



DIOCESE OF ST. PETERSBURG  
Office of the Bishop

February 23, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

The dangerous consequences of pornography on the internet generation is being discussed with more frequency and at every level, including in the Catholic Church. The U. S. Catholic Bishops promulgated a pastoral statement in 2015 entitled *Create in Me a Clean Heart*. Pope Francis has addressed pornography more times than any other Pope in the history of the Church, including in his 2016 apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, or *The Joy of Love*. More recently, the Holy Father called attention to the dangers of the internet when he addressed the participants in the world congress on *Child Dignity in the Digital World*. His Holiness referred to internet dangers (i.e., pornography) as “what is probably the most crucial challenge for the future of the human family.”

The problem of pornography is real. It’s here. It’s now. It’s in our homes. And the harm it causes to individuals, marriages, children, and families is pervasive and great.

The Pope’s words motivate us to do our part to create healthy environments in which the internet is present, including on our smartphones. The Pope’s reminder of these dangers encourages us to take steps to protect the dignity of all human life, especially that of children.

As you may remember, it’s been almost a year since we celebrated in our diocese our first Safe Haven Sunday with the theme *Equipping the Family, Safeguarding Children*. This was just the beginning of our pursuit to do our part by directly addressing the harmfulness of pornography in marriages, families, and the culture as a whole. This weekend, we continue our efforts by celebrating our second Safe Haven Sunday with the theme *Equipping the Family, Having Critical Conversations*.

In addition to using Safe Haven Sunday to raise awareness, we’re providing effective tools to assist you in making your homes safe havens. Many parishes will provide families with the book *Confident: Helping Parents Navigate Online Exposure*, which provides Catholic parents a step-by-step guide to understanding their children’s exposure to pornography. All parishes will have two other excellent resources. First, a week’s worth of free digital parental tips is available by simply texting **SECURE** to **66866**. Second, our diocesan website features many superb, free resources for parents, individuals, and families combating this issue. Just visit [www.dosp.org/freedom-from-porn](http://www.dosp.org/freedom-from-porn).

This weekend, our diocese will join the Holy Father’s efforts — as will many other dioceses in the United States and around the world. Let’s take this opportunity to collectively empower marriages and families by bringing to light the dangers of pornography.

Asking the Lord’s abundant blessings upon you and your loved ones, I remain

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Gregory Parkes  
Bishop of St. Petersburg