



### "Contemplative in action": Balancing Prayer and Technology in a Digital World



Dear friends,

It is said: 'You are free to make whatever choice you want, but you are not free from the consequences of that choice'. In fact, what we are is the result of the decisions we make. Every choice - be it endless scrolling or meaningful engagement - has the power to influence our productivity, mental health, relationships and overall happiness. Ultimately, the responsible use of technology depends on individual decisions.

By making conscious and reasoned choices, technology can turn into a tool for growth, connection and personal fulfilment. As Nobel Peace Prize Winner Christian Lange wisely stated: 'Technology is a useful servant, but a dangerous master'.

The real question is: will technology be an empowering tool for us or will it become a source of stress and distraction? Will it enslave us or make us masters? The answer lies in the hands of those who use it.

I wish you to choose wisely and let technology enhance your life, never allowing it to control you.

● Fr Harris Pakkam SDB  
Member of the Sector for  
Social Communication,  
Director of InfoANS

In today's hyper-connected world, technology has become part of our everyday lives. From smartphones in our pockets to social media, we are constantly informed, entertained and engaged. While these advancements offer unprecedented opportunities including new ways for spreading the Gospel, they also present challenges. **This raises critical questions, particularly considering recent developments in artificial intelligence.**

How do we strike a balance between our lives nourished by prayer and the constant distractions of our mobile phones? Do we know how much time we spend chatting and scrolling? How does the use of digital devices affect our spiritual well-being? In a world inundated with information from our devices, does the concept of "**contemplative in action,**" as articulated in our constitution (**Cost. 12**), still hold relevance in our daily activities? Can we use our digital devices to better connect with isolated youths in the digital world?

These fundamental questions require serious reflection particularly from us Salesians, given their sensitive nature in today's context. It is discouraging to observe that traditional physical breviaries seem to hold little relevance now, as we often resort to using mobile devices even for the eucharistic celebrations. **We find ourselves increasingly distanced from the communities and young people around us,** which is a point of concern. It should be noted that "communication begins with connection and moves towards relationships, community and communion" (*Communio et progressio*, 12).

It is important therefore to set limits and establish boundaries for screen time to avoid burnouts, be selective about the content we engage with, and well ensure a healthy balance between digital interactions and face-to-face relationships. By doing so, we can make the best use of these tools while maintaining our spiritual well-being as we become definitely **Digital Missionaries** who use technology for the salvation of the young. Let us remember: the Salesian... "*cultivates union with God, aware of the need to pray without ceasing in a simple heart-to-heart colloquy with the living Christ and with the father, whom he feels close at hand. Attentive to the presence of the Spirit and doing everything for God's love he becomes like Don Bosco a contemplative in action*" (**Cost. 12**).

● Fr Philemon Anthony Chacha SDB  
Originally from Tanzania (TZA), he is currently studying at UPS  
in the Faculty of Social Communication

#### FOR REFLECTION AND SHARING

- What can I do to find a balance between my spiritual life and the constant distractions of my mobile phone?



# THE KEY TO THE RIGHT USE OF AI IS WHO DRIVES IT AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE



*Dear Libor, this month we want to give thanks especially for the media. You have been working in this field for a long time. What are you thankful for?*

I am thankful that the media enable us to reach young people where they are. The Gospel has always been spread through what was available at the time - Don Bosco used the press, we have social networks, podcasts, videos. They allow us not only to inform, but above all to inspire, to bring joy and hope.

I am also very grateful to the people who are involved in this work. Every piece of content that comes out is the result of the collaboration of many. And I am also grateful to the viewers, listeners and readers who make us realise that what we do is meaningful.

*Lately there has been a lot of talk about Artificial Intelligence, the fact that it is everywhere today and that one day it could destroy us. Should we be afraid of it?*

I wouldn't say we should be afraid, but we certainly shouldn't be naive. Artificial Intelligence is a tool that is already radically changing society, from media to education, from economics to politics. And yes, it carries real risks. We see the mass spread of disinformation, the manipulation of public opinion or deepfakes that can falsify people's voices and images, for example. If AI continues to develop unchecked, its capabilities could exceed human control making it increasingly difficult to distinguish truth from manipulation. Our challenge, therefore, is not only to use AI, but also to think about it ethically and critically. Technology itself is neither good nor bad; the key is who drives it and for what purpose. If left unregulated and without values, it can be dangerous.

*What advice would you give to those who want to learn how to use AI to work with young people? What should we start with, how should we do it?*

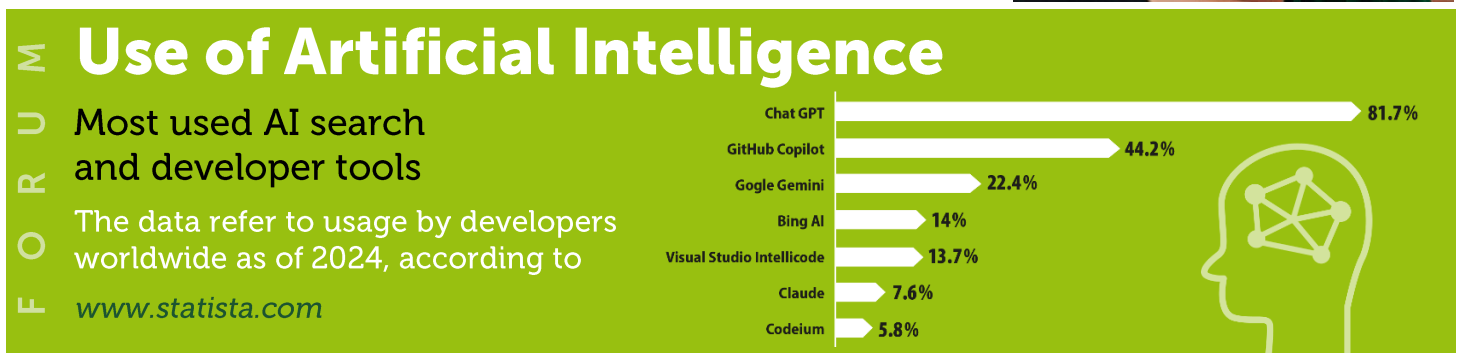
I would recommend not being afraid to experiment, but to think about the consequences. AI can be used very effectively in evangelisation and youth work, but it must always be a tool, not a substitute for human interaction.

Start trying it out on something concrete: have it generate an image for a Bible story (*Leonardo AI, Midjourney*), create a short script for a catechesis (*ChatGPT, Claude*), prepare a graphic for social media (*Canva*), edit a video (*CapCut, Inshot*). Artificial intelligence can save time, but we should not leave it to think and decide. The important thing is to look for ways to use AI to work with young people, not instead of them. We teach them to think critically, to be creative and to seek the truth - and in this no technology can replace the living human being who accompanies them. And this is the task of us Salesians.



Fr Libor Všetula SDB

Originally from the **Czech Republic**, I am a provincial delegate for Social Communication. For six years I led the Salesian community in Brno - Žabovřesky, was the director of the Salesian Media Centre and a lecturer at the Salesian Media School. I dedicate myself to **new media and technology**, teach media education and collaborate with TV Noe. My goal is to combine modern communication tools with pastoral care and evangelisation **to bring Christian values to young people in the digital world.**



## APRIL SALESIAN MISSIONARY INTENTION

### GIVE THANKS > NEW TECHNOLOGIES SALESIAN INTENTION

We give thanks for the missionary presence of Salesians on the digital continent through the new technologies they use for the welfare of the young

Prayer intention of Pope Francis > *For the use of new technologies*

Social Communication Collaborators