

H. SPECIFIC ISSUES IN HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT: PASTORAL RESPONSE GUIDELINES

H.5 PORNOGRAPHY

PRAYER | PRAYER FOR HEALING MEMORIES OF SINS AGAINST CHASTITY

Lord God, who can understand his errors?

Cleanse me from secret faults and my cherished sins.

Keep me back from blatant habitual sin.

Lord, do not let sin rule over me. Cleanse me, forgive me and heal me.

Then I will be blameless and innocent from my many sins.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to You.

Lord, You are my strength and my redeemer.

(Psalm 19:12-14) http://www.porn-free.prg/sample_prayers.htm

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Note: A review of section G.1, G.2 and G.3 helps support appropriate communication.

Note: Should the student disclose viewing pornographic images of minors or classmates, it becomes a legal matter and needs to be passed to the administration immediately.

- 1.** Remember you have been called by God as a Catholic educator to foster in students Catholic worldview.
- 2.** Adults (parents and educators) can be uncomfortable discussing pornography with children or students because of a past or current personal struggle with it. It is important to avoid both minimizing the harmful behavior – “everyone does it” – and the opposite extreme of demonizing it – “that is a filthy and disgusting behaviour.” Remember to present the freeing truth of the Church’s teaching on love and sexuality, balancing truth with compassion.
- 3.** Pornography is the fastest growing addiction in the Western world. This problem starts in elementary school. Statistics indicate that by high school, viewing of pornography is commonplace. Students often bring pornography to school in some form, and students routinely have pornographic material on their electronic devices. This is the most common addiction of teenagers.

4. Typically pornography is NOT a topic that students will bring to a teacher for help or guidance.
 - In 2011, 71% of young adult males reported having viewed pornography at least once in the past week.
 - About 35% of females reported doing so.
 - The average age of first time viewing of pornography is 10 years old.
 - Pornography addiction is the fastest growing addiction in young adults under age 25.
 - Most student interaction with pornography involves “sexting,” “phone sex,” and the internet.
 - Visits to pornographic websites are 3 times more than the total of *all* other website visits combined.
 - Pornography use is linked to later sexual dysfunction and relationship difficulties.

5. Student disclosure may come out of a presentation/guest speaker or class discussion on this topic or by students being found with pornographic images.

6. Discussion with students needs to be gender specific.
 - Males are much more likely to be engaged in viewing pornography. The male mind is hardwired to respond to visual stimulation. (Dr. William Struthers, *Wired for Intimacy*, <http://vimeo.com/38288203>)
 - Females are less likely to view pornography but this number is growing. Furthermore, those women who struggle in this area can feel further stigmatized when it is assumed that “this is a male problem.”
 - Females can also be affected by boyfriend pressure or indirectly by the culture of sexual objectification.

“Someone who misuses love by detaching human sexuality from the intimacy of a committed, loving relationship between two spouses and turns it into commercial goods sins seriously. Anyone who produces, buys, or consumes pornographic materials violates human dignity and seduces others to sin.”

Youcat # 412

CHURCH TEACHING

Pornography consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, and the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials (CCC 2354).

Blessed John Paul II stated that the problem with pornography was not that it showed too much but that it did not show enough. This is because pornography only values specific body parts. This reduces people to objects, and suggests to the viewer that people have no value other than those body parts. One cannot have a relationship with the person being viewed in pornography; therefore, the viewer can only use them. The greatest damage caused by pornography is to family relationships. The love between a husband and a wife can be destroyed, and the healthy relationship between parents and children seriously jeopardized. Actors, directors and all other individuals involved in the production, distribution and sale of pornography are also hurt. The effects of pornography also extend far beyond the industry and the home into areas such as human trafficking and the drug trade.

See: <http://www.reclaimsexualhealth.com>

CASE STUDIES

Note: The following Case Studies and Personal Story could be discussed during a staff in-service.

SITUATION #1

A group of grade 11 male and female students are gathered around a student's laptop at lunch and laughing. Mr. H. is on lunch duty and curious about what they are up to. They are so involved in what they are all watching that they don't notice him walk up. As soon as he saw the computer screen, he was shocked to find that they were watching pornography. When they realized that they were caught they closed the laptop and started to put it back in their bag. Mr. H. confiscated the laptop and delivered the students and the laptop to the principal's office.

SITUATION #2

Rick is in grade 10 and struggles with pornographic images on the internet. It really bothers him but he can't help it. He feels that he is addicted. Last week he finally confessed it to his priest and his priest suggested that he speak to someone about it. After thinking about whom he trusted the most, he decided to talk to one of his teachers who was also his basketball coach. At lunch he found his teacher and asked to speak to him about something. He shared his struggle with him and admitted that he was having difficulty staying away from porn.

SITUATION #3

John is in grade 12 and has quite the reputation as a “lady’s man.” He was in the library on his spare and had two other male grade 12 students around him. They were watching something on his phone and the librarian went to tell him to put his phone away. Before John could put it back in his pocket she saw an image of him having sex with another student. It turned out that the students were recording themselves having sex so they could show their friends.

PERSONAL STORY*FRANCIS’ STORY*

Hello there, my name is Francis. Pornography has become so common in this world today. Millions of young people are addicted to this sin of lust. I'm a Catholic. I was addicted to sin too. After a session of porn watching, which always led me to masturbation, I would feel so guilty... I felt as though my soul is being torn apart. By the grace of Jesus, I went to confession and felt a great peace within me. I told God I will never see such disgusting things again in my life. However, maybe a week or two later, I would end up watching porn again. For many years I was in this state. But Jesus never forgot about me. He poured out great mercy upon me, when I went for confessions. Now I'm 20 years old, and changes have happened in my life. I want to say to all the people out there who are addicted to this sin, that you are not alone. Millions of people are addicted as well. For Catholics, DO go for confession after watching pornography, and allow Jesus to pour out his mercy. For those who ask, He will grant it. Stay strong, and know that there are people praying for you. The devil is powerful. He can destroy our lives through these sins. But victory and empire have already been won by Jesus. Every knee will bow to Jesus, including the devil. The devil is strong, but compared to God, he is nothing. I will be praying for you people out there.

I was raised Catholic and went to Catholic school through eighth grade. I enjoyed the simple true faith of a child and was sure God wanted me to be a priest when I grew up. For reasons blurred by time and heartbreak, I threw away my faith and did my best to fit into the scary world outside. I was always fascinated with pornography as well as other cravings. Although I was able to get my other cravings for drinking and drugs under control, I never even wanted to quit my love affair with pornography. That was back in the 1990's and I could see no reason to ever stop. I liked the fantasy life of porn much better than trying to figure out how to have a real relationship with a woman. I got all my love through my eyes. Then I discovered the internet. My addiction got absolutely out of control and I was helpless to stop. I would spend several hours at a time feeding my addiction and then would crave more. I tried to "overdose" on internet porn to finally disgust myself so maybe I could stop but of course that did not work. Then in 2005, just before Lent, I was led to pray the rosary and to confess my addiction to a priest. A true miracle happened. My craving for porn was lifted from me; completely gone. I was so grateful that I re-dedicated myself to the Lord and I am convinced that as long as I stay close to the Blessed Virgin Mary by praying the rosary every day, and receive Communion with a grateful heart, I need never again suffer the agony of pornography. Reference: <http://www.pornnomore.com>

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Ask the student if he is being pressured into viewing porn or into behaviour that he does not want to participate in.
2. Ask the student if he feel that his viewing of pornography is the result of peer pressure. Most first exposure to pornography takes place in a group setting.
3. Start by assuring the student that the desire for sexual expression is inherently good. Sexuality is a gift from God and the longing/desire is innate and natural.
4. Distinguish between pornography and sexual curiosity. Pornography is about power, not sex. It is about dominance (and sometimes violence), not authentic love and self-giving. Pornography reinforces aggression, perversion and other unhealthy consequences (e.g., STDs, etc.).
5. Dispel the false and unrealistic body images created by pornography, as well as the idea that women exist to fulfill every male fantasy (the objectification of woman).
6. Women are abused in the production of pornography. Depression and mental illness are prevalent in the industry. Encourage students to pray for the actresses when feeling tempted to take pleasure from these images.
7. Make the connection to pornography as an unhealthy addiction. Draw a parallel to other bad habits (smoking, drinking, and drugs). Pornography quickly goes from experimentation, to habit, to addiction. Evidence shows that pornography addiction leads to other addictive behaviours. It is similar to drug addiction in its power.
8. Addictions are life-long. You do not ever get cured of an addiction. The only treatment is abstinence.
9. Pornography use is a form of voyeurism and impedes spiritual, emotional and social development.
10. Self-control – our faith gives us the gift to control our desires. By prayer and the sacraments we receive grace which can help us overcome this addiction.
11. Ask the student if their parent/guardian is aware and if they are able to have open and honest conversation about this. If not, how does the student feel about talking to their parents? Would they be willing to talk to a professional? (See Appendix C)
 - Encourage students to use blocking and reporting software. Example: K9Web Protection.

- Refer them to the school counselor and/or priest for spiritual direction and recovery.
- Dispel the notion that pornography is completely private and that it can be accessed without shame.

12. Direct the student to these online resources:

- COVENANT EYES: <http://www.covenanteyes.com>
Internet accountability tracks websites you visit on your computer, smart phones, and tablets and send them in an easy-to-read report to someone you trust.
- CHASTITY.COM: <http://www.chastity.com>
Romance without regret does exist. But if you want the real thing, be prepared to sacrifice. Only then will you see that the peace and joy that comes from chastity is worth more than all the pleasure in the world.
- PORN NO MORE: <http://www.pornnomore.com>
Provides an organized means and resources with which to confront and address the problems of impurity and moral corruption in our society.
- XXX CHURCH: <http://www.xxxchurch.com>
We use the web, social media, and news media to tell a story often left untold to raise awareness about the true addictive and destructive nature of porn.

13. Consider using the following test:

How do I know whether I am addicted to pornography?*

1. Have you ever thought you needed help for your sexual thinking or behaviour?
2. Do you feel that you'd be better off if you didn't keep "giving in"?
3. Do you think that sex or stimuli are controlling you?
4. Have you ever tried to stop or limit doing what you felt was wrong in your sexual behaviour?
5. Do you resort to viewing sex to escape, relieve anxiety, or because you can't cope?
6. Do you feel guilt, remorse or depression afterward?
7. Do you feel as if your pursuit of pornography has become compulsive?
8. Does it interfere with relations with your friends / family?
9. Do you fantasize about images during the day?
10. Do you keep going from one "relationship" to another?
11. Does pursuit of pornography drive you to ignore other obligations?
12. Have your work habits or academics decreased as porn has become more compulsive?
13. Do you lose time from school or work because of it?
14. Do you return to viewing pornography soon after having masturbated?
15. Can you see yourself still doing this when you are married and have a family?

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RESOURCES

Episcopal Commission for Doctrine, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. "Pastoral Letter to Young People on Chastity." Updated March 2011.

Jason Evert, "Romance without Regret" handbook.

Romance Without Regret <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REj1rhc4RUk>