

March 3rd, 2019
8th Sunday of Ordinary Time
Clean Heart Sunday

For this weekend, all the parishes in our state have set aside time for Clean Heart Sunday. The purpose is to raise awareness regarding the terrible impacts of pornography on individuals, children, marriages, families, churches, and really all of society. But, first, let us explore purity and then consider this evil attack on purity.

St Paul writes about how our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. He writes, "*Do you not know that your body is a temple of the holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been purchased at a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body.*" 1 Cor 6:19-20

Purity comes when we fill ourselves with goodness and love and things from God. Jesus taught with this parable, "*The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a person took and sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all the seeds, yet when full-grown it is the largest of plants. It becomes a large bush, and the 'birds of the sky come and dwell in its branches.*" Mt 13:31-32 A pure person's mind, body, and soul is filled with good things ... with love of neighbor ... and every time a temptation such as an impure thought or desire is fought off, another branch grows.

Now in physics, we learn that every action has an equal and opposite reaction. And the spiritual life is similar. If we fall to temptation and impurity, we draw from purity and fill ourselves with impurity and evil instead. The more we dwell on immodesty or pornography, the more we are filled with a different growing weed that takes away from the plant Jesus talked about.

At another point, Jesus taught, "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" When using pornography, instead of growing in holiness, we take away from holiness and fill our body, mind, and soul with evil.... Just like committing adultery.

What happens when one views and uses pornography? The images, ideas, and concepts are taken into the mind and memory and preserved *with deep emotions and feelings.*

Now, if we stumble on pornography and push the temptation out quickly as one should through prayer, that's one thing. But if one seeks out porn and dwells on it and keeps returning to it and looking for it, this is where we really push away purity and instead the evil grows and infiltrates the body, mind, and soul. What may start as a curiosity, can become an addiction. Instead of thinking proper things with the body and soul about intimacy, one can become possessed by this impurity. The desire grows and causes the individual to keep seeking it out. Pure and holy intimacy becomes foreign and distant.

St Pope John Paul II taught us the concepts of purity in his teaching called, *Theology of the Body*. The first principle is: "*We are to use things and love persons.*" Pornography is clearly an example of doing the reverse. Those who produce and consume porn are using people and their bodies for pleasure and income. This is not love as it is not willing the good of another but using people instead. In addition, the images, concepts, and stories stick to the porn users like two-sided tape. They don't go away easily as they remain embedded in the mind and memory ... and thereby push out goodness.

So, the first thing for all of us to do is to keep ourselves pure so that the Holy Spirit can abide in us. So, God can be there ... instead. Next, we need to learn about how serious this problem is. The average age for first porn use is now down to 11 years old ... **the average!** 79% of millennial men use porn at least monthly and most use it multiple times per week. 76% of women use porn monthly, too, so this isn't just a male problem. Pornography has infiltrated our families, children, friends, and homes. Children, especially teens and pre-teens are now confronted more and more with this problem and their growing brains and minds are much more susceptible They are more vulnerable.

15 years ago, I was traveling with my daughter around Spain as she was discerning her call to religious life as a Carmelite Sister. At one point, we checked into a hotel and I put on the TV. BOOM, hard core porn was on I turned it off as fast as I could and went downstairs and complained ... loudly ... and a woman was already complaining. We must fight back! Let us not allow porn purveyors to destroy our resources and tools and families. If uninvited porn appears, don't stay silent. Turn to prayer and let the Holy Spirit fill us instead. And take action to help eliminate it or prevent it.

God has given us many great gifts ... intimacy ... knowledge that has led to the Internet and other technologies ... like smart phones. With all this we can do amazing things. But the evil one wants to destroy us and our families and our true love and intimacy. Let us not allow evil to succeed ... we must stay pure and show God that his goodness will prevail through us. How much are we spending on these great gifts ... smart phones, tablets, computers, internet fees, ...? How much time and money are we spending protecting our devices from porn? Are we helping each other and protecting our families, especially our children ... on what is coming into our homes ... our bodies, minds, and souls?

Let us all pray regularly and do our best to be pure and holy and to fight this evil. Let us turn to our Mother Mary and beg her to help us all be pure and holy in the sight of God. Let us use the sacraments, especially confession, if we fall or have fallen. We need God and his Grace to help us win this battle.

We are giving out a short book in the back of the church called, "*Equipped – Smart Catholic Parenting in a Sexualized Culture.*" Please take one home and use it ... it is short and easy to follow. In addition, there are videos and e-mails you can register for ... to learn more about this terrible problem and to discover other tools and ways to help fight this evil. See the bulletin and our website for details.

May God be with all of us as we fight this growing, evil epidemic that seeks to destroy our families, friends, and especially our children.