



Institute For Theological Encounter With Science and Technology

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Isolation? Or Contemplation?

As this issue of the ITEST Bulletin goes to press, we are in the most unusual circumstances of our entire lives. The introduction of “social distancing,” cancellation of gatherings (notably Sunday Mass), and the “Shelter in Place” policy are entirely new phenomena that none of us has ever experienced in our lifetimes. Some senior citizens recall as children experiencing the hardships required by World War II, but it was completely different from this.

There is a constant pull to watch TV, as one or another prognosticator recites the latest national data. It’s nice to hear that most people will experience mild symptoms; but it’s no fun being told you’re in a “high risk group” because you’re a senior citizen. We all know we aren’t going to live forever, but until now that has been an abstraction, a thought “out there” in the ether. Suddenly it’s real.

As we sit in isolation in our homes, our traditional means of interacting with others have vanished. When we chose to focus on “social media,” we had no idea it would suddenly become such a dominant factor in everyone’s life. Within this issue, you’ll find several essays that examine aspects of this new, imposed confinement. On page two, Sebastian Mahfood, OP reviews the Church’s leadership in media and social communications. On page six, Sr. Marianne Postiglione, RSM reflects upon this most unusual Lenten sacrifice; and how valuable are the social media that keep us connected at this unprecedented time. On page seven, Sr. Marysia Weber, RSM discusses the value of silence. On page nine, she also writes about the problem of “Screen addiction.”

When the self-quarantining began, Bishop Bob Barron (of *Word on Fire Ministries*) made a video about how to use this period. He pointed out the problem of the *divertissements* that normally command our attention, never leaving time for quiet thinking and introspection. He recommended instead using this time for spiritual reading, ranging across selections in the Bible, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, and several modern authors. Barron noted the opportunity for thoroughly contemplating a Biblical passage, taking extra time to discover deeper meaning. Coincidentally, this advice matches quite well with Sr. Marysia’s recommendation of a “fast day” -- give up using screens for a day.

For me personally, the most comforting thought to contemplate today is the fact that we’re all praying for each other. For a substantial fraction of a century, trust in the guidance and protection of the Holy Spirit has been a cornerstone of my outlook on life.

I pray that you will discover valuable insights during this time of separation. Perhaps this issue of the ITEST Bulletin will help toward that goal.

Thomas P. Sheahen, Director, ITEST

In This Issue...

<i>Among the Marvelous Things</i> by Dr. Sebastian Mahfood, OP	2
Letter to the Editor.....	5
Announcements.....	6
<i>Hope in the Time of the Lenten “Corona Virus”</i> by Sister Marianne Postiglione, RSM	6
<i>Do We Really Need Silence?</i> by Sister Marysia Weber, RSM, DO, MA.....	7
<i>Aquinas on Social Media’s Effects on the Soul</i> by T.J. Burdick.....	8
<i>Screen Addiction: Why You Can’t Put that Phone Down</i> by Sister Marysia Weber, RSM, DO, MA.....	9
<i>An Invitation to ITEST Members</i> by Robert Slocum	11
From the Magisterium.....	12

Among the Marvelous Things

by Dr. Sebastian Mahfood, OP

In the Second Vatican Council's decree on the media of social communications, *Inter Mirifica*, promulgated by Saint Paul VI on December 4, 1963, the Council provided its rationale for engaging the topic as follows:

It is ... an inherent right of the Church to have at its disposal and to employ any of these media insofar as they are necessary or useful for the instruction of Christians and all its efforts for the welfare of souls. It is the duty of Pastors to instruct and guide the faithful so that they, with the help of these same media, may further the salvation and perfection of themselves and of the entire human family.^[1]

The media so named are “the press, movies, radio, television and the like,” which remain important means for evangelization today. The difference between 1963 and 2020 is one of access to the means of production. In 1963, almost everyone was a consumer of these media, but it was expensive to be a producer of them as concerned the human, financial and physical resources necessary to produce quality programming. In 2020, anyone with an Internet connection can be a producer of these media as evidenced by the rapid development of social media commons such as personal websites and blogs, podcasting services, and interactive engagement platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and the like.^[2]

Important in the mandate provided by *Inter Mirifica* is the statement “[i]t is the duty of Pastors to instruct and guide the faithful...,” which calls to mind the legal rule, popularized by St. Thomas Aquinas, “*nemo dat quod non habet*,” which means “no one

gives what he does not have.” So, how do Pastors go about getting the knowledge and experience to instruct and guide the faithful in the use of the media of social communications? They must either bring it into their ministries with them or learn it along the way, and this need to gain such knowledge and experience reaches into the heart of the pastoral formation programs. If these programs are going to be effective in training ministers, then the first to be trained are the formators themselves.^[3]

The key really is not so much in training pastoral ministers on the use of a specific tool – that is, on its technical aspects – but on the formation provided in how the media may be used to evangelize within a media age. Just like the apostle Paul used the media of his day to spread the Gospel message, writing instructional and motivational epistles to the Christian communities he formed, and even one to a community in Rome he didn't form, today's pastoral ministers are called to use the media of our day to engage their communities. In fact, Saint John Paul II wrote in *Redemptoris Missio* (1991) the following:

The first Areopagus of the modern age is the world of communications, which is unifying humanity and turning it into what is known as a “global village.” The means of social communication have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behavior as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular, the younger generation is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media. To some degree perhaps this Areopagus has been neglected. Generally, preference has

Continues on page 3



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S. Marianne Postiglione, RSM, Senior Editor
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been given to other means of preaching the Gospel and of Christian education, while the mass media are left to the initiative of individuals or small groups and enter into pastoral planning only in a secondary way. Involvement in the mass media, however, is not meant merely to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel. There is a deeper reality involved here: *since the very evangelization of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, it is not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church's authentic teaching. It is also necessary to integrate that message into the "new culture" created by modern communications.* This is a complex issue, since the "new culture" originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating, with new languages, new techniques and a new psychology. Pope Paul VI said that "the split between the Gospel and culture is undoubtedly the tragedy of our time," and the field of communications fully confirms this judgment.^[4] (emphasis mine)

This necessity of integrating the message into the new culture created by modern communications was confirmed in "The Rapid Development" (2005), when Saint John Paul II wrote,

Such is the importance of the mass media that fifteen years ago I considered it inopportune to leave their use completely up to the initiatives of individuals or small groups, *and suggested that they be decisively inserted into pastoral programs.*^[5] (emphasis mine)

The significance of Saint John Paul II's reaffirmation of this 'suggestion' is that it is his final instruction on the subject. He died just a few months later, leaving behind a long legacy as the communications pope. As of this writing in January 2020, in fact, "The Rapid Development" remains the most recent apostolic exhortation to the Catholic community to undertake a specific activity in regard to the use of communications media – and that can be summed up in two words: "own it."^[6]

On the same day Saint John Paul II promulgated "The Rapid Development," he also promulgated the

39th World Communications Day Message in which he expressed an appeal that "the men and women of the media will play their part in *breaking down the dividing walls of hostility in our world*" and "use the resources at their disposal to strengthen the bonds of friend-ship and love that clearly signal the onset of the Kingdom of God here on earth."^[7] (emphasis his) Those resources are, as Pope Pius XII explained in *Miranda Prorsus* (1957), "gifts from God"^[8] and ought to be used as such.

Saint John Paul II had written in his 2002 World Communications Day message a profound mandate based on an obvious rationale:

The Internet causes billions of images to appear on millions of computer monitors around the planet. From this galaxy of sight and sound will the face of Christ emerge and the voice of Christ be heard? For it is only when his face is seen and his voice heard that the world will know the glad tidings of our redemption. This is the purpose of evangelization. And this is what will make the Internet a genuinely human space, for if there is no room for Christ, there is no room for man. Therefore, on this World Communications Day, *I dare to summon the whole Church bravely to cross this new threshold, to put out into the deep of the Net, so that now as in the past the great engagement of the Gospel and culture may show to the world "the glory of God on the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6).* May the Lord bless all those who work for this aim.^[9] (emphasis mine)

To assist in this mandate, the Catholic faithful have been well-instructed by the Church. Consider the Pontifical Council of Social Communication's pastoral instruction entitled *Aetatis Novae*, which, though predating the advent of the World Wide Web by a few years, provides in its appendix a useful outline for designing pastoral plans for social communications. The mandate for the plan designed in *Aetatis Novae* lay in the pastoral instruction on the means of social communication that was promulgated in a document entitled *Communio et Progressio*,^[10] released through the Pontifical Council of Social Communications in 1971. The instruction leads with the emphasis the Second Vatican Council placed on social communication in explaining,

Continues on page 4

Biography of one of this Issue's Editors



Dr. Sebastian Mahfood, OP

Dr. Sebastian Mahfood, OP, is a Lay Dominican of the Chapter of the Holy Rosary in the Province of St. Albert the Great who began teaching the use of appropriate technologies in theological teaching and learning environments in 2000 at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary in St. Louis. In 2014, Dr. Mahfood founded En Route Books and Media, LLC, available online at <https://www.enroutebooksandmedia.com>, as a means by which to assist the faculty of Holy Apostles College & Seminary to secure a publishing outlet for their books. Two years later, he founded WCAT Radio, available online at <https://www.wcatradio.com> as a means by which to assist in the marketing and promotions of the publishing house. En Route has produced 120 books in the areas of academics, popular spirituality, children's literature, and fiction. Over a three-year period, WCAT Radio has produced 68 radio programs covering the same genres and has posted over 5,000 podcasts with a listening audience of over 100,000 people in the year 2019.

A deeper and more penetrating understanding of social communication and of the contribution which the media it uses can make to modern society, can be derived from a number of documents issued by the Second Vatican Council. These are, notably the Constitution on "The Church in the World Today", 2 the Decree on "Ecumenism", 3 the Declaration on "Religious Freedom", 4 the Decree on "The Missionary Activity of the Church", 5 and the Decree on "The Pastoral Duties of Bishops". 6 And, of course, there is a Decree that is wholly devoted to a discussion of "The Media of Social Communication".^[11]

The promulgation of *Inter Mirifica* on December 4, 1963, then, was foundational on the importance of media of social communications. It set the tone for everything that would follow within these other documents and was placed in context with the fullness of the Church's mission by being promulgated on the same date as *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the constitution on the sacred liturgy. In a single stroke, then, the Church addressed the two greatest commandments identified by Christ when he affirmed, as reported in Luke 10:27, that we "shall love the Lord, [our] God, with all [our] heart, with all [our] being, with all [our] strength, and with all [our] mind, and [our] neighbor as [ourselves]" [NIV]

by instructing us in new ways how to talk to God and man.

When Saint John Paul II 'suggested' in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) that instruction in the use of mass media be decisively inserted into programs of pastoral formation, he was affirming what was by that point several decades of direct communications leadership on the part of the Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Council's *Inter Mirifica* (1963) provided the mandate to establish the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (now called the Dicastery for Communication) and the context for all the World Communications Day messages that followed from 1967 to the present year.

As with any teaching that requires an active response, what remains for pastoral ministers is to develop a plan and make it happen. The editors of this bulletin therefore make an appeal to all ITEST members to participate in this good work that engages the use of our social media for the purpose of evangelization.

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Excerpt from *Among the Marvelous Things: The Media of Social Communications and the Next Generation of Pastoral Ministers*, ed. by Dr. Sebastian Mahfood, OP (En Route Books and Media, 2020). Reprinted with permission.

Continues on page 5

1. Paul VI, *Inter Mirifica*, §3 (December 4, 1963). Online at https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19631204_inter-mirifica_en.html
2. With very little initial expense, for example, I set up a Catholic publishing house called En Route Books and Media, available online at <https://www.enroutebooksandmedia.com>, which has at the time of this writing published over 120 Catholic books and is serving as the publishing house for this book, and a Catholic radio station called WCAT Radio (WCAT is short for Why CATHolic?), available online at <https://www.wcatradio.com>, which currently hosts almost six dozen Catholic programs with over, at the time of this writing, 5,000 podcasts on its website available now for public consumption.
3. The Catholic Distance Learning Network that was founded by me and Br. Bernie Stratman, SM, through the Seminary Department of the National Catholic Educational Association in 2006 in response to a suggestion within Saint John Paul II's 2005 apostolic exhortation "The Rapid Development," for example, trained between 2007 and 2014 over a hundred seminary faculty in online teaching and learning tools and methods.
4. John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio: On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate* (December 7, 1990). Online at http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html
5. John Paul II, "The Rapid Development" (January 24, 2005). Online at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2005/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20050124_il-rapido-sviluppo.html
6. This is not to discount, of course, the annual World Communications Day messages that have been promulgated every January 24, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, the patron saint of journalists, since 1967, letters that continue to provide direct instruction from the popes in the use of social media.
7. John Paul II, "The Communications Media: At the Service of Understanding Among Peoples" (January 24, 2005). Online at https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20050124_world-communications-day.html
8. Pope Pius XII, *Miranda Prorsus* (September 8, 1957). Online at http://www.vatican.va/content/pius-xii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-xii_enc_08091957_miranda-prorsus.html
9. John Paul II, "Internet: A New Forum for Proclaiming the Gospel" (January 24, 2002). Online at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_20020122_world-communications-day.html
10. John Foley, *Aetatis Novae* (February 22, 1992). Online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/peccs/documents/rc_pc_peccs_doc_22021992_aetatis_en.html
11. Martin J. O'Connor, *Pontifical Council of Social Communications, Communio et Progressio* (May 23, 1971). Online at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/peccs/documents/rc_pc_peccs_doc_23051971_communio_en.html

Letter to the Editor

I read the observations about the "Nones," in the Winter 2020 bulletin, with great interest. As a member of the Gen X cohort, once referred to as "latchkey kids," as well as having intellectual interests in both theology and technology, I'd like to add three short observations of my own.



First, while as ITEST members we are naturally concerned about reductionist scientism among the Nones, we might focus our expertise more specifically on countering the "technocratic paradigm" of which Pope Francis warns, a generalization of modern science's instrumental reason toward domination in human relations.

Second, motivation must precede learning, so if the Nones re-engage the Church and culture, it will initially be at a fairly low level of intellectual complexity for most of them. Because human reason can most fundamentally assent to the existence of God and dignity of persons, I therefore recommend training our lay Church members to engage the Nones with simple, compelling arguments primarily against

atheism and materialism (in both its ontological and consumerist senses).

My third observation is that the Nones' apathy in regard to religious practice is ironically matched with extraordinary energy in charitable pursuits. Introducing the Nones to the Church through virtuous action in charity and justice, inspired by the Beatitudes, is perhaps the most powerful means of whetting their appetite for a more intimate experience of Christ. In the particular case of science enthusiasts, for example, parishes or dioceses might sponsor groups who collaborate in discernment, selection, and implementation of virtuous ends for research and technological applications.

—Christopher Reilly, MPIA, MA

Editor's Response

I very much agree with your points. Science (or technology) often dominates human relations. This is evident in many settings. One learns best when they are motivated to do so. Charitable pursuits may be the way to motivate the Nones. Certainly, the church has many options for charitable pursuits. It requires people to be involved and organize it.

—Ralph Olliges, PhD

Announcements

Save
the
Date

ITEST Fall Webinar
Human Genome Editing
Wednesday, October 7, 2020

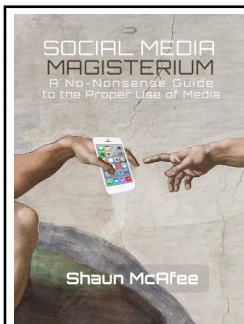
Sister Marysia Weber, RSM, interviews Christopher M. Reilly about his recent article in the *New Oxford Review* entitled “Social Media & the Decline of Human Reason: The Tyranny of Technology in the 21st Century”. Listen to the interview at <https://www.spreaker.com/episode/24719307>

Please enjoy this article from *Science News* by Tina Hesman Saey, a credible writer with a higher science degree. **Coronavirus is most contagious before and during the first week of symptoms**

<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/coronavirus-most-contagious-before-during-first-week-symptoms>

Check out the *COVID19 and Man's Continued Desire for God* webinar, on demand now at

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“Hope in the Time of the Lenten “Corona Virus” Social Media Comes to our Aid

by Sister Marianne Postiglione, RSM, Senior Editor

(The title above is a play on Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s book “Love in the Time of Cholera”)

Since we were children, most of us have had the luxury of choosing our own sacrifices for Lent. Remember the tin box we diligently filled with candy saved and stored away until Easter Morning?

Recently that has all changed; we now have our “sacrifices” chosen for us. Yet, don’t despair! In this era of the corona virus, social media has come to our aid. While it is true that we may find the grocery store shelves yawningly empty of milk, bread, butter, paper towels and tissue, most of us – as the bathroom scale testifies—are not yet starving. (By the way, yogurt is still plentiful, at least in New England.) This issue of the bulletin deals with Social Media: the marvels versus the addictions, the silences versus the noises and finally, the individual versus the community.

What does Lent (or love) have to do with it? Yesterday morning at our little country parish church, Saint Dominic’s, the pastor told us that it would be the last public Mass until further notice. “Until further notice!” Spine chilling to some! Most of all, for those whose daily Mass nurtures their soul, how does anyone cope? Talk about a desert experience! Do we really want to “quarantine” ourselves in the desert for the remainder of Lent with Jesus while doing without our little “necessities? – the freedom to go wherever and whenever we want, visiting friends, enjoying St. Patrick Day parties. “Until further notice!”

This morning at my usual “retirement schedule” breakfast, I had just finished the readings for the day on my old reliable iPad

mini4. The first reading cited the Prophet, Daniel (3:25, 34-43). In effect it somewhat mirrored what is happening now with the pandemic. Azariah praying, begged the Lord, “Do not deliver us up forever...for those who trust in you cannot be put to shame.” Do we see a connection? I did. Glancing to the right side of the device I saw a YouTube notice that Bishop Barron’s Word on Fire would shortly be streaming the Mass. I immediately clicked on it and participated with 18 other members of the social media “congregation” whose number increased exponentially in the next 20 minutes. For me it was an experience of community, not only “virtual” but real as well.

We are fortunate that in many dioceses around the country, during this “Desert time of the Corona Virus,” Sunday Mass will be available to all those who wish to participate either on their mobile devices or television. The St. Louis archdiocese is one among others, with Archbishop Robert Carlson’s announcement of live streaming of daily Mass and other devotions at the Cathedral Basilica at <http://cathedralstl.org/live/>.

What a blessing! Even though social media at times may be abused through misuse, this time it has served as an avenue of grace and has come to our aid: to relieve the parched throat, to feed the gnawing hunger and to refresh the “drooping spirits” of the faithful. Resurrection is around the corner!

“And now,” with the prophet Daniel, “we follow you with our whole heart.”

Do We Really Need Silence? ^[1]

by Sister Marysia Weber, RSM, DO, MA

Let's first talk about noise. Distractions and interruptions are such a common part of our daily lives. We do not even think of them as excessive noise anymore. There is exterior noise and interior noise. Consider as one example, the exterior and interior noise produced by digital technology. In the minute it takes to read this article, chances are you will pause to check your smartphone, answer a text, switch to your desktop to read an email, or glance at the Facebook message popping up in the corner of your screen.

The increasing frequency of screen time use is having neurobiological and psychological effects on persons across generations. A study by the American Psychological Association (2017) demonstrated that the more people checked their electronic devices, the more they described feeling "stressed out." Studies indicate that those who spend more time on social media, gaming, texting, and video chatting on their phones are more anxious than others who play sports, go outside, attend religious services and interact face-to-face.

What can we do to calm the overstimulated mind and to address effects that media is having on our brains? Research tells us that the healthy human brain relies upon periods of silence. Some benefits include:

- 1) Silence builds the brain. One study looked at the effects of different sounds on the brains of mice. The scientists discovered that when the mice were exposed to two hours of silence per day, they developed new cells in the area of the brain associated with memory, emotion and learning.
- 2) The effect of silence can result in the diminishment of stress. Overstimulation from the sights and sounds of digital devices, for example, activate our stress hormones in the same way that a worrisome event or impending fear might do.
- 3) Silence allows the brain to process information. Our brains need quiet time in order to integrate information effectively. Even when the brain is in a resting mode, it is still working at a mile a minute. When we are sleeping our brains are constructing elaborate dreams and processing the

thoughts and emotions we experienced throughout the day. It is important to give our brains time to do this necessary work.

- 4) Silence facilitates reflection. At the deepest level each person, made in God's image and likeness, needs silence to live in relationship with God and others. When we are actively absorbing information, performing a task or working toward a goal, our energy is focused in an external direction. It is silent reflection that creates a space for our minds to redirect our attention to the Holy Spirit who will guide us toward interior freedom and personal growth.

Cardinal Sarah, in *The Power of Silence* stated that we need to learn to quiet our minds so that we can pray:

Developing a taste for prayer is probably the first and foremost battle of our age. Our world no longer hears God because it is constantly speaking, at a devastating speed and volume, in order to say nothing... Modern civilization does not know how to be quiet.

What are some practical means to help quiet the mind? To purify the memory and imagination? Consider engaging in a media fast. For example, give up using screens for a day. This might be a valuable Lenten practice. Take time to reflect on your experience of a screen-free day. What did you notice? How did your no-screen day compare with a day when you were using screens? What did you notice when you were interacting face-to-face with family, friends and coworkers for a day? What were you able to do because you were not engaged with your screens?

Cardinal Sarah commented that we need silence in order to listen: "I do not mean simply to not interrupt what someone else is saying, but an interior silence....Without silence, God disappears in the noise..." This Lent, let us take time for silence, to quiet our minds to more deeply perceive God who is reaching out to us (CCC#1, 27).

[1] Portions of this article were first printed in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis Office of Sacred Worship Liturgy Notes.

Aquinas on Social Media's Effects on the Soul

by T.J. Burdick

If Thomas Aquinas was alive today, what do you suppose he would think about our use of social media?

I'm a huge Thomas fan. I'm also a big proponent AND critic of tech use when it comes to advancing ourselves spiritually. So, I figured the Angelic Doctor wouldn't mind if I stole his *via negativa* strategy to lay out the arguments of how social media affects the soul.

This was a TON of fun to write.

Aquinas on Social Media's Effect on the Soul Secunda Tertia Pars

Question 91

Article 1. Whether social media is good for the soul

Objection 1. It would seem that social media harms the soul due to its innate temptation toward narcissism on behalf of the soul that uses it. Accounts are opened willfully through the use of one's intellect and posts are curated to provide an audience only the positive actualizations that befit one's progress toward attaining "likes" and "followers."

Objection 2. Such platforms create within one's soul a higher degree of digital connectivity with other users leaving access to real-world communities ignored and, to a certain extent, avoidable. This occurring because the social media user prefers their curated digital communities over the flesh-and-blood connections, partly because of the ease that social media provides them and partly because they lack the social skills to flourish in an actual one-on-one interaction with other human beings.

Objection 3. Further, social media is said to be addictive by nature. Its constantly streaming colors and sounds appeal to the senses and create within the soul a mental dependency which overcomes the agent intellect and produces behavioral addictions based on social cravings and communal acceptance.

Objection 4. Social media is the primary source of communication for human life. Under the guise of being the most efficient, progressive, and easy way to advance ideas, humanity has degraded oration and intercommunicative operations as secondary means to articulating present realities.

On the contrary, It is written "A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks" (Lk. 6:45).

I answer that, social media use and, consequently, those who use it are able to garner from it sufficient meritorious value if governed by the virtues of prudence and temperance. According to Pius VI, "The Church recognizes that these media, if properly utilized, can be of great service to mankind, since they greatly contribute to men's entertainment and instruction as well as to the spread and support of the Kingdom of God," and "the Church recognizes, too, that men can employ these media contrary to the plan of the Creator and to their own loss" (*Inter Mirifica*).

It holds then, that social media can and should be used as a unique tool to advance personal sanctification through the intake and production of content that is suitable to actualize one's state from one potentiality to another of a higher degree. Hence, the use of social media, and by cross-activity with other platforms within the Internet, the soul can grow in knowledge, relationships, and evangelistic zeal when the content is proportioned to advance the souls sanctity.

But, one must be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mat. 10:16) when using such tools. Constant and consistent reflection of conscious can help determine if the soul's current state is in danger of falling into any number of temptations brought upon it by the evil one. Hence, it belongs to the virtues of prudence (II-II q.47) and temperance (II-II q.141) that the soul is able to find use for the digital tools as opposed to having the tools use it.

Reply to Objection 1. Narcissism is a product of a soul who has deprived itself of pure goodness. If social media use is governed by virtuous prudence and temperance, it becomes an act of worship, a means to glorify God in both thought and deed. Such effects are the fruits of a soul who has been given the Divine grace of wisdom and right judgement.

Reply to Objection 2. Love manifests itself in a myriad of ways, but all degrees in which love is given are overshadowed by God, who "is love." If prudence temperance rightly govern social media use, the soul's longing for love, both through digital connectivity and flesh-and-blood interactions, will find their total reality in God. As St. Paul states, their "hearts may be encouraged as they are brought together in love, to have all the richness of fully assured understanding, for the knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:2-3).

Reply to Objection 3. Addiction is caused by a lack of self-control in a soul. Attachment to social media is comparable to attachment to food, drink, lust, etc. Hence, St. Paul encourages "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect" (Rom.12:2). In avoiding sin and pursuing virtue, social media becomes a manned tool of agent intellect and not a dictator of reason.

Reply to Objection 4. As stated in I q.34 a.1, "according to the Philosopher (Peri Herm. i) vocal sound signifies the concept of the intellect. Again the vocal sound proceeds from the signification or the imagination, as stated in De Anima ii, text 90. The vocal sound, which has no signification cannot be called a word: wherefore the exterior vocal sound is called a word from the fact the it signifies the interior concept of the mind." Since vocal words have this apparent reality, the same applies to written words and inferred meanings from pictographics. They can, therefore, be used for the betterment or detriment of one's soul based on whether the mind from which they come is motivated by virtue or by vice.

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Check out the author's website at <https://www.tjburdick.com/>

Screen Addiction: Why You Can't Put that Phone Down

by Sister Marysia Weber, RSM, DO, MA



Have you ever had an irresistible urge to check your texts, social media posts or email updates when your cell phone rings, beeps or buzzes? Is the amount of time spent on your cell phone increasing? Do you text, access social media or open your email account while driving? Do you find yourself mindlessly checking your cell phone many times a day even when you know there is likely nothing new or important to see? What is it about our relationship with our cell phones that makes us want to check-in with it many times a day? Are we aware of how many times we even do so?

A recent survey found that Americans check their phones 47 times a day, and 50% check their phones in the middle the night. 18 to 24-year-olds check their phones 82 times a day, and 75% of them check their phones in the middle of the night.^[1]

What about our youth? How much time are they spending on their devices? Although the estimates vary, the Kaiser family foundation reports that the average 8- to 10-year-old spends almost 8 hours on various digital devices while teenagers spend 11 hours in front of screens.^[2] This is more time than they do anything else, including sleep.

Is this increasing number of hours spent using the cell phone having any effects on our well-being? Research is telling us that the answer to this question is a resounding yes! Excessive screen time is contributing to an increase in anxiety, depression, attention deficit and lower self-esteem, to name a few.^[3] Delays in language development and social skills in young children have also been noted.^[4,5]

For a full treatment of this topic, see my book *Screen Addiction: Why You Can't Put that Phone Down*,

which is divided into seven sections. Section one offers an overview of the psychosocial effects digital media are having on children and adults. Section two considers screen addiction and online gaming and offers several suggestions and resources to address the detrimental effects excessive use of electronic media is having on some people. Section three considers Internet pornography addiction and treatment. Section four focuses on some of the most popular digital applications and websites used by teenagers and what parents need to know in order to provide a safety net for their children. Section five addresses the question, "Is electronic media making us smarter?" Section 6 briefly overviews new research that engages the human genius in creating apps that promote neurocognitive health. A description is provided of the largest government study underway, which will follow children into adulthood to garner a better understanding of the interplay between childhood experiences and screen use. Section 7 describes the neurobiology of joy as an essential ingredient for healthy growth and development. The appendices contain three discussion booklets—one for parents, one for young persons and one for teens with age appropriate questions, tips, suggestions and resources. The booklets may also be downloaded from the publisher, En Route Books and Media, at www.enroutebooksandmedia.com/screenaddiction as stand-alone documents for use by various groups. There is also a link on the website and in the appendices to a 5 ½ minute video vignette on screen addiction to help focus the discussion.

1. Deloitte, 2016 Global Mobile Consumer Survey: US Edition; The market-creating power of mobile, 2016.
2. Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Generation M2: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds, January 2010.
3. Y. J. Kim, H. M. Jang, Y. Lee, D. Lee, D. J. Kim. Effects of Internet and Smartphone Addictions on Depression and Anxiety Based on Propensity Score Matching Analysis. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2018 Apr 25;15(5).
4. H.L. Kirkorian, K. Choi, T. A. Pempek, Toddlers' word learning from contingent and noncontingent video on touch screens. *Child Dev*. 2016;87(2):405–413.
5. Jenny S. Radesky, Dimitri A. Christakis, Increased Screen Time Implications for Early Childhood Development and Behavior *Pediatr Clin N Am* 63 (2016) 827–839.

Continues on page 10

Quotes from the Popes

“No communicated message may ignore the humanity of the person to whom it is addressed, or impose on him a manner of thinking or of living which is in contrast to the dignity that is proper to him; neither should it seek to dissuade him from developing to the utmost the potential which he carries in himself, nor discourage him from affirming his authentic rights, nor impede him from the fulfillment of the duties consequent on those rights.” Pope Paul VI, 10th WSCD

“In the world of today as it is, the instruments of social communications in their many forms - press, cinema, radio, television - are the principal makers of public opinion. Great, then, is the moral responsibility of all those who have these instruments in their employ, or who are the guiding forces behind them. The media of social communications ought to be put

at the service of humanity, and therefore of truth and goodness which constitute humanity's most important and necessary values. Those, therefore, who work professionally in the field of social communications should feel themselves under obligation to form and to make widespread a public opinion which conforms with truth and goodness.” JP II, 20th WCD

“The fundamental ethical principle is this: ‘The human person and the human community are the end and measure of the use of the media of social communication; communication should be by persons to persons for the integral development of persons’ (*Ethics in Communications*, 21).” Pope John Paul II, 39th WCD

“Precisely because contemporary media shape popular culture, they themselves must overcome any temptation to manipulate, especially the young, and instead pursue the desire to form and serve.” Pope Benedict XVI, 40th WCD

Biography of one of this Issue's Editors

Sister Marysia is a Religious Sister of Mercy of Alma, MI. She is a physician, certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology and also completed a fellowship in consultation-liaison psychiatry. She trained at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, MN. She has a Master's degree in Theology from Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana. She practiced psychiatry at her religious institute's multidisciplinary medical clinic, Sacred Heart Mercy Health Care Center in Alma, MI from 1988-2014. She became the Director of the Office of Consecrated Life for the Archdiocese of Saint Louis in 2014 and is adjunct clinical instructor at Washington University School of Medicine in the Department of Psychiatry. Sister Marysia has published two books through En Route Books and Media, entitled *The Art of Accompaniment: Practical Steps for the Seminary Formator* (2018) (<http://enroutebooksandmedia.com/artofaccompaniment/>) and *Screen Addiction: Why You Can't Put that Phone Down* (2019) (www.enroutebooksandmedia.com/screenaddiction/).



Sister Marysia Weber,
RSM, DO, MA

“Ponderables” in Faith and Technology by Father Robert Brungs, SJ

(Summer 1998 Volume 29, No. 3)

“The more I thought about a phrase quoted from a paper* [given at an ITEST conference] ‘the vastly enhanced power at man’s disposal to affect his natural and social environment’ – the clearer it seemed that technology, allied with science is both humanity’s glory and worst fear. In a real way, technology is the human response to original sin: ‘With sweat on your brow shall you eat your bread until you return to the soil as you were taken from it.’ There is no technology that does not in some way require human ‘sweat’. Nature’s harmonious link to mankind, wished for by the Creator, has been seriously disrupted by sin.

“Yet, all is not lost. Man’s fascination with making things is at once a response to God and an occasion of hubris and further sin. The more we make and the ‘better’ our life becomes the more we are tempted to ‘go it alone’ We don’t clearly see the need for God in our lives and in our aspirations. So the making of new things can and does become freighted with our own sinfulness. Yet redemption is promised both to the individual and to the community. God has so arranged it that perhaps even despite ourselves our technological urge moves us closer to Him.”

*The article referred to is “Saint Prometheus: Does Technology Have a Religion” by Dr. Ton Meijknecht.



“I would like to devote this year’s Message to the theme of storytelling, because I believe that, so as not to lose our bearings, we need to make our own the truth contained in good stories. Stories that build up, not tear down; stories that help us rediscover our roots and the strength needed to move forward together. Amid the cacophony of voices and messages that surround us, we need a human story that can speak of ourselves and of the beauty all around us. A narrative that can regard our world and its hap-

penings with a tender gaze. A narrative that can tell us that we are part of a living and interconnected tapestry. A narrative that can reveal the interweaving of the threads which connect us to one another.”

Pope Francis, ““That you may tell your children and grandchildren’ (Ex 10:2),” Message for 54th World Communications Day (January 24, 2020), available at http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/communications/documents/papa-francesco_20200124_messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html

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An Invitation to ITEST Members

by Dr. Robert Slocum, Richardson, Texas

I was drawn to ITEST many years ago through my chosen career in Engineering Physics that followed a path through Texas Instruments, graduate schools and on to found small businesses in defense contracting and oil exploration along with my involvement in the ministry of the laity. Along the way the one question that continually gives balance and



5D BIBLE
STUDY

purpose to my life is: What shape does my obedience to Christ take

in this High-Tech World and the Church where God has placed me today? I encourage people of faith to find their answers to this question as I seek out effective methods for equipping lay men and women for effective ministry both in the *Church Gathered* and the *Church Scattered*. One of my most helpful tools for answering this question concerning discipleship in daily work is a Scripture study process that challenges me to examine my life issues from the perspective of Scripture. For nearly three decades I have been personally involved with an evolving Scripture study process now branded the 5D Bible Study, a lay-led Bible Study based on five shared spiritual disciplines. This simple method is the most effective Scripture study method I have seen for facing the issues of discipleship in daily work.

I want to extend an invitation to ITEST members to consider participating in a 5D Bible Study. Recently people both inside and outside the 5D studies have come to recognize the

effectiveness of the simple 5D study process for developing students who are effective lay leaders and disciples in the Church and in the world. But, my enthusiastic 5D students warned me: “If they don’t see it, they won’t get it”. Fortunately Brad Smith, President of Bakke Graduate University (BGU), captured the introduction to 5D on four short introductory videos (less than four minutes each) which you can view at the new 5D website found at:

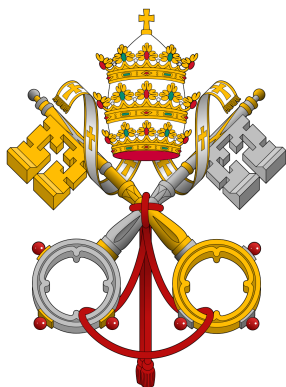
www.5dbiblestudy.com

So, if what you see appeals to you, I invite you to consider participating in a ‘pilot project’ by forming a 1-semester 5D Bible Study. To help you with your decision, you can view the six training videos on the 5D website by clicking **CURRENT MEMBERS** (top of page) and entering **5dmembers** in the password protected window. The study can take place in a congregation or parish setting or in a stand-alone office or home setting. Because all willing students are encouraged to teach one Scripture lesson per semester, the opportunity to relate the Scripture of the week to issues of the day is often transformational when discussed in the weekly small group. We want to encourage Pilot Project 5D Studies before opening the 5D website to the public, so there is no charge for use of this material. Your questions about the 5D Bible Study and available resources including the 5D Bible Study Handbook, a FAQ 5D Start-up Guide and distance coaching can be answered by calling us at (469) 444-0588, or sending us an email at info@5dbiblestudy.com.

From the Magisterium

“Those very remarkable technical inventions which are the boast of the men of our generation, though they spring from human intelligence and industry, are nevertheless the gifts of God, Our Creator, from Whom all good gifts proceed: for He has not only brought forth creatures, but sustains and fosters them once created.” - *Miranda Prorsus* (1957)

“The Church recognizes that these media, if properly utilized, can be of great service to mankind, since they greatly contribute to men's entertainment and instruction as well as to the spread and support of the Kingdom of God. The Church recognizes, too, that men can employ these media contrary to the plan of the Creator and to their own loss.” - *Inter Mirifica* (1963)



The Emblem of the Papacy,
Courtesy of Wikimedia

“It is . . . an inherent right of the Church to have at its disposal and to employ any of these media insofar as they are necessary or useful for the instruction of Christians and all its efforts for the welfare of souls. It is the duty of Pastors to instruct and guide the faithful so that they, with the help of these same media, may further the salvation and perfection of themselves and of the entire human family.” - *Inter Mirifica* (1963)

“The media of social communication can contribute a great deal to human unity. If, however, men's minds and hearts are ill disposed, if good will is not there, this outpouring of technology may produce an opposite effect so that there is less understanding and more discord and, as a result, evils are multiplied.” - *Communio et Progressio* (1971)

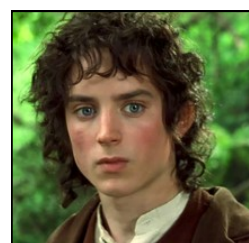
“The Church sees these media as ‘gifts of God’ which, in accordance with His providential design, unite men in brotherhood and so help them to cooperate with His plan for their salvation.” - *Communio et Progressio* (1971)

“Every episcopal conference and diocese should therefore develop an integrated pastoral plan for communications, preferably in consultation with representatives of international and national Catholic communications organizations and with local media professionals.” - *Aetatis Novae* (1992)

“Priests, deacons, religious, and lay pastoral workers should have media education to increase their understanding of the impact of social communications on individuals and society and help them acquire a manner of communicating that speaks to the sensibilities and interests of people in a media culture. Today this clearly includes training regarding the Internet,

including how to use it in their work.” - “Church and Internet” (2002)

“Social networks are the result of human interaction, but for their part they also reshape the dynamics of communication which builds relationships: a considered understanding of this environment is therefore the prerequisite for a significant presence there.” - Pope Benedict XVI, 47th WCD (2013)



Courtesy of Wikimedia

Our Response to the Call to Engage in the Use of Social Media

Frodo: “I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.”

Gandalf: “So do all who come to see such times. But that is not for them to decide. All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given to us.”



“If a family uses the Net to be more connected, to then meet at table and look into each other's eyes, then it is a resource. If a Church community coordinates its activity through the net-work, and then

celebrates the Eucharist together, then it is a resource. If the Net becomes an opportunity to share stories and experiences of beauty or suffering that are physically distant from us, in order to pray together and together seek out the good to rediscover what unites us, then it is a resource.” (Pope Francis, 53rd WCD)

Special Notice!

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, for everyone's safety, we have decided to offer the Shroud of Turin presentation as a **webinar-only** event. This webinar will be held on Saturday, April 25 and registration is still open at www.archstl.org/turin. We hope you will be able to join us for this interesting discussion. This event is free for ITEST Members!