10 Commandments for the Internet Age

Archbishop Eamon Martin, Coadjutor Archbishop of Armagh,
from 'The New Media and the Work of Evangelization' – May 20, 2014

http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/news/2014/05/22/archbishop-offers-10-commandments-for-catholics-online/

"The internet has become like the nervous system of our culture, in which more and more people are expressing and exploring their identity, picking up and discarding their values and attitudes, expressing their feelings and prejudices, befriending and unfriending each other, measuring each other's status and importance, relevance and appearance. If our young people and people are living in this gigantic network, then we, as people of faith need to be in there, dialoguing with the inhabitants of this world, with the men and women who dwell in the web."

Here are Archbishop Martin's digital media principles in full:

1. **Be positive and joyful.** Offer 'digital smiles' and have a sense of humor. Remember that it is the ' joy of the Gospel' that we are communicating, so, as Pope Francis says: no 'funeral faces' or 'sourpusses'!

2. **Strictly avoid aggression and 'preachiness' online**; try not to be judgmental or polemical – goodness knows, there is enough of this online already! Instead, try Pope Francis' approach of 'tenderness and balm'.

3. **Never bear false witness on the internet.**

4. **Remember 'Ubi caritas et amor'** (where charity and love are)**.** Fill the internet with charity and love, always giving rather than taking. Continually seek to broaden and reframe discussions and seek to include a sense of charity and solidarity with the suffering in the world.

5. **Have a broad back when criticisms and insults are made** – when possible, gently correct.

6. **Pray in the digital world!** Establish sacred spaces, opportunities for stillness, reflection and meditation online.

7. **Establish connections, relationships and build communion.** Church has always been about 'gathering'. In this, it is worth considering an ecumenical presence for the Christian churches online. The internet tends to be a place of ethical and intellectual relativism, and often of aggressive secularism. The scandal of disunity among Christians can be easily exploited and exaggerated. Therefore we must seek to share resources so that we can have a powerful Gospel witness. Wouldn't it be wonderful if people started noticing online: 'See how these Christians love one another'.

8. **Educate our young to keep themselves safe** and to use the internet responsibly.

9. **Witness to human dignity at all times online**. Seek, as Pope Benedict once said, to 'give a soul to the internet'. We are well aware of the pervasive prevalence of pornography on the internet which can 'pollute the spirit', destroy and degrade human sexuality and relationships, reduce persons to objects for gratification, draw millions into the commodification and commercialization of sex, feed the monster that is human trafficking.

10. **Be missionary**, be aware that with the help of the internet, a message has the potential to reach the ends of the earth in seconds. In this regard, let us foster and call forth charisms in younger committed people who understand the power and potential of the net to bear witness.

On 5 May Pope Francis tweeted: @Pontifex: What does "evangelise" mean? To give witness with joy and simplicity to what we are and what we believe in.

That is our challenge and our privilege as Christians. Freely we have received the joy of the gospel now let us freely give it.