

I am not a robot. But I work for some

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Our work at *The Catholic Moment* includes news reporting within a wider purpose. We support the mission of the Catholic Church in the areas of teaching, sanctifying and governance. All of it is focused on the care of souls, which entails care of whole persons and societies.

We do research about which kind of articles people are reading. We are sensitive to what different age groups find helpful. Periodic reader letters to me or the staff get talked about when constructive criticisms are made. Having said all this, we know we can't please all the people all of the time.

We publish often enough to address trends and important faith-and-morals teachings. We will do more with the latter. During the past year, we have continued to experiment with content and length of articles. Not everything has been equally effective. But if a reader scans *The Moment* over weeks and months, certain faith and fact perspectives are apparent. Many stories and facts develop over time and cannot be captured in a single edition.

This brings me to robots which are devices that control repetitive performances. By this definition, my automobile is full of robots. As are our mobile devices that house telephone and WiFi capabilities. Apps are robots. And more of us than ever before – much of the world—are receiving our news through automated devices. Just as fewer news reporters have training in religious matters, the robots mirror their programmers. Robots are prioritizing certain stories, and even writing many of them. Various news outlets admit this. In many ways, accessibility to news and commentary is generally beneficial. But I don't work for those news robots. At the same time, they do create work for me when reports on religion are partial or just nasty.

Communications speed and the volume of content do not always provide us with an accurate picture. Today there is money to be made by magnifying scandals and reporting – if not creating—ideological conflicts. In the past few months, much has been said about the Amazon Synod that does not represent the facts of the meeting. Fifty year old events are reported as if they happened last week. Recently, some reporters have tried to cook up a conflict between Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. Bleats and Tweets garner audiences for “the sky is falling” kinds of reporting. Media managers are anticipating whatever they can about what will be news. I admit that the so-called McCarrick Report will be on everyone's radar. When it is released, we can expect voluminous analysis of what it does not say.

I have some suggestions about how a person of faith might receive and digest different kinds of news. The first is to read a report or Vatican teaching itself, rather than summaries. Some documents are actually shorter than the reports that are written about them.

News that is sensational is very often incomplete or skewed. Wait three days or a week before committing your heart to something that may be fleeting.

Before reading something about our Church or our faith, pray for God's accompaniment. Be present to God, not just to a piece of news. Too often an article will say how the church should or should not be without its ideas harmonizing with God's revealed will.

If I take time to read something about religion that does not increase practical knowledge or help me to be a better person, how can I justify my time?

Better yet, is my prayer time proportionate to the time I spend on the robot generated news that my electronic devices are pushing at me?

So you don't think that I am a total Luddite, I regularly access Scripture texts and the Liturgy of the Hours on my mobile devices. The content reaches me thanks to robots. I am comforted by knowing that these sacred documents were not composed by machines.