# 10 Fun Ways to Use Technology

# 10 Fun Ways to Use Technology
# for a More Vibrant Catechetical Program

## 1 Visit the Vatican (and anywhere else!) . . . Virtually

Wouldn't it be nice to take your class on a field trip to the Sistine Chapel? No problem! The Vatican Museum offers free **virtual tours** of some of its most famous sites.

These spaces are tourist free, so take your time and gaze at that ceiling! All you need is an internet-connected device. For a truly immersive experience, use a projector or an interactive whiteboard.

You can visit other important Church sites using the concept of "virtual field trips" with participants of all ages. Use digital tools such as streaming video, satellite maps, or other virtual field-trip sites. Search for these resources or design your own trip without leaving the comfort of your parish or school.

Make it extra enriching by preparing in advance for the trip and become the virtual tour guide for your class with fun facts about each place. Or encourage families to take their own virtual field trips. Be sure to follow up with your students on their "travel" experiences and what they've learned.

## 2 Use Video

Utilize short videos to introduce, reinforce, or extend concepts in the religious education classroom. A large variety of Catholic videos are available online if you search for them. (Be sure to view anything you plan to share before you present to the class.) Videos might even be components of your catechetical programs, so you may not need to look far. Good video with engaging and high-quality imagery will immediately capture each student's attention and imagination. Your students will thank you.

Here are some examples of places to start looking:

- *Vatican News*: https://www.vaticannews.va/
- **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops** has weekly video reflections: http://usccb.org/bible/reflections/
- **History.com** offers historical documentaries like this one on Vatican City: https://www.history.com/topics/religion/history-of-vatican-city-video, but be aware they include ads.

**S** ® **Sadlier** Religion

### 3 Stream a Podcast

Typically, podcasts are audio programs offered in a series on a digital device. You can incorporate them on a regular basis or just choose one that relates to a particular lesson or theme in your session.

Listen as a class and have a discussion after. Or set up a listening station for individual students or small groups. The station should include earbuds, a digital device with accessible podcasts, and a reflection sheet to capture thoughts or prompt discussion.

Here are some Catholic podcasts designed for kids, which you can stream on your preferred podcast application:

- **Saint Stories for Kids** offers a weekly podcast featuring a Catholic saint: https://shininglightdolls.com
- **Catholic Sprouts** is a daily five-minute podcast usually with a liturgical focus: https://catholicsprouts.com/Catholic-Sprouts

### 4 Enrich Prayer Experiences

Use digital music, reflections, or guided meditations during prayer time as an alternative to traditional prayers. You can find free digital photos on a site like Pixabay™ to project, or religious art from a digital gallery like The Metropolitan Museum of Art™ to use during a meditation or *Lectio* and *Visio Divina*. These prayer experiences do not need to be long.

Sprinkle these experiences into class sessions for a change of pace and to show students the many ways to pray.

### 5 Plan an Exciting Quest

A webquest is a research project in which students go online to answer a question. They have to find clues and information to complete the quest. Be sure to monitor that students are using only approved-safe search engines to complete questions. You can either design your own webquest adventure using word processing, presentation, or even spreadsheet software or use an app or website to put one together.

Here are a few examples of quest topics, though you could build a webquest about any topic:

- Saints
- Prayer
- Scripture
- Liturgical Seasons

Here are examples of websites that will help you to build or find a webquest:

- Create or search for webquests on your topic: zunal.com
- Search a database of webquests: http://questgarden.com

Here are examples of Catholic sites to use during a quest:

- **Vatican:** https://www.vatican.va
- **United States Conference of Catholic Bishops:** http://usccb.org
- **Sadlier Religion:** http://sadlier.com/religion
- **Catholic Relief Services:** http://crs.org
- **Catholic News Service:** https://www.catholicnews.com

**Sadlier Religion**

## 6  Use Technology for Creative Communication

Invite catechists and students to use available technology to create presentations and projects that can be shared with peers, families, and the community.

Doing a presentation or asking students to share information? Encourage the use of presentation software and include multimedia elements including images, videos, music, and other graphics in presentations. Simple video recordings can be put together using free software to make a class video that can be shared with families or the community.

Don't just think of technology as a tool for consumption—think of it as a tool for creation!

## 7  Connect with Your Community

It's always an amazing opportunity to invite guest speakers to come to your classroom. Perhaps you'd like to interview a candidate for the priesthood or a member of the community who experienced something unique.

Instead of scheduling and relying on a face-to-face visit, use virtual meeting software to set up the conversation. Many free options are available, such as **Zoom.us**,™ **FreeConferenceCall.com**,™ and **FaceTime**.®

A virtual meeting makes travel unnecessary and is often as impactful as having a guest in the same room as students. Project on a screen for a large group to see and record for future use. Engage with the presenter by talking live or through chat.
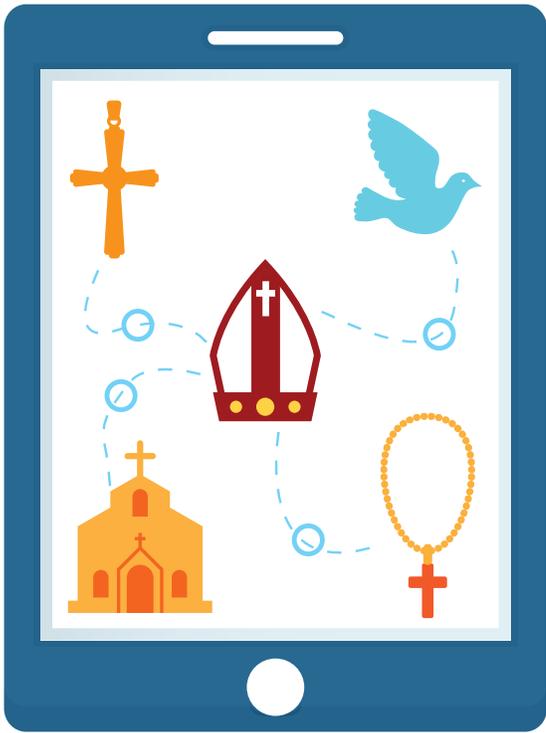
## 8  See What Students Have to Say

Invite students to take a poll or survey using digital tools and immediately see the results. This makes class interactions more fun and engaging!

**Crowd Signal**,™ **Poll Everywhere**, and **Micropoll**® are examples of interactive quiz tools that make this happen. Instead of asking a question during class and hearing from only a few students who have raised their hands, quick interactive questions done through these tools get anonymous responses prompting more participation. Results are immediately tallied and can be viewed on a screen.
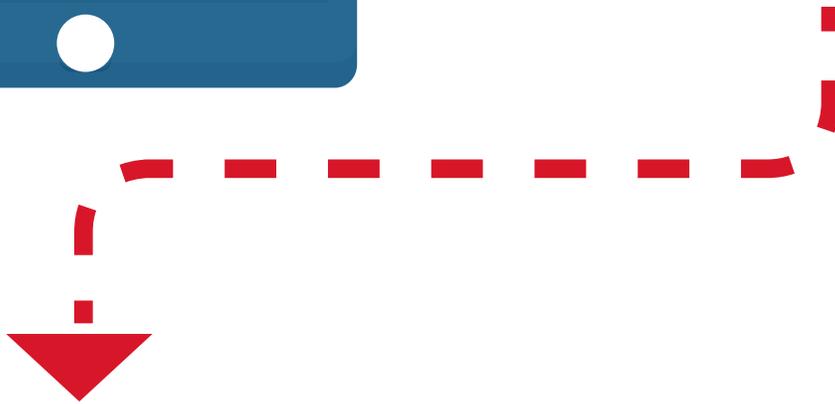
Sadlier Religion

### 9   Brainstorm Digitally

Instead of asking students to brainstorm on paper or static graphic organizers, pull up a cool digital mind map maker such as **MindMup** or **Stormboard.**® As brilliant ideas are dreamed up, input them digitally, and see them collect in a visual way. This process supports collaboration and creativity as well as helps students with comprehension!

As students contribute and ideas are added, a mind map or other digital graphic organizer immediately updates and responds so students can see their ideas growing in real-time.

You could even combine this with interactive quiz tools to survey what ideas resonated with students or what ideas they should further explore.
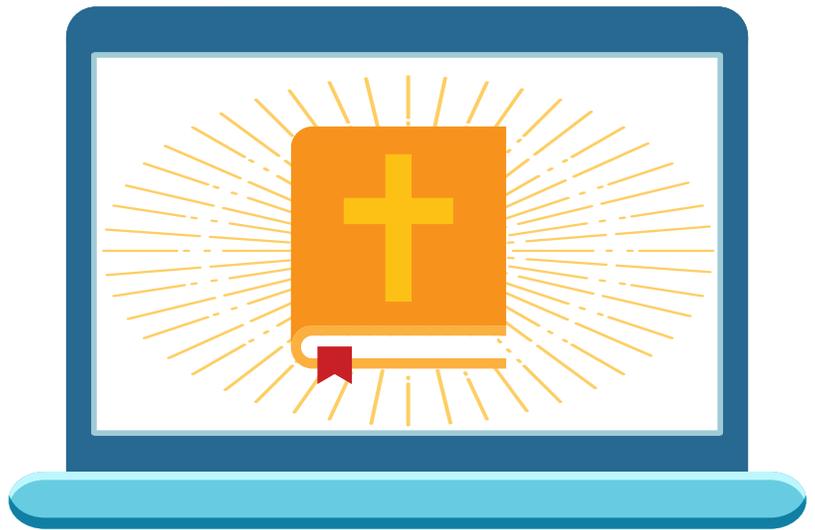
### 10   Explore an Online Bible

One of the biggest benefits of using a digital Bible—whether an eBook or online—is robust search options by keyword or topic. Plus, no heavy book to carry!

Invite students to use digital versions of the Bible to find a specific passage, highlight, and makes notes for easy future reference. Some digital Bibles have added features, like audio. These versions are great modern tools for every religious education class. Explore a digital version of the NABRE at **http://www.usccb.org/bible/books-of-the-bible/index.cfm**.



Note: The applications, podcasts, and websites in this eBook are intended as examples. Sadlier does not endorse these or other sites for Catholic content.

**Sadlier Religion**