

Homily (6th Sunday Ordinary Time – Year A) 2-16-2014

1. In our Gospel Reading, Jesus laid out some pretty difficult commandments, going so far as to explain to his disciples, **“You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with Lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”**
2. We all struggle to live out our faith in one way or another, *but with this particular reading in mind*, I would like to shed the **Light of Hope** on a Problem that is ruining lives and marriages.
3. **That problem is Pornography!** When I bring up this topic, *many of you may want to cover your childrens’ ears*, but sadly, in many cases **it is our children that need to hear today’s message of Hope the most.**

4. A couple weeks ago, my fellow deacons and I attended a continuing education session provided by **Archdiocesan Counselor Sam Meier.**
5. Sam shared some statistics and stories that may shock those of you who are parents or grandparents.
6. One of the statistics that I found most shocking was that **“the largest consumers of inappropriate internet websites are kids ages 12 to 17.”**
7. Sam also shared the results of a recent survey of 14 to 16 year olds, which showed that **nearly 1/3 of these children had viewed inappropriate materials when they were 10 years old or younger.**

8. A little closer to home, Sam shared the story of a **3rd Grade Boy** in one of our **Catholic Parishes right here in Johnson County**, who had been teaching his classmates how to find explicit materials on the Internet.
9. This problem is **not only rampant among boys and men**, but increasingly among females as well, with books like the *Shades of Gray series* distorting women’s and girls’ view of what **true love and romance** are all about.

10. If that wasn’t shocking enough, **Sam then shared some of the Brain Science associated with the viewing of explicit images and videos.**
11. You see, the use of these explicit materials is not only a sin, but in many cases, **they leave those who use them with an Addiction.**
12. **Those with an addiction in this area have been found to suffer from side effects similar to those experienced by abusers of alcohol and cocaine.**

13. Research has also found that the viewing of explicit material leads men to be more likely to have affairs and to have a more critical view of women; leads women to have a more negative view of themselves; and results in husbands and wives having less intimacy in their marriages.

14. All that I have shared thus far is pretty disturbing, but as I mentioned earlier, there is Hope. **Let me repeat that, There Is HOPE!!!**
15. Whether we struggle in this area or another, **There is Hope for Individuals and for Marriages!!!**

16. **Let’s explore some of the Sources of that Hope.**
17. Although our culture would lead people to believe that the Church is prudish regarding Human Sexuality, that view couldn’t be farther from the truth.
18. For the Church teaches that **God designed Human Sexuality** as one of the most **beautiful ways** that we as human beings can **mirror the Holy Trinity.**

19. **When a Husband and Wife commit themselves to each other For Life, Mind, Body, and Soul, they are fulfilling their Vocation to **mirror** that kind of **Total Self-Giving Love** that is the **essence of the Most Holy Trinity**, a self-giving love, that is Open, to the **Conception of New Life**.**
20. **The commitment, the love, the new life**; The husband, the wife & the child; are meant to be a **privileged mirror** of the **Most Holy Trinity**!
21. That's the **true Meaning** of Human Sexuality.
22. **Original Sin** and **Human Selfishness** have **obscured** that meaning.
23. This is why it is so easy to fall into the trap of **misinterpreting and abusing** this Gift, whether through infidelity, contraception, abortion, pornography, or homosexual activity.
24. These are Sins,... not because the Church has a **Negative View** of human sexuality, but because the Church has such a **Noble View** of its real meaning.
25. Only when we understand that we were created to mirror the Most Holy Trinity can we begin to grasp the true meaning, not only of sexuality, but also of **every other aspect of human life**.
26. The Catechism teaches us that "**The mystery of the Most Holy Trinity is the Central Mystery of the Christian Faith and of Christian Life.**"
27. This is because we were all created in the **Image of God**.
28. Therefore, whenever we sin, we **rebel not only** against God, but We **also rebel** against **ourselves**, for **Every SIN distorts and tears apart the Image of GOD in our souls**.
29. For instance, the viewing of explicit videos and images not only **enslave and abuse** the people who make them, but they **rip the love and meaning** away from one of the most beautiful Gifts that God has given us.
30. Instead of **honoring one's spouse** with the **gift of oneself**, those who view inappropriate images use others for their own selfish desires, treating others like a **product** or a **thing**.
31. **In his visit to the United States 5 years ago, Pope Benedict XVI** stated that: "**Children deserve to grow up with a healthy understanding of sexuality and its proper place in human relationships.**" (Pause)
32. Another source of Hope is given to us in our First Reading from the Book of Sirach, where the Prophet is quoted as sharing the Good News, "**If you choose, You Can Keep the Commandments. They Will Save You.**"
33. Those first three words are Crucial, "**We must Choose!**"
34. It has been said that, "***five minutes of intense courage can change a life.***"
35. For those struggling with sin in this area, those five minutes of courage must be lived **over and over again**. We need a new disposition of heart.
36. You see, **God wants to Bless us**. When he says we **should or** should **not** do something, **it's always with this Blessing in mind**.
37. But the Devil tries to convince us that God's **Commandments** are **unreasonable and cruel**.
38. But which approach is really the **cruel** one, God's Commandments or the Devil's temptations?
39. God's Commandments are **not cruel**. They are the path to **true Blessing**.
40. It's the Devil's Temptations that are **cruel** and **destructive**.

41. If we *persevere in seeking and accepting God's Grace and Mercy* through frequent reception of the **Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist** and *a commitment to Daily Prayer*, **God will give us the Grace to keep his Commandments, and He will Bless Our Lives and Our Marriages.**
42. In addition to the supernatural graces available to all of us through the **Sacraments and Daily Prayer**, other sources of help are also available to those struggling with pornography:
 - Help is available through the Archdiocese's **My House Initiative**;
 - through the **encouragement and accountability provided by men's and women's groups**; it might be a CRHP Group, a Cursillo Group, a Bible Study Group, really any group where we can rely upon the support, encouragement and accountability provided by close friends; and
 - through the support provided by **spiritual directors, catholic counselors and Catholic 12-step groups.**
43. For those who are young, help is available through your parents, through counselors, accountability groups, and through the use of new software tools.
44. Although the Internet is a source of temptation for many adults and children, New Software Tools are helping those who struggle in this area.
45. Software such as **Covenant Eyes; Net Nanny and Open DNS** not only help protect children from seeing inappropriate materials, but they can also be set up to send **Internet Activity Reports** to family members and friends for accountability. You can have reports showing your internet searches and the websites you visit sent to your spouse, friend, brother or any Accountability Partner.

WITNESS: *My Nervousness to Preach on this Topic; Meeting Parent of 4th & 6th Grader up at Nativity this week; Discussing my Homily with him; His not struggling in this particular area, but being an Accountability Partner for Three other guys, one of whom had lost his job because of his struggles in this area; His saying that others need to Know about Covenant Eyes, and how it is really helping people who struggle in this area.*

46. Many people, young and old, are also benefitting from their study of Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body.
47. There are many books by **Christopher West** on the Theology of the Body and *programs such as Theology of the Body for Teens.* (Pause)
48. No matter what areas of Sin we Struggle with, We need to Turn to God and Rely upon His Grace to overcome Temptations to Sin.
49. We also need to Rely upon the loving support of Family and Friends.
50. *We are all called to Mirror the Image of the Most Holy Trinity in our lives.*
51. As hopeless as our struggles to keep the Commandments may seem, and We all struggle in one way or another, with God's Grace and the other avenues of support available to us today, more people are beginning to see the Light of Hope! We Can Keep the Commandments!
52. As we prepare to Receive the Eucharist, let us Choose NOW to follow the Commandments and Open our Hearts to receive the Blessings of Joy, Peace, Hope and Love that God Offers Each of Us.