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|  | * **24** | |
|  | **Facing the Future:**  **Using Social Media to bring others to God** | |
| What’s the Point? | We are entering a new era in the information age, the era of social media. The confusion of social interaction and money has created an atmosphere where all interactions are seen as a means of making money. People blindly trust Facebook but they are wary of the Church. We do not want money but salvation for all and it can become confused against the World’s messages.  How do we use this new tool like Archbishop Sheen used TV? | |
| **Background Information** | ***Reference***   * ***NAB****: Prv 25:2-13; Mt 12:36; Eph 4:17-24, 29; Col 4:2-6;* * ***CCC****: ¶ 426-9;* ***904-7****;* ***1072****; 2493-99;* ***2512***   “*Since the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission. This it intends to do following faithfully the teaching of previous councils. The present-day conditions of the world add greater urgency to this work of the Church so that all men, joined more closely today by various social, technical and cultural ties, might also attain fuller unity in Christ*.” (*Lumen Gentium* 1)  How prophetic this seems now, yet it was timely in its day way back in 1964. Satellites had linked the world in a way only hinted at by radio, and now live images came right into your home from anywhere in the world, even space! So, it is true prophecy, meaningful in its time and yet revelation for all time! We certainly see the truth in that statement by the Council “*that all men, joined more closely today by various social, technical and cultural ties”* surrounds us. This world is filled with new “connections” new technology.  “*If I preach the gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me, and woe to me if I do not preach it! If I do so willingly, I have a recompense, but if unwillingly, then I have been entrusted with a stewardship.*” (*1 Cor* 9:16-17) Somehow we have to evangelize this world, and apparently by any means necessary. Part of our problem is the way we evangelize. We Catholics are not fundamentalists, and the way we interpret the call to evangelization is broad, but it comes down to living like we know God. That means that every moment of our lives is dedicated to discipleship. It is not something we can turn on and off. But that is true struggle. If we lived like we “*love the LORD, your God, with your whole heart, and with your whole being, and with your whole strength*.” (*Dt* 6:5) then everyone would know, and others would give praise to the Father because of our love. By living it, we preach loudest, louder than any shout from the street corner; by not living it we are loud witnesses to its absence.  Okay, so the ‘how’ is easy, then what do we preach? What we teach is clear. It is not ourselves, it is not a particular theology, it is not the Catholic Church, it is nothing but “*Jesus Christ, and him crucified*” (*1Cor* 2:2; c.f. *1 Cor* 1:23) and the life that we lead and the Body we belong to because of that and all it entails. “*At the heart of catechesis we find, in essence, a Person, the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son from the Father... who suffered and died for us and who now, after rising, is living with us forever.” To catechize is ‘to reveal in the Person of Christ the whole of God’s eternal design reaching fulfillment in that Person. It is to seek to understand the meaning of Christ’s actions and words and of the signs worked by him.’ Catechesis aims at putting ‘people... in communion... with Jesus Christ: only he can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity*.’” (*CCC* 426 – *Catechesi tradendae* 5)  And frankly, we have been talking about this most of the year, so the final question is *where do we evangelize*? When we used to talk in seminary about reaching people it all came down to *go where they are*. That is what Jesus did. Sure they gathered around the mount or sat on the plain, but he went to them, and not just physically but spiritually as well. Today we Catholics are in all parts of the world, every nook and cranny we can get into. Our priests, nuns, sisters, brothers, laity, and missionaries travel to reach as many people as possible. But we cannot only leave it up to others to leave the comfort of their living room as these people do, can we? Or can we? We are all called to evangelize, using the talents and material goods available to us. We send money to the missions; we send clothes and food to the St. Vincent De Paul; but do we put our lives at risk? Do we stake our reputations on the love of God? What do we have that we can use that puts us at risk?  Usually it is our reputations. But we can do that, growing where we are planted, so to speak. Teens struggle to become ‘who they are’ to reach the fullness of their created natures, to shed their adolescent skin and become who they are. Trying to fit in while at the same time trying to forge a personality independent of others is difficult work. Most of us are not struggling to find food or shelter, or trying to protect our dignity in a world which does not bestow dignity on the marginalized; but our teens are, in many different ways. Sometimes the family situation is strained, sometimes the culture produces stereotypes and prejudices against them because of age, color, race, and creed. Sometimes they have too much and are blinded to who they are by the stuff they are surrounded with. But all of that is only symptoms of what we are discussing here.  Teens are looking for a place to express themselves, a place where they have the same ‘freedom’ of expression as they see adults enjoying. But they can fall easily into the blinders that many of the social networking sites foster. In their bid for your information, they use social engineering to create a comfort zone of activity in which the user is lulled into divulging unwatched thoughts and a multitude of personally identifiable information. This produces a zombie-like culture, where momentary pleasure and fleeting connections are paramount. Consequently there are many people who need the message of God in their lives because they are lost and manipulated by the culture around them. So what we must begin to do is view social media just as our youth do, *as the world*. They live, work, go to school in a physical world but they operate within a virtual one. They can sit next to one another at our tables and never physically interact.  This is one place we have to go to go where the people are. They are spread about cyberspace even if they are in the next room. But this type of interaction is totally different than we are used to as adults; to the teens it is as natural as picking up the phone and actually using it to call and talk to someone. When they pick up their phone they are going a million extra places; everything is open to them, not just a simple vocal interaction. They are interacting with a virtual world, which, as far as I can see, has no horizon or boundaries.  And therein lies some of the problem. There are no facial clues or vocal indicators which give them hints into the subject or the mood of the rest of that world, nor can they relate their own mood to it. There is only information, and lots of it. Some of it is good some of it is not. Coming to understand the difference and how we use this media is important for overcoming the base use of technology. Teens today are told there are no boundaries, and when we try to tell them there are, they can look at us as old-fashioned fuddy-duddies. Where in their world are there boundaries? Where in their world is there a call for restraint or virtue?  This tie into discipleship may be a hard sell, but helping them to understand that though they wear blinders, even if they think they are savvy (just using technology to listen to music leaves quite a trail) it is the basis of their interaction with the technology which makes all of the difference. There are certainly concerns about privacy, but we are children of the light, who do our deeds in the light, not darkness (*c.f. Eph* 5:8-14). Who cares what kind of trail you leave if it leads others to Christ! We are under obligation to evangelize, and that is what we need to base all of our interaction with others, but especially in the emerging technologies of today and tomorrow. | |
| Materials Needed | * Laptop * Projector | |
| **Attention Grabber** | ***Pros and Cons of Social Media* (5 min)**  See PowerPoint. | |
| **Outline** | **Prayer**: | *Evangelization Prayer* |
| **Activity**: | *Pros and Cons of Social Media* |
| **Presentation**: | *Virtual life vs. Real life: Understanding Social Media* |
| **Table Discussion**: | *Table Questions*. |
| **Post Discussion:** | *None*. |
| **Closing Prayer**: | *Group Prayer.* |
| **Prayer** | **Introductory Prayer:** (**5 min**)  *Gracious and merciful God, we pray that we heed the words of Christ —“do not be afraid”— and strengthened by the Holy Spirit’s gift of courage, give witness to the Gospel and share our faith with others. Pour forth your Holy Spirit to inspire us with these words from Holy Scripture. Stir in our soul the desire to renew our faith and deepen our relationship with your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ so that we might truly believe in and live the Good News. Open our heart to hear the Gospel and grant us the confidence to proclaim the Good News to others. Pour out your Spirit, so that we might be strengthened to go forth and witness to the Gospel in our everyday life through my words and actions. In moments of hesitation, remind each of us: If not me, then who will proclaim the Gospel? If not now, then when will the Gospel be proclaimed? If not the truth of the Gospel, then what shall I proclaim? Give us the confidence to proclaim the Gospel and boldly witness to the saving grace of your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.* | |
| **Pre-discussion Presentation** | (15 min) | |
|  | ***Virtual life vs. Real life:***  ***Understanding Social Media***   * 5 min of ice breaker asking about Pros and Cons of Social Media * Talk (addressing those pros and cons)   + Virtual life vs. Real life   + Using social media to evangelize (examples of \*boycott\* of products/organizations/others who are against our Faith)   + Pray and then post * Purpose: go to your virtual life and re-evaluate and see if it resembles your real world. | |
| **Table Talk** | Group Questions (30 min) | |
| **General Group Questions:**   1. What is social media? What is most popular? 2. Do you have any sites/apps that you use? 3. Why do you use the social media that you do? 4. How does Social Media help people? 5. How does Social Media hurt people? 6. What is the best use of social media? 7. How can social media be used to spread the Gospel? 8. What more can people like the Pope or the Bishop do? 9. What can the Church do to reach more people? 10. What are you willing to do? 11. Have you ever boycotted anything? 12. Have you ever protested anything? | |
| **Post-discussion Presentation** | None (0 min) | |
|  | **None.** | |
| **Closing** | **Prayer (5 min).** | |
|  | **Group Intercessions**  **Ps 101**  *I sing of mercy and justice; to you, LORD, I sing praise. I study the way of integrity; when will you come to me? I act with integrity of heart within my household. I do not allow into my presence anything base. I hate wrongdoing; I will have no part of it. May the devious heart keep far from me; the wicked I will not acknowledge. Whoever slanders a neighbor in secret I will reduce to silence. Haughty eyes and arrogant hearts I cannot endure. I look to the faithful of the land to sit at my side. Whoever follows the way of integrity is the one to enter my service. No one who practices deceit can remain within my house. No one who speaks falsely can last in my presence.* | |
| Reminder | **\*\*\*\* REMEMBER IMPORTANCE OF RECORDING ATTENDANCE!!** This is a legal document! Please, write down on your attendance sheet the name of any teen at your table, whether they are on your roll or not. | |
| Attachments | * *None* | |