

Penance. Find another trustworthy and dependable person to assist and support you....Professional counseling is another important help.... Persevere and don't lose heart!

**To parents...** Equip your children to deal with a world where so much pornography is so easily available....eventually your children will be around an unfiltered computer. Will they at that point be sufficiently educated and morally strong to resist this evil?



#### ON-LINE RESOURCES:

**www.porn-free.org** helps people discover the truth about pornography and "sexual" addictions.

**www.freedomeveryday.org** is sponsored by L.I.F.E. Ministries (Living in Freedom Everyday).

**www.settingcaptivesfree.com** is a Christian based ministry addressing a number of addictions. Its resources are available in several languages.

**www.sa.org** is the web site for Sexaholics Anonymous. It shares information and Twelve Step Spirituality for those struggling with sexual addiction.

**www.filterreview.com** provides a description and customer rating of different internet filters. It is a good single source to learn about many different products.

**www.covenanteyes.com** is not a filter but an accountability service. Users will designate two other individuals who will periodically receive reports of all the sites the user has visited. This can work well in conjunction with a filter.



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## A Pastoral Letter on the Dignity of the Human Person and the Dangers of Pornography

**Bishop Robert W. Finn**

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<http://www.diocese-kcsj.org/Bishop-Finn/pastoral-07.htm>

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*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*  
(Matthew 5:8): **A way of discipleship.**

### **Pornography: Epidemic Attacking Human Dignity**

...Use of internet pornography is perhaps the fastest growing addiction in the world.

Use of pornography is a serious sin against chastity and the dignity of the human person. It robs us of sanctifying grace, separates us from the vision of God and from the goodness of others, and leaves us spiritually empty. Attraction to pornography and its gratifications is a false "love" that leads to increasing emotional isolation loneliness and subsequent sexual acting-out with self and others....

### **CHAPTER I THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON**

*Create a clean heart in me O God.* (Psalm 51:12):

#### **The virtue of chastity.**

...Before he became Pope John Paul II, Karol Wojtyla wrote a book entitled, *Love and Responsibility*....While some would say that the opposite of love is hate, he taught that the opposite of love is use. The idea is that if you do not love some-

one, you will end up using that person. This is known as the Personalistic Norm. Negatively stated, it means that one may never use another person as an object for one's own pleasure. Positively stated, it holds that the only proper response to a person is love....

### **CHAPTER II THE PROBLEM OF PORNOGRAPHY**

*The path of sinners is smooth stones that end in the depths of the nether world.* (Sirach 21:10):

#### **The bitter fruit of pornography.**

...The destructive work of the devil, who Sacred Scripture calls "the father of lies," is to distort in us our sense of what is good. He tells us that others are for our use and enjoyment; that satisfying our cravings will make us happy. But the "happiness" is fleeting. We are spiritual beings sharing God's own life, and this enticing adventure has no spiritual substance. It leaves us deceived, ashamed, unfulfilled and confused.

...Pornography can become as physically and chemically addictive as alcohol, drugs or gambling. The graphic images of pornography burn themselves into our sense imagination. The more deeply and frequently this happens, the harder the road to freedom will be....

Viewing pornography for this distorted venereal pleasure is, objectively, a mortal sin. It is seriously contrary to the life God intends for others and ourselves. It kills the life of sanctifying grace. If we are in serious sin we must not approach Holy Communion until we have received sacramental confession....Still, because God's initiative of grace remains at work, we must not despair. At any time, He stands ready to assist us. We must entrust ourselves to His mercy and return to the Sacrament for forgiveness and a new beginning.

In all this, pornography offends God. It misuses His gifts of freedom, the human body and love....

*Go not after your lusts, but keep your desires in check.* (Sirach 18:30):

#### **The Internet and modern technology.**

The volume of Internet pornography is growing exponentially. It seems to be anonymous and accessible....Moreover, it can be particularly addictive. The sense images and sexual gratifications they trigger leave an impression in the memory. The fantasies can be recalled and perpetuated....Pornography use causes intense physical changes in the body and brain, which reinforce the disordered thoughts and behaviors. With repeated use, the obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviors associated with pornography become increasingly difficult to interrupt or resist.

...The technology itself is not evil. The problem lies in the abuse of technology and its use in evil ways. Like dynamite, it is something powerful that demands proper handling. It can be used to either serve or assault humanity.

We live in a culture that is increasingly dark and death-dealing. We can easily begin to absorb these negative influences—taking them in like a plant absorbs, through its roots, what is in the soil or "culture" in which it is planted. We become numb and we don't even realize that we are slowly being poisoned. This problem is serious and it demands our response.

### **CHAPTER III RESPONDING TO THE PROBLEM**

*I said: 'I will confess my offense to the Lord.' And you, Lord, have forgiven the guilt of my sin.* (Psalm 32:5):

#### **The Sacrament of Penance.**

Acknowledging the problem for ourselves is an important first step. As St. Ignatius noted, this can be done in the Sacrament of Penance....It is the normal means for us—instituted by Christ and provided by the Church—to be reconciled and receive spiritual healing. Stately simply, pornography is sinful and the Sacrament of Penance removes sin. This sacrament puts us in touch with the depth of God’s merciful love. It removes what is bad. It strengthens us with what is good, with God’s grace.

*We are contending not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.* (Eph 6:12.):

**Develop a plan to stay strong.**

In order to persevere we must develop a plan to “stay sober” and avoid the intoxication of pornography. We will not succeed if we think we can easily put aside the temptations to use pornography. We must avoid the occasions of sin, that is, anything that leads us toward it....

**AVOIDING A SECRETIVE OR ENTICING ENVIRONMENT.** We must be careful and plan out what we do when we are in private. Away from others we must be on our guard, mindful of our weakness. Can we invite someone to monitor our computer?...At home, a computer should be located in the open rather in the private room.

**ELIMINATING PORNOGRAPHIC MATERIALS.** We must remove any pornography that is readily available. Eliminate your access as quickly as possible. Destroy the videos, throw out the photos and magazines, cancel the problematic cable or satellite channels.

Because we have grown to depend on computers, this is harder when dealing with Internet pornography....Use a filter. If you knew that eating certain foods or taking certain drugs to which

you are allergic would kill you, you would scrupulously avoid these things. If getting rid of the computer is the only way to assure your chastity—your sexual sobriety—such measures may be necessary for the life of your soul.

**BEING GOOD STEWARDS OF OUR TIME.** Idle time may be the occasion for our use of pornography....We should use our time to constructively do things that are part of the direction we want for our life, that express and strengthen our commitments to others.

**KNOWING OUR WEAKNESSES....**Being honest about our individual weaknesses in these areas will help us avoid the “occasions of sin,”—remote or near occasions—that may cause our downfall....Learn to see the danger coming before it gets too close or too strong.

*You must, therefore, be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* (Matthew 5: 48 ):

**Develop a plan to grow holy as a disciple.**

...It is not enough to remove the bad. We must bring in the good. If we do not replace the bad with something good it can more easily return (Cf. Luke 11:24 -26). Through repentance and Sacramental Reconciliation we move out of darkness into the light but we need a program for staying in the light....

**COMMITMENT TO DAILY PRAYER.** The real core of this prayer must be a growing expression of our relationship to God our Father, to Jesus Christ who redeems us, and to the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us and helps us to be more like Christ in the world. We need to hear God’s affirmation of us—our innate goodness and dignity—so we can begin to love others in a similar way....

**HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.** For us as Catholics the Mass and the worthy reception of the Eucharist are the font from which we draw our spiritual strength and the highest expression of our worship and thanks to God....

**DAILY EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE AND FREQUENT CONFESSION.** No one can hope to seriously grow in the spiritual life without the constant repentance to which Christ calls us. Particularly when we are trying to break the habits of destructive sins, a brief recollection of our day in which we renew our sorrow for our sins and track our progress prepares us for a worthy celebration of Confession. The saints tell us to keep our daily examination of conscience cursory so as not to rekindle the passion of our sins. Satan’s new temptations and occasional discouragement will come. But we must persevere in hope despite our setbacks....

**UTILIZE GOOD SPIRITUAL READING.** Another means of support is through study. As God’s word to us the Bible is life giving and irreplaceable....

**AWARENESS OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD.** Making a faith-filled dedication of our self and our efforts to God each...Keeping a religious medal, holy card or icon on or near the screen of your computer, or on top of the television, can help us be aware of our commitment to live a new life in Christ.

*Behold, now is a very acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* (2 Corinthians 6:2):**Grow Strong in the Exercise of the Virtues.**

**TEMPERANCE...**The more we learn to strengthen our will by occasionally denying ourselves licit enjoyments, the more we will likely succeed in the temperance which supports chastity. When we do this out of a motive of love of Christ, this

“discipline” becomes “discipleship.” It is a kind of spiritual conditioning that strengthens us for other challenges that will come.

**MODESTY** is decency and discretion in the way we dress, act and speak....“Custody of the eyes” means we turn away from those gazes that are intended for our gratification and curiosity. This age-old practice can help us avoid occasions of sin that otherwise lead us to exploit others.

**PURITY** is one of the most wonderful characteristics of the love and light of Jesus Christ....The exploitative use of others through pornography is a contradiction of this purity which characterizes God’s love and must be the model for our love....

*A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; he who finds one finds a treasure.* (Sirach 6:14 )

**Developing a support system.**

...if you or someone you know has reached the point of an addiction or even just a compulsion, more help may be necessary. It is important to develop a support system. This system may involve counseling with a competent professional. It may involve a support group....

There are some additional resources for those struggling with Internet pornography. One is to purchase a computer filter and have a friend download and secure it with a password not to be shared with you. Another is an accountability service that will send a report of every site you visit online to two accountability friends. This can be used in conjunction with a filter.

*Let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people.* (I Chron 19:13 ):**Take Action.**

**To those who struggle with pornography**—Do not give up!...Seek the Sacrament of