

# **Bishop Loverde's new pastoral focuses on 'evil of pornography'**

ARLINGTON, Va. (CNS) — The “evil of pornography” has spread like a plague throughout the culture thanks to mainstream entertainment and threatens the fabric of society far beyond the boundaries of church and school, said Arlington Bishop Paul S. Loverde in a new pastoral letter.

“This plague stalks the souls of men, women and children, ravages the bonds of marriage and victimizes the most innocent among us,” the bishop said. “It obscures and destroys people’s ability to see one another as unique and beautiful expressions of God’s creation, instead darkening their vision, causing them to view others as objects to be used and manipulated.

“Today, perhaps more so than at any time previously, man finds his gift of sight and therefore his vision of God distorted by the evil of pornography,” Bishop Loverde said.

“As part of my responsibility to lead all the people in the Diocese of Arlington to the vision of God, I find it necessary now to address the tremendous moral, social and spiritual dangers of pornography.”

Bishop Loverde’s newest pastoral letter is titled “Bought With a Price: Pornography and the Attack on the Living Temple of God.” The full text can be found online at [www.arlingtondiocese.org](http://www.arlingtondiocese.org).

The bishop, who belongs to an interfaith coalition called the Religious Alliance Against Pornography, said he became more aware of the growing plague of pornography from various sources:

- His brother priests routinely confront it in the confessional.
- Counselors treat it through Catholic social service agencies.
- Catholic school teachers, youth ministers and religious educators confront its effects in the lives of young people.
- Parents speak of the challenges of raising children to act and dress with modesty in today's culture.

In his letter, Bishop Loverde examines the nature of the current threat and addresses the arguments put forth by those who defend the pornography industry. He offers concrete counsel to all Christians, young people, couples and priests on how to guard against pornography and reflects "on the gift of sight and its fulfillment in divine contemplation."

"Our sight, more than just a physical ability, also serves as an important means for understanding faith, heaven and salvation. Indeed, its proper end and fulfillment is the vision of God himself. Man's final purpose is caught up with his ability to see," he said.

The bishop said that "no one person living in our culture can totally separate himself or herself from the scourge of pornography. All are affected to a greater or lesser extent, even those who do not directly participate in the use of pornography.

"In a culture that sees pornography as a mere private weakness or even as a legitimate pleasure to be protected by law, we must repeat here the Catholic Church's constant teaching," Bishop Loverde said. "In simple terms, the Catechism of the Catholic Church condemns pornography as a grave offense.

"The immorality of pornography comes, first of all, from the fact that it distorts the

truth about human sexuality,” he said.

Bishop Loverde reminded the faithful that the use of pornography is gravely evil and those who knowingly engage in such activity commit a mortal sin. “Such actions deprive them of sanctifying grace, destroy the life of Christ in their souls, and prevent them from receiving holy Communion until they have received absolution through the sacrament of penance,” he said.

“The most tragic and frightening victim of the scourge of pornography is the family,” Bishop Loverde said. “Although the ‘intimacy’ promised by this vice is illusory and the happiness sought in its practice is transitory and destructive, the damage to the human relationships so necessary for the flourishing of the family is even more shockingly real and, in many cases, permanent.”

The bishop said society stands at a threshold. “Either we can continue to allow this plague to spread with fewer and fewer checks, or we can take concrete steps to uproot it in our lives, our families, our neighborhoods and our culture.

“A free people can combat the tremendous moral, social and spiritual dangers of pornography with great courage,” he said. “My fervent prayer is that Catholics, other Christians and all people of good will understand this threat, confront it, facilitate true healing, and ever more fully live out our God-given use of human sight.”