

Being Church in the Digital Age

In many ways, the challenges the Church faces in the Digital Age, are versions of the same challenges we all face to be Family in the digital age. The major changes in our primary forms of communication, new ways to build relationships (that sometimes can also break relationships if we aren't mindful), rapidly evolving technology, and the recurring questions of what is safe, what is appropriate, and how we keep it all in perspective are in front of us every day. Even where we turn to look for answers can be a challenge because there is a virtual avalanche of information available, with a wide spectrum of opinions. We hope these resources will give you some reference points as you tackle the challenges and issues for your family.

Love it or hate it, the Digital Age is here, it is the way of life, and technology is not going away, so we need to educate ourselves and decide the best way to adapt in positive ways.

Communication & Mercy



Excerpts from
Communication and Mercy: A Fruitful Encounter
for the 50th World Day of Social Communications by
Pope Francis,
highlighting the place of digital communication and the associated responsibilities in our digital age.

*Dear Brothers and Sisters,
The Holy Year of Mercy invites all of us to reflect on the relationship between communication and mercy.*

.....
What we say and how we say it, our every word and gesture, ought to express God's compassion, tenderness and forgiveness for all.

.....
Communication has the power to build bridges, to enable encounter and inclusion, and thus to enrich society.

.....
Words can build bridges between individuals and within families, social groups and peoples. This is



possible both in the material world and the digital world.

.....
Communicating means sharing, and sharing demands listening and acceptance. Listening is much more than simply hearing. Hearing is about receiving information, while listening is about communication, and calls for closeness. Listening allows us to get things right, and not simply to be passive onlookers, users or consumers. Listening also means being able to share questions and doubts, to journey side by side, to banish all claims to absolute power and to put our abilities and gifts at the service of the common good.

...
Emails, text messages, social networks and chats can also be fully human forms of communication. It is not technology which determines whether or not communication is authentic, but rather the human heart and our capacity to use wisely the means at our disposal. Social networks can facilitate relationships and promote the good of society, but they can also lead to further polarization and division between

individuals and groups. The digital world is a public square, a meeting-place where we can either encourage or demean one another, engage in a meaningful discussion or unfair attacks.

The internet can help us to be better citizens. Access to digital networks entails a responsibility for our neighbor whom we do not see but who is nonetheless real and has a dignity which must be respected. The internet can be used wisely to build a society which is healthy and open to sharing.

Communication, wherever and however it takes place, has opened up broader horizons for many people. This is a gift of God which involves a great responsibility. I like to refer to this power of communication as "closeness". The encounter between communication and mercy will be fruitful to the degree that it generates a closeness which cares, comforts, heals, accompanies and celebrates. In a broken, fragmented and polarized world, to communicate with mercy means to help create a healthy, free and fraternal closeness between the children of God and all our brothers and sisters in the one human family.



But also some words of caution from Pope Francis....
Comments from Pope Francis Message for World Youth Day 2017

By RYAN KILPATRICK

March 22, 2017 TIME Magazine

"The Church is not like a flash mob, where people agree to meet, do their thing and then go their separate ways..." Pope Francis

Pope Francis has called on young people the world over to resist the "false image of reality" portrayed by social media and reality TV, and take charge of their own destiny. "Don't let yourselves be led astray by this false image of reality! Be the protagonists of your history; decide your own future."

In a video message for World Youth Day, which falls on April 9, the head of the Catholic Church said that those who call today's youth "distracted and superficial" are wrong.

"To have a past is not the same as to have a history," Francis said, urging faithful youngsters to spend more time with their grandparents.

The pontiff also hit out at excessive smart phone use and cautioned that "the Church is not like a flash mob, where people agree to meet, do their thing and then go their separate ways," according to the Catholic Herald.

Online resources:

5 Ways to Teach Kids to Use Technology Safely
<http://www.techguide4parents.com/5-ways-to-teach-kids-to-use-technology-safely/>

Guidelines for parents from SAFELINE

<http://studentsafeline.org/for-parents/safe-technology/>
a student hotline about helping with technology usage, including Computers 101, Social Media and Cell Phones



Keeping Kids Safe Online

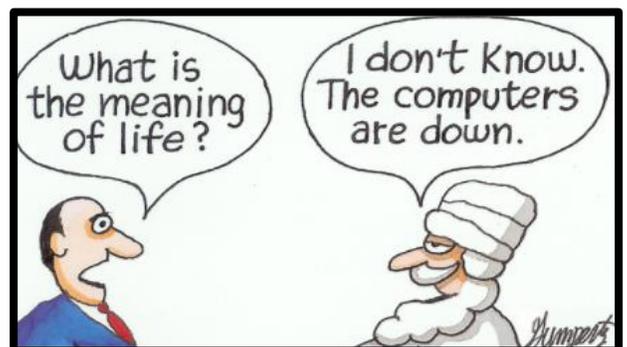
http://www.wcsjnews.com/business/business_news/parental-control-guide-how-to-restrict-kids-youtube-settings/article_298a07b6-988a-5684-a1cb-96e2c7caa030.html

tech expert *Stephanie Humphrey* advice on keeping kids safe online.

How to set up Parental Controls on YouTube
How to set up Parental Controls on YouTube Kids
Parental Restriction for Overall iPhone Settings
Net Nanny for Universal Settings.

Guiding Principles for Use of Technology with Early Learners (United States Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology.)
<https://tech.ed.gov/earlylearning/principles/>

Is Technology Good for Little Kids? from Parents Magazine, includes 5 Take Charge Rules for Parents: Unplug Yourself, Fire the Electronic Babysitter, Develop Healthy Media Habits Early, Teach How Technology Can Aid Learning, and Be Skeptical
<https://www.parents.com/fun/entertainment/gadgets/is-technology-good-for-little-kids/>

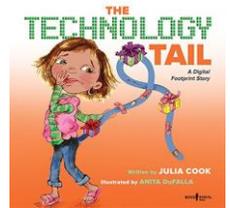


Books for Parents and Children, found on Amazon:



Once Upon a Time... Online: Happily Ever After Is Only a Click Away! (Hardcover – December 27, 2016) by David Bedford (Author), Rosie Reeve (Illustrator)

The Technology Tail: A Digital Footprint Story (Communicate with Confidence) (Paperback – September 1, 2017) by Julia Cook (Author), Anita DuFalla (Illustrator)



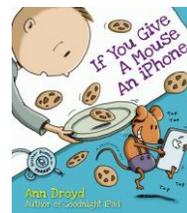
Facebook Messenger Kids app with a basic overview of intended use and how the app works... Tech Talk from catholicmom.com
<https://catholicmom.com/2017/12/18/tech-talk-will-kids-use-facebooks-messenger-kids-app/>

Guidelines for Responsible Use of Technology developed by University Prep School in Seattle, WA, that include advice on mindfulness, critical evaluation of information, communication, and care for devices and data.
<http://www.universityprep.org/students/technology-resources/guidelines-for-responsible-use-of-technology>

Social Media Guidelines from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
<http://www.usccb.org/about/communications/social-media-guidelines.cfm>

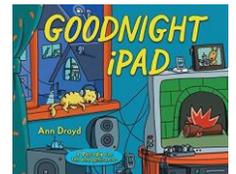
A mother's blog, with several posts regarding technology and her family, including Friday February 8, 2013: Friday Q&A, A Technology Contract; Wednesday August 31, 2016: Thoughts on Technology; Thursday October 13, 2016: Social Media/Technology "Trainers"; Thursday October 5, 2017: Why I Think Technology is Ruining Our Kids
<http://www.71toes.com>

Have Smart Phones Destroyed a Generation? September 2017 *The Atlantic*, by Jean W Twenge (also the author of *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy--and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood--and What That Means for the Rest of Us*)
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/09/has-the-smartphone-destroyed-a-generation/534198>



If You Give a Mouse an iPhone: A Cautionary Tail (Hardcover – October 21, 2014) by Ann Droyd (Author)

Goodnight iPad: a Parody for the Next Generation (Hardcover – October 27, 2011) by Ann Droyd (Author)



**LIFE** 2017



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Rescued by Jesus**