

**Chesterton Academy of the Holy Family**  
**Supper Club - 16 October 2021**

**Social Media Discussion with Chesterton Seniors**

Major themes:

1. Social media is addictive (“...scrolling and scrolling and scrolling.”);
2. Often is used to hide, mask, or pretend to be someone else/live a different kind of life;
3. A near occasion of sin, especially sins against humility, modesty, and chastity;
4. Self-awareness when using social media is absolutely necessary;
5. Keep accounts private, use privacy features, and friend/follow only those you know;
6. Many reported being grateful to parents for allowing some exploration but also being firm and honest about dangers and boundaries
  1. “I am incredibly grateful for my mom doing that and explaining to me why people should do that. She answered my questions without a plain ‘no’ or ‘because I said so.’ Sometimes those dismissive answers make kids want to rebel...Having those boundaries and someone to *teach* you the importance of those boundaries changed the way I view media.”
7. Most reported having seen bullying, a few less reported being bullied themselves, still fewer admitted to being the bully.
8. Most said they felt pressured to use social media, either by older siblings or friends at school. Some said it was direct pressure (“hey come on just get on it), while others said it was more social pressure/FOMO/comparison (“...I’m the only one without it...”)
9. Many reported being dismayed by levels of politicking and/or virtue signaling. “Those who know the least know it the loudest.”

“What advice would you give a younger sibling or underclassmen regarding their use of social media?”

1. Don’t let it be a substitute for real life interactions and relationships. Real relationships are best played out in real life and real time.
2. Consider what you post: is this authentically me? Is it true? Is it necessary to post?
3. Before downloading: “what is my purpose in doing this?”
4. Think: What would grandma think if she saw this post/picture/video? Would I want my future kids to see this?
5. If your parents say no, respect them. Don’t push, and never go behind their back with social media. They know better than you do, so trust and respect them.

## Tips for Parents

1. Evaluate your own social media/phone use; am I scrolling late into the night? Am I on the phone at the table, in the car, during prayer, or during family gathering times? Kids are watching you.
2. Become familiar with the popular apps, what they're for, and how they work: Instagram, Tik Tok, Snapchat, Vsco, Reddit, (less popular: Kik, Tumblr, ask.fm)
3. Spouses should consult together and then discuss as a family an appropriate age limit to start using social media (i.e. 13 years old, first year of high school, etc)
4. Establish accounts together; help your children navigate the setup process, set privacy settings, and create usernames and passwords. Non-negotiable: parents should know the passcodes for devices and passwords for accounts.
5. If you are on the same apps, request to follow them and vice versa. Establish boundaries that are fair to them (i.e. "I will follow you and see what you post but I promise not to comment or comment on everything you do." It's a similar idea to requiring that a parent be home when friends are over but not inserting yourself into their conversations or activities without cause.)
6. When hosting friends, everyone puts their phone in a basket and picks up it when they leave.
7. All devices (even your own, possible) plugged in together at night away from bedrooms and sleeping areas. Buy yourselves real alarm clocks.
8. Set rules for daily use. No social media before school or after 8pm, for example.
9. Keep a dialogue open with your children. It's hard to admit that our kids can teach us a lot about technology. Social media is still like the Wild West - largely ungoverned, potentially dangerous, but also full of interesting and potentially life-giving opportunities. Yours kids will need you as a guide and companion.

## Fr. Ryan's Own Social Media Rules

1. I deleted Instagram from my phone. I was tailoring every experience so that it would look good on my story, and I was getting mad as heck as I scrolled for hours day and night.
2. I deleted Tik Tok. It should be called "Tik Toxic". There's good stuff sprinkled in there, but so much of it is unChristian, hypersexualized, nonsense. Get rid of it.
3. I've limited by Netflix binging.
4. I do not watch the news on any channel, I do not listen to talk radio ever for any reason, and I read the news once a day from the newspaper that is already being delivered to the rectory.
5. I go for a walk every night through the North Central campus. Hang out around there around 9pm and we can pray the rosary together.
6. I turn off screens at 8:30pm. I have Screen Time and Content restrictions on every device, so that email and other apps are not accessible to me after 10pm except with a password that only a priest friend knows. I am currently having a competition with myself to try to lower my screen time average week by week.
7. I bought a real alarm clock and charge my phone away from my bed. I've made a rule that before I can check my phone I must do my morning prayers.
8. Before I unplug for the night, I send a message to a group chat of friends that shares with each other where we saw God working that day.