

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday 19 October 2017

Feeling Blessed at Manchester Science Festival? BlessU-2 robot comes to Manchester Cathedral and the Museum of Science and Industry on a weekend visit from Germany

Manchester Science and Industry Museum will play host to a major exhibition 'Robots' during the 10 day Manchester Science Festival but for one weekend only- the 100 robots will be joined by their German cousin, BlessU-2.

The BlessU-2 robot has been part of an exhibition marking this year's 500 year anniversary of the Reformation in Wittenberg, Germany. This city has a historic association with Martin Luther and the events in 1517 which led to seismic political, religious and cultural upheaval across Europe.

The robot gives blessings in five languages English, German, French, Spanish and Polish. The machine is not a robot priest, nor is it intended to replace the blessing of a priest or pastor, but in an age of technology when many people are permanently attached to their mobiles and 'feeling blessed' on social media, what does a blessing really mean?

This church is no strangers to scientific debate with former wardens and intellectual heavyweights Dr John Dee and the Reverend William Herbert both playing their part in the field of science and the team here are really excited by the visit by the robot on Saturday.

Revd Canon Dr David Holgate, Sub Dean and Canon for Theology and Mission at Manchester Cathedral says:

'In the Church of England, priests are ordained to "bless the people in God's name"; it is always a special privilege to tell people personally that God is for them. The BlessU-2 bot is a playful way of reminding us of this truth, even though the words are not given personally. The invention of the printing press was the high tech invention that drove the Reformation, and so it is good for us to be thinking of what technical advances are driving our culture today.'

Sandra Matz, Pastor for the Church of Light of the EKHN has been closely involved with this project:

"For 4 months BlessU-2 was located in Wittenberg at the World Reformation Exhibition. He gave over 10000 blessings. Hundreds of people from all over the world came to visit Bless U2- the first blessing robot of the world.

Now, BlessU-2 starts to travel the world. And his journey begins in Manchester. I'm really excited about our upcoming trip and the opinion of the people in Manchester on our provocative experiment.

People all over Germany are discussing- Can a robot bless? What do you think? Can a robot bless you? I would say- Let's give it a try. "

David and other clergy will be available at Manchester Cathedral between 10am and 11am and 3pm-4pm to talk to visitors, and to give a blessing to those who would like to be blessed by a human priest, perhaps as well as getting a blessing from BlessU-2. Robot craft activities will be available for families. No tickets are required for this completely free event and everyone is most welcome.

Meet the BlessU-2 robot at **Manchester Cathedral**: Saturday 21 October 10am-1pm and 2pm-4pm
The Museum of Science and Industry: Sunday 22 October 10am-1pm and 2pm-5pm

For more information, please contact Communications and Marketing Officer, Joanne Hooper (joanne.hooper@manchestercathedral.org) on 0161 833 2220 extension 221 or Kat Dibbits at the Museum of Science and Industry (kat.Dibbits@msimanchester.org.uk) on 0161 606 0176 / 0161 606 0213

www.manchestersciencefestival.com www.manchestercathedral.org