



For Our Confraternity Readers:

Servus Mariae

“Servus Mariae Nunquam Peribit”

“Servus Mariae” translates as “the servant of Mary” or “the slave of Mary.” This title reflects the spirituality of the Congregation of Mary Immaculate Queen, with whom the Confraternity members are affiliated. That spirit is one of Total Consecration to Jesus through Mary, as taught by St. Louis Marie de Montfort. The column title also reflects the motto of CMRI: *Servus Mariae nunquam peribit* (“The servant of Mary will never perish”).

Spiritual and Physical Dangers of Obsessive Use of Technology

by Rev. Fr. Dominic Radecki, CMRI

We live in a world which revolves around the latest technological devices: phones, tablets and laptops. The tragic part is the fact that it is not only affecting adults in a detrimental way, but it has a devastating effect upon children and youth. Natasha Dow Schull, a professor at MIT, compares the obsession with these items with that of those addicted to gambling in Las Vegas. After interviewing gamblers, Schull explains that “winning isn’t really the point, even the money isn’t really the point. It’s being in the ‘zone.’ They’re so engrossed in the games they’re playing they lose track of time” (*Angelus*, February 2, 2018, Naomi Schaefer Riley, *Parenting With a Wired Child*, pp. 12-15).

“In his book, *Glow Kids: How Screen Addiction is Hijacking our Kids — and How to Break the Trance*, Nicholas Kardaras writes about his experience as a therapist counseling children and teens. He cites research studies from brain scans that suggest tech exposure can ‘alter brain structure...in exactly the same way that drugs can’ (ibid., p. 13). He goes on to say that even the so-called average kid can become hooked on screens along with those who feel adrift and purposeless, or have ADHD and are depressed. A mixture of stress, disconnect, and “the seductively addicting escapism of glowing screens” have resulted in technology addiction.

Apps and games are designed to keep people engaged as much as possible. In an age which lacks self-control in nearly every aspect, the player succumbs to their impulse to keep scrolling. People are exposed to so

much fantasy that they find it difficult to separate it from reality. This is especially true for youth. Games enhance this desire to escape into a fantasy world.

“There is ample evidence that intense social media use is correlated with an increase in anxiety and depression... Research shows that excessive gaming — spending two-thirds or more of free time — is correlated with negative mental health outcomes, including higher incidence of anxiety, depression and substance use” (Caroline Miller, *Is Internet Addiction Real?*, www.childmind.org).

The Environmental Health Trust, a non-profit organization which educates individuals, health professionals and communities about environmental health risks, on Nov. 1, 2011, printed charts showing the increase of brain cancer in individuals in Finland and Norway. In children it can take over 10 years to show signs of development.

Addictive use of mobile phones, according to some developmental psychologists, reveals that adolescents and young adults are more prone to engage in various risk behaviors, while emerging adults (age 18 to late 20s) are more prone to problematic behaviors and substance abuse. They have a higher risk of developing damaging behaviors which include substance use and excessive video game involvement (NCBI Journal of Behavioral Addictions).

“In a 2016 survey by Common Sense Media, half of teenagers said they ‘feel’ they’re addicted to their mobile device. Three quarters of them said they felt compelled to

immediately respond to texts, social media posts and other notifications” (Miller).

It is interesting to note that, while some parents are alarmed at the sheer amount of time their children spend on screens, they often find that they themselves have become quite addicted. Thus for example, a father who tries to limit the time spent on such devices by his children, often finds that he, himself, spends many hours into the night on screen activity, an activity which his children do not fail to notice. Some parents have even allowed the excuse that the child can listen to music to help him get to sleep. What kind of compromise is this? And for whose convenience? Is the battle not worth fighting?

Contemporary smart phones support a myriad of functions, some of which include email and Internet access, short-range wireless communication, gaming, gambling, purchasing, social networking, watching TV shows, photography and pornography. A cell phone opens a whole world of access to your children, most of which is not only detrimental to the proper development of their character, but even worse, can destroy their moral integrity and the life of grace in their soul.

When you give your child a phone or tablet, you are not only changing the information they can access, but you are also changing their habits, personalities and desires. Provision of a cell phone or tablet is not a necessary part of parental obligation to your children — although your children would definitely make you think so.

In a 2017 interview, Bill Gates admitted that the use of smart phones has gone to excess. He said he did not allow his children to have cell phones until they were 14 and then did not allow them to have them at dinner and made sure they were cut off long before bedtime.

The problem worsens when the tablet is placed in the hands of a very small child as a type of “pacifier.” A parishioner shopping in a supermarket noticed a 3-year old sitting in the seat of the shopping cart while the mother was waiting to check out. The parishioner commented to me on how young the child was to be engaged in the game on the tablet, at which he was quite adept. The mother, with some embarrassment, said that after he had seen his third grade sister using one, as it was required by the teacher in the public school which she attended, he wanted one too. The parishioner informed the woman that the teacher cannot require that they do

their work on it and that the mother could go and claim her rights. At that point, the mother merely shrugged her shoulders, indicating that she was fine with the situation.

Sadly, the rare amount of time in which the family may be together finds each doing his/her own thing on smart phones. Personal, face-to-face communication and interaction has become nearly obsolete. In one family, a child was texting his parent who was sitting across the table from him. It is



even the case that when relatives get together for a visit, invariably members pull out their phones for one reason or the other.

Such obsession has not only caused family conflict and division, but has also nearly destroyed creativity and ingenuity. Not long ago, children could create games and entertainment using simple things found in nature or around the house. You might remember making forts out of boxes or a bow and arrow from tree branches.

Now, unless there is a button or a key to click or a tablet to scroll, the child is stymied if asked to go outside and play. When forced to get off their phones, children will usually sit around bored. Used to being superficially engaged with technological devices, they find nothing to do which suits their interest and will eventually flop onto their bed or the couch.

In short, addiction to the smart phone has caused adolescents to push everything else out of their lives. They lack real friendships, real social engagements offline, and usually find their grades dropping in school.

So far we have been talking about the adverse physical and social effects of addiction to technological devices. A far greater danger of this addiction is the detrimental effect it has on the soul because of easy access to immoral and pornographic sites.

The sexual revolution in America was one in which people rebelled against God's laws regarding the proper use of the gift of procreation. In the pursuit of unrestricted sinful pleasure, they glorified sex, and of necessity had to eliminate God along with His laws.

Lust has displaced love and has become the end-all and be-all of personal selfishness and illicit pleasure. Women have become degraded, and so have men's view of them. It is the fault of both.

Women have fallen prey to the lure of clothing manufacturers who have designed more for the incitement of lust than for its main purpose of covering the body. Society has brainwashed women into thinking that their value lies in

their carnal allurements in order to become the desirable object of the lust of men. Children and teens have long been affected by this. Their indecent clothing styles have mimicked those of adult women.

The Roman Empire, when saturated with the usual vices, turned to the perverse. Our society also, which has been saturated with immorality at every turn, has turned to the perverse in search of something different and more exciting. Thus, pornography, even child pornography, has become commonplace, with millions being addicted to it.

Pornography has been proven to be addictive and has the same effect on the brain as drugs. Brain scans show that the changes to a porn addict's brain looks much like those of a heroin addict's brain. Modern technological devices offer easy entry into a sinful world of pornography and perversity.

The links which present videos of bizarre tattooing, piercings and dress, occult music and practices, Satanism, black magic and witchcraft etc. are all the result of the revolt against law, religion, tradition and God. Brutal and savage murders, even of parents and peers, have been the result of such absorption. It is a fact that many satanic crimes are overlooked or underrated and hundreds of cases are never reported.

There is no simple solution for these tragic situations. Naomi Schaefer Riley, a New York-based journalist, writes that "There is no single social media platform that ensures kids are safe and well-adjusted. The only thing that can really affect kids' relationships to technology is seriously curtailing it. Eliminating screen time during the week, limiting it to a couple of hours on the weekend, picking days to be technology-free, putting off the purchase of a phone for a child, ending unsupervised use of technology, postponing or banning the use of social media, monitoring communication on all platforms — these are, unfortunately, the only known ways to keep our kids out of harm's way" (Parenting with a Wired Child, op. cit, p. 15).

Spiritual Aids for Confraternity Members

July

- More souls go to hell for sins of the flesh than any other reason. Practice and promote modesty in dress, especially during the warm summer months.

- Daily extra prayer: Fatima Prayers in reparation to the Blessed Sacrament

- Intention: Pray that our youth may be given the special graces they need to live their holy Faith with strength and conviction amidst the assaults of the world.

- Suggested books for spiritual reading: *All For Jesus* (Faber); *Jacinta, The Flower of Fatima* (Medeiros), *Chastity* (Gerald Kelly, SJ)

August

- "Pray, pray a great deal, and make sacrifices for sinners. Many souls go to hell because there is no one to pray and sacrifice for them," was the message of the August apparition at Fatima.

- Daily extra prayer: Act of Reparation to the Immaculate Heart of Mary

- Intention: Commend our priests in your daily prayers.

- Suggested books for spiritual reading: *Hail, Holy Queen* (Liguori), *Saint Philomena: Powerful with God*, *St. Bernard of Clairvaux*

September

- September is dedicated in a special way to Our Lady's Seven Sorrows. Gain merit with your crosses by uniting them to hers.

- Intention: Pray for our seminarians as they begin another year of studies.

- Daily extra prayer: Seven Hail Marys in honor of the Seven Sorrows of Mary.

- Suggested books for spiritual reading: *Devotion to the Mother of Sorrows* (pamphlet), *The Holy Mountain of LaSalette*, *The Mass and the Christian Life*

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The question remains: are you courageous enough and disciplined enough yourself to enforce these rules? ❀