The Catholic Church and Its Use of Social Media
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As a 2000-year-old institution with over a billion followers worldwide, the Catholic Church is arguably the world’s largest organization. It spans myriad cultures, languages, races, political and social ideologies, and yet despite these differences provides a common thread among these —publics. With such a widespread following, the Catholic Church needs a way to communicate effectively with these groups, reminding them of its mission and maintaining unity among adherents across countries and cultures. Doing this is no easy task, but the Church has realized the importance of utilizing technology to stay connected to its Catholic faithful, even prior to the creation of the Internet. In an excerpt from Inter Mirifica, a decree promulgated by Pope Paul VI, he said: —Among the wonderful technological discoveries which men of talent, especially in the present era, have made with God's help, the Church welcomes and promotes with special interest those which have a most direct relation to men's minds and which have uncovered new avenues of communicating most readily news, views and teachings of every sort. The most important of these inventions are those media which, such as the press, movies, radio, television and the like, can, of their very nature, reach and influence, not only individuals, but the very masses and the whole of human society, and thus can rightly be called the media of social communication‖ (1963). Through the use of content analysis, this research seeks to analyze how the Catholic Church represents itself through the use of sites such as YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, and its effectiveness in utilizing these social media. Ultimately, the study intends to show how the Church has taken to promoting itself and its mission with greater urgency and, in the words of the Church’s current head, Pope Benedict XVI, has used new communication technologies to —introduce people to the life of the Church and help [its] contemporaries to discover the face of Christ‖ (2010).