

There's an app for that: Follow JC Go! a great tool to express Catholic faith

You know an app must be right when Pope Francis gives it his official blessing.

Part way through a month focused on youth in the Church I think the launch of the app, Follow JC Go!, is a great opportunity for young people to express their ardour for the faith.

This app – developed by a Catholic organization from Florida in preparation for World Youth Day in Panama next January – was inspired by the game Pokémon Go!

The game was at its hottest point in the summer of 2016 when crowds of people were chasing and collecting Pokémon on their phones. Players are in search of Pokémon to capture and collect.



Katherine Szojka

Similarly, in Follow JC Go!, players also have to walk around but instead of capturing Pokémon, they must answer questions about the saints in order to collect them. Players can also keep track of their prayer, food and health count by collecting items, entering a church whenever they pass one and completing spiritual and corporal acts of mercy.

This game was met with a bit of skepticism from people because it seemed to appropriate popular culture and adapt it into our Catholic culture. But it's much more than that. This idea of collecting saints reminds me of when Catholic Christian Outreach organized a tour of St. Francis Xavier's relics across

Canada earlier this year. I still meet people eager to show me the third-class relic they obtained from their little trip to venerate the saint.

Meeting these people reminds me of the excitement we had when we found a new rare Pokémon. In a way, the faithful have been playing this game since the third century.

Apart from the gameplay itself, I like the idea of using things like apps and memes to express the Catholic faith. Just as St. Francis Xavier's arm gained attention from different people, so will this new app.

All of this is meant to get people to ask the question: What is this thing people are interested in and why are they interested in it?

In the Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul travels to Athens to share the Good News. He realizes that the people of Athens are misguided in what they are worshipping. But instead of condemning the Areopagus people, he started pointing out what a religious people they are and from there got to work explaining the Good News in a way that they understood.

In many ways, the Areopagus of today are made up of those who are collecting Pokémon characters and using memes as a form of communication. Those of us who are striving to enter the world of the New Evangelization would be going about it wrong if we did not also permeate the culture with amusing little signs that point to what is greater.

As Catholics, we all contribute to the culture we are in, but we must not let the Good News be lost in an ever-changing world.

– Katherine Szojka, 17, is a Grade 12 student at St. Gabriel Online School in St. Albert and a Youth Speak News columnist. This column was originally published by The Catholic Register.