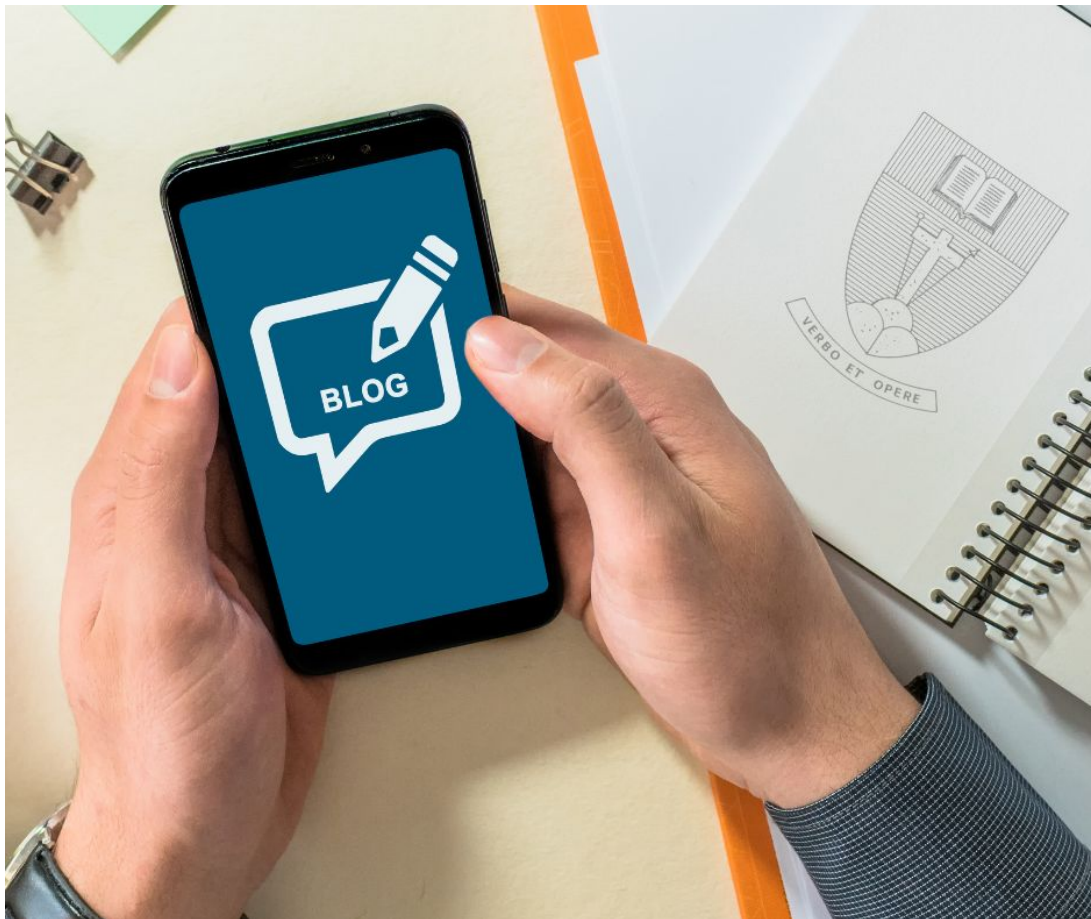


Morality in the digital age

November 2, 2025



(from the Alphonsian Academy Blog)

Some scholars point out that, in today's society, the morality of *self-denial* has been replaced by the morality of *self-fulfilment*. While the former promoted social virtues and universal values—such as sincerity, loyalty, sacrifice, responsibility, and fidelity to the social group—the new morality focuses on psychological values [1].

Instead of prioritizing self-control and discipline over one's impulses, happiness is now considered to depend on being true to oneself and achieving personal authenticity. As early as 1950, Riesman asserted that external norms had been replaced by internal criteria.

An elderly friar in my community aptly expressed this change, saying: "When I entered religious life, I was told that I was professing to begin a path of penance. Now young people enter to be happy. How everything has changed!"

1. Enhance inner motivations

In this new context, parents, educators, and mentors must begin with the desire for self-realization that resides in young people, striving to guide it appropriately. The goal is for young people to feel motivated to contribute actively and generously in the spheres where they find themselves: family, education, and society. Rather than insisting on what they should or should not do, mentors should show them the path toward which they can strive.

Thus, the formative accompaniment does not seek to impose external rules, but to awaken in

We use cookies to ensure that we give you the best experience on our website. If you continue to use this site we will assume that you are happy with it.

Ok No Privacy policy

This approach not only responds to current cultural changes but also finds its foundation in biblical tradition, where the experience of God's love (indicative) is what motivates commitment and dedication (imperative). Likewise, in the spiritual life, mystical experience accompanies and gives meaning to ascetic commitment. Karl Rahner said that the Christian of the future will be a "mystic"—that is, a person who has experienced something—or will not be a Christian (Rahner 1969, 25).

2. Priority of the indicative over the imperative

Formators must motivate digital natives by showing them the profound values of consecrated life, accompanying them in their search for a "why" that gives meaning to their actions and aspirations. Only in this way can they find their way amidst the incessant flow of stimuli and demands that the networked society presents them. This approach is crucial, since young people tend to be very generous and helpful when they manage to transcend commercial and consumerist logic.

An example of this generosity is the numerous collaborative initiatives that have emerged on the internet, such as the Linux operating system, Wikipedia, help forums, blogs, and volunteer platforms. These initiatives, the result of the selfless efforts of thousands of people, demonstrate that young people can mobilize altruistically when they find a purpose that inspires them.

Applying this to vocational promotion, religious orders should not lower their standards in order to attract more vocations. Young people are primarily seeking a sense of purpose that responds to the challenges and aspirations of today's world. For example, hospitality and forgiveness in contrast to cutthroat competition; simplicity and moderation in contrast to consumerism and the throwaway culture; and fraternity in contrast to anonymity and selfish individualism.

Indeed, the best promotion of vocations is fidelity to the charism and the essential values that give meaning to consecrated life. They should not be offered an easy life, but a life with purpose, one that responds to the great challenges of our time.

Conclusion

The digital realm is not a dispensable option, but an inherent dimension of contemporary society. This revolution has been accompanied by a progressive shift in how we perceive morality. Therefore, the challenge is not to erect barriers, but to embrace this new context, promoting ideals and values that guide our path, both in the physical and digital worlds. Ultimately, we must build together a welcoming, well-organized space where we can share goals and hopes, feeling like fellow travellers on this journey with all of humanity.

Prof. Carbajo-Núñez M.

[1] These paragraphs are taken from the recent publication: Carbajo-Núñez Martín, *Digital World and Consecrated Life: Opportunities and Challenges*, Monograph "Religious Life" 2/138 (2025) 118 pgs.
