual director and doing a nightly Examen, and I've fallen out of both habits.

3. I pray that I will grow to live a more Christ-like life. I wish to live out the demands of the Gospel more radically.

4. Build more knowledge about my faith and understand how to keep it vivid day to day.

5. To grow closer to God

6. This is my first online experience of this type. I am typically reserved at first until i understand where others are in their journey.

7. I hope to grow more sensitive to Jesus' presence in my life, and to develop a stronger and more fruitful habit of prayer.

8. Taking time to get closer to Jesus so that I can follow his path. Loving and helping others.

9. I hope to deepen my faith & feel a connection to other like minded ppl. Because of Covid, I have not been participating in mass in person & feel disconnected from others.

10. I'm not exactly sure, but a friend told me about it and thought it might be helpful for me. I think it will be interesting to see what others share too.

11. I desire to be more bold with my faith and to have courage without fear in sharing the truth of our identities as sons and daughters of God.

12. I want to bring myself into a more intimate relationship with God to better understand and follow His will and to feel his love and guidance in the remainder of my life

13. Deepening my relationship with God

14. Finding peace of mind

15. Increase my faith

16. To have a deeper sense of spirituality. To feel closer to God. To learn how to really pray.

17. A deepening of faith

18. Become a better person and a better Catholic.

19. Continued growth in my relationship with God and to walk with others in their quest.

20. I am interested to hear about others' experiences of faith, as well as increasing my knowledge of foundational truths taught by the Church fathers.

21. I hope to grow closer to God and feel part of a community. I have not attended mass since March because of the pandemic and I feel disconnected from my faith

22. To rediscover God’s love for me. To understand a bit more as to why so many unfortunate events and plans have failed to better my life.

23. I like to listen to others and their spiritual experiences. I think when we share we are more inclined to open up about our beliefs to others. I'm looking for community with other believers.

24. Get some good espiritual advice and time to reflect on my faith.

25. I am interested in Ignatian insights as to how to handle everyday life - grew up in a very Jesuit influenced household

26. Spiritual growth

27. I always appreciate an opportunity to grow in my faith and make more room for God in my life, and I love faith sharing groups. Covid has made it tough to gather in groups, so I love the idea of moving that online.

28. A more regular prayer life that is more structured.

29. Developing a practice that's regular.

30. I am seeking a disciplined way to incorporate prayer into my life. I have too many excuses to not pray...they are GOOD excuses :)

31. A new retreat experience Some group discussion Finally participating in an Ignatian experience. Maybe some insight to break thru to a little more trust

32. Deepen my spirituality, improve my behavior, love more, forgive more, treat and heal intergenerational trauma, be a better helper to others, help heal this sick society

33. I hope grow in faith, hope and charity and better be able to see Christ in others. I would like to have a deeper relationship with Jesus. I am also interested in hearing about how others experience their faith journey.

34. A stronger understanding of my faith.

35. I hope to enhance my understanding of, and participation in, the Spiritual Exercises and sharing in prayer, comments and fellowship with fellow participate.

36. Getting more involved with God and my relationship with him

37. A connection with other people. A deepening of my spiritual life

38. I would like to develop a new spiritual practice in a community. I would like to learn more about the examin.

39. To grow in wisdom and knowledge of God. To learn new ways to pray and to meet other people who also want to know God more deeply.

40. To become more connected to God through the spiritual exercises and the online community.

41. I welcome the structure of being a part of a larger group, and therefore have an appointment with a daily spiritual practice. But whatever I gain from others in the group is pure bonus!

42. I hope to become closer to God. I like the idea of some more structure in my faith life in order to help me do that. I am excited to be a part of this experiment.

43. Deepen my faith journey during this COVID-19 pandemic when it isn't possible in my state to attend weekly mass in person and receive the Eucharist.

44. At this time, my life is in transition. In the past year I have lost some dear friends, sold my home (where I lived for over fifty years), moved into an small apartment where I have been isolated as is the rest of the world for the last six months. My hope is that I can use this experience to deepen my faith.

45. 1. I hope to resolve my discouragement with the Roman Catholic Church. 2. I hope to grow closer to God as some of my perceptions are changing. 3. I hope to find ways to conform my thoughts and behavior to be a more positive force in my family and community.

46. That I become closer to my faith. I feel I am strong, but do not meditate often enough. I think participating in this will help me with that.

47. My hope is to find a space that fosters spiritual growth while helping me connect with others who have a similar appreciation for the role of discernment in spirituality.

48. I am hoping to get some clarity and to feel God's support during these very difficult time.

49. hope to become a part of something again, to belong. Being in isolation has changed me

50. To walk a journey with others. To help with discernment. To deepen my relationship with God

51. Family Diversity Faithful Citizenship (would like to pray more about it)

52. Sharing within a community. I live alone and private on-line sharing is often the only channel open to me

53. I am looking forward to exchanging ideas and thoughts on ways to remain connected to my faith. My Jesuit experience at Holy Cross was pivotal for me to continue my faith. And I desire a community of those who understand Jesuit theology.

54. Get and be closer to God, prepare me to see and be with Him when I depart this world.

55. I hope to know more about my Faith and be closer to God

56. Commitment to a more consistent prayer life and in exploring what the Exercises will reveal at this time in my life.

57. It's been a long time since my last retreat so I'd like to get all possible benefits.

58. Growth in relation with Creator, Life Sustainer God Life Force

59. Interest, Understanding, Open-mindedness

60. I would love to continue growing in my relationship with God. Perhaps this experience will help me find other ways to pray.

61. Reconnect with my Church, especially now. Grow my spiritual life. Learn how to share in a "welcoming" way (welcoming from me, welcome to others)

62. I miss retreats

63. I hope to grow deeper in my spirituality

64. I wish to establish a regular prayer life. I am a graduate of a Jesuit University and attend a Jesuit Parish at Boston College, MA.

65. opportunity to explore Ignatian Spirtuality in-depth within a group setting (versus trying to learn it on my own)

66. To continue to grow in my acceptance and realization of God's love for me. To engage in faith sharing with a larger community than my neighborhood parish. To continue growing and experiencing Ignatian spirituality.

67. To explore Ignatian spirituality

68. My hope and desire is to come closer to my God and my brothers and sisters. To embrace the differences and to understand with more enlightenment the path I am on.

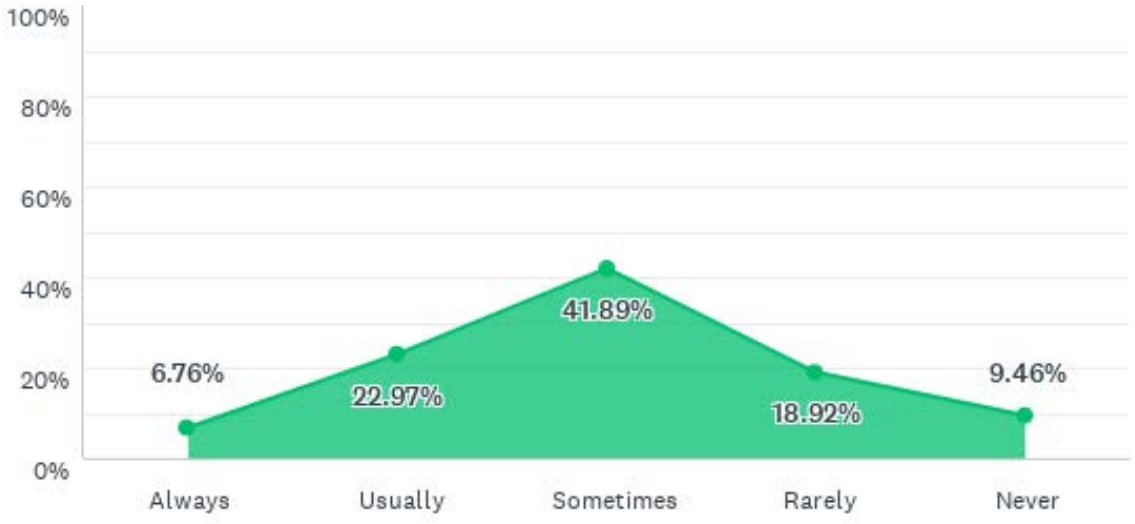
69. Deeper relationship with God.

70. Draw closer to God. Receive guidance. Learn in order to share.

71. deepen my relationship with God; gain insights/ideas from others (as well as share them); consider new ideas/interpretations

72. Nourished prayer life; faith translated into action

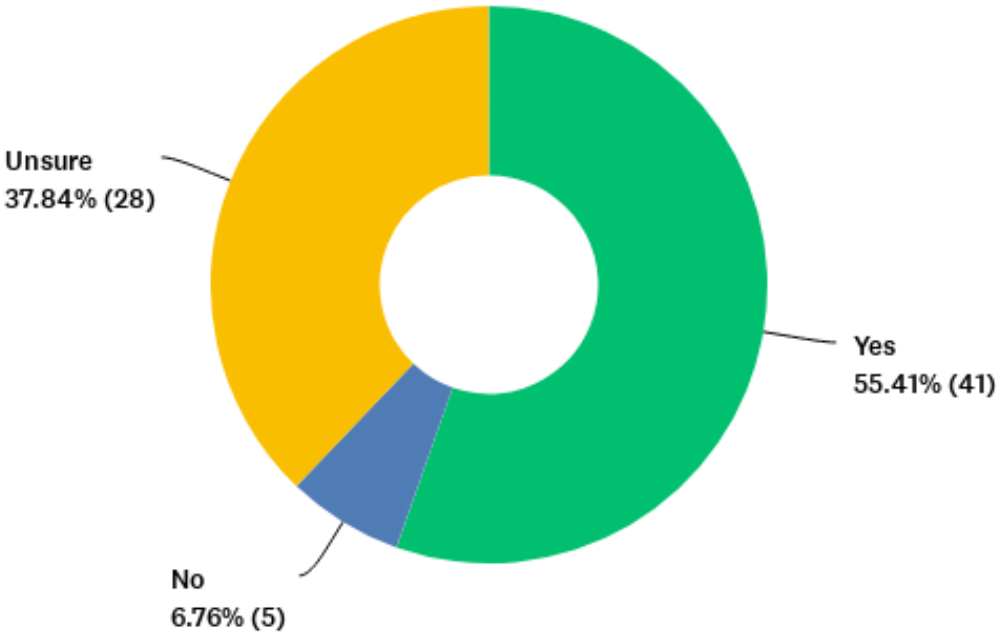
Q12: How often, if ever, does it occur to you to discuss faith-based content on Facebook?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Always	6.76%	5
Usually	22.97%	17
Sometimes	41.89%	31
Rarely	18.92%	14
Never	9.46%	7
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 12

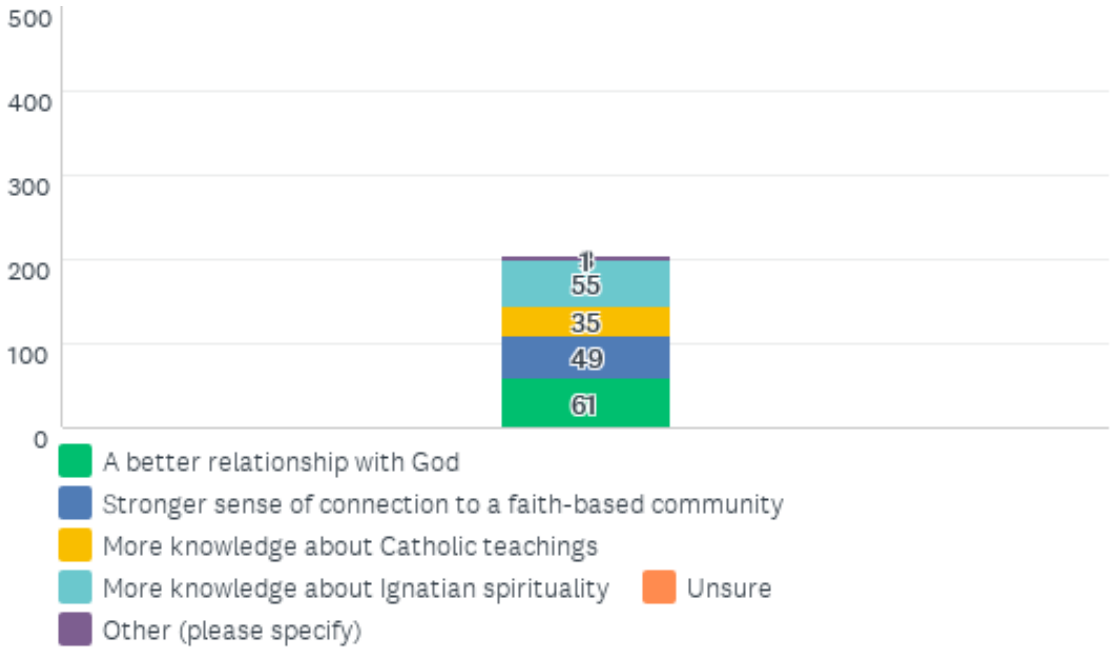
Q13: Do you consider online community to be a type of “real” community?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	55.41%	41
No	6.76%	5
Unsure	37.84%	28
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 13

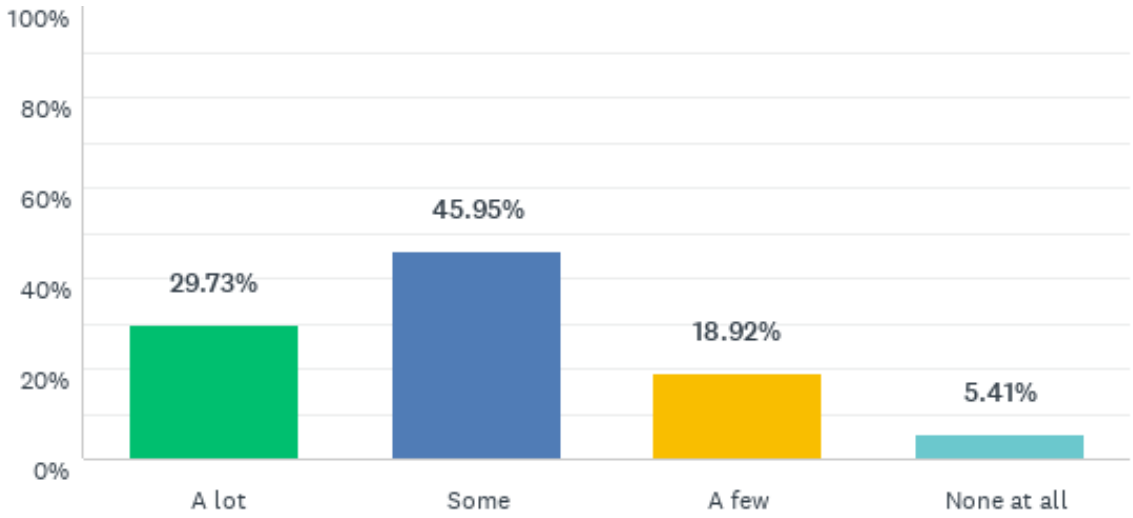
Q14: What outcome would you like to see from this online faith-sharing group? Please choose all that apply



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A better relationship with God	82.43%	61
Stronger sense of connection to a faith-based community	66.22%	49
More knowledge about Catholic teachings	47.30%	35
More knowledge about Ignatian spirituality	74.32%	55
Unsure	1.35%	1
Other (please specify)	4.05%	3
Total Respondents: 74		

Pre-Retreat Survey 14

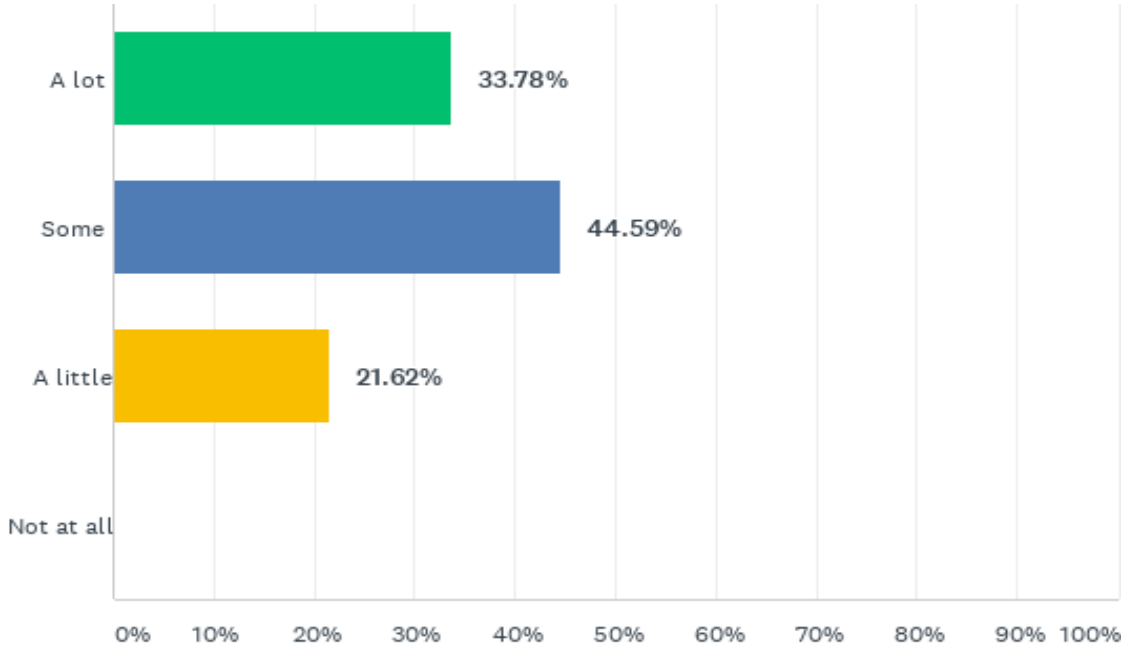
Q15: How many of the people you know online also play a role in your offline life outside of the internet?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	29.73%	22
Some	45.95%	34
A few	18.92%	14
None at all	5.41%	4
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 15

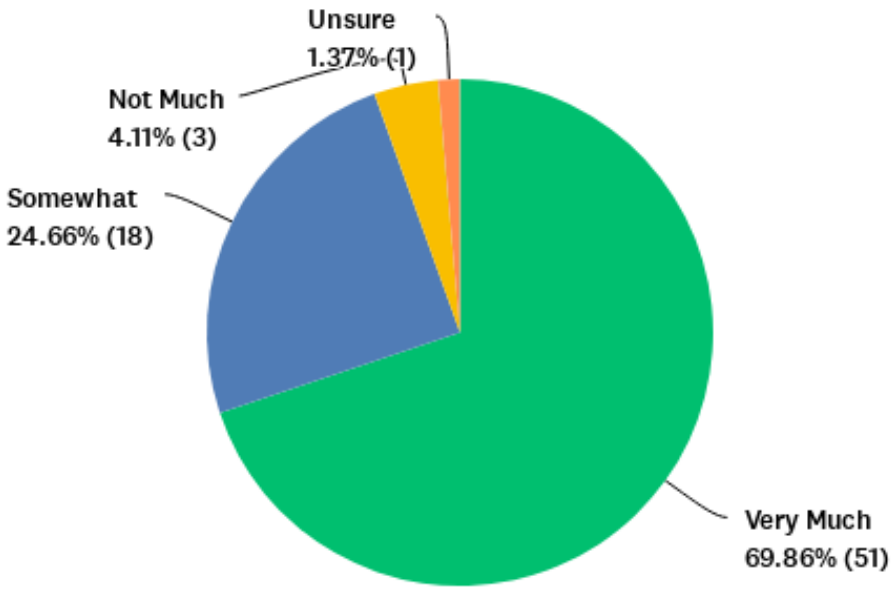
Q16: How comfortable do you feel with talking about your personal faith and religious experiences, as opposed to exchanging opinions, in an online faith-sharing group?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	33.78%	25
Some	44.59%	33
A little	21.62%	16
Not at all	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 16

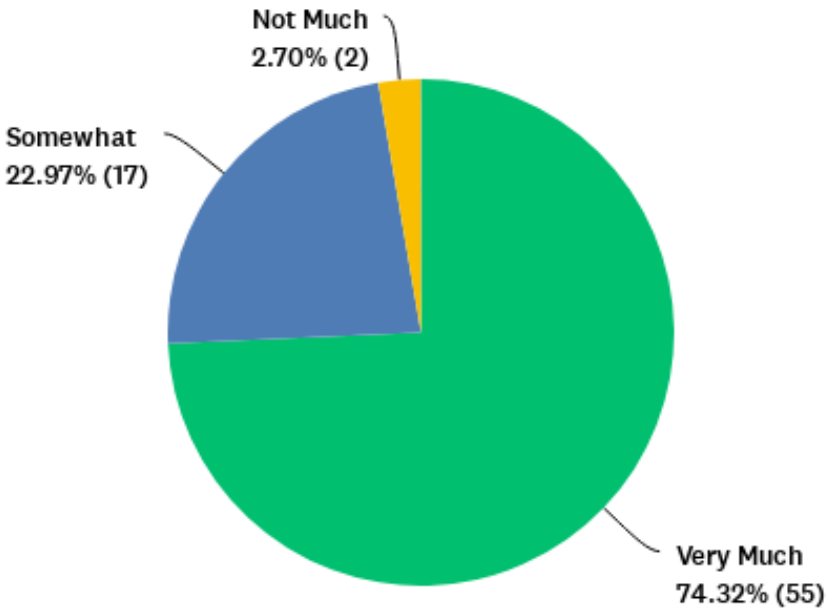
Q17: To what extent does this statement accurately describe your spiritual life? Statement: “I have a deeply felt sense of God’s love for me even though I am a sinner.”



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	69.86%	51
Somewhat	24.66%	18
Not Much	4.11%	3
Not At All	0.00%	0
Unsure	1.37%	1
TOTAL		73

Pre-Retreat Survey 17

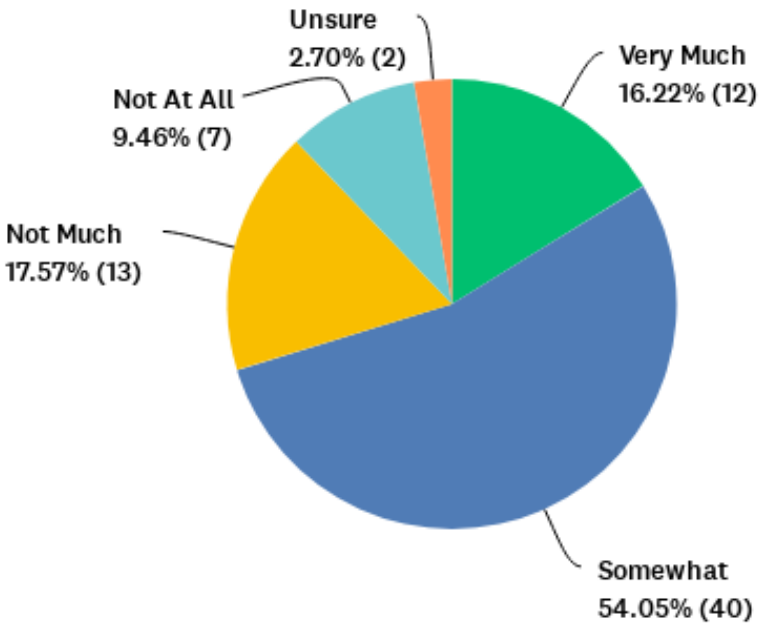
Q18: To what extent does this statement accurately describe your spiritual life? Statement: “I feel a desire to accompany Jesus and labor with him in his ongoing ministry.”



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	74.32%	55
Somewhat	22.97%	17
Not Much	2.70%	2
Not At All	0.00%	0
Unsure	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 18

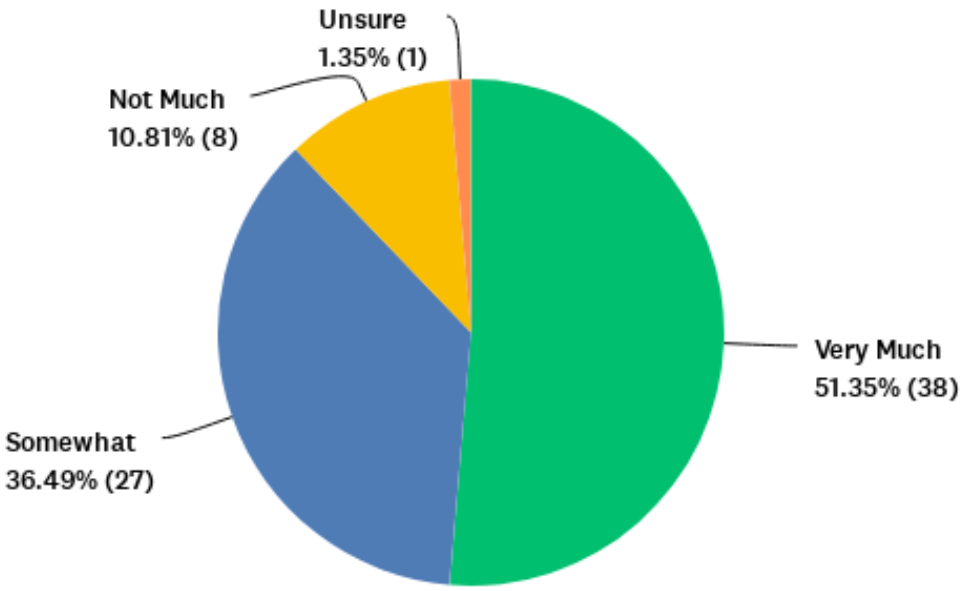
Q19: To what extent does this statement accurately describe your spiritual life? Statement: “I feel like I have suffered with Jesus on the cross.”



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	16.22%	12
Somewhat	54.05%	40
Not Much	17.57%	13
Not At All	9.46%	7
Unsure	2.70%	2
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 19

Q20: To what extent does this statement accurately describe your spiritual life? Statement: “I feel like I have rejoiced with the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, in gratitude for all he gives me.”

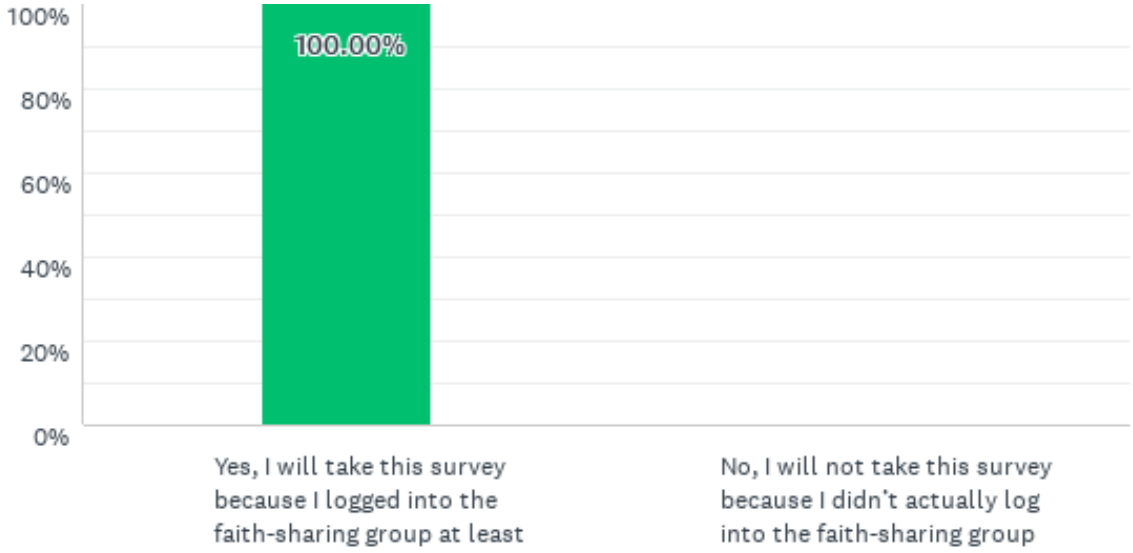


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	51.35%	38
Somewhat	36.49%	27
Not Much	10.81%	8
Not At All	0.00%	0
Unsure	1.35%	1
TOTAL		74

Pre-Retreat Survey 20

Post-Retreat Survey Results

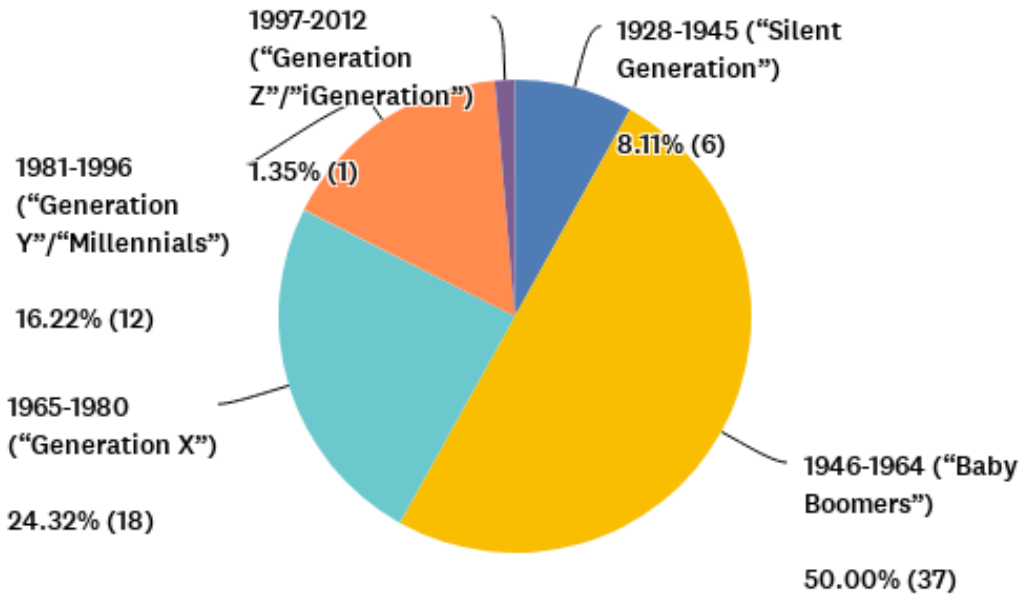
Q1: This survey asks questions about your experience of the online faith-sharing group, based on the 30-day Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius retreat, that you recently completed through the collaboration of America's Facebook page. By continuing with this survey, you confirm that you logged into the faith-sharing group at least once. If you filled out the pre-survey and agreed to the study, but did not end up logging into the group to participate, please select “no” here and scroll to the end to submit this survey without answering any of the other questions.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, I will take this survey because I logged into the faith-sharing group at least once	100.00%	74
No, I will not take this survey because I didn't actually log into the faith-sharing group	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 1

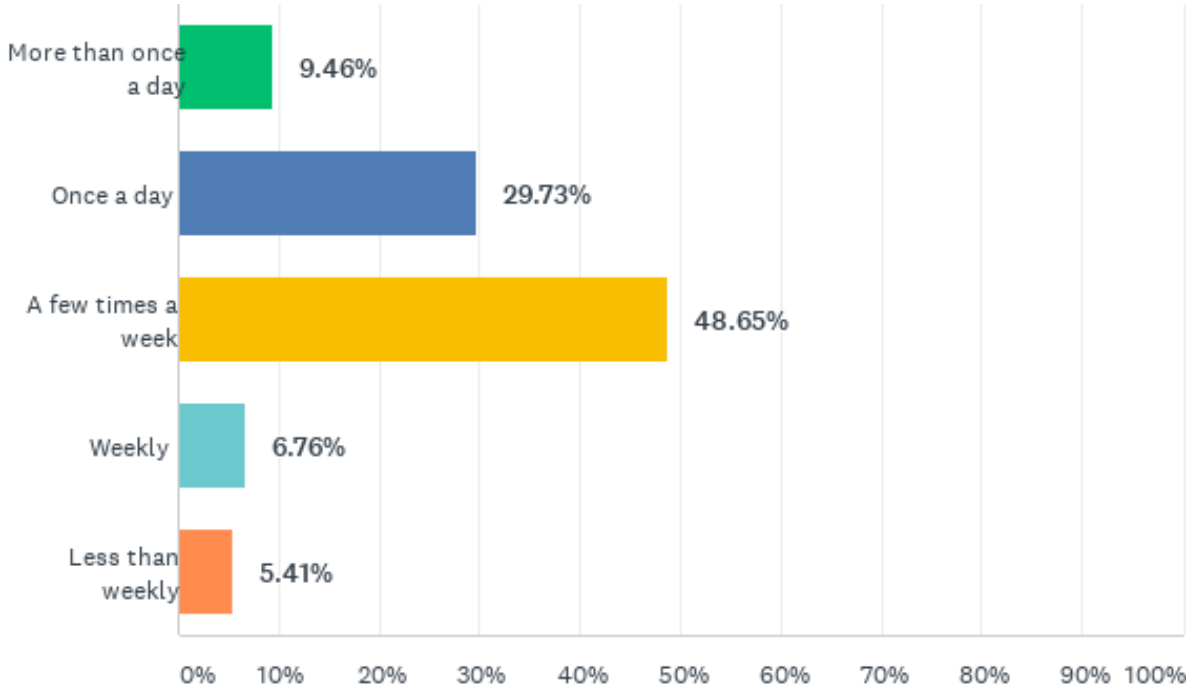
Q2: In which generation were you born?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00%	0
1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	8.11%	6
1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	50.00%	37
1965-1980 ("Generation X")	24.32%	18
1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	16.22%	12
1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	1.35%	1
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 2

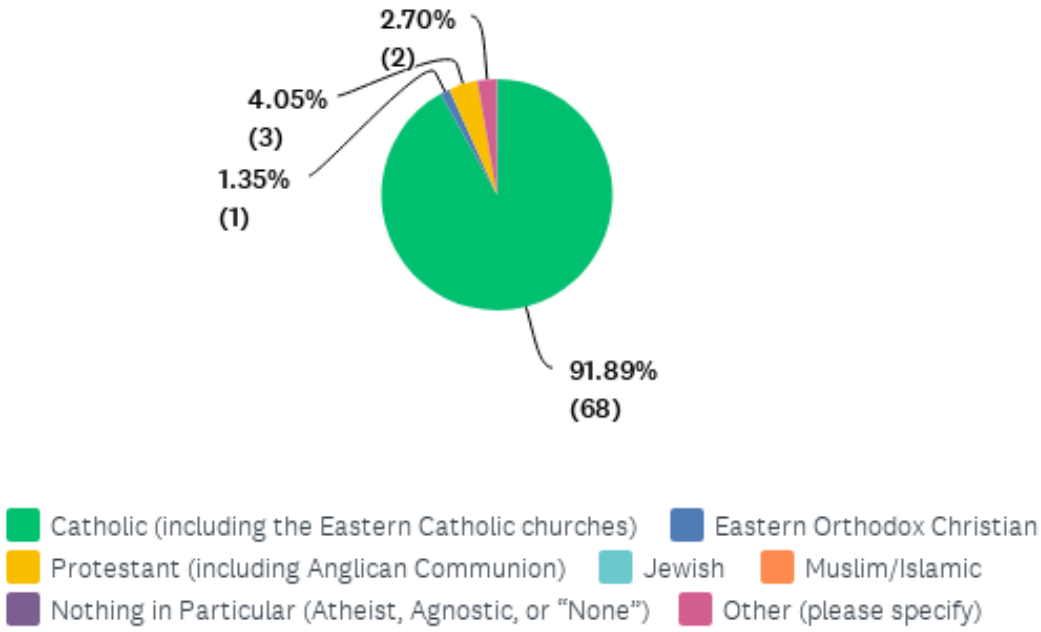
Q3: On average, how often did you log on to this Facebook faith-sharing group each week?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More than once a day	9.46%	7
Once a day	29.73%	22
A few times a week	48.65%	36
Weekly	6.76%	5
Less than weekly	5.41%	4
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 3

Q4: How would you describe your current religious affiliation?

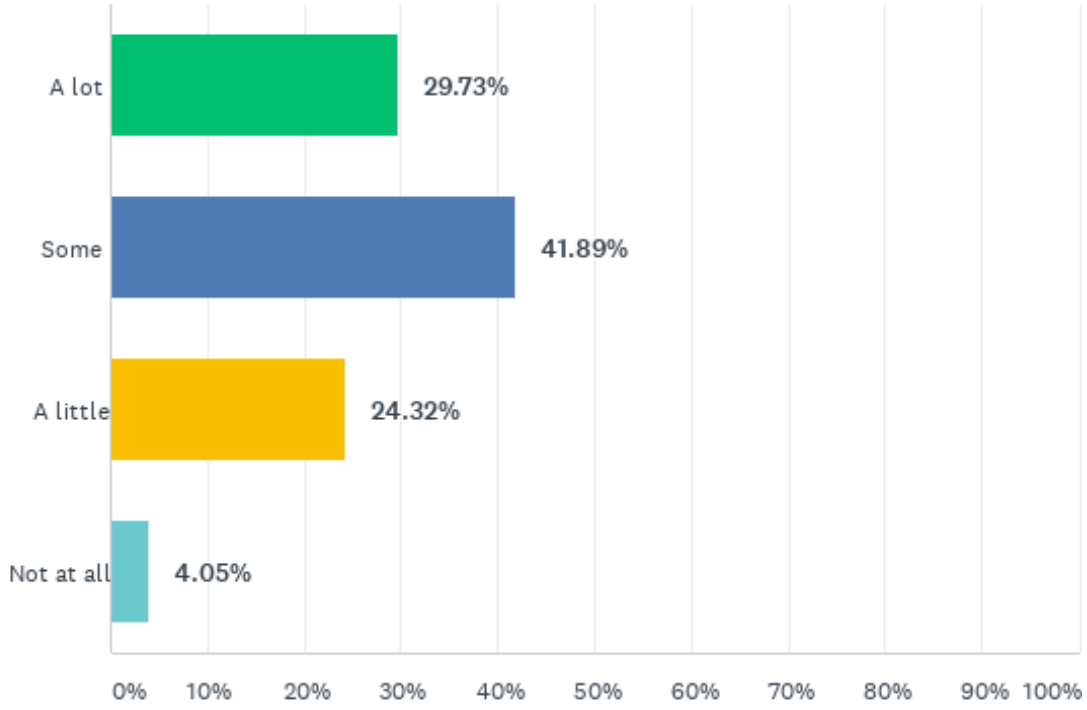


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Catholic (including the Eastern Catholic churches)	91.89%	68
Eastern Orthodox Christian	1.35%	1
Protestant (including Anglican Communion)	4.05%	3
Jewish	0.00%	0
Muslim/Islamic	0.00%	0
Nothing in Particular (Atheist, Agnostic, or "None")	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	2.70%	2
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 4

"Other" responses: Soon to be former Catholic leaning towards American Baptist; Indigenous

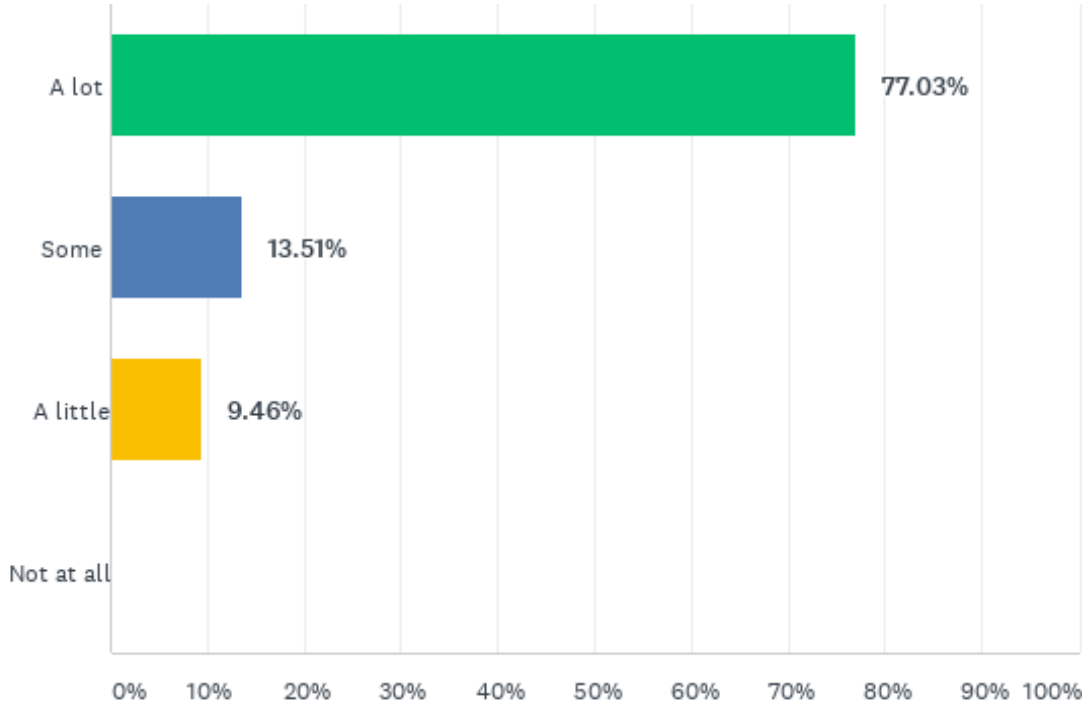
Q5: How strongly did you feel personally connected to this online community during the 30 days of faith-sharing?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	29.73%	22
Some	41.89%	31
A little	24.32%	18
Not at all	4.05%	3
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 5

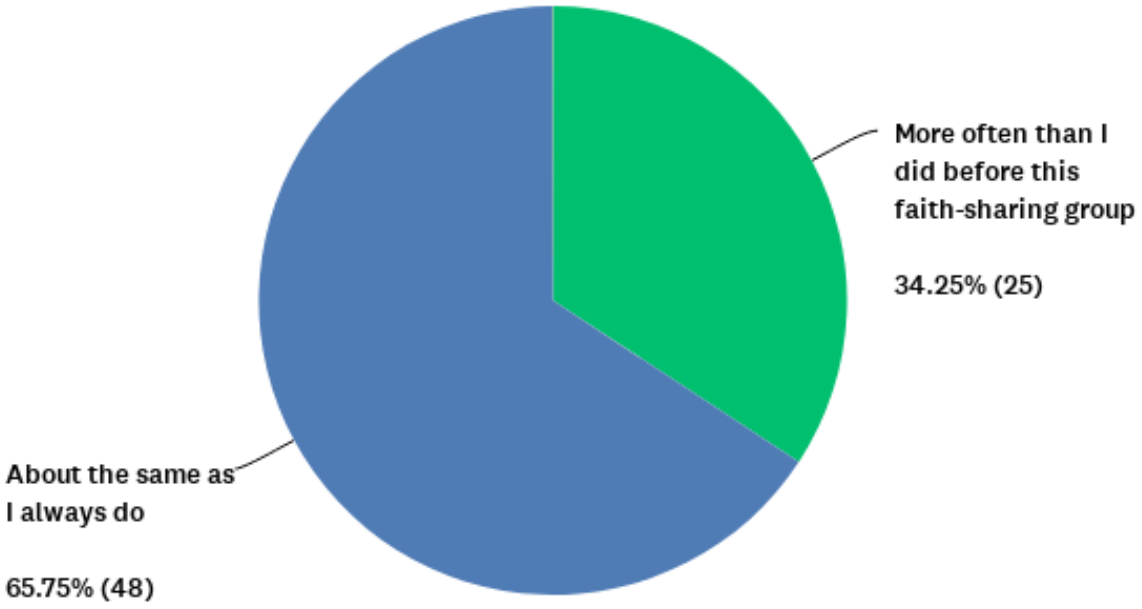
Q6: How strongly did you feel personally connected to a Higher Power as you understand it during the 30 days of faith-sharing?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	77.03%	57
Some	13.51%	10
A little	9.46%	7
Not at all	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 6

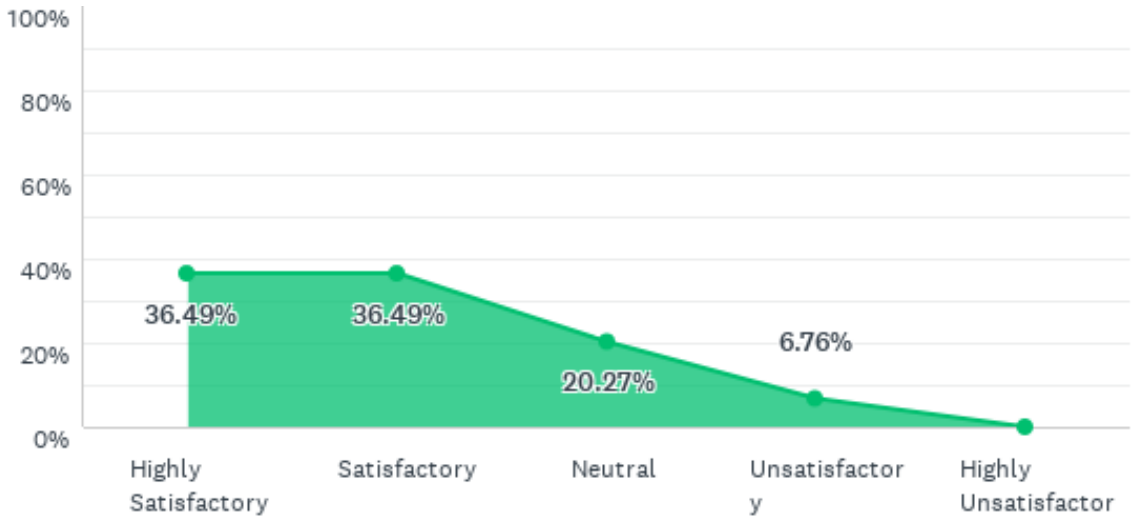
Q7: How often do you intend to attend a religiously sponsored event (funeral, wedding, church service, online discussion, spiritual reading, prayer or meditation group, etc.) moving forward from this faith-sharing group into the future?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More often than I did before this faith-sharing group	34.25%	25
About the same as I always do	65.75%	48
Less often than I did before the group	0.00%	0
I don't plan to attend religious services in the future	0.00%	0
TOTAL		73

Post-Retreat Survey 7

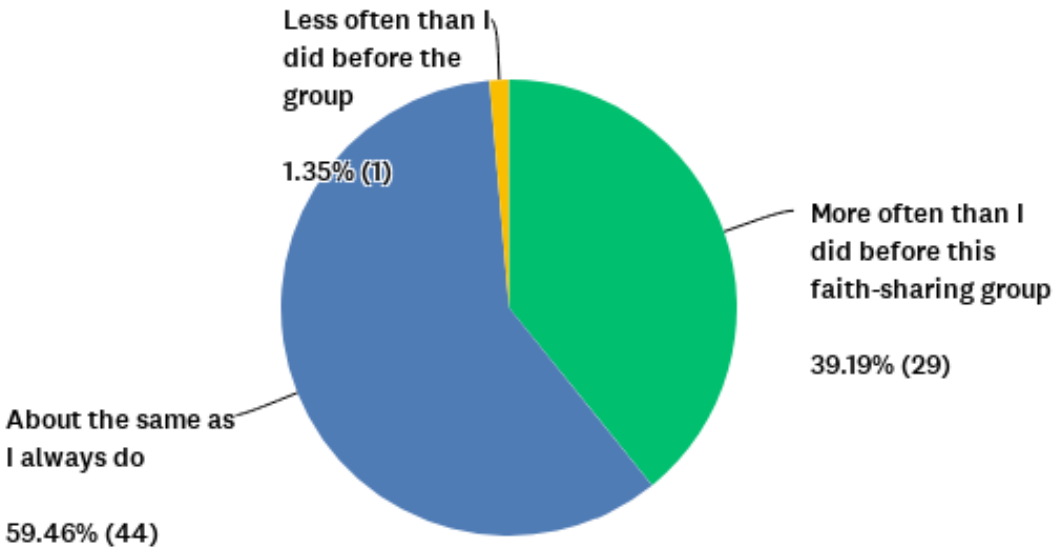
Q8: This online retreat utilized Facebook. How satisfied do you feel about the use of Facebook to facilitate the group interactions?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Highly Satisfactory	36.49%	27
Satisfactory	36.49%	27
Neutral	20.27%	15
Unsatisfactory	6.76%	5
Highly Unsatisfactory	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 8

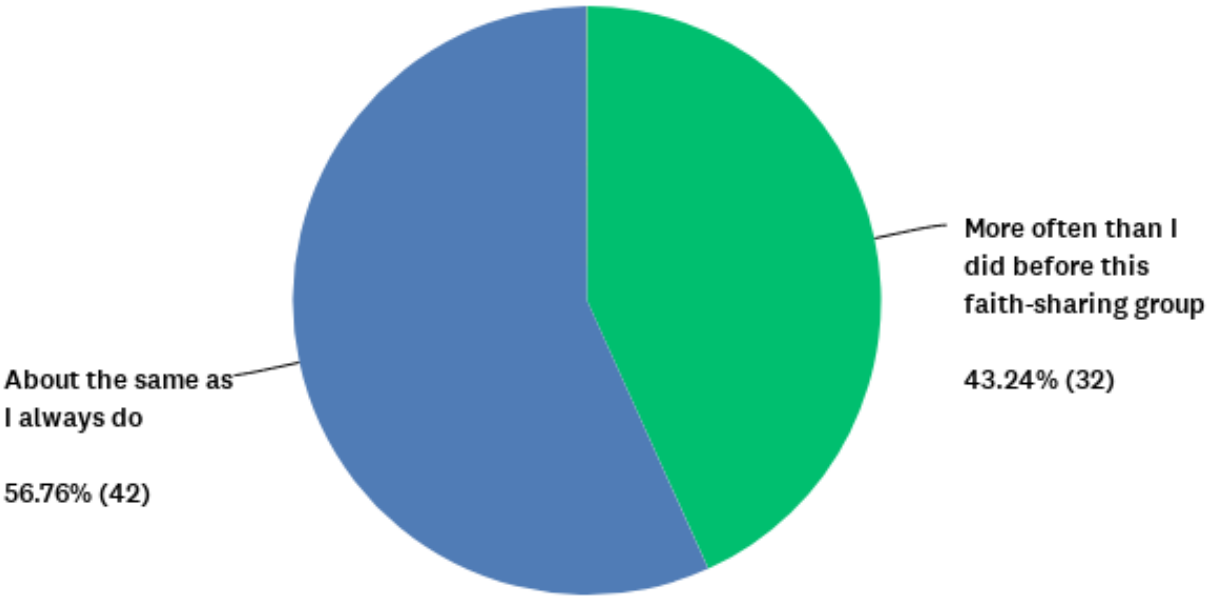
Q9: How likely are you to discuss faith-based content with others online as you move forward from this faith-sharing group into the future?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More often than I did before this faith-sharing group	39.19%	29
About the same as I always do	59.46%	44
Less often than I did before the group	1.35%	1
I don't plan to share my faith online in the future	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 9

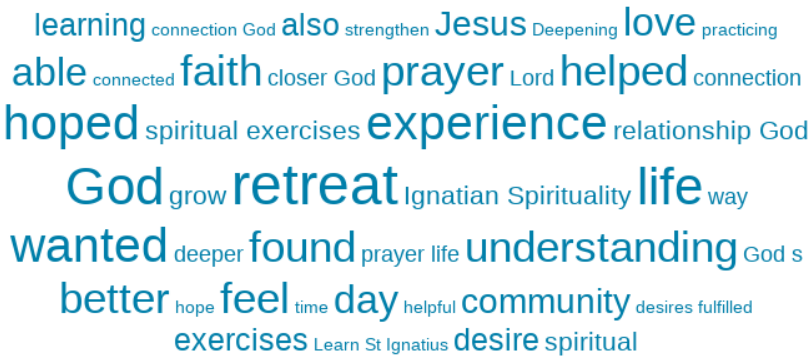
Q10: How likely are you to discuss faith-based content with others offline (face-to-face) moving forward from this online faith-sharing group?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More often than I did before this faith-sharing group	43.24%	32
About the same as I always do	56.76%	42
Less often than I did before the group	0.00%	0
I don't plan to share my faith offline in the future	0.00%	0
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 10

Q11 What particular hopes or desires did you find were fulfilled in this experience? Please write them in the space below.



Post-Retreat Survey 11

Survey Monkey generated the above Word Cloud to summarize the results of this question. Seventy-two participants answered this free response question and two participants skipped it. Here is the full text of all 72 individual responses to Question 11 arranged generationally; all spelling and grammatical errors are original to the texts as respondents typed them out.

Silent Generation (5 respondents)

1. To include my faith focus/awareness more in my life each day

2. A greater sense of connection to God‘s presence. A creative sense of peace with events in my life

3. This experience helped me to review my spiritual life: my beliefs, my understandings, my practices. It also helped me to re-commit in necessary ways.

4. I was looking for a period of introspection and rest

5. The desire to pray more. The desire to be more reflective in my prayer and faith life. The desire to become a more holy person, more in love with God and to live more aware of God’ presence in my life.

Baby Boomers (37)

6. To step back and take stock. To be more aware of God's presence. To see a way through sin.

7. It was a powerful online experience

8. I was exposed to tools that have helped me enter more deeply into my relationship with God. New ideas from Fr. Sean, the daily exercises and the comments of others provided feedback that expanded my understanding. Also, with Covid and the decrease in personal interaction it was perfect to have this online retreat. And for me personally I live in what's been called "mission territory" for the church so there are very few opportunities in my community to have Catholic sponsored religious discussions, retreats, classes, etc. I am very grateful that I found this site online and was able to participate.

9. A more extensive understanding of the *Exercises.*

10. It gave me the incentive to stop in the midst of my day and pray. Sounds simple, but it's not always easy to do. This retreat was a gift in the midst of my too busy life.

11. Didn't really have any hopes or desires fulfilled in this experience.

12. I was focused and committed to my prayer time for the duration of the experience.

13. Much better st mindful meditation. Loved being lead and learning how to enter the silence better.

14. I learned to make some reflections and prayers...

15. I had wanted to do a 30 day retreat since the early 90s when I worked at Gonzaga but never had the time and then we moved out of the area and did not have opportunity. I was pleasantly

surprised by the depth of sharing from the participants and the creation of a solid, if narrowly focused community. Each day we were able to come to this sacred space.

16. Spiritual growth and confirmation of my faith and belief system.

17. I was interested in the introduction to *The Imitation of Christ*, and the *Spiritual Exercises*.

18. I came into the retreat with three goals. I've been doing spiritual reading, but it contained lots of theology, and the theology had me in my head, instead of in my heart. The Ignatian Spirituality helps with that. I'm anxious to let go of my ego and discover more of who I am in God. I don't know that the retreat did anything directly with that, but it did leave me more open to God. I went in with lots of questions about sin, and the first week helped with some of that.

19. I hoped to understand my Catholic faith and the writings of St Ignatius more clearly. I also wanted to know myself better. These hopes and desires were fulfilled.

20. Learn more about St. Ignatius. Hear more thoughts of Christ from other Christians. Share in our faith and beliefs. Grow more in my connection with Christ.

21. I drew closer to God, I forgave someone having better connected with my own sinfulness. I lived the Scriptures and was given direction through the colluqys. I feel more loved by Him and I love Him more, particularly through his suffering and the Hope I found.

22. I expected to hear Father talking live online about our faith. There were connection problems, so my hopes were not always fulfilled. I expected to hear thoughts and opinions from other people. There were not a lot of them.

23. The hope to remain focused during prayer. The guided contemplations were very helpful for this. I hoped to start and finish the retreat which i did. When i did tge spex years ago i Remember

skimming over week 3 whereas this time i was able to stay with it. I usually atrend daiky mass but due to covid this and examen were alternative moments

24. I am happy to have learned about St. Ignatius. My wife and I are making more of an effort to watch uplifting videos on saints. We have enjoyed these before but they are now more frequent in our life. I hope this will continue to grow and develop even greater spiritual thirst in our lives.

25. I was interested to see how it would work online compared to individuals in with guided as I am at present studying.

26. I wanted to deepen and expand my personal prayer life, and I was curious about the Exercises. I feel that my prayer life has been renewed, and that when I pray now I am less distracted and more engaged in prayer.

27. I experienced some of the exercises, which I'd always been curious about. Also, I'd hoped to draw closer to God and break through a problem, and that occurred. I feel better able and willing to follow God's will in this challenge with a sense of certainty.

28. I'd hoped to find peaceful reflection and a deeper connection with my faith.

29. God stirs my heart in the midst of lockdown - with no in-person sacraments, or for this experience, no in-person discussions with the retreat master, yet still God spoke. What an awesome God!

30. Learning about new ways that I can practice using to actually feel Jesus' reality as a human, and thereby feel God's guidance more strongly in decisions on how to live my life.

31. Closer to God, by speaking to him in moments set aside each day to do so.

32. I had hoped to learn more about Ignatian Spirituality and was happy to do that. I also found my experience of God in my life strengthened by using my imagination, my senses to enhance my prayer life in this and other devotions.

33. I was just hoping to connect with Our Lord and His people again. I have been so isolated, as has everyone else.

34. I thought it was remarkable that I was discovering ways to include Jesus in my daily life. The thought of "hating sin" had never entered my mind. I had never sat at the foot of the Cross watching Christ die. I have noticed that reading scripture has become mysterious to me, the words have their own life and I'm more willing to reread in an effort to understand.

35. I desired to enter into meditative/contemplation daily. This retreat has helped me begin to do this.

36. Ability to participate in the spiritual exercises. Would not have been able to do so otherwise

37. I felt closer to God, more aware of His Divine Providence. I deep more confident in discerning God's will & learned more about praying the Lectio Divina.

38. I wanted to reestablish a habit of daily prayer. I wanted to clarify where I was in my spiritual understandings . I wanted to discern if I was ready to move on spiritually. This really helped

39. Feeling connected to a faith community during the pandemic. Learning more about St Ignatius. Growing deeper in my Faith

40. Happiness

41. It caused me to re-examine the [tenets] of my faith and recommit my life to Jesus Christ

42. It was so so helpful in strengthening my connection to God, especially when I am away from my parish life of being in community. I had hoped for that this might happen. The retreat gave me structure and suggestions of what to consider in my relationship with God and the Church.

The private site was a very good idea. I felt free to express where I was and it was nourishing and enlightening to read where others were.

Generation X (18)

43. Made the EE accessible

44. I've wanted to do an Ignatian retreat for a while, but logistics made it not possible for me to do. I appreciated this opportunity but found it difficult to keep up with it every day. I made it through the first week only, but I hope to catch up with the other videos this month at my own pace.

45. I had hoped to find a way to participate in some form of the spiritual exercises.

46. I understand my current relationship with God and where I want to be..... I knew I needed a reboot and this helped!

47. I wanted to see what the long retreat was like. Now I have an idea about the content.

48. It was good to share reflections I found it helpful

49. God’s Patience with me and his constant Love for me despite my weakness

50. A deeper relationship with God. Finding time to be present to God's daily blessings.

51. Learned about a new source for faith sharing

52. A sense of God's intimacy and an answer to something for my future development

53. I became more aware of what I need to work on to improve my relationship with God

54. A closer connection to my Lord and others in this community.

55. Connection to God, relationship with Jesus, better understanding of the exercises

56. I wanted to know what was a 30-day Spiritual Exercises retreat.

57. I had hoped to grow closer to God through the group. Unfortunately I was unable to participate as frequently as I’d hoped due to some challenges in my personal life.

58. I wanted to stay sane during COVID and remind myself to act as a person of faith

59. Received an introduction to the 30 day retreat as I wanted. I'd been exposed to Ignatian spirituality but this let me experience more of it. I also wanted to connect with my real-life friends and experience it together.

60. It was great that I did not have to leave my home and still be part of faith sharing and deepening my relationship with the Lord.

Millennials (11)

61. I met God through Father Salai's guidance :) and able to get closer to him

62. Understanding more about the Ignatian Spirituality

63. I have been practicing the Exercises by myself for many years, but do to funds, I never attended a retreat. I hope for many years to be able to experience a retreat such as this and found that hope and desire fulfilled. I enjoyed having a teacher and videos and not having to depend on myself and my translations of the meaning of the texts.

64. Deepening of prayer life

65. Knowing I’m not alone and others have similar situations and feeling as mine.

66. More at peace with Jesus' love for me.

67. Intimacy with the Lord. He took me deeper than I was expecting and allowed me to dream with Him.

68. Good to have a community and learn more about the spiritual Exercises—I would like access to the retreat so I can go back and listed to the weeks again. My participation was interrupted when people close to me where had covid... so I did not participate for some time so I got really behind—but I think the meditations would be really useful still as I slowly start tagging back up

69. I was able to grow in and strengthen my life of prayer, grow in my reliance on God's grace, and grow in my ability to discern God's providential guidance. Prayer, learning to be sustained by God and depending on His grace, and growing in the ability to discern His hand more clearly is especially important when parish life, access to the sacraments, and community are so limited.

70. I loved the Ignatian style of meditations, using my imagination to establish the scenes from Scripture, and to hold colloquies at the end of a day. Doing these—especially the composition of place and seeing Jesus in my imagination— helped me to feel closer to Jesus than I usually do. It had a real affective impact on me and I felt an increase of love for God in my heart. My desire to actually spend more time in prayer, and my desire to feel closer to God, were both fulfilled.

71. I got a peak of Ignatian Spirituality

Generation Z (1)

72. When I did the sessions I felt more connected to God

Q12 Other than Facebook, is there another digital media format you would suggest that America use for an online faith-sharing group? Please write your suggestion in the blank. If you do not write anything, your answer will be recorded as "no suggestion."

Post-Retreat Survey 12

Survey Monkey generated the above Word Cloud to summarize the results of this question. Fifty-six participants answered this free response question and 18 participants skipped it. Here is

the full text of all 72 individual responses to Question 12 arranged generationally; all spelling and grammatical errors are original to the texts as respondents typed them out.

Silent Generation (3)

1. YouTube

2. I have been using Zoom with a spiritual direction group. It works well.

3. ZOOM sessions.

Baby Boomers (28)

4. No Suggestion

5. Zoom

6. I don't know any other format. It worked for me because I have a Facebook account but something different might reach more people and include people who don't do Facebook.

7. Facebook is the only social media site I use.

8. I have found zoom to be a great platform as well.

9. I don't know digital media well enough to make any kind of suggestion!

10. No suggestion

11. Youtube

12. Zoom would allow real time interaction but also would restrict participation to those who could comply with that

13. WhatsApp, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams.

14. No suggestion

15. Zoom day retreats Speakers to encourage us Debate forums

16. I would suggest breaking into small groups of maybe 6- 10 people with a set time weekly to meet and share. How about Zoom?

17. We use zoom for luve meetings but db is useful for referring to page in my own time and zone

18. Zoom could work but the flexibility would need to be present in that offering also since I was not able to watch the videos when they were presented live.

19. Cannot think of any

20. I've found Zoom to be very helpful. My anonymous group recently had a virtual convention. Some sessions were panelists only, but others were more interactive. Of course they were not asynchronous. but folks were present from all over the world. A previous convention had simultaneous translations in 5 languages.

21. None

22. Have you talked with any of the communities that host "closed" or "paying" membership who might be willing to have you provide this kind of retreat on their website? (e.g. http://www.icpe.org/; https://www.wordonfire.org/; https://franciscan.edu/; etc.)

23. FB is the platform I'm most comfortable, but younger folks probably are more comfortable with newer platforms that I'm unfamiliar with.

24. Twitter, if it could be a private group.

25. I'm not very tech savvy, so not aware of other options

26. Maybe a dedicated website, and not social media. I tend to get lost in the social media rabbit hole. No one's fault but my own. Use the social media to direct to the website

27. A directed Zoom room based on Ignatian prayer w a designated Ignatian spiritual director as the group leader.

28. Recorded WebEx or Microsoft teams might work yet I don't know if you can comment like we have done on Facebook

29. Facebook seems to be for older people. You had better interview the younger crowd to see what they are into.

30. Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Slack

31. I am not well versed in the scope of digital media. I like the opportunity for writing and reading comments in addition to hearing/seeing the retreat leader.

Generation X (15)

32. Mighty Networks or other community platform

33. I find it easier to be "present" when events are live.

34. Maybe a text messaging small group format

35. Maybe a zoom meeting for each time zone could help with connections in the secret group setting

36. Zoom or the like might encourage more interaction and might help create a sense of community.

37. Twitter

38. Not sure

39. No suggestion

40. Ascension Presents

41. Zoom

42. I think it needs to be "more" than Twitter or Instagram- but cannot be as much as Zoom... i.e. people need to be able to come and go as their schedule allows

43. No answer

44. This worked well

45. No

46. No suggestion

Millennials (9)

47. Youtube - General audi[e]nce Tiktok - Gen Z Instagram - Millenials

48. No suggestion

49. I wish I knew, I honestly don't like facebook that much, but don't know of any other solutions.

50. No suggestion.

51. I'm not a very techy person. But it was a little hard to interact with others on Facebook other than just commenting my answers and maybe reading someone else's.

52. I liked the recorded meditations—I just don't use Facebook as often. Not YouTube—I liked the community aspect on Facebook!

53. Having one's own site could be especially helpful especially if it had a "message board" where people could have ongoing discussions on topics that arise.

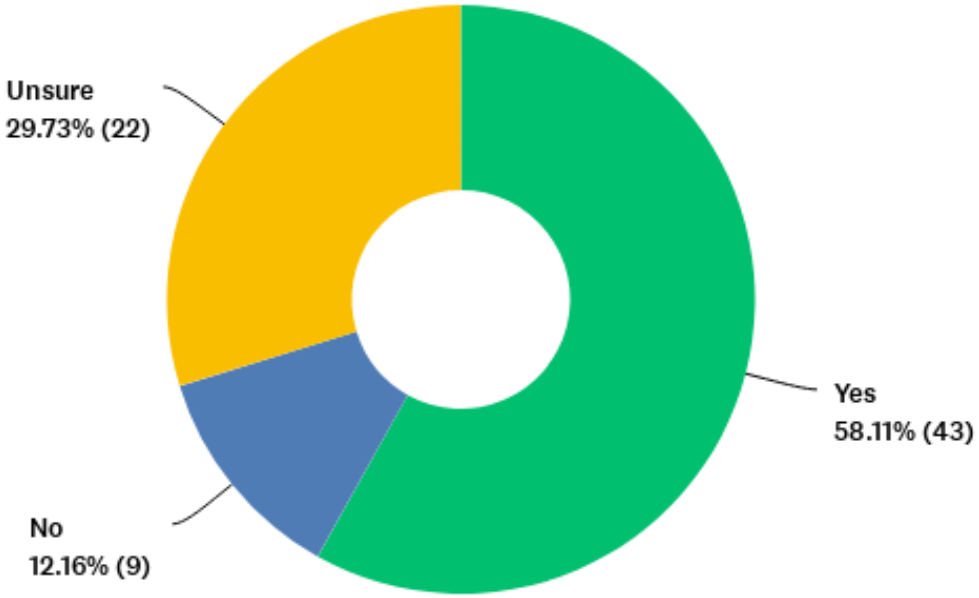
54. Instagram could work for a faith-sharing group structured around images (sacred art, architecture, etc) but Facebook worked really well for videos + participants interacting in comments.

55. No suggestion

Generation Z (1)

56. Slack, Discord

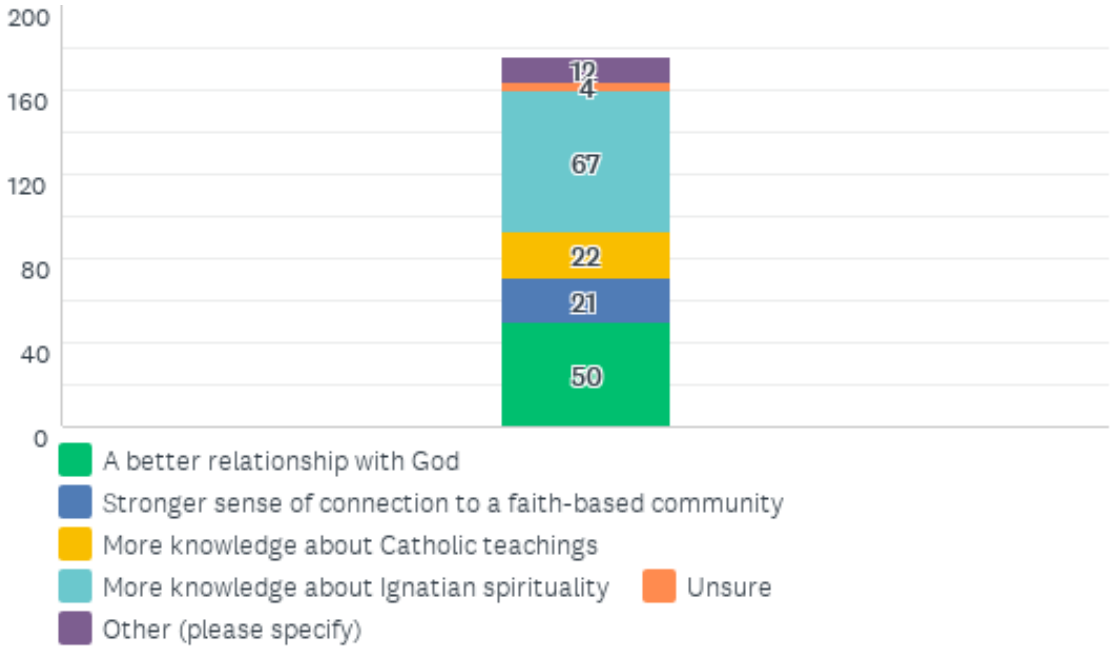
Q13: Do you consider this Facebook faith-sharing group to have been a type of “real” community?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	58.11%	43
No	12.16%	9
Unsure	29.73%	22
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 13

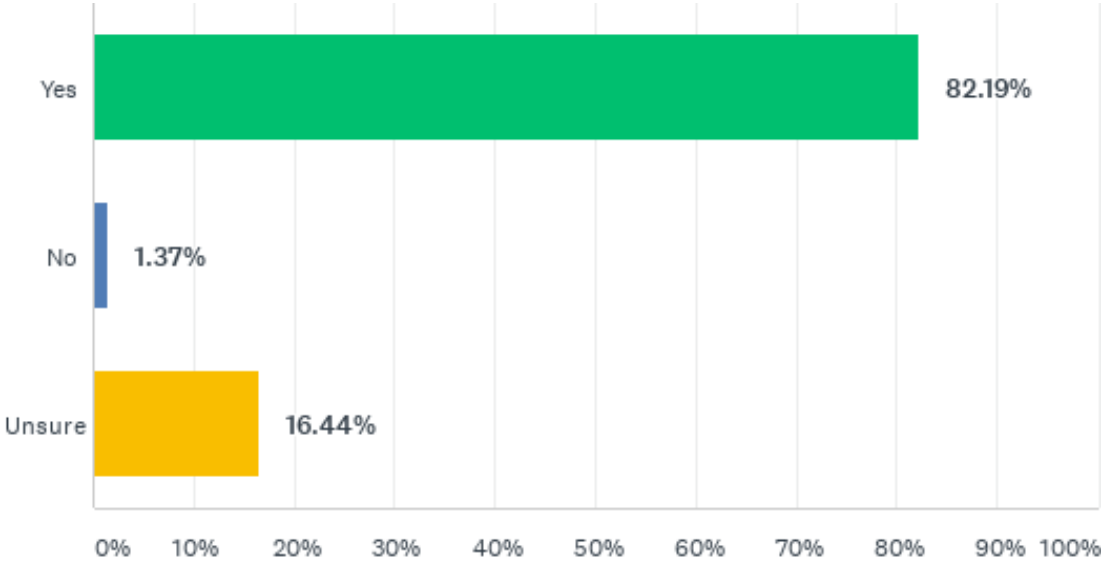
Q14: What outcomes did you see in your spiritual life at the end of this online faith-sharing group? Please choose all that apply



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A better relationship with God	68.49%	50
Stronger sense of connection to a faith-based community	28.77%	21
More knowledge about Catholic teachings	30.14%	22
More knowledge about Ignatian spirituality	91.78%	67
Unsure	5.48%	4
Other (please specify)	16.44%	12
Total Respondents: 73		

Post-Retreat Survey 14

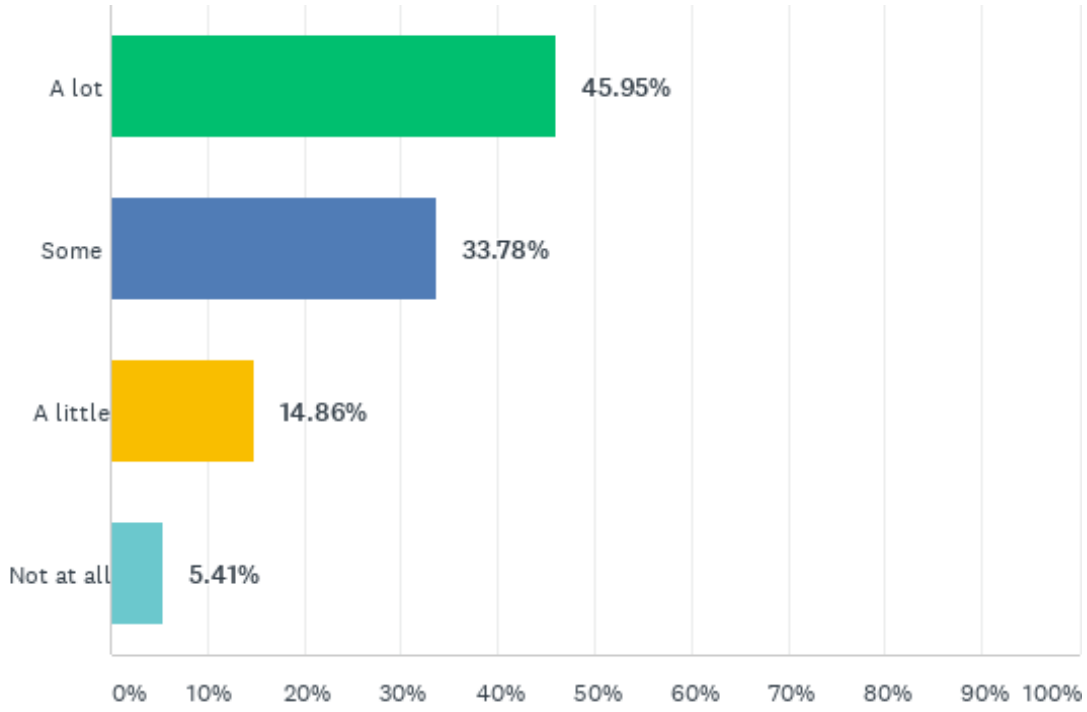
Q15: Based on this experience, would you be interested in participating in another online faith-sharing group at the America Media Facebook page?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	82.19%	60
No	1.37%	1
Unsure	16.44%	12
TOTAL		73

Post-Retreat Survey 15

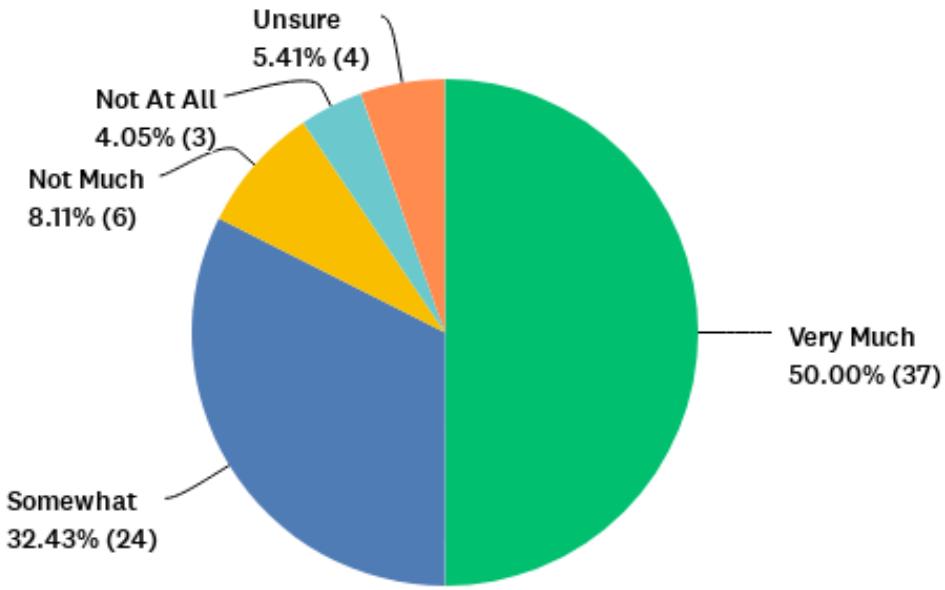
Q16: How comfortable did you feel talking about your personal faith and religious experiences, as opposed to exchanging opinions, in this Facebook group?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A lot	45.95%	34
Some	33.78%	25
A little	14.86%	11
Not at all	5.41%	4
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 16

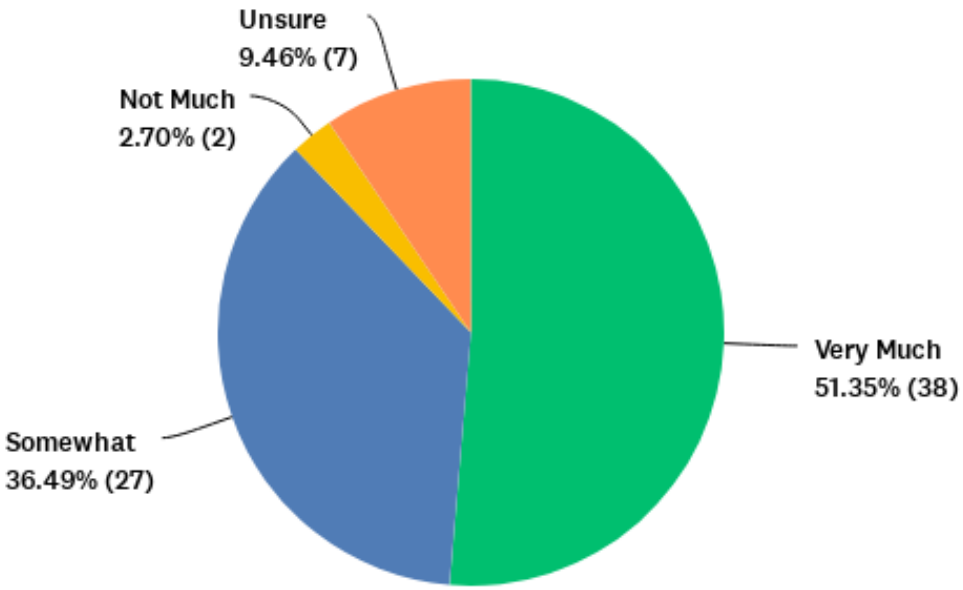
Q17: To what extent does this statement accurately describe the grace you received in Week One of the retreat? Statement: "I grew in a deeply felt sense of God's love for me even though I am a sinner."



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	50.00%	37
Somewhat	32.43%	24
Not Much	8.11%	6
Not At All	4.05%	3
Unsure	5.41%	4
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 17

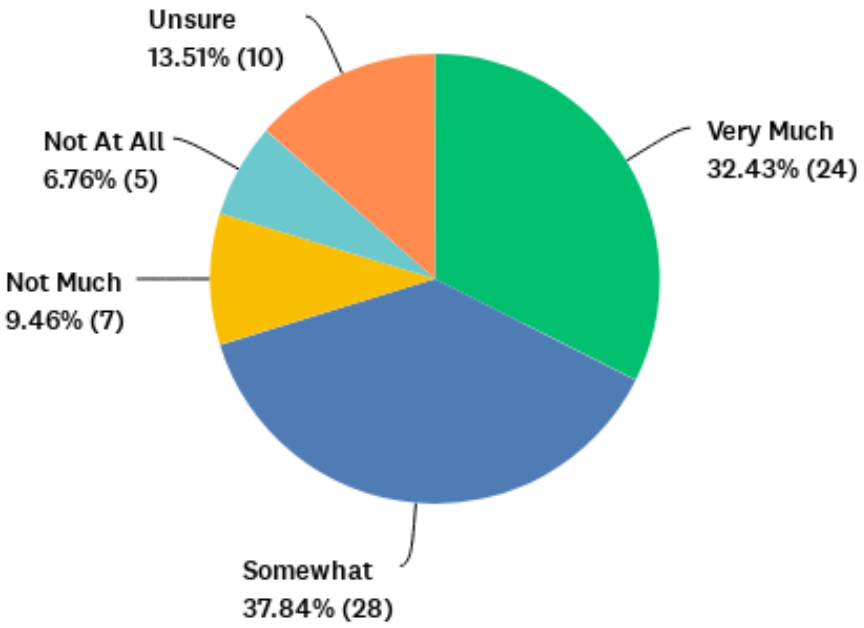
Q18: To what extent does this statement accurately describe the grace you received in Week Two of the retreat? Statement: “I grew in my desire to accompany Jesus and labor with him in his ongoing ministry.”



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	51.35%	38
Somewhat	36.49%	27
Not Much	2.70%	2
Not At All	0.00%	0
Unsure	9.46%	7
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 18

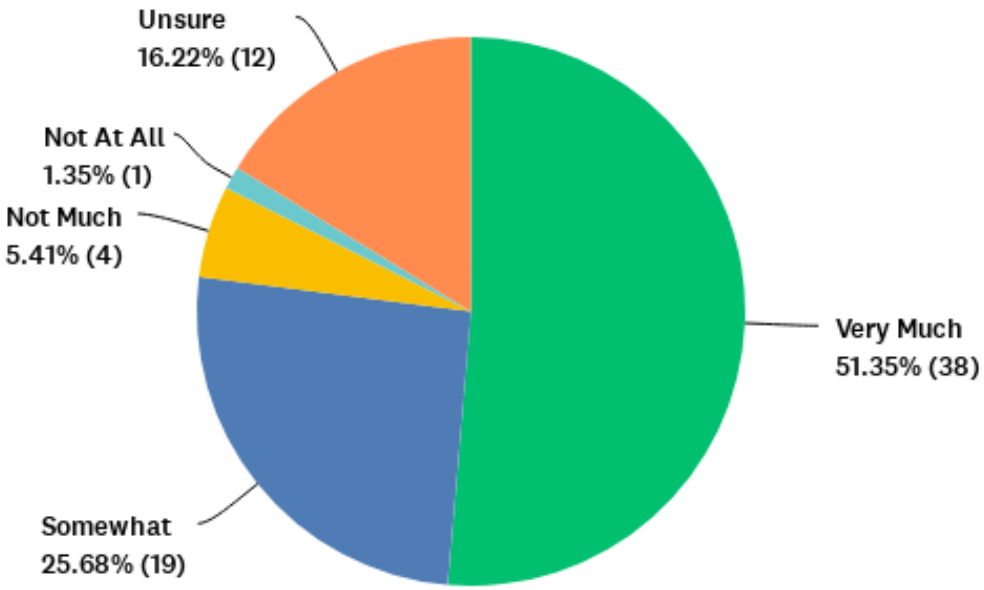
Q19: To what extent does this statement accurately describe the grace you received in Week Three of the retreat? Statement: “I experienced a stronger desire to suffer with Jesus on the cross.”



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	32.43%	24
Somewhat	37.84%	28
Not Much	9.46%	7
Not At All	6.76%	5
Unsure	13.51%	10
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 19

Q20: To what extent does this statement accurately describe the grace you received in Week Four of the retreat? Statement: “I rejoiced more deeply with the risen Lord, Jesus Christ, in gratitude for all he gives me.”



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Much	51.35%	38
Somewhat	25.68%	19
Not Much	5.41%	4
Not At All	1.35%	1
Unsure	16.22%	12
TOTAL		74

Post-Retreat Survey 20

Appendix Six: Raw Data and Slides from the Facebook Group

Facebook internal group analytics raw data from August 31 to October 30, 2020:

Top Cities	**Members**
San Antonio, TX	14
New York, NY	10
Chicago, IL	8
Ellensburg, WA	7
Lagos, Nigeria	6
Nairobi, Kenya	5
Philadelphia, PA	5
Cambridge, MA	4
Washington D.C., DC	4
Kenosha, WI	4
Adelaide, SA, Australia	4
Bloemfontein, South Africa	4
Houston, TX	4
Boston, MA	4
Austin, TX	3
Aba, Nigeria	3
Guatemala City, Guatemala	3
Wellesley, MA	3
Redmond, WA	3

Richmond, VA	3
Charleston, SC	3
Los Angeles, CA	2
Fairfield, CT	2
Arlington, VA	2
Newton, MA	2
Pine Ridge, SD	2
Buenos Aires, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, Argentina	2
Accra, Ghana	2
New Haven, CT	2
Ottawa, ON, Canada	2
Lutherville, MD	2
Parañaque, Philippines	2
Montreal, QC, Canada	2
St. Louis, MO	2
Manila, Philippines	2
Des Moines, IA	2
El Paso, TX	2
Enugu, Nigeria	2
McLean, VA	2
San Francisco, CA	2
Fort Wayne, IN	2

Birmingham, MI	2
Gainesville, FL	2
Ann Arbor, MI	2
London, UK	2
Kalamazoo, MI	2
Revere, MA	2
Glasgow, UK	2
Long Beach, CA	2
Medway, MA	2
San Severino Marche, Marche, Italy	1
Johns Creek, GA	1
Bellingham, WA	1
Baltimore, MD	1
Atlanta, GA	1
Pensacola, FL	1
Welland, ON, Canada	1
Lancaster, UK	1
Pleasant Prairie, WI	1
Lincoln, NE	1
Winthrop, MA	1
Doylestown, PA	1
Laurel Fork, VA	1
Oklahoma City, OK	1

Westfield, IN	1
Vancouver, BC, Canada	1
Rome, Lazio, Italy	1
Belfast, UK	1
Sacramento, CA	1
Pachuca, Hidalgo, Mexico	1
Stow, MA	1
Crawfordsville, IN	1
Oak Lawn, IL	1
Franklin, MA	1
Cumbernauld, UK	1
Marikina City, Philippines	1
Falkirk, UK	1
Butuan City, Philippines	1
Portland, OR	1
Canton, NY	1
North Port, FL	1
Pasto, Narino, Colombia	1
Jakarta, Indonesia	1
Brisbane, QLD, Australia	1
Lima, Peru	1
Riverhead, NY	1
Singapore, Singapore	1

Bellingham, MA	1
Canton, MI	1
Saint Catharines, ON, Canada	1
Ibadan, Nigeria	1
Sydney, NSW, Australia	1
Wheat Ridge, CO	1
San Juan, Puerto Rico	1
Garden Grove, CA	1
Carmel, IN	1
New Orleans, LA	1
Bluffton, SC	1
Bellevue, IA	1
Il-Hamrun, Central Region, Malta	1

Facebook Group Analytics 1

Countries	**Members**
United States	284
Nigeria	19
Philippines	13
United Kingdom	12
Canada	12
Australia	6
Kenya	5

South Africa	4
India	3
Guatemala	3
Malta	2
Ghana	2
Colombia	2
Italy	2
Argentina	2
Indonesia	2
Mexico	2
Democratic Republic of the Congo	1
Portugal	1
Denmark	1
Hungary	1
Sudan	1
Uganda	1
Singapore	1
Ireland	1
Myanmar	1
Kuwait	1

United Arab Emirates	1
Puerto Rico	1
Mauritius	1
Cameroon	1
Switzerland	1
Spain	1
Peru	1
Austria	1
Germany	1
Pakistan	1

Facebook Group Analytics 2

Age Range	Women	% Women	Men	% Men
13-17	0	0%	0	0.00%
18-24	9	2.3%	11	2.80%
25-34	35	9%	44	11.3%
35-44	27	6.9%	26	6.7%
45-54	37	9.5%	18	4.6%
55-64	63	16.2%	17	4.4%
65+	73	18.7%	30	7.7%

Facebook Group Analytics 3

Top Moderator Posts From Most to Least Engaging	Comments	Reactions	Views
Welcome to Day 4 of retreat! On this feast of St. Francis of Assisi, my video introduces the notion of a preparatory prayer and then shares a guided meditation on the Triple Sin contemplation (the sins of Lucifer, Adam, and one anonymous person) in #45 that Ignatius offers as the first imaginative exercise of the retreat. Please enjoy the video, pray over this exercise however the Spirit moves you, and share your responses in the comment box below. If you want some additional spiritual reading today, I suggest Psalm 139 (Lord, you search me and you know me). If you want a copy of my book to follow the introductions and faith-sharing prompts in writing, I've pinned a free PDF copy of it to the top of the announcements section of this page. God bless!	66	212	185
Welcome to Day 5 (sorry I misspoke and said 4 at start of video) of our faith-sharing retreat! In today's video I introduce St. Ignatius's note in #54 on the colloquy, his strongly urged practice of having a spiritual conversation at the end of each prayer period, and then offer a guided meditation with the Second Exercise on Sin (our own sins) starting in #55. Please enjoy the video, reflect on this	56	172	224

material in whatever way moves you, and post your responses to the faith-sharing prompts below. If you want more to reflect upon today, a suggested reading in our edition of the Spiritual Exercises (posted as a PDF free under announcements) is Lk 12:33-43.			
Welcome to Day 7 of retreat! Today's video repeats the reflection on God's love for sinners with a guided meditation on death written by Fr. De Place that I shared in an introductory video on September 18, following the advice of St. Ignatius in #71 for Other Exercises during the first week and elaborating a bit further. Suggested additional readings: Mt 25:31-46 and The Imitation of Christ book 3 chapter 14. Today's video concludes our first week-long session of daily videos, on the First Week of the Exercises, and tomorrow I'll begin posting on the Second Week theme of following Jesus for October 8-14. If you feel drawn to go more deeply into the grace of sorrow, confusing, and contrition for the role of sin in your broken relationships, please feel free to watch these first seven videos again or the First Week introductory videos from September to help pray further. But if you feel you've received the grace you sought during this first seven	52	152	209

days of videos, please prepare for our shift tomorrow into the Second Week theme as we pray to know, love, and follow Jesus in his earthly ministry. Godspeed!			
Welcome to Day 8 of retreat! Today's video presents the contemplation of the Reign of Christ in #91, also known as the Call of the King or Kingdom Meditation, a key exercise that St. Ignatius provides as a transition from week one to week two of the Spiritual Exercises. Please enjoy this somewhat longer video and share your responses to the reflection questions on the comment box below. Additional suggested readings: Jn 15, Col 3, Imitation of Christ book three (sorry I said one in video!) chapters 13-32, and any life of Christ or lives of the saints you wish to read (or watch if it's a movie!) during this second weeklong session of Oct. 8-14 where we pray to hear the call of Jesus and answer it by following him. 🙌	51	153	151
Welcome to Day 6 of retreat! Today's video presents an Ignatian repetition of the first two exercises on sin that I posted on October 4-5 (Days 4-5 of our 30-day faith-sharing retreat) and so I ask you to simply go deeper into them today and share what's moving you in the comment box below. The	47	135	200

idea of an Ignatian "repetitio" is to go back and do a simplified version of an earlier prayer period, focusing on what drew you most strongly in it, to see where God invites you to go deeper. You may pray from memory with what's moving you in these videos or else follow this new video today that synthesizes them, but please pray however moves you over the painful thoughts and feelings which may arise, including any memories from your life story that come up. If you find Fr. De Place's challenging repetition of #62 here too difficult to digest, here are two other suggested readings you might like to use today in addition to the suggested readings of the last two days: Revelation 3 and the Imitation of Christ book 3 chapter 14. Just keep in mind God's love for you in the midst of any shame, guilt, or deep sadness that emerges today as it will for all of us, and feel free to share with/support each other. Prayers!			
Welcome to Day 14 of our 30-day Spiritual Exercises faith-sharing retreat! As we wrap up our second 7-day session of daily videos today, transitioning from the second week theme of imitating/following Jesus Christ with the considerations of St. Ignatius on making a choice of a way of life (#169) rooted	44	148	149

in our focus on him, please share your thoughts in response to the video's questions in the comment box below after you've had a chance to reflect. Additional suggested readings today are Jn 1, Lk 5, Mt 4, Mk 1, and The Imitation of Christ book 3 chapter 54. Tomorrow we'll start our third 7-day session of October 15-21 on the third week theme of suffering with Jesus Christ in his passion. If you find yourself discerning a choice about your life commitments at this point in the retreat, or about small ways to live out your existing long-term commitments, I invite you share them in today's video comment thread as we move ahead. Godspeed!			
Welcome to Day 13 of retreat! Today's video presents a guided meditation with the Three Kinds of Humily (#169) exercise of St. Ignatius. Please enjoy the video, reflect, and share your response to the faith sharing questions below. Additional suggested readings from our edition of the SpEx if you want them are Mt 10 and The Imitation of Christ book 1 chapters 15-16 and book 3 chapter 54.	47	98	195
Welcome to Day 21 of our 30-day Spiritual Exercises faith-sharing retreat! Today's video presents a guided contemplation from the death to the burial of Jesus from the	41	121	125

points of St. Ignatius in #298, along with the account in Jn 19:30-42. If you prefer another gospel version of this story for your prayer today, you'll find the other three accounts in these places: Mt 27:57-66, Mk 15:42-47, and Lk 23:50-56. Please enjoy the video, reflect in whatever way you find helpful, and share your responses to the reflection questions in the comments below. Tomorrow we will move into the resurrection as we pray for the grace to rejoice with the risen Jesus during our last 7-day session of October 22-28, with a couple transition day reflections thrown in on October 29-30 and a post-retreat survey that I ask you to fill out (to finish my D.Min project in ministry on digital faith-sharing groups and also to help shape America Media's future digital group offerings) whenever you finish the retreat. However, that's still the distant future, so let's stay present and engaged right now as we bring our whole selves to intimate prayer and ask God for what we desire this week! :)			
Welcome to Day 10 of retreat, which occurs whenever you happen to watch this video! Today's video presents St. Ignatius's contemplation of the birth of Jesus (#110); suggested readings are Lk 2:1-21 and The Imitation of Christ	41	113	187

book 3 chapters 1, 2, and 18. As usual, I invite you to share your responses to the faith-sharing prompts in the comment box below. We continue to pray for the second week grace to know, follow, and love Jesus, and you're also welcome of course to ask for anything particular you're seeking from God on this faith-sharing retreat. Please feel free to turn your notifications on in Facebook and on your smart device if you want to get a message whenever these daily videos go live in the mornings (US Central Time) but it's okay to just log in as often as you're able to follow along. Take what you like, leave the rest, and remember there will be an anonymous post-retreat survey on Oct. 31 at the end to share your experience with me and help us at America Media consider future groups like this one. Thank you!			
Welcome to Day 9 of retreat! Today's video presents a guided contemplation for the Incarnation exercise (#101 of the Spiritual Exercises) as we pray for the second week grace to adore and follow Jesus Christ more intently in our lives. Please post your responses to the faith-sharing prompts in the video below whenever you happen to see this video, today or another day. If you want additional readings to pray over, our	39	123	163

translation suggests: Lk 1:26-56 and The Imitation of Christ book 2 chapters 1,7, and 8.			
Welcome to Day 17 of retreat! If you're logging on infrequently but trying to keep up with most or all of these videos in some order, please change the display above the first post from "new activity" to "most recent" each time you enter the group, and it will display the most recent video posted rather than the most recent member comments. Today's video presents the contemplation of the Eucharist in the Last Supper (#190) that St. Ignatius offers in the third week of the Exercises. If you want more to pray over today, our translation recommends Mt 26:17-30 and The Imitation of Christ book 4 chapters 1-2. You may also check out the brief points of St. Ignatius in #289 on the journey of Jesus with his friends from Bethany to the Last Supper in Jerusalem. Godspeed!	40	111	187
Welcome to Day 15 of our 30-day Spiritual Exercises faith-sharing retreat! Today's video presents a guided contemplation with the three prayer points of St. Ignatius on Palm Sunday (#287) paired with Mk 11:1-10. If you want to reflect on these points with another gospel version of the	37	110	169

story, you'll also find the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem in Mt 21:1-11, Lk 19:29-44, and Jn 12:12-19. We'll now be spending October 15-21, our third 7-day session of daily videos, praying for the Week 3 grace of suffering compassionately with Jesus in his passion. If you wish to pray a little more with the Week 2 theme of following Jesus and laboring alongside him in his public ministry before Jerusalem, I recommend praying with one of his healings or miracles, as we didn't cover those passages in our second session of October 8-14. Godspeed!			
Welcome to Day 12 of our 30-day faith-sharing retreat through the Spiritual Exercises! Day 12 is whenever you view this video; you may even view and share on multiple videos in one day, depending on how the Spirit moves you in prayer. As we continue praying for the second week grace of imitating Jesus, and begin reflecting on our life choices in relation to that, today's video presents the Two Standards meditation (#136) of the Exercises. I invite you to watch or listen, reflect in whatever way seems appropriate to you, and post your response to the faith-sharing questions in the comments below this video. If you want more material for	35	109	136

spiritual reading or prayer today, our translation suggests Mt 19 and The Imitation of Christ book 3 chapters 23, 27, 31, and 56. But some of you have found other great books on Jesus and the saints for spiritual reading; please feel free to share what you're reading (if anything) in that other discussion thread on the page. Pray well!			
Welcome to Day 19 of retreat, the October 19 patronal feast of the Chapel of the North American Martyrs here at Jesuit High School New Orleans! Today's video presents a contemplation of Jesus from Pilate to the crucifixion, using the points of St. Ignatius in #296 and St. Matthew's gospel version. Suggested readings for this scene are Mt 27:31-38; Mk 15:20-28; Lk 23:24-38; Jn 19:12-24. However, please feel free to read and reflect on the entire passion account from one of the four gospels in these days of praying for compassionate tears to suffer with Jesus who suffers for love of each one of us. Godspeed!	32	103	213
Welcome to Day 28 of our 30-day faith-sharing retreat! As we conclude our fourth and final 7-day session, praying for the grace to rejoice in gratitude with the risen Jesus, today's video presents the second way of praying with the Our Father	32	101	105

from #249 of the Spiritual Exercises -- a sort of lectio divina that St. Ignatius says here may be done with any vocal written prayer. Please enjoy praying with this video and post your response to the faith-sharing prompts in the comment box below. Tomorrow and Friday, we'll have two "transition days" of video reflections looking at materials from the Exercises on our lives outside of retreat as we wrap. Then a post-retreat Survey Monkey poll will be posted for you to complete by November 7, following up on our pre-retreat survey from September, and a farewell video this Saturday, October 31.			
Welcome to Day 11 (sorry I said 10 at start of video lol) of our 30-day Spiritual Exercises faith-sharing retreat! Today's video presents a guided meditation with St. Ignatius's exercise on the childhood or "Hidden Life of Jesus" in the Spiritual Exercises #132-134 and #271. Please enjoy this reflection and then share your responses to the faith-sharing prompts by posting a comment below this video. Scripture describes the life of Jesus between the ages of 12 and 30 in two short verses, Luke 2:51-52, but we may read the entirety of Luke 2:40-52 to get the entire story of finding 12-year old	35	82	171

jESUS in the temple that precedes it. (We may also look at the presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple in Luke 2:22-38.) If you want an idea for additional spiritual reading today, our translation suggests The Imitation of Christ Book 1 chapter 20 and Book 3 chapters 44 and 53. God bless!			
Welcome to Day 27 of our 30-day faith-sharing retreat! Today's guided video presents the Contemplation to Attain the Love of God (#230) of St. Ignatius in the Spiritual Exercises. Here are some additional suggested readings if you find it helpful for your prayer today: Jn 17, 1 Jn 4, and the Imitation of Christ book 3 chapters 3, 5, 6, an 34. As we continue to pray for the fourth week grace to rejoice in gratitude with the resurrected Jesus, please enjoy this prayer exercise and share your response to the reflection questions in the comment box below.	28	113	100
Welcome to Day 18 of retreat! Today's video offers a guided contemplation from the Last Supper to the Agony in the Garden (#200 and 290 of the Spiritual Exercises) as we pray for the grace of compassionate tears in union with Jesus who now suffers for love of us. Here are the Gospel passages on this mystery for additional prayer and spiritual reading if you	29	107	152

like: Mt 26:31-46; Mk 14:27-42; Lk 22:24-46; and Jn 13:31-38, 14-17, and 18:1-2.			
Welcome to Day 26 of our 30-day Spiritual Exercises online faith-sharing retreat! Today's guided contemplation video presents the Ascension of Jesus Christ with the points from St. Ignatius in #312 of the Exercises, offering three possible places in the story from Acts 1:1-11 where we might rest our hearts and minds as we pray for the grace to rejoice in the resurrection and ascension. Please enjoy the video and share your experiences of this prayer, using my reflection questions as helpful, in the comment box below.	27	106	109
Welcome to the final day, Day 30, of our 30-day faith-sharing retreat! Today's second of two transition videos presents the Rules for Thinking With the Church of St. Ignatius which begin in #337 of the Spiritual Exercises. As you reflect on this video on the strength of your connection to a faith community, considering how to carry the graces of the four Ignatian weeks forward with you, I invite you to post your response to the video prompts in the comment section below and then take the post-retreat Survey Monkey poll that's pinned under the Announcements section sometime	33	62	131

before October 7. Even if you have not watched all of the videos by then, and are trying to go through all of them, will you please take the survey to capture your experience to this point? Thanks!			
Welcome to Day 25 of retreat! Today's video presents a guided contemplation on what St. Ignatius calls the Ninth Apparition of the Risen Christ in #307 in the Spiritual Exercises, covering the commissioning of the disciples to go out and spread the good news. This story exists in all three synoptic gospels in these verses: Mt 28:16-20, Mk 16:14-20, and Lk 24:46-53. We continue praying for the grace to rejoice more deeply with the resurrected Jesus in gratitude for all he has given us during this final 7-day session of daily videos.	29	80	181
Welcome to Day 20 of our 30-day faith-sharing Spiritual Exercises retreat! Today's video presents a guided meditation on the Death of Jesus using the three points of St. Ignatius in #297 of the SpEx which synthesize the following gospel accounts of this story: Mt 27:39-56; Mk 15:29-41; Lk 23:39-49; Jn 19:25-39. My video focuses on Luke's account, but I invite you to pray with any of the four gospels and/or with	27	78	112

the points of Ignatius today as we pray for the grace to suffer with Jesus who suffers for us out of love. Please post your responses to the faith-sharing reflection questions (end of video) in the comments below.			
Welcome to Day 22 of our 30-day Spiritual Exercises faith-sharing retreat! This morning we begin our fourth and final 7-day session, praying for the grace to rejoice with the risen Jesus as Ignatius invites us to do in the fourth week of the Exercises. Today's video presents his first contemplation on the resurrection (#218), focusing on the apparition of Jesus to his Mother Mary, an appearance that Ignatius believes (#299) happened before any other despite not being described explicitly in Scripture. Please enjoy imagining yourself present with Mary and Jesus in this indescribably happy moment, converse with one of them about what you see and your reaction to it, and post your response to the faith-sharing prompts in the comment section below.	24	93	115
Welcome to Day 24 of our 30-day Spiritual Exercises faith-sharing retreat! Today's video presents a guided contemplation with the points of St. Ignatius (#306) on what he numbers as the Eighth Apparition of the Risen Christ in Jn	27	75	118

21:1-25. Please enjoy the video and share your thoughts on the reflection questions, or simply share your prayer experiences, in the comment box below. We pray during this final 7-day session for the grace to share the joy of the resurrected Jesus Christ and his friends in prayer. On a side note, I'm glad to see we've been growing closer together as a group, talking directly with each other at times without making evaluative comments! :)			
Welcome to Day 29 of our 30-day faith-sharing retreat through the Spiritual Exercises! During these last two "transition days" heading out of the retreat, I want to share a couple of reflections from St. Ignatius on how we might live out the graces we've received or deepened during this experience. Today's video presents the Rules for the Distribution of Alms (#337) that St. Ignatius presents to guide our service and giving to those in need. Please enjoy the reflection and post your comments below this video.	25	83	97
Happy Halloween, or All Hallow's Eve, here in the United States! Please fill out the post-retreat survey pinned at the top of Announcements in this group to assist America Media, and my D.Min research for CUA, as we discern how to do	29	62	167

online groups. Today is also the feast of St. Alphonsus Rodriguez for Jesuits, Reformation Day for Lutherans, and the Day of the Dead for Mexican Catholics. My farewell video offers my gratitude for this experience, a request to complete the post-retreat survey by November 7, and some thoughts about how to discern what to take with us out of the retreat. Please feel free, during this mystagogy period at the end of retreat, to read through the comment sections of the videos and share your gratitude inventory in the comment section below today's final video. The videos and this group will remain available for people who wish to continue using them; I will keep the group "secret" (hidden and invitation-only) to protect the privacy of what people shared unless the group asks to at least make it visible and invitation-only. You can also keep interacting with people's faith-sharing comments on the videos if you haven't read all of them and want to encourage one another.			
Welcome to Day 3 of retreat! Today's guided meditation is on the Ignatian General Examen (#43) of the Spiritual Exercises, with an additional suggested reading of 2 Corinthians 2:7-9 if you want more to pray over. You'll find	22	96	146

all of the materials for this retreat free online if you want them written out, or else you're welcome to buy my edition of the Exercises, but this is a “take what you need and leave the rest” retreat where I invite you to listen for what bits speak to you and focus there rather than trying to get it all down perfectly. In the Society of Jesus today, we celebrate the feast of St. Francis Borgia, a Spanish duke and early benefactor of the Jesuits who left his wealthy life to become a Jesuit himself and our superior general. God bless!			
Welcome to Day 23 of retreat! Following yesterday's video on the first appearance of the risen Jesus to his mother Mary that St. Ignatius, today's video presents what he calls the "second apparition" of the risen Jesus to Mary Magdalene and the other women who come to the tomb early Sunday morning, using the points of Ignatius from #300 of the Spiritual Exercises. I use Luke's version of this story in my guided contemplation today, but you may find different perspectives on the story in all four gospels here if you wish to choose your favorite: Mt 28:1-; Mk 16:1-11; Lk 24:1-11; Jn 20:1, 11-18.	22	95	149
Welcome to Day 16 of our 30-day faith-sharing retreat!	24	82	169

Today's video presents a guided contemplation of Jesus preaching in the Temple, #288 of the Spiritual Exercises with Lk 19:47-48. As we continue in this third week to contemplate Jesus and pray for the strength to follow him compassionate now in his sufferings, we also pay attention to whatever feelings and thoughts or memories this exercise brings up for each of us, asking for whatever each of us desires on the retreat at this point. Godspeed!			

Facebook Group Analytics 4

Popular Times	**12 AM**	**1 AM**	**2 AM**	**3 AM**	**4 AM**	**5 AM**	**6 AM**	**7 AM**	**8 AM**	**9 AM**	**10 AM**	**11 AM**	**12 PM**	**1 PM**	**2 PM**	**3 PM**
Monday	1	0	1	1	2	3	6	6	5	7	8	8	7	5	9	10
Tuesday	1	1	1	2	1	4	4	12	9	6	10	14	7	3	9	6
Wednesday	2	2	2	1	2	3	5	13	14	7	4	2	6	5	7	5
Thursday	3	1	0	3	2	4	2	6	9	9	8	5	2	5	6	5
Friday	2	1	5	2	3	3	6	11	7	8	10	4	6	6	5	5
Saturday	2	0	1	1	2	4	6	6	5	6	6	7	5	4	5	4
Sunday	4	1	1	0	2	3	2	7	5	7	9	9	6	10	6	7

Facebook Group Analytics 5

Popular Days	Posts, Comments and Reactions
Monday	149
Tuesday	147
Wednesday	143
Thursday	132
Friday	131
Saturday	132
Sunday	139

Facebook Group Analytics 6

Popular Times CST	Monday (# of posts, comments, reactions)	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
12 AM	1	1	2	3	2	2	4
1 AM	0	1	2	1	1	0	1
2 AM	1	1	2	0	5	1	1
3 AM	1	2	1	3	2	1	0
4 AM	2	1	2	2	3	2	2
5 AM	3	4	3	4	3	4	3
6 AM	6	4	5	2	6	6	2
7 AM	6	12	13	6	11	6	7

8 AM	5	9	14	9	7	5	5
9 AM	7	6	7	9	8	6	7
10 AM	8	10	4	8	10	6	9
11 AM	8	14	2	5	4	7	9
12 PM	7	7	6	2	6	5	6
1 PM	5	3	5	5	6	4	10
2 PM	9	9	7	6	5	5	6
3 PM	10	6	5	5	5	4	7
4 PM	4	5	7	9	4	11	7
5 PM	14	10	11	12	8	11	10
6 PM	14	10	8	4	10	10	12
7 PM	11	9	10	8	10	10	9
8 PM	12	9	11	14	7	8	10
9 PM	5	7	9	7	4	9	5
10 PM	7	4	3	4	5	4	5
11 PM	4	3	3	2	2	5	4

Facebook Group Analytics 7

Date	**Posts**	**Comments**	**Reactions**	**Active Members**	**Total Members**	**Pending Members**	**Approved Member Requests**	**Declined Member Requests**
2020-	3	31	74	153	203	2	184	0

08-31								
2020-09-01	14	106	196	209	219	8	15	0
2020-09-02	1	29	64	185	238	7	15	0
2020-09-03	3	25	55	210	283	0	15	0
2020-09-04	2	37	74	241	295	1	3	0
2020-09-05	2	15	33	228	304	3	5	0
2020-09-06	3	10	38	259	328	0	7	0
2020-09-07	2	18	41	234	336	2	1	3
2020-09-08	3	22	65	253	342	0	6	0
2020-09-09	1	31	73	256	346	1	0	0
2020-09-10	1	22	43	225	355	2	4	0

2020-09-11	1	29	77	280	359	0	4	0
2020-09-12	1	25	48	230	362	1	2	0
2020-09-13	1	18	38	218	364	0	1	0
2020-09-14	3	31	66	250	367	1	0	0
2020-09-15	1	14	40	172	369	0	2	0
2020-09-16	1	10	27	164	374	1	2	0
2020-09-17	2	21	46	201	376	0	2	1
2020-09-18	2	16	54	197	377	0	1	0
2020-09-19	1	17	37	161	376	0	0	1
2020-09-20	2	31	48	190	379	0	2	0
2020-	1	48	87	185	380	0	0	0

09-21								
2020-09-22	1	23	49	187	381	0	2	0
2020-09-23	3	32	40	214	385	0	0	0
2020-09-24	1	34	53	176	390	0	4	0
2020-09-25	3	18	56	210	396	0	6	0
2020-09-26	1	35	71	205	396	2	1	0
2020-09-27	1	25	58	180	400	0	3	0
2020-09-28	3	27	71	264	401	0	1	0
2020-09-29	1	24	45	237	401	0	1	0
2020-09-30	3	53	183	237	401	0	0	0
2020-10-01	3	74	238	263	402	0	0	0

2020-10-02	5	73	245	262	404	0	0	0
2020-10-03	3	73	245	277	402	0	0	0
2020-10-04	1	59	197	240	403	0	0	0
2020-10-05	2	62	189	228	402	0	0	0
2020-10-06	1	53	179	193	402	0	0	0
2020-10-07	2	64	165	222	401	0	0	0
2020-10-08	2	45	110	194	401	0	0	0
2020-10-09	1	31	122	149	402	0	0	0
2020-10-10	1	39	134	150	401	0	0	0
2020-10-11	2	49	141	229	400	0	0	0
2020-	2	69	206	257	400	0	0	0

10-12								
2020-10-13	2	39	98	188	399	0	0	0
2020-10-14	1	47	126	199	399	0	0	0
2020-10-15	1	26	61	157	399	0	0	0
2020-10-16	2	27	80	231	398	0	0	0
2020-10-17	1	31	98	168	398	0	0	0
2020-10-18	3	55	112	182	398	0	0	0
2020-10-19	4	47	130	200	398	0	0	0
2020-10-20	1	28	101	138	398	0	0	0
2020-10-21	2	44	133	165	398	0	0	0
2020-10-22	1	30	91	215	398	0	0	0

2020-10-23	1	19	76	137	397	0	0	0
2020-10-24	1	37	117	125	397	0	0	0
2020-10-25	1	45	152	163	397	0	0	0
2020-10-26	1	29	100	106	397	0	0	0
2020-10-27	2	50	168	178	397	0	0	0
2020-10-28	2	35	115	148	396	0	0	0
2020-10-29	3	43	144	135	396	0	0	0
2020-10-30	1	45	87	139	395	0	0	0

Facebook Group Analytics 8

Top Contributors (Names deleted for privacy)	**Posts**	**Comments**
Participant #1	0	65
#2	0	60

3	3	42
4	0	44
5	0	43
6	0	40
7	0	40
8	1	29
9	0	34
10	0	31
11	0	31
12	0	29
13	0	27
14	2	16
15	1	20
16	0	25
17	0	24
18	0	24
19	0	22
20	0	22
21	0	21
22	0	21
23	0	21

24	0	20
25	0	20
26	0	19
27	0	19
28	0	18
29	0	17
30	0	17
31	0	16
32	0	15
33	1	10
34	0	14
35	0	14
36	1	8
37	1	6
38	0	10
39	0	10
40	0	9
41	0	9
42	0	9
43	1	2
44	0	7

45	0	6
46	0	6
47	1	0
48	0	5
49	0	5
50	0	5
51	0	5
52	0	4
53	0	4
54	0	4
55	0	3
56	0	3
57	0	3
58	0	3
59	0	3
60	0	2
61	0	2
62	0	2
63	0	2
64	0	2
65	0	2

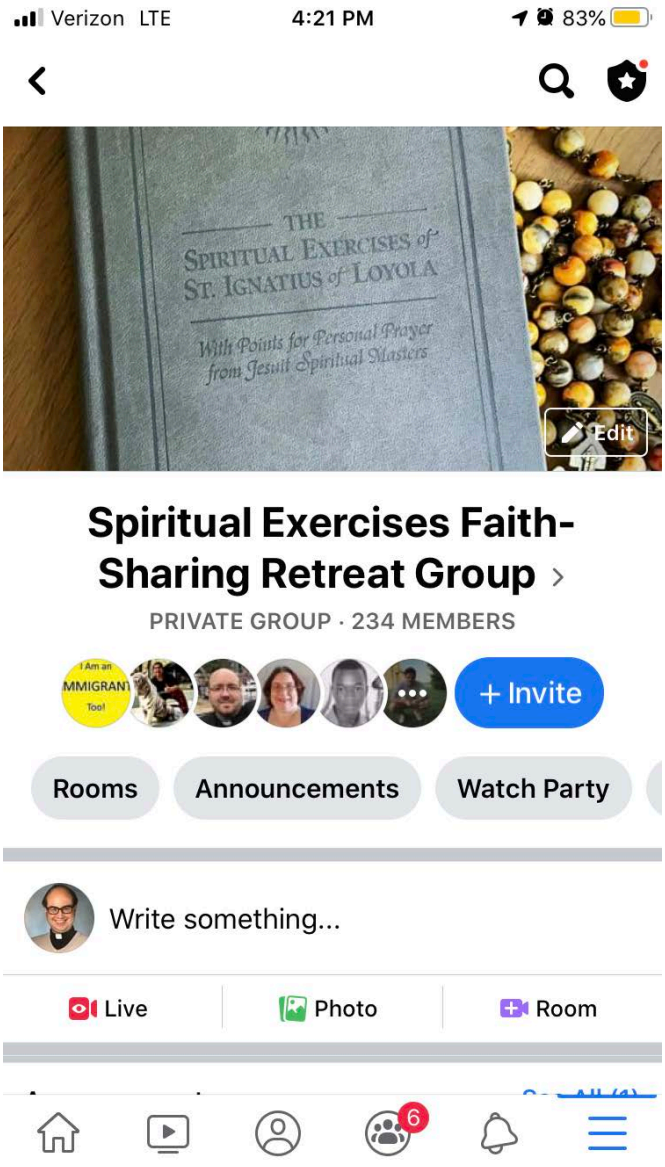
66	0	2
67	0	2
68	0	2
69	0	1
70	0	1
71	0	1
72	0	1
73	0	1
74	0	1
75	0	1
76	0	1
77	0	1
78	0	1
79	0	1
80	0	1
81	0	1
82	0	1
83	0	1
84	0	1
85	0	1
86	0	1

87	0	1
88	0	1
89	0	1
90	0	1

Facebook Group Analytics 9

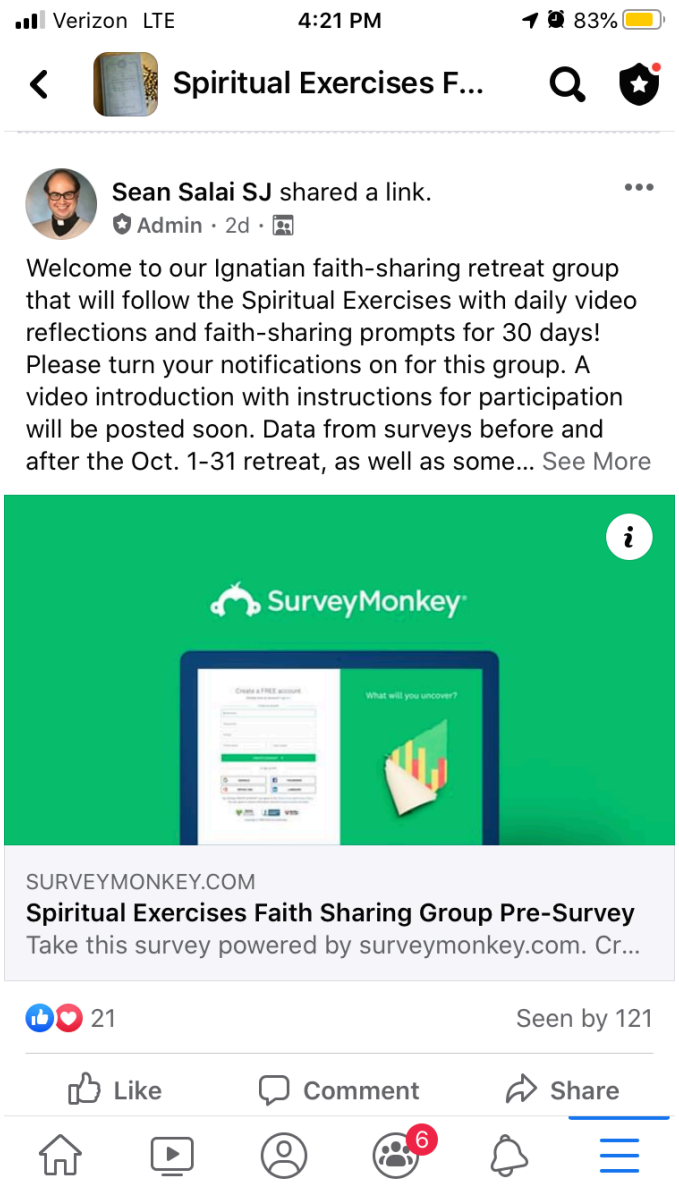
Note on the above: This chart represents all group members who commented or reacted to posts during the introductory month and month of retreat. To maintain confidentiality, the investigator has deleted the names that Facebook recorded, numbering the participants instead.

Slide A: Screenshot of the Group Page from August 31, 2020



Facebook Group Slide 1

Slide B: Screenshot of the Welcome Message with Link to Pre-Retreat Survey, August 31, 2020



Facebook Group Slide 2

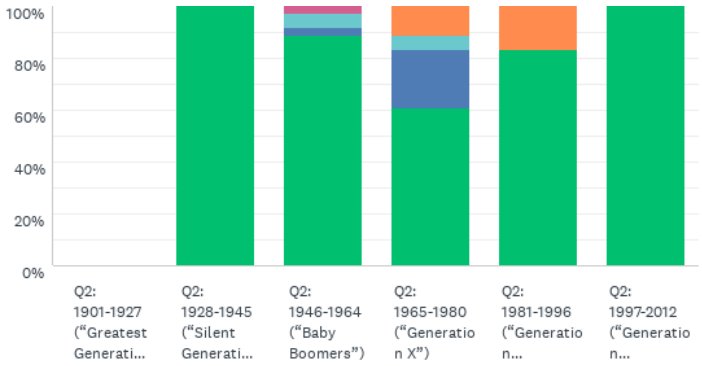
Slide C: Screenshot of September 3, 2020 introductory video 41 minutes after live stream

Facebook Group Slide 3

Appendix Seven: Generational Breakdown for Key Survey Questions

The following generational analysis of key pre-retreat and post-retreat survey responses uses the "compare" feature of Survey Monkey to break down data according to what participants answered on Question Two of the questionnaires about their ranges of birth years. The following breakdown, when appropriate, gives the pre-survey question first and then post-survey question. When the question and responses match, as in Question Three here, only one data set appears.

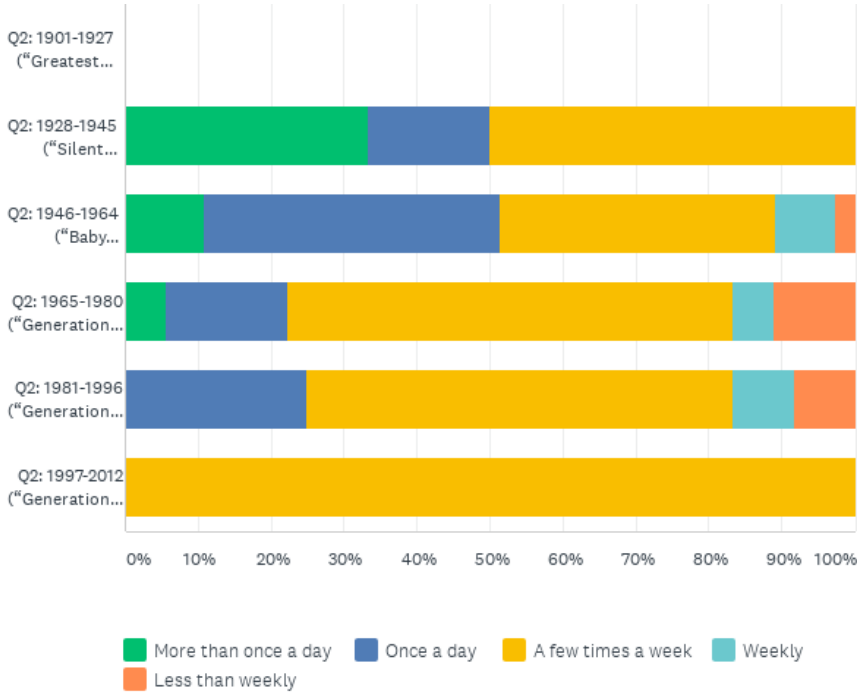
Q3: Where do you live?



	UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND TERRITORIES	ELSEWHERE IN NORTH AMERICA/CENTRAL AMERICA	SOUTH AMERICA	EUROPE	ASIA	AFRICA	AUSTRALIA OR NEW ZEALAND	ANTARCTICA	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	100.00% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	89.19% 33	2.70% 1	0.00% 0	5.41% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.70% 1	0.00% 0	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	61.11% 11	22.22% 4	0.00% 0	5.56% 1	11.11% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	83.33% 10	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.67% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	61	5	0	3	4	0	1	0	74

Generational Breakdown 1

Q3: On average, how often did you log on to this Facebook faith-sharing group each week?

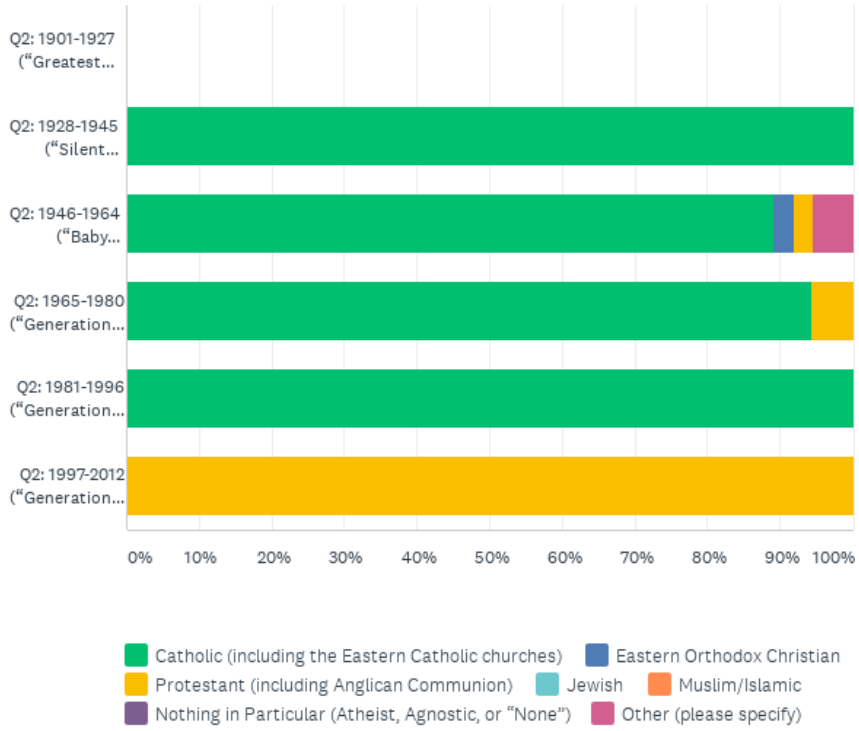


	MORE THAN ONCE A DAY	ONCE A DAY	A FEW TIMES A WEEK	WEEKLY	LESS THAN WEEKLY	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	33.33% 2	16.67% 1	50.00% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	10.81% 4	40.54% 15	37.84% 14	8.11% 3	2.70% 1	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	5.56% 1	16.67% 3	61.11% 11	5.56% 1	11.11% 2	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	0.00% 0	25.00% 3	58.33% 7	8.33% 1	8.33% 1	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	7	22	36	5	4	74

Generational Breakdown 2

(Question Four and its results were the same on both surveys.)

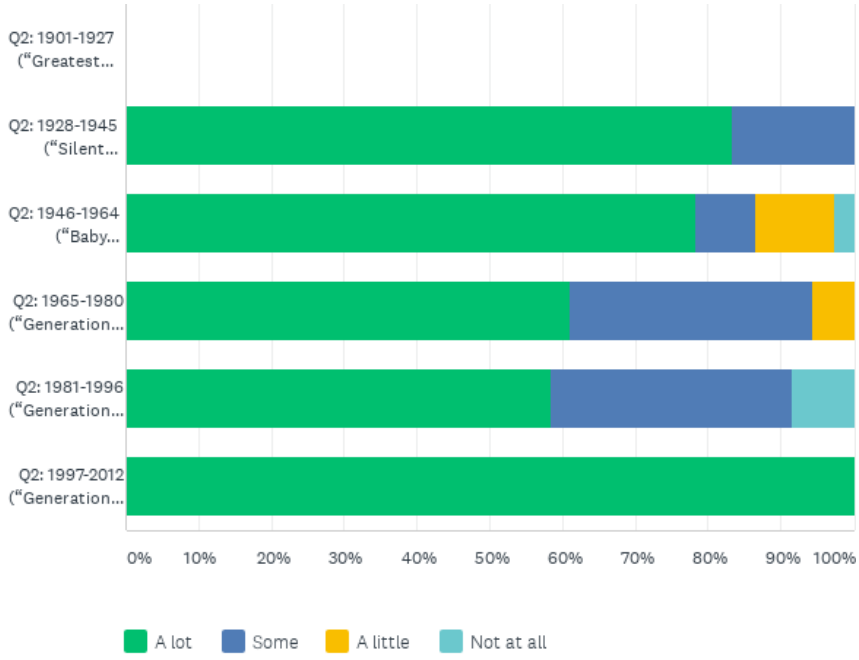
Q4: How would you describe your current religious affiliation?



	CATHOLIC (INCLUDING THE EASTERN CATHOLIC CHURCHES)	EASTERN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN	PROTESTANT (INCLUDING ANGLICAN COMMUNION)	JEWISH	MUSLIM/ISLAMIC	NOTHING IN PARTICULAR (ATHEIST, AGNOSTIC, OR "NONE")	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	100.00% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	89.19% 33	2.70% 1	2.70% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	5.41% 2	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	94.44% 17	0.00% 0	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	100.00% 12	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	68	1	3	0	0	0	2	74

Generational Breakdown 3

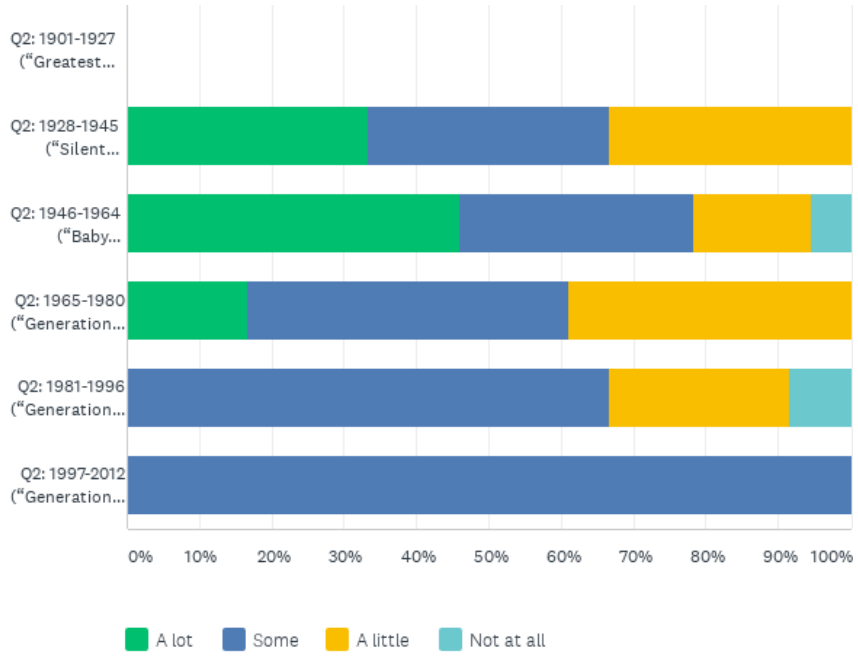
Q5: How strongly do you feel personally connected to a particular faith-based community?



	A LOT	SOME	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	83.33% 5	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	78.38% 29	8.11% 3	10.81% 4	2.70% 1	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	61.11% 11	33.33% 6	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	58.33% 7	33.33% 4	0.00% 0	8.33% 1	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	53	14	5	2	74

Generational Breakdown 4

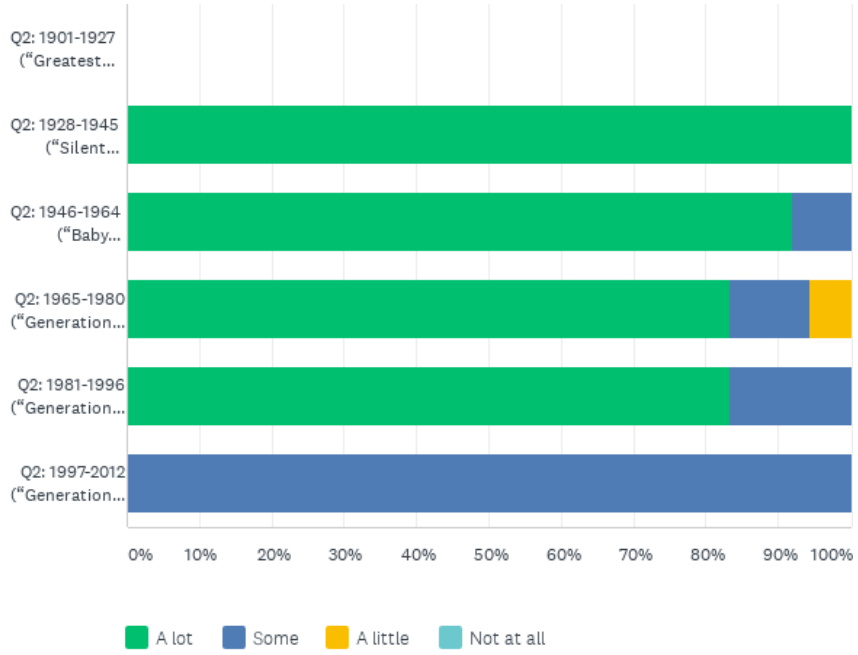
Q5: How strongly did you feel personally connected to this online community during the 30 days of faith-sharing?



	A LOT	SOME	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	33.33% 2	33.33% 2	33.33% 2	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	45.95% 17	32.43% 12	16.22% 6	5.41% 2	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	16.67% 3	44.44% 8	38.89% 7	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	0.00% 0	66.67% 8	25.00% 3	8.33% 1	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	22	31	18	3	74

Generational Breakdown 5

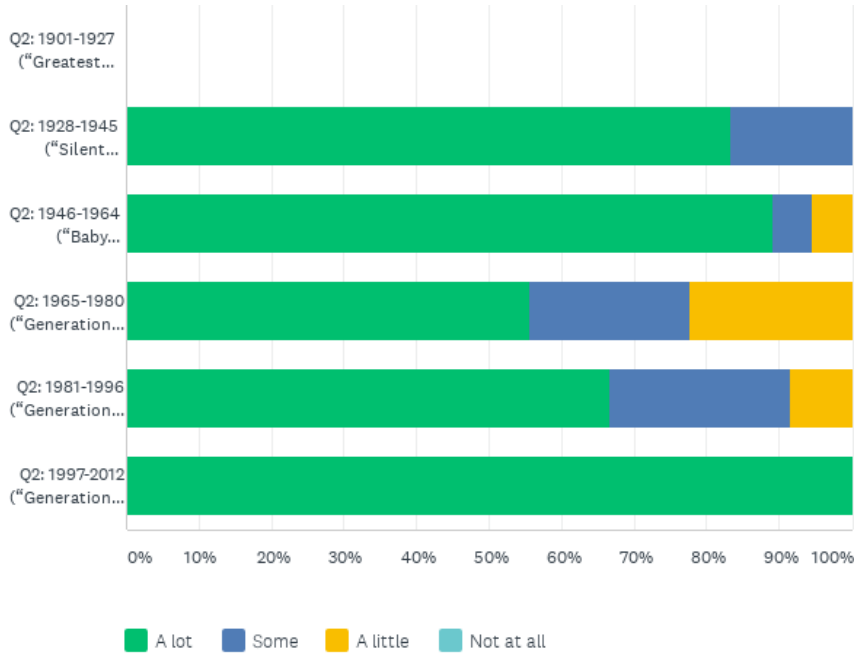
Q6: How strongly do you feel personally connected to a Higher Power as you understand it?



	A LOT	SOME	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	100.00% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	91.89% 34	8.11% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	83.33% 15	11.11% 2	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	83.33% 10	16.67% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	65	8	1	0	74

Generational Breakdown 6

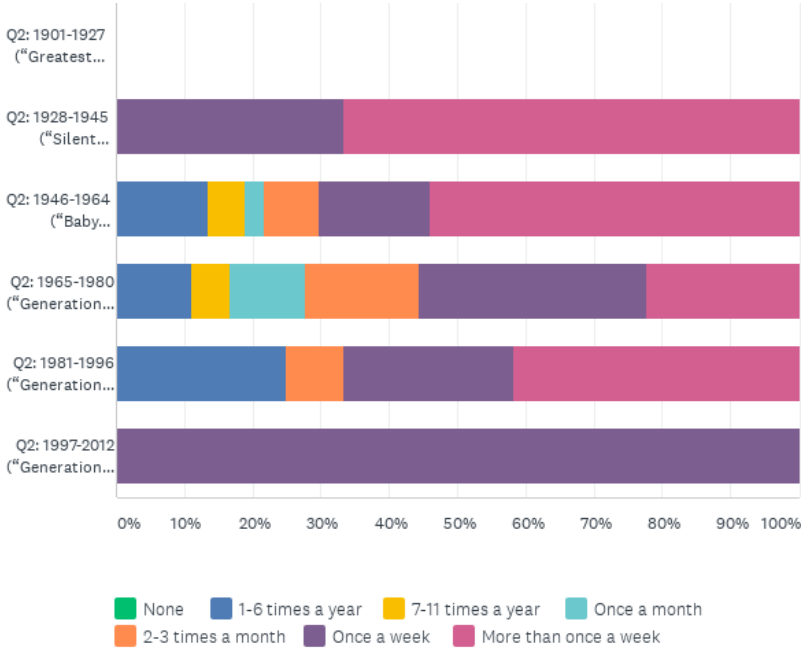
Q6: How strongly did you feel personally connected to a Higher Power as you understand it during the 30 days of faith-sharing?



	A LOT	SOME	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	83.33% 5	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	89.19% 33	5.41% 2	5.41% 2	0.00% 0	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	55.56% 10	22.22% 4	22.22% 4	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	66.67% 8	25.00% 3	8.33% 1	0.00% 0	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	57	10	7	0	74

Generational Breakdown 7

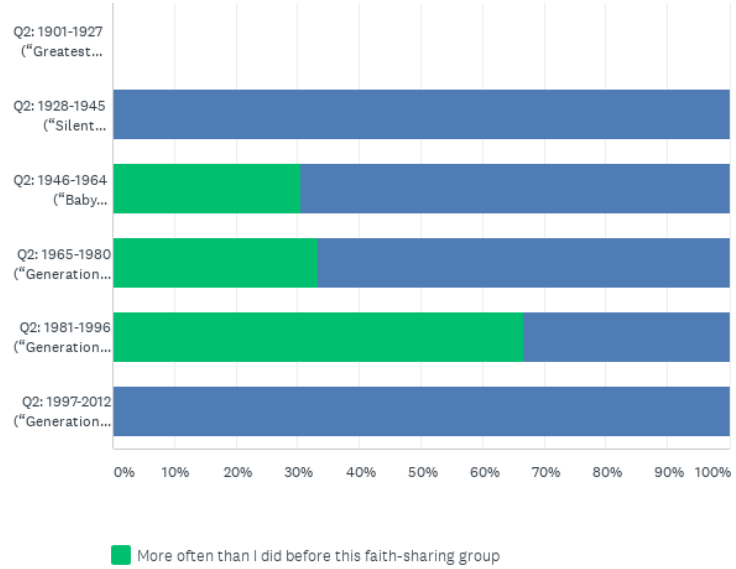
Q7: How often have you been involved in a religiously sponsored event (funeral, wedding, church service, online discussion, spiritual reading, prayer or meditation group, etc.) in the past 12 months? Select the response that most closely approximates your attendance.



	NONE	1-6 TIMES A YEAR	7-11 TIMES A YEAR	ONCE A MONTH	2-3 TIMES A MONTH	ONCE A WEEK	MORE THAN ONCE A WEEK	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	33.33% 2	66.67% 4	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	0.00% 0	13.51% 5	5.41% 2	2.70% 1	8.11% 3	16.22% 6	54.05% 20	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	0.00% 0	11.11% 2	5.56% 1	11.11% 2	16.67% 3	33.33% 6	22.22% 4	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	0.00% 0	25.00% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.33% 1	25.00% 3	41.67% 5	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	0	10	3	3	7	18	33	74

Generational Breakdown 8

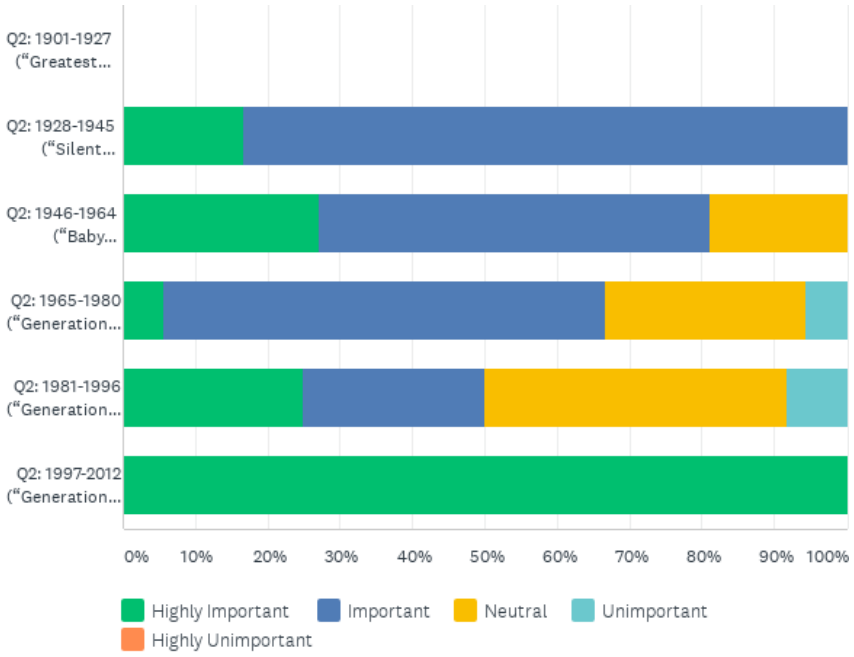
Q7: How often do you intend to attend a religiously sponsored event (funeral, wedding, church service, online discussion, spiritual reading, prayer or meditation group, etc.) moving forward from this faith-sharing group into the future?



	MORE OFTEN THAN I DID BEFORE THIS FAITH-SHARING GROUP	ABOUT THE SAME AS I ALWAYS DO	LESS OFTEN THAN I DID BEFORE THE GROUP	I DON'T PLAN TO ATTEND RELIGIOUS SERVICES IN THE FUTURE	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	0.00% 0	100.00% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.22% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	30.56% 11	69.44% 25	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	49.32% 36
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	33.33% 6	66.67% 12	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	24.66% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	66.67% 8	33.33% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.44% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.37% 1
Total Respondents	25	48	0	0	73

Generational Breakdown 9

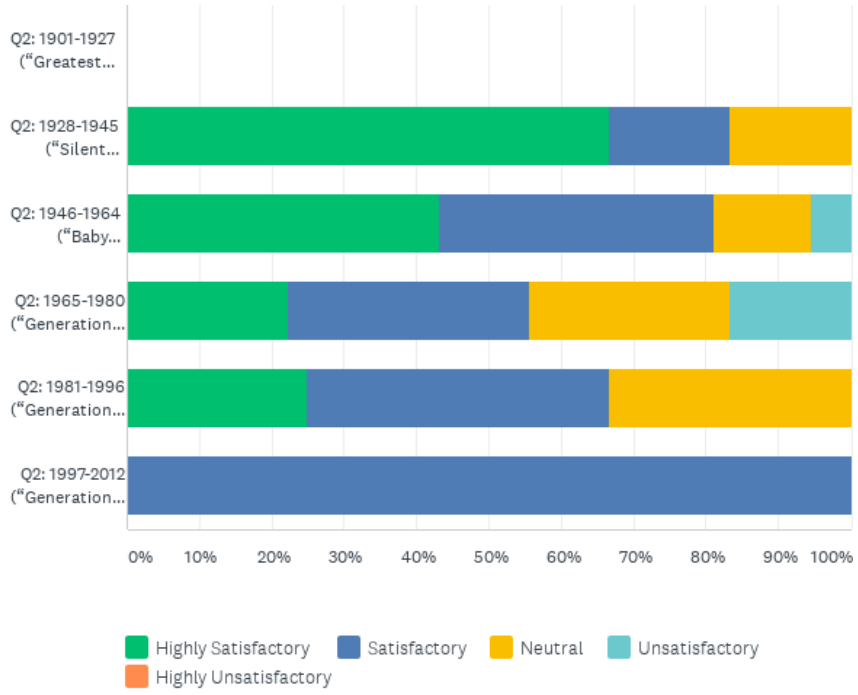
Q8: How important is online interaction (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, comment boxes, other social media platforms) in your life?



	HIGHLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	UNIMPORTANT	HIGHLY UNIMPORTANT	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	16.67% 1	83.33% 5	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	27.03% 10	54.05% 20	18.92% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	5.56% 1	61.11% 11	27.78% 5	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	25.00% 3	25.00% 3	41.67% 5	8.33% 1	0.00% 0	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	16	39	17	2	0	74

Generational Breakdown 10

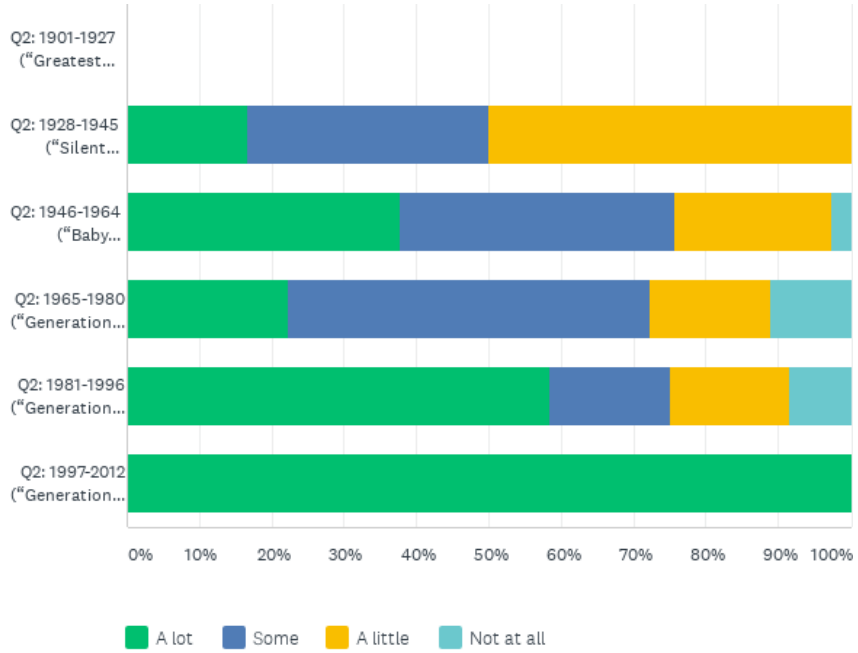
Q8: This online retreat utilized Facebook. How satisfied do you feel about the use of Facebook to facilitate the group interactions?



	HIGHLY SATISFACTORY	SATISFACTORY	NEUTRAL	UNSATISFACTORY	HIGHLY UNSATISFACTORY	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	66.67% 4	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	43.24% 16	37.84% 14	13.51% 5	5.41% 2	0.00% 0	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	22.22% 4	33.33% 6	27.78% 5	16.67% 3	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	25.00% 3	41.67% 5	33.33% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	27	27	15	5	0	74

Generational Breakdown 11

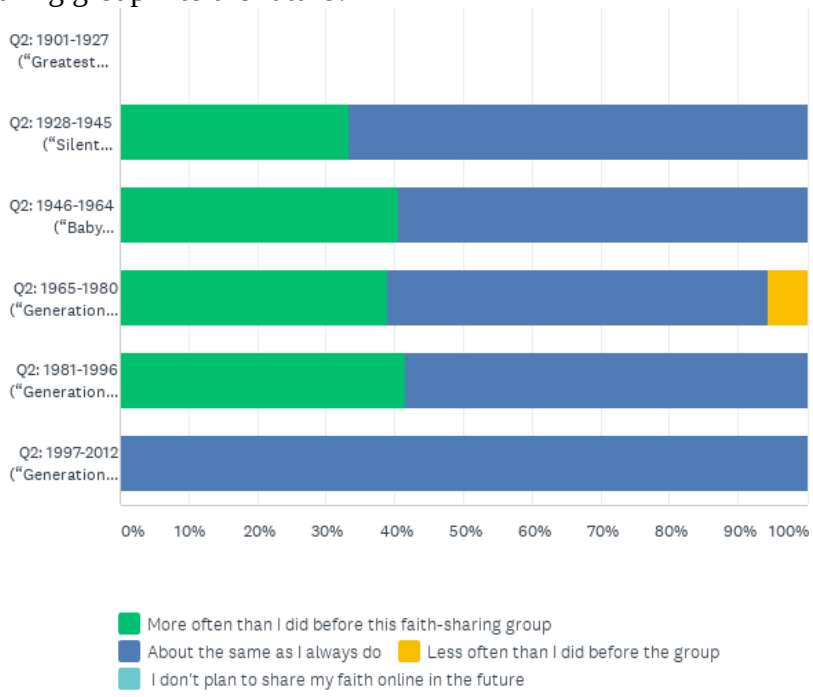
Q9: How much, if at all, have you shared your faith with others online during your life?



	A LOT	SOME	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	16.67% 1	33.33% 2	50.00% 3	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	37.84% 14	37.84% 14	21.62% 8	2.70% 1	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	22.22% 4	50.00% 9	16.67% 3	11.11% 2	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	58.33% 7	16.67% 2	16.67% 2	8.33% 1	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	27	27	16	4	74

Generational Breakdown 12

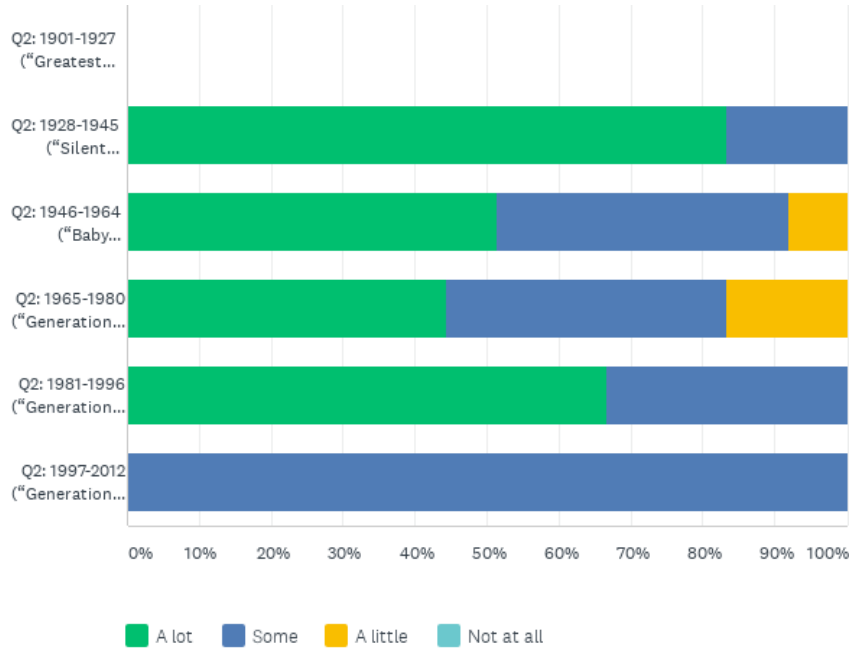
Q9: How likely are you to discuss faith-based content with others online as you move forward from this faith-sharing group into the future?



	MORE OFTEN THAN I DID BEFORE THIS FAITH-SHARING GROUP	ABOUT THE SAME AS I ALWAYS DO	LESS OFTEN THAN I DID BEFORE THE GROUP	I DON'T PLAN TO SHARE MY FAITH ONLINE IN THE FUTURE	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	33.33% 2	66.67% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	40.54% 15	59.46% 22	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	38.89% 7	55.56% 10	5.56% 1	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	41.67% 5	58.33% 7	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	29	44	1	0	74

Generational Breakdown 13

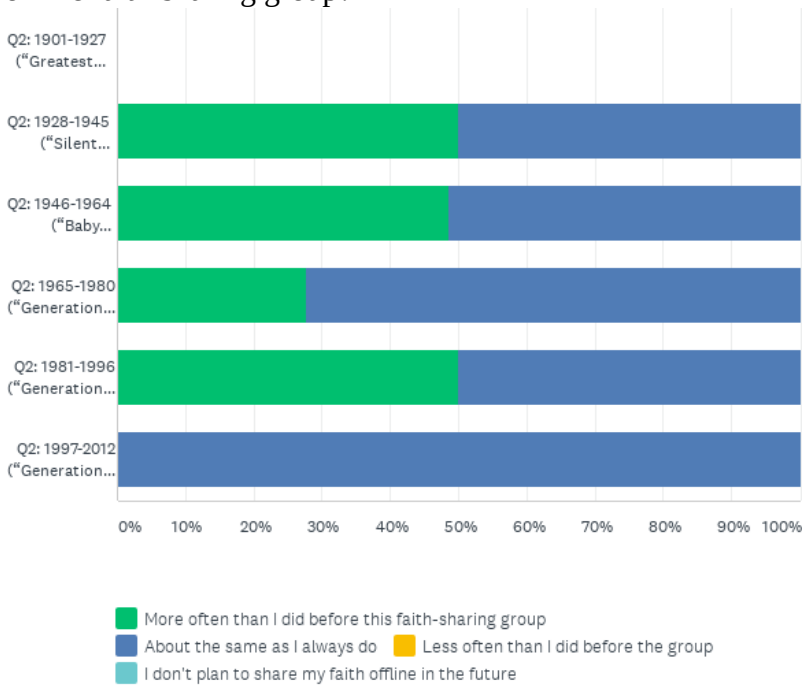
Q10: How much, if at all, have you shared your faith with others offline (face-to-face) during your life?



	A LOT	SOME	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	83.33% 5	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	51.35% 19	40.54% 15	8.11% 3	0.00% 0	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	44.44% 8	38.89% 7	16.67% 3	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	66.67% 8	33.33% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	40	28	6	0	74

Generational Breakdown 14

Q10: How likely are you to discuss faith-based content with others offline (face-to-face) moving forward from this online faith-sharing group?

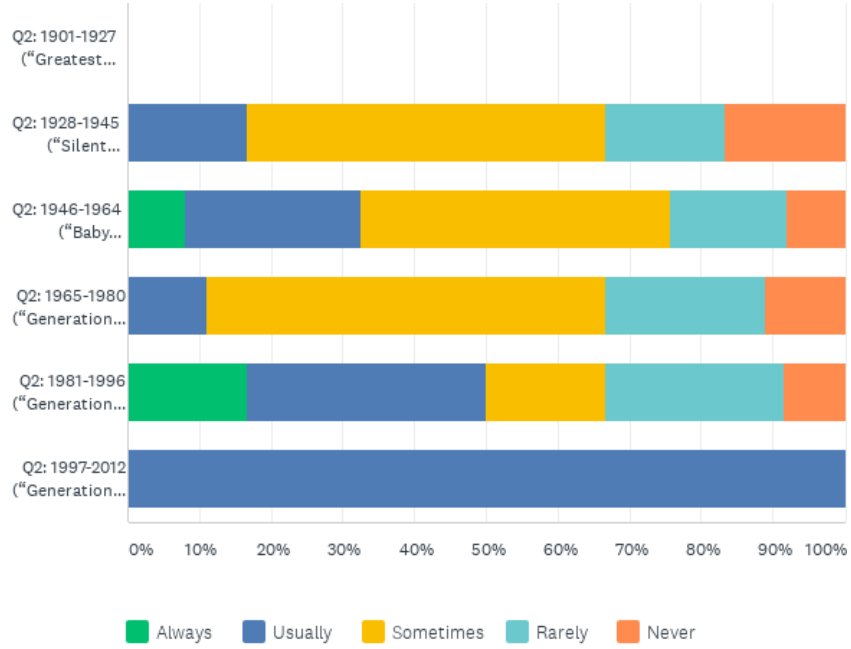


	MORE OFTEN THAN I DID BEFORE THIS FAITH-SHARING GROUP	ABOUT THE SAME AS I ALWAYS DO	LESS OFTEN THAN I DID BEFORE THE GROUP	I DON'T PLAN TO SHARE MY FAITH OFFLINE IN THE FUTURE	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	50.00% 3	50.00% 3	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	48.65% 18	51.35% 19	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	27.78% 5	72.22% 13	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	50.00% 6	50.00% 6	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	32	42	0	0	74

Generational Breakdown 15

(The following question occurs on the pre-retreat survey only; Question Twelve in the post retreat survey collected free response texts already reported generationally in Appendix Five.)

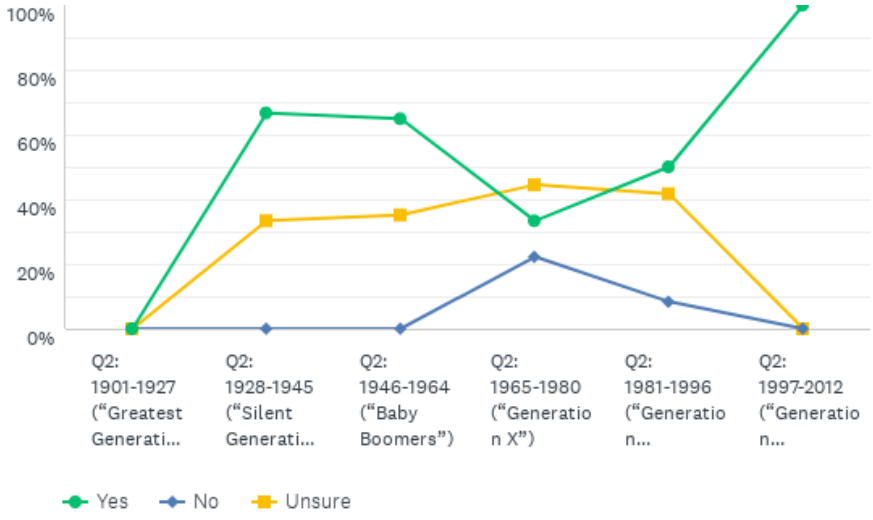
Q12: How often, if ever, does it occur to you to discuss faith-based content on Facebook?



	ALWAYS	USUALLY	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NEVER	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	50.00% 3	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	8.11% 3	24.32% 9	43.24% 16	16.22% 6	8.11% 3	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	0.00% 0	11.11% 2	55.56% 10	22.22% 4	11.11% 2	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	16.67% 2	33.33% 4	16.67% 2	25.00% 3	8.33% 1	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	5	17	31	14	7	74

Generational Breakdown 16

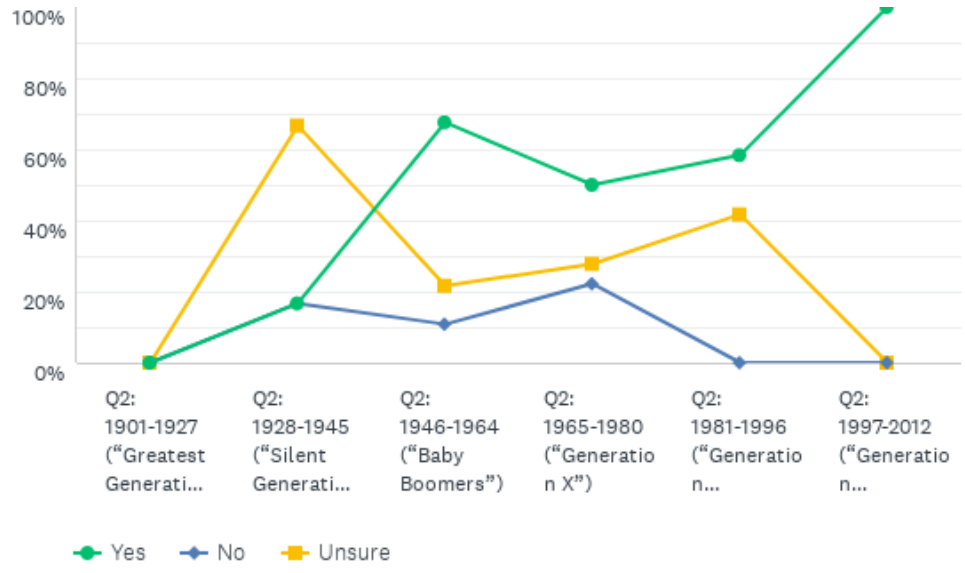
Q13: Do you consider online community to be a type of “real” community?



	YES	NO	UNSURE	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 (“Greatest Generation”)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 (“Silent Generation”)	66.67% 4	0.00% 0	33.33% 2	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 (“Baby Boomers”)	64.86% 24	0.00% 0	35.14% 13	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 (“Generation X”)	33.33% 6	22.22% 4	44.44% 8	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 (“Generation Y”/“Millennials”)	50.00% 6	8.33% 1	41.67% 5	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 (“Generation Z”/”iGeneration”)	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	41	5	28	74

Generational Breakdown 17

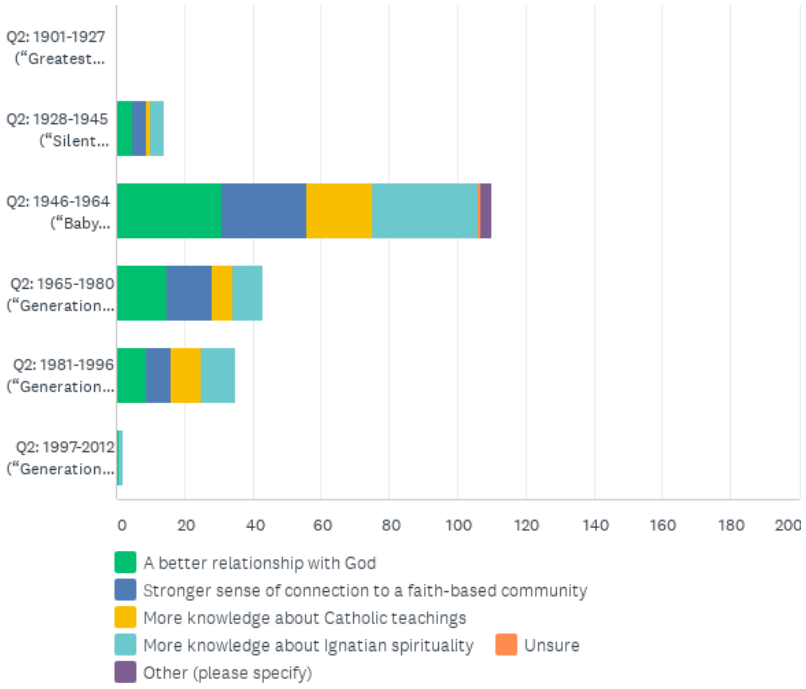
Q13: Do you consider this Facebook faith-sharing group to have been a type of “real” community?



	YES	NO	UNSURE	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 (“Greatest Generation”)	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 (“Silent Generation”)	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	66.67% 4	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 (“Baby Boomers”)	67.57% 25	10.81% 4	21.62% 8	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 (“Generation X”)	50.00% 9	22.22% 4	27.78% 5	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 (“Generation Y”/“Millennials”)	58.33% 7	0.00% 0	41.67% 5	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 (“Generation Z”/”iGeneration”)	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	43	9	22	74

Generational Breakdown 18

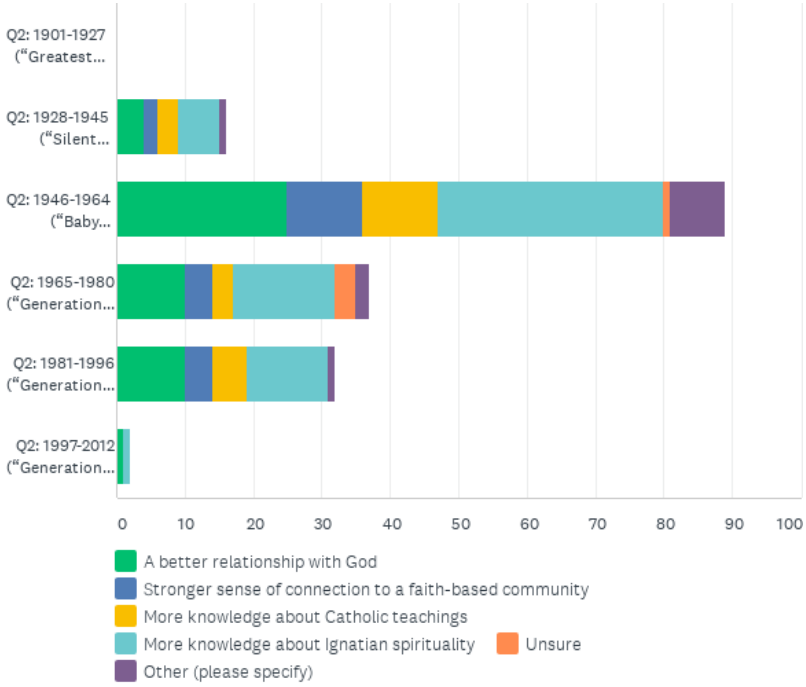
Q14: What outcome would you like to see from this online faith-sharing group? Please choose all that apply



	A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD	STRONGER SENSE OF CONNECTION TO A FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY	MORE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CATHOLIC TEACHINGS	MORE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY	UNSURE	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	83.33% 5	66.67% 4	16.67% 1	66.67% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	18.92% 14
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	83.78% 31	67.57% 25	51.35% 19	83.78% 31	2.70% 1	8.11% 3	148.65% 110
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	83.33% 15	72.22% 13	33.33% 6	50.00% 9	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	58.11% 43
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	75.00% 9	58.33% 7	75.00% 9	83.33% 10	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	47.30% 35
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.70% 2
Total Respondents	61	49	35	55	1	3	74

Generational Breakdown 19

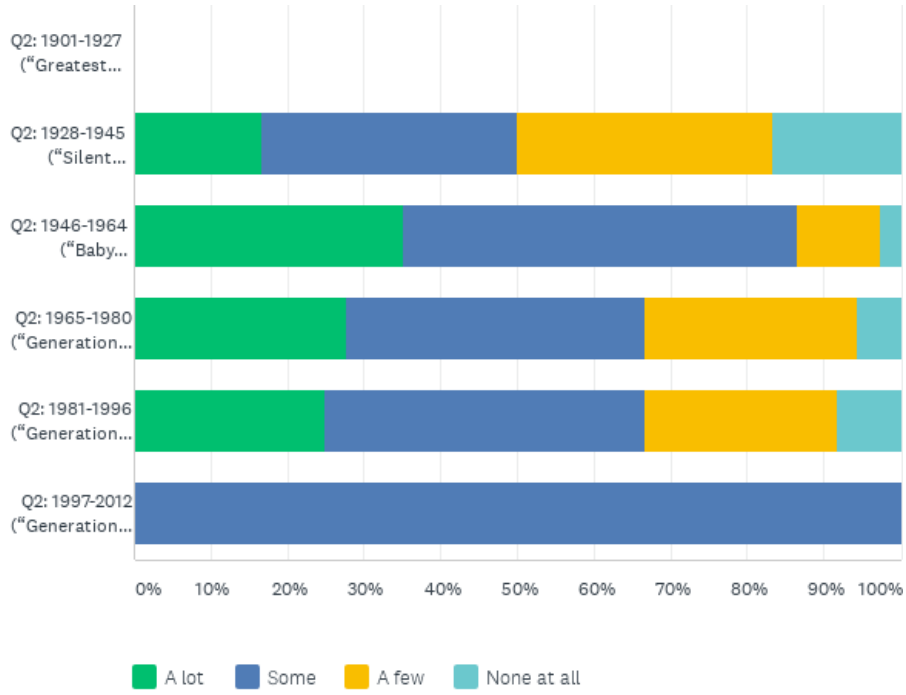
Q14: What outcomes did you see in your spiritual life at the end of this online faith-sharing group? Please choose all that apply



	A BETTER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD	STRONGER SENSE OF CONNECTION TO A FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY	MORE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT CATHOLIC TEACHINGS	MORE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY	UNSURE	OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	66.67% 4	33.33% 2	50.00% 3	100.00% 6	0.00% 0	16.67% 1	21.92% 16
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	67.57% 25	29.73% 11	29.73% 11	89.19% 33	2.70% 1	21.62% 8	121.92% 89
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	58.82% 10	23.53% 4	17.65% 3	88.24% 15	17.65% 3	11.76% 2	50.68% 37
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	83.33% 10	33.33% 4	41.67% 5	100.00% 12	0.00% 0	8.33% 1	43.84% 32
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	2.74% 2
Total Respondents	50	21	22	67	4	12	73

Generational Breakdown 20

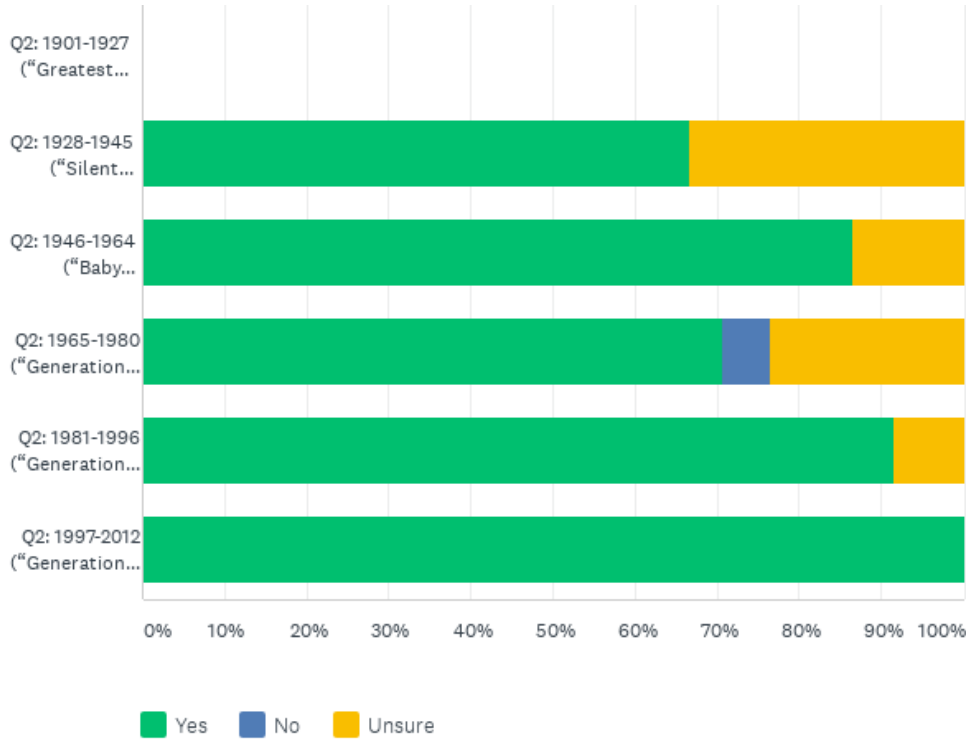
Q15: How many of the people you know online also play a role in your offline life outside of the internet?



	A LOT	SOME	A FEW	NONE AT ALL	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	16.67% 1	33.33% 2	33.33% 2	16.67% 1	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	35.14% 13	51.35% 19	10.81% 4	2.70% 1	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	27.78% 5	38.89% 7	27.78% 5	5.56% 1	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	25.00% 3	41.67% 5	25.00% 3	8.33% 1	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	22	34	14	4	74

Generational Breakdown 21

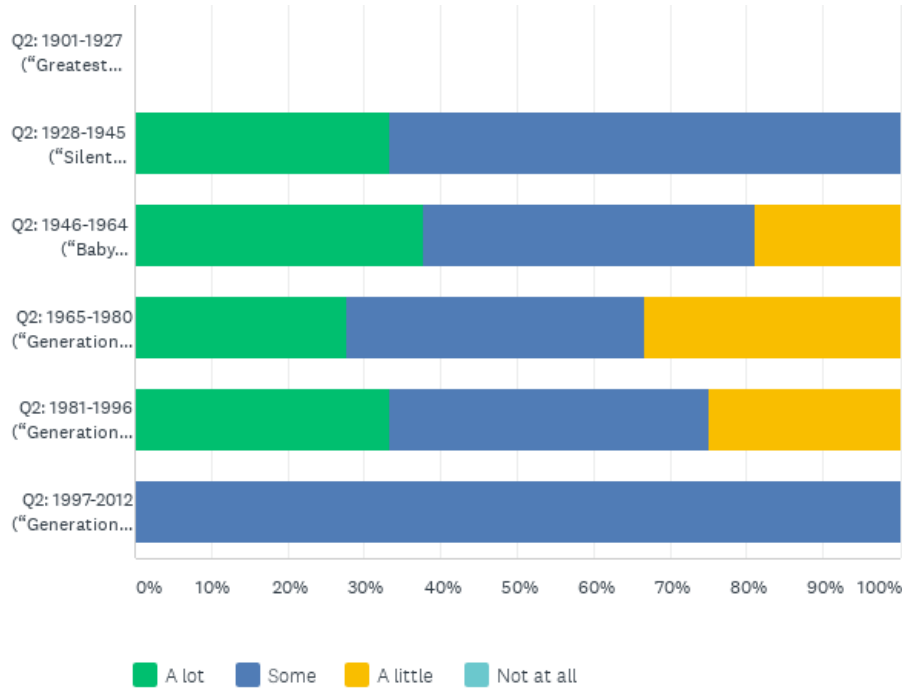
Q15: Based on this experience, would you be interested in participating in another online faith-sharing group at the America Media Facebook page?



	YES	NO	UNSURE	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	66.67% 4	0.00% 0	33.33% 2	8.22% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	86.49% 32	0.00% 0	13.51% 5	50.68% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	70.59% 12	5.88% 1	23.53% 4	23.29% 17
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	91.67% 11	0.00% 0	8.33% 1	16.44% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.37% 1
Total Respondents	60	1	12	73

Generational Breakdown 22

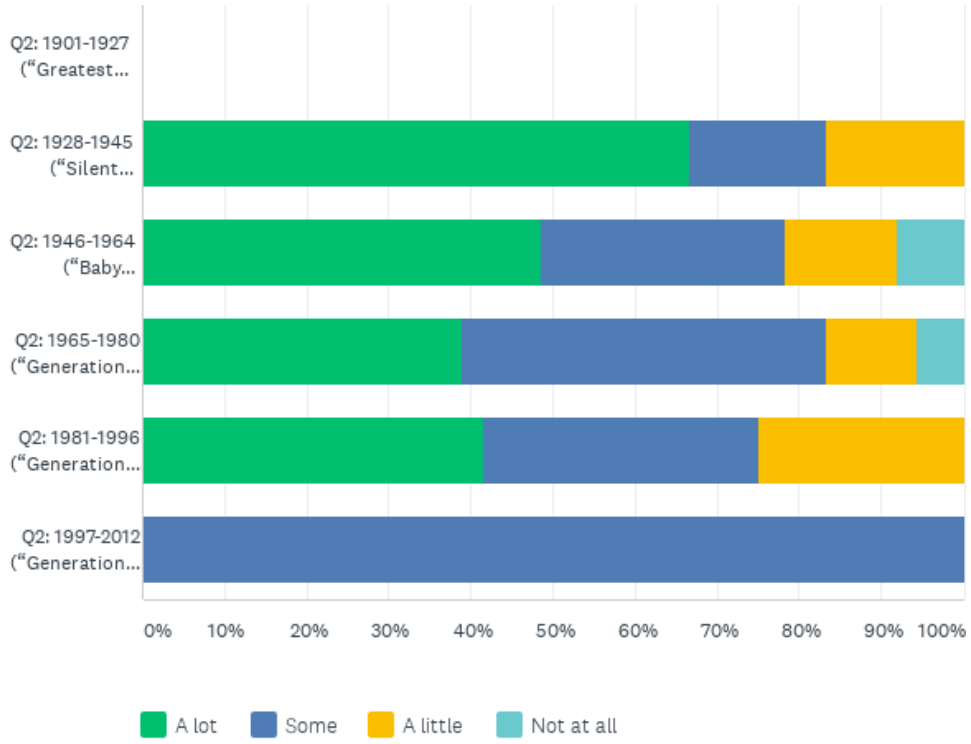
Q16: How comfortable do you feel with talking about your personal faith and religious experiences, as opposed to exchanging opinions, in an online faith-sharing group?



	A LOT	SOME	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	33.33% 2	66.67% 4	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	37.84% 14	43.24% 16	18.92% 7	0.00% 0	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	27.78% 5	38.89% 7	33.33% 6	0.00% 0	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	33.33% 4	41.67% 5	25.00% 3	0.00% 0	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	25	33	16	0	74

Generational Breakdown 23

Q16: How comfortable did you feel talking about your personal faith and religious experiences, as opposed to exchanging opinions, in this Facebook group?



	A LOT	SOME	A LITTLE	NOT AT ALL	TOTAL
Q2: 1901-1927 ("Greatest Generation")	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Q2: 1928-1945 ("Silent Generation")	66.67% 4	16.67% 1	16.67% 1	0.00% 0	8.11% 6
Q2: 1946-1964 ("Baby Boomers")	48.65% 18	29.73% 11	13.51% 5	8.11% 3	50.00% 37
Q2: 1965-1980 ("Generation X")	38.89% 7	44.44% 8	11.11% 2	5.56% 1	24.32% 18
Q2: 1981-1996 ("Generation Y"/"Millennials")	41.67% 5	33.33% 4	25.00% 3	0.00% 0	16.22% 12
Q2: 1997-2012 ("Generation Z"/"iGeneration")	0.00% 0	100.00% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	1.35% 1
Total Respondents	34	25	11	4	74

Generational Breakdown 24

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