

“Cell-phone Mania”

By Father John Catoir

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Cell-phone mania has become a serious epidemic. It even threatens our spiritual well-being. Please give me a minute to explain.

A neighbor gave her 14-year-old daughter a birthday party, and noticed how quiet everyone was. She went into the room, and found them all on their cell phones. She was shocked and immediately reacted, "Put down those phones right now, this is supposed to be a party - have some fun." Later, after her daughters initial embarrassment, they all became normally boisterous, and had a happy time.

The practice of zoning out during family meals in order to use a cell phone is discourteous and unacceptable. Dinner is family time. It should be a loving exchange of ideas, and a sharing of feelings. Today, the family meal is treated by some as a pit stop. Youngsters have more important things on their minds than family unity. There should be a rule in every home: no cell phones for one hour during the family meal. Family comes first.

Jesus said, "Love one another." St. Peter added, "Be of one mind, love one another as brothers, be courteous."

Courtesy is defined as the politeness of one's attitude and behavior toward others. This implies good manners, civility and respect.

One of the more serious repercussions of cell-phone mania involves automobile accidents caused by the practice of texting while driving. Texting while driving is a sin. We have always been taught not to put ourselves in the occasion of sin. To do so makes us vulnerable to possible disaster. Unnecessary risks are a sinful choices.

You May question my use of the word sin in this connection, but all sin involves actions that are displeasing to God. He loves you, and sin is doing something that hurts the one He loves. We commit many sins of deliberate inadvertence. Parents need to assert their authority more in this area, and insist upon courtesy in all things. No cell phones during the dinner hour.

Have you ever noticed how doctors seem to focus more on record keeping than on the patient. They open the laptop, type in some statistics, and while still looking at the screen, ask a few questions without looking up. Eventually they do look at you, and say a few words, but before you know it the visit is over. Are doctors losing the art of courtesy?

Dr. Abraham Nussbaum, author of "The Finest Traditions of My Calling" wrote in the Wall Street Journal -5/9/16, "Many doctors are burning out, and advising against a medical career." He blamed it on their scientific approach to medicine, and recommended that doctors revive their commitment to the Hippocratic Oath, which ends, "May I always act so as to preserve the finest traditions of my calling, and may I experience the joy of healing those who seek my help." This quote moved me deeply.

Since Jesus said, "I've come that your joy may be full," I wonder how He must feel about so many of his children becoming addicted to their cell phones. It seems clear to me that our electronic toys and tools are slowly diminishing our sensitivity to the feelings of others. Charity begins at home.