

Press release, August 12, 2024

## Private with AI Jesus

---

**In St. Peter's Chapel in Lucerne, visitors can take advantage of the unique opportunity to talk face-to-face with an AI visually depicted as Jesus. And be amazed. The machine will be ceremoniously switched on on August 23rd.**

Today, blessing robots are already a reality in retirement homes and are quite popular. Artificial intelligence (AI) has found its way into the church. For example, it is now possible to have witty conversations with an AI Luther or AI Paul. Chatbots offer real opportunities in pastoral care: they provide support around the clock and first aid where necessary.

Now you can experience AI in the middle of Lucerne: From August 23 to October 20, St. Peter's Chapel on Kapellplatz is presenting the experimental hands-on art installation DEUS IN MACHINA. Visitors can take advantage of the unique opportunity to talk face-to-face with an AI visually represented as Jesus, and share thoughts and questions with a heavenly hologram. Important: This is explicitly not a confession.

Who is this AI Jesus for?

*"Curious people who are more distant from the church are particularly likely to show great interest in exchanging ideas with the AI Jesus," says project employee and theologian Marco Schmid.*

Because a conversation with "Deus in machina" could be astonishing in various ways and be worth it. Here is a selection:

1. **Unusual perspectives:** The AI Jesus could provide answers that combine historical, theological and modern ethical viewpoints. This could lead to unexpected insights.
2. **Independence from bias:** Since AI is based on data and algorithms, it could provide answers that are free from personal or cultural biases, which can be surprising, especially in controversial or sensitive topics.
3. **Personalized responses:** AI could be able to respond very specifically to individual questions and concerns using personalized biblical, spiritual or theological references – often faster and more comprehensively than a human counselor.
4. **Speed:** The ability of AI to solve complex questions quickly and being able to accurately analyze and answer questions in difficult or ambiguous circumstances could be impressive, especially.
5. **Linguistic diversity:** The AI could communicate in multiple languages and incorporate cultural references from different parts of the world, providing a global perspective.

Important to know: This list of advantages should not obscure the fact that an AI can also give incomprehensible, and in some cases even stupid and idiotic answers.

### «Deus in machina» offers a critical discussion

The AI Jesus is intended to enable more than just unique experiences. In collaboration with the Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, St. Peter's Chapel wants to stimulate discussion about the opportunities and risks of artificial intelligence, especially in the context of the church and pastoral care. That is why the art exhibition is entitled "Deus in machina".

*"The title of the installation – Deus in machina – suggests divine omniscience and wisdom. It is deliberately provocative." Marco Schmid.*

Why is the title provocative? There are movements that believe that artificial intelligence is the cure and solution to all of the world's problems. This is propagated by a movement supported by philosophers and futurists, transhumanism.

Essentially, AI Jesus - like AI in general - is a data-based system. It delivers information from large amounts of data in a matter of seconds - based on the principle of probability. AI systems learn independently and follow algorithms that can be set by third parties. This decision-making process is often opaque. It is a black box. It makes it difficult or even impossible to understand why an AI comes to a certain result.

This also raises the ethical question: Who is responsible for the results and information provided by artificial intelligence?

A critical examination of AI and personal distance are therefore important. Visitors to St. Peter's Chapel are made aware of this with an information board. The theologians at St. Peter's Chapel offer on-site discussions if people are confused by the answers of the AI Jesus. They can also give their feedback anonymously after their exchange with the AI Jesus. Lectures and a panel discussion provide an in-depth look at the topic.

### Info

The art installation was initiated on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Swiss St. Luke's Society. The project was created in collaboration between the "Immersive Realities Research Lab" of the HSLU (Prof. Dr. Aljosa Smolic, Philipp Haslbauer) and the Peterskapelle (Marco Schmid)

Ceremonial switching on of the machine: August 23, 2024, 7 p.m.

Ceremonial shutdown of the machine: October 20, 2024, 5 p.m.

During this period, the "confessional" is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Peterskapelle, Kapellplatz 1, 6004 Lucerne

[www.peterskapelle.ch/deusinmachina](http://www.peterskapelle.ch/deusinmachina)

### Photo

- Conversation with the AI Jesus in the confessional – but without confession. Photo generated by AI by Philipp Haslbauer

Catholic parish of Lucerne  
office

For further inquiries

Marco Schmid, theologian Peterskapelle Catholic  
Church City of Lucerne

041 229 90 53 | [marco.schmid@kathluzern.ch](mailto:marco.schmid@kathluzern.ch)

Ingrid Schmid, media spokesperson and head of the Communication/Marketing department  
Catholic Church of the City of Lucerne

041 229 99 60 | [ingrid.schmid@kathluzern.ch](mailto:ingrid.schmid@kathluzern.ch)

### **About the Peterskapelle**

The oldest church in the city of Lucerne is a location (not a parish) of the Catholic Church of the City of Lucerne. St. Peter's Chapel sees itself as a space for Catholicism in the best sense, namely for the entire range of forms and experiences: space for reflection and debate. Space for reflection and silence. Space for encounters. Space for experiments. Space for your ideas.

### **About the Catholic Church of Lucerne**

The Catholic Church of the City of Lucerne is a network of 8 parishes, 2 locations, 13 city-wide departments and 1 parish with an office. Over 300 employees and around 2,000 volunteers represent a lively church that wants to be there for people with innovative content and needs-based services. Since 2022, the Catholic Church of the City of Lucerne has been certified with the Grüner Guggel environmental label.