

## Archbishop Eamon Martin's ten tips for engaging on the digital highway



1. Be positive and joyful. Offer 'digital smiles' and have a sense of humour. Remember that it is the 'joy of the Gospel' that we are communicating, so, as Pope Francis says: no 'funeral faces' or 'sourpusses'!
2. Strictly avoid aggression and 'preachiness' online; try not to be judgemental or polemical – goodness knows, there is enough of this online already! Instead, try Pope Francis' approach of 'tenderness and balm'.
3. Never bear false witness on the internet.
4. Remember 'Ubi caritas et amor'. Fill the internet with charity and love, always giving rather than taking. Continually seek to broaden and reframe discussions and seek to include a sense of charity and solidarity with the suffering in the world.
5. Have a broad back when criticisms and insults are made – when possible, gently correct.
6. Pray in the digital world! Establish sacred spaces, opportunities for stillness, reflection and meditation online.
7. Establish connections, relationships and build communion. Church has always been about 'gathering'. In this, it is worth considering an ecumenical presence for the Christian churches online. The internet tends to be a place of ethical and intellectual relativism, and often of aggressive secularism. The scandal of disunity among Christians can be easily exploited and exaggerated. Therefore we must seek to share resources so that we can have a powerful Gospel witness. Wouldn't it be wonderful if people started noticing online: 'See how these Christians love one another'.
8. Educate our young to keep themselves safe and to use the internet responsibly.
9. Witness to human dignity at all times online. Seek, as Pope Benedict once said, to 'give a soul to the internet'. We are well aware of the pervasive prevalence of pornography on the internet which can 'pollute the spirit', destroy and degrade human sexuality and relationships, reduce persons to objects for gratification, draw millions into the commodification and commercialisation of sex, feed the monster that is human trafficking.
10. Be missionary, be aware that with the help of the internet, a message has the potential to reach the ends of the earth in seconds. In this regard, let us foster and call forth charisms in younger committed people who understand the power and potential of the net to bear witness.