

Technology Can Enhance Celebration of Mass

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When Kim Mandelkow, the director of the office for worship of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, gave her workshop on “Enhancing liturgy in a digital age” on Thursday, Jan. 10 at the Gigs, Geeks & God (G3) Conference at Our Lady of Lourdes in Milwaukee, she had one clear message for the liturgical ministers in attendance.

“Intentionality is huge,” she said.

That message came at the end of a conversation about putting up screens in worship spaces. The prevailing sentiment Mandelkow was trying to convey was not one of whether the screens were good or bad for a specific parish, but to make sure thought has been put into the whys and hows of using screens if a parish decides to install them.

If a parish does decide to install screens, there are several uses that can benefit parishioners, such as videos, closed-circuit broadcasts, translations, a participation aid (song lyrics, etc.), art and environment, a homily aid and an interactive aid.

However, there are some drawbacks, especially if they conflict with a Catholic’s ability to concentrate on the mysteries being celebrated. The focus becomes less on the liturgy and more on the technology.

“Technology is playing an increasing role in worship and communal prayer,” Mandelkow said. “Its use can enhance the ability of the assembly to be more fully, consciously and actively engaged. But when technology is used, it also means that the focus of the liturgy moves. It naturally shifts to what’s taking place on the screen.”

Some questions to consider before making the investment of time and



▲ Kim Mandelkow, the director of the office for worship for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, talked about enhancing liturgy in a digital age during the Gigs, Geeks & God conference Jan. 10 at Our Lady of Lourdes.

talent into technological advances include: Will the frequency and use of this technology in your church setting justify the cost of the equipment? Are there trained parishioners and staff able and willing to set up and use the equipment? Will the use of this technology during Mass distract from where the action is taking place? Is the design of the church such that this technology distracts from the aesthetics of the building? Will print, video or a combination of these help parishioners to more consciously, actively and fully participate in the liturgy? If your parish projects hymns or religious art, are copyright requirements met?

“Nothing should distract from the action of the liturgy,” Mandelkow said. “Liturgy is our source and our summit.”

However, there are ways that the use of technology can be beneficial during the liturgy.

Those include multi-lingual use for diverse parishes and as an aid during the Mass.

Mandelkow gave an example while reciting Luke 15: 4-7. First, she spoke the verses with just the reference on the screen she was using. The second time she read it, the words to the verse were on the screen. Attendees of the conference drifted to the words on the

screen and weren’t able to engage with her as she recited the reading.

However, one liturgical minister in attendance said her parish projected the day’s readings on the screen before Mass so parishioners could reflect on them prior to the start of the liturgy.

“Technology has come into play in our Church today,” Mandelkow said.

Our current digital age is not the only time in the Church’s history where the convergence of technology and worship was such a prominent discussion point.

On Nov. 22, 1963, at the second session of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), bishops from around the world voted 2,147-4 to approve *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the new constitution for the liturgy of the Church. It was one of the most monumental reforms of Vatican II.

“Undoubtedly, it was monumental in the life of the Church,” Mandelkow said. “It was a vote that changed the Church forever. Bishops from around the world rejoiced as the celebration began. They anticipated this document to be monumental and positive in the life of the Praying Church.”

However, President John F. Kennedy, the first and, to-date, only Catholic president of the United States, was assassinated hours later that same day in Dallas, Texas. While the Church was making a fundamental shift into the modern era, viewers at home were learning of Kennedy’s death by the state-of-the-art technology of the day: television.

For those with further questions, the office for worship has a six-page PDF on guidelines for the use of technology. Just search for the office for worship on archmil.org.