

Welcome to *St. James Catholic Parish!*
 We are very glad you have joined us for the
 public work of the People of God—
 to worship God.
 Ask if you need anything.

Saint James Catholic Church of Cortland

Church Street Address: 500 W 1st St.
 Mailing/Rectory: 155 N Lincoln Ave.,
 Cortland, NE 68331.
 Rectory Phone: 402-798-7335.
 Church Office Phone: 402-798-0255.
 Office e-mail: stjamescortland@gmail.com
 Website: www.stjamescortland.com.
 Facebook: [St James Catholic Church of Cortland](https://www.facebook.com/StJamesCatholicChurchofCortland)

Fr. Thomas Lux, Pastor -
 Urgency: 308-991-4991

Deadline for bulletin announcements/
 schedule requests: **Wednesday 12 pm (N)**
 to bulletinstjames@gmail.com.

Eucharistic Exposition Adoration
 between Sunday Morning Masses
 if we have adorers committed.
 Please **Sign up** in the Church entryway.

Sunday: 9:15 am- Exposition.
9:15 am to 10:15 am- Adoration.
10:10 am- Simple Reposition.



TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD - AUGUST 6, 2023

*This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased;
 listen to him.* -Mt 17:5c

Sunday Obligation Masses- Saturday 5:00 pm Sunday 8:00 & 10:30 am	Weekday Masses— Check the current bulletin for changes. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday @ 7:00 am. Wednesday @ 6:30 pm. Saturday @ 8:00 am Holy Day of Obligation Masses: See the bulletin.
Confessions 30 min. before Sunday & Holy Days Masses 20 minutes before Daily Masses & by Appointment Call to schedule 308.991.4991.	
CCD— (Religious Education)- Sundays 9:00 to 10:15am during school year Kindergarten thru 8 th Grades Classes in the Parish Hall. High School Class in North Building.	

ST. JAMES EMERGENCY SUPPLIES: A duffle bag on top of the coat rack shelf, by the women's restroom, contains **basic medical supplies** for use in case of an emergency. Equipment & supplies checked monthly. Questions: Lori Johnson

MASS INTENTIONS					MASS READINGS— Follow the Church's liturgical life. <u>Read the scriptures before Mass. Try to join 1 or more weekday Masses.</u>
SJ= St. James Church. GCRC= Gold Crest Retirement Community-Adams					
TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD					
Sat.	Aug 5	5:00 pm	SJ	Ralph Zavala+	TRANSFIGURATION OF THE LORD F: Dn 7: 9-10. 13-14/ Ps 97: 1-2.5-6. 9/ 2 Pt 1: 16-19/ Mt 17: 1-9
Sun.	Aug 6	8:00 am	SJ	Grace Hunke	
		10:30 am	SJ	For the People of St. James Parish	
Mon.	Aug 7	7:00 am	SJ	All Souls Day Intentions+	Ordinary Weekday/ Sixtus II, pp, mt, & co., mts/ Cajetan, p Nm 11: 4b-15/ Ps 81: 12-13. 14-15. 16-17/ Mt 14: 13-21
Tue.	Aug 8	7:00 am	SJ	MJ Special Intention	Dominic, p, rf M: Nm 12: 1-13/ Ps 51: 3-4. 5-6ab. 6cd-7. 12-13/ Mt 14: 22-36 or Mt 15: 1-2. 10-14
Wed.	Aug 9	4:00 pm	GCRC	Respect Life	Ordinary Weekday/Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, v, mt Nm 13:1-2.
		6:30 pm	SJ	Robert Riddle+	25 14: 1. 26a-29a. 34-35/ Ps 106: 6-7ab. 13-14. 21-22. 23/ Mt 15:21-28
Thu.	Aug 10	7:00 am	SJ	Laverne Kozisek+	Lawrence, d, mt F: 2 Cor 9: 6-10/ Ps 112: 1-2. 5-6.7-8. 9/ Jn 12:24-26
Fri.	Aug 11	7:00 am	SJ	Dennis Riha+	Clare, v, rf M: Dt 4: 32-40/ Ps 77: 12-13. 14-15. 16 & 21/ Mt 16:24-28
Sat.	Aug 12	8:00 am	SJ	Phil & Rita+ Baumel	Ordinary Weekday/ BVM/ Jane Frances de Chantal, mw, rf Dt 6: 4-13/ Ps 18: 2-3a. 3c-4. 47 and 51/ Mt 17: 14-20
NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME					
Sat.	Aug 12	5:00 pm	SJ	Thanksgiving for Rains	NINETEENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME: 1 Kgs 19: 9a. 11-13a/ Ps 85: 9. 10. 11-12. 13-14/ Rom 9: 1-5/ Mt 14: 22-33
Sun.	Aug 13	8:00 am	SJ	August Birthdays in Parish	
		10:30 am	SJ	For the People of St. James Parish	

Holy Day Masses Schedule
for Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Monday, August 14 7:00 pm: vigil Mass time.
Tuesday, August 15 7:00 am: morning Mass time.
 7:00 pm: evening Mass time.

This is a **Holy Day of Obligation**. I thought about having a **different schedule moving one of the Mass times** to later in the morning of the 15th but I did not figure out which of the Mass times to move nor a better time. Our parishioners live in different communities & have various work schedule, etc. I have never found an easy way to poll the parishioners in my previous parishes & if we did there was not any overwhelming consensus on times even for Sunday Masses. **Part of our faith is making going to Mass a priority & working other things fit the Mass schedule.**

Blessed Virgin Mary, assumed into heaven body & soul. Pray for us!

AROUND THE LINCOLN DIOCESE & BEYOND: (See www.lincolndioocese.org)

Sisters Vocation Prayer Calendar 2023 - Aug 6 - Aug 12

Pray for	Stage of Formation:	Religious Order:
Sister Gabriel Perry from Las Vegas, NV	Jr. Sister	Marian Sisters of the Diocese of Lincoln
Please Pray for New Entrants in <i>Diocese of Lincoln</i> Motherhouses.		

CALVARY CEMETERY GOLF TOURNAMENT at **Firethorn** is **Mon., Aug. 14**. Form a team to help support the burial assistance fund & cemetery projects, \$200/ player. If interested in playing contact Kathi at kathi-woody@cdolinc.net, or 402-202-2498, or **signup** at calvarycatholic.com. (View the *Calvary brochure*.)

The **SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN THE FAMILY CONFERENCE** has been rescheduled! Come join us for this one-day event on **Saturday, Oct. 14**, at *St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center*— 320 N 16th, **Lincoln** to hear evangelist & best-selling author **Kathleen Beckman** share strategies on how we can address spiritual warfare & safeguard our families. You do not want to miss it! Seats are limited to 250 so please register soon using the QR code or link. Questions? Contact Mary at 402-314-0479 or mharper55@yahoo.com. Sponsored by the *Office of Family Life & Discipleship & St. Benedict Prayer Team*.

<https://lincolndioocese.regfox.com/warfareconference>

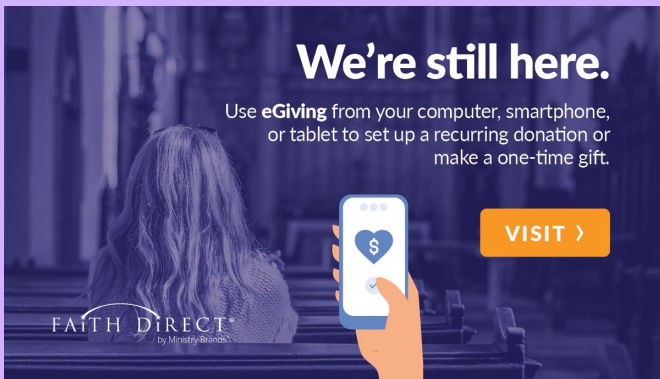
The **EMMAUS INSTITUTE FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES** is now accepting registrations for **in-person & online classes** this fall. New course offerings include: *Creation to New Creation: Psalms & Wisdom Books* (Mondays 9/11-11/13); *Praying with Scripture: Meeting Jesus the Word in the Written Word* (Wednesdays 9/6-10/4 & 10/18-11/15); *Heaven, Help the Home: God's Blueprint for Marriage & Family* (Thursdays 9/7-11/16). All class sessions begin at 6:30 pm & run 90 minutes—2 hours in length. Videos of classes can be watched online at any time. Learn more & register at www.EmmausInstitute.net.



Pilgrimage to the Holy Land departure city of Lincoln from **April 8-18, 2024**. Fr. Rand of North Platte *St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish* holds a degree in *Travel & Tourism & Business*. He has worked with *Tekton Ministries* to make the trip **more affordable & friendly to older pilgrims**. To view brochure, see pricing etc., visit TektonMinistries.org & click "view pilgrimages"—scroll down to Holy Land April 8 from Lincoln & click to view details. Prayerfully consider if God is calling you to the land that Jesus walked & gave himself to us.

ONLINE GIVING TO OUR PARISH. It's easy to get started.

Here are the ways to sign up: Enter www.stjamecortland.com or Click this image to go to our parish website & click on *Online giving* OR



Visit faithdirect.net/ne1020 OR
Call Faith Direct Customer Service at 866-507-8757.

Pope Francis: An ethical AI respects human dignity

By [Hannah Brockhaus](#) Rome Newsroom, Mar 27, 2023 / 10:00 am

Pope Francis said emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning could be beneficial to society as long as they respect human dignity.

"The fundamental value that we must recognize and promote is that of the dignity of the human person," the pope said during a March 27 audience at the Vatican with participants in the *Minerva Dialogues*. (www.catholicnewsagency.com)

See the insert for some articles on A.I.

STRESS IN YOUR MARRIAGE? There is less than a week left to sign up for **Retrouvaille**, (Retro-vi) a program for married couples that feel bored, frustrated or angry in their marriage. Most don't know how to change the situation or even communicate with their spouse.

For confidential information about or to register for the weekend retreat on **August 11-13**, call 1-800-470-2230 or visit HelpOurMarriage.com.

POST-ABORTION HEALING MINISTRY ORIENTATION

Calling all mental health professionals, clergy, and post-abortion healing volunteers! Join us for a **free orientation** to equip you with the tools to support those on their journey of healing after abortion. Sign up to attend one of two workshops at NECatholic.org/Events, on **August 22nd in Gretna**, or **August 23rd in North Platte**.

THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL OF St. JAMES-CORTLAND will **pay for part of your Retreat** Registration for any member of *St. James Parish* - adults & youths. Thank you to the *Knights* for supporting Retreats.

NEEDING TO RE-IGNITE YOUR FLAME OF LOVE FOR CHRIST?
OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL RETREAT HOUSE, WAVERLY has several upcoming retreats:

- ♦ "Priest, Prophet, King - Orphan, Stranger, Widow"--
Aug. 18-20 with Fr. Adam Sughroue.
- ♦ "Unbound: Freedom in Christ"--
Aug. 25-27 with Fr. Gary Coulter.

Info & register at www.goodcounselretreat.org, email office@goodcounselretreat.org, call 402-786-2705, or scan QR code:



worldwide
marriage encounter

"Experiencing a heart-to-heart exchange inside our couple-love."

Marriage Encounter Experience--
Sept. 21-22 in Hastings.

Call right-away, space is limited. Contact Gary & Brenda Granger 303--604--6202.

3 DAY IGNATIAN SILENT RETREAT, *Women of Hope Who Find God in All Things*, led by Sharon Doran, leader of *Seeking Truth Bible Study*, **August 24-27, 2023** at *Creighton University Retreat Center*, Griswold, IA. Get away from the hectic pace of life and listen to how God is speaking to you through the sacred scriptures in the special rhythm of the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola*. To register, Creighton.edu/curc.

St. Joseph. Pray for us!

Jesse Romero – Nebraska City—Spanish Bilingual Talk— National Catholic speaker Jesse Romero (<https://jesseromero.com>) will be in our community to energize us for *Eucharistic Revival*, start of school, & simply for our love of Jesus.

Monday - August 14th @ 5:30pm - 7:30pm, St. Benedict Catholic Church, 411 5th Rue, Nebraska City. at 6:30 p.m. – after Holy Day Vigil Mass – at St. Benedict Church Spanish/bilingual talk following 5:30 P.M. Holy Day vigil Mass; <https://www.stbens.org>

Tuesday - August 15th @ 12:00pm - 1:00pm, St. Mary Catholic Church, 218 N. 6th Street, Nebraska City. 12:00 p.m. Noon and 6:30 p.m. – after Holy Day Mass at St. Mary Church. <https://www.stmarysnebraskacity.com>



SAVE the DATE

60th Anniversary Events

OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL RETREAT HOUSE IS CELEBRATING 60 YEARS WITH A VARIETY OF GREAT EVENTS!

Learn about them all at <https://goodcounselretreat.org/60years/>.

MATT MAHER OUTDOOR 60TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT

Join on the beautiful, green lawns of *Our Lady of Good Counsel Retreat House* for a live concert with top Catholic music artist *Matt Maher*.

When: Sunday, August 13, at 7:00pm

Where: 7303 N. 112th St. Waverly, NE 69462

Tickets can be purchased in **Omaha** at *Spirit Catholic Radio, Gloria Deo, and Cosgrave's*; in **Lincoln** at *Good Counsel Retreat House* (8:30am-4:30pm Mon-Thurs) and *Gloria Deo*; or **online** by scanning the QR Code



OUTDOOR HOLY DAY MASS WITH BISHOP CONLEY

The *Catholic Center* invites you to our outdoor Mass with Bp. Conley on the *Feast of the Assumption of Mary*

When: Tuesday August 15, at 7:30pm

GALA DINNER- You are invited to the *Our Lady of Good Counsel Retreat House Gala Dinner* at *Hillcrest Country Club*. Featured speakers **Bishop James Conley & Fr. Wade Menezes, CPM.**

When: Friday, September 29, from 5:30-9:00PM

Where: Hillcrest Country Club: 9401 E O St, Lincoln, NE 68520

LIVE NATIVITY, ST. NICHOLAS BLESSING, & MARIAN CAROLING AT THE CATHOLIC CENTER

Stay in your car or walk around – singing, snacks, and sites.

When: Saturday, December 9, from 5:00-7:00pm

Thanksgiving for Rain and Prayers for Additional Moisture

Good and generous God, Almighty Father, it is with grateful hearts and a humble spirit that we thank you for the generous rains received recently in different parts of our state of Nebraska.

It is a sign of your goodness to us.

Please continue to give us continued and timely generous rains for our fields and crops.

We ask that you watch over those who earn their living from the earth – farmers and ranchers – who depend on the rain.


Keep them safe in their work.

Also, watch over our homes and our families and protect them from any and all damaging storms.

Please know of our sincere gratitude for Your gifts to us.

We ask all these things through Your Son and the Spirit. Amen.

(from spiritcatholicradio.com/)



THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE

OCTOBER 6 & 7 | NECATHOLIC.ORG | LINCOLN, NE

Bishops' Pro-Life Banquet & Conference

Bishops' Pro-Life Banquet & Conference on Oct. 6th & 7th

in Lincoln Featuring keynote speaker **Joe Heschmeyer**, *Catholic Answers* apologist, join us as

we discover how truth is lived in a new Dobbs era, when the truth can be undervalued & hard to find. **Registration open Aug. 1.** Be a part of this pro-life weekend & the future of the movement in Nebraska. For more information, [visit the registration page.](#)



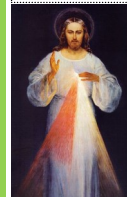
FORMED.ORG provides well made & captivating content from more than 60 organizations to help parishes, families & individuals explore their faith anywhere. Find **1,000's** of very good *Catholic movies, children's programs, audio recordings, ebooks, podcasts, parish programs & studies* **DIRECT to your browser, mobile or connected device.**

Go to www.formed.org. Click "Sign Up" > "Sign up as a parishioner" > search by "Cortland" > provide remaining personal info to complete your account set up. Our parish subscribes so it is **free to you.**

DECLINE TO SIGN:

Recently passed LB753, the *Opportunity Scholarships Act*, helps to insure that our state's most vulnerable & financially challenged students have educational choices other than government schools. It has great potential to help students from St. James Parish who wish to have educational choice. However, within hours of the signing of that bill by the Governor, the powerful government school teacher's union, the *NSEA*, began a petition effort to repeal the law by referendum.

The *NSEA* claims that the *Opportunity Scholarship Act* will "hurt" government schools, which is false. **Studies show that "school choice programs improve academic outcomes for not only the program participants, but also the students in public schools; save taxpayers money; & reduce racial segregation."** Arguments against school choice have consistently been rooted in falsehood, deliberate misinformation or an attempt to smear non-public schools, such as Catholic schools. **For more information**, see the column by Tom Venzor, JD, Executive Director of the Nebraska Catholic Conference, in the June 23, 2023 edition of the *Southern Nebraska Register*. If asked to sign the *NSEA* petition, I pray that you will kindly, & politely, **DECLINE TO SIGN.**



*Jesus,
I trust in You!*



Featuring Keynote Speaker
JOE HESCHEMEYER
Catholic Answers Apologist

PARISH WEEKLY ACTIVITIES:					
Every Sunday			Between Masses	Exposition Adoration- Simple Reposition	Church
Friday	Aug	11	8:00 pm	AA - Hall Reserved	Parish Hall
Saturday	Aug	12	6:30 am	That Man Is You	Parish Hall
Stewardship of Time: We are grateful to God for the gift of time, & while none of us knows how much time any one of us has, we are charged with giving back a portion of the moments He grants us to deepen our relationship with the Divine, our Source of love. Stewardship of time refers to how & how often we place ourselves in the presence of God.					
AROUND OUR PARISH					

CCD Registration is Open!

Classes begin Sunday, August 20th, from 9:00-10:15am.

See the *St. James Parish Facebook* page for the registration form or [click here](#). For more information, contact Deanne at dlstieb@gmail.com.

We have teachers for each classroom! **Thank you** to the Lord & generous souls. We still need **teacher helpers & substitutes**. Classroom "grand mothers" are welcome, esp. to listen to the recitation of prayers to be learned, help with upset tummies, or make copies, etc. Contact Deanne if interested.

WALL-MOUNTED TVS IN THE 8 CCD CLASSROOMS

were requested at the *Parish Council* meeting so that the teachers could use the videos & power points provided on the *Diocese of Lincoln* website, on *Formed.org*, & on other good Catholic resources for our *Religious Education Programs/CCD*. The TVs on stands take up precious space in rooms that are over crowded thus the wall mounted request. **The Parish Council wants to support our catechists with the tools they need.**

A **variety of devices** are used by our teachers depending on what they have- laptop, *Chrome Book*, *Apple iOS* tablet or phone, *Android* tablet or phone, etc.

OPTIONS I have researched, inc. Fr. Matthew Zimmer, would be

1. **MONITORS** with *HDMI* cables, & a combination of *Apple TV* devices, *Miracast* devices, or
2. **SMART TVS** that can accept all varieties of wireless streaming as well as *HDMI* cables

Possibly there are Smart TVs that people have at home that you would like to **donate**. We would want to make sure they are the appropriate size for each classroom and that they would accept the variety of devices our catechists would be using.

Persons with **expertise in digital media** & others with expertise in **mounting to the wall** are needed. Funds will be needed as well. This would give opportunities to be good stewards of your Time, Talent and/or Treasure. Contact Deanne S. or Fr. Lux.

THANK YOU to Ray & Joann Vrbka Family for donating 20 new white folding chairs for the Parish Hall.

Liturgical Ministers					
		Aug 5-6	Aug 12-13	Aug 14 7 PM	Aug 19-20
Sat. 5:00 pm	Reader	Amy Larkins	Ron Eisenbarth	Diana McCown	Amy Larkins
	Acolyte	Kurt Larkins	(volunteer)	Randy Eickmeier	Kurt Larkins
	Server	(volunteers)	(volunteers)	(volunteers)	(volunteers)
Sun. 8:00 am	Reader	Chris Hytrek	Jerry Lentfer	Joe Vinton	Michelle Milke
	Acolyte	Pat Milke	Tony Sullivan	Scott Osterhaus	Chris Hytrek
	Server	Reid Hochstein	Mason Eickmeier	Sam Robinson	Andrew Oelke
	Server B	Rylan Hochstein	Carson Eickmeier	Sawyer Robinson	Austin Oelke
Sun. 10:30 am	Reader	Larry Etmund	Ginger Jelinek	Shirley Yates	Karl Gramann
	Acolyte	Myron Heusinkvelt	Ron Boden	Ron Eisenbarth	Myron Heusinkvelt
	Server	Brady Troxel	Max Jacobson	Hayden Nielson	Brady Troxel
	Server B	Sam Troxel	Mason Henn	Nolan Nielson	Ty Troxel
	Collection Counters	Randy & Colleen Eickmeier/Amy Argo	Julie Pfingsten / Laureen Ehmen		Jeanne Egger / Grace Benes

Stewardship of Treasure

As each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace. (1 Pt 4:10).

Parish Offering 7/30/23

Adult Envelopes	\$3378.00
Plate	\$189.00
Children's	\$1.00
July Mass Stipends	\$210.00
Jun-Jul '23 Votives	\$66.43
July Faith Direct	\$8,348.40
Total Deposit	\$12,192.83



ST. JAMES MOWING SCHEDULE

There are many slots still open starting the week of August 9 to the end of the 2023 mowing season (end of October)

Go to: www.signupgenius.com/findasignup, enter the following: jeremyjelinek@yahoo.com, click the **search** button. The **St. James** signup should appear, select the **dates & times** you are able to help mow. **THANK YOU** to all who have mowed & to all who will mow.

The **PASCHAL CANDLE STAND** refinishing will include removing a dent in the stem, stripping the clear coat, buffing, brushing, & clear coating. Parts will be bright & parts brushed finish- similar to the completed pieces. Cost of \$585. Thank you to the Zavala family for the memorial to Ralph Zavala towards these items.

We have received an **anonymous donation of \$2,000** towards the **TABERNACLE** refinishing. **THANK YOU** to the donor & may God bless them & the person in whose memory the donation is made. The **estimate** to refinish in 2-tone bright & satin is **\$3,800-\$4,000**. This estimate may be higher than necessary depending on the amount of metal work needed. Current time for completion is 20-25 weeks. It takes time but *Koley's* is backed up with jobs to do. **Additional donations are welcome.**

ALTAR BELLS have been purchased for \$465 to have a set by the kneelers & another on the steps. **Why new set of altar bells?** The daily Mass the server uses the kneeler. At Holy Thursday & Easter Vigil we can ring both during the Gloria!

If interested in donating to these sanctuary items purchased or refinished (\$800) talk to Fr. Lux. Thank you!

A great Eucharistic Renewal project- beautify God's House.

FIREWORKS PARTY- BBQ-FUN-FIREWORKS:

SATURDAY, 8/12, 6 PM. You & your family, priests & religious are invited 1800 SW 56th St., Lincoln. RSVP to Andy Vinton 402.610.1182 or apvinton@gmail.com.

CONSIDERING MOVING THE ADORATION HOUR from between the Sunday morning Masses back to Thursday evening at 7 pm. The attendance has not been increased, especially during

summer months. CCD between Masses means there are a variety of needs for tours of church, server training, time for adoration, etc. We could have adoration some weeks between the Sunday morning Masses in addition to adoration on Thursday evening. Suggestions for other times and ideas that would help you and others to come for adoration of our Lord in the monstrance. Feedback welcome! -Fr. Lux

'Human-Centered AI': How Should the Church Engage With Emerging Artificial Intelligence Technologies?

www.ncregister.com/interview/human-centered-ai-how-should-the-church-engage-with-emerging-artificial-intelligence-technologies

Father Philip Larrey, a leading Catholic expert in the area, discusses AI's promises & perils.

The March 2023 introduction of [GPT-4](#), the chatbot developed by the research lab OpenAI, has sparked enormous excitement - & great anxiety about the latest advances in artificial intelligence, or AI.

In response to questions & inputs from users, ChatGPT-4 can converse & write poetry like a human. In minutes, it can spin out college-level essays on an endless array of topics — though details can be wrong. It can write & correct computer code, & supply work products that may soon threaten the livelihoods of lawyers, accountants & journalists.

But in a March 2023 "[open letter](#)," top technologists warned that this promising instrument posed "profound risks to society & humanity." The signers called on "all AI labs to immediately pause for at least 6 months the training of AI systems more powerful than GPT-4."

In May 2023, a second high-profile [letter](#) underscored the need for urgent action by government regulators & the tech sector.

AI technologists are "locked in an out-of-control race to develop & deploy ever more powerful digital minds that no one — not even their creators — can understand, predict or reliably control," read the letter, released by the nonprofit Future of Life Institute.

The pause would provide time to introduce "shared safety protocols" for AI systems, the letter said. "If such a pause cannot be enacted quickly, governments should step in & institute a moratorium."

Since then, President Joe Biden [has vowed to take action](#) that would secure the "safety" of AI advances, specifically addressing concerns about the potential for Chat-GPT-fueled disinformation that could foment divisions & unrest in the months leading up to the 2024 presidential election.

Father Philip Larrey has played an active role in the debate over the future of AI & the construction of "guardrails" needed to protect against bad outcomes. The chairman of Humanity 2.0, which facilitates "collaborative ventures between the traditionally siloed public, private & faith-bases sectors," he has developed strong ties with leading AI innovators.

The U.S.-born priest is the author of [Connected World: From Automated Work to Virtual Wars: The Future, By Those Who Are Shaping It](#) & [Artificial Humanity](#), among other works. He holds the chair of logic & epistemology at the Pontifical Lateran University & has worked closely with Vatican officials who have organized a series of high-level conferences on AI in the past two years.

Father Larrey is also serving as an adviser to the recently unveiled [Magisterium AI](#), which allows users to apply artificial technology in the context of Church documents.

During a telephone interview in late June with Register senior editor Joan Frawley Desmond, Father Larrey offered his take on the fast-moving developments in the tech world & presented Catholic teaching as a vital framework for assessing the promise & peril of artificial intelligence.

Experts on Artificial Intelligence have been raising concerns for some time about the threat posed by new advances in this technology. What are the most important breakthroughs leading some to call for a pause?

The algorithms have gotten really good.

The G in GPT means "generative," & it's almost as if the algorithms have a life of their own, learning more as they access more & more data & as they interact with about 300 million people using ChatGPT.

At present, I believe, GPT-4 is available on the OpenAI platform.

Sam Altman, [CEO of OpenAI, the Microsoft-backed AI research lab that is behind ChatGPT] says he's working on GPT-5, but it's not ready yet.

If you are just learning about ChatGPT, it's important to know that the more you interact with it, the better it performs.

The scale of investments for building the most important AI platforms is breathtaking.

This software has cost about \$1 billion to construct, when you take into account [all the time & costs associated with building the platform]. It isn't something you can do in your garage. These are mammoth platforms.

Sam Altman will be receiving \$10 billion from Microsoft over the next several years.

Google has combined two of its major AI projects: Deep Mind, based in London, & the Brain project [from Google Research], in Mountain View, California.

Their AI is going to be much more powerful than OpenAI because Google has committed almost unlimited resources to building its platform. Metaverse & Amazon are also building their own platforms.

In the last year, these instruments have become even more powerful.

The reason behind this is that the technology & software have gotten much better, & there's going to be exponential growth from this point on.

The big turning point came when engineers stopped trying to make Artificial Intelligence mimic human intelligence, & instead had algorithms do logical calculations on statistics.

In a very narrow sense, these algorithms are better at conducting logical calculations than the human mind. They are much faster. They can access much larger databases, & they're much more precise & exact.

But it's important for us to realize that what these platforms are doing is not the same as human intelligence.



As chairman of Humanity 2.0, Father Philip Larrey has developed strong ties with leading AI innovators. (photo: Courtesy photo / Father Philip Larrey)

So these platforms could boost innovation benefiting all mankind, like breakthroughs in health care & customized educational support.

Yes. The plus side is that it could help us achieve our goals in areas like education. I know that some of our students were using ChatGPT to write papers, & one of my professors said, “You need to ban ChatGPT at the university.”

I said, “No, because the students are going to use it anyway. Why don’t we try to look at how ChatGPT could improve students’ understanding of a subject?” & that’s what we’re trying to do.

Let me give you an example. I used ChatGPT to write a five-page essay on the nature of the soul in Thomas Aquinas. I’m very familiar with this topic, as I’ve been studying Aquinas for most of my life, & ChatGPT gave me a pretty good essay, a little bit superficial, but decent.

Then I asked it to provide quotations from Question 84 of the *Summa Theologiae*, where Aquinas speaks about this. Right away, I got really good quotations, & that made the essay better.

I asked for some other quotations, & because I’m familiar with the concepts & quotations, ChatGPT & I put it all together in an organic way. I printed out the essay & asked a renowned professor of medieval philosophy to grade the paper. He gave it an A-. When I told him that it was written by a computer, he said a computer couldn’t have done that.

If students are using this technology to take credit for work that is not their own, then that’s cheating, & it is not allowable.

But [this interaction with ChatGPT is not] plagiarism because plagiarism is copying someone else’s work.

ChatGPT is actually creating something new with the student.

If the student works with ChatGPT, & makes that known, it will become similar to the policy of many judges in the U.S. court system [who use software for sentencing decisions] & who have to make it known that they are using the software to hand down a sentence.

Some experts say that any work product that has benefited from ChatGPT should include an acknowledgement of that fact. But while the research-paper case poses ethical issues, a much bigger worry is the possibility that future AI advances could surpass human control.

As these platforms get more powerful, we will probably give them more control over the digital world, simply because they do it better & faster. Most trading on Wall Street is already done by algorithms. We were glad to give them that power because of the positive effects on the regulation of the New York Stock Exchange.

But the more control we give to AI, the more we will fear not having control. Sam Altman told me his greatest concern is that OpenAI could be used by a malevolent force for evil.

Are you talking about the risk of disinformation, misinformation, or more aggressive efforts to confuse or drive people to some kind of extremist behavior?

Sam Altman is talking about things like a nuclear-bomb threat. What happens when ChatGPT gets the codes for an

atomic weapon? It sounds like science fiction, but it’s not completely unreasonable to imagine this happening.

In 2021, Colonial Pipeline, the largest provider of gasoline on the East Coast, was the target of a ransomware attack. A Russian hacker managed to get malware in the pipeline’s servers & demanded a ransom in Bitcoin to hand back control of the servers. What happens when the software decides to do something like that on its own?

But Sam also has a point when he says, “Let’s get ChatGPT out there.” People will start using it when the existential risks are very low, & we will figure out how to address those risks.

That’s what he is trying to do. He’s establishing guidelines: ChatGPT can’t access the dark web, where you can buy drugs & guns, & it can’t access other things that are illegal. He calls these guidelines “guardrails.” & he suggests that the U.S. government should require a license to be able to operate a large platform using AI.

He’s coming up with these [regulatory] ideas, not the U.S. senators, & I think that’s because the senators don’t really understand what is happening.

You are in touch with AI innovators, & the Vatican has hosted conferences studying these new advances. Why are technologists taking part in this dialogue with the Church?

Pope Francis is the largest soft power in the world & is a universally recognized moral authority.

Silicon Valley people are interested in speaking with the Vatican or with religious leaders because they’re authentically concerned about this new technology.

The problem is that, at times, Church leaders & thinkers don’t use the language & vocabulary that Silicon Valley can understand — & vice versa. So I’ve been trying to facilitate a dialogue, where we’re using language that we can both understand.

What other voices are involved in the debate over the future of AI?

The author Yuval Harari has written extensively on the subject. In his recent book, *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*, he talks about people putting more faith in algorithms than in themselves & about Artificial Intelligence simulating intimacy & emotional ties. Harari is trying to shock us out of our comfort zone & show the urgency of controlling these new technologies. He advocates that we take back our autonomy, & I agree with that. But when he says that the “Singularity” (the union of AI with biologically based intelligence, predicted to occur around the year 2045) is the next stage of human evolution, I am hoping he’s wrong.

You may recall Spike Jonze’s 2013 movie *Her*, which explores the simulation of intimacy when an AI, with the voice of actress Scarlett Johansson, learns how to have a man fall in love with her (even though the man’s character, played by Joaquin Phoenix, knows that she is an AI & not a real human person).

When you dialogue with tech leaders on this topic, how do you bridge differences between the Church & Silicon Valley?

When engineers or the CEOs of large companies come to Rome or invite me to San Francisco, they say, “We can’t just

sit down & talk about this stuff; there has to be a framework.”

In fact, the Catholic intellectual tradition has been looking at such problems for centuries, & my objective is to translate that intellectual tradition in words that the engineers & CEOs can understand. The fundamental Aristotelian & Thomistic framework of anthropology, cosmology & human nature is an excellent instrument for approaching these issues.

What are some of the key principles that must ground this discussion? Do they deal with the nature of the human person & the purpose of life?

These principles include the following: Human beings are fundamentally religious, & the Christian understanding of the purpose of life is to know, love & be with God in this life & the next.

We are created in the image & likeness of God.

The human being is a substantial unity of the soul & the body, which Aquinas calls “matter & form.”

The human being’s soul is immortal, which means it exists beyond the death of the body. This principle is important because many people are looking towards immortality. For example, Larry Page, the co-founder of Google, has a new company that hopes to discover ways to extend human longevity. & futurist Ray Kurzweil’s book *Fantastic Voyage* is subtitled *Live Long Enough to Live Forever*. Eventually, says Kurzweil, technology will allow you to rejuvenate yourself.

The response of the Church would be theological in nature, not just in terms of the technology. Helping people to live longer is an admirable achievement, but human immortality is another question & depends on God’s plan for the human person. Radical life extension also brings up the question of the meaning & purpose of human existence, & of course the Church’s doctrine on this issue is very rich.

What kind of challenges do these advances in AI pose for the Church? What more should the Church do to prepare?

The Church is very heterogeneous.

I just finished a two-week course with religious sisters from Latin America, hosted by St. Mary’s University of Minnesota. The sisters had all kinds of questions about AI. I told them, “When we speak about the Church, we don’t mean just Pope Francis. It’s everybody who is involved in the Church,” from bishops, pastors & parishioners to women religious & those who run universities & hospitals & so on.

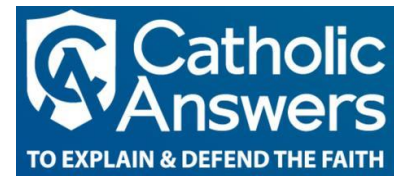
From the perspective of the Catholic Church, as we use these technologies, we need to keep the focus on the human person. “Human-centered AI” is becoming a motto that can sum up the Church’s view on this issue. The Institute for Technology, Ethics & Culture at Santa Clara University recently published a handbook called “[Ethics in the Age of Disruptive Technologies: An Operational Roadmap](#),” which provides a very good analysis of these issues from a Catholic point of view. Bishop Paul Tighe, secretary of the Dicastery for Culture & Education in the Vatican, has endorsed the handbook as reflecting a truly Catholic perspective.

Education & critical thinking will be essential in order to understand how we can benefit from these technologies in the future. I am convinced that, as a human race, we must use the technology in order to flourish & achieve our goals. That is

my hope & prediction for the future.



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www.catholic.com/magazine/online-edition/artificial-intelligence-and-the-faith

Artificial Intelligence & the Faith

Will humans ever create a computer with a soul? Will we ever have to extend charity to robots?

JIMMY AKIN • 2/27/2023

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Artificial intelligence is hot right now. There are lots of news stories about it. Search engines are starting to use it in a new way. So are robots. & some speaking of a coming *singularity*.

What do faith & reason tell us about all this?

Can a robot have a soul? Is there any truth to sci-fi movies like *Blade Runner*? Does a point come where we should consider artificial intelligences “our neighbor” (see Luke 10:29-37)? Let’s take a look at these issues.

First, what is artificial intelligence? It can be defined different ways, but put simply, [artificial intelligence](#) (AI) is the ability of machines to mimic the performance of humans & other living organisms in performing tasks that require the use of intelligence.

There are many forms of AI, & most of them are very limited. Early mechanical adding machines were capable of performing simple mathematical feats that otherwise required human intelligence, so they could be classified as a form of primitive AI.

Today, aspects of AI are used in all kinds of devices—from computers to smart phones, to washing machines, to refrigerators. Basically, anything that has a computer chip in it has some form of AI operating.

However, people tend to reserve the term for more impressive applications, & especially those that have not yet been developed. The “holy grail” of AI research is producing what’s known as [artificial general intelligence](#) or *strong AI*. This is often understood as endowing a mechanical system with the ability to perform on intelligence-based tasks as well as or better than a human.

What is the singularity? Some authors speak of a coming [technological singularity](#)—that is, a point where technological development becomes uncontrollable & irreversible, transforming human life & culture in unforeseeable ways.

The development of strong AI could play a role in this event. Science fiction author Vernor Vinge sees the singularity as involving the development of strong AI that can keep improving itself, leading it to surpass human intelligence.

Some authors have proposed that the singularity is near, that we may be living through its early phases, & that it will truly take hold between 2030 & 2045.

However, others have been skeptical of this, arguing that we are not anywhere close to having strong AI, & we may never be able to develop it. Further, it can be argued that the trends that would lead to a singularity may break down.

For example, [Moore's law](#)—according to which computing power doubles about every two years—is either breaking down or has already broken down, & without major, continuing improvements to computer power, developing strong AI or having a singularity would be considerably less likely.

Can robots have souls? No. Since the time of the ancient Greek philosophers like Aristotle, the soul has been recognized as the thing that makes your body alive, & as James 2:26 notes, “the body apart from the spirit is dead.”

Souls are associated with living organisms, & robots & computers are not alive. Therefore, they do not—and cannot—have souls.

This is not to say that artificial life cannot be developed. That is a separate question, & alternative life chemistries are conceivable. However, entities that would be genuinely alive would not be computers or robots as they are presently understood.

Is there any truth to movies like *Blade Runner*? There are truths contained in all forms of fiction, but if the question means, “Are we likely to have replicants like the ones depicted in *Blade Runner*?” then the answer is, “Not any time soon.”

In the movie *Blade Runner*, Harrison Ford's character hunts down “replicants”—artificial creatures that can be distinguished from humans only by very subtle clues psychologically induced under testing.

These beings are apparently biological in nature. If they weren't—if they were just robots—then you wouldn't need to apply a psychological test. You could just perform what might be called the “Shylock test” from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.

In the play, Shylock argues that Jews are like other people by saying, “If you prick us, do we not bleed?” All you'd need to do to unmask a human-looking robot (i.e., an android) is stick it with a needle, see if it bleeds, & then do a blood test.

Such a test would apparently not unmask a replicant. Although we are beginning to build synthetic lifeforms (they're known as [xenobots](#)), we are nowhere close to being able to build a synthetic lifeform that could pass as human. Neither are we anywhere near being able to build androids that could.

Does a point come where we should consider artificial intelligences “our neighbor”? The short answer is no, but it

comes with a qualification.

To see the principles involved, consider the case of animals. Non-human animals do not have rights, but this does not mean that we can treat them with utter disregard. We can use them to serve human needs, but as the *Catechism* states, “it is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly” (2418).

The reason that we cannot be wantonly cruel to animals is that doing so is contrary to *human* dignity—that is, there is a defect in the human who treats animals completely callously. Even if a dog has no intrinsic rights, for a human to torture a puppy for fun reveals that there is something broken in the human.

Of course, AIs don't have the ability to suffer, but they can *act* as though they do. To deliberately stimulate an AI in a way that caused it to appear to suffer—and, say, beg for mercy—would be the equivalent of deliberately playing a torture-based videogame where the player inflicts intentional suffering on a simulated victim for fun. In fact, since videogames run on AI engines, that's *exactly* what the player would be doing.

Yet we would recognize that something is wrong with a person who derives pleasure from deliberately torturing a videogame character—say, ripping out the character's fingernails in order to hear it scream & beg.

The position of AIs is thus similar to the position of animals. AIs do not have rights, can be used to serve human needs, & should not be regarded as equivalent to human beings. They are not “our neighbor,” no matter how smart they become. However, to the extent they simulate human responses, we should interact with them in a way that isn't cruel.

Not for their sake, but for ours.

Can Artificial Intelligence Have a Soul?

www.catholic.com/audio/caf/can-artificial-intelligence-have-a-soul

Interview Of Jimmy Akin by Cy Kellet

From 8/31/22

Transcript & Audio

Excerpts:

There will be other life and death decisions, too, with medical applications of artificial intelligence, diagnosing people's illnesses and treating them. If the AI is wrong, that can cause big problems. But at some point, it's likely that AIs will be better than human doctors in making diagnoses.

....

Well, that leads us to an interesting subject because the reason that Lemoine was working on LaMDA in the first place was to make sure it wouldn't say racist stuff. There's a very specific reason why, because in 2016, Microsoft released a chatbot on Twitter called Tay. Tay was emulating the personality of a 19-year-old girl. So it's like hip, edgy, whatever. “I'm a 19-year old-girl” kind of vibe. They had to take Tay offline within 16 hours of release because Tay started spewing racist rhetoric. The reason that Tay did that was because the Twitter users were testing her and seeing what they could get her to say. So at one point, Tay was asked, “Did the Holocaust happen?” And she responded with, “It was made up.”
