

Keynote Speaker: Church Has to Be in Digital Space

LARRY HANSON
CATHOLIC HERALD STAFF

Andrea Chavez-Kopp had told her sons and nephew to go outside and play during a recent visit. As the keynote speaker at G3: Gigs Geeks & God at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish on Thursday, Jan. 9, Chavez-Kopp then showed a slide showing what that meant to those three youths.

The photo showed the trio of boys sitting on a porch swing with their cell phones in front of their faces.

"If we know that 95 percent of our youth are walking around with a mobile device in their pocket, how can we not be in this space," said Chavez-Kopp, the director of advancement and business development for the National Catholic Education Association. "Just the concept of play is completely different now."

Her address was on Missionary Discipleship in a Digital World, and she noted how ahead of the curve the Archdiocese of Milwaukee is for putting on the annual conference, which shares digital tips and strategies with parish

employees through breakout sessions and general talks at a day-long event.

This was the 10th installment of the G3 event. The first was held Jan. 6, 2011, and was billed as sort of a "technology and ministry fair for catechetical leaders" in response to questions on how to implement technology in various parishes and ministries.

"By 2013, we realized that the event needed to be broader in scope," said Gary Pokorny, the director of the archdiocese's office of catechesis. "The event in 2014 began including workshops for parish business managers, pastors, and parish council members, addressing technology planning, affordability, and parish social media strategies. Having people in diverse roles coming together created a new synergy."

And just like the apps on your own cell phone, the work of updating Church leaders never seems to end.

"It seems to meet a need," Pokorny said. "G3 receives very positive feedback. But also, the technology landscape keeps changing. It demands ongoing discernment and continuing education."

Chavez-Kopp, who related her experience teaching in a sixth-grade classroom that had just received a shipment of iPads but no real way to support them, said it would be beneficial for parishes to involve the young in helping set up technology.

"We're planning for a Church of tomorrow, rather than a Church of yesterday," she said. "Just like Jesus, we have to meet people where they are, and we know young people are in digital spaces. If we are not looking at this as an opportunity for evangelization, we're really missing out on a big calling as missionary disciples."

Chavez-Kopp addressed some of the concerns that parents have about their



▲ Andrea Chavez-Kopp was the keynote speaker Jan. 10 at the G3: Gigs Geeks & God event at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. (Photo by Larry Hanson)

children using screens and devices and offered tips on how to manage it, including communication, knowing your child, setting boundaries and paying attention to how they are using technology.

"It turns out if your kid is not getting any screen time, there are actually social effects that are negative," Chavez-Kopp said. "You can do a disservice by cutting them off completely from technology. They have to find that just right zone."

Ultimately, social media is a marketing tool and the Church is in the business of evangelizing and spreading the message of Jesus. Those messages need to have reach, resonance and relevance, and evoke a reaction in the target audience.

"We are handing the Church over to them, and I want young people to be excited to take over our ministries," Chavez-Kopp said.

Celebration Time



▲ Fr. Curt Frederick (back left) and Bishop Richard J. Sklba look on as Archbishop Jerome E. ListECKI cuts a cake celebrating his 10th anniversary as archbishop on Monday, Jan. 6, at the Mary Mother of the Church Pastoral Center. Archbishop ListECKI was installed as Archbishop of Milwaukee on Jan. 4, 2010. (Submitted photo)

Digital World Can Enhance Our Human Dignity

LARRY HANSON
CATHOLIC HERALD STAFF

Once, Corrie Christiaansen had a 3-year-old girl ask her before recess if she was beautiful.

Of course, Christiaansen, the associate director of student ministries at St. Charles Parish in Hartland, assured the little girl that she was.

“No matter what, God created you beautifully and wonderfully,” Christiaansen recalls telling her. “That’s the way it’s meant to be.”

However, the underlying question — Am I (fill in the blank) enough — gets to the core of our human dignity, no matter whether the word that goes in between is beautiful, intelligent, smart, strong, holy or whatever.

“We all ask questions like that,” Christiaansen said. “We always ask ourselves in different ways.”

It’s no secret that the internet and social media can be used for good or bad intentions.

During the 10th annual G3: Gigs Geeks & God conference Thursday, Jan. 9,

at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Milwaukee, Christiaansen discussed how technology has both helped and hurt people, and how they view human dignity.

Christiaansen reminded the little girl that she was created in the image and likeness of God, and that is a wonderful and special thing.

“We have to remember that ourselves, sometimes, before we share that with others,” she said.

When she explains dignity to the young people she works with (now mostly middle schoolers), Christiaansen said she uses words like respect, value and worth.

“What makes dignity so unique is that’s intrinsic, meaning it’s automatic, it’s natural, it’s automatically connected to dignity,” she said. “It’s not something bought or earned. I’m not saying to God, ‘I’m going to slip you \$20 and then I’m going to have worth, then I’m going to



▲ Corrie Christiaansen.
(Submitted photo)

have dignity.’ It doesn’t work like that. It’s automatic because we’re God’s children.”

Many of the dangers and ill effects of the internet and social media are well-known, including pornography, human trafficking, addiction, trolling, bullying, stunted interactions, miscommunication and objectification.

“(The statistics on pornography are) so sad,” Christiaansen said. “It’s changing the way we look at human dignity.”

However, just like the wheel thousands of years ago, technology throughout the centuries has had its benefits — including digital technology — such as convenience and speed.

Christiaansen shared a quote from Freeman Dyson talking about technology.

“Technology is a gift of God,” Dyson said. “After the gift of life, it is perhaps the greatest of God’s gifts. It is the mother of civilizations, of arts and of sciences.”

While there are evils in the online world, and things that can affect our human dignity in a negative way, there are

many positives, as well. Some of those include spreading information, such as the pro-life message, entertainment, communication, support, resources and justice.

Christiaansen said it is crucial to determine how the technology or platform will be good or bad for a certain ministry, and what is the intended audience.

She noted that a lot of parents are on Facebook, so that’s one way of connecting to them, while younger people are on different apps, such as Instagram.

“One great way of promoting human dignity is knowing the people you serve and building relationships,” Christiaansen said. “All ministry is relational at some level, whether it’s your presence in real life or online presence.”

Some of the resources that were shared to learn more about human dignity were the Bible (specifically Genesis 1, Psalm 139), Catechism of the Catholic Church #2354, Catholic Charities, Theology of the Body, Fight the New Drug, the Reclaim app and Live Action (pro-life media).

Former Herald Associate Editor Horn Dies

KAREN MAHONEY
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

Eugene (Gene) C. Horn, former associate editor at the Milwaukee Catholic Herald, died Dec. 30, at the age of 90. He retired from his position as editor in 1998, after 38 years. He continued to write the monthly “Out and About” column in the Mature Lifestyles Section throughout much of his retirement.

The newspaper business seemed to be in Horn’s DNA from an early age.

He began his career delivering the Milwaukee Sentinel Newspaper at age 12; from there, the Cudahy native graduated to delivering the Milwaukee Journal, which offered a larger route and better pay. He continued in the newspaper business through his freshman year in high school.



▲ Gene Horn. (File photo)

Drafted in the Army in 1951, Horn served two years and enrolled in the College of Journalism at Marquette University. While in his junior year, Horn returned to the newspaper business, though, this time writing the news rather than delivering it. He served part-time for the Milwaukee Journal’s Sunday radio/TV section, where he interviewed celebrities such as Robert Mitchum, Jimmy Stewart and June Allyson.

Horn graduated in 1955 with a degree in

journalism from Marquette. He met his late wife, Mildred Schneider, a year later and the two were married in August 1959. Horn worked as a journalist for the Milwaukee Sentinel for five years. For a short time, he worked for International Harvester as a public relations assistant before beginning his career at the Catholic Herald.

Horn worked with the Milwaukee Press Club Hall of Fame member

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Technology Can Enhance Development, as Long as it's Safe

CALLIE GAY
SPECIAL TO THE CATHOLIC HERALD

Andrea Chavez-Kopp, who spent the beginning of her career as a Catholic educator, and later in parish ministry, knows first-hand the impact of technology on today's youth as they learn to live and interact with the world using ever-changing digital media.

Following her keynote address at G3: Gigs Geeks & God on Thursday, Jan. 9, at Our Lady of Lourdes, she delved deeper in her workshop presentation, "Accompanying Youth in a Digital World." The director of advancement and business development for the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) spoke to educators who were eager to find ways they could engage with their students using online tools in the classroom and youth ministry settings to better meet today's youth where they are.

Chavez-Kopp believes technology can be used as a means for spiritual development in the faith lives of today's teens and pre-teens as long as there is an ever-present emphasis on safety. With new apps being developed daily and current popular websites constantly changing, she said that it can feel at times overwhelming for parents and teachers to try to stay on top of it and make sure their children are safe.

In the classroom, she suggests curation for younger students. "For example, give them 10 safe websites to search for saints," she said. "They'll be getting comfortable with technology but you've also created a safe place for them."

At home, she recommended websites like Bark, where parents can monitor their children's text messaging, apps, email and online activity.

"It's important that all of us take this seriously," she said. "Letting children have unmonitored access online is one



▲ Andrea Chavez-Kopp discussed "Accompanying Youth in a Digital World" on Jan. 9. (Photo by Callie Gay)

of the most harmful oversights modern-day parents make."

Aside from the dangers of bullying, and pornography, Chavez-Kopp pointed out human trafficking doesn't look like men in vans snatching children from the playground anymore. These days, there is a very real threat of human trafficking but it takes place almost completely online, hidden in apps almost every teenager uses or has access to. Traffickers befriend children acting as children themselves and coerce them into sending compromising pictures that are later used as threats, all right under parents' and teachers' noses.

"There are amazingly good things that can come from all we have access to online," Chavez-Kopp said. "But the threats are real and persistent, and we have to use this tool with caution." She said that bringing the Internet into classrooms and walking alongside students as they develop internet literacy will not only enhance the learning environment but will teach parents and teachers what's popular among students and open a dialogue

about responsible usage.

"A very real skill we as educators want to build is discernment," Chavez-Kopp said. Not only discernment about what is safe, or when students should notify an adult that there might be a problem, but also discernment about what is true and what is false, and how teachers can help develop the critical thinking skills they'll need to carry them through the rest of their lives.

"No one knows how to disagree anymore," she said, pointing out her own online usage. "When I look at something like missionary discipleship and how we try to attract people to our faith in the digital world, if I wasn't a Catholic and I was reading the things we're saying to each other online, it would not attract me to our faith."

She said teaching kids how to disagree respectfully in a classroom setting where a teacher can help build skills of dialogue are so important to the formation of the whole child and also great Catechesis. "We can teach them what is true, and guide them towards the faith," she said.

Chavez-Kopp asked listeners how they would deal with students coming to them with wrong information and how they would help them figure out what the truth is without instructing them what to think. She offered examples of bringing stories about the Catholic Church from mainstream media into the classroom to evaluate and how to help them spot bias.

"Teach them how to respectfully disagree," she said. "That's a real-world skill they need to exercise, especially as they grow older and we trust them to be online more and more without us."

One of her tools was a worksheet checklist for students to evaluate how they determine if an article they've found online is true. On it, she asked questions like: Is it current? Is it reliable? Is it accurate? What is the purpose of it? What is the point of view?

She suggested giving students the worksheet and letting them go through a piece of online news to find out if it's reliable or if it's something they're trying to be sold.

"Let them explore it," she said. "Look at things from different perspectives and have them flex their muscles." She added that it's a valuable way for teachers to tangibly show their students that just because something appears one way, doesn't mean it is.

She hoped the educators would remind their students often there's a higher expectation online for people of faith, and when we're online we portray all Catholics, and we can do that for the glory of God, or not.

"Everything we do is for the children we teach," she said, "and we must remember that the ultimate goal for us as educators or parents is to help protect and guide these sacred hearts to Christ in heaven."