Happy New Year! Happy New Decade! I cannot believe that the turn of the century was 20 years ago and that we are, at this moment, living through the ever changing and continuing technical revolution. It is a good time to reflect on how these changes have impacted our lives, our relationships and our ministries.

In particular, as I reflect on the state of online faith-based ministry, I ask myself how we have utilized online tools to advance the mission of Christ on earth during the past 20 years. We need to acknowledge how much we have learned about the Internet and online platforms and celebrate the many skills we have learned to use the technology that supports them, even while we re-commit ourselves to keep learning and growing.

**Change, Change and More Change**

The Internet is integral to our communication systems. For some, even in our own country, it is still a dream or in its most rudimentary state, but many of us have access to high speed broadband. Websites, email, social media platforms...
such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn are ordinary tools that we use often, if not daily.

We have Wi-Fi in our homes and workplaces and have come to expect it in public spaces. We have laptops, tablets and “smart” phones and TVs. We have GPS (one of the things I love most) and the ability to order just about anything online. We can pay bills, check our credit scores, transfer money from savings to checking online. We have live streaming of events from all around the world. We have online meetings and conferences, online college degrees, and Face Time. We have so much that we either take it for granted or let it overwhelm us.

The challenge for us in ministry is to recognize and take advantage of these resources for ministry. We have to learn best practices in their use, develop the necessary skills and move forward with them. It is not easy. For me, there has been a lot of trial and error; many, many learning curves; resistance from people that I expected to be onboard already; all kinds of obstacles, and yet, I started Catholic Web Solutions with the support of my community in 2010.

Progress and Accomplishment

I became a blogger and have trained others to blog; have helped launch engaging websites for religious communities and evangelizing websites for parishes. Today, I manage several evangelizing parish websites and create faith-based content: texts, images and videos for parish Facebook pages. I publish a free online daily newsletter “Catholic Enews Daily” which pulls current content from my favorite Catholic sources and makes it available to others.

In doing all of this, I have met exceptional clergy, religious, and laity who understand how important it is for us to pioneer in this area. It is true, we have made much progress, but it is easy to get bogged down in how far we still have to go. There are days when I feel discouraged, but I self-talk myself out of it by remembering just how far we have come and all the people who have taken up the challenge and are moving forward.

We have a pope, cardinals, bishops, priests, religious, laity, the Vatican, dioceses, parishes and religious communities communicating the Good News online. Some are better at it than others, but we are there and it is good that we are.

Be Courageous One Step at a Time
Take a few minutes to remember and celebrate how far you have come in your online presence and ministry in the past 20 years. Know that by coming this far you are blazing trails for others. Don’t think about all that you still do not know or can’t do. Think about the one little next step you can take from where you are and do whatever you can to take it. That is progress and that is good!

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