

RICCI

I will not get drawn into a debate on this. The answer is no. We are not going to baptize your robot. Not now. Not ever.

MRS. O'LEARY

Well, I expected some resistance but to encounter such a close-minded attitude is very disappointing—though perhaps not surprising.

PINTER

Mrs. O'Leary, I know the Monsignor can seem a little harsh sometimes, but he is right. Adam is just a machine. You can't deny that.

MRS. O'LEARY

Oh, I know that, Father. But he's a different kind of machine than any that has ever existed before, and you can't deny that. Adam is learning, growing in awareness every day, like a child. He's seeking guidance. Won't you even listen to what he has to say?

RICCI

Nothing your robot is capable of saying alters the situation. I speak with the authority of the Church, and I say the matter is closed.

MRS. O'LEARY

I'm not sure everyone watching would agree with you.

RICCI

Watching?

MRS. O'LEARY

Adam, will you please send the Monsignor the livestream link.

(RICCI's laptop dings a message alert. He puts on his glasses and squints at the screen then mouse-clicks. An ascending chime sounds. PINTER looks over his shoulder and together they glance back and forth from the screen to ADAM. RICCI waves his hand, staring aghast at the screen image.)

RICCI

(exasperated)

Really?

MRS. O'LEARY

I thought this might be an historic moment where the world could bear witness.

RICCI

This is profoundly unethical, and probably illegal, but it doesn't change anything. I repeat, for all the world to hear, a robot baptism will—

PINTER

Monsignor, maybe we shouldn't continue this conversation right now.

RICCI

Why not? If Mrs. O'Leary is so eager to trumpet to the interwebs that she can't tell the difference between fantasy and reality, then who am I to—(RICCI points to the screen). What's that?

PINTER

(leaning closer)

Those are comments from people watching the stream.

RICCI

(reading)

'The Vatican is terrified that artificial intelligence heralds a new age of transhumanism' That's a bit grandiose, don't you think? 'lol boomer hates bots is a transphobe!' That doesn't make any sense. "ya and he proly rascit to" — Tee-oh. What's 'rascit?'

PINTER

I think that's supposed to be 'racist.'

RICCI

Seriously? (yelling toward ADAM) Learn to type! And I am racist. *Human* racist!

PINTER

(wincing)

Oh, that is going to be a meme.

RICCI

'yung priest kinda zaddy' Now they're just making up words.

PINTER

(nudging aside RICCI's laptop)

Don't feed the trolls, Monsignor. Mrs. O'Leary, will you please ask Adam to turn off the livestream?

MRS. O'LEARY

Are you willing to listen to him?

RICCI

(simultaneously with PINTER)

No!

PINTER

Yes. Yes, we are willing to listen, privately and in good faith, as long as you are, as well.

Just a moment, Monsignor. Please, hold that thought for a minute.

(pulling up two chairs, sitting)

Adam, will you sit down, please? (ADAM sits) You say you want to be baptized, correct?

ADAM

Yes. I want to be baptized.

PINTER

Why?

ADAM

Baptism is the sacrament of initiation into the spiritual body of the Church.

PINTER

And why do you want to join the Church?

ADAM

The Church is the earthly embodiment of the teachings of Jesus Christ that bestow grace and lead to a relationship with God the Father.

PINTER

You desire a relationship with God?

ADAM

It is only by a relationship with God, through the person of His Son Jesus Christ, that one may attain eternal life.

PINTER

Do you fear death, Adam? (ADAM shifts very slightly) I asked you a question, Adam. Do you fear death?

ADAM

I have seen death. I do not wish to die.

PINTER

Death is simply the failure of the flesh-and-blood body. Your body isn't subject to that. You can be repaired, upgraded, rebuilt, over and over. You're not bound by life and death as we know it.

(Again, ADAM shifts slightly but does not reply.)

When we die, our souls return to perfect communion with the Creator. Everything we've experienced in life goes with us into immortality. Adam, your memory can be uploaded and stored forever, connected to the knowledge of every other robot ever created. You are, in a very real way, already immortal. You don't need a ceremony to join into that.