

SAFE HAVEN SUNDAY

February 14, 2021

HOMILY HELPS¹

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Year B, Lectionary # 77: Lv 13:1-2,44-46; Ps 32:1-2,5,11; 1 Cor 10:31-11:1; Mk 1:40-45

***Note:** These bullet points are offered only as a resource to assist you in preparing your homily for Safe Haven Sunday. Feel free to pick and choose, copy, paste, borrow, edit, and adapt them as you see fit.*

“The one who bears the sore of leprosy shall . . . cry out, ‘Unclean, unclean!’ . . . [H]e shall declare himself unclean, since he indeed is unclean. He shall dwell apart, making his abode outside the camp” (Leviticus 13:45).

- Today there are people whom society treats like moral lepers when their hidden failures or perverse moral behavior come to light. And they are shamed by the media. But there are those who suffer from a shame from a disease that is caused by the media.
- This disease is especially aggressively attacking our middle school children and teenagers. Its growth goes unmentioned in the media that spawns it. Unlike COVID that ravages the body, this virus ravages the emotional and spiritual lives of its victims.
- Youth are an easy target for this virus. It captivates their curiosity about their maturing bodies. It preys on their youthful innocence and fuels their desire to explore new horizons of life that are opening up to them. And yet, this virus darkens their horizons.
- This virus instills fear of being discovered. It seduces children and teenagers to keep it a secret. The fears and shame it arouses prevent them from admitting the inner turmoil they are experiencing. This secret sickness draws these young victims to hide and **isolate** from their parents or adults who could help them.
- Most lamentable, this “unclean” virus is legally protected and tolerated by society. Let me be candid, this virus is pornography. The very word is unsavory. We would prefer not to hear it pronounced in public, especially in church and during Mass.
- Confusing feelings of shame and awkwardness stir within most of us adults when pornography is discussed. Yet it is precisely this avoidance that allows it to thrive.

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- If it comes to light that a child is viewing pornography, parents may feel inadequate as to what to say beyond “Don’t do it,” or worse, “I’m disappointed in you.” Be prepared never to blurt out, “I’m ashamed of you.” A hasty warning or a word of disapproval and nothing more only widens the distance of young children and teens from their parents.
- Parents, you are not alone in this responsibility of parenting. Today our parish is offering you informative aids rooted in solid Catholic truths of wholesome human sexuality. Our Diocese has set aside today as Safe Haven Sunday to ensure safe haven homes.
- Yet pornography invades your children’s bedroom through the open door of their smart phones and laptops. It can hold them captive in your home that you strive to make safe.
- Today I am encouraging you and offering you help to work through any hesitancy you may have in beginning an important conversation with your child on the issue of pornography – a reality they have already or will face. Do not let them face it alone.
- The Safe Haven Sunday initiative equips you with ongoing informative aids that will prepare you to open a discussion with your child about this shame ridden virus that roams the world unchecked, seeking whom to devour.
- ***“Moved with pity, [Jesus] stretched out his hand, touched [the leper], and said to him, ‘I do will it. Be made clean’”*** (Mark 1:41).
- Jesus was moved with loving compassion. He reaches out to you also as parents with the very same loving compassion. There is power and strength in his love for you to guide you in raising your children in a world fraught with dangers.
- Parents you possess a deep love for your son or daughter. Pray to the Lord Jesus for courage to put your love for them into action by broaching the topic all parents are reluctant to address with their children – the God given gift of human sexuality.
- Do not let the porn industry hijack your parental role and infect your child with destructive attitudes and shame concerning human sexuality and marital intimacy.
- ***“[Jesus] stretched out his hand, touched him.”*** Jesus actually touched the leper. He did not simply heal him at a distance. He made physical contact with his diseased body. Fear, shame at being seen touching him – not the least revulsion – held him back.
- Fears inhibit all of us in speaking openly about pornography because truthfully it is dark, deceitful, and destructive. Parents, face these fears and inhibitions, but with the Lord, to work through them, with him, to reach out in compassion to your son or daughter.

- You are well aware that a conversation about sexuality will be awkward as well for your young child and your teen. It is extremely important to prepare for this conversation. Pray to the Lord for guidance. Read and reflect on the materials offered you today.
- If you do discover your child has been viewing pornography, nothing of shame, anger or disappointment must be conveyed toward him or her in your one-on-one conversation. Speak words that will assure them you will be with them to help them to overcome this habit and to claim their dignity as your child and a child of God the Father.
- The porn industry took advantage of your children's innocence, wounding their dignity and holding them bound in secrecy. Your compassion as a parent will be a great blessing to begin a healing of this wound of secrecy. God empowers you to bless your child.
- This conversation may seem fruitless, but your open candid acceptance of your child as God's gift to you will bear fruit in your son or daughter in the years to come. As a child, you yourself can recall how you longed for your father's or mother's loving acceptance.
- Begin now to prepare to speak to your child. Please download and read this year's e-book, *"Connected: How Strong Family Relationships Lead to Internet-Safe Kids."*
- Sign up for the 7-day Safe Digital Family Challenge by texting-to-opt-in as described in today's Safe Haven Sunday materials. Both are completely free. These will help you to work through your hesitancy and free you to reach out and "connect" with your child candidly and lovingly. Your "reaching out" will be a blessing upon your child to live in the freedom to be who God created him or her to be.
- In closing, I thank you for being the parents that you are for your children. Remember, "Perfect families do not exist, but healthy families do." And healthy families stay connected by starting anew every day.
- May the outstretched hand of our Savior Jesus Christ heal us all of whatever isolates us from being connected as a family, as parents with sons and daughters in the safe haven of the Heart of God our Father.