



## *Fire & Light*

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**Holy Great-Martyr and Healer**

**St. Panteleimon (305)**

+ The Dormition Fast begins Friday, August 1 +

- Fr. Alexander Atty

Never give up. No matter what sin you possibly could do, you can't give up! And don't let anyone tell you it's worthless. The devil thinks differently than you and I do, by the way. He'll put into your brain—and mine also—that you can't win. You're not going to win. You're not going to win, and he says it so often in so many different ways that you begin to believe him, and you wave the white flag and you surrender and you say, "Everybody else is doing it. Why shouldn't I?"

### The theme of this edition of Fire and Light: The passions of the flesh...

#### **St. John Chrysostom saw the great significance of human sexual behavior...finding its full scope in the war between God and Satan (Commentary on Romans, Homily 4):**

"The desire of intercourse...united the sexes to one another. This desire the devil having taken away, and having turned the course into another fashion, he sundered the sexes from one another, and made the one to become two parts in opposition to the law of God. For it says, "the two shall be one flesh;" but he divided the one flesh into two: here then is one war. Again, these same two parts he provoked to war both against themselves and against one another. For even women abused women, and not men only. And the men stood against one another, and against the female sex, as happens in a battle by night. You see a second and third war, and a fourth and fifth, for beside what have been mentioned, they also behaved lawlessly against nature itself. For when the Devil saw that this desire it is, principally, which draws the sexes together, he was bent on cutting through the tie, so as to destroy the race, not only by their not copulating lawfully, but also by their being stirred up to war, and in sedition against one another.

How many hells shall be enough for such? But if you scoff at hearing of hell and believe not that fire, remember Sodom. For we have seen, surely we have seen, even in this present life, a semblance of hell....For such is the burning of Sodom, and that conflagration! And they know it well that have been at the place, and have seen with their eyes that scourge divinely sent, and the effect of the lightnings from above. Consider how great is that sin, to have forced hell to appear even before its time!"

#### **St Gregory Palamas:**

**"Anyone who has fallen into fornication, adultery or any other such bodily impurity, should desist from this revolting filth and cleanse himself through confession, tears, fasting and the like. For God judges unrepentant fornicators and adulterers.** He condemns them, dismisses them and consigns them to hell, unquenchable fire and other never-ending punishments, saying, "Let the impure and accursed be taken away, lest they see and enjoy the glory of the Lord" (Isaiah 26:10).... In a word, if you desire life, to see good days, to be rescued from enemies both visible and invisible, the barbarians currently threatening us, and those punishments reserved for the prince of evil and his angels, turn away from all evil and do good (Psalm 33:12,14). "Be not deceived", the Apostle tells the Corinthians, "neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor covetous, neither drunkards nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the Kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). If someone has no inheritance with God he neither belongs to God nor has God as his Father.

But let us, brethren, I beseech you, abstain from deeds and words hateful to God, that we may boldly call God our Father. Let us truly return to Him, that He too may turn back to us, cleanse us from all sin and make us worthy of His divine grace. Then shall we keep festival both now and forever, and celebrate in a godly and spiritual way the accomplishments of God's promise, the Coming of the All-holy Spirit among men and His resting upon them; the fulfillment and perfection of the blessed hope in Christ Himself Our Lord."



*Walk before God in simplicity,  
and not in subtleties of the mind.  
Simplicity brings faith; but subtle and  
intricate speculations bring conceit; and  
conceit brings withdrawal from God.*

■ *Saint Isaac of Syria*

### *THE HOLY AND GREAT MARTYR PANTELEIMON.*

Born in Nicomedia of a Christian mother, Eubula, and a pagan father, Eustorgius, he studied medicine as a young man. The priest Hermolaus befriended him, instructed him in the Christian faith and baptized him. Panteleimon miraculously healed a blind man whom other doctors had treated in vain: he healed him by the name of Christ and baptized him. From jealousy, the doctors denounced Panteleimon as a Christian, and he went before the Emperor Maximian for judgment. He stood before the earthly ruler in the body, but in his mind he stood before the heavenly King. He freely declared himself to be a Christian before the Emperor, and, in front of his eyes, healed a paralytic of a long infirmity. This miracle brought many of the pagans to the Christian faith. The Emperor put him to torture, but the Lord appeared to him on several occasions and delivered him whole and uninjured. Then St Hermolaus suffered, along with Hermippus and Hermocrates. Condemned to death, St Panteleimon knelt in prayer. At that, the executioner gave him a blow on the neck with his sword, and the sword broke as if made of wax. The executioner could not kill him until he had finished his prayer and had himself given the word to behead him. Panteleimon was beheaded under an olive tree, which after that became laden with fruit. 'Panteleimon' means 'all-merciful'. God the all-merciful received his righteous soul, and glorified him among His greatest saints, his relics remaining incorrupt. This wonderful martyr suffered with honor as a youth for Christ on July 27th, 304. Saint Panteleimon is invoked in the prayers at the blessing of water and the blessing of oil, together with St Hermolaus and the other Unmercenaries and Wonderworkers. The loveliest church dedicated to him is to be found on the Holy Mountain.

## *Resisting temptation!*

### **St. Moses the Hungarian of the Kiev Caves (July 26)**

The impure enemy of mankind struggles mightily against a person who is susceptible to the passion of fornication, so that such a person might remain darkened by this passion and will not be able to look upon God. For, only the pure in heart will see God. It was upon this field of battle that our holy Father Moses fought and defeated the power of the impure enemy giving us an example of such a victory.

Saint Moses was a Hungarian by birth. Together with his brother George, he was in the service of the pious prince, Boris the Passion-bearer, who loved Moses very much. During the battle on the Yalta River, in the war between Prince Boris and Prince Svyatopolk, Saint Moses was the sole survivor of Boris's forces. Blessed Moses fled to Kiev, where he hid from Svyatopolk in the home of Predislava, Prince Yaroslav's sister. Here, Moses spent his time in prayer. Finally, Prince Yaroslav defeated Svyatopolk, who then fled to Poland. Later, Svyatopolk returned with Boleslav of Poland and his army. They drove Prince Yaroslav away and occupied Kiev. King Boleslav returned to Poland taking as captives two of Yaroslav's sisters, several boyars and St Moses. The blessed one, who was huge and muscular, and exceedingly handsome, was led away chained by his arms and legs.

A Certain wealthy and powerful Polish noblewoman saw the Saint and was seized by the lust of carnal desires toward him. She went to Moses and asked him how he had fallen into such a cruel condition. He replied, "It is thus pleasing to God." The woman then continued, "If you will yield to me, I will deliver you and make you great in all Poland, and you will rule over my estates."

The Saint, however, understood her unclean lust and said to her, "What man who has listened to a woman acted well? Adam listened to a woman and was banished from Paradise. Sampson, who overpowered everyone with his strength, by the unclean enchantment of a woman, was given into the hands of aliens. Herod, who had won many victories, yielded to impure passions and was enslaved by a woman, and he beheaded John the Forerunner. How can I listen to the unclean advice of a woman, who I do not even know?"

But she continued, "I will deliver you from death and make you renowned. I will have you as my husband, for I cannot bear to see your youth go to waste."

Saint Moses sharply replied, "Know that I will not fulfill your desires. I want neither power nor wealth, but I seek spiritual and physical purity. May I not ruin my five-year long struggle, and now I innocently endure torments so that I may be delivered from eternal torments."

The woman then conceived a new evil scheme. "If I ransom him," she thought, "then I can force him to submit to me."

She sent to the master of the slaves and bought Moses for three thousand gold pieces. Now that St Moses was her slave, she ordered that he be clad in rich attire and fed with rich foods. She began all the more to entice him to fornication. The blessed one, however, when he saw the woman's frenzy, prayed and fasted all the more diligently, taking only dry bread and water. The woman, being thus shamed, fell into a rage and ordered the blessed one thrown into a dungeon, intending to starve him to death. But the Lord, 'Who ever gives food to all flesh, Who once nourished Elias in the wilderness, and also fed Paul of the Thebaid, did not forsake this blessed one. One of the servants of this woman secretly brought Moses food. Other servants tried to convince the Saint, saying 'Moses, our brother, what prevents you from marrying? You are young and this widow lived with her husband for only one year. She has beauty, her wealth is countless and her power is great. The king himself would not disdain her, while you, a prisoner, do not want to be her lord. If you are afraid of violating Christ's commandment, He Himself said, "For this sake a man will leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife and the two shall be one flesh'. Also, the Apostle said, 'It is better to marry than to burn', and that 'young widows will remarry'. You are not bound by monastic vows, you are free. So why do you cause yourself to suffer such torments? How will it benefit you if you die? Even the righteous ones: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had wives. It is better for you to submit to a woman and be free and be the lord of this house.'

Blessed Moses replied to them, 'Oh brethren and good friends! You advise me well, but I know it is worse than the advice the serpent gave Eve in Paradise. You advise me to submit to a woman, but I shall not accept your advice, and even if I die in these chains and torments, I shall not yield to her flattery. Though many of the righteous were saved with wives, I am a sinner and I will not be saved with her. I want neither kingdom nor power in the Polish land, but I seek the higher heavenly Kingdom. Even if I am deprived of life, I will not listen to the advice of this woman, and I will remain like a monk, for Christ said in His Gospel, whoever has left his home and brethren, father, and mother

or foregoes a wife or children or village for the sake of His Name will inherit eternal life. Shall I heed Christ, or you? The Apostle says the same, 'The unmarried worries about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord, while the married worries about the mate, how to please the mate.' I ask you, whom ought one to work for — the Lord or a wife?

Therefore, this woman's beauty will never seduce me and will not separate me from Christ's love."

When the woman heard of all this, she was aroused to madness with evil thoughts. She had Moses dressed and seated upon a horse, and, surrounded by a large retinue, she rode with him among her villages and the town, saying to him, "All this is yours; do what you wish." To the people she said, 'This is your lord, and my husband,' Everyone bowed to Moses.

The Saint felt pity toward the woman's madness, and said to her, "You are doing all this in vain. You cannot entice me with the corruptible things of this world, and you cannot steal from me incorruptible spiritual wealth — please, try to understand this and do not go through all this in vain."

In a rage, the woman said, 'Do you not know that you have been sold to me? Who will deliver you from my hands? I will not let you go alive! I will have you tortured and executed!'

The blessed one answered her with boldness, "I fear no evil, for the Lord is with me. I intend to work for Him in the monastic life."

At this time, by God's mercy, a priest-monk from the Holy Mountain who was travelling in the area, heard of Moses and came to him secretly. After speaking with the Saint, he tonsured him and taught him much about spiritual and physical purity. When the woman heard of this, she lost all hope of leading Saint Moses into sin, and she began to have him tortured. He was stretched out and beaten with metal rods until the ground was covered with his blood. The torturers pleaded with Moses to submit to the woman. "There is no limit to the tortures she will inflict on you before having you killed."

To all this, Saint Moses replied bravely, "Brothers! Do what you have been ordered to do. It is impossible for me to renounce monasticism and God's love. No torment, nor fire, nor swords, nor wounds can separate me from God and the great angelic tonsure.

I will not submit to the accursed will of this shameless woman, who has brazenly displayed her shamelessness before all people, inciting me to

defilement and fornication."

In desperation, the woman wrote to King Boleslav, accusing Saint Moses and asking the king to influence him to accept her. The king ordered the woman to come to him with her slave Moses. When he saw Moses, he tried to compel the Saint to take the woman. Finally, he said to Moses, "Who is so insensitive as you, that you refuse so many benefits and honor, and give yourself over to torture? You must choose either life or death. If you fulfill the will of your mistress, you will receive great honor and power; if you disobey, you will receive death."

Then the king said to the woman, 'This captive, whom you have purchased, cannot go free. As his mistress, do to your slave what you will, so that the other slaves will not dare to disobey their masters.'

Our holy Father Moses replied to the king, "What use is it to a man to acquire the whole world and lose his soul, or, what will a man give in return for his soul? You promise me glory and honor, when you yourself will soon die, and this woman will be killed."

The Saint's prophecy was truly fulfilled. The woman began to torture Moses all the more, ordering that he be given a hundred lashes each day, so that he would eventually die from bleeding. Meanwhile, King Boleslav raised a great persecution against the monks and drove them out of Poland. In the midst of all this, Boleslav fell ill and died suddenly one night. At his death, a great rebellion broke out in the land and the people rose up and slew their bishops and nobles, including this shameless woman. The slaves were freed.

Saint Moses, that good warrior of Christ, had suffered for six years. For five years he had struggled in his chains, showing the patience of Job, but in the sixth year, he suffered courageously for purity more than Joseph. After his liberation, he made his way to the Kiev Caves, where he struggled as a hesychast for ten more years. Here, he radiated the Grace of God and attained to great spiritual heights. He reposed on July 26 while St. Anthony, Founder of the Kiev Caves Monastery, was still alive. His sacred relics repose uncovered and incorrupt in the cave of St. Anthony.  
**Through his holy prayers, many have been delivered from fornication and impure passions.**

***Holy Father Moses, pray to God for us!***

# **Adultery and Fornication**

## **What Saith the Scriptures?**

*"Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body;  
but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.*

*What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you...?  
Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

**1 Corinthians 6:18-20**

- I. Although by the corrupt moral standards of today's permissive society premarital and extramarital sex are considered acceptable and blameless in the eyes of man, nevertheless, the Word of God clearly declares that God (Who never changes – Malachi 3:6) considers it sin.

Genesis 20:9 "a great sin"

Genesis 34:7 "which thing ought not to be done"

2 Samuel 13:12

Jeremiah 13:27

Ezekiel 16:3-22

1 Corinthians 6:18

2 Corinthians 12:21

- II. What is the difference between fornication and adultery?

- A. Fornication is the illicit sexual intercourse of unmarried persons.

1 Corinthians 6:9, 18

- B. To commit adultery is to have sexual relations with someone other than one's own spouse (husband or wife).

Jeremiah 29:23; 5:7-8

Proverbs 6:29, 32; etc.

1. Even looking at someone with a lustful heart is adultery.

Matthew 5:28

- III. The Bible is not silent on the subject of premarital relations.

- A. Sexual intercourse is to be confined to marriage.

Genesis 34:1-7, 31

- B. Marriage is God's provision for the release of sexual desire.

1 Corinthians 7:2

Hebrews 13:4

- C. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). If a couple cannot restrain themselves, Paul said that they should go ahead and marry (1 Corinthians 7:9, 36-37).

- D. Consider the following accounts of fornication in Scripture.

1. Schechem and Dinah

Genesis chapter 34

2. Tamar and Amnon

2 Samuel chapter 13

- IV. Fornication and adultery are absolutely forbidden by God.

Genesis 20:9

Exodus 20:14 (Deuteronomy 5:18; Matthew 5:27; 19:18;

Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; Romans 13:9; James 2:11)

Leviticus 18:20

Deuteronomy 23:17-18

2 Samuel 13:12

Matthew 14:34 (Mark 6:17-18)

1 Corinthians 6:15; 10:8

- A. These sins are exceedingly "evil" and "wicked" in God's sight.

Genesis 39:9  
Leviticus 19:29  
Deuteronomy 22:22-24, etc.  
1 Samuel 2:22-23  
1 Corinthians 5:13

- B. They greatly displease God (Hosea 4:1-2, 11) and provoke Him to anger (Numbers 25:1, 3; Ezekiel 16:26; Colossians 3:5-6).
- C. God abhors them.  
Proverbs 22:14
- D. "For this is a heinous crime" (Job 31:1, 9-12), "villainy" (Jeremiah 29:22-23) and filthiness (Revelation 17:4).
- E. "They know not the light" but "are in the terrors of the shadow of death" (Job 24:15-17). It is "the way of hell;" "the dead are there" (Proverbs 7:27; 9:13-18).
- F. The words of anyone who defends such "unfruitful works of darkness" (Ephesians 5:3, 11-12) are "contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Timothy 1:9-10).

V. Adultery and fornication are serious offenses.

- A. Under the law, such acts were counted worthy of death.

Genesis 20:3, 7, 17; 26:11  
Leviticus 20:10-12  
2 Samuel 12  
Proverbs 2:16-19; 7:5-27  
Romans 1:29, 32

1. Burned.

Genesis 38:15, 24  
Leviticus 21:9

2. Stoned.

Deuteronomy 22:13-21, cp. John 8:4-5

- B. In the days of the early church, fornication was considered just cause for excommunication from the fellowship of believers.

1 Corinthians 5:1-2, 9-12

- C. Fornication justifies divorce.

Deuteronomy 22:13-21  
Matthew 5:32; 19:9 (Mark 10:12)

- D. In the Old Testament, fornication and adultery symbolized unfaithfulness to God, either by idolatry or backsliding in general.

Jeremiah 3:1, 6, 8, 9, 14, etc.  
Ezekiel 6:9; 16:36, etc.  
Hosea 1:2; 4:11-12; 3:1  
Acts 15:29

- E. Such offenses are self-defiling (Leviticus 18:20, 24, 30; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20) and can lead to one's own spiritual destruction.

Proverbs 2:16, 18-19 "unto death"  
Proverbs 6:27-29, 32 "destroyeth his own soul"  
Proverbs 9:13-18 "the dead are there ... in the depths of hell"  
Genesis 20:3, 7 "thou art but a dead man ... for she is a man's wife"

- F. Scripture lists fornication and adultery with such sins as murder, witchcraft, robbery, idolatry, etc.

Hosea 4:2  
Romans 2:21  
Acts 15:29; 21:25  
1 Corinthians 6:9-10  
Revelation 9:21

- G. The offense shall be met with severe judgment.

# Arousing Ourselves to Death

## *Porn Is Ravaging Our Churches*

**T**HE COUPLE WILL TYPICALLY tell me first about how stressful their lives are. Maybe he's lost his job. Perhaps she's working two. Maybe their children are rowdy or the house is chaotic. But usually, if we talk long enough about their fracturing marriage, there is a sense that something else is afoot. The couple will tell me about how their sex life is near extinction. The man, she'll tell me, is an emotional wraith, dead to intimacy with his wife. The woman will be frustrated, with what seems to him to be a wild mixture of rage and humiliation. They just don't know what's wrong, but they know a Christian marriage isn't supposed to feel like this.

It's at this point that I interrupt the discussion, look at the man, and ask, "So how long has the porn been going on?" The couple will look at each other, and then look at me, with a kind of fearful incredulity that communicates the question, "How do you know?" For a few minutes, they seek to reorient themselves to this exposure, wondering, I suppose, if I'm an Old Testament prophet or a New Age psychic. But I'm not either. One doesn't have to be to sense the spirit of this age. In our time, pornography is the destroying angel of (especially male) Bros, and it's time the Church faced the horror of this truth.

### A PERVERSION OF THE GOOD

In one sense, the issue of pornography is not new at all. Human lust for covenant-breaking sexuality is rooted, Jesus tells us, not in anything external to us but in our fallen passions (Matt. 5:27-28). Every generation of Christians has faced the pornography question, whether with Dionysian pagan art, or with Jazz Age fan-dancers, or with airbrushed centerfolds.

But the situation is unique now. Pornography is not now simply available. With the advent of Internet technology, with its near universal reach and its promise of secrecy, pornography has been weaponized. In some sectors, especially of our young male populations, it is



nearly universal. This universality is not, contrary to the propaganda of the pornographers themselves, a sign of its innocence but of its power.

Like all sin, pornography is by definition a perversion of the good, in this case of the mystery of the male and female together in a one-flesh union. The urge toward this is strong indeed, precisely because our Creator, in manifold wisdom, decided that human creatures would not subdivide like amoeba, but that the male would need the female, and the female the male, for the race to survive.

Beyond that is an even greater mystery still. The Apostle Paul tells us that human sexuality is not arbitrary, nor is it merely natural. It is, he reveals, itself an icon of God's ultimate purpose in the gospel. The one-flesh union is a sign of the union between Christ and his Church (Eph. 5:22-33). If human sexuality is patterned after the very Alpha and Omega of the cosmos, no wonder it is so difficult to restrain. No wonder it seems so wild.

### AN ECCLESIAL ISSUE

Pornography, by its very nature, leads to insatiability. One picture, stored in the memory, will never be enough to continue arousing a man. God, after all, designed the man and the woman to be satisfied not with a single sex act but with an ongoing appetite for each other, for the unitive and procreative union of flesh to flesh and soul to soul. One seeking the mystery outside of this covenantal union will never find what he is looking for. He will never find an image naked enough to satisfy him.

Yes, pornography is an issue of public morality. We have spoken to this repeatedly. A culture that doesn't safeguard the dignity of human sexuality is a culture on its way to nihilism. Yes, pornography is an issue of social justice. After all, pornography, at least as we know it today, is rarely about mere "images." Behind those images stand real persons, created in the image of God, who through some sad journey to a far country of despair have

## Without genuine repentance, the cycle of temptation will grind on.

tumbled down to this. We agree with those—often even secular feminists with whom we disagree on much—who say that a pornographic culture hurts women and children through the objectification of women, the trafficking of children, and the commodification of sex.

But before pornography is a legal or cultural or moral issue, it is an ecclesial one. Judgment must, as Scripture tells us, begin with the household of God (1 Pet. 4:17). The man who is sitting upstairs viewing pornography while his wife chauffeurs their children to soccer practice might well be a religionless, secular culture warrior. But he is just as likely to be one of our church members, maybe even one who reads *Touchstone* magazine.

To begin to address this crisis, we call on the church of Jesus Christ to take seriously what is at stake here. Pornography is about more than biological impulses or cultural nihilism; it is about worship. The Christian Church, in all places and in all times and in all communions, has taught that we are not alone in the universe. One aspect of "mere Christianity" is that there are unseen spiritual beings afoot in the cosmos who seek to do us harm.

These powers understand that "the sexually immoral person sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18). They understand that a disruption of the marital sexual bond defaces the embodied icon of Christ and his Church (Eph. 5:32). They know that pornography, in the life of a follower of Jesus Christ, joins Christ, spiritually, to an electronic prostitute or, more likely, to a vast digital harem of electronic prostitutes (1 Cor. 6:16). And these accusing powers know that those who unrepentantly practice these things "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9–10).

### SHAM REPENTANCE

This means that our churches cannot simply rely on accountability groups and blocking software to combat

this scourge. We must see this as darkly spiritual and, first and foremost, reclaim a Christian vision of human sexuality. Internet pornography, after all, is downstream from a view of human sexuality that is self-focused and fruitless. In an era when sex is merely about achieving orgasm by any means necessary, we must reiterate what the Christian Church has always taught: sex is about the covenant union of one man with one woman, a union that is intended to bring about flourishing, love, happiness, and, yes, sensual pleasure.

But it is also intended to bring about new life. An incarnational picture of sexuality, rooted in the mystery of the gospel, is the furthest thing possible from the utilitarian ugliness of pornography. Our first step must be to show why pornography leaves a person, and a culture, so numb and empty. Human sexuality is, as our colleague Robert George put it, more than "body parts rubbing against one another."

Moreover, we must call for repentance in our own churches, and this will be more difficult than it sounds. Pornography brings with it a kind of sham repentance. Immediately after an "episode" with pornography is "over," the participant usually, especially at first, feels a kind of revulsion and self-loathing. An adulterer or a fornicator of the more traditional kind can at least rationalize that he is "in love." Most people, though, don't write poetry or romantic songs about this isolated, masturbatory compulsion. Even the pagans who find pornography pleasant and necessary seem to recognize that it is kind of pitiful.

Typically, for those who identify as Christians, a pornographic episode is followed by a resolve "never to do it again." Often these (again, typically) men promise to seek out some sort of accountability and leave it behind. But often this resolve is less about a convicted conscience than about a sated appetite. Even Esau, belly full of red stew, wept for his lost birthright, but "found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears" (Heb. 12:17).

Without genuine repentance, the cycle of temptation will grind on. The powers of this age will collaborate with the biological impulses to make it seem irresistible again. The pseudo-repentance will only keep the sin in hiding. This is devil work, and is among those things our Lord Jesus came to destroy (1 John 3:8).

### GENUINE REPENTANCE

Our churches must show what genuine repentance looks like. This does not mean setting up legalistic rules and regulations against the use of technology itself. This, the Apostle Paul tells us, is "of no value in stopping



the indulgence of the flesh" (Col. 2:23). It does mean, however, that every point of temptation comes with a corresponding means of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). For some especially vulnerable members of our churches, this will mean giving up the use of home computers or of Internet technology altogether.

Such a suggestion seems absurd to many, as though we were suggesting that some Christians might do well to stop eating or sleeping. But human beings have lived thousands of years without computers and without the Internet. Is our Lord Jesus right when he says it is better to cut off one's hand or gouge out one's eye rather than be condemned by our sin? (Matt. 5:29). How much less is it, then, to ask that one cut through a cable?

We must also empower women in our congregations to grapple as Christians with husbands enslaved to pornography. We believe, and have taught emphatically, that wives should submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:23). But, in Scripture and in Christian teaching, all submission (except to the Lord directly) has limits. The husband's body, the Bible says, belongs to his wife (1 Cor. 7:4). She need not subject herself to being the physical outlet for her husband's pornographically supplied fantasies. If

both are members of a Christian church, and if he will not repent, we counsel the wife to follow our Lord's steps (laid out in Matt. 18:15-20) to call a brother to repentance, up to and including church action.

## THE GOSPEL ANSWER

Finally, and most importantly, we call on the church to counteract pornography with what the demonic powers fear most: the gospel of Jesus Christ. Jesus, after all, walked with us, before us, into the testing of the appetites. His enemy and ours offered him a solitary masturbatory meal, to be wolfed down in the desert. Jesus turned back Satan's offer, not because he did not hunger, but because he wanted a marriage supper, joined with his Church "as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2).

The powers want any child of Adam, especially a brother or sister of the Lord Jesus, to cringe in hiding from accusation. Through the confession of sin, though, any conscience, including one darkened by pornography, can be cleansed. By the blood of Christ, received in repentance and faith, no satanic indictment can stand, not even one that comes with an archived Internet history.

—RUSSELL D. MOORE, *for the editors*

## Not to Dishonor the Gift – St. John Chrysostom

Since as we have partaken of so great a gift, let us do everything not to dishonor such a benefit. For if before Christ what was done was worthy of punishment, how much more now after this unspeakable benefit!

I say this because I see many after their Baptism living more carelessly than the un-baptized, and having nothing peculiar to distinguish them in their way of life. It is, you see, for this reason that neither in the market nor in the Church is it possible to know quickly who is a believer and who is an unbeliever; unless one is present at the time of the holy Eucharist and sees the one person present and another absent. But **they ought to be distinguished not by their attendance, but by their way of life.** That is, the believer ought to be manifest not only by the gift, but also by the new life. The believer ought to be the light and salt of the world. But when you do not even shed light on yourself, how are we to know that you are a believer! Because you have entered into the holy waters of Baptism? No! This becomes a source of punishment to you. For such an honor becomes an increase in vengeance to those who do not live worthy of the honor. The believer ought to brightly shine not only with what he has received from God, but also with what he himself has contributed. He should be discernible by everything: by his walk, by his look, by his garb, by his voice.

# Pornography in the Pew

## – A Hidden Sin

By Gabrielle Devenish , October 28, 2011

It is widely known that pornography is a prevalent issue in today's society, but its potential of addiction is not isolated to the secular world. Charles Swindoll calls it "the number 1 secret problem in your church."

"Without your knowing, it could be eating your church alive. And the scariest thing is . . . you may not realize the extensive damage it's causing," Swindoll wrote on his website, Insight for Living. "It's ruining marriages, destroying relationships, harming youth, and hurting the body of Christ."

No longer is viewing pornographic material confirmed to boys and men sneaking a peak at a Playboy magazine. The Internet has created an instant and easy access to what is known as "hardcore" images and film.

"I'd say the overwhelming majority of users have almost no understanding of the consequences of pornography," said David R. Smith, author of Ministry by Teenagers, in an email to The Christian Post. "They do not understand that it's not real. They mentally glaze over the reality that pornography is about two M's: money and masturbation. Of course, it also leads to the dehumanization of women (no matter what the adult industry may say)."

Pornography and sexual sin are becoming more and more pervasive. According to watchdog organization Covenant Eyes, the profit obtained from the pornography industry is more than the collective revenue of the top technology companies such as Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo, Apple, EarthLink and Netflix.

United Families International found that 40 million Americans regularly visit pornographic sites and 2.5 billion pornographic emails are sent each day. The same survey found that nearly 30,000 users are viewing porn each second.

According to a ChristiaNet survey, 50 percent of Christian men are addicted to pornography. And it's not

just a "guy-thing;" 20 percent of Christian women are addicted to pornography, and 60 percent of Christian women admitted to significantly struggling with lust.

And yes, pornography is in the pulpit, too. Christianity Today found that 37 percent of pastors admit that they struggle with Internet pornography, and 51 percent say it's a source of temptation. And more than half the pastors surveyed (57 percent) said that addiction to pornography is the most sexually damaging issue in their church.

It breaks apart marriages – 56 percent of divorces involve one party having an obsessive interest in "pornographic websites," according to the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. And pornography breaks up churches.

"You hardly need to be reminded that fallen pastors and priests did not 'suddenly' fall. More often than not, pornography played a role in their downward spiral," Swindoll wrote.

But there is hope.

"Help exists," Smith said. "There are hundreds of reputable agencies and ministries that specialize in overcoming pornography addiction. Some of them are even free: [www.XXXchurch.com](http://www.XXXchurch.com) being one of them. The greatest need any person struggling with pornography abuse has is accountability. That individual should seek a person of authority to whom he/she is accountable in this arena of their lives."

"It's not just an adolescent male thing that guys grow out of," said Rusty Rohr, a recovering pornography addict in the Pure Life recovery program. "It's a serious problem, a heart issue. . . . And men can find freedom, not just cleaned up behavior."

"[Pornography] is destroying families and is the main contributor to the exploitation of women and children. Pornography is the gateway to the sex industry and the harm must end," said Patrick Trueman, president of MIM, in a statement.