

Developers of new app say it could bring Catholics back to confession

SOUTH BEND, Ind. – Can modern technology help strengthen our faith? Some techno-savvy Catholics from South Bend think so.

In his message for the 2011 World Communications Day, Pope Benedict XVI said it's not enough to just "proclaim the Gospel through the new media," but one must also "witness consistently." The developers of "Confession: A Roman Catholic App" for Apple's iPhone, iPad and iPod Touch think their product helps people do both.

Brothers Patrick and Chip Leinen and their friend Ryan Kreager said feedback has been positive. The app, reportedly the only one with an imprimatur, is designed to help people make a better confession.

Given in this case by Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, an imprimatur is an official declaration by a church authority that a book or other printed work may be published. It declares the published work contains nothing offensive to Catholic teaching on faith and morals.

"The app is really built for two kinds of people," Kreager explained. "For Catholics who go to confession regularly, it gives the user information. They enter their name, age, their sex, their vocation and their last confession date, and it generates an examination of conscience based on that information."

Centered on the Ten Commandments, the examination would be different for a young mother than for a teenage boy, for example. The examinations were provided by two different priests, the app developers said.

In addition to helping Catholics who already make use of the sacrament of reconciliation, Kreager said the confession app is helping another group of people.

"It's also for people who've been away from the church and want the opportunity to go to confession," he told Today's Catholic, newspaper of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese. "You go to the examination of conscience and it literally walks you

through, step by step, your confessions as you're in the confessional."

Patrick Leinen said that during testing, a man who hadn't been to confession in 20 years used the app and made his way back to the sacrament.

"Just the fact that someone had used the app like that, even before it was released to Apple. ... That's the coolest thing in the world!" he said.

Serving as a kind of digital notebook designed to help people remember the various prayers as well as to list the sins they want to confess, the confession app provides several versions of the act of contrition, including one in Latin.

Melanie Williams, a 17-year-old junior at Marian High School in Mishawaka, said going to confession is an important part of her life. A fan of technology, she appreciates the customized examination of conscience.

"It makes me evaluate my personal situation in life," she said, noting how easy it is for her to understand and remember the sins she wants to confess. "My favorite part is definitely the inspirational quote that pops up after you have gone to confession. Each time I feel like it really tells me what I really need to hear at that moment. It is a great motivational tool after a good confession!"

In addition to customizing each user's list, everything is password-protected for privacy.

"Once you go to confession, all that information is wiped out," said Kreager. "All it's going to remember is personal data like your name, age and date of last confession."

The three developers of the confession app named their company Littleiapps. Little "i" as in "I must decrease and he must increase," explained Chip Leinen. They say they hope to create more Catholic apps in the future.

"I think it has the potential to bring many teens back to the faith and confession," said Williams, adding that she knows kids who haven't been to confession in years for various reasons. "I think this app will be a wonderful helper for teens to encourage them to go to confession. They won't have the excuse that they don't know how to go to confession anymore!"

For information on downloading the confession app, go to www.littleiapps.com.