

Put Out Into the Deep

# The Consequences of Pornography



Bishop DiMarzio

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For over 2,000 years, the Gospel has continually called Christians to evangelize and transform the culture in which we live by becoming holy, but we recognize there are obstacles to holiness. Today, an increase in material prosperity sometimes results in a spiritual poverty that can lead to a fixation on oneself to the detriment of one's relationships with a spouse, children, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and most importantly Almighty God. The multi-million-dollar pornography industry profits from this and reinforces a growing narcissism, or pre-occupation with self.

How can we define pornography? In 1986 the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography defined it as, "material that is sexually explicit and intended primarily for sexual arousal." At one time, pornography was sold in a limited number of locations; it was considered shameful to patronize such establishments. Now, we can find it even in our homes — on the radio, television or computer.

At its core, pornography is a dagger driven into the heart of love. In his first encyclical, "Redemptor Hominis," the late Pope John Paul II, of happy memory, reminded us that "man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate in it." For the Christian, a human is created in the image and likeness of God; hence, sex is a participation in the communion of God and creation. The pornographer considers humans to be simply a more evolved animal and believes that pleasure is the only

end of sex.

There are many adverse consequences due to the accessibility of pornography and the growth of this industry that prey on the human soul. Pornography is a corruption that causes complications and dissolutions of marriages. It is a symptom of the disordered understanding of freedom that pervades modern culture and threatens the foundations of the family and human dignity. Freedom, as described in the encyclical of John Paul II, "Familiaris Consortio," is "conceived not as a capacity for realizing the truth of God's plan for marriage and the family, but as an autonomous power of self-affirmation, often against others for one's own selfish well-being."

How does pornography corrupt and complicate marriage? In his encyclical, "Humanae Vitae," Pope Paul VI tells us that the Church has consistently taught that through the "mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone," a husband and wife "develop that union of two persons in which they perfect one another, cooperating with God in the generation and rearing of new lives." Pornography impedes this participation in the divine life and sets up a false dichotomy between love and sex. It is said that some spouses — a small number, I would hope — will spend hours apart on the Internet in a virtual world of so-called "adult" chat rooms and Web sites, rather than spending time nurturing their relationship and pouring themselves out as a total self-gift, sharing aspirations, fears, joys, sorrows and struggles.

Moreover, the entertainment industry markets movies and programming to children that is rife with adult innuendo. Our modern culture is hypocritical

when it claims to advocate for children and at the same time seeks to expose children and adolescents to thousands of pornographic depictions in movies, on television and radio, and via the Internet. Can any reasonable person deny that these images adversely affect their human formation? This atmosphere eats away at the souls of our children. It degrades their human dignity, frustrates and confuses development of genuine human relationships and frequently acts as an incubator for violence. Although it is primarily parents who must not abdicate their responsibility to closely monitor the viewing habits and Internet use of their young children and teenagers, communities must work together to assist parents by strengthening and enforcing anti-obscenity laws.

Perhaps the most unfortunate consequence of the explosion of pornography is the emergence of modern-day "slave trading." The pornographers' mentality views human beings not as persons "but as things," an object of trade, at the service of selfish interest and mere pleasure; the first victims of this mentality are women. As an advocate for migrant people, I have witnessed first-hand the tragedy of human trafficking. The practice of transporting girls and young women from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa to work in houses of prostitution, online brothels, and the so-called adult movie industry can leave no doubt in anyone's mind that pornography has real human victims.

As a society and as a Church, we need to put out into the deep of ridding our culture of the terrible addiction of pornography. We must become more aware of the means available to curb its influence on our society.

## Bishop Comments on Priest's Arrest

In a letter to the parishioners of St. Ephrem's Church, Dyker Heights, Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio said he had withdrawn the faculties of a resident priest from Ghana arrested Oct. 18 for "inappropriate behavior with a young lady" in the parish.

The bishop said the priest, Father Anthony Ocloo, 45, no longer resides in St. Ephrem's rectory, where he had stayed since January, and may not function publicly as a priest. He was in this country at the direction of his bishop of the Diocese of Keta-Akatsi to study for a master's degree in business administration at St. John's University.

Msgr. Peter V. Kain, St. Ephrem's pastor, read the letter at the five weekend Masses Oct. 22-23.

In the letter, Bishop DiMarzio said the Kings District Attorney's Office was notified "immediately" after the allegation was received by the diocesan telephone "hot line." Detectives from the District Attorney's Office arrested Father Ocloo at the rectory.

The bishop said that diocesan and parish representatives "are cooperating fully" with law enforcement agencies investigating the allegation.

The information from the toll-free number was also given to the diocesan Victims Assistance Coordinator, Sister Ellen Patricia Finn, O.P., to offer assistance to the person who made the allegation and her family, the bishop noted.

Bishop DiMarzio said that Msgr. Kain "has been most supportive and has once again given evidence of his pastoral sensitivity and concern."

In addition to meeting with the family, the pastor addressed the issue with 250 parents of students in the parish school and religious education program, with the school faculty and with the parish staff.

"This has been one of the most painful times for me in my 40 years in the priesthood," Msgr. Kain said.

After the weekend Masses,

Sister Ellen Patricia and two members of the diocesan healing team, Sister Patricia Hudson, C.S.J., and Alfred Wassler, were available at the church to speak with parishioners who wished to discuss the incident.

Bishop DiMarzio wrote that the diocesan response to the allegation complied with the mandates of the U.S. bishops' 2002 "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People" and the accompanying "Essential Norms."

"I wish to remind all parishioners," he said, "that anyone who wishes to report an incident of inappropriate behavior with a minor" should call the "hot line" number: (888) 634-4499. "Callers are responded to professionally and with courtesy," he said.

The bishop concluded his letter by asking parishioners to pray "for the persons affected by this disturbing incident . . . that they will feel the healing touch of Christ at a difficult time in their lives."

## Reports That Miers Was Raised Catholic Are Misleading

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Harriet Miers was not raised as a Catholic.

Catholic Church records and the White House both refute what has become a boilerplate part of discussions about Miers, the White House general counsel and nominee for the Supreme Court.

News stories, commentaries

and editorials nationwide have repeated the description that Miers was brought up Catholic but now attends an evangelical Protestant church.

According to White House spokeswoman Maria Tamburri, "Harriet Miers did not grow up Catholic."

The editor of the Texas

Catholic, newspaper of the Dallas Diocese, began checking records of baptisms and other sacraments.

"The Diocese of Dallas has no record of Harriet Miers or her immediate family ever having been a member of the Catholic Church," said Deacon Bronson Havard, spokesman for the diocese.

## Bishop DiMarzio's Calendar



Sunday, Oct. 30 — 10 a.m., Mass, Sacred Hearts-St. Stephen's Church, Carroll Gardens.  
— 3 p.m., Polish Heritage Mass, Holy Cross Church, Maspeth.

Monday, Oct. 31 — 1:30 p.m., Episcopal Vicars Meeting, Chancery.

Tuesday, Nov. 1 — 6 p.m., Mass for Legatus, St. Joseph's College Chapel, Brooklyn, dinner to follow at Bishop's Residence, Brooklyn.

Wednesday, Nov. 2 — 10:30 a.m., All Souls Day Mass, St. Mary Star of the Sea Cemetery, Lawrence, L.I.

Thursday, Nov. 3 — 9:30 a.m., Fall Dialogue with Major Superiors, Immaculate Conception Center, Douglaston.  
— 1 p.m., Financial Summit, Immaculate Conception Center, Douglaston.  
— 4 p.m., Confirmation, Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Astoria.

Friday, Nov. 4 — 6 p.m., Mass, 25th Anniversary of Diocesan Office of Black Ministry, St. James Cathedral-Basilica, Brooklyn.

Saturday, Nov. 5 — 11 a.m., Mass, National Council of Catholic Women, St. Mary Gate of Heaven Church, Ozone Park.  
— 2 p.m., Wedding Anniversary Mass, St. James Cathedral-Basilica, Brooklyn, followed by reception at St. James Pavilion.