

February 14, 2024

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) 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 of 2015, the USCCB released 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 the formal statement, the USCCB speaks 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 to 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 generation."

Thus, on **February 18**, we will be celebrating the first annual Safe Haven Sunday 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 issue of pornography and to recommit ourselves to take steps to ensure our homes are safe havens for all.

It may come as a surprise to you that we live in a culture where pornography has become the norm and children as young as 8 years old are being targeted by the pornography industry. The Church wants to help you in protecting your children against this evil. We have the book *Equipped* available in the church as a great resource to guide you in how to teach your children to say no to pornography while at the same time forming them in a broader understanding of:

- Their God-given identity.
- The importance of sexual integrity.
- The difference between sexual impulse and life-giving union.
- How to understand sexual shame.
- How to engage media with discernment.
- This book makes it possible to have engaged, healthy, and informed conversations about online threats.

It is my hope you will use this resource to help you have the difficult discussion with your child(ren).

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

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

Fr. Louis Maram Reddy

Pastor