

Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth

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Bishop Vann to launch blog on the first Sunday of Advent

Bishop Kevin Vann will begin blogging on the first Sunday of Advent, November 28.

On the blog, the “Fort Worth Shepherd,” Bishop Vann will share his experiences, thoughts and observations as he travels the diocese, the country, as well as his visits to Rome.

“The First Sunday of Advent will see a new ‘venture’ for me,” Bishop Vann says. “I will begin officially that day a ‘Blog’ that can be accessed through our diocesan webpage.

“This has been at the suggestion and urging of a number of people, both here in Fort Worth and around the country,” the Bishop says. “I hope this will be a forum where I can communicate some of my personal reflections and thoughts on our faith as I travel around our diocese and to other meetings in this country and elsewhere.

“Advent always is a beautiful season of faith as we reflect first of all on the second coming of Christ, and then prepare for the celebration of His First coming. It is also a new Church year, so it is a graced moment to begin in faith something new! This is will be a ‘work in progress’, as is life, with the help of God!”

Bishop Vann’s blog heeds a call issued to U.S. Catholic bishops at their fall assembly the week of November 15 “to embrace social media in order to effectively evangelize the digital continent.”

In a report to bishops during the meeting, Bishop Ronald Herzog of Alexandria, Louisiana, a member of the USCCB Communications Committee, said the Catholic Church must employ social media to evangelize just as the printing press was used by the Church centuries ago to mass print the Bible.

“Although social media has been around for less than 10 years, it doesn’t have the makings of a fad,” said Bishop Herzog. “We’re being told that it is causing as

fundamental a shift in communication patterns and behavior as the printing press did 500 years ago. And I don't think I have to remind you of what happened when the Catholic Church was slow to adapt to that new technology," he said, referencing the Protestant Reformation.

Bishop Herzog described the communication habits of young people today, which he noted have moved beyond e-mail to the world of social media.

"If the Church is not on their mobile device, it doesn't exist," he said. "The Church does not have to change its teachings to reach young people, but we must deliver it to them in a new way." He compared this outreach to evangelizing a new digital continent, and said the Church has serious challenges to overcome, noting, "Most of us don't understand the culture."

Bishop Herzog said the egalitarian nature of the Internet makes it particularly challenging to the Church.

"Anyone can create a blog," he noted. "Everyone's opinion is valid. And if a question or contradiction is posted, the digital natives expect a response and something resembling a conversation. We can choose not to enter into that cultural mindset, but we do so at great peril to the Church's credibility and approachability in the minds of the natives, those who are growing up in this new culture. This is a new form of pastoral ministry."

A USCCB survey found that a growing number of dioceses throughout the U.S. are employing social media to communicate.

Bishop Vann will open his blog with a greeting: "Welcome to my blog! As shepherd of the Catholic Diocese of Fort Worth, my travels take me to every corner of our local Church, around the United States, and sometimes as far away as Rome, Italy. Through the 'Shepherd of Fort Worth' blog, I wish to share with you important information about our diocese, the wonderful spirit of our Catholic faith, the people I encounter, and the blessings of daily life."

In addition to Bishop Vann's blog, The Fort Worth Diocese has a major presence in the digital media world. The diocesan website is at www.fwdioc.org. The North Texas Catholic web edition is at www.fwdioc.org/ntc and the diocesan Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Fort-Worth-TX/Roman-Catholic-Diocese-of-Fort-Worth>.