

Parents First

Parents have the first responsibility for the education of their children (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2223)

Church Teaching *Redemption*

There are a number of common misconceptions about sin and redemption that often creep into our understanding of the relationship between God and human beings. Frequently, Christians have an idea that getting into heaven is about being “basically a good person.” This is often described using the image of a set of scales with our good deeds on one side and our bad on the other. As long as our good outweighs the bad, we



get our foot in the door and we are safe. Unfortunately, it’s not that easy (CCC 1989-1994). Freshmen will tend to learn quickly that this is also not the

way that human relationships work (CCC 1913). One cannot be mostly good to their friends and still occasionally, lie, cheat, or steal. When a relationship becomes broken it needs to heal. This begins with saying we are sorry, making restitution, and making a firm resolution not to continue the offense (CCC 1450-1460).

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When we commit sin we are not offending a human but God (CCC 1440). This means that consequences are eternal. While we do not have the power to heal that relationship on our own, God reaches out to us through Jesus Christ in the sacraments, particularly Reconciliation, and allows us to hear with our own ears that we are forgiven (CCC 1441-1442).

Growing in Virtue

Charity is also the virtue known often in Scripture as love. As children move into high school, they and perhaps some of their friends may begin dating. It may be prudent at this point to reiterate that the love that the world teaches and the love that the Church teaches are often two very different things. St. Paul reminds us of this virtue often at weddings (1Cor 13) when we read his description of true love as opposed to infatuation. He tells us that love requires the sacrifice of our own desires for the

good of the other while infatuation seeks only to possess the other for the sake of personal gratification.

In these same relationships temperance is also a necessary virtue. Temperance helps us to find balance and to place limits, not being prudish but not going the way of the playboy either. Temperance requires an understanding that all things have their appropriate place and time. It requires an understanding that God gave us good things to enjoy, but that He wants us to share that joy with others as well. Thus we should eat but not overeat, sleep but not become lazy, drink but not become drunk, and temper our sexual desires with the fire of a loving marriage.

Culture Alert...

76% of victims in internet-initiated sexual exploitation cases were 13–15 years old and 75% were girls. Most cases progressed to sexual encounters. (Journal of Adolescent Health—11/04)

Guidelines for Answering Questions

- Ask for more information before answering, (i.e. "Why do you ask?", or "Tell me more.") Your child's response will provide you with insight, context and time to think.
- Pause to ask God for the wisdom and grace to provide an appropriate answer.
- Phrase your answer in the context of your family's Catholic values (i.e. "When you are grown and married" or "As Catholics, we believe...").
- If you don't know the answer, say "That's a great question but I'm not sure of the exact answer. I will look it up and get back to you later today." Make sure to follow up later with an answer.

Example: What's wrong with pornography?

Know the context of the question (see above guidelines) i.e.: Did they hear peers talking about it? Did they see something on TV or the computer?. The information your child provides to these questions will help frame your answer in a way that is meaningful to them. **Remember that 80% of 15-17 year olds have had multiple hard-core pornography exposures and the largest consumer group of Internet pornography is 12-17 year-olds.**

Possible responses:

- "Pornography diminishes the God-given value and dignity of each person."
- "It devalues God's purpose for sexual attraction and sexual intercourse."
- "Pornography causes the viewer to objectify the body rather than the person and depicts women as just objects to be used for sex."
- "Viewing pornography can be very addictive, especially for boys and men. "
- "Males who regularly view pornography often find themselves needing to view more and more as well as harder core porn to get the same pleasure."
- "Viewing pornography can also lead to unrealistic expectations about sex and can make it difficult to form relationships in the real world."

Practical Suggestions



Today's technology makes it easy for kids to stumble across or find pornography. Here are a few steps you can take to protect your kids from the dangers of pornography:

- Monitor your teen's electronic devices. Install monitoring or filtering software on computers, check the history to see which websites your kids are visiting, talk to your cell phone provider about limiting or monitoring the amount of media your child can access via their phone.
- Computers, TV's, DVD players and gaming systems should not be allowed in your teen's bedroom. Remember bedrooms are primarily for sleeping! Keep all electronic media in a very public room of your house (family room, den, rec

room), a room you frequently visit unannounced.

- Find opportunities to discuss ways media attempts to deceive one into thinking that sex is a commodity to be purchased and promotes what you do to and with your body has no effect on you as a person: a disconnect.

"Frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation helps to give Christians the necessary graces to lead a life of virtue" (CCC 1469).

Parent Resources

- *If You Really Loved Me: 100 Questions on Dating, Relationships and Sexual Purity*, by Jason Evert, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009
- *Pure Love*, 35 pg. booklet by Jason Evert, Catholic Answers, 2003
- Archdiocese website, www.archomaha.org, click safe environment then anti-pornography
- Circle of Grace Parenting and Sexuality handout
- *Theology of the Body for Teens: High School Edition*, Ascension Press, 2006
- Family Life Media Center: <http://www.archomaha.org/pastoral/flo/media.html>. Select resources


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