

## Breaking the Shackles of Pornography Addiction

By Bishop Victor Galeone

This past Sept. 19th, I flew to Saginaw, Mich. to attend a two-day workshop dealing with pornography, hosted by the local bishop, Robert Carlson. The issue is so critical that I feel the need to share some of my concerns with you.

First, permit me to list some cold statistics:

- Sex is the #1 search topic on the Internet.
- 4.5 million pornographic websites are available today (1.3 million in 2003).
- More than 68 million persons, mostly men, have accessed a pornographic site so far in 2006.
- Boys, ages 12-17, are among the largest consumers of pornography (90% view online porn while doing their homework).
- Rape statistics are proportionately higher in those states with higher pornography sales.

Why this recent explosion of accessing pornography on the Internet? In 1995, Philip Elmer Dewitt wrote an article for Time magazine where he described the allure of online porn:

"... pornography is different on the computer networks. You can obtain it in the privacy of your home - without having to walk into a seedy bookstore or movie house. You can download only those things that turn you on, rather than buy an entire magazine or video. You can explore different aspects of your sexuality without exposing yourself to communicable diseases or public ridicule."

In short, easy access, anonymity and affordability have made Internet porn more popular and seemingly less dangerous than previous means of sexual experimentation.

I stress "seemingly" because the reality is far otherwise. Recent psychological studies have shown that as little as a dozen combined hours of surfing pornographic sites on the Internet can lead to addiction:

- This addictive disorder closely resembles pathological gambling.
- Pornographic images viewed online because the release of epinephrine into the brain that chemically burns the  
the pictures into one's permanent memory.
- This chemical change in the brain is more difficult to eradicate than a cocaine addiction.

The *New York Times* of May 15, 2000, carried the story of a 34-year-old woman who discovered that her husband, a minister, had an online porn habit. "How can I compete with hundreds of anonymous others who are now in our bed, in his head? Our bed is crowded with countless faceless strangers, where once we were intimate."

On Jan. 24, 1989, Ted Bundy, the infamous serial killer, was executed in Florida State Prison. Before being apprehended, Bundy had killed at least 28 young women and girls in ways too horrible to contemplate.

The day before he was executed, Bundy granted an interview to Dr. James Dobson, a professional psychologist, who founded the Focus on the Family ministry. This is a segment from that interview, where Bundy describes for Dr. Dobson how his criminal behavior began:

**Ted:** "I grew up in a wonderful home with two dedicated and loving parents, as one of five brothers and sisters. We, as children, were the focus of our parent's lives. We regularly attended church. My parents did not drink or smoke or gamble. There was no physical abuse or fighting in the home..."

“As a young boy of 12 or 13, I encountered...in the local grocery and drug stores, soft-core pornography...From time to time, I would come across books of a harder nature - “ more graphic...The most damaging kind of pornography is that which involves violence and sexual violence. The wedding of these two forces - “as I know only too well - brings about behavior that is too terrible to describe.”

The full transcript of this interview may be found on <http://www.pureintimacy.org/>. This site, by the way, has some outstanding articles dealing with pornographic addiction.

There are a number of criteria for Internet addiction. The addict:

1. Is preoccupied with the Internet (eagerly anticipating the next online session).
2. Has attempted to control internet use - to no avail.
3. Uses the Internet to escape problems, depression, anxiety or guilt.
4. Repeated stays online longer than originally intended.
5. Has lied to family members or others about the extent of Internet use.

Has risked the loss of a significant relationship, job or educational opportunity because of Internet use. Some years ago, a public service ad aired on many TV stations after 10 p.m. on weekends. It simply asked, “Parents, do you know where your son or daughter is right now?” It might be good if parents would ask themselves periodically, “Do I know where my son is right now while he’s doing his homework on the computer?”

I would like to close with two quotes from Holy Scripture. The first is from the letter of James, 1:13-15: “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”

And the second quote is from the Sermon on the Mount. It indicates one of the ways to find true happiness. “Blessed (= happy) are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.” (Mt. 5:8)