

JULY-AUGUST 2022 Volume XXXVI Issue No. 06 "Amen, Amen, I say to you, whoever believes in me will do the works that I do, and will do greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12)

HUMAN 2.0 (Part 1) by Jaci Phillips, PhD

Technology is growing at an exponentially rapid rate.

Less than 20 years ago, growth in information technology was doubling approximately every one year. That means that growth in 10 years would be equivalent to the 1000 years of previous technological growth, 20 years a million times (and this was 17 years ago), and a billion in about 30 years.

Do you recall your technological life in the year 2000? I recall my tech life in 1990. I had no computer (at home or at work in a hospital). There was no internet service. I had never heard of a cell phone. The car I drove was standard transmission. The television I got in 1991 (my first) was around 13 inches. It used rabbit ears and I almost never watched it except, of course, for All My Children. This was much the same way I grew up. We played outside. We had a great bunch of friends. The entire time I was growing up, nothing much changed with our phone except that we went from a dial to push buttons, although I do recall my grandparents using 'party lines.' Our vacuums didn't change much. Our stoves and refrigerators didn't change much. Even our cars, much like clothing, grew more stylish as time progressed, but the technology underwent minimal changes. In 1996 I got my first desktop computer and dial-up internet. How little did I know that life would never be the same. But I made it through college and a PhD by doing research the old fashioned way ... in a library. Now I have the best journals and articles at my fingertips and I can endlessly search topics without the tedious task of finding the journal in the library and copying the article to read later. In very many ways this was a wonderful change. In other ways, not so much. Pharmaceutical promotion used to be limited to medical journals and reps in doctor's offices; now medications are promoted everywhere to a public that knows almost nothing about medications. So, a two-edged sword.

Around 2003 I got my first cell phone. It seemed like science fiction; like the Star Trek 'communicator.' Now, 25 years after my first computer, attempting to write an article, or this newsletter, without the aid of a computer would be impossible. Landline phone services are all but gone. If you want to communicate other than face-to-face or by carrier pigeon - a cellphone, once a choice and a luxury - has now become a near necessity. This is the way technology transitions. First it is a luxury, then a convenience, then we can't function without it, then we literally forget how to function without it.

Just as with other things in life, there are both good things and bad things about technology. It's great to be able to reach people via text or cellphone instead of waiting for them to get home. Imaging techniques in medicine have helped us to understand the brain and the human body on a level we never thought possible. I love to read, and while you can't replace the feel of a real book, reading on my iPad is much easier and more convenient. It used to take me an hour every week to find all of my music for Mass. Now, with it on my iPad, I carry tall file cabinets full music with me.

So many other things... Air travel has made the whole world so

accessible to each other. I know I say a prayer of thanks to God when I hear the electricity for the heat kick on in the winter. I could go on, but you get the idea. Technology has significantly [positively] impacted our lives in countless ways.

But I wonder how much we have stopped to consider the *negative* implications of technology... where it's already at.. and where it is heading. It seems to me that we don't give this much thought - we just mindlessly *go with the flow* of '**needing**' the next best thing that will make our lives *easier and better*. We *take* the advertising bait.

I am going to take some time in this article and some articles in future editions to try to stand back and look more objectively at technology. *I know I need to do this*. Hopefully you will also find something in it informative and helpful. The most important question **is:** *where is all of this going and what does God think?* I may not know all of the answers to that, but I can tell you some of the answers based upon people's own words *and on The WORD*.

Not long ago, I was wondering what would happen if I didn't have my phone to help me find places. I started to recall how I used to either know how to get around by memory or I could pull out a good old fashioned city map of any new town I moved to and I could find my way around. In 2004, I once had to take back roads from Birmingham, Alabama, to Erie over Christmas because there was a southern snow storm that had the highways gridlocked. People could not get off of the highways because they didn't know the way. I got my Rand McNally out and did it with no problem. Now I no longer carry maps in my car and if cell towers went down, I could not get very far on my own. The realization of how dependent am on this little rectangular computer makes me uncomfortable.

Even more unnerving to me is being in places and hearing people call an inanimate speaker and microphone connected to an AI supercomputer by a woman's name, making it seem like a friendly human assistant. Even creepier is to hear it answer nearly any question you could throw at it. Here is my question... *if it listens for a particular name, when does it stop listening for its name?* Is it good? Well... If you have mobility issues and can't get up to change your thermostat, etc., then YES! You can program it to run nearly every electronic device in your house. It apparently makes you home 'smart.' I can't help but wonder if it makes *us dumber* at the same time. I see this speaker/microphone/AI supercomputer that imitates a friendly woman's voice rapidly becoming another one of these luxury-conveniences that we just can't live without. Is more technology always better?

What do you think about this one...? The speaker on the other end of the AI super-computer can now learn a voice pattern of a deceased loved one (or any human being) and use that voice to interact with you. How many of us would not blur the lines of recalling that this is not our familiar loved one talking to us, but is a piece of cold inanimate technology? And how is that helpful to be able to converse with the disembodied voice of a dear one? Portable medium? I can't

EUCHARISTIC REVIVAL: 2022 -2025"THIS IS MY BODY, He said it, I believe it!" by Kathryn Wilcox

If you visit the diocese web site you will see the headline above. It introduces the invitation of the bishops of the United States to all Catholics to join in a three-year effort to grow in their understanding of the church's teaching on the Eucharist. Our diocesan celebration was launched on the feast of Corpus Christi, June 19, 2022, with several processions and events. You will find a nine day Corpus Christi novena available. This is only the beginning; many additional events are being planned.

This is not a new thing - it is actually calling us back devotion to the central core of the catholic faith: The Eucharistic celebration of the Mass. In the year 1530, in Milan Italy, the Archdiocese called for a 40 hour long Eucharistic adoration prayer event. It was in response to the threatened invasion of the Turks, and the lack of faith of the Catholic community. People responded and the 40 hours of adoration spread to other dioceses. Even St Ignatius Loyola and St Philip Neri promoted it.

In our own country, St. John Neumann (1811-60), the fourth bishop of Philadelphia, was a strong promoter of the Forty Hours Devotion. However, there was no organized schedule for the event; it was sporadic. At that time there was a strong anti-Catholic sentiment in Philadelphia. Churches were being burned during the "Know Nothing Riots of 1844" and the situation was becoming dire. St John was advised to not introduce the event because it could increase hatred and violence towards the church.

St John chose to not hide our faith, but instead called on Catholics to come, worship Jesus in the Eucharistic, and proclaim the faith. It was successful. The celebrations have continued until the present time. Most have been shortened to a one day event, but are still being celebrated throughout the country.

Thinking about the importance of the Eucharist brought back the memories of my visit in 1989 to Medjugorje. We thought we were going to see the visionaries to whom the blessed mother was appearing. Instead we found much more. Crowds of people were going to daily Mass, and the field beside the church was set up each day with confession stations where visiting priests from all over the world who came to visit were hearing confessions. My mother, sister and I, went to confession to a priest from New Zealand. As we walked back to our cottage, we encountered several people who excitedly encouraged us to go to the cemetery? When my sister asked for more details, they told us to follow the path beside the vineyard and pointed it out. As we strode along the grassy walkway we passed people returning who were quiet and reverent. The closer we got to the cemetery the more pilgrims there were. Then we were there... and through the crowd we saw an outdoor alter and clusters of folks kneeling among the grave stones. But the most striking thing were the prostrated individuals laying on the ground before the altar on which was a monstrance, holding the Eucharist. Those in the vicinity were also quietly praying the rosary. You could feel the power of God very intensely, so much so that it was hard to leave. We stayed until almost dark and then headed back to our house. The next day we had an opportunity to go to Vicka's house and she stood on the steps and faced a crowd who had many questions. The only one I remember is when one lady asked her why so many people were leaving the Catholic Church. "Because, she said sadly, "they do not know what they have." Of course she meant the Eucharist. It is also worth noting that whenever Mary appears, her messages encourage us to turn to Jesus and the Eucharist.

How many people today believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist? We need to pray that this initiative by the bishops catches on fire and brings Catholics back to confession and sincere belief in the Eucharist. Our churches and our faith are being attacked, as was the case in Milan in 1530 and Philadelphia in 1844, and we need to strengthen our faith and resolve to defend, as Vicka said, "what we have." Pray that soon, all come to believe that Jesus is alive in the Eucharist. *Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.*"

AN ADULT CONVERSATION

By Daniel Barron

Since 2020 we have all been under the umbrella of a pandemic that has stretched over the whole world. According to the world health organization at the writing of this article there have been a total of 545,226,550 cases and 6,334,728 deaths with covid-19 worldwide. However, I'd like to highlight another issue that is currently plaguing the global community; a pandemic that has affected almost everyone in some way. The numbers are staggering, and they far surpass the covid numbers. It has no visible symptoms - you can have it and no one will know. It's not talked about by health professionals or media. As a matter of fact... there has been little done to mitigate its deadly effects. Many times this pandemic will affect children who will carry the effects with them into adulthood, and sometimes for the rest of their lives. We need our praver warriors on this.! It has more power when it's hidden. It's time to bring this pandemic into the light. The pandemic that I'm talking about is pornography.

With it, the devil mocks and mutilates the beautiful gift of human sexuality and everything surrounding it. There was a study done in 2017 of 330 young men at a Midwestern U.S university. The average age of exposure for young men to pornography was about 13 years old (the youngest being 5 years old and the oldest being 26). I can honestly say I was surprised at the average age ... surprised that it wasn't younger. I am only 28 and I have seen firsthand the damages of pornography in the lives of many people. I've seen porn addictions start in people at very young ages. I've also seen addiction carry into old age, and also affect relationships and marriages.

Pornography has drastically changed the attitudes of young people. You might be interested to know that young people are having a harder time dating than ever. Around 70% of singles looking to find dates are either 'somewhat' or 'very dissatisfied' with the current dating market. There are a lot of young

men who look for casual sex and can't find it. They are referred to as "incels" or "involuntary celibates." This is admittedly a good thing that people are having less sex outside of the holy bond of marriage, but it is directly tied to the increase in pornography addiction, which is the focus of this article.

Hookup culture (fleeting sexual encounters, one-night stands etc.) has become prevalent for a lot of people, but I don't think it's as popular as some think. A lot of people just choose porn instead of any kind of human relationship. Popular online groups exist, such as "MGTOW" (men go their own way) and "red pill," which have similar messages. The message/goal is to avoid getting involved with women through marriage or serious committed relationships. Many things, such as the frequency of men losing custody battles and infidelity have been cited as reasons why committed relationships are viewed as bad. These popular communities of men are fueling



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"Ask me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession."

PS 2:8

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Alicia Hartle serves as executive director of Pentecost Today USA (the National Service Committee of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the US) and is a founding member of an ecumenical household, The Oakland Prayer Group, Abba's House, Unbound Pittsburgh-Greensburg, and Catholic Women's Fellowship ministries. Born into the fire of Renewal in the Pittsburgh area, she has worked in ministry and business development on local, national, and international levels. Knowing God and making Him known are her greatest passions.

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imagine what could go wrong there (insert sarcasm). Definitely a twoedged sword.

How wonderful is it that mothers of newborns can, not only watch and hear their babies on monitors, but also know their body temps and whether they are breathing. A good use to be sure! On the flip side, a friend recently downloaded an app to listen to while falling asleep. It turned off when it knew, by listening to breathing, that he was asleep. The creepy part was that, as soon as he woke up in the middle of the night, *it knew* he was awake and automatically started to play again. Part of the issue with this technology is that we simply do not know what it does, what it is capable of doing, what is being collected, or how it will be used. And **we should** care about that. We download apps like they are items we need at the grocery store. I am one of those weirdoes who actually tries to read the pages and pages of things you have to click "agree" to before you start to use something. I can say unequivocally that you are clicking away any [perceived] right to privacy for a little bit of convenience or entertainment.

More food for thought... when we primarily walked places, our food was all grown or raised locally and we could walk to the neighborhood store. Even if the power went out for a long time, we had food to eat. We knew how to grow gardens. We canned our own food for the winter. People preserved meat. And food was healthy, completely without the chemicals and preservatives that are used in foods today. I don't think that American health has benefitted from the advancement of buying most of our food in big-box grocery stores, food that is primarily highly processed leading to destruction of key nutrients, and to all kinds of sensitivities and diseases that were not rampant before.

This leads me to ask whether our lives have likely become more *complex,* more *technology dependent,* less *personal,* less *people connected,* more *distracted,* than <u>God</u> intended. I think that in many ways, technology makes us feel <u>more</u> powerful than we are... and <u>less</u> fragile than we **are**.

As I have noted in some of my examples, technology has led to incredibly positive advances. In my time working in my field, I have had the absolute pleasure of evaluating over 600 Parkinson's patients to assist in determining if they were good candidates for deep brain stimulation surgery (DBS). There are very few things less gratifying or moving than being in the operating room with a patient who has basically no functional use of their limbs, and the moment that the neurosurgeon reaches the correct spot and turns on a stimulator, the patient immediately regains a great deal of the lost function. There is no one in that room that ever gets used to that moment no matter how many times you see it. But, a researcher and skeptic by nature, I see both sides of the technology sword. As a person who is always looking at something and wondering how God sees it, I see us dangerously close crossing the point of what is referred to in technology as "the singularity." This is the point where human biology and technology become irrevocably merged, and artificial intelligence moves beyond the ability of mere human intelligence to control or stop. It's the point where we can have designer drugs that go in and fix genes or allow the body to make its own drugs. But it's also the point where you will be at a severe disadvantage if you decide not to merge with technology to fix and enhance every part of being a human being. This definitely crosses a threshold into God's realm (and that really never works out well). Consider human DNA corrupted with the DNA of fallen angels in Genesis 6. In Genesis 7 and 8 God used a flood to wipe out defiled DNA and start over.

Now the term 'Human 2 point 0'; making it akin upgrading God's work to a better operating system, as if it's the same as 'Window's 11,' is being used openly by people who know much more than I know. I have no reason to doubt them. They openly talk about how humans will soon become 'useless' because AI will run everything and make every decision much better than any human could. Al robots will do physical tasks that humans can do with 1000 times our strength and dexterity, not to mention intelligence, or the fact that they do not need to stop working to eat, sleep, or socialize. I will go more into this in the future.

For now it is enough to consider, what is God's view of all of this? What is moral? What is ethical? We are now talking about messing with the very fabric God uses to beautifully create every human being. Is it ok to cross into God's territory to clone (which has quietly been done for at least decades) and 'gene-edit' and 'genetically select' and 'genetically alter'? To make an inseparable hybrid of humans and computers? To make all of our brains Bluetooth and Wi-Fi connected and intertwined? These ethical and moral questions have never been on the table before. But they are now. In Genesis 11, because they had the technology, people were building a tower that reached to heaven to "make a name for themselves" [Pride]. "But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." Serious consequences. Just because we can, does not mean we should. The Bible references that there are things that humans were not intended to know.

We all have choices to make in the near future. Jesus said to recognize the weather forecast regarding the days we live in. Not only are we dangerously close to making regular humans obsolete, but also, for the first time in history, the technology of the antichrist and the mark of the beast already exists. The 'mark' is close. It gets closer every time biology becomes more linked to technology. Is your Apple watch that tracks so much biology the 'mark'? No. but we are gradually being desensitized into technology that is on the skin [like the mark]. People in some US companies, and more widely is places like Scandinavia, have already willingly been implanted with chips. The 'mark'? No. But so so close. Which is one reason I see it as important to take more of a bird's eve view of where this is all going; acknowledging that, while we are shown and *marketed* the phenomenal good of technology, it will come with just as drastic a hidden dark side. Discernment. Listen to the Holy Spirit. Stay close to God. Love God. Love one another. "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." - This is holy simplicity in all its beauty and wisdom.

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Mark 16:18

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AN ADULT CONVERSATION By Daniel Barron

Continued from page 2

not only casual sex, but also (and I think mainly) addiction to pornography, and the breakdown of the family.

In short, marriage rates and the desire to get married are low, divorce rates and guickness to separate are high, young people are frustrated with dating, and pornography usage is on the rise. To give you an idea of how out of control this is, in 2019 the top 10 porn sites in the world recorded a grand total of 10,357,000,000 visits. Enough for everybody on earth to have viewed a porn video with 2,397,000,000 people left over. This number went UP in 2020! The invention of the smartphone has made porn more accessible than ever. It goes with us everywhere. People can view pornography on their phones in high definition for free whenever they want to. If you have a smartphone, you are constantly about 10-30 seconds away from being able to view almost any pornography imaginable for free. Many people are addicted...many people see no hope in stopping...many don't even want to. In Matthew 10:28 it says "do not be afraid of those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to destrov both soul and body in hell." Many people do not think of porn as a serious sin, or even sin at all. Why have we stopped warning people of the things that are dangers to their souls?? The Catechism of the Catholic Church describes pornography as a "grave" offense. This meets one of the three conditions of mortal sin. Since indulging in pornography is a grave matter, it becomes a mortal sin if 1) You know that it is a grave matter and 2) You deliberately choose to do it anyway. According to both the Church and the Word of God, if you die in a state of unrepentant mortal sin you seriously risk (We cannot discount the vastness of God's mercy) hell. "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, murder. drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Galatians 5:19-21, ESV.

I've been struck by a few revelations about the current situation with pornography worldwide. Teresa of Avila had a vision where she saw souls falling into hell like "snowflakes in a snowstorm." When our mother Mary appeared to the children at Fatima she showed them a vision of hell. She revealed to one of the children (Jacinta) that most of the souls in hell were there because of sins of the flesh. Lastly, sister Faustina (who is famous for receiving the divine mercy image) saw a vision of hell and she said a commonality for most of the people there is that they believed that hell didn't exist.

While it is for God to judge, as the Body of Christ, we must be concerned for multitudes of souls at risk because of addictions to the mortal sins of pornography and masturbation. I recently watched a video of a near death experience of someone who was a very upstanding and loving worship leader in a large church. Long story short, he died and was condemned to hell because of addiction to pornography and illicit sex. He cried out to Jesus and was given another chance and was instructed to warn other people. Now he speaks on his sobering experience in hell to open the eyes of people to see the damage this does to the soul. Pretty serious stuff. Yet is must be brought into the light.

As a society, we continuously search for more pleasure...it's like trying to wring water out of a wet towel. Constantly looking for more. Trying harder to feel more pleasure in our bodies. Consider this... We do have a real enemy whose only goal is to get us to choose hell. The devil uses the same psychotic rage unleashed on Christ during his passion to push us into this addiction (and other sins) and keep us there. Jesus took the ravages of the demonic for us and only His Blood is enough to redeem us. Christ knows what we want...He knows how beautiful the marital embrace that was intended to be and that pornography is a poor substitute for what the soul truly desires. He knows that porn doesn't satisfy us. He knows how destructive it is.

We are deathly afraid of covid...we wear masks; Masses were halted; we socially distance; a lot of our churches removed holy water; people aren't receiving the Eucharist on the tongue as much; we do curbside pickup for our groceries; have virtual appointments and meetings; work from home; and sanitize constantly. Why do we treat this bodily affliction of a virus more seriously than the sins that many of us engage in that have the power to separate us from Christ forever? Covid doesn't have that power. Jesus said, "If you love me, you will keep my commands." We need to "socially distance" ourselves from sin and treat it with the seriousness it deserves.

If you struggle with this sin don't be discouraged...God does not tire of forgiving us or assisting us. Go to confession as soon as possible when you fall, attend Mass frequently, and pray the rosary. Talk to Jesus from your heart frequently and cry out to Him in your struggle. There are many graces in these practices and God always desires to grant mercy to the repentant. "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance." Luke 15:7, NRSVCE.



I thank God for the Spirit-filled prayer warriors who will read this and intercede for those afflicted with this scourge. None of us can save ourselves or be free from sin on our own. It is the grace of God that helps us overcome sin. But the desire to be free is the start of freedom. Let us turn to our Savior, acknowledging our sin, admitting our weakness, and then fighting the difficult battle against free will that has been weakened by sin; always with the assistance of HIS grace and the power of the Holy Spirit. There is always healing and hope in Jesus. There is freedom in Jesus. Only in Jesus. He died to be on our side in all our battles. Don't doubt it. There is victory in Jesus. Remember Romans 8:31... "What then shall we say to this...If God is for us who can be against us?"

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Luke 15:7 KJV

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Be not conformed but be transformed Rom 12:2

Fr Joe Freedy is a former quarterback, called to be a priest. President of Dry Bones ministries and former vocations director and assistant director of evangelization for the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

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