

**Safe Haven Sunday**  
**March 10, 2019**

We've washed the ashes off our forehead and now we begin the season of Lent in earnest. Now we are engaged in the visceral battle of getting the monkey off our back. Over time we develop habits or addictions that weigh us down and get in the way of the vibrant life that we aspire to. These addictions come in many forms. Over-eating or eating the wrong stuff, alcohol and drugs, inappropriate spending and debt or gambling are some of these addictions. They all have their consequences. Lent is a time to straighten things out.

Today throughout the Diocese of La Crosse every Catholic Church is going to focus on one addiction, pornography. Pornography is so pervasive, especially with the Internet. Today we focus on how to protect our children. Research shows that our children are exposed to pornography in the earliest years of grade school. In these early formative years research also shows that it has very damaging effects on the psychological and emotional development of a child.

Pornography is a dead-end street. It produces an initial titillating sensation that results in a huge desire to view more and more graphic material all the while never satisfying. The titillating sensation becomes less and less. It leaves a person feeling empty, lonely and depressed. It kills the spirit. It exploits the person, both the viewer and the one being viewed. It is a multibillion dollar industry that manipulates people and uses them for profit.

There is an attitude out there that pornography doesn't hurt anybody. People think it's anonymous. The fact is your Internet use is tracked all the time. If I Google the Internet to find a tractor part I will end up for the next several weeks with ads popping up about tractor parts. If you go to a porn site there are a lot of people who know what you are looking for. Porn is not anonymous. It is not innocuous.

Besides hurting children this is a terrible affront in a marriage relationship and on family health. Pornography perverts the intimate giving of spouses to each other because it takes what is made to be a sacred gift of self between husband and wife and turns it into a public performance. Use of porn is a violation of fidelity to a

spouse. It erodes trust and is a huge obstacle in the development and deepening of love within the marriage.

In a pastoral letter published by the United States Council of Catholic Bishops, it states: “pornography use hurts the user by potentially diminishing his or her capacity for healthy human intimacy and relationships. It presents a distorted view of human sexuality that is contrary to authentic love, and it harms a person’s sense of self-worth.... It can increase isolation between people because of the feelings of shame and self-reproach it generates. It breaks down trust between family members, and it damages the ability of parents and other adults to be virtuous role models for children.”

So what do we do? How do we respond to this ominous negative force in our life? We have some resources to help families with children. We have a book for each family this weekend. Every family with children has a book up here with their name on it. These books are made possible by a grant given by the Diocesan Council of Catholic women. There are extra books up here for the taking. Grandparents, anyone working with children, especially, these books are for you.

The book is titled, “Equipped: Smart Catholic Parenting in a Sexualized Culture.” The book has many common sense suggestions and resources to help parents nurture a safe haven in their home.

Pornography is not a topic most adults are comfortable speaking about. This is especially true when it comes to parents addressing it with their children. Regrettably though, it is a topic that’s becoming more and more necessary to address in our digital age. Too many parents, grandparents, and teachers think their children have not been exposed to Internet-based pornography. This is simply not true. Statistics tell us another story.

During this season of Lent let us wrestle the monkey off our back. Let us face our addictions, name them for what they are, and through prayer, fasting, and penance and with the grace of God we may come to a new Easter, a spiritual springtime of hope and joy.