

Dear Good People,

In the midst of moving and trying to get everything figured out I inadvertently missed Safe Haven Sunday this last Sunday. This was an oversight on my part. Below you will find some resources to help make your home a safe haven especially as we deal with new technologies that can be very good, but also very destructive. I know this can be a sensitive topic, but it is important for us to bring those things that can sometimes be in the darkness into the light.

Safe Haven Sunday in the Diocese of Des Moines

Last weekend the diocese has asked the parishes to address something that seriously harms us and steals away joy from us, our vocations, our families, and our community. It's the use and addiction to pornography. What used to be a little more difficult to access is now accidentally and easily accessed by children and teens using the internet.

The Diocese of Des Moines is cooperating with a nationwide initiative called Safe Haven Sunday. If you've heard of a resource from Covenant Eyes called *Equipped: Smart Catholic Parenting in a Sexualized Culture* which we hope you will make use of in your homes and lives. It's software that can be downloaded on internet devices that reports any "internet foul play" to a trusted monitor.

Equipped is a resource which uses the image of a house with its foundation, walls, windows, and roof to inform you about how you can make your actual house a place of safety and light. There is substantial teaching about the kinds of conversations and relationships which are helpful to have in the home. It details how to talk about God, our dignity, and our destiny, how to recover from past sins, and the role of sexuality and its goodness in God's plan. It also includes sections on the ways which sin and inappropriate content move us to the darkness of isolation, shame, and blame, and especially how to find remedies for when these things have occurred.

Practically, *Equipped* speaks about screen accountability software, supports and structures in the home, and how to have the Christian message speak louder than the various dark messages of society.

There are also programs called: *Integrity Restored*, *Reclaim Sexual Health*, *Road to Purity* and more on the diocesan website for those who want to get serious about being healed. You don't have to settle with feeling disqualified or ashamed of your sins. Change for good is possible and God wants you to be healed. Whether you realize it or not, that place of healing and the safe haven you seek, is closer than you think.

Not all parishioners have children in the home, nor do all parishioners struggle with pornography. However, the Church is the Body of Christ and the whole community can help bring this wound to the light to heal, and so Safe Haven Sunday is relevant for all families.

- Safe Haven Sunday is an opportunity to discuss internet safety, and how to avoid and address pornography.

- Safe Havens: This weekend is about providing resources for creating "safe havens" in our home, through education, conversations, filtering and accountability software. This battle must be fought in the home, and parents have an obligation to help their children navigate this issue.
- Hope, not fear: Christians ought to have the confidence that "Grace always overcomes evil!"
- Healing is possible: last Sunday's gospel involves a man born blind, and while others are concerned with who is to blame, Jesus is concerned with healing the wound. So too, does Jesus want to heal a person wounded by the sin of pornography. It is not about guilt, it is about freedom. Healing is possible.
- Willful blindness: An irony of the gospel is that by the end of this passage, we learn that the Pharisees are the truly blind ones, which comes from their pride. Sometimes when it comes to pornography we can be willfully blind, whether it is by ignoring the issue, imagining that it is "no big deal" or by despairing of freedom. Humility and honesty are what helps set the blind man free, and, so too, this can help us be free.
- Participation in healing: In today's gospel, while Jesus is the primary actor in the man's healing, Jesus also asks the man to participate. So too, Jesus wants us to be free but he asks for our participation, our action.
- Available Resources: Resources are being provided by the diocese to help our families, parents, and individuals navigate this issue. Please utilize these resources, and know that while this can feel like a very big, and heavy issue, you are not alone, grace will always overcome evil, and freedom is possible.

A.M.D.G.

Rev. Ross A. Parker



Equipping the Family. Safeguarding Children