

Why I Am Catholic

The Church's strong stance against pornography.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that: "*Pornography* consists in removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants (actors, vendors, the public), since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world.

"It is a grave offense. Civil authorities should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials." (2354)

Twenty years ago, the Vatican issued a document entitled: *Pornography and Violence in the Communications Media: A Pastoral Response*. It presented strong concerns and conclusive evidence about the effects of pornography and recommendations for changing media trends.

"Pornography and sadistic violence debase sexuality, corrode human relationships, exploit individuals - especially women and young people, undermine marriage and family life, foster anti-social behavior and weaken the moral fiber of society itself. Thus, one of the clear effects of pornography is sin." (10-11)

"Even so called 'soft core' pornography can have a progressively desensitizing effect, gradually rendering individuals morally numb and personally insensitive to the rights and dignity of others. Exposure to pornography can also be - like exposure to narcotics - habit-forming and can lead individuals to seek increasingly 'hard core' and perverse material. . . Pornography can foster unhealthy preoccupations in fantasy and behavior. It can interfere with personal moral growth and the development of healthy and mature relationships, especially in marriage and family life, where mutual trust and openness and personal moral integrity in thought and in action are so important." (14-15)

Since then, the Internet and other new avenues of distribution provide easy access to pornography. Addiction to pornography is the fastest growing addiction in the U.S., especially for teenage and young-adult males. It is also one of the main causes of divorce.

"In some cases, it can incite its users to commit more overtly violent crimes such as rape, child abuse, and even murder." (*Renewing the Mind of the Media*, USCCB) In 1989, convicted rapist and murderer Ted Bundy "made repeated claims as to the pornographic 'roots' of his crimes. He stated that, while pornography did not cause him to commit murder, the consumption of violent pornography helped 'shape and mold' his violence into 'behavior too terrible to describe.' He alleged that he felt that violence in the media, 'particularly sexualized violence,' sent boys 'down the road to being Ted Bundy's.'" (*Wikipedia*)

The Church advises that: "Parents must re-double their efforts to provide for the sound moral formation of children and youth. This includes inculcation of healthy attitudes toward human sexuality based on respect for the dignity of every person as a child of God, on the virtue of chastity and on the practice of self-discipline. A well-ordered family life in which the parents are obviously faithful and committed to each other and to their children provides the best school for the formation of sound moral values. . . It must not be forgotten that, in matters of human formation, 'more is obtained by reasoned explanation than by prohibition'" (24)