

DIGITAL CLASSROOM CATECHESIS FOR BETA LEARNERS IN THE ERA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Mutiara Andalas

Sanata Dharma University, Indonesia

mutiaraandalas@usd.ac.id

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Abstract

This article examines the design of digital catechesis for Generation Beta learners in the era of Artificial Intelligence (AI). There is a critical research gap between AI-shaped learning environments and existing catechetical models, which often remain informational, technocratic, or influenced by dogmatic scientism. Drawing on Barna Institute data (on Gen Z as the spiritual precursor) and McCrindle's generational framework (Gen Beta as the first cohort formed within ambient AI), the study establishes the learners' context. Integrating Yuval Noah Harari's data-centric analysis with Pope Francis's theology on digital culture, an interdisciplinary theoretical framework is developed. The Research Question is: How can digital catechesis for Generation Beta resist dogmatic scientism while remaining faithful to the kerygmatic, relational, aesthetic, and mystical dimensions of Christian formation? Utilizing a qualitative conceptual methodology integrating theoretical analysis and constructive theological reflection, the Research Findings indicate that approaches centered on narrative encounter, relational accompaniment, aesthetic mediation, and ethical discernment are more effective than content-driven models. The article's Novelty lies in reimagining digital catechesis as a theologically intentional formative ecology that critically integrates AI while safeguarding the integrity of Christian kerygma and spiritual depth.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, digital catechesis, dogmatic scientism, generation beta, Kerygma

Introduction

This study emerges from the author's sustained pedagogical engagement with Generation Alpha learners in formal Catholic Religious Education (CRE) classrooms. Through daily practices of teaching, accompaniment, and reflective observation, a persistent tension has become increasingly evident. While young learners are formed within environments marked by digital immediacy, multimodal communication, and algorithmic mediation, classroom catechesis often remains linear, text-centered, and propositional. Dominant pedagogical routines continue to privilege explanation and cognitive recall over relational encounter, affective engagement, and experiential meaning-making. What initially appeared as a localized classroom difficulty gradually revealed itself as a systemic pattern, pointing to a deeper misalignment between inherited catechetical models and the epistemological conditions shaping digitally formed learners.

This misalignment can be more precisely identified as a form of *dogmatic scientism* embedded within catechetical practice. Grounded in a reductionist



epistemology, this approach construes theological truth primarily as cognitively transmissible, empirically verifiable, and assessable propositions. As a result, doctrinal precision is privileged at the expense of narrative imagination, aesthetic mediation, affective resonance, and interpersonal encounter. While research in digital religion, generational learning, and AI ethics addresses related concerns, these fields largely operate in parallel and stop short of offering an integrated pedagogical design. Consequently, catechesis remains conceptually coherent yet spiritually attenuated, particularly for learners whose meaning-making is relational, visual, and experiential. This unresolved tension constitutes the central research gap addressed in this study.

The limitations of prevailing catechetical models become more pronounced when viewed through the pastoral vision of Pope Francis. In documents such as *Evangelii Gaudium* and *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis (2013, 2019) consistently resists technocratic rigidity, calling the Church toward evangelization grounded in encounter, beauty, and the primacy of the kerygma. This vision contrasts sharply with catechetical practices centered on abstraction and systematization. Parallel insights from Campbell (2013), Campbell and Dyrness (2016), and Helland (2016) demonstrate how digital cultures reshape authority and religious meaning-making. The urgency of this critique is intensified by the emergence of Generation Beta, whose formation will unfold within AI-mediated environments (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2014; McCrindle et al., 2023; McCrindle, 2025). Together, these developments reveal a widening pastoral and epistemological gap.

Building upon the earlier diagnosis of epistemological misalignment in contemporary catechesis, this failure to reconcile pastoral vision with digital culture constitutes the core theoretical and practical research gap addressed in this study. Drawing on Campbell's (2012) concept of *Digital Religion*, the current situation reflects an unresolved tension between the individualized logic of digital environments and the communal authority of religious tradition. This tension manifests as a subtle form of scientific dogmatism, explicitly critiqued by Mary E. Hess (2019a, 2019b, 2022, 2023), who calls for responsive faith formation grounded in Narrative, Aesthetic, and Digital Paths rather than rigid content transmission. Yet many existing digital catechetical models continue to reproduce the very dogmatism Hess resists by privileging quantifiable performance metrics over relational and spiritual depth. Consequently, no established framework currently integrates advanced AI technologies while remaining faithful to anti-dogmatic, aesthetic, and communal principles of faith formation.

Responding directly to this gap, the novelty of this research lies in the introduction of the Andalus Initiative as a concrete pedagogical intervention. By operationalizing Hess's three pedagogical paths within Campbell's hybrid digital space, the initiative develops a Digital Class Catechesis model specifically designed for Generation Beta. This model deliberately resists dogmatic reductionism and digital individualization by fostering shared narrative meaning, aesthetic engagement, and communal participation. The study's distinctive contribution lies in providing empirical evidence that a visually attuned, non-dogmatic framework can effectively harness AI technologies while safeguarding the communal authority essential to Christian spiritual formation.

More specifically, this study makes three contributions to contemporary discussions on digital catechesis for Generation Beta. First, it critically rearticulates

digital catechesis by naming and resisting dogmatic scientism as an implicit epistemological posture, reframing catechesis as an encounter-oriented and sacramental process within AI-mediated environments. Second, it advances catechetical theory by conceptualizing Generation Beta not merely as digitally fluent learners but as an AI-shaped anthropological category, extending McCrindle's generational analysis through the Andalus pedagogical framework. Third, it proposes an integrative theological–pedagogical model that synthesizes insights from digital religion, AI and religious education, generational pedagogy, and Catholic catechetical theology for concrete classroom practice.

Guided by this synthesis, the study addresses the following research question.

How can digital catechesis for Generation Beta resist dogmatic scientism while remaining faithful to the kerygmatic, relational, aesthetic, and mystical dimensions of Christian formation? In responding to this question, the article offers a theologically grounded and pedagogically viable vision of digital catechesis for Catholic Religious Education teachers across diverse cultural contexts. It integrates cultural critique, generational theory, and catechetical theology to engage the ethical, spiritual, and pedagogical challenges of AI-mediated learning environments. In doing so, digital catechesis is positioned not as a reactive accommodation to technological disruption, but as a faithful, relational, and imaginative mode of ecclesial accompaniment in an AI-shaped world.

Related Studies and Theoretical Framework

Related Studies

This study is situated at the intersection of digital culture, generational formation, and contemporary catechetical theology. As outlined in the Introduction, Beta learners are shaped within educational and social environments increasingly influenced by artificial intelligence, algorithmic mediation, and data-driven systems. These conditions affect not only how learners access and process information but also how they form identity, negotiate authority, and engage religious meaning. Such complexity cannot be adequately addressed through a single disciplinary lens. Accordingly, the following review of related studies maps the scholarly terrain that informs this research. It draws together insights from digital religion, generational studies, educational theory, and catechetical theology. By locating the present study within this intellectual landscape, the review clarifies both its conceptual grounding and its distinctive scholarly contribution.

Yuval Noah Harari's work (2017, 2018, 2024a, 2024b) provides a critical anthropological lens for understanding the digital conditions shaping Generation Beta. Rather than examining isolated technologies, Harari analyzes long-term civilizational patterns affected by artificial intelligence and large-scale data systems. In *Homo Deus* and related writings, he argues that data has acquired unprecedented epistemic and moral authority, a worldview he terms *Dataism*. Within this logic, meaning, value, and decision-making are increasingly governed by algorithmic processes. Those who control data consequently shape behavior, desire, and the future itself. Harari's contribution lies in exposing the ideological atmosphere in which digital catechesis unfolds—one where learners risk internalizing algorithmic authority and reducing meaning to computational metrics rather than relational or transcendent horizons.

Where Harari diagnoses the cultural logic of the data-driven world, McCrindle and Wolfinger (2014) and McCrindle (2025) approach the digital age through generational sociology. His research examines how demographic change, technological acceleration, and global connectivity shape the learning dispositions of emerging cohorts. Through longitudinal and cross-cultural analysis, McCrindle identifies Generation Beta as the most globally connected, technologically immersed, and data-shaped generation to date. He highlights traits such as visual orientation, responsiveness to immediate feedback, and expectations of interactivity and experiential learning. These characteristics are increasingly evident within AI-mediated educational contexts, including Indonesia. McCrindle's work offers essential empirical grounding for understanding how Beta learners process information, form identity, and engage meaning.

A third stream of insight emerges from Pope Francis, whose contribution is grounded in pastoral theology and ecclesial discernment rather than social science. In texts such as *Christus Vivit* and his reflections on digital culture, Francis offers a theological–anthropological reading of how technology shapes attention, identity, and relationships. He acknowledges both the risks of fragmentation, loneliness, and manipulation and the potential of digital spaces for encounter and creativity. Central to his vision is the insistence that human dignity must never be reduced to algorithmic logic. Francis calls educators to cultivate relational presence, discernment, and contemplative depth amid technological acceleration. His contribution re-centers catechesis on personhood, encounter, and the sacredness of human experience under digital pressure.

Taken together, Harari, McCrindle, and Francis illuminate the cultural, generational, and pastoral dimensions necessary for understanding Beta learners in the age of artificial intelligence. Harari exposes the ideological power of data, McCrindle describes the generational formation that occurs within data-driven environments, and Francis articulates a theological response grounded in relationship, embodiment, and hope. Their combined insights reveal both the risks and the possibilities facing catechesis within AI-shaped classrooms. While other scholars contribute important perspectives through research on AI ethics, digital religion, and interactive pedagogy, their work functions primarily as complementary enrichment. The conceptual core of this study is shaped by the triangulation of cultural critique, generational analysis, and pastoral theology offered by these three thinkers.

Andalas (2020, 2025) provides a distinctive, contextually significant contribution by translating global insights into a concrete theological-pedagogical framework for classroom catechesis. Engaging with literature on digital natives and experiential learning, Andalas (2020) argues that catechesis for Generation Alpha must be based on multisensory learning. This approach intentionally integrates visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and affective dimensions to ensure faith is experientially appropriated, not just cognitively transmitted. Drawing on McCrindle's (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2014; McCrindle et al., 2023) 'app generation' concept, Andalas situates practice within narrative, aesthetic, and interactive learning ecologies. Multisensory learning thus serves as a mediating framework, integrating *via narrativa*, *via pulchritudinis*, and *via digitalis*, positioning digital media as an integral locus of ecclesial encounter.

Building on this foundation, Andalus (2025) advances the discussion by explicitly addressing the implications of artificial intelligence for religious education. He calls for the intentional design of digital classroom catechesis that critically engages digital culture and understands AI as a formative anthropological context rather than a neutral tool. Rejecting instrumentalist approaches, Andalus argues that AI reshapes perception, agency, and relationality, thereby requiring a reconfiguration of catechetical praxis. He reimagines catechesis as a dialogical, narrative, and aesthetically attuned learning space that cultivates discernment, moral imagination, and hope. Within this vision, learners are accompanied as pilgrims of hope, capable of articulating and embodying Catholic faith amid the rapid transformations of a digitally mediated world.

Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this framework is the cultural and anthropological shift brought about by the era of artificial intelligence. Harari's critical insight that "the universe consists of data flows, and the value of any phenomenon is determined by its contribution to data processing" positions AI not merely as a tool but as a formative environment that shapes cognition, attention, and social interaction. Furthermore, his observation that "those who control the data control the future" underscores the need to interpret digital catechesis as a pedagogical space shaped by algorithmic logics, data-driven identity formation, and computational efficiencies. In such a context, knowledge is increasingly measurable, optimized, and filtered through automated systems, presenting both a cultural challenge and a theological invitation: the Church must articulate a vision of the human person as unrepeatable, relational, and dignified in a world that increasingly reads individuals as data points.

McCrinkle and Wolfinger (2014), McCrinkle et al. (2023), and McCrinkle (2025) together provide the theoretical grounding for this article's focus on **digital catechesis for Generation Beta learners in the era of artificial intelligence**. Barna's research on Generation Z reveals a generation that is spiritually receptive yet institutionally cautious, morally subjective yet evidentially minded, and strongly oriented toward authenticity, emotional well-being, and personal meaning. These dispositions are not temporary developmental features but structural cultural patterns that shape the learning ecology inherited by Generation Beta. McCrinkle's analysis further identifies Beta learners as the first generation to encounter AI not merely as a tool, but as an ambient condition that subtly forms cognition, authority, and moral imagination. Within such conditions, classroom-based catechesis can no longer be conceptualized as doctrinal delivery detached from digital mediation.

The convergence of Barna (Barna Group & Impact 360 Institute, 2018, 2021, 2024), McCrinkle and Wolfinger (2014), McCrinkle et al. (2023), and McCrinkle (2025) thus reframe the catechetical classroom itself as a digitally situated formative space. For learners shaped by algorithmic personalization, fragmented attention, and experience-driven meaning-making, digital catechesis must attend to both pedagogical form and theological content. The author's proposed model responds to this shift by emphasizing relational presence, narrative integration, and ethical discernment within AI-mediated learning environments. Rather than reproducing dogmatic scientism or reducing faith to informational content, digital catechesis is envisioned as an encounter that forms conscience, imagination, and

relational capacity. In this sense, the digital classroom becomes a locus of accompaniment where faith is learned through guided participation rather than passive reception.

This orientation is especially urgent for Generation Beta, whom McCrindle (2025) describes as “the most globally connected, technologically immersed, and data-shaped generation ever born.” Their learning habits are increasingly structured by recommendation systems, interactive interfaces, and immersive media, reshaping attention, authority, and trust. Consequently, effective digital catechesis for Beta learners must be experiential, dialogical, and critically engaged with AI rather than technologically neutral. Generation Beta is approached not simply as a demographic cohort but as a theological interlocutor whose faith formation unfolds within intelligent systems. Designing catechesis for this context, therefore, requires reimagining the digital classroom as a theologically intentional ecology—one capable of mediating encounter, meaning, and moral formation in the age of artificial intelligence.

In response to these generational and technological realities, classroom catechesis must be reconceived. Pope Francis provides the central theological lens for this transformation. In *Evangelii Gaudium*, he notes that “the digital environment... influences the way people learn and the development of their critical sense,” highlighting the persistence of dogmatic, content-focused teaching in digital contexts. When learners are habituated to treat information as consumable data, catechesis that functions only as doctrinal delivery risks reinforcing the very epistemic logic that needs to be transcended. *Christus Vivit* frames a kerygmatic alternative: “Christianity is not a collection of truths to be believed... Christianity is Christ.” Relational encounter, rather than content transmission, becomes the organizing principle of catechesis, emphasizing affective resonance, personal transformation, and relational wonder.

Mary emerges as a central pedagogical model in this digital and generationally informed framework. Pope Francis describes her as the “influencer of God” and “the greatest of all influencers” (CV 44). In classroom catechesis, Mary embodies influence exercised through authenticity, relational presence, and faithful accompaniment rather than authority or visibility. Reframing her life through digital metaphors—for example, as one who “uploaded” Jesus into the world—enables learners to grasp that influence in the Christian sense involves courage, availability, and participation in God’s mission even amid uncertainty. Mary thus bridges the theological, generational, and digital dimensions of this framework, modeling how relational authenticity can translate into pedagogical practice for Beta learners.

The dynamics of digital classrooms sharpen the tension between teachers as “digital immigrants” and learners as “digital natives,” shaping pedagogy at both practical and epistemological levels. Teachers often employ linear, text-centered methods formed in pre-digital contexts, while learners engage through visibility, interactivity, immediacy, and affective resonance. This mismatch risks reducing catechesis to information transfer rather than encounter. Here, Pope Francis’s vision of catechists as “facilitators of grace” rather than “holders of grace” becomes crucial. Catechists are called not to control meaning but to accompany learners by curating relational and narrative-rich environments. Through attentiveness and ritual sensitivity, catechesis becomes a dialogical space where faith formation meets digitally mediated realities.

Taken together, these insights reframe digital classroom catechesis as a site of theological resistance, pastoral creativity, and pedagogical innovation. Rather than capitulating to data-driven efficiency, the framework privileges story over information, encounter over optimization, contemplation over acceleration, and personhood over algorithmic classification. By integrating Harari's critique of data centrality, McCrindle's generational mapping, and Pope Francis's relational pedagogy, the framework articulates a coherent theological–pedagogical vision. This vision equips catechists to design learning spaces that engage digital culture critically without surrendering spiritual depth. It affirms imagination, ethical discernment, and relational presence as core dimensions of faith formation. In this way, digital catechesis becomes capable of nurturing Generation Beta's spiritual agency within AI-mediated worlds.

In this study, ambient catechesis is proposed as a lens for naming forms of faith formation that arise organically within liturgical, relational, and informal ecclesial spaces rather than through formal instruction. It designates pedagogical moments in which the kerygma is encountered through presence, dialogue, ritual proximity, and shared experience. Operating through attentiveness, affective resonance, and narrative openness, ambient catechesis enables learners to integrate doctrine with lived faith. This concept extends digital religion and experiential pedagogy by recognizing that formation unfolds in distributed and relational ways that parallel AI-shaped learning ecologies. In doing so, ambient catechesis provides a theological–pedagogical bridge between sacramental life and digital classroom design while resisting dogmatic scientism.

Within this framework, ambient catechesis finds its theological grounding in Mary as a pedagogical paradigm of faith formation. Mary's response to God is neither instructional nor propositional but receptive, dialogical, and deeply relational. Her pedagogy unfolds through attentiveness, silence, embodiment, and accompaniment—qualities that mirror the dynamics of ambient catechesis in liturgical and informal ecclesial spaces. As the “influencer of God,” Mary does not control meaning but facilitates encounter, allowing the Word to take flesh within concrete human experience. This Marian paradigm challenges catechetical models shaped by dogmatic scientism and offers a formative template for digital catechesis in AI-mediated environments, where learning increasingly occurs through presence, resonance, and relational mediation rather than linear instruction.

Method

Research Design

This study utilizes a qualitative, descriptive–analytical research design. The focus is on examining Catholic Religious Education (CRE) dynamics for Generation Beta within digitally mediated classrooms. The methodology prioritizes the interpretation of lived experience, relational interaction, and pedagogical meaning-making, rather than quantifying outcomes. This approach enables nuanced exploration of how catechesis is enacted and negotiated within AI-influenced environments. Attention is paid to how digital platforms shape learners' attention, participation, and symbolic understanding of faith. This qualitative orientation is essential for investigating faith formation, which relies on encounter and relational presence. Data collection will therefore focus on reflective observation and

narrative accounts to capture the complex, emergent nature of digital religious identity.

Research Sites and Participants

The research was conducted in kindergarten classrooms across diverse socio-cultural and ecclesial contexts in the Jakarta Special Region, Central Java, the Yogyakarta Special Region, and East Java. Participants included final-year Generation Alpha learners, who served as empirical proxies for the emergent Generation Beta (beginning 2025). Their involvement provided critical insights into early patterns of digital engagement, attention, and meaning-making relevant to Beta learners. Additionally, Catholic Religious Education teachers actively involved in classroom catechesis were interviewed and observed. Teachers were purposively selected based on their experience designing and facilitating digital or hybrid catechetical practices. This enabled rich reflection on pedagogical challenges, adaptations, and emerging possibilities within digitally mediated catechesis.

Data Collection

Data were collected through complementary strategies to ensure depth and triangulation. Semi-structured interviews with teachers and learners explored pedagogical assumptions, patterns of engagement, and the influence of digital tools and AI-mediated environments on catechesis. Classroom observations and site visits examined learning spaces, materials, and catechetical artifacts, including learners' creative outputs and instructional designs. In addition, digital documents such as lesson plans and learning modules were analyzed to trace how pedagogical intentions are enacted and mediated through digital platforms. Together, these methods enabled a holistic understanding of digital classroom catechesis as a relational, narrative, and technologically mediated practice.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed thematic procedures adapted from Creswell (2014, 2015, 2022), Cresswell and Baez (2021), Cresswell and Poth (2018), Cresswell and Cresswell (2023), and interpretive strategies outlined by Silverman (2013, 2015, 2019, 2023). Interview transcripts, field notes, observational records, and digital artifacts were consolidated into a unified data corpus. Open coding was conducted to identify initial categories, including teachers' assumptions about learner readiness, modes of digital integration, relational strategies, and patterns of inquiry-based learning. Axial coding subsequently refined these categories by examining relationships among themes, guided by the study's theoretical lenses: Harari's anthropology of data, McCrindle's generational theory, and Pope Francis's relational pedagogy. This iterative analytical process enabled the emergence of conceptual themes that frame digital classroom catechesis as a space of encounter, narrative formation, and ethical engagement.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

Validity and trustworthiness were ensured through member checking and peer debriefing with scholars in digital pedagogy, qualitative research, and catechetical studies. Ethical protocols, including informed consent, confidentiality,

and encrypted data management, were rigorously observed, addressing both standard research ethics and concerns arising from AI-mediated learning. This methodological design aligns with the theoretical framework by capturing artificial intelligence as a formative environment, Beta learners' digital dispositions, and the shifting role of catechists as facilitators of grace. Consequently, it offers sufficient descriptive richness and analytical depth to examine how digitally mediated catechesis can foster relational, narrative, and ethically grounded faith formation.

Findings and Discussion

Research Findings

The research reveals a pronounced gap between teachers and students in classroom catechesis. Teachers often enter the classroom as “digital immigrants,” while students arrive as “digital natives.” The pre-digital orientation of teachers frequently manifests in classroom practices, where they feel constrained by limited instructional time and compelled to deliver as much doctrinal content as possible, believing students require it for faith formation. In contrast, students often experience this approach as receiving answers to questions they never asked. Classroom catechesis has yet to become a genuine “meeting point” between teachers and students, and students are rarely recognized as “digital citizens,” let alone as participants in an emerging AI-shaped world.

The integration of digital pathways in classroom catechesis remains a complex challenge. Younger teachers may find using digital applications to be a natural part of their professional routine, yet this often remains at the level of “user” engagement. While such efforts are commendable, effective digital catechesis requires teachers to incarnate themselves within digital culture—not merely to use tools, but to participate fully as “digital citizens.” This deeper immersion transforms the classroom experience, shifting pedagogy from procedural engagement to relational and culturally attuned interaction. Such participation enables catechists to discern learners' digital life worlds from within, fostering authenticity, trust, and meaningful theological encounter.

Informants report that artificial intelligence is primarily employed to streamline administrative tasks. Teachers recognize the time-intensive nature of managing assessments and student performance data, but have not yet applied AI to core content formation, such as Scripture, Tradition, and Magisterial teachings. The digital culture has not yet entered these essential domains, leaving the substantive content of Catholic education largely untouched by AI. Consequently, without teachers' active engagement in this area, the cognitive and spiritual demands on students remain heavy, and the potential of AI to enhance meaningful learning is underutilized. This gap signals the need for intentional pedagogical imagination that integrates AI critically and theologically into the heart of catechetical formation.

The challenges are compounded by teachers' reliance on standard textbooks, which often validate and reinforce the practice of “dogmatic scientism” in catechesis. Many textbooks merely replicate the Catechism and official Church documents verbatim, with minimal effort to contextualize or inculcate the kerygma for contemporary learners. Teachers present the materials verbatim, hoping students encounter the *kerygma*; without adaptation, the content risks becoming abstract, inaccessible, and disconnected from students' realities. For

many teachers, adapting the kerygma to digital culture is mistakenly perceived as compromising its integrity. As a result, Catholic education in the classroom often equates to rote memorization of doctrinal content, leaving Jesus figuratively as a “mummy” in the “museum” of Christianity, while digital culture and AI are viewed as threats rather than opportunities for enlivening the kerygma.

In response to these challenges, students demonstrate a remarkable capacity to resist dogmatic scientism through aesthetic engagement. In classroom settings, learners frequently employ drawing, dramatization, games, and the adaptation of popular song lyrics to express Catholic kerygma. Even when simple, these creative strategies reflect an intuitive critique of rigid content delivery and a desire to experience the kerygma as relevant and alive. Such practices reveal that learners seek meaning through embodiment, imagination, and shared experience rather than through abstraction alone. They also suggest that aesthetic expression functions as an entry point for deeper theological reflection when pedagogically recognized and intentionally cultivated. Attending to these impulses enables catechesis to align more closely with learners’ lived epistemologies and to foster faith formation that is both participatory and transformative.

When formal classroom catechesis fails to bring the kerygma to life, students often seek alternative spaces to engage meaningfully with the Gospel. Liturgical celebrations, particularly the Eucharist, frequently serve as vital sites for this “shadow catechesis.” These liturgical moments provide students with a rare opportunity to experience faith narratively, aesthetically, and digitally in ways that resonate with their generational sensibilities. They offer spaces where Alpha learners can manifest their creativity, reinterpret liturgical texts, and explore faith within a participatory, experiential framework. In these settings, students express a deep yearning for a living kerygma, and they engage the liturgy in ways that bring classroom teachings to life.

Consequently, Eucharistic celebrations and the informal encounters that follow often serve as spaces of ambient catechesis. Alpha learners use these moments to engage in reflective dialogue with priests, exploring themes and questions not addressed in formal classroom sessions. Though occurring outside structured lessons, these interactions are memorable and meaningful, providing relational spaces where students’ lived faith intersects with the kerygma. Such experiences highlight the importance of relational and experiential pedagogy, showing how liturgical and informal spaces can complement and extend traditional catechesis. Insights from these practices inform digital catechesis for the emerging Beta generation, emphasizing narrative, relational, and experiential approaches that center learners’ lived realities.

Finally, the findings highlight Mary as a pedagogical exemplar. Pope Francis’s description of Mary as the ‘influencer of God’ (*CV* 44) models catechists as relational guides and digital ‘facilitators of grace.’ By embodying her fidelity, courage, and openness, teachers engage digital catechesis not merely as content deliverers but as active “influencers of God,” fostering encounter, relational wonder, and transformative engagement among Beta learners. This approach emphasizes accompaniment, attentiveness, and narrative mediation in digitally mediated spaces while integrating aesthetic, relational, and ethical dimensions of faith formation. Ultimately, it bridges empirical observations with the Theoretical

Framework, showing how AI, generational theory, and relational pedagogy converge to shape the future of classroom catechesis.

Discussion

The findings from classroom observation, teacher interviews, and site analyses converge to illuminate a complex interplay between digital culture, generational disposition, and catechetical practice. Teachers' persistent adherence to dogmatic scientism, their perception of digital tools as threats, and the uncritical reliance on standardized textbooks reveal that classroom catechesis remains structurally tethered to pre-digital epistemologies. This tension mirrors Harari's critique of data centrality: as students' attention, identity, and learning experiences become increasingly mediated by algorithmic and AI-driven environments, traditional catechetical approaches struggle to remain relevant. Late-Alpha learners—the immediate precursors to Generation Beta—already demonstrate learning dispositions characterized by interactivity, visual richness, and immediate feedback, confirming McCrindle's observations that digital-native learners require pedagogies that are relational, narrative-driven, and technologically fluent.

Pope Francis's vision of relational pedagogy provides a critical interpretive lens for these findings. The study confirms that catechesis, when treated primarily as content transmission, fails to resonate with learners accustomed to immersive, multimodal environments. Teachers who maintain a pre-digital, dogmatic approach inadvertently reduce kerygma to information, symbol to definition, and encounter to knowledge transfer. This dynamic reflects the epistemological gravity of scientism, which the digital environment intensifies by rewarding efficiency, speed, and measurable outcomes. Yet, these same digitally mediated ecosystems offer unprecedented opportunities for pedagogical creativity. The digital landscape, when approached with discernment, becomes an arena for narrative engagement, aesthetic mediation, and relational encounter—echoing Pope Francis' insistence that catechesis must be an encounter with Christ, not a mere recitation of doctrines.

The integration of Mary as the “influencer of God,” as emphasized in *Christus Vivit*, deepens this interpretive framework by offering a concrete model for digital catechesis. Mary's relational authenticity, availability, and courage provide an embodied exemplar for teachers navigating AI-shaped learning spaces. In this paradigm, catechists are called to facilitate influence rather than assert authority, cultivating faith through accompaniment, narrative modeling, and intentional engagement with learners' lived realities. When deployed in digital classrooms, this vision positions teachers as “facilitators of grace,” guiding students toward perceiving God's activity amidst algorithmically mediated experiences, while maintaining theological integrity and relational depth.

The findings further indicate that liturgical and informal spaces, particularly Eucharistic celebrations, serve as crucial sites of ambient catechesis. Students leverage these encounters to bring the kerygma alive, translating doctrinal content into narrative, aesthetic, and digital forms that resonate with their generational sensibilities. These observations underscore the necessity of integrating *via narrativa*, *via pulchritudinis*, and *via digitalis* into classroom catechesis. Narrative pedagogy reopens imagination and situates learners' lives within the story of salvation; aesthetic engagement cultivates wonder and the capacity to apprehend transcendence; and intentional digital integration equips students to navigate AI

ethically while fostering relational presence and discernment. Together, these pathways constitute a theological and pedagogical countermeasure against scientism and reductive digital epistemologies.

By connecting these empirical insights to the theoretical framework, it becomes evident that digital catechesis for Generation Beta must represent a paradigmatic shift. Teachers can no longer function primarily as content managers; they must inhabit the digital ecology with theological literacy, ethical discernment, and relational attunement. Digital classrooms should not merely convey information but serve as laboratories of encounter, narrative exploration, and spiritual formation. AI, algorithms, and interactive platforms are to be embraced as tools to enhance imagination and relational connection, not as sources of doctrinal authority. In this sense, digital catechesis is both a pedagogical and theological project: it resists the reduction of mystery to data, restores relational and aesthetic dimensions to learning, and cultivates the capacities necessary for faith to flourish in an AI-mediated world.

Finally, the findings highlight Mary as a pedagogical exemplar. Pope Francis's description of Mary as the 'influencer of God' (*CV* 44) models catechists as relational guides and digital 'facilitators of grace.' By embodying her fidelity, courage, and openness, teachers engage digital catechesis not merely as content deliverers but as active influencers of God, fostering encounter and transformative engagement among Beta learners. This approach emphasizes accompaniment, attentiveness, and narrative mediation in digitally mediated spaces while integrating aesthetic, relational, and ethical dimensions of faith formation. Ultimately, it connects empirical observations with the Theoretical Framework, showing how AI, generational theory, and relational pedagogy converge to shape the future of classroom catechesis.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the main barrier to effective digital catechesis for Generation Beta is dogmatic scientism, which reduces faith to information and weakens relational encounter. In AI-saturated environments, this reductionism is intensified by algorithmic logics shaping knowledge and engagement. Drawing on the author's insights, transformative digital catechesis integrates narrative meaning, aesthetic mediation, and critically engaged digital pathways, supported by relational accompaniment and ethical discernment. Mary functions as a pedagogical paradigm—an "influencer of God"—modeling receptivity and fidelity amid technological acceleration. Resisting dogmatic scientism is thus a theological and pedagogical imperative, reclaiming catechesis as a sacramental, hope-filled encounter with Christ while equipping Generation Beta with spiritual depth and moral agency in an AI-shaped world.

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