PAKISTAN: AUTHORITIES RESTORE TWITTER ACCESS
Authorities in Pakistan have restored access to Twitter after blocking the micro-blogging site for 12 hours on May 20 in response to “blasphemous” posts about the Prophet Mohammed. Pakistan Telecommunication Authority barred access to the site after Twitter refused to remove posts promoting a Facebook competition that called for users to create caricatures of the Islamic prophet. Interior Minister Rehman Malik later stated that a complete block on the site should not have been imposed. Church leaders in the predominantly Muslim country welcomed the government’s decision to reverse the ban. (UCANEWS)

PHILIPPINES: CBCP HEAD SEEKS JUSTICE FOR SLAIN CATHOLIC RADIO MAN
The head of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) is calling for justice for the killing of a Catholic radio reporter in Mati City, in Davao del Sur. Cebu Archbishop Jose Palma, CBCP president, condemned the killing of DzHM-AM news reporter Nestor Libaton on May 8, and prayed that the broadcaster’s death would be given justice. The killing took place as the Catholic Church was set to observe World Communications Sunday on May 20. “We are saddened because we know how important communication is. The celebration of World Communication Sunday is a way of reminding us that as Christians, it is our duty to proclaim and to communicate the teaching of Jesus,” Palma said. The Philippines has one of the world’s highest rates of unsolved media killings. At least 151 reporters have been killed since 1986. (CBCPNEWS)

INDIA: PRESIDENT LAUDS CATHOLIC NEWSPAPER
President Pratibha Devisingh Patil on May 15 praised the Catholic daily newspaper, Deepika, for its contributions to the country’s national life. Patil praised Deepika for playing “an important role in the renaissance and reformation” in the 19th century in Kerala, where the newspaper is based, and for its efforts during the country’s struggle for independence. Deepika, celebrates its 125th anniversary this year. It is run by the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate congregation. (UCANEWS)

PHILIPPINES: CATHOLIC YOUTH GROUP LAUNCHES ITS OWN SOCIAL NETWORK
The Student Catholic Action of the Philippines (SCAP) launched its own social network called Tambayan (hang-out place) in its official website <http://m.seaphilippines.com/> to reach young people. SCAP full-time member Frence Boiser, 27, said the move is, “very timely. Technology gives a big advantage now... This is also a medium for the new evangelization.” Young people who join Tambayan mostly talk about youth issues like leadership, governance and how young people can initiate change. At present, Tambayan has over 500 members. (CBCPNEWS)

INDONESIA: ULEMA SAYS LADY GAGA IS ‘HARAM,’ FORBIDDEN
“Pop” music lovers in Indonesia are at war, following the March 20 statement by the Ulema Council (MUI), which has branded the Lady Gaga concert, scheduled in the coming months as haram (forbidden) and morally “threatening.” Khalil Radwan, executive member of the MUI said that “no Indonesian Muslim” should attend the concert of the U.S. pop-star, in June in Jakarta, because her gestures and clothing on-stage are contrary to morality and reprehensible. The strict clampdown has provoked the reaction of thousands of Indonesian music lovers, who have not hidden their anger and outrage at the words of the Islamic leader. “Music is music,” they say in a loud voice, “it has nothing to do with the desires of the flesh.” (ASIANEWS)

PHILIPPINES: CHRISTIAN CHURCHES CALL FOR LADY GAGA BAN
Catholic bishops on May 18 led calls for authorities to cancel concerts by Lady Gaga in Manila, with religious groups claiming the pop singer's lyrics are “blasphemous.” Bishop Arturo Bastes of Sorsogon, a member of the Permanent Council of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, joined the calls to bar the US singer from performing. Speaking on Church-run Radyo Veritas, Manila Auxiliary Bishop Broderick Pabillo urged the government to follow the example of other Asian countries that have banned shows of the five-time Grammy Award winner. A joint statement by religious groups including the Intercessors for the Philippines, the Philippines for Jesus Movement and the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches described the concert as “grossly blasphemous, immoral, lewd, obscene” with “demonic and occultist undertones that is an insult to our God and is a direct attack against our Christian faith.” But despite fierce opposition from religious groups, Lady Gaga has proven a hit in the Philippines, prompting concert organizers to arrange a second performance due to high demand for tickets. (UCANEWS)

PHILIPPINES: SALESIAN YOUTH GROUP HOSTS ONLINE RADIO SHOW
The Salesian Commission on Youth Ministry has launched an online radio program titled Youth Gig in February this year. The program embraces the new media wave to complement traditional ways of reaching out to young people, explains one of its hosts, Richard Tanada, 31. The weekly radio show can be heard over <www.radyomaria.ph>,” and has segments on vocations, youth activities and a portion called “Good News and Bad News,” which features underreported news that would interest young people. Youth Gig is also on radio band and reaches Central and Northern Luzon every Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. (CBCPNEWS)
INDIA: HINDI BIBLE ANDROID APP LAUNCHED

The Hindi Catholic Bible is now available on the Android Market under the app name Divya Vachan. The app is a combined effort of Jesus Youth International and Delhi Catholic Archdiocese. The data has been supplied by Biblemitr.com, the first online Hindi Catholic Bible from the Bhopal Archdiocese. The software for the app has been developed by Ethic Coders. The Divya Vachan application allows free downloads of the complete Hindi Bible. Other features include easy search facilities, automatic bookmarking services and adjustable font sizes. The android version is the first of its kind in the smartphone series. Divya Vachan will also be available for the iPhone and Blackberry. (CBCI)

CHINA: RICCI EXHIBITION CENTER OPENS

China’s first exhibition center dedicated to Father Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) has opened in Zhaoqing, the place where the Italian missionary first set foot on the mainland. The acting director of Paris Ricci Institute and officials of the Guangdong provincial cultural bureau and Zhaoqing city attended the opening ceremony on May 13. The new “Matteo Ricci Cultural Exchange Exhibition Center” details the life of the Jesuit priest, known as Li Madou to Chinese people, through an array of exhibits and written accounts. The center is located near the ruins of the first church and Jesuit house that Fr Ricci and his confrere Fr Michele Ruggieri were allowed to build after they arrived in China in 1583. The church, called “Xianhua Temple” out of respect for Buddhist custom, was dedicated to the Blessed Mother. (UCANEWS)

PHILIPPINES: MEDIA BLAMED FOR RISE IN TEEN PREGNANCIES - YOUTH

Some youth leaders pointed at media as the culprit why there has been an increase in teen pregnancies in the Philippines. With the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) 2011 annual report showing that teen pregnancies in the Philippines increased by 70% from 1999 to 2009, young people reacted and blamed the influence of media. Jermer Cruz, 25, a full-time pastoral worker for Kids for Family and Life of the Catholic group “Couples for Christ,” explained, “We blame it on media where they just say that sex is sex and that there is nothing more meaningful.” Young people, like Cruz, are echoing findings from a 2008 Rand Corporation study that showed, “Adolescents who have high levels of exposure to television programs that contain sexual content are twice as likely to be involved in a pregnancy over the following three years.” (CBCNEWS)

PIERRE BABIN, A ‘GIANT’ IN CATHOLIC COMMUNICATION, DIES

Fr. Pierre Babin, omi, founder of CREC and pioneer of the “symbolic way” died on May 9. He was 87 years old. A pioneer of group media, an expert in educational psychology, writer and essayist, Pierre Babin was born in 1925 at Paray-le-Monial, France. He entered the Congregation of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) in 1942 and was ordained a priest seven years later. In 1971, he founded the Centre for Research and Education in Communication (CREC, www.crecinternational.org) in Lyon, specializing in media training and mainly serving Christian institutions. He had close links with OCIC and Unda and with their merger in 2001, with SIGNIS and participated in meetings and projects. (CBCI)

KOREA: GAY ADVERT SPARKS OUTRAGE

Conservative and religious groups have branded an advertisement against homophobia as immoral, saying it advocates gay sex and are calling for it to be banned. The Christian Council of Korea (CCK) issued a statement on May 15 urging district offices to immediately ban the advertisement. The Protestant Korean Association of Church Communication went as far as saying on May 14 that the advertisement will encourage homosexuality among people and “finally make South Korea a country of homosexuals.” However, an official from the Seoul city government said the advertisement is not breaking any laws and that “each district office has the right to approve advertisements on the streets.” The ad is the brainchild of Lee Gye-duck, a gay activist who is also funding the campaign. Lee said he wants the public to be better informed about homosexuality and how wrong discrimination is. (UCANEWS)

CHINA: MEDIA PRAISES XU GUANGQI

Mainstream media in China praised Paul Xu Guangqi highly when they reported on Shanghai city’s series of commemorative events to mark his 450th birth anniversary. Xu (1562-1633) was the first Shanghai Catholic convert, and the Holy See is reviewing his beatification along with his close collaborator, Italian Jesuit missionary Father Matteo Ricci (1552-1610). Well-known even among non-Catholics in modern times, Xu was regarded as the first Chinese to introduce advanced European scientific knowledge into the country in the late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) and was also a famous scholar-official, mathematician, astronomer and agricultural scientist. Shanghai Daily, the most influential English newspaper in the municipal, published a report on April 24, Xu's birthday, describing him as “one of China’s great men of applied science.” (UCANEWS)

THAILAND: NEW BUDDHIST TEMPLE FEATURES COMIC SUPER HEROES

Painted in all white and adorned with glittering glass, the Buddhist temple Wat Rong Khun in northern Thailand near the city of Chiang Rai would probably be the most stunning in the world. Designed by Thai Buddhist artist Chalermchai Kositipipat, the temple is expected to be finished by 2070. It is rich in symbols derived from Buddhist and Hindu traditions, as well as some more unorthodox sources. Inside, Wat Rong Khun contains the expected statues of the Buddha, but the Buddhist artist has also included images of Superman, Batman, and Neo from The Matrix who he believes further the Buddha’s message. Kositipipat says the temple is his offering to Lord Buddha and believes the project will give him immortal life. (UCANEWS)

If Catholics are to be of service to the means of social communication and to act so that these may serve humanity’s ends... it is in the spiritual sphere that the Church can best help.

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