



Catholic Diocese of Columbus

Office of the Bishop
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December 10, 2022

Dear Reverend Fathers and School Administrators,

It comes as no surprise that pornography is one of the leading causes of addictions, abuse, adultery, divorce, and human trafficking. Pornography creates unsafe environments for children, produces distorted attitudes towards the body, sex and marriage. It is devastating families and damaging society and the common good. Our announcement of the Gospel of Life is a proclamation about the dignity of the human person and the gift of sexuality. A person should be treated as a person, worthy of love, not reduced to an object to be viewed or used for pleasure.

As a Church, we have a specific responsibility for the care and protection of young people, and we must confront this issue so that our young people may be both safe and free. We cannot afford to ignore the problem. The USCCB's statement, *Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography*, states, "We must see our role in protecting children from pornography as our sacred duty, as well as an aspect of our work to create safe environments in accord with our ongoing implementation of the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People*."

Together we can address this issue by teaching those who have been entrusted to our care about pornography's effects and to share resources with them. On January 28 and 29, we will celebrate Safe Haven Sunday in our Diocese. This awareness day will give us the opportunity to address the harmfulness of pornography in marriages, families, and culture as a whole, while providing helpful resources to both individuals and families.

I will provide a recorded homily that I encourage you to show in your parishes that weekend and to share throughout your parish and school social media channels. Other resources and support materials will be shared with you from Covenant Eyes and in partnership with the Diocesan Offices of Evangelization, Communications, Hispanic Ministries, Catholic Schools, Marriage and Family Life, and Social Concerns. These materials will be age-appropriate and will help clergy, parents, teachers, and young people have serious conversations about an issue affecting families.

Last year, with my parish and school staff we undertook this initiative. It was not easy and must be carried out with sensitivity and care. I cannot begin to tell you how grateful families were that we addressed the issue. Join me in accepting our responsibility to protect children and families.

Grateful for your ministry and assuring you of my blessing, I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus