

“REAPING WHAT WE SOW” THE PRICE OF THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

De mortuis nil nisi bene dicendum. “Of the dead, say nothing but what is good.” Some Latin adages are easier to assimilate than others, but lately this one has been extremely difficult for me to observe. Tracing its first recorded appearance to the early **4th century A.D.**, the struggle is nothing new. Following last month’s death of a 91-year-old man whose magazine empire effectively rendered soft-core pornography “mainstream,” some would even say “chic,” the Hollywood reaction was as unimaginative as it was utterly predictable. The typical encomium dubbed him a cultural icon, a pioneer who freed sexuality from its centuries-old shame, etc. The media-driven sycophantic outpouring was likely only tempered due to the coverage of the senseless Las Vegas tragedy. The effects of this cultural shift are unmistakable—the widespread acceptance of guilt-free pre-marital sex greatly aided the burgeoning sexual revolution. I can neither refute the notion that he was monumentally successful in his goals, nor deny the transformational shift in American society since the 1960’s. Though it deeply saddens me to admit, the shift is as true as it is sad. Believers of all stripes, as well as people of good will who care about ethics and fidelity, ought to take note whence we came to this moment in history.

The above adage remains valid, not only because a deceased person lacks the ability to defend him/herself, but because charity demands that we **respect the dignity** of every human person, especially after death. However, we ought neither to feel constrained from discussing fundamental issues, nor shy away from evaluating actions, for they transcend any single individual. To do otherwise would render all ethical discourse and moral evaluation essentially impossible. I cannot, nor ought I even try to judge the state of another’s soul— that is far above my pay grade! But as a follower of Jesus Christ, though an imperfect one to be sure, I am called to **witness to the truth**, including the truth of life and love. And the fruits of the sexual revolution both here and around the world have been exceedingly rotten, leaving an intractable legacy of harm to souls, to the meaning of marriage and a warped vision of God’s gift of human sexuality.

While I enjoy writing these columns, especially those requiring some historical or theological research, I would much rather avoid this one. While it is never easy to admit defeat, with respect to sexual mores we in the Church have suffered tremendous losses during my own lifetime: a loss of credibility, a loss of clarity and a loss of support from many in our flock. Much of it has been our own un-doing, but we mustn’t remain paralyzed as a result. This is a **Respect Life** issue in the broad sense. As such, my faith demands that I speak about issues of grave moral consequence in our world today. While *Playboy* as a “brand” has faded in the past twenty years, the prevalence of pornography has skyrocketed, largely due to the accessibility and anonymity of the internet.

Approximately **40 million** Americans regularly visit pornographic sites, meaning that **28,258 users** are watching pornography on the internet **every second**. More people visit adult sites than visit Netflix, Amazon and Twitter combined, according to one study. Unquestionably, addiction to pornography is widespread, almost always beginning in the teenage years and often continuing well into adulthood and even after marriage. It is that powerful of a force for evil. A **National Center on Sexual Exploitation** study of university students found that 93% of boys and 62% of girls had seen internet pornography during adolescence. Half of college aged males (49%) first encountered pornography before the age of 13. One statistic revealed that 35% of all internet downloads are pornographic in nature. This alone ought to motivate us to respond.

Respected therapists have detailed the typical pattern into which someone falls who gets hooked on this material. First (1), curiosity leads to a habit and eventually an addiction. Next (2), escalation occurs, whereby the user requires more and more graphic stimuli to feed the habit, leading to (3), desensitization. This is characterized by a dulling of previously held feelings of guilt, and the person often justifies his/her behavior, feeling little if any remorse. Finally, it is an established fact that in some cases, long-term exposure to this material leads to an increasing tendency to act out sexually in a most inappropriate and even illegal way. One major study revealed that in major hotel chains where pornography is offered, 50% of the hotel guests purchase it, comprising nearly 70% of the hotels’ in-room profit. Both **Marriott and Hilton** chains have stopped offering this in-room service. But not all have followed suit. Those chains that refrain from these offerings deserve our patronage.

We are not powerless in this fight for decency and on occasion, even a single complaint bears fruit. Years ago, I was on a flight in which the on-air movie was certainly indecent, even if not technically obscene. I complained that there were young people on the plane (in the days before individual screens) and sure enough, the film was immediately pulled and another put in its place and an apology was made. We need to see decency in media as it truly is, a Respect Life issue. It is directly related to the respect we owe to the human body as a temple of the Holy Spirit. The last week in October marks the annual **White Ribbon Campaign Against Pornography**, begun now thirty years ago by Norma Norris, after responding to her pastor's laments that the public seemed indifferent. She decided to do something. For more information, please visit <http://endsexualexploitation.org> for more information on concrete ways you can help to address this growing problem. May we always find our true freedom in Jesus Christ.

- From the "You Can't Make It Up" file...Representatives from a Belgian nursing order, the Brothers of Charity, have been summoned to Rome to discuss their refusal to cease offering the option of euthanasia in their facilities. One Board member sniped on Twitter that "the time of *'Roma locuta, causa finita'* is long past." ("Rome has spoken, the cause is finished.") In my opinion, do you want to know who's really finished? The Brothers of Charity!
- The enduring value of the message of Fatima extends far beyond the amazing "**Miracle of the Sun**" witnessed by an immense crowd gathered at the *Cova da Iria* on October 13, 1917. It is in the message of fervent prayer for peace and conversion and the necessity of entrusting ourselves and our world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the Handmaid of the Lord.
- You are invited to attend a **Lasagna Dinner Fundraiser** sponsored by our Knights of Columbus Council and Ladies Auxiliary on Saturday October 21 following the anticipatory Mass at 5:15 p.m. The dinner will support "Mary's Meals," an international organization that provides one meal each day at school for needy children all around the world. The dinner will be held in Hayden Hall.

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,
Rector