

February 24, 2019

Re: Safe Haven Sunday, "Equipping the Family, Safeguarding Children," next weekend, March 3, 2019

Dear Friends:

As your pastor, I am always impressed by the love I see in the families of our parish community and am constantly giving God thanks for your many efforts that truly uphold the dignity of marriage and family life. Thank you!

As you work hard to create safe havens for your children and spouse, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), our bishop, Bishop Gregory Parkes, and I wish to bring one particular issue to your attention. It's not easy to discuss, but it's important. That issue is pornography.

In November 2015, the USCCB approved a pastoral response to pornography, called *Create in Me a Clean Heart*. The intention of writing this document was to:

- offer healing and hope to those who have been wounded by pornography;
- articulate the Catholic Church's response to the pastoral crisis brought about by the production and use of pornography; and
- raise awareness of its pervasiveness and harms.

Why? Because pornography is hurting many people, including marriages and families, singles, priests and religious, and even children. It hurts the healthy process of vocational discernment for our young people. Pornography use impacts the relationships of children with their parents, husbands with their wives (and vice versa), the pastor with his community, and most importantly, our relationship with our Lord.

In their formal statement, the USCCB speak directly to parents about being proactive about the issue of pornography in the life of the home with their children and together as a married couple ensure the home keeps its status as a safe haven for all. The Bishops state, "The use of pornography by anyone in the home deprives the home of its role as a safe haven and has negative effects throughout a family's life and across generations" (p. 15).

Thus, Bishop Parkes has asked all parishes throughout the Diocese of St. Petersburg to celebrate Safe Haven Sunday next weekend, March 3, 2019, with the theme "Equipping the Family, Safeguarding Children." This awareness effort is meant to draw our attention as a

community to the seriousness of the issues of pornography and to recommit ourselves to take steps to ensure our homes are safe havens for all.

In the back of the church next weekend, we'll have free resources for you to assist with striving for healthy and holy marriages and families, including how to talk to your children about internet dangers. But you don't have to wait. You can begin learning now by joining *The Equipped 7-Day Challenge: A Digital Crash Course* by texting SECURE to 66866 to receive seven days of e-mailed digital tips!

I look forward to celebrating Safe Haven Sunday with you next weekend!

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, intercessors of the home, and St. Michael, I am,

Sincerely,

Signature
Name
Pastor