

The Church and Virtual Reality: Body, Community, and Worship in the Digital Age

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Abstract:

The article explores the theological implications and challenges posed by Virtual Reality (VR) technology for Church life, particularly focusing on digital worship and community formation. With the rapid expansion of VR, including phenomena such as VR churches and virtual sacraments, significant questions emerge concerning the authenticity and ecclesial validity of such practices. The study critically examines VR's capability to replace physical worship, especially in Orthodox Christian theology, which deeply values bodily participation and physical presence in sacraments.

Central to this examination is the theological significance of the Incarnation, affirming the irreplaceability of material and bodily participation in the liturgical life of the Church. Orthodox theology emphasizes that authentic worship and sacraments involve material elements and genuine community, aspects impossible to replicate virtually. The paper argues that virtual worship undermines the fundamental ecclesiological principles by removing essential elements such as physical community, real-time co-presence, and actual material sacramental participation. VR worship risks turning liturgical experiences into consumerist spectacles devoid of spiritual depth, potentially fostering individualism and superficial religious experiences.

Empirical studies highlight both positive aspects of VR—such as enabling participation for individuals with disabilities—and negative effects, like feelings of isolation and identity confusion resulting from avatar-based interactions. Ultimately, the article argues that VR may be beneficial in educational or catechetical contexts but should be categorically rejected for sacramental purposes. It insists on safeguarding the embodied, communal, and material aspects of ecclesiastical worship. The paper advocates for careful pastoral use of digital technologies to support, rather than replace, traditional ecclesial communities, emphasizing the necessity of preserving authentic, physical liturgical experiences to maintain the integrity and fullness of Church life.

Key Word: Virtual Reality (VR); Digital Worship; Orthodox Theology; Embodiment; Sacraments; Ecclesiology.

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I. Virtual Reality and the Challenge of Digital Worship: A New Ecclesiological Question

The rapid development of Virtual Reality (VR) technology has begun influencing numerous aspects of human life—from education and entertainment to work and socialization. Inevitably, questions arise regarding the role of VR in religious contexts, specifically within the life of the Church. Already, examples of "churches" in VR environments exist, where believer-users gather as digital avatars for worship, preaching, and even ritual ceremonies. A notable instance is the "VR Church," an entirely virtual church founded in 2016 by Pastor D.J. Soto¹³. This digital congregation has even conducted "virtual sacraments," such as the baptism of the digital persona (avatar) of a woman with mobility issues within a virtual baptismal font¹³. Concurrently, during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a significant increase in the use of VR technologies among religious communities, resulting in the development of new forms of digital religious experience¹⁶.

These new realities compel theologians and clergy to reconsider the relationship between the human body and the ecclesiastical community in the digital age. Orthodox theology—and the broader Christian tradition—attributes central significance to the physicality of worship and the incarnate nature of the sacraments. As VR attempts to simulate experiences of presence and community without physical bodily contact, critical questions arise: Can a gathering of believers in a virtual space substitute for the Church's assembly "in one place" (ἐν τὸ αὐτό)? Is it possible for an avatar to genuinely "pray" and "participate" in worship? Could a Divine Liturgy ever be conceived in virtual reality, where avatars virtually partake of the Holy Mysteries³? These questions are not merely practical or technical but deeply theological and ecclesiological.

This article aims to interdisciplinarily explore the topic and substantiate the explicit rejection of using virtual reality in the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. We will analyze the patristic theological foundations concerning the body, matter, and community (with emphasis on Saints Symeon the New Theologian, Gregory Palamas, and John Chrysostom). We will examine the ecclesiological significance of physical assembly in worship, alongside contemporary approaches from sociology, philosophy of technology, and psychology regarding human experience in cyberspace (concepts such as cyber-embodiment, presence, artificial incarnation, avatar, and self-perception). Additionally, empirical data and examples of VR usage in ecclesiastical contexts will be presented, alongside the emerging risks and concerns. Finally, we will clearly distinguish permissible VR uses—such as educational, catechetical, or touristic applications—from its unacceptable use in sacramental and liturgical contexts.

The distinction between acceptable and unacceptable VR applications in the ecclesiastical sphere will become particularly clear. On one hand, permissible uses—pedagogical, catechetical, and touristic—will be illustrated. On the other hand, we will explicitly demonstrate why VR's use in worship and the sacraments is considered theologically and ecclesologically unacceptable, emphasizing the irreplaceable physicality and materiality of authentic ecclesial experience.

In this way, we aspire to demonstrate that embodied assembly and the material substance of the sacraments constitute irreplaceable components of ecclesiastical life, which cannot be digitized or authentically reproduced in virtual cyberspace. This aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic for an academic audience, theology students, pastors, and any interested reader.

II. From Body to Avatar: Cyber-embodiment and Theological Implications

Virtual Reality (VR) is a technology allowing users to immerse themselves in a digitally generated space that simulates a three-dimensional experience of presence. Through specialized equipment (such as VR headsets and haptic gloves), users feel as though they are "inside" an artificial environment, interacting with objects and other users represented as digital avatars. The central feature of VR is the creation of an avatar—a digital representation of ourselves, an anthropomorphic (or even non-anthropomorphic) body that represents "us" in the virtual world.

Psychological studies have demonstrated that the use of an avatar accompanies a subjective sense of embodiment within it. The term "sense of embodiment" precisely describes one's awareness of inhabiting, possessing, and controlling the movements of a body^{15, 8}. Within VR, it becomes possible for a person's physical body to be "replaced" by a virtual body-avatar, and modifying this avatar (in appearance, gender, dimensions, etc.) consequently alters the user's perception of their presence and corporeality in the digital space⁸. This phenomenon has perceptual and behavioral consequences. Users interact differently with the environment and each other depending on the avatar they embody. A series of experiments have highlighted the so-called "Proteus effect," in which individuals tend to adjust their behaviors according to their avatars' characteristics. For instance, people using taller, more imposing avatars behave more assertively, while those with attractive avatars display increased confidence³⁷. In other words, the digital image selected or received by someone in cyberspace feeds back into their self-perception, potentially causing behavioral changes even outside the virtual environment (e.g., in real life)^{9, 37}.

Cyber-embodiment describes precisely this new condition. The human body does not cease to exist, but in cyberspace, it is represented by a hybrid of the real and the virtual. Users continue experiencing sensations from their physical bodies (e.g., sitting in their room with a VR headset), while simultaneously viewing and sensing themselves as the avatar in the digital environment. Thus, there is dual-location awareness: individuals perceive themselves as existing both in physical and virtual spaces. The sense of presence (also called place illusion) in VR is so strong that the brain may temporarily treat the virtual environment as a real place. For instance, users feel genuine fear when looking into a digital abyss, or they may sweat when their avatar is running, despite physically remaining stationary. "Presence" is defined as the sensation of "being there" in digital space^{30, 25}, and enhancing this sensation is a primary objective for VR applications.

In other words, VR generates artificial embodiment. Users acquire a virtual body—an avatar—either photorealistic or entirely imaginary, which they inhabit and control²⁹. In social VR environments such as VRChat, AltSpaceVR, or Meta's Horizon, avatars range from human-like to animalistic, cartoonish, anime, or surreal, making clear that digital appearances may be chosen or adopted for personal reasons¹⁸.

This freedom of identity selection is appealing to many, particularly to individuals feeling marginalized in the physical world. Relevant research notes that VR churches attract people with disabilities or those confined to their homes, as well as individuals hurt or disillusioned by traditional religious communities, preferring the distance and anonymity offered by virtual church spaces¹. The case of Alina Delp, a woman with a rare illness keeping her bedridden, illustrates this clearly. She reported finding "spiritual comfort" in participating in worship services via VR, represented as a purple robot avatar⁴. Recent research by Ding-Yang Hsu¹¹ indicates that while some users initially found participating in VR ceremonies exciting, they gradually experienced emotional and

spiritual isolation. Specifically, participants reported that the absence of genuine interpersonal contact created feelings of alienation, hindering authentic spiritual connection¹¹. Conversely, Guichun Jun¹³ presents positive experiences of people with disabilities who felt part of a religious community through VR. However, these individuals also emphasize that VR does not replace the real, physical presence in an actual worship gathering but rather serves as a temporary or supplementary means¹³.

Nevertheless, this situation raises fundamental questions about authenticity and self-perception. In the virtual world, individuals present themselves as they wish or imagine themselves to be. The material reality of the body (gender, age, appearance, physical limitations) can be bypassed or altered. While this has positive applications—such as allowing people with mobility issues to move and interact freely as avatars without disability stigma—it also raises critical questions: Precisely who is participating in a given social or worship activity? If I appear as a cartoon character or another gender in VR, is this an honest and genuine presence or merely a mask?

In Church theology, the concept of personhood is intrinsically connected to each individual's concrete, unique existence, including their body and specific characteristics. The potential for multiple online identities (e.g., one person having several avatars or remaining anonymous) introduces fluidity regarding what constitutes personhood and community. Cyberspace, "dominated by virtual relationships, multiple identities, spatiotemporal contraction, and the absence of traditional hierarchical structures," is often experienced as a space of equality and freedom, so appealing that some envision it as a "new Jerusalem" liberated from bodily constraints³⁶. However, this perception is illusory. The VR experience creates the illusion of an authentic experience, blurring boundaries between digital and real life, leading users to perceive their digital activities as extensions of daily reality²⁰.

This confusion between virtual and real constitutes a risk. In the vast realm of the internet, exchanging information among users cannot replace the authentic expression and function of the Church as the living body of Christ²⁰. Although VR promises a richer experience than a simple video call (due to three-dimensional presence), the individual participating in a VR gathering remains doubly removed from reality—neither physically present nor genuinely represented, but rather embodied by an avatar, an "virtual self"^{14, 21}. Catholic theologian Antonio Spadaro aptly questions, "Can an avatar participate in prayer? Can a digital image engage genuinely in worshipful communal prayer? Could we conceive a virtual Eucharistic assembly where avatars partake of Eucharistic elements in a simulated world?"²⁷. These questions reflect concerns that in VR worship, there is no real worshipper, only their digital trace.

Overall, the digital age introduces novel challenges to anthropology and ecclesiology: bodily concepts expand digitally, presence becomes partially virtual, and community takes on network-like characteristics rather than physical coexistence. The critical questions remain: How might these shifts impact Church life if VR is integrated into worship? What potential consequences, positive or negative, might arise?

III. Bodily Participation as an Essential Element of Ecclesiastical Experience

From its inception, Christian faith has been intrinsically linked with the concepts of incarnation and materiality. The Word of God Himself "became flesh" (John 1:14), assuming human nature with body and blood—a foundational reality that forever sanctifies human corporeality. The centrality of physical presence in ecclesiastical life is biblically grounded in numerous references. The Apostle Paul notably writes: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body" (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Christ Himself also emphasizes, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matthew 18:20), underscoring the essential nature of physical gathering. The earliest churches gathered physically "in homes," consistently breaking bread together and participating jointly in the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:46; 1 Corinthians 11:20). The believers' assembly (ἐν τὸ αὐτό—"together, in one place") was a constitutive element of ecclesiastical life. Saint Ignatius of Antioch (1st-2nd century) stressed the need for believers to gather around the bishop for one Eucharist, declaring, "Let there be one Eucharistic altar, just as there is one Jesus Christ"²², thus reinforcing the unity of time, place, and body in worship throughout patristic tradition.

Orthodox Christianity, in particular, has developed a rich theology regarding the materiality of the sacraments. Saint John of Damascus (8th century) defended the veneration of holy icons based on the truth of the Incarnation. Because God assumed matter (a body) in His incarnation, we can depict His visible image materially. Similarly, in all sacraments, the salvific grace of God is bestowed through material signs—the water of Baptism, the oil of Chrismation, the bread and wine of the Eucharist, the bodies of husband and wife in marriage, etc. This material dimension of the sacraments is neither symbolic nor secondary but essential. God sanctifies bodies and matter, not only human souls. As contemporary theology aptly summarizes, liturgy and sacraments constitute core elements of ecclesiastical life because they embody the heart of faith and introduce believers into the fullest possible communion with that faith²³. In other words, Christian worship involves the bodily participation of Church members (the body of Christ) in offering praise, thanksgiving, and prayer to God²⁶.

Church Fathers repeatedly emphasized that salvation occurs within the ecclesial community and through the body. Saint John Chrysostom (4th century) highlighted the unique power of collective prayer. He contrasted private prayer at home with communal worship in church, noting: "We shall never be able to pray at home as we do in Church, where there is a multitude of brethren... and psalms, and prayers, and priests' intercessions"¹². Chrysostom explains that communal worship provides harmony, agreement, the bond of love, and priestly prayers—elements absent when one isolates oneself privately. Chrysostom's testimony illustrates the ancient Church's view of believers' physical gathering as irreplaceable for prayer and Eucharist.

Simultaneously, the Church rejected spiritualist or Gnostic tendencies that devalued the body. Ancient Gnostics and Manichaeism, for instance, regarded matter as inferior or evil. The Church, through fathers like Basil the Great and Gregory of Nyssa, proclaimed human salvation as psychosomatic unity, affirming the body as a "temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19), destined for resurrection in glory at the end of times. Orthodox anthropology culminates in the teachings of Saint Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022) and Saint Gregory Palamas (1296–1359). Symeon, for example, insisted on frequent Holy Communion as a means of human deification, entirely renewing "the whole human being, soul and body"³¹. Symeon teaches that participation in the sacraments truly nourishes us with Christ's immaculate body—not symbolically or figuratively, but genuinely and substantially. Through this communion, we become fully members of Him—of His flesh and bones (Ephesians 5:30). The Eucharist is not merely spiritual remembrance but a personal union wherein the whole person, body and soul, is transformed and renewed in Christ.

Gregory Palamas, defending Hesychasm, developed a comprehensive theology of the human body: the body, when partaking in divine grace, is transformed along with the soul. Opposing those (like Barlaam) who considered the body a hindrance to pure prayer, Palamas insisted that the entire person—body and spirit—participates in communion with God. Even bodily senses can receive divine illumination. Palamas emphasizes that the flesh is transformed and elevated alongside the soul, becoming a dwelling place for God and participating in divine gifts even in the future age¹⁹. Palamas' view underscores that the human body is destined for glory and active participation in salvation, rejecting any notion that might exclude or bypass it in spiritual life.

Thus, the Church is fundamentally a bodily communion. The phrase "body of Christ" is not merely metaphorical but describes a reality wherein believers, united in Christ's body and blood through the Eucharist, form organic members of a living organism. Worship and sacraments have always been collective and bodily acts. Real people, in real temples, perform real ceremonies with tangible elements, believing that through matter, immaterial grace is conveyed. Even when the Church utilized new technologies (e.g., printing liturgical books or broadcasting services via radio/TV to the ill), it always did so discerningly. No transmission was ever considered equivalent to physical presence, and it was never suggested that liturgical obligations could be fulfilled without personal, bodily participation in worship.

IV. Virtual Assembly and the Disruption of Ecclesiastical Ethos

When worship enters a virtual reality environment, fundamental dimensions of ecclesiastical life undergo radical changes. Here, we will examine these changes and explain why they are considered problematic or unacceptable from a theological standpoint.

Physical Community vs. Virtual Community: The Church understands itself as a community of persons living in a genuine relationship of love in Christ. The gathering of believers in one location, centered around the Eucharist, is not a minor detail but the revelation of the Church to the world. In a physical church, people see and hear each other, pray together breathing the same air, often physically touch each other (during the kiss of peace or blessing), and share actual bread and wine from a common chalice. These elements create an embodied communion characterized by accepting and coexisting with others in the name of Jesus Christ. Conversely, in a virtual "church," each person is alone in front of a screen, interacting merely through internet-mediated exchanges of data (voice, avatar movement), devoid of real bodily co-existence. Frequently, these online "communities" are pseudo-anonymous or entirely pseudonymous, reducing the ecclesiastical gathering to a virtual simulation lacking genuine interpersonal contact, communication, and familiarity.

Distortion of Ecclesiastical Space and Time: Church worship is localized (in a consecrated church or sacred space) and temporally specific (at designated times with a beginning, duration, and end, where all participate simultaneously). However, in the digital world, space becomes a "utopia"—a place materially existing nowhere. Digital churches can indeed be beautifully constructed (and VR simulations of Notre-Dame and other cathedrals already exist). Nevertheless, these remain mere digital settings without history, sanctification through actual prayer, or saints' presence, lacking continuity with local traditions. They are software products, easily modified or deleted. In contrast, a physical church embodies the prayers of generations, regarded as sacred due to relics or miraculous icons, and represents a "House of God" on earth. Similarly, digital space alters liturgical time. Live-streamed worship, for example, has already introduced a temporal elasticity allowing people to view recorded services at any time outside the established liturgical order. In VR, this could expand further, rupturing

the synchronization characteristic of liturgical gatherings "ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό" (together, simultaneously), transforming worship into the consumption of individually accessed archives rather than collective prayer.

Turning Worship into Consumerist Spectacle: A significant risk identified is that worship, detached from its experiential-participatory context, becomes yet another audiovisual product for consumption. Even simple television broadcasts can become just another religious program. Full virtualization exacerbates this, encouraging worshippers to approach it as an interactive program, choosing camera angles, settings, and avatars, akin to a video game. Divine grace cannot be part of an on-demand scenario or delivered as streaming content²⁰. This highlights the danger of trivializing worship, turning mystery into spectacle. Digital individuals consume content quickly and superficially, perpetually shifting stimuli. Thus, transferring worship to VR platforms intensifies perceptions of it as entertainment or personalized experience, leading to a Protestantization of liturgical life. Already, avatars appear irreverently in VR "churches," with disruptive behaviors (trolling) during initial VR worship attempts. The sacred atmosphere struggles to survive in environments where anonymity allows disrespectful behaviors.

Absence of Material Sacramental Elements—Non-Existence of Sacraments: The most fundamental impact concerns the sacraments themselves. As Church sacraments involve material elements, a virtual environment lacking these cannot support real sacraments. Actual baptism requires actual water; ordination requires the bishop's physical laying on of hands; the Eucharist necessitates the real consecration of bread and wine shared physically among believers. Virtual ceremonies cannot actualize these mysteries. Even if each believer has bread and wine at home and a priest remotely recites prayers (as tested by Protestants during the pandemic), the Orthodox Church rejects this because Eucharist must be centralized, shared from one chalice, symbolizing participants becoming co-members of Christ. A "VR Eucharist" completely lacks this crucial dimension.

Pastoral and Ethical Implications: VR worship's convenience may foster individualism and religious apathy. Instead of attending church physically on Sunday mornings, a believer might simply wear a VR headset at home. This erodes the traditional spiritual discipline requiring active community involvement—participating in church services, charity, cleanliness, or choir. These practices vanish in online avatar meetings.

VR worship may cultivate illusory spirituality—a digital "Docetism," appearing spiritual without substantial reality. This significantly risks deception, making individuals believe emotional engagement with virtual hymns equates to fulfilling obligations toward God. Replacing actual sacramental life with virtual experiences substitutes reality with an idol.

Equally critical are the implications for pastoral ministry. Traditionally, priests personally know their congregants, understanding their needs and providing tailored spiritual and psychological support. VR worship severely limits pastoral interaction. Technology-mediated, avatar-based interactions obstruct authentic personal communication. Lack of genuine interpersonal contact prevents building trust between clergy and congregants. Priests struggle to monitor worshippers' reverence or prayerfulness, effectively becoming digital presenters rather than active dispensers of divine grace. Consequently, VR weakens rather than supports the Church's pastoral mission.

In conclusion, the implications of VR worship on ecclesiastical life are detrimental on multiple levels, disrupting communal and sacramental unity, depriving worship of bodily spirituality, exposing it to irreverence, and fundamentally altering its nature. Thus, the critical question emerges: is there any positive or neutral use of VR acceptable within the Church? We will examine contemporary practices and potential distinctions next.

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VI. VR as a Theological Degradation of the Embodied Experience of the Church

The use of virtual reality (VR) in the Church's liturgical life raises critical theological issues, summarized in the following key points:

(a) **Doctrine of Incarnation and the Sacredness of Matter:** Christian theology is founded upon the Incarnation of the Word of God. According to Christian doctrine, God assumed an actual human body that experienced death and was resurrected in glory. Christ's Ascension underscores the supreme value of human embodiment (1 Timothy 3:16; Luke 24:39). According to Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 15:44-49), the promise of resurrection does not imply escape from the body, but rather its transformation. VR worship, although not explicitly denying the Incarnation, indirectly undermines it by prioritizing virtual-mental presence over actual,

bodily participation. Father Georges Florovsky notably describes the Church as “the flesh of Christ prolonged throughout the ages”⁶, emphasizing the necessity of physical presence in the Church’s liturgical life.

(b) Body and Soul as Indivisible Unity: Church Fathers, such as Saint Gregory Palamas and Saint Symeon the New Theologian, stress that human salvation occurs as a psychosomatic unity. Orthodox anthropology rejects Cartesian dualism and pure spiritualism. Physical participation in ascetic practices (fasting, prostrations, veneration) and sacraments is integral to spiritual life. Worship involves bodily expressions such as kissing icons, kneeling, and receiving the material elements of the Eucharist. Conversely, VR participation diminishes the authentic psychosomatic experience, limiting worship to a purely mental and visual activity. Bishop Kallistos Ware highlights the inseparable unity of body and soul, noting that “the body will be transformed alongside the soul, and divine grace will manifest through the body”³⁵.

(c) The Church as a Community of Persons: Theologically, the Church is defined as a community of persons in Christ. Ecclesiastical catholicity is realized in local communities where believers jointly partake in the Eucharist under their bishop³⁸. The parish, as a local community, extends beyond worship to encompass everyday life. In contrast, VR disrupts locality and genuine personal community, reducing ecclesiastical experience to impersonal online gatherings. True community life requires commitment, patience, and forgiveness—qualities that VR cannot similarly foster.

(d) Real Grace through Real Signs: Orthodox sacramentology relies on material elements sanctified to convey divine grace³⁸. Digital representations cannot replace the real materiality foundational to the Church’s sacraments. The concept of “digital Eucharist” or remote participation in sacraments lacks theological grounding and contradicts the Incarnation principle itself.

(e) Witness and Pastoral Responsibility: The Church is called to witness authentic community and genuine human relationships, especially amid contemporary loneliness and superficial digital connections². If embraced uncritically, virtual worship would strip the Church of its distinctive characteristic: the authentic, living communion of believers. As noted by the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece, the Church is not a social media platform but the body of Christ in the Holy Spirit¹⁰.

In conclusion, utilizing VR in Church worship constitutes a theological degradation by distorting essential aspects of the Church’s embodied and charismatic reality. Despite VR’s educational and instructional benefits, worship and sacraments retain non-negotiable bodily and communal characteristics essential to life in Christ.

VII. Pastoral Responsibility and Theological Boundaries in the Age of Virtual Reality

The preceding study and theological analysis yield conclusive positions serving as theological and pastoral guidelines:

Human embodiment is an irreplaceable element of ecclesiastical life. Active bodily participation, involving all senses in worship and sacraments, is essential for transmitting divine grace. Attempts to replace physical presence with virtual representations fundamentally distort worship experiences⁶.

Despite its high realism, virtual reality remains merely an image, not genuine experience. Actual transubstantiation of material elements, vital to sacramental practice, cannot occur virtually. Consequently, virtual worship cannot replace the real Church community.

Orthodox ecclesiology is incompatible with the concept of a “virtual church.” Theologically, the Church is defined as a gathering of persons in a specific space and time, fostering genuine relationships of love, service, and unity³⁸. A virtual assembly of avatars cannot fulfill essential ecclesiological requirements of a genuine community.

Contemporary sociological and psychological studies confirm that religious practices confined to digital and private spheres lose public and social significance, while virtual experiences often cause identity confusion and distorted reality perception².

VR usage can only be acceptable as an educational, instructional, and communication tool, and for broader gospel dissemination. Conversely, its use in sacramental practice and divine worship must be categorically rejected to prevent theological confusion or distortion.

The Church must exercise pastoral care towards contemporary individuals, utilizing digital media not to replace but to strengthen authentic community. The objective is not to create a “parallel church,” but to employ digital presence as a bridge to genuine, embodied Church community. Facing digital realities, the Church should adopt practices preserving bodily worship while creatively employing technology. Particularly, digital platforms can be developed for catechesis, psychological support, and communication among believers. Parishes can organize hybrid programs, employing digital presence for catechesis and communication while maintaining physical presence as non-negotiable for worship.

Conclusively, explicitly rejecting virtual worship and digital mediation in sacramental practices reflects theological and pastoral responsibility rather than technophobia. The Church, faithful to its tradition and Christ’s

Incarnation, must safeguard authentic ecclesiastical life from digital distortions, thus ensuring the authenticity of spiritual experiences and human community²⁸.

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