



Addressing Porn Addiction on a Supernatural Level

Without God's grace, those seeking freedom from pornography addiction may find the five basic steps just outlined very difficult. Fortunately, all believers can seek grace by

6. Praying daily
7. Seeking education and formation in the virtues
8. Practicing patience and perseverance (Self-mastery is the work of a life-time)
9. Turning one's thoughts to God's merciful love when tormented during recovery with images and temptations
10. Additionally, Catholics are blessed to be able to partake frequently in two great sources of sacramental grace: the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Communion.

Addressing Porn Addiction on a Pastoral Level

It is important for all spiritual fathers to lead their sons and daughters towards freedom and healing. How does one accomplish this goal on a pastoral level?

First, educate the community of believers about the problem. Two excellent resources for clergy are pastoral letters by Bishop Paul S. Loverde of the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia and by Bishop Robert W. Finn of the Diocese of Kansas City - St. Joseph, Missouri.

Second, be willing to summon men to this effort from the pulpit. Invite the men of the parish to form a weekly men's group. Pastors can facilitate this process by putting these men in touch with the growing Catholic men's movement in the United States.

Third, encourage the parents of young people in the parish to take measures to protect their children from pornography, especially on the Internet. Parents need to take every precaution to safeguard their children from the dangers of pornography, for example, by purchasing filter programs.

Children deserve to grow up with a healthy understanding of sexuality and its proper place in human relationships. They should be spared the degrading manifestations and the crude manipulation of sexuality so prevalent today. They have a right to be educated in authentic moral values rooted in the dignity of the human person. ... What does it mean to speak of child protection when pornography and violence can be viewed in so many homes through media widely available today?

We need to reassess urgently the values underpinning society, so that a sound moral formation can be offered to young people and adults alike. All have a part to play in this task – not only parents, religious leaders, teachers and catechists, but the media and entertainment industries as well. Indeed, every member of society can contribute to this moral renewal and benefit from it.

*Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Bishops,
April 16, 2008*

A Final Word on the Issue of Pornography

The problem of eliminating pornography addiction among Catholics and other Christians is not solely the responsibility of men or of the clergy. All who desire to protect the common good and defend Christ's Church must do their part. We need to remember that pornography addiction is an intimacy disorder and that those who are struggling with it are extremely wounded people.

The sexual revolution continues to destroy millions of lives. Many marriages have been destroyed, and women and children have paid the highest price. Let us remember that we engage in this fight for the well-being of our culture and of all humanity, and for the souls of pornography's countless victims today and in the future.

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¹ Most Rev. Robert W. Finn, *Blessed Are the Pure in Heart* (Feb. 21, 2007); available at www.diocese-kcsj.org/content/diocese/bishop/homilies_and_statements.

² Most Rev. Paul S. Loverde, "Bought with a Price: Pornography and the Attack on the Living Temple of God"; available at www.arlingtondiocese.org/documents/BoughtPrice_F.pdf.

The full-length version of this article is posted at www.usccb.org/prolife/programs/rfp/houck.pdf.



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PORNOGRAPHY: WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

by Mark Houck

Hope and Trust in Life!
RESPECT LIFE



The startling growth of the pornography industry in the last 15 years represents a grave threat to the well-being of society. Many of the social ills and behavioral disorders plaguing

our world today—teenage sexual promiscuity, crisis pregnancy, adultery, abortion, divorce, sexual abuse, sexual deviancy, rape, and incest—can be linked to the spread of pornography.

The numbers illustrate the scope of the problem:

- In 2006, the world-wide pornography industry's estimated revenue was \$97 billion (up from \$57 billion in 2005).
- Porn industry revenues are larger than those of the top technology companies combined—Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo!, Apple, Netflix, and Earthlink.
- There are 420 million pornographic web pages, 89% of which are U.S.-based.
- 40 million U.S. adults visit pornographic websites regularly.
- Children aged 12–17 are the largest group of consumers of online pornography.

It should be obvious from these statistics that many Christians struggle with pornography addiction. One estimate puts the number of churchgoing men who are porn users at 50%. Another study found that one in six women is struggling with an addiction to porn.

THE DIGNITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON

Our dignity and worth come from God, not from our accomplishments or possessions. We are “like” God in that we have an immortal soul, we are called to be holy as God is holy, and we have the abilities to reason and to love. As Catholics, we understand the beautiful reality that each unique human person is a unity of body and soul, and that our human dignity includes our sexuality:

Our sexuality is ... part of our person. It gives us the ability to connect and give ourselves in love to another person. Our human sexuality is an important means by which we can share in the love and creativity of God.¹

Only in marriage can a man and woman give their entire selves, body and soul, to their spouse. This love alone—love that is free, total, faithful and fruitful—can satisfy the desires of our hearts.

Any action that undermines the unity of the body and soul, that treats sexuality as simply a physical activity or treats another person as an object to be used, demeans the dignity of the human person.

How Does Pornography Harm Individuals and Society?

Children, teens and young adults are being victimized by an industry that objectifies people by eliminating the human dimension of their lives. Everyone involved in the pornography industry—whether its production, distribution, sale or use—“cooperates and, to some degree, makes possible this debasement of others” because sexuality “is reduced to a demeaning source of entertainment and even profit.”²

How can we expect our young people to practice chastity when they are bombarded daily with messages that tell them to do otherwise? This violates the sexual latency of children and promotes teen/college-age promiscuity, resulting in out-of-wedlock/crisis pregnancies and the spread of STDs at epidemic levels.

Within marriage, addiction to pornography can destroy intimacy. Eventually, the husband or wife who views pornography can lose the ability to relate on a personal and intimate level with the real person of his or her spouse.

Pornography as Addiction

Pornography addiction is defined as “a psychological addiction to, or dependence upon, pornography, theoretically characterized by obsessive viewing, reading, and thinking about pornography and sexual themes to the detriment of other areas of one’s life.” The statistical evidence, as well as the testimony of experts in the field of sexual addiction, shows that pornography is the foremost addiction in the world today due to its pervasiveness and its growing level of acceptability in our culture.

Addressing Porn Addiction on a Natural Level

Pornography addiction is a multi-dimensional problem requiring a multi-faceted solution. Such addiction involves the mental, emotional, physical, relational, and spiritual components of a human being.

In his book *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction*, Dr. Mark Laaser explains that sexual addiction is a result of trauma or wounds experienced over the course of one’s life. Emotional, spiritual or physical abuse during childhood, inflicted by family and the culture at large, can trigger an addiction in adulthood as an attempt at “self-medication” in response to the trauma.

There are practical measures that offer significant hope for those struggling with pornography. Here are five ways that those addicted to pornography can begin the recovery process:

1. Decide to get well and resolve to stop viewing *all* forms of pornography.
2. Remove all sources of temptation that may prevent one from healing.
3. Be willing to make sacrifices, which may involve changing current duties or habits.
4. Become familiar with the process by which one begins to repeat addictive behavior.
5. Find a support group or a network of “solid” people to help in one’s recovery.