

**Kenrick-Glennon Seminary
Saint Louis, MO**



Protocol for Chaste Internet Usage

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Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to the glory of God the Father, we seek each seminarian's configuration to the Heart of Jesus Christ, High Priest and Shepherd, so that he can shepherd wholeheartedly with Christ's pastoral charity. (Mission Statement, Kenrick-Glennon Seminary)

INTRODUCTION

The priesthood is both a gift to the Church and a gift to the man called to share in the one priesthood of Jesus Christ. Although no one is worthy of this call, Jesus Christ calls certain men to serve his people in this unique ministry. Seminary formation strives to foster affective maturity within a man so that he has the freedom to respond to the Lord's call and reject the inner lies that can bind the human heart. Growth in the four dimensions of seminary formation helps a man to be more receptive to the indwelling presence of the Trinity which brings about authentic conversion and inner healing.

Matthew 5:8 is sometimes translated, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God." Spiritual Directors and Formation Advisors desire to assist seminarians in experiencing this purity of heart. When a man's thoughts, feelings and desires are rooted in the Heart of Jesus Christ then he can "shepherd wholeheartedly with Christ's pastoral charity."¹

FORMATION GUIDELINES FOR CHASTE INTERNET USAGE

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)

This document addresses the use of the internet to view pornography and some of the issues related to this problem. The viewing of child pornography is gravely sinful; it is a crime both in ecclesiastical² and civil law³. Any knowledge or suspicion of this behavior by a seminarian will be referred to the proper law enforcement authorities immediately as required by law.

¹ Mission Statement of Kenrick-Glennon Seminary

² "In view of the Circular Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, dated May 3, 2011, which calls for 'mak[ing] allowance for the legislation of the country where the Conference is located,' Section III(g), we will apply the federal legal age for defining child pornography, which includes pornographic images of minors under the age of eighteen, for assessing a cleric's suitability for ministry and for complying with civil reporting statutes." Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, USCCB, (2011).

³ Missouri Revised Statutes Section 573.010.1

The Catechism of the Catholic Church defines pornography as follows:

Pornography consists of removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties. It offends against chastity because it perverts the conjugal act, the intimate giving of spouses to each other. It does grave injury to the dignity of its participants, since each one becomes an object of base pleasure and illicit profit for others. It immerses all who are involved in the illusion of a fantasy world. It is a grave offense....”⁴

The goal of this policy is two-fold: to help seminarians be men who are spiritually healthy and affectively mature, and to provide guidelines for Spiritual Directors and Formation Advisors which they can use to discern when a man, while open to conversion in chaste behavior, has passed a threshold toward addiction which necessitates stepping out of seminary formation to receive more intense professional care.

The *Program for Priestly Formation* §115 states that spiritual formation “stands at the heart of seminary life and is the center around which all other aspects are integrated.”⁵ The seminary provides many elements which can help a man grow in his spiritual life. Spiritual direction and the regular celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, the Mass and Eucharistic Adoration, Lectio Divina, and formation advising, all aid a man in his human formation and spiritual growth.

The intent of seminary formation is to bring a man to authentic freedom. *PPF* §76 outlines characteristics that describe men who are “apt instruments of Christ’s grace”⁶. The desire is to form men who reflect “that perfect man who is Christ come to full stature.” (Ephesians 4:13b)

Today’s seminarians come from a society that is saturated with inappropriate representations of sexuality. The vast majority of seminarians know the allurements of the internet and they openly discuss this with their Spiritual Directors and Formation Advisors. Bringing this issue into the light is the healthiest way to confront it. A student must be willing and able to bring this to the Lord’s mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and be open to conversion. This openness may include reporting behavior to the external forum, cooperating with monitoring software (Covenant Eyes, etc.), counseling and increased accountability and self-reporting.

⁴ CCC, 2354.

⁵ United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Program of Priestly Formation*, 5th ed., §115.

⁶ *Program of Priestly Formation*, §76.

To overcome internet temptation, the man needs the grace of God, and through this grace, he must have a desire for conversion. He needs to recognize the pattern of cues, routines, triggers, and reinforcements. He must be alert to the cues and then be willing to change the routine, or negative consequences will result. “Christians of every generation are called to live in conformity with the truth of Jesus Christ and to stand apart from those aspects of culture that are contrary to this truth.”⁷

There are signs that a man is willing to cooperate with formation. First, he should bring the problem of pornography viewing (past or present) to his Spiritual Director. Second, the spiritual director may counsel the seminarian to bring the issue to the external forum. Third, the man must be willing to take the steps necessary to avoid the temptation of internet pornography. He must be willing to cleanse his environment, work with an accountability partner, look for ways to substitute new behaviors for the old patterns, and self-regulate. The use of human formation resources may help identify underlying psychological patterns and motivations. The use of spiritual formation may provide inner healing and spiritual conversion.

Viewing internet pornography must be addressed by the Spiritual Director and the seminarian’s Formators. It is necessary to ascertain clear information about the impact of this behavior on the seminarian’s life, the frequency, content of viewing, attempts to modify usage, and the seminarian’s response. The document entitled **Usage Profile Questions** offers sample questions to assist Formators in the endeavor.

There are gradations of gravity in the issue of viewing pornography, as is the case with all forms of temptation. The first level is called “Periodic”, which means a man views pornography infrequently. With proper contrition and spiritual direction, he may overcome this fault. The second level is called “Habitual”. In the *Summa Theologiae*, Saint Thomas Aquinas described habit as “a disposition whereby that which is disposed is disposed well or ill.”⁸ One at the habitual level has a continued disposition toward improper behavior. Confronting “habits” requires more openness to God’s healing grace and a sincere desire for conversion. Again, Reconciliation, spiritual direction, healing prayer and an accountability partner are forms of actual grace. The third level is referred to as “Compulsive”. This level is characterized by increased cravings for usage and disregard for negative consequences. The seminarian at this stage may spend many hours viewing pornography. The compulsive level is a sign that the man

⁷ Paul Loverde, *Bought With A Price: Every Man's Duty to Protect Himself and His Family from a Pornographic Culture*. (Catholic Diocese of Arlington, 2014), 43.

⁸ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 49, art 1.

has reached a point where he needs psychological intervention and may need to leave seminary formation. The fourth level is “Addictive”. At this level the man is so involved in viewing internet pornography that he must step out of seminary formation to receive intensive psychological care which is beyond the resources the seminary is able to provide. The descriptions of these levels of behavior are found in the document entitled ***Levels of Unchaste Internet Usage***.

When usage problems become apparent, it is necessary for the formators and seminarians to work toward appropriate conversion. When habits persist, a seminarian should be advised to bring the behavior to the external forum for additional assistance.

If a seminarian’s level of involvement is compulsive, he must work with formators to significantly change his behavior by the end of Theology I in the formation program. Seminarians involved at the level of addiction cannot remain in seminary formation. In the development of affective maturity, the seminarian must bear mutual responsibility for chaste formation. Suggested interventions may be found in the document entitled ***Usage Interventions***.

The Mission Statement of Kenrick-Glennon Seminary states, “We seek each seminarian’s configuration to the Heart of Jesus Christ.” May this document give guidance to fulfill this mission.

Usage Profile Questions * (I-FACTS)

I — IMPACT ON LIFE

What are the consequences of this behavior? What is the impact on conduct, relationships, and responsibilities? (e.g. Have significant relationships suffered adversely because of this behavior? Does the seminarian confide in others in relationship? Is there a decline in self-care or responsibilities?)

F — FREQUENCY

How often does the seminarian engage in this activity? How long is the viewing time? Has the frequency or duration of viewing increased? (e.g. Is the seminarian aware of time and duration of usage?)

A — ATTEMPT TO MODIFY

What has been done to change behavior? What has been successful, what has failed? (e.g. What steps have been taken to change the behavior? Are the levels of risk and aversive consequences increasing?)

C — CONTENT

What is being viewed? What medium (computer, television, phone, tablet, etc.)? What types of sites, chat rooms, interactive sites, or buying, sending of material are present? (e.g. What is being viewed? Is there interactive activity like chat rooms or texting?) **Note:** The viewing of child pornography is a crime. Any knowledge or suspicion of this behavior must be referred immediately to proper law enforcement authorities.

T — TRIGGERS

What are the “cues” (emotions, circumstances, behavior) which trigger usage? What are the “reinforcements” of usage? (e.g. Can the seminarian identify reasons for viewing, such as reduction of stress, boredom, anger, or loneliness?)

S — STUDENT RESPONSE

How does the seminarian respond to usage? Does the seminarian utilize defense mechanisms such as minimization of problem, responsibility for conduct, level of truthfulness, desire for change, cooperation with formators? (e.g. Does the seminarian possess a desire to change; is he taking steps to do so in cooperation with formation?)

- * Note: Spiritual directors and formators must be willing to assist by assessing these areas through respectful questioning.

Levels of Unchaste Internet Usage *(see attached)

Note: Any possession, viewing, or suspicion of possession or viewing of child pornography must be reported immediately to the proper authorities.

PERIODIC — Infrequent use of unchaste internet site. Accompanied by remorse and desire to alter behavior. Although time between use can vary widely, there is a clear difficulty in curtailing or completely stopping this behavior.

HABITUAL — Periodic use of unchaste internet sites with increasing frequency. Accompanied by remorse and desire and attempts to change. There is typically a pattern of more purposeful and premeditated activity and an increased sense of failure and shame. There is often a clear connection between use and life problems or stressors.

COMPULSIVE — Frequent use of unchaste internet site in spite of recurrent and adverse consequences. Negative consequences may include repeated failure to fulfill major responsibilities, disruption of relationships, disruption of social obligations, and a compromising of moral, spiritual, and emotional beliefs. Viewing may be accompanied by increased cravings, use of defense mechanisms such as denial and rationalization, as well as failed attempts to quit and non-compliance with formation interventions. The patterns and rituals of use are becoming stronger and more resistant to change. The seminarian is aware that his patterns are becoming more habituated and dysfunctional but still remains unable to quit. At this level, the seminarian may not be suitable to remain in seminary formation. His need for psychological intervention is beyond what the seminary is able to provide.

ADDICTIVE — Intensified use of unchaste internet sites driven by more intense cravings. This includes a disregard for recurrent additional undesirable consequences. An increasing use of more sexually arousing material and amount of time spent on viewing this material is evident. At this level, vocational obligations are seriously compromised. The usage becomes more secretive and involves withdrawal from support systems. Repeated failure to refrain from addictive viewing is present. Increasing cybersex behavior that involves others may be present (i.e. sexting, sexual chat rooms, purchase of pornography, sending of pornography, meeting with others for sexual behavior). This level indicates involvement beyond the resources of the seminary. The defensive strategies at this level are extremely well developed, highly resistant to intervention and characterized by extreme denial and other complex defense mechanisms. At this level of involvement, the seminarian would be dismissed to avail himself of beneficial services.

** The Levels of Unchaste Internet Usage is a tool and protocol developed by Kenrick-Glennon Seminary as a criteria to determine increasing levels of internet pornography usage. Resources used in development include, but are not limited to:*

- Susanne Harvath, Ph.D. Clinical observations, experiences, and consultations.

Published Sources:

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