

Catholic

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A REDEMPTORIST
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ONE LIGUORI DRIVE
LIGUORI, MO
63057-9999

800-325-9521
LIGUORI.ORG

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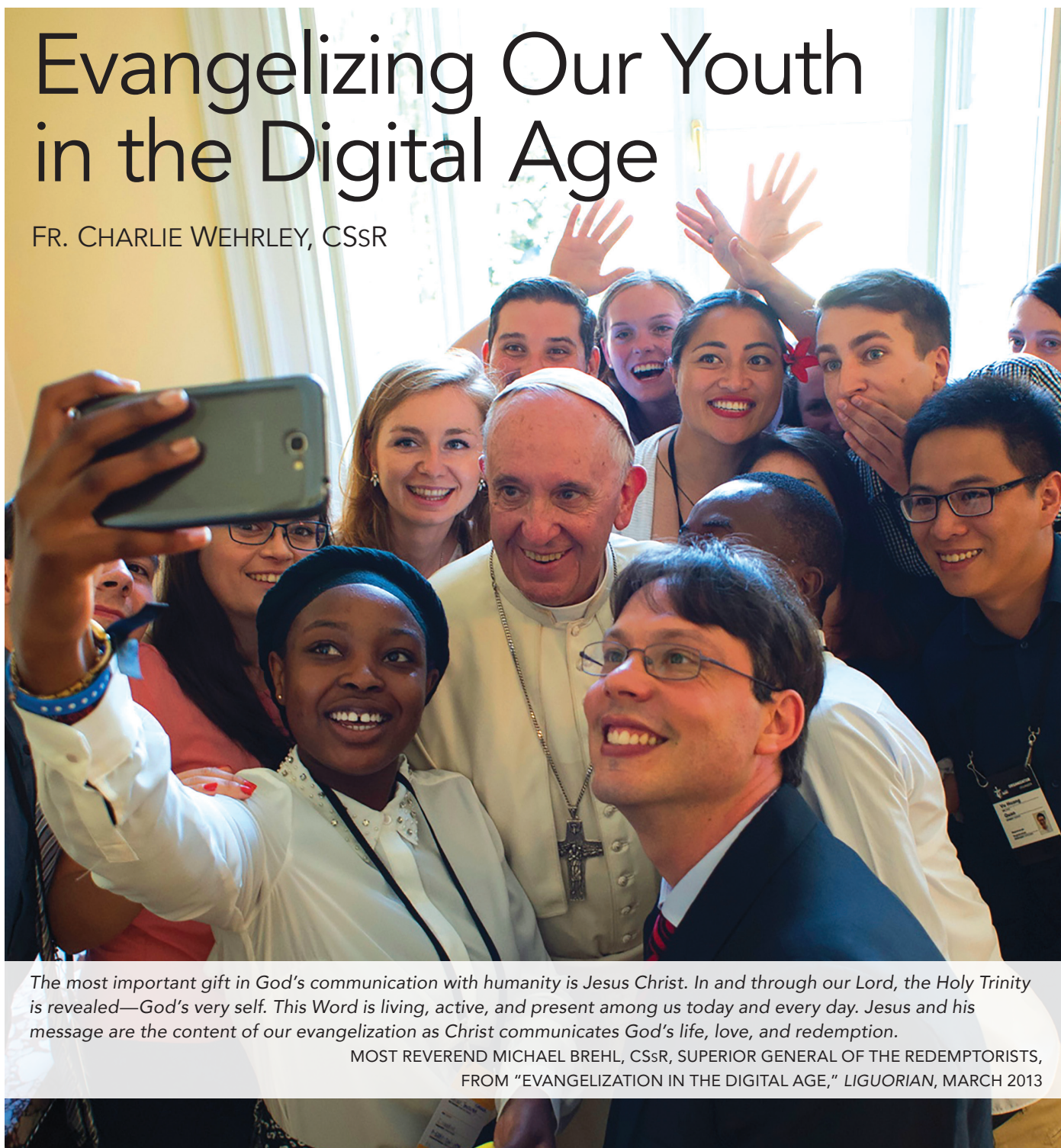
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JULY 2019

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Evangelizing Our Youth in the Digital Age

FR. CHARLIE WEHRLEY, CSSR



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The most important gift in God's communication with humanity is Jesus Christ. In and through our Lord, the Holy Trinity is revealed—God's very self. This Word is living, active, and present among us today and every day. Jesus and his message are the content of our evangelization as Christ communicates God's life, love, and redemption.

MOST REVEREND MICHAEL BREHL, CSSR, SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE REDEMPTORISTS,
FROM "EVANGELIZATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE," *LIGUORIAN*, MARCH 2013

The Bible teaches that Jesus traveled on foot virtually every day to deliver his message of God's love for all people. Jesus left Nazareth, went to Capernaum, and found his first apostles. Traveling was Jesus' way of evangelizing and meeting the spiritual needs of his listeners. He sat, ate, drank, and talked with sinners and the most marginalized people of his day—in their language. But it's important to note that Jesus didn't disregard or ignore the immorality of his listeners. He called them to be better. Ultimately, he called them to repent.

In response to criticism about serving and meeting people "where they are," he spoke parables, like the one about the Good Shepherd who leaves his flock to search for a lost sheep and rejoices more over finding the one gone astray than the ninety-nine who stayed put. "In just the same way there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who have no need of repentance" (Luke 15:7).

We, too, are called to the mission of evangelization. The Pope speaks to our individual mission in Christ and the key role the Holy Spirit plays in fulfilling this mission:

You...need to see the entirety of your life as a mission....Do so by listening to God in prayer and recognizing the signs he gives you. Always ask the Spirit what Jesus expects from you at every moment of your life and in every decision you must make, so as to discern its place in the mission you have received. Allow the Spirit to forge in you the personal mystery that can reflect Jesus Christ in today's world.

—POPE FRANCIS

ON THE CALL TO HOLINESS IN TODAY'S WORLD
(GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE)

Today, many youth feel as if they are among the most marginalized because the Church hasn't done a good job of meeting them where they are spiritually or listening to them and speaking their language. One student told me, "Priests listen to us to respond, not to actually hear us." Another explanation may be that perhaps the Church and/or its leaders haven't fully exemplified the example Jesus set forth. In short, we should question how effectively our forms of evangelization challenge those we meet toward conversion.

As the communications director for the North American Conference of Redemptorists, one of my responsibilities is understanding the difference between past and present modes of communication and ultimately how the variance affects the overall mission of evangelization. Though we can all agree that Jesus and his message form the content of our evangelization, *how* we communicate and evangelize have changed drastically since Jesus' time. Over the centuries, we've evangelized verbally, mostly by preaching and storytelling; through print media (books, then newspapers

