

CATHOLIC HERALD



Use of Media, Devices Should Be Strategic

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CATHOLIC HERALD STAFF

Even nuns can get addicted to their cellphones.

Just ask Sr. Helena Burns.

Holding up her cellphone, she asked, “For how many of you has this gotten old? This doesn’t bring me joy. People bring me joy. Creation brings me joy. As B. B. King said, “The thrill is gone.”

During her keynote speech at the Gigs, Geeks & God (G3) conference Thursday, Jan. 10, at Our Lady of Lourdes, Sr. Burns had an encouraging message about the use of media despite some negative perceptions.

“We can change the way we’re using media,” she said. “If there’s something we need to fix, let’s fix it.”

She said in her talk, “Using Media Humanly,” that we need a plan and a strategy on using media, and that we can choose how we use it. She said events like the G3 are beneficial, because they allow the faithful an opportunity to reflect.

► **READ MORE PAGE 19**

▲ *The annual Gathering for Life in Kenosha will take place from 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 19. See story on Page 12. (Submitted photo)*

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► **PAGE 4**

Respect Life

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► **PAGE 11**

► KEYNOTE, FROM PAGE 1

The self-described former phone addict, a member of the Daughters of St. Paul (committed to conveying God's word through the media), said her journey and relationship with media and devices isn't unusual.

"It can happen to anyone," she said. "I'm a Daughter of St. Paul. How can I possibly go negative on the media?"

With no strategy on using media, Sr. Burns said there are two traps people can fall into — both of which are sub-optimal — going completely negative on media or using it 24/7 with no thought or reflection on how we are using it.

Often, the lines between personal and professional lives are blurred. She noted sometimes she has been less than holy ("If an 8-year-old boy finds it funny, I find it funny.") and some of her younger sisters have reported her to the higher-ups in the order.



▲ Sr. Helena Burns was the keynote speaker at the Gigs, Geeks & God Conference.

"Snitches get stitches," she joked in her sing-song voice, but was leading to a bigger point.

"If we have a plan and stick to it, we can develop that transparency that the saints had, where they were the same person everywhere they were," Sr. Burns said. "They treated everyone well, no matter who they were with."

She added that the way one uses media personally will speak the Gospel more loudly than how they use media professionally.

Being less than human in the use of media could lead one to become a virtual human, rude, isolated, robotic, addicted, obsessed, distracted, interrupted or lazy. "If I'm using media humanly, I'm using it very, very well," she said.

In order to use media more humanly, Sr. Burns said there are three places where there shouldn't be any screens.

She called them "tech-free zones."

Sr. Burns said there shouldn't be screens at meals, Mass or in the master bedroom of married couples, the "Three M's."

She shared the story of a young girl who told her that she started going to her grandmother's house after school, because her mother looked at her. Sometimes, the ever-present ability to access media can make people drift from an authentic human connection, even with the ones they love the most.

A reliance on technology can interfere with the building of relationships.

"We literally have the world in our hands right now, and that can be very hard to resist," Sr. Burns said. "The question is, what kind of world do we want to live in?"

The answer to that is more pressing now than ever.

"We want to make sure we're not transforming ourselves into something that's not less than what God made us," she said. "You have only one life. Do you want to spend it like this (putting her face down in the phone)?"



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