

Satan's Number One Weapon in Modern Times: Addiction to Internet Pornography
Fr. Thomas Steinke, IVE

Today I'm going to discuss a very powerful addiction, one that has taken over the lives of millions of people around the world. I'll break the conference down into four sections:

- **Part 1: The Magnitude of this Epidemic**
- **Part 2: The Physiological Aspects of Addiction**
- **Part 3: Why the Natural Progression of this Addiction leads to Perversion and Violence**
- **Part 4: The Solution: Breaking Free of Porn Addiction**

Part 1: The Magnitude of the Epidemic

I first became interested in this addiction when I heard one of our priests say he thought that two out of three men in their twenties and thirties were struggling with this problem. I thought "Wow, that's an epidemic," so I started doing more research over the years.

Previous to that I remember reading back in the 1990s about a husband who was addicted to pornography and claimed to be a sincere, practicing Catholic and I thought, "Come on, if you really want to practice your faith, how could you be watching something as degrading as pornography." I've since come to see that this is true; there are many serious Catholics and countless people, millions are not an exaggeration, who would like to never watch internet pornography again, but have become ensnared by Satan's number one weapon in the world: addiction to internet pornography.

In my counseling sessions with them, I can hear the frustration, the stress, the despair in their voices. Many have been struggling for over twenty years and often it has progressed and become more deeply entrenched. Some act out by going to prostitutes and massage parlors or even worse. Imagine something you desperately want out of your life and each morning you think, not today and then you fall again and again, and the cycle repeats itself year after year. This leads to depression and despair. In fact, the foremost expert on the subject, Dr. Patrick Carnes says that "Emotional illness . . . flourishes within the addict's world. Depression, bipolar disorders, suicide, obsessive-compulsive behavior, and post-traumatic stress disorder are frequent companions to the addiction."¹

Hence, these addicts are not happy campers who joyously look forward each day to getting their fix of pornography; they are powerless to stop watching pornography even when they see the horrifying effects it has in their lives.

Now I'm sure everybody here knows this is a problem, but the extent of the problem is simply mind-boggling. The following are some statistics about pornography that I have compiled from various sources:

- **2006 Worldwide Pornography Revenues were \$97.06 billion. To put that in perspective, the revenue from pornography sales is larger than that of Microsoft,**

¹ Patrick Carnes, *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction*, (Center City: Hazelden, 2001), 31.

Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo, Apple and Netflix combined! These figures are even more amazing when you consider that between 70-80% of the adult material online is free.²

- 60% of all website visits are sexual in nature.³

And this epidemic is incredibly widespread. Some surveys indicate that 80-percent of men, 40-percent of women and even 60-percent of the clergy have struggled with the use of Internet pornography at some point in time.⁴

According to a survey conducted by the Barna Group in the U.S. in 2014:⁵

- The following percentages of men say they view pornography at least several times a week:
 - 18-30-year-olds, 63%; 31-49-year-olds, 38%; 50-68-year-olds, 25%
- The following percentages of women say they view pornography at least several times a week:
 - 18-30-year-olds, 21%; 31-49-year-olds, 5%; 50-68-year-olds, 0%
- 55% of married men say they watch porn at least once a month, compared to 70% of unmarried men.
- In a survey among Christians, 50% of all Christian men and 20% of all Christian women say they are addicted to pornography.⁶

Even more alarming is the widespread among children, In fact, according to a study conducted by the Family Safe Media:⁷

- Eleven is the average age when a child is first exposed to pornography
- The largest single age group of Internet pornography users are 12-17-year-olds
- 80% of 15-17-year-olds have had multiple exposure to hard core pornography.
- Incredibly, in 2004 Swedish researchers found that 99% of young men had watched pornography.⁸

Bishop Robert Finn in his *Pastoral Letter on the Dignity of the Human Person and the Dangers of Pornography* says, “Pornography is not new, but it has become a kind of plague in our society, reaching epidemic proportions. . . Use of internet pornography is perhaps the fastest growing addiction in the world”⁹ And I think that is an understatement.

² Matthew Zook, “Report on the location of the Internet adult industry,” in *C’Lick Me: A Netporn Studies Reader*, ed. Katrien Jacobs, Marije Janssen, Matteo Pasquinelli. (Amsterdam: Institute of Network Cultures, 2007), 103-121. <http://www.networkcultures.org/uploads/24.pdf> (accessed Dec. 27, 2012).

³ MSNBC/ Standford/ Duquesne Study, Washington Times, 1/ 26/ 2000.

⁴ Mayling Simpson and Paul Hebert, *STEAMBOAT TODAY: “Pornography: A public health crisis,”* <http://endsexualexploitation.org/articles/steamboat-today-pornography-a-public-health-crisis/>

⁵ 2014 Pornography Survey and Statistics. Proven Men Ministries. <http://www.provenmen.org/2014pornsurvey/> (accessed Dec. 29, 2014).

⁶ Kastleman, Mark B.. *Drug of the New Millennium: Pornography 500mg* (Kindle Location 159). Packard Technologies. Kindle Edition. Citing Market Wire. August 7, 2006. ChristiaNet.com. December 7, 2006 [http:// www.marketwire.com](http://www.marketwire.com).

⁷ Kleponis, Peter (2014-08-26). *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography* (Kindle Locations 335-347). Emmaus Road Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁸ T. Tydén and C. Rogala, "Sexual behavior among young men in Sweden and the impact of pornography," *Int J STD AIDS* 15/ 9 (2004): 590-593.

⁹ Robert W. Finn, *A Pastoral Letter on the Dignity of the Human Person and the Dangers of Pornography*, Ash Wednesday , February 21, 2007.

The August 8, 2010 edition of *Our Sunday Visitor* features an interview with Dr. Peter Kleponis, a psychiatrist who was called in by the New York Archdiocese to help train priests on how to heal men suffering from pornography addiction. “He told *Our Sunday Visitor* he talks to priests around the country, and ‘this is the No. 1 sin they are hearing from men in the confessional.’”¹⁰ And every priest knows this is true.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health estimated that in 2008 there were 1.9 million cocaine users and according to the Central Intelligence Agency there are an estimated 2 million heroin users in the United States. Those numbers shrink in comparison to the 40 million regular users of online pornography in America.¹¹ According to another source, there are 27 times more sex addicts than heroin addicts in the United States (13 million sex addicts in the U.S. today as compared with only 467,000 heroin addicts).¹²

Part 2: The Physiological Aspects of Addiction

So obviously internet pornography is addicting, but why is it addicting? To answer that question, I want to talk about the physiological aspects of this addiction. Indeed, the addictiveness of porn is a matter of hard science.¹³ And in recent years, hundreds of brain studies have shown that gambling, alcohol, nicotine, heroin, crystal meth, and sexual addictions all modify the same fundamental brain mechanisms¹⁴ and produce a recognized set of anatomical and chemical alterations in the brain.¹⁵ In fact, in 2011 the *American Society of Addiction Medicine* (doctors and researchers) confirmed that the physiological changes associated with all addictions are basically the same by redefining what an addiction is based on these changes.¹⁶ The new definition of addiction begins with “Addiction is a primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry.”¹⁷

The lure at the physical level is dopamine which is at work in the part of the brain associated with rewards, the part where you experience cravings and pleasure and where you get addicted. The purpose of dopamine is to motivate you to seek what you perceive as good.¹⁸ The more dopamine released, the more you will want something. No dopamine and you just ignore it. High-calorie chocolate cake and ice cream will trigger a big blast of dopamine; celery or glass of water, practically nothing. Dopamine surges are the

¹⁰ Tom Hoopes, “Catholic psychologist trains confessors in growing problem.” *Our Sunday Visitor*, August 8, 2010, <https://www.osv.com/TabId/735/ArtMid/13636/ArticleID/1802/> [accessed March 12, 2015].

¹¹ Morgan Bennett, Public Discourse, *The New Narcotic*, http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2013/10/10846/?utm_source=RTA+Bennet+Part+One&utm_campaign=winstorg&utm_medium=email

¹² Mayling Simpson and Paul Hebert, *STEAMBOAT TODAY*: “Pornography: A public health crisis,” <http://endsexualexploitation.org/articles/steamboat-today-pornography-a-public-health-crisis/>

¹³ Michela Romano, Lisa A. Osborne, Roberto Truzoli, and Phil Reed, “Differential Psychological Impact of Internet Exposure on Internet Addicts,” *PLoS One* 8/2 (2013) doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0055162.

¹⁴ Eric J. Nestler, “Is there a common molecular pathway for addiction?” *Nature Neuroscience* 6/11 (2005): 1445-1449, doi: 10.1038/nn1578.

¹⁵ N.D. Volkow, “Addiction: decreased reward sensitivity and increased expectation sensitivity conspire to overwhelm the brain's control circuit,” *Bioessays* 32/9 (2010): 748-755, doi: 10.1002/bies.201000042.

¹⁶ “Public Policy Statement: Definition of Addiction,” *American Association of Addiction Medicine*, April 12, 2011, http://www.asam.org/docs/public-policy-statements/1definition_of_addiction_long_4-11.pdf.

¹⁷ American Society of Addiction Medicine, *Definition of Addiction*, <http://www.asam.org/quality-practice/definition-of-addiction>

¹⁸ Natalie Angier, “A Molecule of Motivation, Dopamine Excels at Its Task,” *The New York Times*, October 26, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/27/science/27angier.html>.

barometer by which your body determines the value of any experience. It tells you what to seek or what to avoid, and where to focus your attention. Sexual stimulation and orgasm are the single biggest natural blast of dopamine available to your reward circuitry.¹⁹

Dopamine enforces what to remember and seek in the future by being the catalyst in the rewiring of your brain.²⁰ Modern research shows that the brain links together the nerve cells associated with pleasure with the nerve cells that store memories of the event. The dopamine released with pleasure triggers the production of the DeltaFosB which is the protein that causes the person to remember and want to repeat the action by actually physically and chemically restructuring the reward center of the brain.²¹ That is why the accumulation of DeltaFosB in the reward center of the brain is the surest sign of any chemical or behavioral addiction.²² The porn addict is literally a “different person” inside, showing the same kind of structural change that PET brain scans reveal in drug addicts.²³

Most of the people I talk to say the addiction began in their teens. According to 2014 Barna Group Study it seems that 63% of men between the age of 18-30 are addicted if viewing pornography several times a week is indicative of an addiction. Even if they aren't, there are two major reasons why these teenagers or any teenagers who dabble in porn and have unrestricted internet access will almost certainly become addicted.

First, many studies show that in a teenager's brain, the connection between the logic center, where reasoning and discernment take place, and the limbic system, where the emotional, pleasure and “gut-reaction” responses take place is extremely underdeveloped. This is precisely why teens often “act without thinking.”²⁴ I remember driving in a car going over 100 miles an hour as a teenager with an inexperienced driver and not even seeing any danger in it. That would horrify me today. Youth tend not to see how dangerous something is until it is too late and that is especially true with pornography.

The second reason is because a teenager's reward circuitry is in overdrive.²⁵ Indeed, male teenagers have 20 times the normal amount of testosterone coursing through their system at puberty. With that kind of a sex drive, it is extremely difficult to exercise the self-control necessary to decide to stop looking at porn once exposed to it. Consequently, their brains will also produce higher spikes of dopamine in response to internet porn and this in turn causes their brains to produce more of the addiction protein DeltaFosB.²⁶ That is why it is

¹⁹ Cathleen Genova, "Learning addiction: Dopamine reinforces drug-associated memories," research press release, September 9, 2009, http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2009-09/cp-lad090309.php.

²⁰ Cathleen Genova, "Learning addiction: Dopamine reinforces drug-associated memories," research press release, September 9, 2009, http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2009-09/cp-lad090309.php.

²¹ Eric J. Nestler, "Transcriptional mechanisms of addiction: role of Δ FosB," *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B* 363/ 1507 (2008): 3245-3255, doi: 10.1098/rstb.2008.0067.

²² Deanna L. Wallace, et al., "The Influence of DeltaFosB in the Nucleus Accumbens on Natural Reward-Related Behavior," *The Journal of Neuroscience* 28/ 41 (2008): 10272-10277, doi: 10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1531-08.2008.

²³ Dr. Judith Reisman, *The Psychopharmacology of Pictorial Pornography Restructuring Brain, Mind & Memory & Subverting Freedom of Speech*, The Institute for Media Education, 2003, 22- 23.

²⁴ Gargi Talukder, *Decision-making is Still a Work in Progress for Teenagers*, *BrainConnection.com*, News in Review, July, 2000, and Dr. Judith Reisman, *The Psychopharmacology of Pictorial Pornography, Restructuring Brain, Mind & Memory & Subverting Freedom of Speech*, The Institute for Media Education, 2003, p. 12.

²⁵ Adriana Galvan, et al., "Earlier Development of the Accumbens Relative to Orbitofrontal Cortex Might Underlie Risk-Taking Behavior in Adolescents," *Journal of Neuroscience* 26/ 25 (2006): 6885-6892, doi: 10.1523/JNEUROSCI.1062-06.2006.

²⁶ Eric J. Nestler, "Transcriptional mechanisms of addiction: role of DeltaFosB," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 363/ 1507 (2008): 3245-3255, doi: 10.1098/rstb.2008.0067.

very easy for the teenager to become deeply addicted in a relatively short period of time. Why else would the heaviest users of internet pornography be children aged 12-17 years old?²⁷ Once addicted, it is extremely difficult to quit. Addicted teenagers often become enslaved for life.

Dr. Kleponis says that “If there is one message I can leave with parents, it’s the truth that no child or teen is immune to the dangers of pornography. Our high tech world puts everyone at risk. We need to understand how dangerous pornography is to youth and we must do everything we can to protect them.”²⁸ He says that “The reality is that pornography is a silent cancer. It comes into people’s lives without warning and slowly grows unnoticed until one day a person realizes it has totally consumed him. The addiction has taken over the teen’s life and leaves him feeling helpless and hopeless.”²⁹ I personally often hear eleven and twelve-years old children tell me something like “I know it’s bad, but I can’t stop.”

Part 3: The Natural Progression of this Addiction is Perversion and Violence

I said earlier that pornography is more addictive than heroin or cocaine, at least based on the number of people addicted. Indeed, pornography combines the addictive qualities of both heroin and cocaine. Pornography, like cocaine increases dopamine levels in the brain which causes a “high” and a subsequent craving for a repetition of the high. Pornography, like heroin, also releases opiates which have a relaxing effect when the user climaxes. Hence pornography is a type of polydrug that triggers both types of addictive brain chemicals in one punch, enhancing its addictive propensity as well as its power to instigate a pattern of increasing tolerance. Tolerance in pornography’s case requires not necessarily greater quantities of pornography but more novel pornographic content like more taboo sexual acts, child pornography, or sadomasochistic pornography.³⁰

Mark Kastleman in a book entitled *Drug of the New Millennium: Pornography* says that when the person watching pornography realizes that what he is watching is not right, but can’t stop anyway, the

conflict puts the nervous system under stress and brings on a “fight or flight” type response. The adrenal gland sends out cortisol, the “stress hormone,” which in turn activates myriad body-system processes to counteract stress. In essence, the entire pornography process is intensified and supercharged, far beyond what sexual arousal alone would accomplish.³¹

The conflicting stimuli, the forbidden pleasure, so to say, creates such an overwhelmingly intense sexual experience that “many neuropsychologists and therapists refer to pornography as “visual crack cocaine.” Many begin “dabbling” in pornography with no

²⁷ Kastleman, Mark B., *Drug of the New Millennium: Pornography 500mg* (Kindle Locations 1585-1590). Packard Technologies. Kindle Edition.

²⁸ Kleponis, Peter (2014-08-26). *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography* (Kindle Locations 2136-2138). Emmaus Road Publishing. Kindle Edition.

²⁹ Kleponis, Peter (2014-08-26). *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography* (Kindle Locations 4506-4507). Emmaus Road Publishing. Kindle Edition.

³⁰ Morgan Bennett, Public Discourse, The New Narcotic, http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2013/10/10846/?utm_source=RTA+Bennet+Part+One&utm_campaign=winstorg&utm_medium=em ail

³¹ Kastleman, Mark B. *Drug of the New Millennium: Pornography 500mg* (Kindle Locations 640-645). Packard Technologies. Kindle Edition.

clue of its enormous power, only to come to this realization after they are hopelessly addicted.³² Kastleman explains that

As the porn user becomes desensitized, he needs more extreme images for the brain to release the same level of endorphins and other neuro-chemicals . . . It's the conflicting messages in pornography that causes the brain and other parts of the body to release the highest quantity and variety of neuro-chemicals. This is why pornographers mix nudity and sex with aggression, submission, violence, incest, molestation, rape, etc.³³

In a 2010 content analysis of the best-selling and the most-rented porn films, researchers found that 88 percent of analyzed scenes contained physical aggression: generally spanking, gagging, choking or slapping.³⁴ Indeed, dopamine surges sharply for novelty,³⁵ surprise and shock,³⁶ and anxiety.³⁷ It may seem ironic that seeking out new kinds of shocking and perverted pornography that are inconsistent with your moral values or sexuality causes an explosive release of dopamine, but that is what happens at the physical level. Moreover, when someone watches pornography, the brain reacts in such a way as if you were the person engaged in the sexual act. Viewing a pornographic movie creates a neurological experience whereby a person vicariously participates in what he is watching.³⁸ Much as Pavlov's dog learned to salivate to the bell, today's porn users are being conditioned to become excited to different kinds of shocking sexual perversions. The brain's reward system cannot distinguish between good and evil. Its axiom is simply that dopamine is good.³⁹ Unconscious sexual conditioning can be summed up as, "This is what turns me on" or, at the brain level, "This is what increases the release of dopamine."

With this background information, we can see why the natural progression of this disease is toward perversion and violence. In fact, a recent meta-analysis of 22 studies between 1978 and 2014 from seven different countries concluded that pornography consumption is associated with an increased likelihood of committing acts of verbal or physical sexual aggression, regardless of age.⁴⁰ Indeed, pornography addiction is a major driver of the demand for prostitution that leads to the abduction of children and women for sexual slavery.⁴¹ Laura Lederer, former Senior Advisor for the U.S. State Department on Trafficking in Persons says that "Pornography is a brilliant social marketing campaign for

³² Kastleman, Mark B. *Drug of the New Millennium: Pornography 500mg* (Kindle Locations 647-651). Packard Technologies. Kindle Edition.

³³ Kastleman, Mark B.. *Drug of the New Millennium: Pornography 500mg* (Kindle Locations 258-265). Packard Technologies. Kindle Edition.

³⁴ Bridges A., Wosnitzer R., Scharrer E., Sun C., Liberman R. (2010). *Aggression and sexual behavior in best-selling pornography videos: A content analysis update*. *Violence Against Women*, 16, 1065–1085. doi:10.1177/1077801210382866

³⁵ Cell Press, "Pure Novelty Spurs The Brain." *ScienceDaily*, 27 August 2006, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/08/060826180547.htm.

³⁶ Max Miller, "Big Think Interview With Adam Kepecs," *BigThink.com*, August 20, 2010, <http://bigthink.com/videos/big-think-interview-with-adam-kepecs>.

³⁷ David H. Barlow, David K. Sakheim, J. Gayle Beck, "Anxiety increases sexual arousal," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 92/1 (1983): 49-54.

³⁸ William M. Struthers. *Wired for Intimacy: How Pornography Hijacks the Male Brain* (Kindle Locations 907-908). Kindle Edition.

³⁹ Wilson, Gary (2014-08-25). *Your Brain on Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction* (Kindle Locations 1174-1183). Commonwealth Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁴⁰ Wright, P. J., Tokunaga, R. S. and Kraus, A. (2016), A Meta-Analysis of Pornography Consumption and Actual Acts of Sexual Aggression in General Population Studies. *J Commun*, 66: 183–205. doi:10.1111/jcom.12201

⁴¹ Mayling Simpson and Paul Hebert, *STEAMBOAT TODAY*: "Pornography: A public health crisis," <http://endsexualexploitation.org/articles/steamboat-today-pornography-a-public-health-crisis/>

commercial sexual exploitation.”⁴² As we heard, it literally conditions the brain to see violent sexual acts as good, at least, insofar as physical pleasure is concerned.

Indeed, almost all of the most horrendous serial killers in recent years were influenced by an addiction to pornography. The list includes, Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, Arthur Gary Bishop, John Wayne Gacy, David Berkowitz, and many other of the notorious Mass Murderers.⁴³ The day before Ted Bundy was executed in Florida’s electric chair, religious broadcaster James Dobson interviewed him and Bundy made it clear that his addiction to pornography was the fundamental reason he murdered over 30 women. He said “I’ve lived in prison for a long time now, and I’ve met a lot of men who were motivated to violence just like me. And without exception, every one of them was deeply involved in pornography.”⁴⁴

Everybody knows about the horrifying crimes of ISIS. According to Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn, the former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency in his book entitled *The Field of Fight*, “80 percent of the material on the laptops [of ISIS members] . . . was pornography.”⁴⁵ He quoted a teenager who escaped from ISIS as saying “[W]e were facing a despicable foe, one who would rape and pillage women and children, boys and girls, behead for fun, all while watching pornography on their laptops.” Make no mistake about it: there is a direct correlation between the watching of pornography and the increase of perversion, violence and Godlessness in the world. World Famous Exorcist Father Gabriele Amorth said that “ISIS is Satan,”⁴⁶ which makes perfect sense since members of ISIS are frequently killing Christians.

Everybody knows about the horrifying crimes perpetuated by the Nazis at Auschwitz. Fr. John Hardon said that one of his Jesuit brothers

was one of the few survivors of four and a half years at Auschwitz. [and he said that] . . . without exception the Nazi troopers, both men and women, who extorted the most horrendous suffering from their prison victims, were sexual perverts. They derived what may be called diabolical pleasure from subjecting the prisoners to the most inhuman sufferings.⁴⁷

I ask “What is going to happen to us Christians when a large and larger portion of the world’s population becomes addicted to perverted and violent forms of pornography?”

Enough about the severity of the problem, what’s the solution? First, let me explain the mechanics behind the impulse to repeated sin. A 2014 University of Cambridge study used brain imaging to show that the porn-addicted brain reacts to porn cues the same way the drug-addicted brain reacts to drug cues which only makes sense since they are physically

⁴² Matt Fradd, *5 things you need to know and share about sex trafficking*, <https://www.lifesitenews.com/blogs/5-things-you-need-to-know-and-share-about-sex-trafficking>

⁴³ NatNanny, *What Serial Killers and Murderers think about Pornography*, <https://www.netnanny.com/blog/what-serial-killers-and-murderers-think-about-pornography/>

⁴⁴ Stephen Chapman, *Chicago Tribune*, January 26, 1989, “Killer Ted Bundy and other Hazards of Pornography,” http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1989-01-26/news/8902280471_1_pornography-meese-commission-ed-meese

⁴⁵ Meg Wagner, *New York Daily News*, July 14, 2016, “ISIS collecting stockpile of child, animal porn; some terrorists’ computers 80% full of X-rated material.”

⁴⁶ Edward Pentin, *National Catholic Register*, September 18, 2016, “World Famous Exorcist Father Gabriele Amorth Dies at 91,” <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/edward-pentin/world-famous-exorcist-father-gabriele-amorth-dies-at-91>

⁴⁷ Fr. John Hardon, *Christian Chastity and the Pro-Life Movement*, http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Chastity/Chastity_003.htm

and chemically altered in the same way.⁴⁸ The brain modifications of an addict trigger a blast of dopamine when the afflicted individual puts themselves in an occasion of sin: the alcoholic goes by bar, the person addicted to pornography is alone with internet access, etc. This, in turn, triggers a compulsion to watch porn or take the drug. With modern science, we have a deeper understanding of what St. Paul taught: I have a law in my body that wars against the law in my mind that causes me to do the very thing I do not want to do (Romans 7:15-25).

The bottom line is that all forms of addiction cause an overpowering impulse and this is precisely when and why people fall habitually into any vice.⁴⁹ To prove this they've done studies with alcoholics, ---I read this in a book entitled *The Power of Habit*--- all had been to rehab at least six months and could not quit; one had been to rehab over 60 times. They put a device in their brain that emitted an electrical charge which effectively blocked the impulse and afterward every one of them quit cold turkey.⁵⁰

Breaking free of the pornography addiction necessarily entails creating new neurological routines, different impulses, so to say. St. Thomas Aquinas says that we must have a virtue in our body as well as our soul.⁵¹⁵² Hence, to possess a virtue, the body must also be inclined to obey reason. To illustrate how that can be done with an impulse associated with pleasure, I like to give an example from everyday life that everybody can relate to. Did you even notice that people from different countries like different foods? People from Argentina like empanadas, people from Salvador like pupusas, people from Mexico like hot sauce, but everybody says the way their mother prepares food is the best. That's because everybody has little physiological addictions to the foods they've eaten all their lives. Did you ever notice at a restaurant that you get an impulse to order the same thing you always get there? Here's what I tell people, say you go a restaurant and get an impulse to get a bacon double cheeseburger, you fight it off and get the salad. If you keep getting the salad whether you feel like it or not, eventually your body will develop an impulse to eat the healthy salad instead of junk food. Then you will have a law in your body that is in accord with the law of your mind. In scientific language, you've "created new neurological routines"⁵³that overpowered the old habit.

Likewise, with the addiction to pornography, you will need to create new neurological routines so that your body does not incline you to sin. You will not be healed of the addiction to pornography until you stop getting overpowering impulses to sin.

⁴⁸ Voon V, Mole TB, Banca P, Porter L, Morris L, Mitchell S, et al. (2014) *Neural Correlates of Sexual Cue Reactivity in Individuals with or without Compulsive Sexual Behaviours*. PLoS ONE 9(7): e102419. Doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0102419.

⁴⁹ Wilson, Gary (2014-08-25). *Your Brain on Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction* (Kindle Location 1176- 1180). Commonwealth Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁰ Duhigg, *The Power of Habit*, 72-73. For a particularly clear and scholarly presentation of this phenomena, see Heinze, Hans-Jochen, et al. "Counteracting Incentive Sensitization in Severe Alcohol Dependence Using Deep Brain Stimulation of the Nucleus Accumbens: Clinical and Basic Science Aspects," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* 3, no. 22 (2009).

⁵¹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II, q. 72, a. 2, ad 2.

⁵² More specifically, he says, "Although virtue is essentially a perfection, it does not follow that whatever is the matter of a virtue implies perfection. For man needs to be perfected by virtues in all his parts, and this not only as regards the acts of reason, of which counsel is one, but also as regards the passions of the sensitive appetite, which are still more imperfect." St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 51, a. 1, ad 2.

⁵³ Cf. Charles Duhigg, *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* (New York: Random House, 2012), 20-21.

The Role of Grace

I agree with Dr. Peter Kleponis when he says, “Addiction won’t magically go away with Confession and the Eucharist. The sacraments can give them the strength and grace necessary to successfully work through their recovery program.”⁵⁴ The reason why this is true is because when someone goes to confession and receives Holy Communion, the grace they receive does nothing to the physiological impulses. Grace is a participation in the divine nature⁵⁵ and as such it is against the very being of grace to have a direct effect on the body. I note two reasons why grace by its very nature cannot directly change corporeal dispositions. First, grace is a participation in the life of God and God has only two immaterial operations: that of the intellect and the will. Hence it follows that grace can only directly affect the individual’s intellect and will. Secondly, the subject of grace is the immaterial human soul, not the soul and the body like the sensitive faculties. This would be impossible if grace directly influenced the material faculties.⁵⁶ Moreover, St. Thomas Aquinas never says that grace directly affects the inclination of the sensitive appetite.⁵⁷ In fact, Aquinas teaches that this type of modification is only possible through the repetition of virtuous acts.⁵⁸

It would be a miracle, strictly speaking, if God were to change corporeal dispositions. This is because a miracle is when God intervenes in the physical world, i.e., He does something that is outside the laws of nature. For God to change the physiological responses of a person instantaneously would be to change something in the course of nature in an unnatural way which is what a miracle is. The *Catholic Encyclopedia* defines this as a miracle “*quoad modum*” which is when “there may be forces in nature fitted and capable of producing the effect considered in itself, yet the effect is produced in a manner wholly different from the manner in which it should naturally be performed, i.e., instantaneously, by a word, e.g., the cure of the leper (Luke 5).”⁵⁹ Hence it would be a miracle if God instantaneously changed physiological impulses.⁶⁰

So when someone is addicted to pornography, they will still get powerful impulses to watch pornography in the beginning stages of recovery. Moreover, continued use of pornography literally erodes the prefrontal region of the brain, responsible for willpower.⁶¹ Grace will simply give them a supernatural strength to fight off the impulse and perhaps the light to

⁵⁴ Kleponis, Peter (2014-08-26). *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography* (Kindle Locations 3421-3422). Emmaus Road Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁵⁵ Aquinas, *ST*, III, q. 2, a. 10, ad 1: “*Gratia quae est accidens, est quaedam similitudo divinitatis participata in homine*” (Leon. 11.48).

⁵⁶ Aquinas, *ST*, I-II, q. 110 a. 4, c: “*Sicut enim per potentiam intellectivam homo participat cognitionem divinam per virtutem fidei; et secundum potentiam voluntatis amorem divinum, per virtutem caritatis; ita etiam per naturam animae participat, secundum quandam similitudinem, naturam divinam, per quandam regenerationem sive recreationem*” (Leon. 7.315). In this text, only the immaterial faculties and the soul are affected by the infused virtues.

⁵⁷ As noted above, Aquinas says that with the infusion of the divine virtues the sensitive appetite obeys reasons even if it has a contrary disposition.

⁵⁸ See Aquinas, *ST*, I-II, q. 65, a. 3, ad 2: “*Et similiter habitus moraiium virtutum infusarum patiuntur interdum difficultatem in operando, propter aliquas dispositiones contrarias ex praecedentibus actibus relictas. Quae quidem difficultas non ita accidit in virtutibus moralibus acquisitis: quia per exercitium actuum, quo acquiruntur, tolluntur etiam contrariae dispositiones*” (Leon. 6.425).

⁵⁹ Driscoll, “Miracle,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*.

⁶⁰ Recall that earlier Mirkes had posited a certain ontological separation between the infused and acquired virtues (See the section entitled “The Ontological Status of the Infused and Acquired Virtues”) Perhaps this is what she had in mind.

⁶¹ Mayling Simpson and Paul Hebert, *STEAMBOAT TODAY*: “Pornography: A public health crisis,” <http://endsexualexploitation.org/articles/steamboat-today-pornography-a-public-health-crisis/>

avoid the occasion of sin. We all experientially know this is true. If the alcoholic goes to confession, he will still have to battle the next day.

The Indispensable Role of Confession and Daily Mass

The most effective healing for any addiction includes daily Mass and frequent confession. They both have an indispensable role. First, the fervent reception of Holy Communion is the single most effective means known to God or man to get the strength to fight off the impulse to view pornography. The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* says that [The Eucharist] “restrains and represses the lusts of the flesh . . . it of necessity extinguishes the ardor of concupiscence.”⁶² The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says that Holy Communion replenishes the grace lost through sin, and thus “preserves us from future mortal sins.”⁶³

Bishop Robert Finn in his Pastoral Letter about the dangers of pornography says, “Participating in Mass more often and receiving communion, provided we have not alienated our self from God by serious sin, can be of inestimable help to us to stay in the light.”⁶⁴ Dr. Kleponis says that “receiving the Eucharist is exceptionally healing because it is God within us. . . It’s easy to see the Eucharist as a necessary part of the healing process when we understand how powerful it is. Many men and women who I’ve worked with have shared its efficacious effects upon their lives. It gives men the strength to persevere in recovery.”⁶⁵ Kleponis then gave the example of someone who was healed from pornography addiction in part from daily Mass, frequent confession and Eucharistic Adoration.

God the Father told St. Catherine of Sienna that after one receives Holy Communion, He leaves grace in the soul whereby “you participate in . . . [God’s] strength and power, which strengthen the soul against her sensual self-love, against the Devil, and against the world.”⁶⁶ In other words, you participate in the infinite power of God. St. Peter Julian Eymard says that

In the midst of adversity . . . the faithful soldier of Jesus overcomes temptation and the assaults of men and of Hell through Holy Communion. In vain will you seek this superhuman strength outside the Eucharist. But if the Eucharist gives that strength, then Jesus, the Savior, the God of strength, is really there. Such is the interior evidence that Jesus Christ gives of His presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament.⁶⁷

When he says the superhuman strength received “is the interior evidence that Jesus Christ gives of His presence in the Most Blessed Sacrament” I count this as one of the greatest graces one can receive in this life: to personally experience the power of the Eucharist in

⁶² Catechism of the Council of Trent, p. 244. St. Thomas teaches us that the Eucharist remits our venial sins, a part of the punishment due to sin, and preserves us from future sins (*Summa Theologica*, III, Q. 79, Art. 4-6).

⁶³ *Catechism*, #1395.

⁶⁴ Robert W. Finn, *A Pastoral Letter on the Dignity of the Human Person and the Dangers of Pornography*, Ash Wednesday , February 21, 2007.

⁶⁵ Kleponis, Peter (2014-08-26). *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography* (Kindle Locations 2891-2899). Emmaus Road Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁶⁶ Catherine of Siena, Saint (2010-06-20). *The Dialogue of Saint Catherine of Siena* (Kindle Locations 2700-2705). . Kindle Edition.

⁶⁷ Eymard, St Peter Julian (2013-01-15). *The Real Presence* (Kindle Locations 867-872). Veritatis Splendor Publications. Kindle Edition.

overcoming a seemingly impossible addiction. And I am very consistently hearing that when the addict makes it to daily Mass and asks Jesus for strength against this temptation they don't fall on that day, but when they start missing Mass, they do fall. Concrete personal evidence that Jesus Christ gave them the superhuman strength to avoid committing a sin that in the past seemed impossible to resist. Hence, when Eymard says, "In vain will you seek this superhuman strength outside the Eucharist" that must be taken literally. There is no other way you can get that kind of strength, the will is strengthened by God, the source of infinite power. Fr. John Hardon is very clear:

The verdict of human history is certain. Either a person receives Holy Communion frequently and regularly or human nature is no match for the passions that plague every human being. This is especially true of the two most demanding passions of pride and lust. This year, I'll keep repeating, my 50th year in the priesthood has taught me a lot. I've told people often: "In the name of God, go to communion often, even daily, otherwise, forget it! You will never overcome either your pride or your lust and the two go together." All of this is, I repeat, the verdict of human history, and the experience I would add of every Catholic priest who has come to know human souls.⁶⁸

I totally agree with his assessment. I hear people struggling for many years without any success and then they go to daily Mass and immediately they start winning the war.

The other key is that, if you fall, you have to get confession immediately. I am constantly reminding people that they need to get to confession when they sin gravely. People just don't realize how dangerous it is to try to battle Satan with our unaided fallen human nature. No matter how deeply addicted you are, when you have God in your soul, you have the advantage. But once you no longer have God in your soul you're in trouble. So some people will fall on Wednesday and then say something like "On Monday I am going to confession and then I will never commit this sin again." Between Wednesday and Monday, they fall several times. They've actually lost ground because the physiological aspect of the addiction, which is the heart of the soul of the addiction, has deepened. I believe this is the number one reason why many Catholic men and women have been enslaved to sin for many years. They never give the brain a chance to heal.

Confession serves a three-fold role in the healing process of an addict. First, it enables the afflicted person to receive Holy Communion in a state of grace so that they can get the supernatural strength they so desperately need to fight off the evil impulses. Secondly, it keeps one from falling deeper into sin and the throes of addiction. Remember the natural progression of this addiction is perversion and violence. When I hear people have sunk into diabolical perversions and/or are very depressed and despondent, it is always because they fell and didn't get to confession for several weeks and Satan just dragged them through the mud. Hence the third effect is that it keeps the addict from falling into despair. When people are struggling with an addiction, despair is always a possibility. According to Dr. Patrick Carnes, "Seventeen percent of sex addicts have attempted suicide; 72% have thought about it."⁶⁹ After a good confession, everybody feels better and more at peace. Accordingly, St. Augustine said, "It is thanks to the medicine of Confession that the experience of sin does not degenerate into despair."⁷⁰ Despair is one of Satan's biggest

⁶⁸ Fr. John Hardon, "The Holy Eucharist as Communion and Sacrament," paragraph 12, http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Eucharist/Eucharist_047.htm.

⁶⁹ Patrick Carnes, Ph.D, *Out of the Shadows: Understanding Sexual Addiction* (Center City: Hazelden, 2001), 30.

⁷⁰ St. Augustine, *Sermon 82*, 8: PL 38, 511.

weapons in this war. So much so that Bishop Robert Finn in his Pastoral *Letter On the Dignity of the Human Person and the Dangers of Pornography* says “If you remember just one sentence from this letter let it be this: Never despair of God’s mercy.”⁷¹ Jesus told St. Faustina to

Tell souls where they are to look for solace; that is, in the Tribunal of Mercy. There the greatest miracles take place [and] are incessantly repeated . . . It suffices to come with faith to the feet of My representative and reveal to him one’s misery, and the miracle of Divine Mercy will be fully demonstrated. Were a soul like a decaying corpse so that from a human standpoint, there would be no [hope of] restoration and everything would already be lost, it is not so with God. The miracle of Divine Mercy restores that soul in full.⁷²

The Catechism lists these effects. It says that

The whole power of the sacrament of Penance consists in restoring us to God’s grace and joining us with him in an intimate friendship. For those who receive the sacrament of Penance with contrite heart and religious disposition, reconciliation is usually followed by peace and serenity of conscience with strong spiritual consolation . . . [it gives] an increase of spiritual strength for the Christian battle.⁷³

Other Important Natural and Supernatural Aides in the War Against Addiction

I also recommend the daily recitation of the rosary. Sister Lucia, the last surviving visionary from Fatima, told a priest the following in a 1957 interview:

Look, Father, the Most Holy Virgin in these last times . . . has given a new efficacy to the recitation of the Holy Rosary. She has given this efficacy to such an extent that there is no problem, no matter how difficult it is, whether temporal or above all, spiritual . . . that cannot be solved by the Rosary. There is no problem I tell you, no matter how difficult it is, that we cannot resolve by the prayer of the Holy Rosary.⁷⁴

Pius XI said that “the Rosary is a powerful weapon to put the demons to flight and to keep oneself from sin...If you desire peace in your hearts . . . let not even one-day pass without saying it, no matter how burdened you may be with many cares and labors.”⁷⁵ Sometimes I hear that if the addict can’t possibly make it to Mass and they say their rosary they won’t fall, but if they miss Mass and their rosary, they’re gone.

Finally, one must avoid the occasion of sin. I tell people they have to get a filter on their computer (K9 is free, Covenant Eyes is the best according to Kleponis). Some people get rid of internet access altogether. The vast majority of addicts only get the impulse when they are alone with internet access so a key is not to be alone with internet access. Bishop Finn says that “If you knew that eating certain foods or taking certain drugs to which you are allergic would kill you, you would scrupulously avoid these things. If getting rid of the computer is the only way to assure your chastity – your sexual sobriety – such measures may be necessary for the life of your soul.”⁷⁶ I tell people that you have to help God out; you can’t be alone with immediate access to porn sites all the time (e.g., with your I-Phone

⁷¹ Robert W. Finn, *A Pastoral Letter on the Dignity of the Human Person and the Dangers of Pornography*, Ash Wednesday, February 21, 2007.

⁷² St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, *Diary*, #1448 (Stockbridge: Marian Press, 2007), 511-512.

⁷³ Catechism, #1468, 1496.

⁷⁴ Sr. Lucia, *Fr. Fuentes Interview*, 161, <http://www.srlucia.com/BookPdf/ch33.pdf>

⁷⁵ Pope Pius XI, <http://ourlady.tumblr.com/post/51396981806/the-rosary-is-a-powerful-weapon-to-put-the-demons>

⁷⁶ Robert W. Finn, *A Pastoral Letter on the Dignity of the Human Person and the Dangers of Pornography*, Ash Wednesday, February 21, 2007.

24/7) and expect God to always bail you out. Normally, if you repeatedly put yourself in an occasion of sin, you will fall. It isn't fair to expect God to give you the supernatural strength every day to fight off an impulse that is as strong as a heroin or cocaine addict gets when you could avoid it.

It is very helpful to also get an accountability partner. Douglas Weiss, himself a recovered sex addict and nationally-known lecturer on sexual addiction, has stated, "I have not experienced, nor have I ever met anyone who has experienced sexual addiction recovery alone."⁷⁷ Kleponis says that "I have found the best accountability partners are men who are also struggling with pornography addiction because they truly understand the struggle and what it takes to remain clean."⁷⁸ Douglas Weiss isn't Catholic so he, like Dr. Mark Laaser, can't understand the power of the sacraments of the Catholic Church. I do think an accountability partner is a good thing, but I have seen people get over this addiction by only taking the steps I've outlined above.

Finally, many sex addicts, if not most, are suffering from deep emotional wounds that should be handled by a licensed therapist. I find people, even after the addiction is over, will still fall into the sin occasionally, not because they were overpowered, but to temporarily forget about their wound. Dr. Kleponis says that

For these men it's more than just "harmless adult entertainment," and often they don't know the wound is there. All they know is that viewing pornography makes them feel really good, and since the effects are temporary, they need to go back to it incessantly. Thus, they become emotionally dependent on pornography to keep their pain at bay.⁷⁹

There are also nasty withdrawal symptoms that can cause one to tumble. Dr. Kleponis says As with any addiction, recovery begins with detoxing the brain . . . Because the brain has become dependent on operating at an abnormally high level of chemical stimulation and needs regular doses of pornography to maintain that level of dopamine, withdrawal symptoms occur when the dopamine level drops: depression, anxiety, anger, irritability, insomnia, headaches, and/or the uncontrollable urge to use pornography and masturbate. This is when a man can be triggered to use pornography.⁸⁰

Anyone who can make it a month without falling is no longer physiologically addicted and then if they get to confession immediately after any fall, they will never become addicted again. Nevertheless, the impulses will still fire and perhaps very strongly at times. Gary Wilson, author of *Your Brain on Porn*, says it could take many months or even up to a couple years for the brain to heal itself. This healing of the brain is sometimes called rebooting and it entails restoring your brain close to its pre-addiction condition.⁸¹ So if you do a PET scan on a recovered porn addict, the brain won't look like that of an addict anymore.

⁷⁷ Stephen Wood, *Breaking Free: 12 Steps to Sexual Purity for Men*, (Greenville: Family Life Center Publications, 2010), 18.

⁷⁸ Kleponis, Peter (2014-08-26). *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography* (Kindle Locations 3220-3221). Emmaus Road Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁷⁹ Kleponis, Peter. *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography* (Kindle Locations 691-694). Emmaus Road Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁸⁰ Kleponis, Peter (2014-08-26). *Integrity Restored: Helping Catholic Families Win the Battle Against Pornography* (Kindle Locations 3096-3100). Emmaus Road Publishing. Kindle Edition.

⁸¹ Wilson, Gary (2014-08-25). *Your Brain on Porn: Internet Pornography and the Emerging Science of Addiction* (Kindle Locations 1717-1722). Commonwealth Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Nevertheless, the former porn addict is like many alcoholics or drug addicts: they can never view pornography again without risking a relapse. Hence, when someone begins living a chaste lifestyle, the inclination to sin will die down, but one can never totally eradicate the effects of past sins. This is in accord with the findings of modern science. Charles Duhigg, the author of a book entitled *The Power of Habit* says that

Habits never really disappear. They're encoded in the structure of our brain, and that's a huge advantage for us, because it would be awful if we had to relearn how to drive after every vacation. The problem is that your brain can't tell the difference between bad and good habits, and so if you have a bad one, it's always lurking there, waiting for the right cues and rewards.⁸²

This fits in with Aquinas' teaching which posits that sensible impressions are retained in the imagination and sense memory.⁸³ In fact, this storehouse of memories left from previous sins is what demons can manipulate to tempt human beings.⁸⁴ I often hear recovering addicts say that they are being bombarded with images from the past, images that spontaneously come up and this is a great cause of distress for them. The sins of your past life do come back to haunt you.

The Healing Role of Jesus Christ is Empowered by our Faith

For those who are struggling with any kind of addiction: alcohol, drugs, eating disorders, internet pornography or other sins, frequent confession and receiving Holy Communion in a state of grace every day is the most efficacious cure I know of. Nevertheless, the reception of Holy Communion does not function like a pill, i.e., I take it and it does its work. It depends on the fervor of our reception. Jesus told St. Faustina that

I desire to unite Myself to human souls, Know, My daughter, that when I come to a human heart in Holy Communion, My hands are full of all kinds of graces which I want to give to the soul. But souls do not even pay any attention to Me; they leave Me to Myself and busy themselves with other things . . . They treat Me as a dead object.⁸⁵ . . . You see, although there appears to be no trace of life in Me, in reality it is present in its fullness in each and every Host. But for Me to be able to act upon a soul, the soul must have faith. O how pleasing to Me is living faith!⁸⁶

That is why those struggling with addictions must make a fervent communion. Hence, after receiving Our Eucharistic Lord, these people should thank Our Lord for the greatest gift in the world, the life of God in their soul. Then they should humbly ask Jesus Christ for the strength not to fall that day. In my experience this is the single most effective way to overcome any addiction. You are putting your faith in Jesus Christ when he is inside you with the intent to sanctify you to give you the grace not to fall into sin and He alone has the infinite power to do just that.

⁸² Duhigg, *The Power of Habit*, 20.

⁸³ Aquinas, *ST*, I, q.78, a.4, c.: "Sic ergo ad receptionem formarum sensibilium ordinatur sensus proprius et communis: de quorum distinctione post dicitur. – Ad harum autem formarum retentionem aut conservationem ordinatur phantasia, sive imago, quae idem sunt: est enim phantasia, sive imago quasi thesaurus quidam formarum per sensum acceptarum – Ad apprehendendum autem intentiones quae per sensum non accipiuntur, ordinatur vis aestimativa. – Ad conservandum autem eas, vis memorativa, quae est thesaurus quidam huiusmodi intentionem. Cuius signum est quod principium memoranda fit in animalibus ex aliqua huiusmodi intentione, puta quod est nocivum vel conveniens" (Leon 5.256).

⁸⁴ Aquinas, *Quaestio Disputatas de Veritate*, q. 16, a. 11, ad 1: "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod demones non possunt novam formam imprimere in organa corporea sensuum; possunt tamen formas in organis sensibilibus conservatas aliquo modo transmutare, ut secundum eas alique apparitions fiant" (Leon. 23.330).

⁸⁵ St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, *Diary*, #1385 (Stockbridge: Marian Press, 2007), 494.

⁸⁶ St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, *Diary*, #1420 (Stockbridge: Marian Press, 2007), 504.

Even St. Faustina seemed almost desperately dependent on Holy Communion to sustain her spiritual life. She says:

O my Jesus . . . You are my strength; sustain me that I may always carry out what You ask of me. Of myself I can do nothing, but when You sustain me, all difficulties are nothing for me. . . Holy Communion assures me that I will win the victory; and so it is.

I fear the day when I do not receive Holy Communion. This bread of the Strong gives me all the strength I need to carry on my mission and the courage to do whatever the Lord asks of me. The courage and strength that are in me are not of me, but of Him who lives in me - it is the Eucharist.⁸⁷

Matt Fradd wrote a book entitled *Delivered* which consists in the personal testimonies of men and women who have been freed from this painful addiction. The method used by Mark Houck is perfectly in accord with what I recommend and I'll close this conference with his testimony. After admitting to having a "full-blown addiction to pornography," he talks about his healing. He says:

One of my key decisions was to make the time that I fell from grace to the time I received the Lord's forgiveness as short as possible. Later, one brother in the Lord confirmed to me how necessary this step was for him in growing in the virtue of chastity. He said that he strived to make the time between when he fell and sacramental confession as close to zero as possible. In a couple of years, this practice would prove to be essential as the grip of pornography and all its attachments started to loosen its hold on me.

I [also] made a conscious decision to become a daily communicant. These words from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* were fresh in my mind: Holy Communion separates us from sin . . . For this reason the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins (CCC 1393). I knew in my heart that the Eucharist was the only sure way I could become that sincere gift that I longed to be for my future bride. I knew that I needed to stay close to the sacraments of confession and the Eucharist if I was going to have any chance of maintaining my freedom from the sin of masturbation and any future sins against the virtue of chastity.

[Later, he says] By the grace of God, it has been seven years since I masturbated. I have been married, as of this writing, just over five years (April 25, 2008). I continue to attend daily Mass as often as I can. I admit it is tougher these days to make daily Mass with our young children's erratic sleep routines.

I know beyond any doubt that the graces I receive from daily Mass and frequent confession are the primary reason for my freedom from sexual sin. I believe in my heart that the virtue of chastity can be obtained, and maintained, solely through the grace of God.

[He ends his story with] I believe that true freedom from any habitual sin is possible for anyone, provided he continually avails himself of sanctifying grace through the sacraments of confession and the Eucharist. It is not a magic formula, but it is God's promise to us. Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (Matt. 7:7-8) Thanks be to God!⁸⁸

⁸⁷ St. Maria Faustina Kowalska, *Diary*, #91 (Stockbridge: Marian Press, 2007), 45.

⁸⁸ Matt Fradd (2013-11-18T08:00:00+00:00). *Delivered* (Kindle Locations 1722-1771). Catholic Answers Press. Kindle Edition.