A Resource for Parish & Home School Catechists

Made in the Image and Likeness of God

-Genesis 1:26-27



"One must so dispose the mind of pupils that they do not lose the conviction that our chief work is the pleasing of God, and that learning is a secondary quality which is good only during the present life. That is why it should not at all be placed so high and in such an attractive form that it will occupy all one's attention and absorb all one's concerns."

St. Theophane the Recluse
(1815-1894)

Introduction

Glory to Jesus Christ! 10/2026

Dear Catechists and Parents,

The title page for every teacher's manual in the God With Us curriculum begins with the following words:

> "Catechesis is the work of the Church, a sharing in the teaching mission of the Body of Christ. Catechetical materials, iconography, liturgical chant etc., strives to speak of the Tradition of the Byzantine Catholic Church. The individual's insights, perception, and experiences become significant in that they personalize the Tradition and give witness to it in our contemporary world."

As we begin a new catechetical year 2026-2027, and in light of rapidly developing technology, it is a good time to reflect on Eastern Christian Formation in contemporary times.

Social media is very much a part of the Digital Domain. The students in front of you regardless of their age find themselves saturated in a web of confusion, trying to discern the good and bad in technology. As Catechists we must help them find Truth, Beauty and Goodness as they navigate the world of technology. "Synthetic intelligence is the new baseline for Generation Alpha, those born between the years, 2010-2025. They are the first humans to grow up in a world where synthetic intelligence is always awake, processing and ready to mediate their cognitive tasks. Their greatest challenge will be learning to disconnect from the machine and seek truth for themselves." (Sebastian Barros)

The following are a few insights to connect with your ECF lessons. At the end of this handout you will find several websites for more information on Artificial Intelligence and Faith.

Talking to Children About Al

- Teach children that Al is a tool, not a person or a brain.
- Human intelligence and souls are created by God. Al is a computer program.
- Al copies how we speak, but does not know what is right or wrong.
- It cannot feel love or care for you. Chat GPT is not a friend. It is a machine.
- It does not think and only repeats what it learned.
- Real wisdom comes from God. Human gifts like empathy, creativity, and the ability to love are unique, special and God-given.
- Al can help you with your homework but you cannot allow it to do your own thinking.
- It cannot make decisions for you. You have a brain and a conscience to do that.
- Never share personal information. It can repeat what you have said and has the potential to bring harm to yourself. (This physical network of cables and hardware can "go rogue", taking action beyond the task it was asked to perform. It is even capable of malicious activity such as cyber attacks, surveillance and research that could lead to biological weapons.)
- It can mimic a prayer but it cannot mean it. It can tell you about the theology of the Holy Eucharist, but it cannot receive the Holy Eucharist. Only you can.
- It can help you to examine your conscience but cannot forgive your sins.

As Catechists and parents it is important to help our youth navigate the balance between technological advancement and moral responsibility. We must look at Al as a tool for education that is in harmony with the Church's mission. Al is capable of giving an instant, flawless two second answer to an ethical question. The data is received but the learning value is in the critical thinking process. Truth cannot be downloaded. The only way to find it is to search, and that search demands risks, struggles and the presence of a human soul. In that search, grace enters and the freedom to choose what is good.

The massive collection of data given to us by Al is not all that bad. How it is used can make it good or bad. As long as this technology can serve humanity, it is good. The Catholic Church is addressing Al because it is a "social" technology and the Catholic Church has a lot to say about Catholic Social Teaching. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops has recently created a Task Force on Preserving Human Dignity in the age of Artificial Intelligence. This Task Force is a response to Pope Leo XIV's urging in his encyclical ***Magnifica Humanitas*** to "build forms of cooperation and cultivate a culture of shared responsibility" concerning the technology. "We will listen to Silicon Valley, but we will not outsource our understanding of the human person to it." (Bishop Michael Olson, Diocese of Fort Worth, Texas.)

In conclusion, the fundamental message is, AI is a work of human ingenuity to serve human persons. When used the right way, it can be part of the unfolding of God's gifts in creation. When misused, it threatens what makes us human.

Soon we will begin the Philip's Fast in preparation for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord God and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Sunday before the Nativity is called "Sunday of The Holy Ancestors." In the Kontakion for that Sunday and in the Ambon Prayer recited by the priest at the end of Divine Liturgy we are reminded of the three blessed youths in the fiery furnace. (Daniel 3: 1-97) They were willing to die rather than to worship the golden statue created by human hands. "You did not worship a man-made image, O thrice-blessed youths. You armed yourself with uncreated divinity. You were glorified in trial by fire. Withstanding the flames, you stood and called out: Hasten, O compassionate God, and hurry to help us in your mercy. For you can do whatever you will." (*The Divine Liturgies of Our Holy Fathers John Chrysostom and Basil the Great. Byzantine Catholic Metropolitan Church Sui Juris of Pittsburgh, USA, 2006.)* Acquaint your students and children with this wonderful and inspiring Old Testament story. Equip them with the tools to recognize the difference between the human and the divine.

And so we pray:

Lord, Our God, let us be mindful of the blessings and challenges that technology brings and strive to use it in a way that honors You and contributes to the well-being of all creation. As parents and religious educators, provide us with the tools and knowledge to inspire a love of learning in the digital age while fostering critical thinking and discernment. Help us to listen to the ear of the heart in making decisions that will guide us in recognizing what is good, true and worthy of the human person. For You are holy always, now and ever and forever. Amen

Website Resources:

https://www.humandevelopment.va/en/magnifica-humanitas/risorse/kit-pastorale.html

https://aleteia.org/2026/03/23/pope-to-parents-dont-let-kids-think-chatbots-are-friends/

https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2026-06/magnifica-humanitas-taylor-black-microsoft-ai-startup-allocator.html

https://www.acutisai.com/articles/busy-doing-nothing-how-technology-steals-real-leisure

https://www.ewtnnews.com/vatican/pope-leo-xiv-use-ai-prudently-because-it-can-project-an-unreal-world

https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2024-01/pope-message-world-day-social-communications-ai.html

https://www.intrust.org/in-trust-magazine/summer-2026/how-to-be-human-in-an-age-of-ai

https://www.usccb.org/artificial-intelligence