

SAFE HAVEN SUNDAY

February 23, 2020

HOMILY HELPS¹

Key Reflection Points for Safe Haven Sunday, the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year A, Lectionary # 79: Lv 19:1-2,17-18; Ps 103:1-4,8,10,12-13; 1 Cor 3:16:23; Mt 5:38-48

- “Turn the other cheek!” These words of Jesus startle us. What, we ask, does he precisely mean?
- Jesus is NOT giving us a “PLAN OF ACTION.” Rather he is teaching us, “WHO WE ARE! His desire is to form in us an ATTITUDE OF THE HEART that we should cultivate as sons and daughters of God. He wants us to draw strength from our relationship to his Father.
- Jesus teaches that when someone hurts us, we ought to act from within, from our center, from our hearts where the Holy Spirit dwells.
- St. Paul’s words in the Second Reading echo the same truth: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you.”
- Jesus is not prohibiting us from defending our rights or the rights of our loved ones. Jesus teaches that reacting impulsively out of vengeance or resentment invites the malice of our attacker to infect our hearts, and slowly our hearts will become like that of our persecutors.
- We must never allow anyone to invade our hearts and desecrate the sanctuary of our inner souls where God dwells. This must always be guarded as a Safe Haven where God dwells.
- This inner sanctuary of God’s presence within us is attacked by an old enemy that today is more pervasive and destructive than ever before. This destructive enemy wields the powerful weapons of shame and isolation.
- It spreads its infection principally through the internet streaming through laptops and smart phones.
- The internet is a great blessing in many ways. But unfortunately, there is a dark side of the internet as well. We all are aware of what I mean. I hesitate to mention the word. It is pornography.
- We tend to avoid speaking about this deadly infection that affects us emotionally, psychologically, socially, and spiritually. It offends us even to mention the word, “pornography,” let alone hear it pronounced in church. But by the very fact that we avoid speaking about it, we also permit it to spread unchecked. Social propriety allows smut peddlers to become more hiddenly aggressive.
- This dark industry has been very aggressive and has seeped into our computers and phones like poison gas pervading the atmosphere we breathe. It robs us of peace of mind, heart, and soul. It arouses shame that binds us. It damages marriages—even destroys some, causes people to lose their jobs, and sends people to prison. Briefly stated, “Porn kills love.”

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- As we politely remain silent about it, the pornography industry has drawn and continues to draw our children into its web.
- Most statistics on use of pornography say the average age of a child's first exposure is 11 years old. New research from the security technology company, "Bitdefender", has reported children under the age of 10 now account for 22% of online porn consumption under 18 -years old. In a U.S. study, 70% of 15- to 17-year-old boys said they had watched porn.
- It's not a matter of IF your child will see something harmful online. It's only a matter of WHEN. And regrettably, internet pornography is teaching our children how and what to think about sex and marriage.
- It is awkward and difficult for parents to speak to their children about the evident reality of pornography on the internet. Safe Haven Sunday helps you to do that.
- Our parish desires to help you parents to become confident in speaking with your children about online exposure to dangerous websites that they might already be viewing or very probably will be viewing sometime in the future—no matter how young they are presently.
- Passive parenting on this issue is no longer an option. The internet never sleeps. Countless websites have a plan for your children. Their plan disrupts the security of their God-given gift of who they are and the development of their future sexual maturity. Safe Haven Sunday helps you form a plan to defend your children from the porn industry's designs upon them.
- Please read this week's bulletin that has very important information about Safe Haven Sunday and the resources we provide you to help families, individuals, and children combat this problem. These include signing up for the seven-day text-to-opt-in program of free digital parental tips and the superb resources available on our diocesan website. In addition, our parish is providing for parents a booklet entitled, *Confident: Helping Parents Navigate Online Exposure*. Please take one as you leave the church this morning.