



Rev. Fr. John Fullerton, U.S. District Superior

S S P X

Platte City, August 18, 2023

Dear SSPX Academy Parents,

I recently returned from a meeting in Écône where the leadership of the SSPX discussed, among other things, the challenges posed by technology. This is not a new topic but an increasingly urgent one, calling for strong and immediate action, especially in our schools since the negative impacts of technology affect not only individuals but, through them, the common good as problematic ideas, images, or attitudes are brought into the school.

For many years now, the “Regulation of Electronic Media” section in the Parent-Student Handbook has strongly discouraged the use of electronic media and the internet in particular, because they “not only impede the intellectual and spiritual progress of the student but pose potentially severe moral risks.” That policy was updated over the course of the past decade because of the ascendancy of the internet; technology has advanced at an alarming rate and social media, in conjunction with the smartphone, makes the internet with all its benefits and risks immediately and personally available. A stronger focus upon our regulation policy and a robust educational effort to help us all better understand the dangers technology poses and how best avoid them for ourselves and our children are, therefore, necessary to balance optimally the dual goals of prudent restriction and proper student formation.

The simple fact is that, since our beginning and end must be the alpha and omega, Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, anything that diverts us from Him is problematic. We must strive to retain our contact with His reality, the creation which leads to the Creator. That has always been the goal and challenge of our intellectual and spiritual lives and, therefore, of education and there will always be obstacles. The technologies of our time add a new level of challenge because they attack more directly than previous innovations the very nature of reality, giving us the impression more than ever that we can control, even define it. Additionally, social media and smartphones are specifically designed to be addictive, literally to re-program our habits and thought processes to overcome, were it possible, our free will. The smartphone is not a passive, but rather an active tool that has the capacity, if not consciously and conscientiously restricted and regulated, to overcome its user. That is the goal of the system designers, even if only to turn a profit, but it can lead to a real slavery and statistics show that young users, in particular, are easily drawn to very bad ends through their engagement with unfettered technologies that they have no chance of overcoming. In

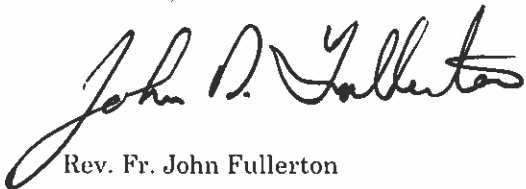
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short, social media and smartphones present an existential threat to our children's moral well-being. We would be collectively negligent not to protect them from them as best we can.

There is much more that has, can, should, and will be said about the dangers of technology—especially social media and smartphones—to all of us, and to children in particular. Hence, we are making this a focus for the upcoming year, with conferences and discussions from and with your school principal and other educational opportunities and resources, including podcasts, from the district. In the immediate, I wanted only to highlight the essential reasons we are compelled again and more forcefully to urge the elimination of some aspects of technology from our students' lives. We are not essentially changing the regulation of electronic media policy in the handbook, but are refining the wording slightly, asking parents to forbid social media and unsupervised access to the internet at home for all their children, and not to allow their children to own a personal smartphone or internet capable device. Additionally, beginning this year, we are making all our campuses “no phone zones” for students. Again, our essential goal is a greater understanding of these problems of our time in order to help us all make the right decisions about how to get the good that technology can offer while avoiding its many pitfalls.

As noted, your principals will personally discuss this with you at much greater depth. I fully trust in and thank you in advance for your understanding and continued support.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John D. Fullerton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Rev. Fr. John Fullerton
U.S. District Superior