The Consequences of Pornography

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For ever 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 one's self to the detriment of one's relationships with a spouse, children, friends, co-workers, neighbors, and most importantly Almighty God. The multi-million dollar pornographic industry profits from this and reinforces a growing narcissism, or preoccupation with self.

How can we define pornography? In 1996 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 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 disorderly understanding of freedom that pervades modern culture and threatens the foundations of the family and human dignity, Freeman, 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 the "mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone," a husband and wife "defends 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 websites, rather than spending time nurturing their relationship and proceeding to act 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 imagery. 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 eat away at the souls of our children? It degrades their human dignity, frustrates and endangers development of genuine human relationships and frequently acts as an incubator for violence. Although it is primarily parents who must not neglect their responsibility to closely monitor the viewing habits and Internet use of their young children and teenagers, communities must work together to strengthen and enforce anti-obscenity laws.

Perhaps the most unfortunate consequence of the explosion of pornography is the emergence of modern-day "slave trading." The pornographer's mentality views human beings not as persons but as tools of interest and mere pleasure; the first victims of this mentality are women. As an advocate for migrant workers, 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, often under no doubt in anyone's mind that pornography leads to human victims.

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

Bishop Comments on Priest's Arrest

In a letter to the parishioners of St. Ephrem's Church, St. 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 Ochoa, 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.

Mgr. Peter V. Kaia, St. Ephrem's pastor, read the letter at the Oct. 25 Masses.

In the letter, Bishop DiMarzio said that the Kings District Attorney's Office was notified immediately after the arrestment was received by the parish, and that a "hot line" Detectives from the District Attorney's Office arrested Father also in the rectory.

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

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 Mgr. Kaia "has been most supportive and has once again given evidence of his pastoral sensitivity and concern."

In addition to meeting with the family, the priest addressed the issue to 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," Mgr. Kaia 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 is under the direction of the U.S. bishops 2002 "Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People and the accompanying "Essential Guidelines."

"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 would experience 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 House base both refute what has become a bedrock part of the biography 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 Tunkhannock, "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.

Catholic Diocese of Dallas has no record of Harriet Miers or her immediate family ever having been a member of the Catholic Church," and Deacon Brianson Hayward, spokesman for the diocese.

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Bishop DiMarzio's Calendar

Sunday, Oct. 30 — 9 p.m., Mass, Sacred Hearts-St. Stephen's Church, Carroll Gardens.

3 p.m., Polish Heritage Mass, Holy Cross Church, Marspeth.

Monday, Oct. 31 — 1:00 p.m., Episcopal Vicars Meeting, Chancery.

Tuesday, Nov. 1 — 6 p.m., Mass for Legatus, St. Joseph College Chapel, Brooklyn, dinner to follow at Baptist 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., Full Dialogue with Mayor Superior, Immaculate Conception Center, Douglaston.

1 p.m., Financial Summit, Immaculate Conception Center, Douglaston.

4-7 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 Basilica, Brooklyn.

Saturday, Nov. 5 — 11 a.m., Mass, National Council of Catholic Women, St. Mary Gate of Heaven Church, Ozone Park.

p.m., Wedding Anniversary Mass, St. James Catholic Church, Brooklyn, followed by reception at St. James Pavilion.