

# The Marketplace of Apps and the Church

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Everybody has “Smartphones” and “Tablets” nowadays. If we are using them, then we are using applications or simply called “Apps”.

What are apps? Apps are types software application designed to run on a mobile device, such as a Smartphone or Tablet. “Apps” or ‘mobile apps’ are add-on programs that are downloaded from a mobile device’s app store, sometimes called marketplace. There are three major marketplaces of apps – ‘Google play’ for android phones, ‘Apps Store’ for iPhones and iPads, and ‘Windows Store’ for windows phones. Some apps are paid while most of them are downloaded free.

There are millions of apps available for every smartphone user. From Google Play alone, there are 2,478,144 apps in the market, 211,117 of them are paid<sup>1</sup>. Here is the list of the number of apps available in every apps marketplace:

- Google Play (Android Phones) - 2,478,144 apps
- Apps Store (iPhone/iPads) -2, 200, 000 apps<sup>2</sup>
- Windows Store (Windows phones) - 850,000 apps<sup>3</sup>

Imagine the numbers of apps available for download. Apps developers are releasing new apps every week. By the end of this year, their number will rise to three million or more.

Apps are grouped according to **categories**, **top charts** and **new released apps**. Here is the list of ‘categories’ we can find in the apps store:

- Art and Design
- Business
- Education
- Entertainment
- Family
- Finance
- Food & Drink
- Games
- Health & Fitness
- Lifestyle
- Medical
- Music
- Navigation
- News
- Photo & Video
- Productivity Reference
- Social Networking
- Sports
- Travel
- Utilities
- Weather

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.appbrain.com/stats/number-of-android-apps>. Retrieved October 24, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Apps Store. <https://itunes.apple.com>

<sup>3</sup> Windows Store. <https://www.microsoftstore.com/store>

The 'family' section offers apps for specific ages. There are apps intended for ages 5 and under, ages 6-8, and 9 and up. But if we try to analyse the categories listed above, we notice that there is no **Religion** section. I suggest that Google play and Apps Store will find a way to put the 'Religion' category for us to easily find the apps of and for the Church.

In **Top Charts**, we can find list of top downloaded apps i.e., monthly top, most downloaded new apps, top grossing and top trending. In **New Releases**, we can find 'new' apps, 'to be released' apps and apps 'under development'.

Now, the question is: Where is the Church in this digital reality? Are there mobile applications intended for the Church? Do we know some of the Church's apps for evangelization? Do we, smartphone users, download and use them for pastoral communication?

Here are some of the apps developed by the Church and for the Church and apps than can be used for evangelization. I categorize them into:

- **Vatican Apps**
- **Universal Church Apps**
- **Religious Organizations Apps**
- **Religious Practices/liturgy/prayer life Apps**
- **Bible/Rosary Apps**

### *Vatican Apps*

'**The Pope App**'. Launched in January 2013 by the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (now under the Secretariat for Communications) in cooperation with the media offices of the Holy See. The app allows us to follow live streaming of papal events, receive notifications of important events, view papal photos, videos, and follow papal tweets and links to all the Vatican media. It is available for free download in iOS or iphone/ipads and Android. Available in five languages: English, French, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

'**Missio**'. Launched by Pope Francis in May 2013 and developed by the Pontifical Mission Societies. The app provides news about the work being done in the poor communities and connects us to project leaders to let us see what we can do. Available in Google Play and Apps Store for free.

'**Vatican. Va**'. Developed by Vatican Internet Service: Telecommunications Directory. The App of the official website of the Holy See ([www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)): It provides access to documents of the Pontifical Magisterium and institutional information of the Apostolic See. It has now 500K downloads and is available in iOS and Android for free.

'**Radio Vaticana**' by Vatican Radio (under Secretariat for Communications). The App offers a News service that includes the latest information that concerns the Church and the World broadcast by Vatican Radio's news programmes. The App is free of charge and the initial version is available in Italian and English.

## ***Universal Church Apps***

**‘YouCat’**. YOUCAT, short for ‘Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church’, is a 2011 publication that aims to be an aid for youth to understand better the Catechism of the Catholic Church. The app, designed in the form of a conversation, is intended for use by **Catholic youths** around the world and is available in 25 languages, including Arabic and Chinese.

Unfortunately, the app is available only in Windows Store. The app is under development for Google Play and Apps Store.

**‘DoCat’**. Launched during World Youth Day in Krakow by YouCat Foundation. DOCAT is a popular adaptation of the social teaching of the Catholic Church. It invites the young people to read the major documents of the Church and take part in the sharing of the Gospel. DoCat is a sequel of YOUCAT. Available for free download both in Android and iOS.

Pope Francis offered the app as a free gift (digital download) until the end of World Youth Day (July 31, 2016). After that, it became an in-app purchase or a paid app.

**‘Catholic News Agency’**. Launched on Jul 16, 2014 by the Catholic News Agency, the app gives us direct access to all of CNA’s content – news stories, columns, faith resources, pictures, and videos. Available in Android and iOS for free.

**‘Catholic Church’**. Released on September 15, 2015 and developed by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). An interesting feature of this app is the ‘Parish Finder’ that helps us locate a parish by GPS, zip code, or address Parish and diocesan information news, events, and resources to help us stay informed and connected. It has also *Mass Schedule* and *parish bulletins* for almost every US parish. The Philippine Church should also develop an app like this. Available in Google Play and Apps Store for free.

**‘myParish’**. Developed by diocesan publications, it helps us connect with our parish, stay up-to-date with what is going on and access to readings, homilies, parish activities, mass times, bulletins and many more.

*We also have apps for the Philippine Church:*

**‘CBCP News’**, developed by DigitalMediaPh, provides news and information about the Catholic Church in and outside the country. **‘TV Maria’** also by DigitalMediaPh, offers TV programs, featured videos and upcoming shows intended for the Church. **‘Veritas’** by Radio Veritas, offers News service and information as aired in their broadcasting. Available for free download in Google Play and Apps Store.

## ***Religious Organizations Apps***

There are also apps developed by some Religious Orders. There are many of them but I will only present few. We have the Dominicans app, Jesuit Prayer and Friars.

**“Dominicans”**. Developed by Dominican Order, the ‘Dominican App’ is the official app of the Order of Preachers. This app gives news updates, access to documents, audio recordings and videos of the Dominican Order.

**‘Jesuit Prayer’**. Developed by the Jesuits in collaboration with the Magis Center for Catholic Spirituality and Loyola Press, ‘JesuitPrayer’ app offers daily scripture, Ignatian reflections, and other Jesuit prayers.

**‘Friars’**. Developed by Franciscan Friars of the United States of America, this free app allows us to submit a prayer to the Franciscans so they can pray for our intention. We can also join the prayers of other users of the app and light a candle for their intentions.

### ***Apps for Religious Practices/Liturgy/Prayer life***

**‘iMissal’**. This is a paid app —for apple and android, the price is P230 and for windows phone - P320. iMissal has been granted an official Imprimatur from the Catholic Church and is approved for Catholic use. It offers access to Mass Readings for any day of the year, liturgy of the hours, common Catholic prayers and many more. iMissal has been one of the top selling Catholic applications since its release.

**‘Laudate’**. Developed by Aycka Soft<sup>4</sup>. Laudate is an app that comes loaded with many useful Catholic resources. It includes Daily Mass Readings and Order of Mass, Catechism of the Catholic Church, Liturgy of the Hours, complete library of all the modern era’s Church Documents including all the documents of Vatican II, Rosary with a Podcast, Daily Meditations and many more. Available for free download.

**‘iBreviary’**. Developed by Paolo Padriani<sup>5</sup> in November 2009, brings the traditional Catholic prayer of the Breviary and all the texts of the Liturgy on our smart phones and tablet. The texts of the Liturgy of the Hours, are formatted just as they appear in the printed version. It used to be a paid app but now it is available for free.

**‘Catholic Calendar’**. Released in October 2011 by Universalis Publishing Limited<sup>6</sup>, the app offers Feasts and celebrations according to the Roman Catholic Calendar and features "About Today" tab giving more information about the saint of the day, Mass readings and many more. This app is free of charge.

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<sup>4</sup> Aycka Soft is an application development and publishing company of mobile application based in Mountain View, California. They develop apps for Android and iPhone.

<sup>5</sup> An Italian Priest, Pastor of the Parish of St. Giorgio - Stazzano (AL) ITALY

<sup>6</sup>Universalis Publishing Limited is based in London. Martin Kochanski is the founder of Universalis Publishing. He was educated by the Benedictines of Downside Abbey, England, a computer software publisher and a writer. Universalis started in 1995 with the aim of harnessing computer technology to help in enriching the spiritual life of Christians, specifically by making the liturgical and devotional resources of the Catholic Church available on the new electronic media.

## ***Bible/Rosary Apps***

We have many versions of Bible apps available in the market. Some of them are good materials for our study of the bible and for enriching our faith. We must be attentive in choosing what to download because many of the Bible apps are developed by other faiths. Some of the good apps are *The Bible App*, *Catholic Study Bible App*, *Catholic Bible*, *New Jerusalem Bible*, *Bible Diary* and *Bible for Kids*. We also have Rosary apps. They come with “podcast” or audio format, text with beautiful illustrations that accompany prayer and versions in different languages. We have the Tagalog version of a rosary app called “Banal na Rosaryo”.

### *Conclusion:*

Apps are effective tools for communication in the digital society which Christians can use and develop for evangelization. It is the challenge for all of us, pastoral communicators, including the Bishops, priests, deacons, religious and lay pastoral workers to know and use mobile applications for our ministries. We should undergo proper education and training in order to use our smartphones and tablets for communicating the Word of God to the faithful. We should always update ourselves for a more efficient way of communicating Christ to the modern world. The Church, according to Pope John Paul II, “takes advantage of the opportunities offered by the communications media as pathways providentially given by God to intensify communion and to render more penetrating the proclamation of His word.”<sup>7</sup> As Pastoral communicators, therefore, we must take the advantage to make use of this development for the nourishment of the life in faith of the members of the church and for the evangelization towards other faiths.

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<sup>7</sup> John Paul II. Apostolic Letter, *The Rapid Development* (January 24, 2005), no. 6.