

9. Pray for your temptations. Whenever an impure image comes to mind, pray for the grace to overcome the temptation. But do not stop there. Let the image serve as a reminder to pray for that woman's conversion. As strange as it sounds, *the antidote to pornography is to love the women in pornography*. Feel responsible for them as your sisters in humanity. According to Pope John Paul II, God "assigns the dignity of every woman as a task to every man."⁹

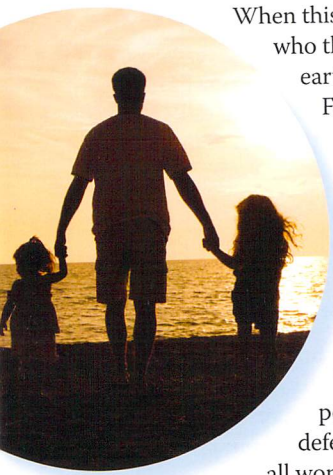
10. Don't be discouraged. The battle is not an easy one, so do not give up if you fall. Persevere and you will win the crown.

"No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you to be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it." —1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

The Church's message of purity is not a condemnation but a calling to authentic human love. It is an invitation for men to master their impulses and to allow Christ to transform the way they view women.

When this happens, they become who they are—sons of God and earthly icons of the Heavenly Father. St. Josemaría Escrivá said, "There is need for a crusade of manliness and purity to counteract and nullify the savage work of those who think man is a beast. And that crusade is *your* work."¹⁰

Therefore, if you own any pornography, destroy it and defend your ability to love all women with a clean heart.

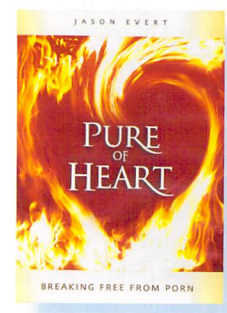


For more information, visit www.chastity.com. This online resource offers a wealth of information on how to practice the virtue of purity. On the site, you can read answers to your specific questions, watch videos, download inspirational audio files, browse a library of articles, shop online, and more.

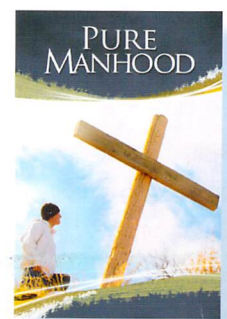
(Endnotes)

- 1 Pope John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 14.
- 2 Statement of Judith A. Reisman, Ph.D., Testimony before the United States Senate, Subcommittee on Science, Technology, and Space of the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on "The Brain Science Behind Pornography Addiction and the Effects of Addiction on Families and Communities" November 18, 2004.
- 3 Joe McIlhane and Freda McKissic Bush, *Hooked* (Chicago, Northfield Publishing: 2008).
- 4 D. Zillman and J. Bryant, "Pornography's impact on sexual satisfaction," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 18 (1988): 438–453.
- 5 J. Budziszewski, "Designed for Sex: What We Lose When We Forget What Sex Is For," touchstonemag.com.
- 6 John-Paul Day, as quoted in Edward Marriott, "Men and Porn," *The Guardian* (8 November 2003).
- 7 Saint Alphonsus Liguori, *The Dignities and Duties of the Priest*.
- 8 R. E. Guiley, *The Quotable Saint* (New York: Checkmark Books, 2002), 135.
- 9 Pope John Paul II, general audience, 24 November 1982. *Man and Woman He Created Them* (Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 519.
- 10 Josemaría Escrivá, *The Way* (New York: Scepter, 2001), 40.

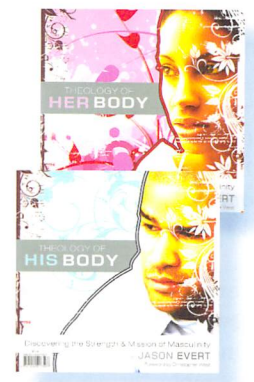
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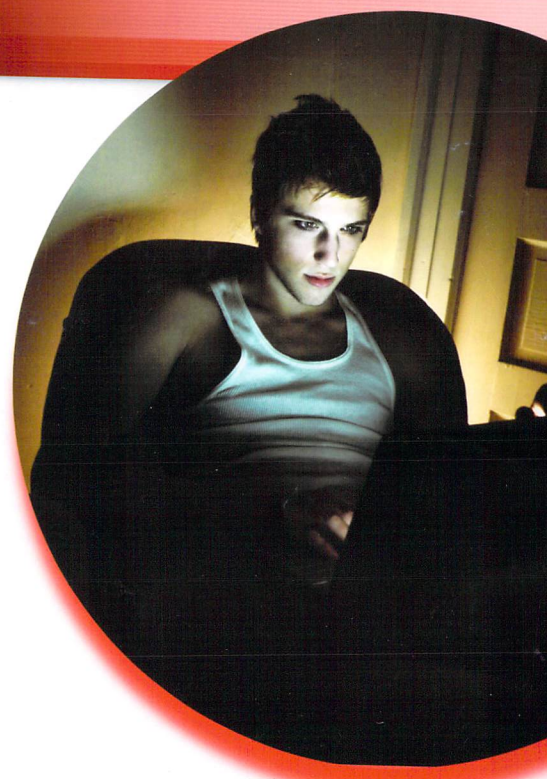


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PORNOGRAPHY

What's the problem?



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If you've ever watched a television show about the deep sea, you've probably seen a creature known as the anglerfish. Its bizarre and gruesome appearance is not easily forgotten because the needle-like teeth of the fish are so long that it is unable to shut its own mouth. Protruding from its head is a bioluminescent lure that dangles above its jaws, inviting unsuspecting prey to wander toward the glow. Smaller fish are entranced by the harmless light and lose their lives at the moment they least expect.

In much the same way, millions of men have become entranced by the allure of pornography. At first, the habit may seem to be only harmless entertainment. But once the damaging effects of lust emerge, these men feel unable to break the habit and erase the memories.

Thankfully, God is able to redeem not only our souls, but even our desires. Christ did not die in order to eliminate sexual attractions; he offered his life to ransom our souls and to teach us how to love. To experience the fullness of his redemption and the freedom he wishes to give, we must begin by admitting our faults and seeking his help and forgiveness. To break free from pornography, a man must first choose to open his eyes to the harm that it causes. It damages children, wives, and the women in the porn industry, as well as the viewer.

"Each man must look within himself to see whether she who was entrusted to him as a sister in humanity . . . has not become in his heart an object of adultery."¹ —POPE JOHN PAUL II

The Problem of Porn

Recent brain research has discovered that with each visual experience, we literally grow new brain.² In fact, synapses between brain cells are either strengthened or pruned based upon how we choose to live.³ Therefore, a man can shape the way his brain views women based upon what

he places before his eyes. Through pornography, a man learns to measure the value of a woman based upon how much lust he feels for her. He may try to convince himself that isn't a problem; but in reality his ability to love is being crippled by it. Without realizing it, he comes to view the world through porn goggles and assumes that constant lust is natural. When he eventually tries to love a woman, he'll find himself confused and disappointed.

One reason for this is that pornography trains a person to get bored with commitment. No matter how perfect a model might be, the man hooked on porn will leave her within a matter of seconds in order to view other women. Without realizing it, he is robbing himself of the ability to be captivated by a woman. If the most seductive supermodels fail to hold his interest for more than a

"The alternative is clear: either man governs his passions and finds peace, or he lets himself be dominated by them and becomes unhappy."

—CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, 2339

few seconds, how long will his bride keep his attention? He has made himself into a glutton who is never filled.

Not surprisingly, research on people who looked at porn found that they were less likely to be satisfied with their partner's affection, physical appearance, sexual curiosity, and sexual performance.⁴ Their behavior has led them away from what they were seeking in the first place. In the words of one husband, "The best way to ruin pleasure is to make it your goal."⁵

The man who views pornography experiences a deadness inside. Yet, he returns again and again to what only leaves him feeling emptier than before. One recovering porn addict admitted that viewing pornography "brings intense disappointment, precisely because it is not what I'm really searching for. It's like a hungry person standing outside the window of a restaurant thinking that they're going to get fed."⁶ If God has created us to love as he loves, it is no wonder that those who view porn are never satisfied.

The fact that strip clubs refer to themselves as "adult" entertainment and "gentlemen's" clubs proves that no matter how far we fall, we still feel a need to identify with authentic manhood. God has stamped into us the call to love in a noble and sacrificial way, as well as the desire to behold what is beautiful. However, when these God-given desires are warped through porn, we miss the point of why God made us men. Instead of dying to ourselves for the sake of women, we sacrifice them on the altar of lust.

When a husband is hooked on pornography, he's only a shadow of the man his wife and children need him to be. His ability to be the spiritual leader of his family is stripped away from him. For lack of a better description, his addiction could be considered a spiritual vasectomy. Until his heart is changed, his ability to transmit the spiritual life is gone. Likewise, so long as a single man is trapped in the habit of porn, he could miss the vocation to which God is calling him.

St. Alphonsus Liguori once noted that "When a raven finds a dead body, its first act is to pluck out the eyes, and the first injury that [impurity] inflicts on the soul is to take away the light of the things of God."⁷ It is not surprising, then, that so many men wander away from the Church when they begin to fall prey to sexual sins, which blind us to spiritual realities. Some of these men may still attend Mass, yet they cannot escape the shame of living a double life.

When one's fantasy life is revealed, the damage becomes impossible to ignore. Upon discovering her father's online porn collection, one young girl stormed away from him, saying, "I thought you were a better man than that." Another teenage daughter said, "I found out my dad looks at porn. I used to look up to him. Now I can't even look at him."

Although these things are not easy to read, there is hope. No matter how deep the wounds or severe the addiction, God is capable of healing anyone who comes to him with a sincere heart.



Ten Steps to Break Free from Porn

- 1. Go to confession.** Through confession, you receive forgiveness and added grace to help conquer temptation in the future. You'll also have someone to whom you are accountable. As the Bible says, "Two are better than one. . . . If they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up" (Eccles. 4:9–10).
- 2. Go to Mass and Eucharistic Adoration.** No greater grace exists in the Church than the Blessed Sacrament.
- 3. Develop a devotion to Mary and St. Joseph.** Carry a rosary with you at all times and pray it often. Invoke our Lady's intercession when you feel tempted. She is the woman who will restore your ability to view all other women honorably. The Church honors St. Joseph as the guardian of virgins and the terror of demons. He is a powerful ally against sins that violate the dignity of women.
- 4. Fast.** There is tremendous spiritual power in this ancient practice. Visit e5men.org, and talk to a priest about how to implement fasting into your prayer life.
- 5. Be active and productive.** St. Robert Bellarmine said, "Flee idleness, for no one is more exposed to such temptations than he who has nothing to do."⁸
- 6. Put a filter on your computer.** See filterreview.com and seenoevilonline.com for examples.
- 7. Use sacramentals.** Place a holy image, crucifix, or statue where you're tempted to view pornography. You could also make the sign of the cross or bless yourself with holy water when you feel tempted.
- 8. Read Scripture.** The Word of God has the power to drive out the evil one.