

**HEALING FROM PORNOGRAPHY
MINI-RETREAT
Por Anisabel Palma**

DESIGN

The basic design of the retreat consists of the following elements: refreshments, welcome, an icebreaker, four moments of prayer and three talks. This is the proposed program:



HEALING FROM PORNOGRAPHY MINI-RETREAT

PROGRAM

- 8:00AM. Refreshments
- 8:20AM. Welcome
- 8:30AM. Ice-breaker
- 8:50AM. Prayer of Adoration/Blessing
- 9:00AM. Sex for One: **What is going on?**
Prayer of Contrition/Repentance
- 9:45AM. For a relationship of love: **Why is this going on?**
Prayer of Supplication/Petition/Intercession.
- 10:30AM. Jesus is the way of freedom: **What should be going on?**
Prayer of Thanksgiving/Gratitude.
- 12:00PM. Dismissal

8:00AM. Refreshments

Fresh fruit, yogurt, coffee, donuts, juice, granola bars.

8:30AM. Welcome

Share the program and a take-home folder with handouts to use during the retreat like the music and prayers but also other resources like schedules, important contact, and other materials that could help them heal from pornography.

If new people at the facilities, inform them of where the bathrooms are and other logistics.

A couple of minutes of introduction to the topic with this information:

- This mini retreat contains three talks and four sets of moments of prayer. With the first talk we will try to explain what is going on with pornography. During the second talk we will try to understand why this is going on and finally in part 3 of the retreat we will enter the phase of what should be going on. The moments of prayer are there to help us receive the healing that we came looking for, either for ourselves or our loved ones. We will start experiencing healing since the beginning.

8:40AM. Icebreaker

Depending on the knowledge I have of the participants, a few possibly choices for an ICE-BREAKER:

- Marooned: This game is simple. Ask people “if you were marooned on a deserted island, which three people would you want there with you?” Ask them to share their choices with the group, and their reasons why.
- Where In the World: Each individual needs to think of three clues that describe, but doesn’t give away, either the country that they’re from, or their favorite foreign place in the world. The rest of the group needs to guess where they are describing.
- The Holy Spirit Blows blessings: Set up chairs like a game of musical chairs, one fewer chair than players. Then have the first player say, “The Holy Spirit Blows blessings for someone who ...” followed by a statement such as “has been to Russia.” And then all the players who have been to Russia need to stand up and find a new seat. The one who is left standing gets to come up with a new statement. It’s a double whammy of hectic action to get everyone moving and giving everyone the chance to get to know one another.

8:50AM. Prayer of Adoration/Blessing

It starts with a popular song of adoration so participants can join in the singing, after that with just the music playing quietly in the background, someone starts leading the group in a spontaneous prayer of Adoration. In a prayer of adoration and blessing we encounter God. It is our response to God’s gifts. We exalt the greatness of God, and we acknowledge our dependence on Him in all things (CCC #2626, 2628).

9:00AM. Talk 1: SEX FOR ONE. What is going on?

The goal of this talk is to present what is going on in reference to pornography. First, explain how common the use of pornography is and then explain what the most common consequences of the use of pornography are.

“The rise of the Internet presents the most dramatic difference between pornography in decades past and more recently. While online media can be a fruitful avenue for evangelization and personal encounter, the Internet also runs the risk of appealing to a desire for instant gratification and replacing human presence with “virtual reality.” Online, pornography is instantly accessible, seemingly anonymous, mostly free, and has the appearance of being endlessly novel. This potent combination has had devastating effects on many men and women. The widespread availability of the Internet means that pornography is in the home, at work, and often literally at one’s fingertips with the prevalence of mobile devices. The Internet’s perceived anonymity can entice a person to view images or engage in activities that he or she would hesitate to do off-line, and the novelty of Internet pornography can itself be intoxicating, affecting brain chemistry, and seducing viewers to keep clicking. In contrast to a magazine, the Internet has no final page.”¹

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines pornography this way: “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

¹ Create in Me a Clean Heart, Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the United States, 2015, p.14.

(actors, vendors, 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.” (CCC #2354)

Multitude of research shows that the use of pornography has grown proportionally to the technological advancements of our era. Internet availability and wide multimedia resources give almost to anyone free and easy access to pornography. There are several big companies and even countries as Japan producing pornography. As with any other industry, they are always looking for ways to increase their revenue and creatively trying to keep and grow their customer base.² Nowadays, there are thousands of sexual toys including high-end sex dolls at the disposal of whomever wants sexual pleasure alone. Technological advances make also possible to distribute their pornographic material quick, easy, and cheap reaching wide audiences. Users on their part could remain anonymous if they want to.

In the past, using pornography was regarded as a sin for larger groups of people; or at least it was considered a bad, immoral habit. Now in the third century, popular culture largely sees it as acceptable frequently combined with masturbation.³ Many of the younger people see porn as just one more digital activity—a way of relieving stress, a diversion⁴, others see it as just “art”.

“All men and women are created in the image of God and are called to love God and others. Pornography use damages the ability of men and women to become who they are called to be. It makes it more difficult for them to be in self-giving, mutually respectful relationships with each other. It attacks a man’s call to love and protect women and to sacrifice for them, and it undermines a woman’s capacity to love and cherish another human being as a gift and to be received as a gift.”⁵ Here are ten consequences of the use of pornography.

1. Pornographic material leads to masturbation and the other way around too. Definition of masturbation: “erotic stimulation especially of one's own genital organs commonly resulting in orgasm and achieved by manual or other bodily contact exclusive of sexual intercourse, by instrumental manipulation, occasionally by sexual fantasies, or by various combinations of these agencies.”⁶ Philip Zimbardo, the director of the famous Stanford Prison Experiment, “in his book *Man, Interrupted*, Zimbardo warns that “procrasturbation” may be leading young men to fail academically, socially, and sexually. Gary Wilson, an Oregon man who runs a website called *Your Brain on Porn*, makes a similar claim. In a popular tedx talk, which features animal copulation as well as many (human) brain scans, Wilson argues that masturbating to internet porn is addictive, causes structural changes in the brain, and is producing an epidemic of erectile dysfunction.”⁷

² Kate Julian, “Why Are Young People Having So Little Sex?” https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/12/the-sex-recession/573949/?utm_source=copy-link&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=share

³ Create in Me a Clean Heart, Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the United States, 2015.

⁴ Kate Julian, “Why Are Young People Having So Little Sex?” https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/12/the-sex-recession/573949/?utm_source=copy-link&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=share

⁵ Create in Me a Clean Heart, Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the United States, 2015, p.15.

⁶ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/masturbation> [Masturbation Definition & Meaning - Merriam-Webster](#)

⁷ Kate Julian, “Why Are Young People Having So Little Sex?” https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/12/the-sex-recession/573949/?utm_source=copy-link&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=share

2. Harms man-woman relationships, most often focused on quality of marital relationships. Viewing pornography increases the likelihood of cheating on a partner. Some State resolutions argue that porn "teaches girls that they are to be used and teaches boys to be users. Widespread pornography use contributes to the declining marriage rate. Pornography lessens the "desire in young men to marry." Pornography has "a detrimental effect on the family unit." Emphasizing this harm to the family helps to establish the case that the harms of pornography go beyond the individual and threaten broader social norms. Framing these harms as a threat to the family, and by extension public health. Pornography use "by either partner" is "linked to an increased likelihood that girls will engage in group intercourse."⁸
3. Pornography is leading to "an increase in problematic sexual activity at younger ages" and is "contributing to the hyper-sexualization of teens, and even prepubescent children."⁹
4. Since many young adults rely on porn for information about how to perform sexually,¹⁰ young people today are more likely to engage in sexual behaviors prevalent in porn, like choking (asphyxiation for sexual pleasure), ejaculating on their face and anal sex, this leads to:¹¹
5. Painful sex or unpleasant early sexual experiences when men recur to nonconsensual substitution of anal for vaginal sex¹²
6. Addiction. "In the same way that a junkie eventually requires more and more of a drug to get a buzz or even feel normal, regular porn consumers will end up turning to porn more often or seeking out more extreme versions—or both—to feel excited again. And once the porn habit is established, quitting can even lead to withdrawal symptoms like drugs."¹³
7. Potential detrimental effects on pornography's users can impact brain development and functioning.¹⁴
8. Consequences of the use of porn in people themselves include: "They had lost jobs due to use at work, damaged intimate relationships or negatively influenced other social activities, experienced diminished libido or erectile function specifically in physical relationships with women (although not in relationship to the sexually explicit material), used escorts excessively, experienced suicidal ideation and using large amounts of money, some subjects either had or were in counselling for their behaviors. Other examples of negative emotional consequences presented in scientific studies include psychological distress, narcissism, depression and anxiety, sexual dissatisfaction,

⁸ Burke, Kelsy, and Alice MillerMacPhee. "Constructing Pornography Addiction's Harms in Science, News Media, and Politics." *Social Forces* 99, no. 3 (2021): 1334-1362. muse.jhu.edu/article/786300. <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.csbsju.edu/article/786300>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ <https://www.brainbuddyapp.com/learn/porn-facts-and-statistics-updated-2021>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Kate Julian, "Why Are Young People Having So Little Sex?" https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2018/12/the-sex-recession/573949/?utm_source=copy-link&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=share

¹³ "How Porn Affects the Brain Like a Drug," *Fight the New Drug* website, 2017.

¹⁴ Utah Concurrent Resolution on the Public Health Crisis, 2016.

loneliness, body image dissatisfaction, and negative self-perception and self-esteem.”¹⁵ “People with porn addictions are preoccupied with sexual thoughts throughout the day. This could cause changes in the way that they perceive or expect other people to behave.”¹⁶ “The actors in pornographic films also face serious risks, such as contracting a sexually transmitted infection (STI) and high rates of drug and alcohol abuse.”¹⁷

9. Harms to lawful behavior. “Many state resolutions allude to or explicitly claim that pornography addiction fuels criminal behavior, typically acts of violence like sexual aggression or the illegal sex industry, that is, sex work or sex trafficking. The Louisiana resolution includes the claim that the age of first exposure to violent pornography correlates with the likelihood of committing acts of violence: “the younger a boy is exposed to images depicting rape, bondage, abuse of women, and other deviant behaviors, the more he is prone to commit violence and force nonconsensual sex with others.” Pornography “increases the demand for sex trafficking,” and for prostitution, therefore. Pornography “increases child sexual abuse and child pornography and the demand for sex trafficking and prostitution. A couple stories found in the research of this topic includes the case of the woman in North Dakota who constantly was breaking in the house of her neighbor to steal items to sell to support her porn addiction or the case of the husband who stabbed his wife to death when she confronted him on his porn addiction.”¹⁸

Pornography use is not a harmless activity. The moral status of pornography is clear from the definition given earlier by the Bishops of the United States document, *Create in Me a Clean Heart*: “producing or using pornography is gravely wrong. It is a grave matter by its object. It is a mortal sin if it is committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent. Unintentional ignorance and factors that compromise the voluntary and free character of the act can diminish a person’s moral culpability. This sin needs the Lord’s forgiveness and should be confessed within the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. The damage it causes to oneself, one’s relationships, society, and the Body of Christ needs healing. Pornography can never be justified and is always wrong. Therefore, I would like to invite all of you to participate wholeheartedly in the following Prayer of Contrition/Repentance; with this prayer we express awareness of our relationship with God. We are creatures who are not our own beginning, not the masters of adversity, not our own last end. We are sinners who as Christians know that we have turned away from our Father. Our petition is already a turning back to him. In our name or in the name of a family member, we are going to ask forgiveness, like the tax collector in the parable: “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” It is a prerequisite for righteous and pure prayer. A trusting humility brings us back into the light of communion between the Father and his Son Jesus Christ and with one another, so that “we receive from him whatever we ask.” Asking forgiveness is the prerequisite for both the Eucharistic liturgy and personal prayer.”¹⁹

Someone leads the group in a spontaneous (based on the previous talk) prayer of contrition/repentance while in the background a quiet song of contrition/repentance is played.

¹⁵ Burke, Kelsy, and Alice MillerMacPhee. “Constructing Pornography Addiction's Harms in Science, News Media, and Politics.” *Social Forces* 99, no. 3 (2021): 1334-1362. muse.jhu.edu/article/786300. <https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy.csbsju.edu/article/786300>

¹⁶ <https://www.brainbuddyapp.com/learn/porn-facts-and-statistics-updated-2021>

¹⁷ *Create in Me a Clean Heart*, Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the United States, 2015, p.12.

¹⁸ <https://www.brainbuddyapp.com/learn/porn-facts-and-statistics-updated-2021>.

¹⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Numbers 2629, 2631.

5 minutes break

Inform participants if someone is interested in individual prayer, there are prayer teams that offer individual prayer at the Chapel after each weekend Mass on the first weekend of the month. A schedule is included in their take-home folder. Also included is the schedule of reconciliation times for those who wish to go to confession.

9:45AM. Talk 2: For a Relationship of Love. Why is this going on?

The goal of this talk is to explain why everything mentioned in the previous talk is going on, what are the forces pushing pornography and why.

There are three main reasons why pornography exists, behind these are the three enemies of our soul, the flesh, the world, and the devil. The first is because pornography offers a fantasy world of pleasure and happiness amid broken souls longing for love (flesh), because it is a multi-billion-dollar industry (the world), and because it is an effective way to separate us from God (the devil).

Pornography offers a fantasy world of pleasure and happiness amid broken souls longing for love (flesh)

“From the beginning of creation, God’s beautiful plan for human love was inscribed on the human heart and in the human body. The light of Christ illuminates the true beauty and vocation of the human person, and it is a light to be handed on person to person, inviting an encounter with the Lord. God created the human person, male and female, in his image and likeness, as the crown of creation. Every one of us is a gift, with the inviolable dignity of a person. “God is love” (1 Jn 4:8), the Triune communion of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Because each of us is created in the image of God, we are given the call—the vocation—of love and communion. Men and women discover the call to love written in their very bodies. The human person is a unity of soul and body, and the body shares in the dignity of the image of God. The body reveals or “expresses the person. The virtue and vocation of chastity is essential to love in all its forms. Chastity means “the successful integration of sexuality within the person,” and thus the attainment of self-mastery and genuine freedom in the sexual arena of human action. It is “a virtue that allows us to do what is right, good, and truly loving in the areas of relationship and sexuality.” Chastity integrates our internal desires for sexual pleasure into our overall pursuit of moral excellence and holiness. Chastity is opposed to lust, which is an inordinate desire for sexual pleasure apart from the true meaning of sexuality and marital love. Whereas lust uses another person as a means for sexual gratification, chastity affirms the whole person, body and soul, over and above his or her sexual qualities. God created us out of love and for love, but we know that all of history is marked by the sin of our first parents and our own sin. Sin damages our relationships with God, our own selves, others, and all of creation. We are all in need of the Lord’s grace, including his mercy and healing. Sacred Scripture witnesses to the particular harm that sin causes to the relationship between man and woman (see Gn 3:7f.). With Original Sin, the experience of concupiscence (the inclination to sin) entered human history, as well as suffering and death. The original communion of man and woman is now threatened by sin, including the sin of lust.”²⁰

²⁰ Create in Me a Clean Heart, Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the United States, 2015.

The second is because it is a multi-billion-dollar industry (the world)

Pornography is a big business. Estimates of revenue stretch easily into the billions of dollars every year. The pornography industry is aggressive, savvy, and regulated only sporadically, even though child pornography or content that is considered “obscene” is illegal to make, sell, own, or view. Many companies invest heavily in lobbyists to push “free speech” ordinances to counter legal charges of indecency and obscenity. Pornographers often use free online content as bait to entrap and addict new users who will then pay to access “exclusive” material. Marketers target young men especially with sexual ads on popular sports and social media websites. Other businesses, such as hotel chains, cable companies, and drugstores, profit greatly from the widespread use of pornography and contribute to its accessibility. The pornography industry and its pervasive reach is a clear sign that pornography has become a structure of sin in our society. Today it can be considered a structure of sin. It is so pervasive in sectors of our society that it is difficult to avoid, challenging to remove, and has negative effects that go beyond any one person’s actions. At the same time, as with any sin, pornography’s prevalence in our society is rooted in the personal sins of individuals who make, disseminate, and view it, and by doing so further perpetuate it as a structure of sin.²¹

There are many victims of pornography. Every person portrayed in it is beloved by God our Father and is someone’s daughter or son. Their dignity is abused as they are used for others’ pleasure and profit. Pornography has connections to sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation worldwide, an evil that we, as bishops, have condemned strenuously. Many sex trafficking victims (mostly women and girls) are forced into prostitution, which may include pornography as “training” or as their “product.” All child pornography is automatically trafficking and a crime, because it involves the sexual exploitation of a minor for commercial gain and it is against the child’s will due to the inability to give consent.

The most visible pornographic material is, the more money it produces for their advertisers. “Erotic, over-sexualized, and pornographic images are more present in American society than ever before. It is commonplace to see these images while reading magazines and social media content, shopping online or at the mall, or watching movies and television. Mainstream entertainment itself has become hypersexualized. Novels that at one time would have been classified as “erotica” are now mainstream, to say nothing of the overtly sexual romance novel genre. Video games, music lyrics, music videos, clothing, and even costumes have become progressively more sexualized, including content targeted to children and adolescents.⁵³ Maintaining purity is a serious challenge in this environment, as is learning appropriate boundaries that are necessary for living chastely and having healthy relationships.”²²

“Pornography is often misrepresented as a harmless pastime (using euphemisms like “adult entertainment” or “gentlemen’s club”) or even promoted as good—for example, as an aid to marital intimacy. It is not uncommon to hear pornography use described as “normal” for men, implying that they are “hard-wired” to look at it. Many people, more men than women, do not consider viewing pornography to be cheating, that is, being unfaithful to one’s spouse or girlfriend/boyfriend. Pornography also desensitizes its viewers, who may seek out and watch more extreme and degrading content over time as their tolerance increases.”²³

²¹ Create in Me a Clean Heart, Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the United States, 2015, p. 14.

²² Create in Me a Clean Heart, Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the United States, 2015, p. 13.

²³ Ibid, 13.

The third is because it is an effective way to separate us from God (the devil).

“Deliberately viewing pornography is a grave sin against chastity. Sexual intimacy and the pleasure that derives from it are gifts from God and should remain personal and private, enjoyed within the sacred bond of marriage alone. Such intimacy should not be put on display or be watched by any other person, even if that person is one’s own spouse. Nor should the human body be unveiled or treated in a way that objectifies it sexually and reduces it to an erotic stimulant. Jesus is clear in his teaching that sexual immorality is not only a matter of one’s actions but also a matter of one’s heart: “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” (Mt 5:27-28). Regardless of the relationship between the parties, looking at another person with lust—as only a sexual object to enjoy, control, and use—is a sin. It is a disordered view of the person, because it is ordered toward use, as of a thing, rather than love, which pertains to persons. This is why pornography can never be justified, even within marriage.”²⁴

“Pornography is likewise a grave sin against human dignity. As the Catechism says, filming or taking pictures of the intimate parts of the body or of sexual acts does “grave injury” to the person(s) “performing,” to anyone responsible for its making or production, and to the general public. Pornography dehumanizes the persons depicted, making them into objects of use. Those who produce and distribute pornography harm the common good by encouraging and even causing others to sin. They do serious harm to the women and men who consent to be in pornographic material, often out of desperation for money or out of an impoverished sense of self-worth. Even worse, in some cases pornographers take advantage of those who cannot even give consent—children and other victims of human trafficking—which is both a grave sin and a heinous crime.”²⁵

“Sin offends God and always hurts the person sinning as well as the community. To choose with full knowledge and complete consent something gravely contrary to the divine law is to commit a mortal sin,³⁵ which “destroys in us the charity without which eternal beatitude is impossible.” Mortal sin ruptures a person’s relationship with God and puts his or her salvation at risk. Forgiveness is needed whenever we sin, and it is always available in the Sacrament of Penance and Reconciliation. Jesus over and over demonstrated his great mercy to sinners, not condemning them but saying, “Go and sin no more” (see Jn 8:1-11). However, persisting in sin can make it more difficult to hear God’s call and respond to his offer of mercy, especially if addiction is involved. Sin also damages the ability of parents and other adults to be virtuous role models for children.”

Pornography use is connected with or can lead to other sins in addition to those already mentioned, especially masturbation. “Masturbation, which is deliberate, erotic stimulation often to the point of orgasm, commonly occurs together with pornography use. While popular culture largely sees it as acceptable, masturbation is always gravely contrary to chastity and the dignity of one’s body. Like other sins against chastity, it seeks sexual pleasure outside of the mutual self-giving and fruitful intimacy of spouses in marriage, in this case, even outside of any relationship at all. In addition, engaging in masturbation has powerful neurological effects that

²⁴ Ibid, p. 10.

²⁵ Create in Me a Clean Heart, Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the United States, 2015, p. 10.

can make it into a highly addictive behavior. However, true freedom from this destructive habit is possible with the grace of Christ. Pornography use also has direct connections with sins such as adultery, domestic violence, the abuse of children in child pornography, and sex trafficking. It also can be implicated in contraception use and abortion, given that it promotes and even celebrates promiscuity and a view of sexuality devoid of love or openness to new life. In sum, pornography presents and promotes a distorted view of human sexuality, in which the person portrayed, man or woman, is treated as merely a means of pleasure.

Pornography participates in and furthers what Pope Francis has condemned as a “throwaway culture” where things and people are used and discarded. It rejects the equal dignity and complementarity between man and woman and strikes at the heart of God’s plan for communion between persons by substituting an image of the viewer’s own lustful desires—which is ultimately illusory—for the reality of a true relationship with another human being. Loving, chaste relationships, with all their challenges and struggles, are the only way to true intimacy and community, as well as long-term happiness.²⁶”

“Pornography viewing is significantly related to all five religious’ outcomes of interest. Specifically, increases in pornography viewing are negatively related to religious service attendance, importance of faith, prayer frequency, and closeness to God, while positively related to religious doubts.”²⁷

This section also ends with prayer. This time it is a Prayer of Petition and Intercession. It is spontaneous and with background music. “Christian petition is centered on the desire and search for the Kingdom to come, in keeping with the teaching of Christ. There is a hierarchy in these petitions: we pray first for the Kingdom, then for what is necessary to welcome it and cooperate with its coming. This collaboration with the mission of Christ and the Holy Spirit, which is now that of the Church, is the object of the prayer of the apostolic community. By prayer every baptized person works for the coming of the Kingdom. Intercession is a prayer of petition which leads us to pray as Jesus did. He is the one intercessor with the Father on behalf of all men, especially sinners. He is “able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.” The Holy Spirit “himself intercedes for us . . . Since Abraham, intercession - asking on behalf of another has been characteristic of a heart attuned to God's mercy. In the age of the Church, Christian intercession participates in Christ's, as an expression of the communion of saints. In intercession, he who prays looks “not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others,” even to the point of praying for those who do him harm. The intercession of Christians recognizes no boundaries: “for all men, for kings and all who are in high positions,” for persecutors, for the salvation of those who reject the Gospel.”²⁸ Therefore, we will pray for all victims, users and perpetrators of pornography.

10:30AM. Talk 3: Jesus is the way of freedom. What should be going on? -The Way Out (Healing Prayer)

²⁶ Ibid, p.12.

²⁷ Samuel L. Perry, George M. Hayward, *Seeing is (Not) Believing: How Viewing Pornography Shapes the Religious Lives of Young Americans*. Oxford University Press. Social Forces, Volume 95, Number 4, June 2017, pp. 1757-1788.

²⁸ Catechism of the Catholic Church, Numbers 2632-2636.

The goal of this talk is to present Jesus as the One capable of releasing those trapped by pornography, heal all wounds caused by pornography and able to restore the image of God on those damaged by pornography.

“But we know that sin does not have the last word. Christ has redeemed mankind and has made it possible for us, not only to fulfill God’s law, but also to live a new life of freedom in the Holy Spirit. In Jesus, redemption and healing are offered to every person. “Healing the wounds of sin, the Holy Spirit renews us interiorly through a spiritual transformation. He enlightens and strengthens us ...” The Gospel is indeed very good news. Our bodies and sexuality are included in Christ’s work of redemption, which brings about a new creation that is fulfilled in the glory of the final coming of the Kingdom of God (see Rom 8:18-23). The human body has such great dignity! In the Incarnation, the divine Son assumed a complete human nature, body and soul. By his Resurrection, we look forward to the resurrection of our own bodies. In Baptism, our bodies are made temples of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor 6:19). Certainly, none of us is free from weakness and concupiscence, which remains after Baptism. Each of us is caught up in the drama of sin and redemption; we are challenged to put selfishness aside and to strive always toward more perfect love. But the Lord invites us with all our weaknesses to trust and abide in him: “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).”²⁹

“Pope Francis reminded the Church of her calling to become a “field hospital” for the wounded of the world. In particular, the effects of pornography on the soul can be deep, and the use of pornography itself can be a sign of other emotional wounds. No wound is so deep, however, as to be out of the reach of Christ’s redeeming grace. The Church as a field hospital is called to proclaim the truth of the human person in love, to protect people—especially children—from pornography, and to provide the Lord’s mercy and healing for those wounded by pornography. Many means of support are available for those who have been harmed by pornography and who desire to be free from it and its effects. Christ is our hope! Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the mission of his Church, Jesus continues to give us himself, so that we can follow and abide in him. We encounter him in multiple ways: through Sacred Scripture, the sacraments, and the whole teaching and life of the Church. Jesus is the way of freedom. The Church says, “Be not afraid!” Come to the Lord Jesus, whose mercy endures forever! The Lord never tires of forgiving.”³⁰

“To all who are struggling with the sin of pornography and striving to cultivate chastity, be assured that you are not alone in your struggle. Jesus is with you, and the Church offers you love and support. Trust in and be led by the Holy Spirit. The Lord’s mercy and forgiveness are abundant! “As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our sins from us” (Ps 103:12). God’s grace and concrete help are always available. Healing is always possible.”³¹

At this moment we invite participants to enter this new life offered by Christ by renouncing Satan and rejecting the lies believed. In silence everyone considers what lies has believed. For example:

- That a toy or a sex-doll are better since they never will cheat on you.
- That pornography was just one more digital activity—a way of relieving stress, a diversion, healthy entertainment.

²⁹ Create in Me a Clean Heart, Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the United States, 2015, p. 9.

³⁰ Create in Me a Clean Heart, Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of the United States, 2015, p. 19.

³¹ Ibid, p.25.

- That pornography was just “art”.
- That pornography was a way to receive safe sex education.
- That watching porno was a way to help nurture better sexual encounters in married couples.
- That pornography use was a harmless activity.
- That it was a business as any other, that you were not forcing your products into people, that they voluntarily consumed what you had to offer.
- That since it was done in private you were harming no one with your habits.

Invite participants to say, using this or their own similar words.

“I renounce Satan and reject the lie of _____.”

“I renounce the sin of use of pornography, I renounce the sin of _____.”

“Jesus, release me of the chains of pornography. I accept the freedom you offers me. Clean me with your Precious Blood and make me a new person. In your name, we pray.”

Psalm 51, 3-12 could be prayed here.

Next the Holy Spirit is called to come and fill all the areas vacated by the lies believed and by the spirits of pornography and lust. This is a longer invocation to the Holy Spirit asking for healing.

“The Church also looks to the saints. Their example and intercession are a great help for us. In a particular way, we invite renewed devotion to the Holy Family and entrustment to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and Sacred Heart of Jesus. Like many of us, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph experienced the joys and struggles of everyday family life—and they did it with great love and purity. At the center of their chaste love was Jesus Christ, and in this way their love serves as a model for all. Jesus is meant to be at the center of our love and relationships as well. Joseph was a righteous man and is a powerful intercessor for all struggling to be pure, especially men. Mary’s Immaculate Heart and Jesus’ Sacred Heart unveil the purity and freedom intended for the heart of every woman and man.”³²

We close the last part of the retreat with more spontaneous prayers of thanksgiving and gratitude. It could be with a song of a more upbeat rhythm followed by loud vocal prayer expressing our thanksgiving and gratitude for all blessings received during the retreat and in the days ahead.

12:00PM. Dismissal

Before dismissing participants, make sure everyone has a take-home folder with resources to assist them in their healing from pornography. Like civil authorities contact information, list of Spiritual Directors nearby, conferences, retreats, counselors, books, fasting practices, warfare prayers, reconciliation times, Adoration schedule, Chapel entrance, etc.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

³² Ibid, p.25.

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8. Samuel L. Perry, George M. Hayward, *Seeing is (Not) Believing: How Viewing Pornography Shapes the Religious Lives of Young Americans*. Oxford University Press. *Social Forces*, Volume 95, Number 4, June 2017, pp. 1757-1788.
9. Utah Concurrent Resolution on the Public Health Crisis, 2016.

INTERVIEWS

I received feedback from two ministers that do not particularly work in healing of pornography ministry but eventually have encountered people in their churches who have approached them with their struggles. John shared he makes clear to people pornography is a sin, a sin condemned by God that if they persist on it they could end up practicing homosexuality; that pornography could provoke mental issues and even it could create marital problems if they try to imitate in their sexual life what they see in pornography. This habit debilitates the person. The tools he offers those who approach him is fasting and prayer so they can resist and heal from this temptation.

Liliana said it is an incredibly difficult and embarrassing subject, but it does need to be talked about. She thinks sometimes people in the Church are so afraid of the uncomfortable that they fail to minister to those in need- She added it is important to see that need and be ready to face it directly. Everything we do, our entire ministry must be based on ministering to the real concerns people have that are uncomfortable and isolating.

IMPLEMENTATION

This mini-retreat took place at the Church of Saint Mary on X
 There were X number of participants. It started at 8am and ended at 12pm.
 There were a total of X hours of contact time with people, including 4 hours at the retreat plus X hours in promoting the event and 1 hour in interviewing 2 other ministers.

EVALUATION

- a. What ideas and experiences most and least engaged participants? Why?
- b. What were your strengths in carrying out the project and what could be improved?