

On Breaking the Power of Pornography I

The word ‘addiction’ is overused, though there is something to it regarding any compulsive behavior and a loss of free will. But since I am not sure about describing the use of pornography as an addiction, and since there is no question but that its use is objectively a mortal sin, I shall approach the question theologically and not psychologically.

With that being said, I came across a fine little pamphlet called *Breaking Free*, by Mr. Stephen Wood. He has some good resources which may be found with Family Life Center Publications (www.familylifecenter.net). I am going to use a good deal of his information, and add to it.

His approach to breaking free from slavery to pornography is in twelve steps. This has a solid Catholic foundation. One is reminded of the twelve steps of humility of St. Benedict, or the twelve steps of pride of St. Bernard, and other examples. So if you want to break free, then attempt the following steps with all your strength:

1. Destroy all your pornography.
 - a. Magazines, books, photographs, DVD’s, CD’s, everything. Burn them in a holocaust to God, and take a good look at the way the fire consumes the material, feel its heat and smell its odor and how it gives off a stench. That will give you a little idea of what you will be avoiding (hell) by such a sacrifice.
 - b. Do it immediately. If you go to confession and cleanse your soul of filth, then get to the destruction immediately. You cannot just “wish” to be rid of this garbage, you must make a decision to break free, and then act immediately on that decision.
 - c. Temptations for men usually come through the eye. Our Lord said, “And if thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body be cast into hell.” (Mt. 5.29)
2. Take radical steps to re-orient your life.
 - a. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, “Sexuality affects all aspects of the human person.” (#2332) So if you find yourself under the influence of a life-dominating sexual sin like pornography use, you must take some very strong steps to re-orient your life.
 - b. To do this, you will need a protection plan, which would consist at the minimum of:
 1. The avoidance of even glancing at pornography. This might mean shopping at different stores, avoiding certain gas stations, or even taking a different route home.
 2. Canceling subscriptions to newspapers or anything containing lingerie ads and inserts; canceling certain cable channels (or better yet, canceling cable altogether), and quit channel surfing. Do this immediately.
 3. Consider and reflect on this passage from Scripture (or better yet, memorize

it): “The night is passed and the day is at hand. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and impurities, not in contention and envy. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ: and make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences.” (Rom. 13.12-14)
NB. When St. Augustine was in the garden at Ostia, and heard children singing “Pick up and read,”—children whom he later knew to be angels—he opened the Bible and his finger fell on those verses. Those few words of St. Paul changed his life forever.

4. Install a good filtering program on your computer. The passwords to the filtering program should belong to your wife, or to a good friend. If you don’t do that, then subscribe to a “clean” Internet provider.
5. Move the computer from your room or office to an open location in the home. Place a powerful image of a saint or the Blessed Virgin or an angel on the screen, and above it. When I say “powerful”, I mean one which moves your heart and not just your mind. You might place some quotes of Sacred Scripture on the screen as well. Do the same for your office computer. The Industry Standard reports that 70% of Internet porn traffic occurs between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.
6. Before you even touch your computer, get in the habit of getting on your knees, making a devout Sign of the Cross with Holy Water, and say at least the prayer to St. Michael the Archangel (the Patron Saint of the Internet) for protection, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary for purity.
7. Be determined to walk away from pornography. If you cannot use a computer without falling into the evil again, then get rid of your computer.

There are ten more steps to take. But if you can just do these two, you will have made some giant strides.

I know this is a distasteful subject. But it must be covered. And lest children be scandalized, I do not want to even mention the word “pornography” from the pulpit.

I’ll try to cover the rest of the steps in a minimum of five more inserts.