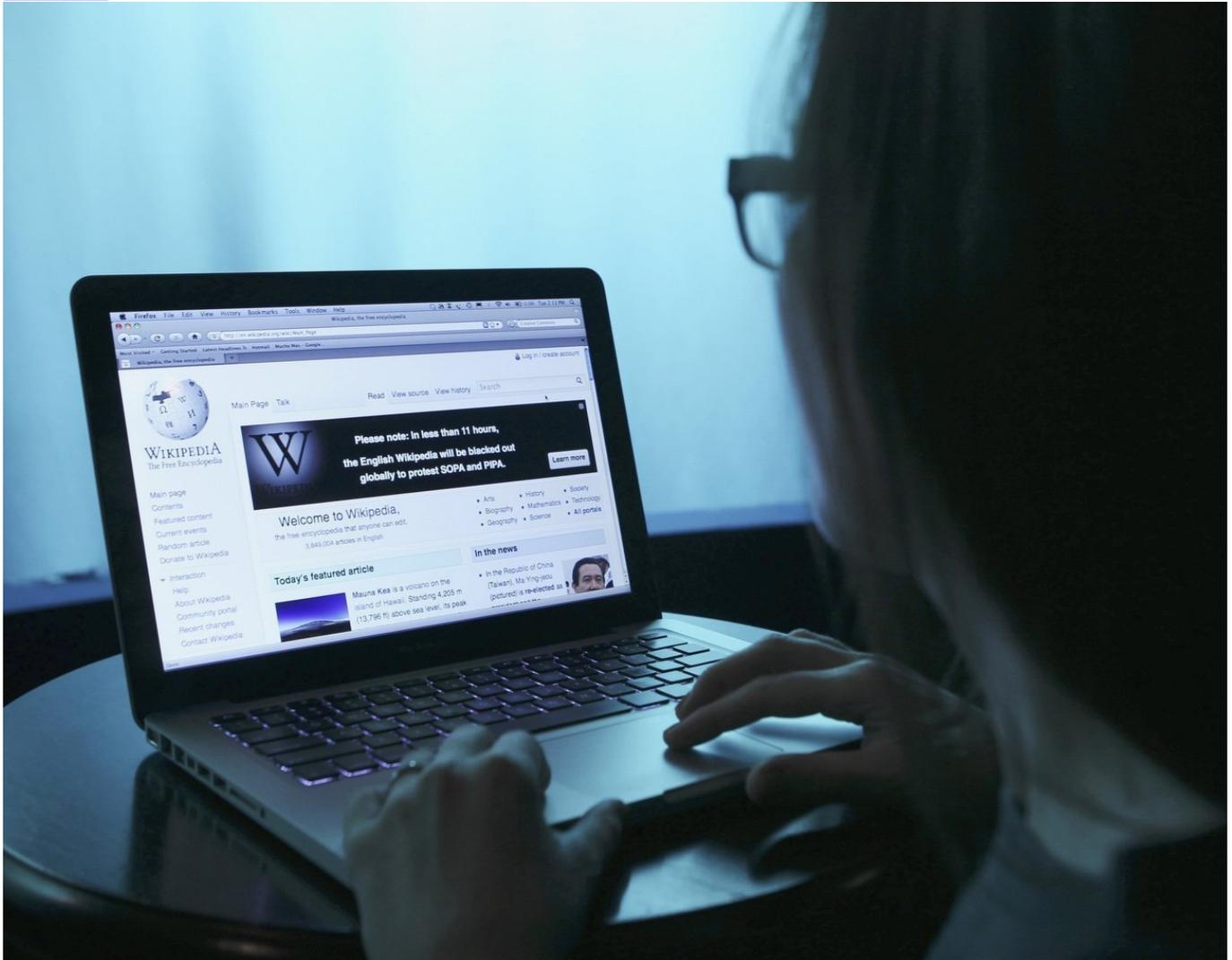


## Culture



A person is pictured working on a laptop computer. (Reuters/OSV/Gary Cameron)



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In this jubilee year, the People of God become pilgrims of hope. As Pope Francis describes in *Evangelii Gaudium*, the lay faithful are called to share that hope broadly – and social media is one of the most accessible ways to do just that. The internet is a space of human gathering, and people today often begin their search for meaning online. As Catholics, we should be there to help.

So when we look at who is gaining audience and popularity on the digital continent, we must also be looking for the voices that are missing.

Unfortunately, most high-profile personalities online today do not reflect the changing demographics of Catholicism. For example, church growth is exploding in Africa and Asia – nearly 19% of the world’s Catholics are [African](#) – but is in decline in Europe and North America. Yet the Catholic faces we see online are almost always people of European descent.

Ethnicity is far from the only form of diversity lacking. I'm thinking, too, of people of marginalized sexualities, genders, abilities and even socioeconomic classes. Is Catholic social media a clique of hegemonic representation that, even inadvertently, silences certain voices?

These are important questions concerning who is considered credible, authoritative and influential in professing the faith. Mainstream Catholic social media overwhelmingly presents white, straight, financially privileged men and women (but predominantly men) – a far cry from reflecting the meaning of the Latin word *catholicus*: "universal." This is not to detract from the value of the platforms of the various Catholic social media influencers but to allow all of us to look at social media as one of the greatest evangelical tools available today.

Social media allows for interaction, education and witnessing to the faith. But it is difficult to communicate effectively – with young people especially – if they cannot see a representation of themselves. This only perpetuates stereotypes; it does not endear them to the Gospel.

Thankfully, gay and BIPOC Catholics can look to leaders like [Bryan Massingale, SJ](#), who are adding their voices. Transgender people can see Catholics like [Maxwell Kuzma](#) sharing the message of the Gospel. Persons living with a disability, like myself, can find Catholic content that reflects our particular faith journey, such as

the apostolate of [Robert Spitzer, SJ](#). But these are few and far between. We need more, much more.

Using technology to proclaim the message of Christ consistently, and in charity, is a must for evangelization in the twenty-first century. But the faces given primacy cannot remain the same. Who will be the new faces of Catholicism on the digital continent? After all, evangelization is for all Catholics, for we are all pilgrims of hope.

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