Impact of Media on Marriage and Family:

Using Technology in a Christian Way(a)

In his Epistle to Timothy, St. Paul says, *"Let no one have contempt for your youth, but set an example for those who believe, in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity."*(1Timothy 4:12) Our actions, words, and lifestyle are all essential parts of living the true Christian life. The power of all these digital devices provides us with an almost unprecedented opportunity to follow St. Paul's words.

Our use of technology should be consistent with our Christian faith. Our digital communications and the content we create and share should all be positive examples to others. That isn't always the case. Sometimes, we may use the gift of technology—accidentally or on purpose—in inappropriate ways. As Christians, we need a guideline to help us determine if our intended actions are consistent with or run contrary to our faith.

Of course, thinking about technology in this way might seem a bit strange. We live, after all, in the nation of "why not?" We love the new and get excited about the many things that we stand to gain with each new gadget. Rarely do we stop to consider whether or not we really need to check out that new web site or buy that new device. After all, "why not?"

Before engaging in any online behavior, we would do well to change our perspective by considering several questions:

   1) **Why am I engaging in this activity? Is it spiritually beneficial to me or another person?**
   2) **Will my activities directly or indirectly hurt, harm, or embarrass another person?**
   3) **Would Christ approve of my actions or activities?**

If we cannot answer even one of these questions appropriately then we shouldn't engage in that activity or behavior. As St. Paul said, we should set an example for others. Therefore, let's prayerfully reflect on the power and capabilities gifted to us through these new technologies. May we always use those capabilities with wisdom and discernment for God's glory.

(a)Excerpted from www.faithandsafety.org – a collaboration of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America by NCCW Service Commission, 2014

If You Don't Read Anything Else -Then at Least Read This(a)

Being a parent isn't easy. It can often feel overwhelming. Throw in the Internet, social networks, computers, mobile, and gaming devices and things can often seem impossible. Five things every Catholic should know:

1. Most importantly—the Church cares about you, cares about your children, cares about your family, and cares about digital safety. In fact, we not only care about digital safety, but we also have something to say about it! We want to help you in a way that's simple, straightforward, and practical.
2. Your Christian faith matters. Looking at technology through the eyes of faith is critical. Just because you can access something doesn't mean it's appropriate; and just because something is being used in a certain way doesn't mean that it fits with our Christian faith and values. Any technology we use should help us grow continually in our relationship with God—that's our primary goal!
3. Digital safety is not about spying on your kids or finding out everything they have been doing online. While some oversight of your kids' digital habits is part of responsible parenting, teaching you how to spy on your kids is not the intent. Rather, the intent is to promote healthy dialogue within your family on how to use technology appropriately with tools and resources helpful in protecting your family from unsolicited and unwanted content.
4. No technology, no piece of software, no parental control is ever a substitute for active, involved, and loving parenting. The most effective Internet safety tool is you! In fact, parents are considered the biggest influence on what kids see as appropriate and inappropriate "digital behavior." So get involved! Every gadget, game, and online experience is a starting point for conversation about navigating the digital world. These conversations are fundamental to your kids' formation towards responsible and faithful adulthood. In fact, a 2011 study from the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that parents are more likely to talk with teens about digital safety and behavior than they are to monitor or restrict their kids.[1]
5. Like it or not, it will be impossible to protect kids completely from illicit content or deviant behavior. No matter how much active parenting you do, no matter how many safeguards you might put in place, some kids will still be exposed to inappropriate things. However, when such situations do occur, we strongly encourage you to use them as opportunities for conversation while—above all—providing the appropriate Christ-like love and guidance to your child.
   Internet safety isn't about the right software or service. Rather, real safety in the digital world is all about active, involved, loving parenting. It's a team effort that builds a strong Christian family!

[1] http://pewInternet.org/Reports/2011/Teens-and-social-media/Part-4/Online-safety-and-parent-involvement.aspx

(a)Excerpted from www.faithandsafety.org – a collaboration of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America by NCCW Service Commission, 2014