



BLOGS

Catholics Should Lead on Banning Porn

Catholic colleges have a great responsibility in preparing students not only for this life, but also for God.

By Patrick Reilly – Posted 12/14/19 at 3:54 PM

Like many Catholics, I was encouraged by U.S. lawmakers' plea for better enforcement of obscenity laws against pornography. What I find troubling, however, is that few Catholic colleges are leading by example.

As even companies like Starbucks and Tumblr move to block pornography on their internet networks—a rather simple thing to do—it seems like common sense that Catholic colleges would also install porn filters to avoid streaming smut to their students. But at the University of Notre Dame, [students are the ones begging](#) for a filter, and still the administration is unwilling to take a simple step toward decency and respect.

By contrast, several of the faithful Catholic colleges recommended in The Newman Guide [block pornography on their Wi-Fi networks](#) and go out of their way to encourage chastity on campus.

One of the arguments against such filters is that blocking porn would violate “free speech.” Social media has been abuzz with vigorous debate over the limits of government authority. But that has no relevance to a private college's behavioral expectations, which are intended to form the character of young adults as much as they also protect the rights of those whose dignity and often safety are endangered by the sleazy porn industry.

College leaders also need to consider the health of their students. The severely damaging effects of pornography are well-documented by chastity advocates like [Matt Fradd](#), a graduate of Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell, Connecticut. His book *The Porn Myth* explains the psychological effects, addictive properties and devastating impact on relationships that pornography can cause.

A representative at the University of Notre Dame has argued that students should be “self-censors.” It is true that students have plenty of opportunities to access online porn outside of a college’s Wi-Fi network, and so they must learn responsibility. But a Catholic college sends an important message about the absolute impropriety of viewing porn by installing a filter—and a college that rejects filters and willingly provides access to porn sends a terrible message to students that it is not a serious concern.

Blocking porn sends a strong message about a Catholic college’s priorities and expectations for students. It says that the college condemns porn and encourages its students to stay far away from it. It tells students that the college cares enough for its students that it would never willingly sponsor a near occasion of sin, leading students into temptation.

Pornography is “not the sort of relationship” that students should be “looking for,” said President John Garvey, who [happily agreed](#) to restrict pornography access earlier this year at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. “We’re not going to lend our system to help them find it.”

If Catholic colleges are not willing to help protect students from something as damaging as porn, what concern do they show for the good of their students? What is the point of Catholic education at all, if there is no effort at formation and teaching students to live as God intended?

Catholic colleges market their bold mission statements and claims, but they need to walk the talk. They claim to offer education for the “mind and heart” and to prepare graduates to be “powerful forces for good in the world.” An easy start would be to block porn and work hard to create campus environments that promote virtue.

The souls of students must be the top concern for Catholic educators. Catholic colleges have a great responsibility in preparing students not only for this life, but also for God. I pray that college leaders muster the moral courage to stand against porn and lead the way for the rest of society.