

THE MOOD? THE WHISPER OF A LIGHT BREEZE



Giant Global Graph is a name coined by the inventor of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee, in 2007, to help distinguish between the nature and significance of the content on the existing World Wide Web, and that of the next-generation web, or “Web 3.0.” The concept refers to the changes that took place on the WWW after the appearance of the Semantic Web and the strengthening of social networks. A graph is an abstract representation of the social relations determined by the users by means of their interactions on the Web.

The exchange of information and documents among Web users that was common in the 1990’s is not central to the logic of the Giant Global Graph. Instead, what is fundamental to it is the value that this information takes on in the relations cybernauts weave among themselves. In short, a search for meaning has been grafted onto what was previously a simple exchange of information.

For the new generations in particular, to insert oneself into a relational fabric as profound and deep-rooted as the one created by the Web means also confronting the fundamental questions of life and its meaning, which should be coherently grasped through

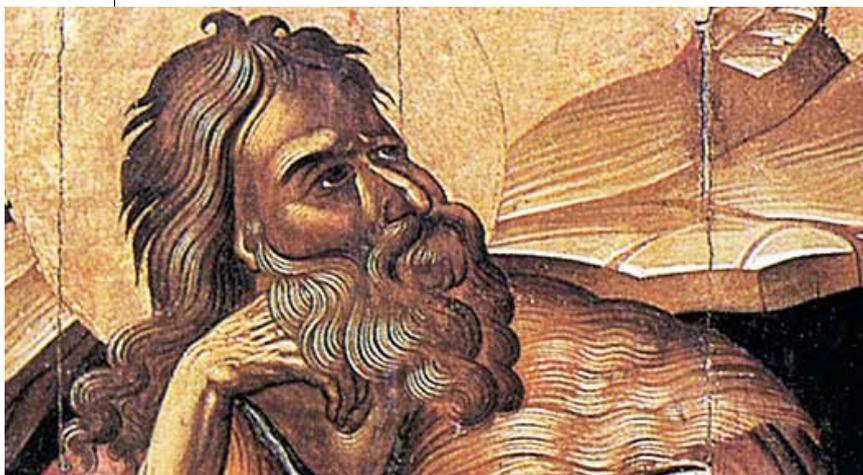
the logic of the Web. As Sr. Angela Ann Zulkowski, a pioneer in pastoral work utilizing digital technologies, explains: “The Internet is a dialogue that allows people to share spiritual goods according to the logic of the market.”

The rules of the game, therefore, require people to operate according to demand-supply strategies even when dealing with spiritual realities. But one often has the impression that there is an overabundance of pastoral proposals online that are not based on specific requests from users. The Internet can be transformed into a “portal of faith” if it becomes first of all a place of credible witness in response to the prejudices and criticisms that encrust digital relationships.

When using digital technologies, the “mood” (interior state) of a social network professional should not be strident. Instead, he/she must humbly enter a network that is already hyper-sensitive due to the lack of physical presence. Therefore, one’s mood should be “the whisper of a light breeze,” as Pope Benedict XVI recommends in his message: *Social Networks: Portals of Truth and Faith; New Spaces for Evangelization*, harkening back to how God revealed himself to the prophet Isaiah.

On the other hand, how can we avoid the unrealistic idea that online interaction—even when characterized by religious content or testimonies to faith—is automatically equivalent to a work of evangelization? The most intriguing strategy for responding to this ambiguity today seems to be a blend of digitally-mediated relations and physical meetings. One responds to an online request by suggesting an in-the-flesh meeting; one engages in a real-life experience and then maintains contact through email

or social networks. It is an interesting route to explore, but it presupposes a certain physical proximity between the one who makes the pastoral proposal and the one who accepts it in the hope of establishing as complete a relationship as possible in all its dimensions, including the digital.



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