

Office for a Safe Environment in Ministry
Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Passaic
454 Lackawanna Avenue
Woodland Park, New Jersey 07424

2021 Annual Clergy Training

The following training program was conducted prior to the annual deacon retreat on Friday 17 September 2021 at the Immaculate Conception Center, Huntington, New York and Monday 27 September 2021 prior to the annual priest retreat at the San Alfonso Retreat Center, Long Branch, New Jersey. It is presented here to accommodate those deacons and priests of the Eparchy of Passaic who for good reason were not able to be present for this annual mandated safe environment training.

General Information and Program Review

1. Website – eparchypassaicse.com

This website is up and running and all necessary information, training materials, forms and directions may be found on this website. It should be noted that only the forms presented on this website are the most current and to be used in processing criminal background checks.

2. Letters of Good Standing/Suitability & Celebrets

- Please see the website under clergy and provide all indicated information when requesting “Letters of Good Standing”.
- Please be timely when requesting such letters and do not wait to the last possible moment to request a letter. In the case of funerals which are time sensitive requested letters can be provided as needed by electronic means.
- Remember that under the provisions of the “USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” “Letters of Good Standing” are required for all clergy requesting to serve outside their own jurisdiction or parish.
- Celebrets may or may not be acceptable so please consult the parish or program with regard to their requirements.
- Only those clergy who have accomplished annual training are eligible to receive Celebrets and “Letters of Good Standing”.

3. Visiting Clergy requirements

- For one time events such as weddings, baptisms, particular family or parish celebrations a “Letter of Good Standing” from the cleric’s proper jurisdiction is sufficient.

- For regular or extended assistance in a parish/program/activity of the Eparchy the cleric must provide a “Letter of Good Standing” from his proper jurisdiction and comply fully with an Eparchy of Passaic mandated training and criminal background check.
 - Priests within the Roman Catholic Metropolitan Province of New Jersey may use a celebret of their local metropolitan Church of New Jersey.
 - Bi-Ritual Clergy must comply fully with the eparchial safe environment program mandates.
4. Annual Training Certification for live stream participants and those using this web based training program may be accomplished by going to the “Clergy” tab of this website and printing and completing the “Training Certification Form” and submitting it to the Office for a Safe Environment in Ministry. Upon receipt of the “Training Certification Form” a “2021-2022 Celebret” will be issued to the particular priest.
 5. Parish Audits are presently in progress. All parishes have been requested to submit the names of those volunteers who are or will be serving in children and youth programs of their parish this year.
 6. Eparchial policy and the State of Pennsylvania Child Protection Law require that Clergy, Employees and Volunteers must renew their basic safe environment training and criminal background check every five (5) years.
 7. Implementation of “Children & Youth Training Curriculum”
 - This training curriculum is found on this website under the “Training Texts” tab and is entitled “Children’s Training Syllabus”.
 - This annual children and youth training is mandated under the “USCCB Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” and eparchial safe environment policy.
 8. Parish facility rentals/leases

Please consult with Mr. Thomas Duch, Esq. the Eparchial Attorney as regards such rental or leases of parish facilities. Mr. Duch will provide a contract for such use that covers issues such as liability, appropriateness of use and safe environment policy of the Eparchy.
 9. The USCCB On-site Audit of the Eparchy will take place this 4 October 2021. Those individuals who by virtue of their responsibility within the administration and ministry of the Eparchy will receive a schedule of this Audit.

The following is an edited version of a presentation by Father Deacon Thomas Schubeck, Ph.D. a deacon of the Eparchy of Passaic at both the deacon's and priest's retreats. He is a Psychologist in private practice and works in the priestly formation program of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Newark, New Jersey. Father Tom serves the parish community of Saint Thomas the Apostle in Rahway, New Jersey.

The Issue of Pornography

Presented by: Father Deacon Thomas Schubeck, Ph.D.

Edited for this website by: Father David J. Baratelli, Ed.S., M.Div.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This presentation is made in light of the fact that the issue of pornography is one of the great and challenging issues facing people within our society today. It is a scourge that has, and does, impact terribly and even destroys the behavioral health and wellbeing of individuals who are afflicted by this dysfunction.

Pornography use has risen dramatically with the coming of the internet. One observer noted that every advance in media technology has sooner or later led to its being used for pornography.

Let's look at some of the numbers:

1. Over 40 million Americans are regular visitors to porn sites. The average visit lasts 6 minutes and 29 seconds.
2. There are around 42 million porn websites, which totals around 370 million pages of porn.
3. The porn industry's annual revenue is more than the NFL, NBA, and MLB combined. It is also more than the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC.
4. 47% of families in the United States reported that pornography is a problem in their home.
5. Pornography use increases the marital infidelity rate by more than 300%.
6. Eleven is the average age that a child is first exposed to porn, and 94% of children will see porn by the age of 14.
7. 56% of American divorces involve one party having an "obsessive interest" in pornographic websites.
8. 68% of church-going men and over 50% of pastors view porn on a regular basis. Of Young Christian adults 18-24 years old, 76% actively search for porn.

9. 59% of pastors said that married men seek their help for porn use.
10. 33% of women ages 25-and-under search for porn at least once per month.
11. Only 13% of self-identified Christian women say they never watch porn – 87% of Christian women have watched porn.
12. 55% of married men and 25% of married women say they watch porn at least once a month.
13. 57% of pastors say porn addiction is the most damaging issue in their congregation and 69% say porn has adversely impacted the church.

(Sobering statistics to say the least.)

Problems that porn addiction has been shown to cause include:

- Chronic erectile dysfunction
- Anorgasmia and delayed ejaculation
- Impaired concentration
- Lethargy and lack of motivation
- Social anxiety and lack of confidence
- Depression and emotional numbness
- Declining interest in real persons
- An escalation to porn that does not match the person's original tastes or "turn-ons" and sexual orientation

How is it that person can get so hooked as to end up suffering these devastating conditions? Let's take a look; we learn what we like and don't like, and if the reward or consequence is great, we will crave it or try hard to avoid it.

If a person like a particular food such as pizza or burgers or whatever particular gastronomic craving they will think nothing of driving miles to their favorite eatery for a late night snack.

There are women who adorn themselves in a way that flaunts their womanhood, social status and self-esteem such as those of the Mursi Tribe in Ethiopia where the woman in this society place large plates in their lips. The larger the plate, the greater the woman's self-esteem and social status. Western observers initially thought that the (Mursi) women did this to avoid the slave trade; but that is apparently not the case.

You being attracted to the menu of your favorite eatery for late night snacks and Mursi tribesmen being attracted to women with lip-plates learned to be attracted to these things by the same "neural processes."

This is what neuroplasticity allows. The dopamine powers the reward circuit and compels us to want, seek, and crave. We end up seeking and craving more than we are satisfied. Sugary and fatty foods cause our brain to release more dopamine than other foods. Dopamines override our feelings of satiety and make us want to eat more. The dopamine spikes in our brain and we get the message “Wow, this is good! I want more!” We become sensitized to the cues. We crave.

Sugar and fat are considered super-normal stimuli. However, there are other important super-normal stimuli which include:

- Fast foods
- Gambling casinos
- Videogames
- Internet porn

With porn, there is a cycle of use – or rather abuse, because all porn use is wrong and harmful.

Let’s consider the “**triggers.**” There may be external or internal circumstances that remind us of the allure of the pornography. These can come in the form of:

- thoughts,
- experiences,
- feelings including anxiety, stress, depression, feeling overwhelmed.

These “triggers” lead to tempting thoughts. “I want it. I really, really, really want it. I need it!!!

The tempting thoughts lead to what one writer refers to a “**SUDS**” – “**Seemingly Unimportant Decisions,**” the little decisions we make that get us closer to the object of our addiction. For instance: “I’m just going to check my email, nothing more.” “I’ll just get online, there’s no harm in that.” “I’ll only look for a little bit, but then I’ll stop.”

In actuality, these seemingly unimportant decisions “**SUDS**” put the person in harm’s way and leads the person to look at porn on the internet. This is **indulgence**. It often starts out with something like “I can handle this. I’ll take a quick peak. One, two minutes tops.”

After a time of indulgence, we have these **defeated interpretations** of our sin. Psychologists use the term cognitive distortions. These are defeated interpretations of false thoughts about something. Some typical thoughts might be “I screwed up, I will never defeat this.” “I’m a failure.” “What’s the use?” And the person keeps on using.

Eventually the person becomes exhausted and moves on to the **guilt** stage. During this stage the person keeps recycling through his cognitive distortions.

From guilt, the person moves to the **penance** stage. For a Catholic or Orthodox Christian that may mean sacramental confession. For others, they may try to make amends and get “clean” by doing something good.

From penance the individual moves to **abstinence**.

If you are struggling with porn it is important for you to understand your cycle of addiction. The only way to understand it with all of its subtleties is to talk about it with someone – preferably your spiritual director or counselor.

God provides us a way to escape amidst each stage of the cycle:

1. Identify you triggers –

- Recognize the times, circumstances, and situations that trigger the tempting thoughts
- Are certain people or environments your triggers?
- Moods ? Emotions? Are you most tempted when you are tired, angry or feeling insecure?
- What about the time of day?
- **Then work on escape routes.**

2. Identify tempting thoughts – Delusions, lies, rationalizations

- “I’m gonna feel good.”
- “it’s nothing; nobody’s gonna get hurt.”
- **Challenge these thoughts; replace them with true thoughts that are of God.**

3. Identify the SUDS –

- What seemingly unimportant decisions do we make that often get us one step closer to indulgence?
- Begin to work to avoid these seemingly unimportant decisions. Speak with your spiritual director and counselor.
- **Bring this to prayer.** In the end, we need to acknowledge that we are deluding ourselves and God because what we decided was unimportant – perhaps thought our rationalization – was indeed important.

4. Identify the defeated interpretations –

- What false thoughts go through our minds in while we are indulging that egg us on to keep doing it?
- If you know what they are, the next time you indulge you can catch these thoughts which should allow you to break out of the cycle sooner.

- Talk to your spiritual director and counselor about these false thoughts. Replace them with true thoughts; and remember that only true thoughts come from God.

5. Identify the feelings of guilt –

- Remember that self-condemnation serves only to perpetuate defeated thoughts (“I’ll never get over this,” “It’s hopeless.” “I’m unforgiveable.”).
- Speak with your spiritual director or counselor.
- *“Have mercy O God in your goodness.
In the greatness of our compassion wipe away my offense.
Thoroughly wash away my guilt and of my sin cleanse me.”*

6. Confess your sins and receive absolution and penance

The fact is there will always be temptation to at least take a small peek but you must be honest with yourself.

Listen to the wisdom of our father among the saints, Saint Ephrem the Syrian:

“Don’t let your eyes look here and there, and don’t look on someone else’s beauty, so that the devil will not conquer you with the help of our eyes.”

Finally remember that we are called to cherish and defend the lives of every person, born and unborn, in their dignity and uniqueness. Respecting life includes the lives of each and every person who has, in one way or another, found their way from their mother’s womb into pornography.

GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST! GLORY FOREVER!