

Bishop Finn has asked the pastors of the diocese to read you a letter from him. It introduces his longer pastoral letter on avoiding pornography. I am happy to share his thoughts with you:

“Dear Friends in Christ:

“*Turn away from sin and be faithful to the gospel.* With these words we have begun the holy season of Lent. This is a blessed time when through prayer, fasting and almsgiving we prepare to more worthily celebrate the Easter Mystery of Christ.

“The gospel shares with us Jesus’ temptation in the desert and leads us to reflect upon the temptations we face in our own lives. One such temptation that many people face is pornography. This old problem has taken on new dimensions with the emergence of the internet and other technologies. It has become the secret entertainment of many people of all ages, walks of life, and economic backgrounds. It is perhaps the fastest growing addiction in the world. For these reasons I am designating this First [Sunday] of Lent as *Purity of Heart Awareness Sunday.*

“Pornography perverts the beauty of intimate love proper to marriage, presenting images that degrade the human person, treating them as objects rather than persons. It distorts the proper meaning and purpose of our sexuality and does grave injury to society.

“Use of pornography is a serious sin against chastity and the dignity of the human person. It robs us of sanctifying grace, separates us from the vision of God and from the goodness of others, and leaves us spiritually empty. Studies show that it leads to increasing emotional isolation, loneliness and subsequent sexual acting-out. It depends on the exploitation of other persons, especially the desperate, poor or the innocent. Addicted persons may endanger or lose their job, their marriages and families, not [to] mention their self-respect.

“On Ash Wednesday I released a pastoral letter entitled, *Blessed are the Pure of Heart.* Copies are available in this week’s edition of *The Catholic Key*, from our diocesan web site (www.diocese-kcsj.org) and through your parish. This letter affirms the dignity of our human sexuality, and the beauty of God’s call to live in purity and chastity. It also looks at the real and growing problem of pornography and explores spiritual and practical ways of combating it. It is part of a larger effort in our Diocese to help people turn away from this sin and be faithful to the Gospel. In the next weeks I urge you to read *Blessed are the Pure of Heart.* By strengthening each other in living chastity we can begin to turn back this destructive tendency in our society.

“May the discipline of Lent [lead] us to the joy of the risen Christ at Easter.

“In Christ and Mary, Most Reverend Robert W. Finn, Bishop of Kansas City-St. Joseph”

Lent gives us an opportunity to confront our temptations with the help of Christ and the community of believers. Whatever it is in our lives that needs to change, let us confess our sin and ask God’s forgiveness.