

The PULLS *Pilgrimage*

*From Powerlessness &
Unmanageability
To Living and
Loving
Sacrificially
through Jesus Christ.*

by David Taylor

2 Corinthians 3:5

Section 5 re: the
Theology of the Body
by *Dr. Edward Sri*

Click here for [PULLS Meeting Agenda and Guide for the Trusted Servant](#)

Table of Contents

(click on content titles to hyperlink directly to the written materials)

DEDICATION	6
Foreword	7
Acknowledgments	8
<i>Section 1: The Nature of the Attack on Our Sexuality...</i>	9
How do we figure out what sexual thoughts and behaviors go beyond God's...	10
How did we get into this mess?	12
The elevator to hell	13
The 5 Perspectives of Recovery (MEPSS)	15
Let's start with Recovery:	16
Abstinence and the Three Circles	18
Chastity, Celibacy, and Continence	21
Temptation	25
The Three Traditional Sources of Temptation	26
The first traditional source of temptation: The World:	26
The second traditional source of temptation: The Flesh:	28
Our 3rd Source of Temptation: The Devil:	30
Speaking of the Devil	31
Satan and the human soul:	33
Memory, the 1st of the 4 faculties of the soul:	33
Imagination, the 2nd of the 4 faculties of the soul:	34
Intellect, the 3rd of 4 faculties of the soul:	35
Will, the 4th of the 4 faculties of the soul:	37
Steering Clear of Satan	38
How do we take on Satan?	39
The PULLS Response	40
<i>Section 2: PULLS Groups</i>	44
All About PULLS Group Meetings	44
Sponsorship...What is it all about?	52
What Every Group Needs to Successfully Run a Meeting	54
What should we do & not do in PULLS Group Meetings?	55
How We Actually Run Meetings	57
The PULLS Diagonal Illustration	63
What do we need to do ourselves, and what do we entrust to God?	68
Five keys to successful recovery	68

Struggles that our Wives or Girlfriends May Experience	72
How can we respond to those we hurt, such as wives or girlfriends...	74
What is the role of the supporting priest in PULLS?	75

Section 3: Expressions and Ideas Central to PULLS 76

Group 1	77
---------	----

Accountability
Acting-out
Act of Spiritual Amends
Addiction
Anger
Autopilot

Group 2	82
---------	----

Bargaining
BLAST
Bottoming out
Circle of Grace
Collateral damage
Compulsions

Group 3	85
---------	----

Custody of the eyes
7 Deadly Sins, Virtues of the Holy Spirit & Opposite Extremes of the Deadly Sins
Defenses
Delusion
Desire vs lust
Dishonesty and secrecy

Group 4	90
---------	----

Don't Dialogue with the devil
Duality
Edging
Enabling
Fidelity
Forgiveness

Group 5	96
---------	----

Guilt
Habit
HOW
Justice
KISS...or is it KIS?
Love

Group 6	99
---------	----

Mercy
Mind your own business!
Night Arousal

Objectification	
One day at a time	
Presumption	
Pride	
Group 7	106
Progress and perfection	
Projection	
Ramping	
Relapse	
Resentment	
RIDD	
Group 8	110
Sabotaging our own success	
Scrupulosity	
Secondary virginity	
Shame	
Sin	
Slip	
Group 9	114
Stepping through the looking glass	
Success	
Superstition	
Surrender	
Three Stepping	
Treasure Hunting	
Triggers	
White Knuckling	
<i>Section 4: The 7 Points of the Kerygma</i>	119
What if I don't learn, process information, or present my thoughts the same way...	119
The Suggested Procedure to Complete Your Points, Key Features & Steps	119
Restoration, healing, and Wholeness	120
The Three Legged Stool	121
Thoughts About the Kerygma: A Brief Summary of Each of the 7 Points	122
The Historical Kerygma	126
Point 1: "God loves you and has a plan for your life" Narrative:	127
Point 2: "Sin disrupts that plan & separates you from God." Narrative:	130
Point 3: "Christ Jesus died to save you." Narrative:	132
Point 4: "Repent and believe the Gospel." Narrative:	134
Point 5: "Be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit." Narrative:	137
Point 6: "Abide in Christ and His body, the Church." Narrative:	140
Point 7: "Go make disciples." Narrative:	143

<i>Section 5: Theology of the Body</i>	145
Theology of the Body and Recovery	145
Why the is a significant part of the PULLS program	146
About Dr. Edward Sri's "Five Key Features of the Theology of the Body"	147
Key Feature #1: The Law of the Gift: Narrative:	148
Key Feature #2: Original Solitude: Narrative:	149
Key Feature #3: Original Unity: Narrative:	150
Key Feature #4: Original Nakedness: Narrative:	152
Key Feature #5: Original Shame: Narrative:	154
Conclusion: Back to the Garden?: Narrative:	156
ABOUT DR. SRI	157
Other Video Programs with Edward Sri	157
Other Books by Edward Sri	157

<i>Section 6: The 12 Steps Revised for PULLS</i>	158
A Historical Look at A.A.'s 12 Steps	158
The 12 Steps Grouped & Adapted By PULLS	159
The Condensed 12 Steps	161
Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our sexual thoughts and behavior- that our lives had become unmanageable	
Narrative	162
The Three Circles Exercise	164
Step 2: Came to believe that God could restore us to His plan for our lives	
Narrative	168
Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God	
Narrative	172
Step 4: Made an honest, searching and fearless moral self-inventory	
Narrative	174
Step 5: Linked our shortcomings to our sins and brought to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, all sins not yet confessed	
Narrative	179
Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all of our flaws and weaknesses	
Narrative	182
Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcoming	
Narrative	183
Step 8: Make a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all	
Narrative	185

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others

Narrative 188

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it

Narrative 192

Step 11: Continued to pray for God's graces and discernment, to know and fulfill His will for us

Narrative 194

Step 12: Served as a disciple of God's healing message to those still suffering, and applied the 12 Steps to all areas of our lives

Narrative 197

Section 7: Appendix 200

PULLS Meeting Agenda and Guide for the Trusted Servant 201

Suggested PULLS Meeting Topic Rotation 203

Agenda for Closing the Meeting 204

The 7 Points of the Kerygma 205

The Key Features of the Theology of the Body 206

The 12 Steps 207

The Promises (Short Version) 208

The Promises (Long Version) 209

Serenity Prayer 211

St. Michael Prayer 212

When possible, answer questions from The 5 Perspectives:... MEPSS 213

Visit our PULLS Website 214

Bulletin Inserts 215

The 10 Traditions 218

The Litany of Humility 219

PULLS Examination of Conscience 220

SOCIAL MEDIA QUESTIONS BASED ON THE 10 COMMANDMENTS 228

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES 231

About the Author: 232

DEDICATION



***The PULLS Pilgrimage is Dedicated to Bishop Paul Sirba,
September 2, 1960-December 1, 2019.***

You honored us by generously *making* the time to discuss ways in which the
Catholic Diocese of Duluth could realistically incorporate **PULLS** resources
into churches throughout the Diocese and beyond.

Your on-point questions and helpful ideas
reflected your abundant compassion and eagerness
to assist those suffering the poverty of sexual sin.

Your gentleness, kindness, thoughtfulness and compassion
for the Children of God, who still suffer from addictive behaviors,
has touched and encouraged us.

We thank you, saint Paul.

Nihil Obstat: Rev. Anthony Craig, STL

Imprimatur: Very Rev. James B. Bissonette, STL, JCL
Vicar General, Diocese of Duluth

June 10, 2021

The granting of the Imprimatur is not to be understood as an endorsement of the opinions or viewpoints of the author, but rather is a declaration that the work in question is free from doctrinal error and may be published.

Foreword

One of my favorite things to watch is the mini-series, ‘Band of Brothers’. It is a mini-series that tells the story of ‘Easy’ Company, of the 101st Airborne Division during the Second World War. In ‘Band of Brothers’, we are given the privilege of following Easy Company from boot camp, through D-Day and the assault at Normandy beach, and all the way to the end of the war. In it you see the importance of fraternity in a time of war. You see the importance of having a band of brothers. Brothers who will encourage you. Brothers who will look out for you. Brothers who will stick up for you. Brothers who will challenge you to be better and won’t let you quit. Brothers who will be compassionate to you. Brothers who have your back. Brothers who will even die for you.

War between nations is a great analogy for life. Because there is an even more real war presently taking place in our midst. A war that has much higher stakes even than the Second World War. This is the war between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the evil one. This is a war for immortal souls. This war was definitively won by Christ through his Passion, Death, and Resurrection, but the fight still rages around us. Whether we personally are a part of the victory remains to be seen. We still must fight the battle. St. Paul tells us, “For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens”. (*Ephesians 6:12*).

The Kingdom of God is infinitely stronger than the Kingdom of the evil one, but the evil one and his devils are a very formidable foe. A foe that is much stronger and more intelligent than we are alone. But God comes to our aid with grace. Grace given through the Sacraments. He guides us with his teachings. He inspires us through the Scriptures. We have the witness and the example of all the saints along with their intercession for us. God even sends his angels to protect us. Because we cannot win this battle alone.

And God also gives us brothers. Just as no individual of Easy Company could have fought and survived on their own, not one of us can go it alone and come out victorious. In the fight against the flesh, the world, and the devil, we have our backs against the wall. But we are not alone. In the fight for freedom from lust, and in the fight for freedom for love, we need brothers.

As a priest, I have come across many men who struggle for chastity and freedom. I have sought to encourage and counsel and keep many men accountable. But doing this on a one on one basis takes a lot of time and energy for one priest. And even with that, there still is something lacking—a band of brothers, a group of brothers there for each other.

Dave Taylor observed that the status quo was insufficient. He saw that while secular addiction groups could be helpful, they were lacking the full strength of Catholic truth. And not only did he see the insufficiency, he had a vision of what was needed and most importantly, he had the courage and commitment to make that vision a reality. PULLS, is an answer to my many prayers as a priest. I have prayed for such a group. I have desired to gather good men together who can help each other reach the healing and freedom God desires for them. A group that rallied around the kerygma, truth of our sexuality, and the call to holiness. I am indeed grateful to Dave Taylor. I only pray that many men will have the courage and humility to start or join a PULLS group.

I guarantee you will not be disappointed.

You are not alone, there is a Band of Brothers for you!

Father Nicholas J. Nelson
Priest of the Diocese of Duluth

Acknowledgments

God loves His children, *wayward* as we may be. I wandered from the plan that He designed for me. He repurposed my shambles and created **hope**, not just for me, but **for any Catholic soul**, who is tired of wandering. Thus, this book. The inspiration and the narrative are God's. I typed it with two fingers and my deepest heartfelt gratitude, to God and those listed below. I refer to myself as the "author" as custom demands, but it is God Who leads **The PULLS Pilgrimage**.

The author would like to thank:

Desi Taylor. I am forever grateful for your merciful support that led to my **chastity**, on April 11, 2016: the worst and the best day of my life. **God** speaks to me through you because of our **Marriage Covenant**. You encouraged the formation and growth of PULLS, and you partnered with me to sketch out the essential blueprints of PULLS. You also provided the **Words of Wisdom** segments, some of the *terminology*, and a fair amount of *rephrasing* when my verbosity got out of hand. You're too modest to be listed as a **co-author**...but that's what you are. Love you, Desi!

My Children. Thank you for your loving acceptance through my human struggles; always being warmhearted and compassionate. You make my heart smile!

Fr. Mike Schmitz. You are the inspirational, go-for-it guy of God that I have needed for the many years that I have considered you a friend. When the Holy Spirit inspired the idea of having a *deeply Catholic answer to sexual waywardness* in the Church (PULLS), you were eager to talk about it. Your encouragement boosted my confidence and determination to forge ahead with PULLS. Thanks to you, our original meetings were at the Newman Center and then on the UMD campus. You motivate me to nurture and adhere to unwavering trust in Jesus...a depth of faith, hopefully expressed in these pages.

Fr. Anthony Craig. You worked tirelessly, reading, reviewing, and combing these pages to ensure that all *doctrine and theology* presented in this book is *sound*. Thank you, Fr. Anthony, for lending your gifts of discernment, wisdom, meticulous eye for detail, and for your kind recommendations leading to the acknowledgement accorded by the Nihil Obstat.

Fr. Nick Nelson. Fr. Nick, you took the *initiative* to contact me and discuss the PULLS program at length, opening the door for Catholic men to form the first PULLS group outside of the Twin Ports. Thank you for **proof-reading** the rough drafts of the PULLS Pilgrimage and clarifying and teaching me numerous finer points of our faith. Your heart has been aching for those who have shared their suffering and confessed their sexual sin to Jesus through you. The Holy Spirit, in His compassionate wisdom, brought us together.

The PULLS men of God. Thank you for developing many of the ideas shared in this book during PULLS *meetings, group media shares*, and individual *conversations*, when God's wisdom is so often expressed through you. One of the gutsiest, most courageous acts that a man can accomplish, is to make the *initial contact* that **betrays his addictive behavior**, and has the power **to change his life forever**... forever, as in the remainder of his earthly life, plus all of eternity. You placed God before addictive behaviors; sacrifice before self-gratification; unabashed honesty before invested delusion; humility before pride; grace before shame; respect, honor and love before use, misuse, and abuse, and the will to trade two dimensional sexuality for Theology of the Body. You raise the bar.

Sam Muer. Thank you for donating your input and **editing talents** to the first drafts of the **PULLS Pilgrimage**. You were part of the **original PULLS group** at our inception, and were the **first** man to **complete the 12 Steps** and to become a sponsor. Our PULLS men of God have the highest respect for you because you say what you mean and mean what you say. Small wonder you attract new men to the safe and healing fellowship of PULLS.

Section 1: The Nature of the Attack on Our Sexuality and the PULLS Response

The PULLS Pilgrimage:

A **pilgrimage** is a **journey** to a **sacred destination**. The traveler entrusts *every* experience, good or bad, to God's will. The **holy destination** that we seek in these pages is not a place, but a *holy condition* or state of the mind, body, heart and soul. We are truly pilgrims and our *objective*, at the end of our trek, is sexual chastity. We begin our travels in a condition of sexual powerlessness and unmanageability and, along the way, we embrace a personal but **shared mission to live and love sacrificially through Our Lord Jesus**.

We are clearly the resistance.

For reasons known to God, *our* hearts refused to accept sexual **sin** in *our* lives. We sensed it, we agonized over it, we confessed it, we despaired and pleaded with God for clarity, and then each of us took the initiative to join the PULLS journey with fellow men of God.

Sadly, it seems that anytime a group of men gather, there is a chance, however remote, that an outsider may get wind of "something secret going on" and jump to false conclusions. Unjust as it is, we are forced to maintain **confidentiality** to protect our individual reputations and the reputation of PULLS from careless and judgmental people.

Let's face it; there are people who may be threatened or angered by our vision. Although our men have many reasons to attend PULLS, we all regard sexual sin as unacceptable and we support God in that belief. That's not a popular view. Even our insistence that **sin exists** is an unpopular view! And we *confess* our past sins. In addition, we do not allow and are **not** impressed by crude, "dirty" jokes and sexually debasing remarks. That disapproval is unpopular, too. People just tend to follow the path of least resistance. It is easy to live an undisciplined, Godless existence and blindly follow whatever whims that the masses of our society promote as **the popular or only way to be, belong, believe, or behave**. How tragic that so many people cave in to temptations with such little resistance. Men like us, who want to fulfill God's job description of what a man is created to be, are becoming increasingly rare. We are fighting a spiritual war against a threatening and seemingly overwhelming opponent. Take a moment to think about these words: **We... are... the... resistance.**

PULLS is a **chastity initiative for men**. Fortunately, there are numerous programs available for our sisters in Christ, who share our desire to abandon the powerlessness and unmanageability of sexual sin. With our current resources, PULLS lacks the expertise, experience, and insight needed to adequately meet the complex needs of women. We invite the courageous women, who seek help, to carefully research the options available to you on the internet.

How do we figure out what sexual thoughts and behaviors go beyond God's boundaries?

So, there are a wide variety of **sexual behaviors** that push beyond the **boundaries within which God has commanded us to live**. We are fighting a private, **hidden** battle with our sexual "demons". Our **secretive** thoughts and behavior lead to **shame**. Carrying the weight of shame around in our hearts is a problem, kind of like carrying a very heavy backpack full of rocks, 24/7.

Christians caught in the **web of sexual sin** are in a serious, **spiritual crisis**. Among the *more common* of these sexual behaviors are viewing pornography, masturbation, sexual objectification, exploitation, and sex outside of marriage, but if **any** sexual conduct results in **disrupting a man's relationships with God, others, or self**, that demands urgent attention.

If we were to try to create a list of all the behaviors people have ever dreamed up, to respond to their sexual urges, no doubt the list would fill many books. And beside every entry on that list, let's say that we would delineate if that behavior was, or was not, within the **sexual boundaries established by God**.

But what are God's boundaries?

Here are a few **criteria** by which each behavior might pass or might fail:

1. First, is the behavior in question inherently **willing the good of the other** (*the definition of love*)? If not, it's a sin.
2. Is "the other" person (see #1) **sacramentally married** to you? If not, it's a sin.
3. Is this sexual interaction lovingly **open to** the possibility of **procreation** (*joining God in the act of procreation by creating a child*)? If not, it's a sin.
4. Is the behavior completely **devoid of selfishness**, and **fully unitive**? If not, it's a sin.

How about an example?

Some reliable statistics accentuate the prevalence of just one of the many expressions of sexual sin: **pornography**. The **Barna Group** and **Covenant Eyes** research groups found that:

- **68% of church going men** view pornography on a regular basis.
- **56% of American divorces** involve one party having an "obsessive interest" in pornographic websites.
- **33% of women** aged 25 and under search for porn at least once per month.
- Pornography use increases the marital **infidelity rate** by more than **300%**.
- **55% of married men** and **25% of married women** say they watch porn at least once a month.

[Mission Frontiers - 15 Mind-Blowing Statistics About Pornography And The Church](#) Nov.-Dec. 2020

Keeping these statistics in mind, let's put just 1 sinful behavior, **pornography**, to the test:

1. Viewing pornography does **not** involve "willing the good of the other".
2. The people viewed in pornography are **not sacramentally married** to the viewer.
3. Viewing pornography is **not** lovingly **open to** the possibility of **procreation** (*joining God in the act of procreation by creating a child*).
4. Viewing pornography is **neither selfless nor fully unitive**.

Viewing **pornography fails on all 4 measures**. Take a moment to put other sexually acting-out behaviors to the test.

The **Theology of the Body**, the second "leg" of the PULLS program, reveals God's beautiful plan for the sexuality of all His beloved children. As one might expect, the TOB reveals **the joyous, blessed, fulfilling and satisfying expressions of our sexuality**. Praise God!

Intimacy

In our society, even the word, **intimacy**, has been **broken**. If asked to describe the word, "intimate", many people would think of "being intimate" and "intimate apparel", both of which have taken

on “sexual” overtones. Godly intimacy **is not** about the intensity, unbridled passions, blinding temptation, lustful fantasizing, provocative allures, or me-centered demands of selfish sex.

So, what is Godly intimacy about, then?

In the words of [*The Catechism of the Catholic Church \(CCC\)*](#):

- **2362** “The acts in marriage by which the **intimate** and **chaste union** of the spouses takes place are **noble and honorable**; the truly human performance of these acts fosters the **self-giving** they signify and **enriches the spouses in joy and gratitude**.¹⁴⁵ Sexuality is a source of **joy and pleasure**.”
- **2363** “The Creator himself . . . established that in the [generative] function, spouses should **experience pleasure and enjoyment of body and spirit**. Therefore, the spouses do **nothing evil in seeking this pleasure and enjoyment**. They accept what the Creator has intended for them. At the same time, spouses should know how to keep themselves within the limits of just **moderation**.”
- **2364** “The married couple forms the **intimate partnership of life and love established by the Creator and governed by his laws; it is rooted in the conjugal covenant, that is, in their irrevocable personal consent**.” (bolded words added for emphasis.)”

Adulthood

The same contextual concerns that we have with intimacy apply to the word, “**adult**”. Young **children** want to act “grown up” like **teens**, and most **teens** aspire to be “**adult**”, with the privileges given to adults. Adults can drink alcoholic beverages, use certain controlled substances, have access to “**adult**” **entertainment** (*almost universally associated with sex*), use “**adult**” (*sex*) **toys**, and enter “**adults only**” (*sex oriented*) **establishments**. On top of that, many adults believe, **as** adults, and **strictly because** they are adults, they are **entitled** to do what they want, regardless of whether it is healthy, kind, or morally right; therefore, in their minds, they sincerely believe that **no one** has the **right** to judge or disagree with their behavior choices. And if “consenting adults” agree that wrong is right, it must be! We are challenged to ask ourselves:

- What unhealthy perceptions of “**adult**” have I bought into? (Or how about the word “**Mature**”?)
- What **socially imposed baggage** do I need to unload, before I can immerse myself in our Catholic virtue of **chastity**?
- As a Christian, what do I need to incorporate into my life to live as a **chaste adult**?
- As an **adult**, have I **justified sinful sexual practices** by citing prevailing social standards (*or lack thereof*)?
- Have I felt **entitled to act out** sexually, because I am an **adult**?

PULLS reintroduces us to **our true calling to demonstrate responsibility, maturity and adulthood** by:

- making the tough, appropriate **choices**, pleasing to God;
- **prioritizing** responsibilities in line with Church teaching;
- **standing tall** in the face of childish, self-centered, social pressures;
- **relying** on the TOB to reestablish our concept of what defines a **man**; and
- **seeking** only God’s solutions to life’s questions and challenges.

Words of wisdom:

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child,
I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.

1 Corinthians 13:11

Feeling guilty vs. feeling ashamed:

God speaks to us through our **conscience**. **Guilt is healthy** and it usually shows us the way to return to choices that honor God. If we choose to ignore the “guilty conscience”, we experience a deeper conviction that **it is not our behavior, but we, who are bad. Guilt deals with behaviors** that can be rectified, while **shame** is a potentially devastating **judgment** that **condemns the person**. Shame keeps us from feeling worthy of love, and prevents us from being open and honest with others; thus, our **secretiveness**. Heaven forbid, someone should find out! We have **behaved** clearly outside of God’s boundaries. **We will need help** to reject the shame, act positively on our guilt, be open and honest, get back on track, and make amends with God, ourselves, and the people whose lives we impact.

How did we get into this mess?

Here’s the most **common storyline** behind our **wounded** sexual thoughts or practices. It **usually** began during our **youth; ignited** by the initial exposure to sexually stimulating triggers (pornography, sexual touch, a sexual image sparking fantasies, an introduction to masturbation, reading sexually explicit literature, witnessing other people in a sexual encounter either in person or media, sexting, etc) we had no idea of the immensity of the mess we were getting into. We simply lacked the maturity to **comprehend** the impact it would have on our lives.

That initial discovery of sex delivered a surprisingly pleasing emotional and physical **response**. The **intensity** of the pleasure **intoxicated** us to a level that we were unable to give due concern to possible consequences. The initial alarm bells of **guilt** were **ignored** while **lust prevailed**. Feelings of excitement, exhilaration, anticipation, infatuation, and fear of losing this seemingly miraculous, mysterious, ‘forbidden fruit’ became an almost **instant preoccupation**.

Commonly, people want to **revisit pleasurable experiences**... often frequently; so, we did it (*whatever the sexual “it” may be*) again and again. Sexually arousing experiences can be **powerfully addictive**; sexual stimulation can cause epic surges of chemicals and **hormones** that **stimulate the pleasure centers** of our brains. **Repeating** the behavior **creates habit**.

There is a portion of the human brain that receives, interprets and processes **visual sexual imagery**, and then orders the launching of a series of stimulating chemicals to the **brain’s pleasure centers**. This part of the brain is **2 ½ times larger in the average male** compared to that of the average female. That is one reason why so many men crowd around a 70”, high-definition, demo TV at the retail store. The visual pleasure runneth over! While that explains a lot, we men **cannot use acute visual stimulation as an excuse to sin**. **Fairness is irrelevant** here. We are summoned to a higher calling.

As sexually stimulating events become more **routine**, they lose their “kick”; so, many of us moved to **more provocative, innovative, or daring** sexual experiences in order **to achieve the same high**. This explains the **progressive nature** of sexually *addictive* behavior.

Usually, we **tell no one** lest accountability would interfere with our quest for continued secret stimulation. We learn to:

- lie,
- cover up,
- isolate,
- deny,
- practice secrecy,
- and develop amazing expertise at countless defenses, to protect us from consequences.

This newly acquired **sexual priority** eventually surpasses **everything we previously valued**, including:

- honesty,
- moral integrity,

- truth,
- family unity,
- loyalty and
- faithfulness.

To complicate matters, many young people have had **other childhood trauma** intruding on their environment, e.g. divorce, addiction, abuse (sexual and otherwise), death, illness, bullying, abandonment, rejection, violence, bigotry. This new sex discovery may **override the painful** living conditions, and provide temporary, but much appreciated **relief or escape**.

Innocence lost is a pivotal, deep wound; one that can disrupt life's direction and derail the child from God's plan. There's no point in pointing fingers; blaming is futile. The thing to do is provide help and/or get help.

If we now see our behavior as unhealthy, why can't we stop?

So now what? **How do we stop**, reverse, and go full steam toward recovery? Stopping addictive behavior frequently, *but not always*, involves a **catastrophe**, an undeniable **shake up**. We call it "**Bottoming out**". Hitting bottom implies that **we are done fighting; we have had enough**; we're hollering "Uncle!". **External circumstances force the surrender**. **Surrender** is something we voluntarily offer because we recognize our utter defeat; choosing to throw in the towel of self control. It's humbling to admit that we are defeated by sin. **Surrendering to Truth** requires humility and that choice, ironically, **begins our victory** over sin. We have **chosen to accept Truth** and take **restorative action**, rather than continue fighting a losing, devastating battle.

There *are* men who *do not* require a personal disaster to **surrender to Truth**. These men come to realize that their sexual **inconsistencies** (*hypocrisy*) **betray their faith**; so, they make a choice to give, or **surrender** this **duplicity** to God. For Christians, who can **discern** the voice of our **Conscience**, our **love for God leads us to surrender**. The **surrender** is a heartfelt **gift**.

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

The elevator to hell:

Visualize a man on an **elevator** descending downward, downward, downward, on a journey **toward "hell"**. There is a **stop button** that **can** stop the descent at any time; the longer he waits, the deeper the descent. Addictive behavior is like that. **Addictive compulsions tell him that he can not, must not, push the stop button**. He has jeopardized everything he values: his home, his marriage/vocation, his very dignity and self-respect, in exchange for this sexual oppression. How could anyone possibly tell him to give that up, too? Wouldn't **all** be lost?

What does a person do when all seems lost?

Those of us with addictive tendencies **mismanaged and misdirected** our lives right **into crisis mode**. What to do? We need:

- to **admit** that **we created the mess** we were in by **attempting to control** the life that God has given us;
- to **recognize and believe the truth**;
- then **tell the truth**, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth;
- **confess** everything: kill the elephant in the room;
- **expose every lie**;
- **accept** every accusation as truth;
- **squash all denial**;
- **listen** to those hurt by the behavior;
- **own responsibility** without hesitation;

- **abandon** the sinking ship of addictive behaviors;
- completely and totally **surrender**.
- Above all, **beg God for mercy. He's already being merciful**, but the 'begging' part is critical for us to experience humility and push our pride aside;
- and **let go and let God** take us to His plan for our lives.

For the men of PULLS, we **push** the **stop** button, **get off** the elevator to "hell", and **join** the PULLS pilgrimage. **HOW?** With complete **Honesty**, **Openness** and **Willingness**.

Surely God has given up on me; is there hope?

Absolutely, there is hope! It is unequivocally not too late! Even though we are each in different places in life, every one of us is exactly where we need to be, **right here, right now, reading these words. Jesus will do His part to help us.** With **God directing our lives**, we are led by the great Power of all Creation, *fighting the spiritual battle* that underlies all addictive and habit-forming behaviors.

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

If our job is <i>this important...</i>	!
And our family is <i>this important...</i>	!
And our responsibilities are <i>this important...</i>	!
And making time for prayer is <i>this important...</i>	!
And our homelife is <i>this important...</i>	!
And caring for our bodies is <i>this important...</i>	!

And SEX is this important... !

And our hobbies are <i>this important...</i>	!
And caring for our pets is <i>this important...</i>	!
And learning and growing is <i>this important...</i>	!
And attending church is <i>this important...</i>	!
And our recreational activities are <i>this important...</i>	!
And hanging out with friends is <i>this important...</i>	!
And getting enough sleep is <i>this important...</i>	!
And staying emotionally stable is <i>this important...</i>	!
And making time for God is <i>this important...</i>	!

....then, alarm bells should be going off in our head. We need to strive to get our **sexuality** to a place where it is **proportional** to all the other important areas of life. Then, we will be *capable* of **the purity that God wants for us**.

The 5 Perspectives of Recovery (MEPSS)

You will find, again and again, we are encouraged to look at issues from the following perspectives: **mentally, emotionally, physically, socially and spiritually** (*hereafter referred to as MEPSS*). **Why?** Because everything that can be said about us, fits into at least one of these **5 areas**. When we climb on board the train of *self-centered* sexual conduct, the entire MEPSS train **goes down hill. Here's how...**

- **Mentally:**

One who is *mentally* healthy is open, insightful, creative, productive and positive. But....

**....addictive behaviors cause the mind
to take a downward slide....**

toward becoming **defensive, secretive, and obsessed** with everything related to the addictive experience. The mind's focus has become **preoccupied**, finding ways to guard, defend, hide and manipulate, to **protect** the flow of sexual stimulation.

Compulsions got us in trouble. Our **urges** seemed absolutely **irresistible and we felt compelled to act** on them. Closely related to compulsions, are the **obsessions** that filled our minds with sexual *preoccupation*. We **lost** our ability to self-govern.

- **Emotionally:** The *emotionally* healthy person **freely and accurately conveys** a wide range of **feelings**. The deeper one gets into habitual, addictive, sexually obsessive activity, the less *appropriately* we express our **feelings, and....**

....our emotions take a downward slide....

down to a dark place where **emotions are denied or stuffed** away. There, they might fester or twist inside of our hearts. Our feelings can erupt in exaggerated, emotional **outbursts**, or be stifled by **defenses**. We become **emotionally ill**. When we *hide* our unpleasant feelings, other people are able to tell that something very dangerous is going on, but they cannot always pinpoint what it is. If they ask, "What is the matter?" we make ourselves **emotionally unavailable**, so we don't reveal our secret, sexual realities.

- **Physically:** Unmanageable sexual practices can smother healthy concerns about maintaining a flourishing lifestyle ...

....and cause us to neglect ourselves physically....

marked with **poor sleep** patterns, passing up **exercise** opportunities, catching or spreading sexually transmitted **diseases**, or abandoning **dietary** responsibilities. Changing the brain's **neural synaptic pathways** in harmful ways, also constitutes physical harm.

- **Socially:** Healthy, positive, constructive friendships and family relationships...

....are likely to drop off....

as new, **undesirable friendships** form with people who **enable or encourage** the growth of addictive thinking and behavior. Other times, we

might **isolate**, withdrawing from social connections. **Online obsessions or excesses** can make us **inaccessible**, too.

- **Spiritually:** A man with a healthy spirituality sets his heart on continually strengthening his relationship with God and learning to love as Our Lord Jesus loves. He prays to **know God's will** and asks for the power to carry it out....

....or following God's path will slide....

as addictive behaviors advance. Our **reliance on our own power** will lift up our constantly growing lust for addictive sexual experiences to the level of **god-like (small g) idolatry**. Serious issues of **spiritual warfare** enter into the picture with our addictive behaviors.

Once our relationship with sexually sinful situations has germinated and caused **dis-order** in us, **every part of our being will have declined** to some degree. So, if we **hit bottom** (*despair, have had it, must stop*), or if we answer the call of our Conscience and **stop the misbehavior**, then **are we chaste?** Has **recovery** started? In the next chapter, we will look at **recovery and chastity**, to provide the framework to answer those questions.

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

Let's start with Recovery:

What is sexuality?

Our **sexuality** includes not only our gender, but

- our attitudes about our **role** as males;
- how we **present** ourselves as men;
- how we **regard** the opposite sex;
- how we **interact** with females and other males;
- our sexual **morals** and **values**.

Our sexuality is not designed by God to be narrowly focused on what we do **genitally**; it is about **what it means for us to be male**. **Sexuality** is so **encompassing**, so deeply seeded in us that, if misused or abused, it impacts us in many ways. The Vatican Document entitled *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education Within the Family*, authored by the Pontifical Council for the Family, tells us, "As an incarnate spirit, that is, a soul which expresses itself in a body and a body informed by an immortal spirit, **man is called to love in his unified totality**. Love includes the human body, and the body is made a sharer in spiritual love". The meaning of sexuality itself is to be understood in the light of Christian Revelation: "**Sexuality characterizes man and woman not only on the physical level, but also on the psychological and spiritual, making its mark on each of their expressions.**" (Bolding added for emphasis.)

If we want to go from **Powerlessness and Unmanageability to Living and Loving Sacrificially through Jesus Christ (PULLS)**, we should have a process to follow and goals to achieve. We use the general term, **recovery**, to describe the **process**, and **sexual purity (chastity)** as **our objective**.

A dictionary definition of **recovery** is

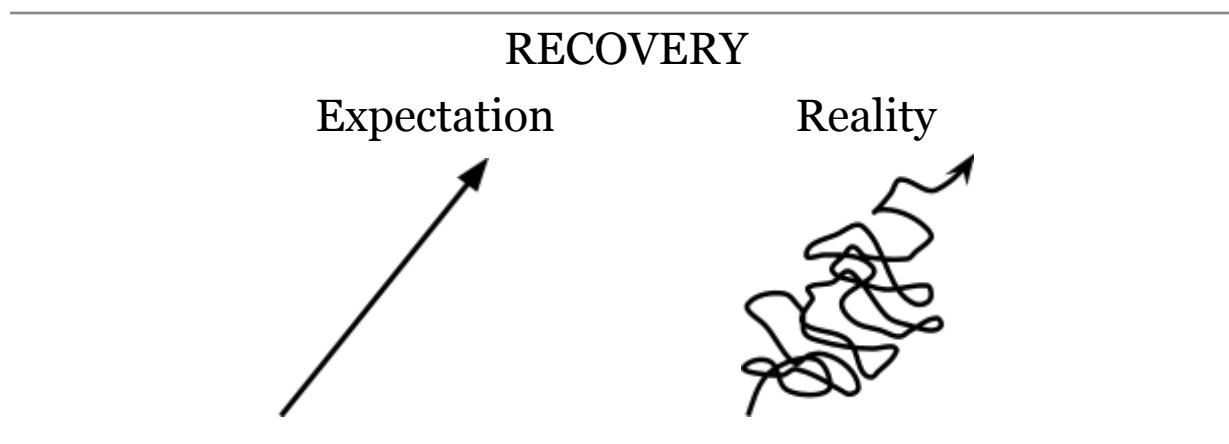
- a **return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength**;
- the action or process of **regaining** possession or control of something **stolen or lost**.

Recovery is a process of **getting back the benefits of our previous healthier lifestyle**. Obviously, our aim, on the way to chastity, is to recover. But just **quitting or abstaining** from addictive behavior **is not recovering**. Keep in mind that we have mentally, emotionally, physically, socially and spiritually (*MEPSS*) gone down hill. **Quitting** just stops the harmful habit; but it **does not “return (us) to a normal state of health, mind or strength.”** Many of the healthy parts of these 5 aspects of life have been “**wounded, lost or stolen**” because our lives have been unmanageable (*mismanaged*) because we have experienced addictive behavior. Stopping right here, for alcoholics, is called “putting a cork in the bottle” or a “dry drunk”. For us, who struggle with sexual issues, simply **quitting the behavior does not mean that we are recovering**. Quitting may or may **not** prevent *further MEPSS loss*, and simply **stopping does not restore what was lost**.

So how does one “recover”, then?

We recover by taking a **hard, honest look** at those wounded parts of our lives (*MEPSS*), and then begin the fascinating **process of climbing back up** toward a progressively renewed, fulfilling life as we **heal**. The **Written Work** later in this book helps us assess our wounds and get us on track to “return to the normal state” or, preferably, **better than just a “normal state”**. **Recovery** then begins with the process of retrieving those misplaced chunks of life. But it doesn’t need to end there. We want our **recovery to** progress beyond just “normal”; we want to strive toward the **LLS** part of **PULLS: Living and Loving Sacrificially in our Lord, Jesus Christ**.

Commencement of self-examination
and improvement begins the **recovery** process



Agenda for Closing the Meeting

Abstinence and the Three Circles

Let's start with abstinence.

Abstinence: By definition, to **abstain** is to **restrain** ourselves **from indulging** in something. When we fast and **abstain during Lent**, are we simply **avoiding** (*overeating, snacking or eating meat*)? As Catholics, we want to **imitate our Lord** by **loving as He loves**. **God receives our acts** of fasting and **abstinence** because they beg a higher calling: to bring us in greater union with Him.

For a more in-depth description of abstinence, check out Section 3: Expressions and Ideas Central to PULLS, in which we refer to the term “white knuckling.”

As long as we do not indulge in **sinful sexual thoughts and behaviors**, we are compliant with the **letter and law of sexual abstinence**. Not bad; but we are called to **look deeper** than just the 'letter', to find the '**spirit**' that underlies our choice to **abstain**. Quitting is great. But it is just the beginning.

Words of wisdom:

It is Jesus you seek when you dream of happiness;
He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you.

St. John Paul II

Isn't abstinence our goal?

Important! God does **not** call for us to **limit** our focus on being sexually **abstinent**. If we **choose virginity, chastity, secondary virginity, modesty, or fidelity**, we rise high above simple **abstinence**. Little growth is required in **abstinence**; we are simply **not doing** sexually sinful actions.

So, what is sobriety?

In our culture, people link the word “**sobriety**” with **alcoholics who quit drinking**; the words **sobriety and abstinence** are used interchangeably. For most 12 Step programs (*whether for overeating, chemical dependency, alcoholism, being in debt, cutting, gambling, on-line gaming, being workaholics, etc.*), **sobriety begins the moment someone quits doing (or abstains from doing)** whatever they are addicted to. So, they refer to that date as their **sobriety date**.

What is a sexual abstinence date?

We, in PULLS, tend to *avoid* the terms “sober” and “sobriety”, partly because of their secular association with alcohol addiction. **Abstinence**, on the other hand, is traditionally recognized in Catholicism. So, we call **the day that we stopped sexually acting out** our “**abstinence date**”.

Similarly, our men who have embraced **chastity** report their “**chastity date**” based solidly on God's Word and Church teachings. The **Theology of the Body** is a treasure for us because it helps us understand God's vision of human sexuality. From the TOB, we can see why **chastity** fits right in with Church tradition and we appreciate how it all started with our sexual abstinence date.

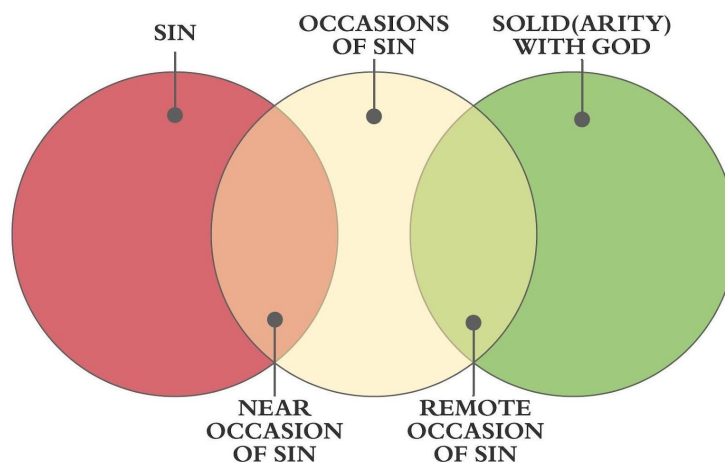
The number of days (*weeks, months, or years*) of **sexual abstinence** that we accumulate can be one **barometer of progress** and often a **motivator**. We keep our eye on

the prize: to **live out our sexual nature, as God specifies, in accordance with our state in life, whether single, married, Holy Orders or in consecrated life.** That's *chastity*.

On the agenda for every PULLS meeting, is an opportunity for any member to share either his **sexual abstinence milestone** or his chastity achievement to date. It may be 4 or 5 days without acting out. A few days can actually be quite an achievement worth celebrating; especially if he has gained a new insight into purity. But keep in mind, whether measured in days, weeks, months, years or even decades, we all maintain our **sexual purity one day at a time**. How encouraging and inspiring to newer members to see how powerfully the program has worked for others!

The Three Circles

By the time a PULLS man finishes writing up his **1st Step**, he is challenged to create his **personal version** of the **3 Circles**. We use a line of **3 overlapping circles**, the **first circle colored red**, the **second circle colored yellow**, and the **third colored green**. Just as street lights indicate red for stop, caution for yellow, and green for go, so it is with the colored circles. The overlapping areas are also described below.



- The **RED** circle is the location for entering our **sinful sexual thoughts and behaviors** that we need to stop because they **separate us from God**.
- The **overlapping portion** of the RED and YELLOW is colored **ORANGE** and represents **Near Occasions of Sin**.
- In the **YELLOW** circle we write down **Occasions of Sin**: situations in which **our choices could take us either way**: into the RED area or into the GREEN.
- The decisions we make whenever we find ourselves in **YELLOW circumstances, test our abandonment to God to be chaste** at any given point in our pilgrimage.
- The **overlapping portion** of the YELLOW and GREEN is colored **YELLOWISH-GREEN** and represents **Remote Occasions of Sin**.
- In the **GREEN** circle, we itemize **safe choices** that indicate **our solidarity with God** because of the direct Christian value of the action, and/or because the **inherent innocence or positiveness** of the choice **compliments our chastity**.

In the **Step 1 Written Work** section of this book, there is a more detailed description of the 3 circle process. It is truly a **process** because one should **update the contents of each circle** periodically through one's pilgrimage of recovery and beyond.

Sexual abstinence and the 3 Circles are paired together for this reason: ***To be ABSTINENT, we refrain from behaviors found in the RED Circle.***

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Chastity, Celibacy, and Continence

About chastity

Chastity is **sexual purity**. Chastity is the expression of one's sexuality appropriate to **one's station in life**. In **Catholic** morality, **chastity** is placed **opposite** to the deadly sin of **lust**, and is one of the **seven virtues**. Sr. Miriam James Heidland, S.O.L.T., describes **chastity** as "**rightly ordered love**."

As we discern God's call for chastity, we expectantly listen for His invitation regarding our vocation. *Initially*, sacrifice accompanies chastity. We let go of, or we **sacrifice** our former unhealthy sexual attitudes, behaviors and fantasies, to embrace and **abide in chastity**. There is humility and honor in the abiding.

Gradually, the "**sacrifice**" **decreases** because we no longer value the supposed "benefits" of our former sexual lifestyle. Chastity more than fills the void. **God** knows our hearts as **He infuses** the adoption of **chastity** into our lives, when that is what we seek. At PULLS meetings, some men share abstinence dates while others (usually those who have completed their journey to chastity via the Points, Key Features and Steps) may choose to share "chastity" dates instead.

Chastity means the integration of sexuality within the person.
It includes an apprenticeship in self-mastery. CCC #2395

Chastity and the Single Person:

Chastity, for the **single (celebrate) person**, is a **choice** that **transcends abstinence**. While some of our men may not have discerned their future vocation, practicing chastity, *as a single person*, helps us **to perfect the gift of loving purely**; their **counsel becomes well grounded** and their **past struggles open doors of compassion**, a definite asset when entering *any* vocational calling whether marriage, celebrate life, or religious life. By **deliberately choosing** chastity, our **capacity to love** will **not** be **contaminated** by the uncaring inclination to use and objectify other people for our own selfish purposes.

All Christ's faithful are called to lead a **chaste life**
in keeping with their particular states of life. CCC #2348

Chastity for the Married Person:

A **chaste** person, single or married, has **no physical or imagined sexual interactions, outside of marriage**. In marriage, chastity is the bedrock of **fidelity and reverence for one's spouse**. It can find its **fulfillment only in** our **faithfulness and love**, experienced in the **sacrament of marriage**. **The marital embrace is fulfilling, satisfying and intimate** because both the **unitive and procreative** possibilities are present. God wants His married people to **delight in our sexuality** and rejoice in our realization of God's love in the **marital embrace**. Every time we "choose" to love our spouse (and **love is a choice**), we are privately re-establishing our *wedding vows*. The chaste man will bring into that marriage

- **purity,**
- **sexual maturity and**

- **the capacity to love** his wife, as **God wants him** to love his wife.

He will be **trustworthy** because he has already practiced **sacrifice**. If he has experienced a past, marred with sexual sin, he can *share his story of struggle and subsequent victory* with the woman he loves, and praise God for his **renewed fidelity**.

Deacon Edward Peters, in his blog, *In Light of the Law* provided these insights on Chastity: “A **non-married** person (whether single or actually celibate) is chaste by observing, among other things, **continence**; but a **married** person is **chaste** by engaging in conjugal relations! In both cases it’s **the same virtue** at work—chastity, **the proper use of one’s sexual powers**—but the actions are obviously quite different. Similarly, if a married person does with a third-party exactly what is done with a spouse, that would be **unchastity**, even though the actions appear the same.”

So, we can view chastity from various angles that invite various, accurate descriptions:

- Chastity is **rightly ordered** love.
- Chastity is the expression of one’s sexuality appropriate to **one’s station in life**.
- Chastity is **sexual purity**.
- Chastity is the full **integration** of God’s plan for our sexuality into our lives.
- Chastity is the **bedrock of fidelity and reverence** for one’s spouse.
- A chaste person, single or married, has **no sexual interactions, outside of marriage**.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Is chastity worth the hard work?

When an athlete is on the field, even if he **gives 100%**, he sometimes still loses the game. As we **put out 100% for sainthood**, we aim at becoming **Christ-like** in our faith and in our intent. **Setbacks** are part of the game. When we fail and have setbacks and falls, we need to right ourselves and stand tall, **trusting God’s grace and mercy**. From there, we progress and learn.

The life of a Christian is marked by **spiritual combat**. God wants us to **be soldiers rather than slaves**. If we get **anything** for free....that is, without effort....we do not value it. If we have neither known freedom (*like slaves*), nor fought to gain freedom (*like soldiers*), we fail to appreciate freedom. We need to go “out on a limb”, trust in God, and **fight** for our freedom. Those of us with sexual powerlessness lack (*or have lost*) the “power”, the ability, the **discipline** and/or the **will to commit** ourselves to healthy sexual choices. Satan wants our lives to *remain* unmanageable and for us to have **no power** over sexual sin. We, the Catholic faithful, need to **fight to free ourselves** from the slavery of sexually addictive behaviors. **Satan wants our lives to be monuments to him**, just as the people of Israel were forced to build great monuments to Pharaoh. **False idols** are absolutely unacceptable.

When the people of Israel followed Moses from captivity in Egypt, they ate **manna** (“**What is it?**”), provided by God. Out in the wilderness, they would **find manna** in the morning and **collect enough for only one day**. Manna would spoil if stockpiled for more than one day. Why? They needed to learn to **trust**, or to **rely on God to provide nourishment anew each day**. Even now, we are called to live one day at a time and trust God to provide thereafter. We need to **be comfortable with the uncertainty of what tomorrow might bring**.

It is not unusual for us, who have developed dependency on habit-forming experiences, to **prefer the slavery** of dependency over the **uncertainty of freedom**. Unable or **unwilling to handle uncertainty**, haven't we **traded freedom for slavery**?

In our former sexual state, **we were essentially slaves**, driven by our desires to do that which we knew was harmful to us. **People in slavery don't have to be responsible**.

For example, the people of Israel relocated to Egypt to escape the famine in their homeland. They remained in Egypt for over 400 years. During their years in Egypt, building up to the exodus, Pharaohs forced the Israelites into slavery. After the 10 plagues, Pharaoh let God's chosen people go forth from Egypt.

Many of the **Israelites**, during the subsequent wilderness journey, complained to Moses that they were better off in Egypt. As slaves, everything had been provided for them. They knew the **"stability" of the slave lifestyle**: tomorrow would be the same as yesterday; a week from now would be the same as a month from now. Everything was certain. In their "wanderings" toward God's promise of a Land of Milk and Honey, many could not cope with the realities of freedom. Now, as it was then, we must **sacrifice the certainty** of slavery (*addictive behaviors*), and **trust God** to deliver on what is uncertain to us (*chastity*)...the plan that God has for each and every one of us.

Trust, Faith and Hope are graces from God, in a here-and-now world of immediate gratification.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

So what is celibacy, then?

Celibacy is derived from the Latin *caelibatus* which means, "the state of **being unmarried**." Since priests (*with few exceptions*) are not married, **celibacy** is usually associated with priests, as well as religious and widowed deacons.

Deacon Edward Peters:

"Celibacy is the chosen, deliberately made, resolve not to enter marriage. Celibacy is **not simply 'being single'** (else, every child is a 'celibate'), but rather, it means having **chosen to live single** either for a while (e.g., till I finish grad school, or till my ailing mother dies) or for life (e.g., I have been ordained or I took permanent religious vows). Celibacy can be chosen **for good reasons** (e.g., I wish to follow the Lord more freely, or I wish to serve as a nurse in poor countries) or for bad reasons (e.g., I despise people and refuse to share my life with anyone), but, standing alone, celibacy means only that **a choice not to enter marriage has been made and is being observed**. Such a person, and only such a person, is properly called 'celibate'.

That being understood, single persons, whether single because of circumstances (e.g., I have not yet met Miss Right, or my husband died last year) or because they are celibate, are **restricted in the sexual activity** they can engage in. Not to get ahead of ourselves, but those restrictions include what we will call **"continence"**. But when discussing celibacy, keep in mind that it is **a chosen way of life, a way of life that has certain consequences**, yes, but fundamentally, a way of life."

Blog: *In Light of the Law*

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Let's talk about sexual continence

Deacon Edward Peters:

“**Continence** is the **choice not to engage in sexual relations**. Again, the **element of choice is important** because simply not having sex does not necessarily mean that one is ‘continent’. A castaway on a desert island might have no food to eat but we would not say he is ‘dieting’, why? Because ‘dieting’ implies that one makes a choice about not eating. Now, a single person (again, whether single by circumstances or because one is celibate) is required to exercise, among other things, continence. But married persons, too, might observe continence. Mary and Joseph are the classic examples: they were not, repeat *not*, celibate; they were, repeat *were*, continent.”

Blog: *In Light of the Law*

Because **continence is a choice**, one is also continent **if** his **self-control permits** him to **choose to engage** in sexual relations **with his spouse**, with a heart open to the possibility of procreation and with a loving **choice to honor the good of his wife**. So, having the **choice to engage or not to engage** sexually is the **key to continence**.

But then, what is sexual incontinence?

Incontinence is the **inability** to have **voluntary control** over one’s sexual expression. There is **no choice involved** in incontinence. **Addiction** to sexual sin can cause sexual incontinence that reveals itself in a number of ways e.g. **inability** to achieve or maintain an erection, **loss of ability or inclination** to sexually respond to one’s spouse, or **incapacity to love** because of self-obsession, to name a few.

Temptation

We have all heard people say stuff like, “God won’t throw more temptations our way than we can handle”; even in the Lord’s Prayer, we say, “...and lead us not into temptation”, as if God would tempt us to sin if we didn’t ask Him **not** to. Unless God wants us to sin, why would He tempt us? Is that really what God is like?

Good news! We believe in **Sacred Scripture** and our catechism, which refers to James 1:13 saying, “*God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one; on the contrary, he wants to set us free from evil. We ask him not to allow us to take the way that leads to sin.*”

Pope Francis, in 2017, referred to the Italian and English mis-translations that resulted in the line “...lead us not into temptation” saying, “This is not a good translation!” The prayer we recite in English was translated from Latin and the Latin version was translated from Greek. Pope Francis said that the French bishops had decided that French Catholics would say “do not let us enter into temptation.”

And here’s what our Catechism says about temptation and God. “*God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but will also provide the way of escape, so that you may be able to endure it,*” (CCC #2848). 1 Cor 10:13 tells us, “*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*”

The “way out so you can endure it” is a grace. Graces are a free and undeserved gift from God. When we are tempted to sin, God is showering us with graces that will strengthen us, if we willingly receive those graces in our hearts. Then, clad in the armor of God, we can be victorious in Christ and leave the temptation behind. But if we stubbornly attempt to resist temptation our own way, the graces essentially bounce off our self-will. So, when tempted, we must pray that God will open our hearts to His graces in order for us to claim victory over temptation in His Holy Name.

Finally, Catholics need to know who God is, and what He does and what He does not do. Uninformed opinions and misinterpretations are spiritually dangerous. We need to constantly stock our store of knowledge with truth and understanding that we gather from Catholic tradition, the Scriptures, the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and from the Magisterium of the Church. Catholic tradition is not about blindly accepting poorly conceived ideas of the past, as many non-Catholics mistakenly believe. God didn’t retire from being God once the biblical books were completed. No! He has been phenomenally active continually correcting misunderstandings, loving, helping and informing His beloved Church for the past 2000 years, revealing His Truth through Catholic Saints, Scholars, and the Magisterium.

Father God, plant within us the desire to continually learn and grow in You and your Truth.
Amen.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church #538: “*Temptation is an attraction, either from outside oneself or from within, to act contrary to right reason and the commandments of God*”. Even Jesus resisted temptation during His 40 days in the wilderness; so, **being tempted**, by itself, **is**

not a sin, but it is certainly **frustrating**; especially for people with sexual sin. That frustration may be the result of two factors:

1. **We lost confidence in repelling our urges.**

It is baffling...when and how did we cave in to our sexual desires so **frequently** and with such **little resistance**? Our **urges stopped being something to resist**. When we **did** ward off our sexual desires, it required **enormous effort** because our **resistance to sexual temptations** was chipped away by so many **past failures**. Each failure became another building block on the tower of shame, secrecy, and duality that we had been building for years. We felt “**demoralized**”.

2. **Sexual temptation devolved into a trigger.**

A healthy means for Catholics to handle temptations is to

1. **pause**, wait a minute, stop, breathe, hesitate before taking any action,
2. take a good critical **look at that temptation**,
3. then, remembering to **pray** for the **openness** to receive God’s input, and using our faith, intellect and will, we **consider the options**,
4. and **decide** which option is the best choice for a man of God,
5. and then, **act** on that decision.

But, before we had our PULLS fellowship and we were separated from God because of our sin, we just jumped right to number 5. We simply **acted out**; sometimes just to get the urges out of our system. We skipped numbers 1 through 4 and, sure enough, we slipped and fell again. That failure spelled *weakness*; so, we felt **ashamed**. **To act on our impulses eliminates freedom.**

Unfortunately, memories of our past **lack of resistance**, **demoralization** and our **impulsivity** can stall our recovery progress or make us quit trying. Keep fighting! Through persistence, support and **trust in God**, we build **resistance**, **courage and faith**. Don’t forget that **we are the resistance**! The triggers become fewer and better defined; the fog of sexual temptation dissipates.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

The Three Traditional Sources of Temptation

There are **three traditional sources of temptations**:

1. **the world**,
2. **the flesh**,
3. **and the devil**.

With our history of sexual struggles, temptation is a big deal...**a really big deal**. Let’s tackle it, one source at a time.

The first traditional source of temptation: The World

Worldly temptations originate outside of us.

Because they are not of our making, worldly temptations happen at times and places, when and where they will, and often, completely beyond our control. We want God to occupy the

front and center position in our heart, but we get **distracted** by random worldly **attractions and situations**.

The world, and every element that exists in it, are of **God's Creation** and were given to mankind **for our stewardship**. **Problem: human governance** of God's Creation has **not always** been **benevolent**. Human weaknesses (*and/or sin*) have compromised our stewardship causing mistrust, abuse, destruction and division. **God's Truth** has become subject to debate, politics, criticism, misunderstanding and rejection, to serve the interests of those who look at creation, only with worldly eyes. Pray for them and do not let them hold you back.

Is It My Job to Weigh In on the Problems of the World?

In the extended **Serenity Prayer** are the words, **"Taking , as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as we would have it."** Jesus did not, with a wave of His arm, cure every leper, blind man or sinner on earth. He could have, but He didn't. Like our Lord, **we can and must impact the little section of the world that is before us**, using our own personalized set of God's graces and gifts.

Agonizing and ranting about issues *outside* of our power or **God's will** to empower us, **is futile**. We will become chronically

- stressed,
- frustrated,
- angry,
- resentful,
- bitter
- and baffled at our powerlessness.

That can **lead us to act out. Repeatedly.**

Temptation to react to **worldly issues beyond our control** needs to be avoided. It is **wasted time and effort** that **takes the place of real action** that can be useful to God's creation and to us personally. Employ the grace of **discernment** to draw a very disciplined line between **what is of God and what is of the world**.

Godliness In; Godliness Out vs. Garbage In; Garbage Out.

"Godliness in; Godliness out": When we look past the temptations of the world and **say yes to attractions that glorify God**, our **output** (*word choices, expressions, affect, attitude and our works*) **will reflect God's** impact on our lives.

"Garbage In; Garbage Out":

Conversely, if we give in to **worldly temptations**, **we are** drawn to attractions such as:

- **abrasive** social media,
- **biased** communications or rumors,
- sexually **provocative** images and computer sites,
- **graphically** written books,
- **sensual** touch or interactions,
- **gratuitous** sexual stimulation,
- **revealing or suggestive** clothing choices, etc.

...all of which distract us from Godliness and occupy what we think and what we do. **“Garbage in/garbage out.”**

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

The second traditional source of temptation: The Flesh

When we perceive, feel, or imagine that something is good or evil, **“something in us” moves us to act**, or **“something in us” moves us not to act**: *usually emotions such as*:

- *love/hatred,*
- *desire/aversion,*
- *joy/sadness;*
- *hope/despair,*
- *fear/courage, and*
- *anger.*

We refer to that **“something in us”** as **“passions”**. **Passions are a connection between our senses and our mind.**

Catholics are **not called** to look at our passions as if they are **morally evil** and something to be avoided. At the same time, we are certainly **not called** to **indulge** our passions with no restraint. **Passions**, in and of themselves, are **neither entirely bad nor entirely good**. They are **good** when **reason determines** that they are **in accord** with what is **good and true**. That's why it's so important to continually grow in our knowledge of our faith and keep seeking God's truth just as a person dying of thirst would seek water.

When our **reason** and our **passions disagree**, our **will can consent** to what our **passions** are pushing us toward, or consent to what our **reason** says is right and good. Remember, **passions... even disordered passions... are not sinful**; they are **rightly ordered or dis-ordered**. *They can lead us to sin*, but they are not sin in themselves. **Sin** is only the result of:

- an act of the will,
- consenting to that which is contrary to reason and
- contrary to what is good and true.

So **passions** can be **rightly ordered or wrongly “dis-ordered”** insofar as they tend toward **goodness or evil**.

Disordered Passions:

Before the fall of mankind, our **passions (feelings)** were in perfect harmony with **reason**. After the fall (*when Eve and Adam, in response to the seductive “reasoning” of the devil, ate from the Tree of Life*), some of our **passions became disordered**. We found ourselves **inclined toward sin**. Our **pride** moved us to **reject God's own word** on what was and what was not morally acceptable.

It's not about denying the passions or being dispassionate. When we **allow reason to govern our passions**, we clear the way to grow in the goodness of God. **Passions** make a vital contribution to our **choosing of the good and true**, so much so, that when passions are **aligned properly**, they actually have a hand in **bringing us toward God's perfect will**.

Think how this fits perfectly in the **PULLS** program, which urges us to **progress toward perfection**. It's not about being creatures in cages and just not sinning. It's about freedom, about not even wanting to sin! And see how understanding of **passions, reason, and will**, can help us understand the **1st Step** concept of "**powerlessness** over our sexual thoughts and behavior"! It's only by first admitting our powerlessness, that we can begin the rewarding work of **growing in virtue**.

The bottom line is **love**. Thomas Aquinas said "**To love is to will the good of another**." (CCC 1766 and 41 St. Thomas Aquinas, *STh* I-II,26 4, *corp. art.*) To **will** the **good** of another, we use **reason** to direct our **passions** toward **goodness**. Controlling our passions makes us **virtuous**. Virtuosity allows us to **love** as Christ loves us.

Here's a shocker: it is good to be **self-possessed**! No, not the selfish, self-centered, self-possession that excludes the good of others! That is not love. But it is good to be self-possessed if **we possess control of our passions**; that we are **virtuous**. Only then can we actually **love** another. If our passions are going all over the place, we don't **possess** ourselves, and therefore **we can't give ourselves to another**, whether that be a wife or the Church. We can't give what we don't have.

A **temptation** for some of us men is to desire the experience of orgasm with a degree of **entitlement or expectation**. There is **no love** in that attitude; the love of God, that we are to pay forward to all we encounter, is concerned only with placing the welfare of the other person ahead of our own. **Sexual orgasm is not a physical need** (*despite all too common opinion*). People are often **tempted** to seek **sexual intoxication** as a **disordered solution** to unpleasant experiences or emotions. Discomfort, disappointment, loneliness, frustration, anxiety, stress or other **uncomfortable feelings** are... well... uncomfortable, but they **do not necessitate a solution**, sexual or otherwise. We need to responsibly and maturely **resist the temptations of the flesh**, and seek emotional support for emotional problem areas and mental health support for mental health issues. "**Medicinal use**" (*abuse*) of **sex** for emotional or mental distress, social pressure or physical discomfort, is a set up for developing a **pattern of abuse that can lead to addiction**.

Words of wisdom:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels,
to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us.
We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;
perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken;
struck down, but not destroyed;
always carrying in the body the death of Jesus,
so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.
For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake,
so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.

2 Corinthians 4:7-11

We learn and soon treasure the fact that our girlfriends or wives are **not sexual ATMs** from which we can make **sexual withdrawals**. Some of our former selves displayed sexual immaturity and succumbed to the **temptation to feel hurt, unwanted, rejected, injured, misunderstood and undesired**, if we didn't get the sexual relief we wanted, when we wanted it. **We pouted inwardly** (*and sometimes outwardly*), feeling resentful and we convinced

ourselves that we were **justified in looking elsewhere** for sexual fulfillment, whether in the arms of a more promiscuous woman (*adultery*), in pornography and fantasies (*adultery in the heart and mind*), masturbation, or other forms of acting out. All of these are **disordered** behaviors and with the allure of **concupiscence** (*lust*), were **rooted in our selfishness and pride**. Sadly, love, as God models it, was photoshopped right out of the picture.

Chastity, on the other hand, **honors God** and the **woman we love**. Our **boundaries** become **clearly defined** and we find ourselves drawing clear, distinct, morally enriching, **sexual lines**. We willingly, lovingly and gladly **resist the temptations of the flesh** that cross those lines.

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

Our 3rd Source of Temptation: The Devil

While **most** of our **temptations originate in ourselves**, there is a **third source of temptation**: the devil, or **Satan**, and the lesser spirits, **demons**. Satan often uses **seduction** to attract victims. He knows exactly which **lies, temptations, manipulations and half truths** will work to **separate us** from any or all of the seven virtues of the Holy Spirit, to sin. He studies our weaknesses and seizes upon them, convincing us that there is “wiggle room” and cracks in the foundation of our values, beliefs and morals. In other words, he uses **temptation to draw us away from God’s plan** and convinces us to **question God’s Truth**, making our sexual impropriety so very easy to justify.

In his definitive and comprehensive work entitled *Interview with an Exorcist, An Insider’s Look at the Devil, Demonic Possession, and the Path to Deliverance*, **Fr. Jose Antonio Fortea** wrote, “***Demons tempt us by infusing thoughts into our minds. In other words, a demon introduces into our reason, memory, and imagination intellectual objects proper to our understanding that cannot be distinguished from our own thoughts.***” (Bolding of any quoted material in this section is added for emphasis.)

Satan’s means of temptation and those of his demons are grounded in:

- his **persistence**,
- his **cunning**,
- his dogged, **predatory vigilance**,
- his **observation** skills,
- and his ability to create chaos, disorder, confusion and/or doubt.

Without a specific plan of resistance, we have no defense against Satan’s **infusion** of thoughts...especially **sexual thoughts...into our minds**.

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

Speaking of the Devil

Satan is real. But he is neither the opposite, nor the evil counterbalance of God. **Satan** is a fallen **archangel**, a created, 100% **spirit being**, who, with those angels who followed him, was exiled, by God, from heaven, *forever*, because Satan and his demon followers rebelled against God. Unlike Satan, **God** is the one and **only God, the Creator of everything** that exists (*including all the angels*), and He has existed forever. Satan is the **Father of Lies** while **Jesus is Truth. God is infinite** while **Satan is finite** and **created**.

Words of wisdom:

"Jesus said, "I have observed Satan fall like lightning* from the sky."

Luke 10:18

Fr. Fortea tells us, "***Demons were not created evil... He (God) tested their fidelity to Him before admitting them to the Beatific Vision, the sight of His very essence.***"

God's test for the angels measured their **joy, precipitated by virtues including love, generosity, and constancy. Constancy means fidelity.** No wonder **the angels, who failed the test, despise fidelity** (*the same virtue that we vow to uphold in the Sacrament of Marriage*)...and **love**...and all the remaining **virtues**; the rebellious spirits were **changed into demons** and **expelled from heaven**. As a result of the nature of the test and their expulsion from heaven, the demons hatefully regard God as the **one who oppresses freedoms!**

Before most of us in PULLS embraced chastity, our conflicted minds, privately **justified our right, or defended our freedom, to sexually act out** as we pleased. We now **seek** the **fidelity** that once engendered such shame in our hearts. **Angels rejoice in our fidelity** while demons are "hell bent" on **undermining it**.

*In Fr. Fortea's words, "A demon's heart only hates; it revels in the suffering of others..The pleasure achieved in doing an evil act is the same as that which a human being feels when he gets **revenge on an enemy** - it is a **pleasure filled with hate.**"* This is why we examine resentments, justice, mercy, and the ability to forgive in our Step work. This is also why we reach out to those who still **suffer** in the 12th Step and 7th Point. Inflicting **suffering** is the demons' specialty.

Fr. Fortea continues, "***The intellects of the rebellious angels were deformed and darkened by the very reasons they used to justify the rebellion of their wills against God.***" Do we recall and recognize the **deformation** and **darkening** of our own wills as our addictive sexual actions advanced? Demons have **exceptional intellects**, they **utilize collaboration**, and are **fueled by malicious hatred** for themselves, certainly for God, and for *those who strive to be in God's service*. That would be us.

There are vast numbers of demons, according to Saints who have been allowed to see them. By the **grace of God**, there are countless **hosts of angels**, and the **guardian angel** assigned to each of us, **repelling** the demons, and **battling** them constantly to **assist** humans. This is referred to as **spiritual warfare**.

We **weaken our resistance** to demonic influence by **edging with evil** by engaging in activities that **glamorize**, or **generate intrigue**, or **provoke** an unhealthy **curiosity** with the evil spirits, e.g., by participating in or “playing” with:

- *ouija boards*,
- *fortune telling*,
- *seances*,
- *tarot cards*,
- *black masses*, etc.

Steer clear.

What Does Satan Want From Us?

Satan wants us:

- to live in **fear**;
- to be **prideful** and **entitled**;
- to believe we are **self-sufficient** and have no need of God;
- to see success in worldly terms (*money, power, fame*);
- to live a **dual life** and be filled with **shame** and **secrecy**;
- to “thrive” on darkness, evil, deceit, and greed;
- to blame others, deflect responsibility and be unrepentant;
- to depreciate the value of life and of love.

Satan wants us to join him in his sole purpose: **corrupting, undermining and/or destroying God’s creation**. Think of it this way: **God is the creator; Satan is the corruptor**.

Our baptism erases *original sin*, but **we remain vulnerable** to the sins that surround and influence us. Satan is very aware of that. **He and the demons observe, study, and interpret** even our **subtlest**, most **imperceptible**, **physical reactions** to our daily events and interactions. From that, they guess what we are thinking. In many ways, they are able to deduce more about us than we know about ourselves. Satan carefully appraises our weaknesses and, like the **predator** that he is, he waits for the most opportune moments to seize on our vulnerabilities.

Satan Must Love Sex, Right?

We’d think that Satan must love sex. After all, sex is probably his favorite tool to derail people from God’s tracks. But no, **Satan hates sex**. Why? First of all, because he hates everything, but also because he is **jealous! Humans have the ability to bring another immortal soul into the world**. Satan despises that. As pure spirit, he can’t do that. So **he tries to distort our most holy ability to procreate**.

Satan uses sexuality, which he **detests**, to deprive God, who he **loathes**, of our souls, which he **deplores**. He has no use for our souls; he just doesn’t want God to have them. That’s the nature of **envy**. Envy wants the **deprivation of someone else’s good fortune** for the sake of **spite**. Depriving us of eternal life with our Savior gives Satan no happiness or joy. Satan wants to abuse us **via our soul**.

Satan and the human soul:

Our **souls** consist of **four faculties**:

1. **Memory**
2. **Imagination**
3. **Intellect**
4. **Will**

Satan wants us to **reject God and His plan** for each one of us; so, Satan will zero in on those 4 faculties, either to enable a non-Christian to continue to exist in the natural world without God, or **seduce** the faithful. Fr. Fortea reminds us, *"Only the body is susceptible to demonic possession. A demon does not reside in - or in any way "possess" - the soul of the person."* But Satan can clearly wreak havoc with a person's soul without possessing it. Here's how:

- Satan can *access* our **memories**, with the **exception** of those that have been **confessed** (yet another testament to the power of the Sacrament of Reconciliation).
- He can also **access imagination**, and **manipulate** thoughts, plans, dreams, fantasies or daydreams.
- Of the 4 faculties, the **will** and the **intellect** remain **inaccessible** to Satan. While Satan **cannot directly** enter our will or our intellect, he can cause **distraction, doubt, conflict, deception, misunderstanding or confusion**.

Let's look specifically at **each** of the 4 faculties of the soul.

Memory, the 1st of the 4 faculties of the soul:

Our memories are formed by

- **experiences**, large and small,
- **emotions** tied to past events,
- input from our 5 **senses**,
- and past **life lessons** that help us deal with today's issues.

We have countless **experiences** in our lives. Most have been forgotten. Even forgotten events add up, and contribute to molding us into the men we become. Events of **great** significance usually influence us **a lot** and most of the time, we remember them; so **significance heightens memory**.

Memory is also associated with **emotions**; usually, the more **intense** the feelings, the more **memorable** the occasion. Many recollections are of events that made us feel a strong sense of love, fear, excitement, shame, pride, humiliation, etc. So, **feelings enhance memory**, too.

Memories are often connected with **any or all of the 5 senses**. Which **smells, sounds, tastes, touch sensations, or images** remind us of Christmas, for example? What memories come to mind with the mention of each of the senses? **Stimulating sensations forge memories**.

Life lessons, great and small, are **essential** for our **development and maturity** and they form the **knowledge and experiences** upon which we **build our lives**. Our life-lessons give us **direction** and **control** when **novel situations arise** that we need to handle. **We quickly tap into associations** that can give the new event meaning: **memories** that recall comparable experiences. Then, we have a **reference** for handling new situations. **Life lessons shape our memories**.

Aren't My Memories Infallible?! Haven't we all shared our memories of a past experience, with another person, only to discover that our recollections have almost **no resemblance** to his? Same event; different impressions. Why? There can be many reasons: contrasting perspectives, different expectations, unequal preparation, dissimilar conclusions. There is also the possibility that **Satan has distorted our memories** to fulfill purposes known only to him.

To Satan's advantage is our insistence that **our memories are crystal clear**; so, we conclude, with some irritation, that the other person is plainly, distinctly wrong. Our **pride and self-interest** prevent us from budging an inch from **insisting** that **we are absolutely right**. Particularly when our past sexual violations are brought to our attention, we may defensively choose to remember a version of the event that minimizes the harm done or deflects our responsibility. Satan doesn't have to get involved if we do his work for him. Humility can help us realize that it might just be **our memories that have been manipulated... by Satan or by our convenient, egocentric self-deception**. Now *that* can be a hard pill to swallow.

So, **Satan can tamper** with, and **warp** our **recollections**. He can bring the worst examples or most distorted versions of past reality to the forefront of our minds. From that, we form **incorrect conclusions, ungrounded decisions** or **misguided directions** to follow. We can choose to simply accept whatever comes to mind in the form of memories or imagination, or we can pray for the grace of **discernment, to know and speak Truth**.

But Satan does not **just** manipulate the recollections of *earth-shaking events*; we **consult our memories to choose a course of action** with life's *less significant events, too...* and Satan is more than willing to **corrupt** what we may think is **inconsequential**. We tend to let our guard down with small challenges.

Consider the over-confident giant, **Goliath**, who was defeated and beheaded by David, a mere boy with no armor but his trust in God, and no weapons other than a slingshot and 5 river stones. David, the inconsequential little brother and shepherd boy, who rose to the challenge, was destined to be the future King of Israel, who God called "a man after my heart" (*1 Sam 13:14 RSV-CE*).

Satan can **accentuate harmful memories** and steer us into a circular pattern of recollections that snowballs into **resentments, shame, rage or hatred** (stinking thinking). Such **passions** invite **reactionary behaviors** based largely on feelings and minimal, misguided, or disordered thought. Being **reactive** (*rather than responsive*) prompts us to push away God's graces. **Disordered passions** lead us in harm's way.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Imagination, the 2nd of the 4 faculties of the soul:

Imagination is a gift from God and a **critical function of our soul**. Without imagination, how could we:

- enthusiastically broaden our spiritual horizons?
- rejoice in the ways we creatively embellish our life as a Catholic?
- picture and pursue all the possibilities of a saintly life?
- set inventive and positive goals?

- visualize the joys and benefits of chastity?
- picture ourselves being embraced by Jesus?
- deepen our reflections and desires regarding our growing faith?

A common concern, however, is the **unwanted, unexpected, sexual images, thoughts, and/or fantasies** that can enter our mind. Have we allowed our memories or imagination to undermine our chastity program in some way? Yes, if we consciously continue that train of thought. No, if we **reject that thought** (*choose to **disagree with Satan***) and move to a Green circle alternative. Even with our **grace of discernment**, it is difficult to perceive what is of **our volition** and what is Satan's.

Satan can access our imagination; so, a daydream, idea, opinion, impression, perception or fantasy can be **Satan's playground and operational domain** *if* we do not **monitor and discipline our thoughts and imagination**. For the man with sexual issues, entertaining **sexual fantasies** reinforces sinful attitudes that **serve Satan's purposes** by giving us unrealistic, unhealthy and sinful sexual...

- perspectives,
- expectations,
- beliefs and
- behaviors.

Sexual fantasies are among Satan's methods of **shattering relationships**, and especially **marriage relationships**, because marriage is a **Sacrament**. The Holy Spirit is the active ingredient in *every* **Sacrament**. What greater evil could Satan perpetrate, than to desecrate Holy Matrimony by injecting the following into the relationship:

- suspicion,
- distraction,
- dissatisfaction,
- perversion,
- defensiveness and/or...
- a pattern of deception.

Our **worldly** (*as opposed to God-centered*) society generally and intentionally, has **no standards of right or wrong** and condemns the **Christian notion of sin** as being judgmental, prejudiced and ignorant. We are confronted with the **lie** that **all decisions, opinions and beliefs are of equal value**. Our "hook-up" culture of sexuality with two or more willing people and no moral boundaries, serves Satan's agenda. Without God, we are defenseless. Satan can delve into our **imagination**s, adjusting, twisting, and fine tuning, **undeterred**.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Intellect, the 3rd of 4 faculties of the soul:

Satan and his demons are extraordinarily intelligent, but they are **not able to directly enter, subvert, or supplant our intellect**. Based on their observations of our physical responses to life events and experiences, they **can tempt, torment and influence** us, and they can manipulate that which we perceive, interpret and conclude. A demon can even insert thoughts, images and memories right into our minds. And in doing so, it can certainly **influence us, BUT it cannot explicitly alter our intellect**.

Our intellect cannot hope to serve its purpose when surrounded by the dis-order of **emotional** unmanageability, our **imagination** overrun with sexual fantasies, **memories** devoted to darkness, and a **spiritual** vacuum devouring hope and trust. **Weaknesses and distractions may prevent us from using the intellect we have.**

Our intelligence has **little to do with** the ability to devote our life to **chastity**. Those of us, who are deeply devoted to Jesus Christ and who wish to embrace chastity, seem to span every point on the intelligence scale from intellectually challenged to the most brilliant of intellectuals. How is this possible? We need only to **take ownership of the mess** we have created for ourselves and for those whose lives we touch because of our sexual powerlessness and unmanageability. This realization **does not require great intellect**. It simply requires honesty, humility, and willingness to:

- **surrender** control to God,
- **let go** of our flaws and weaknesses,
- **repair** damage we have created,
- **repent** of our sexual sinfulness,
- **realize** that Jesus died for us,
- **know** that our **hope** is in Jesus' sacrifice and His rising to new life
- **and live on**, fueled by the desire to **love** as Jesus loves and to **spend eternity** with God.

None of these are a measure of any level of intellectual ability.

True story: Bob was valedictorian of his college and went on to receive his doctorate at Penn State University. He became a full professor of literature at a leading eastern university, where he taught for over two decades. He was brilliant.

But Bob's lifestyle contributed to an addiction to alcohol. Eventually, his drinking impacted his professional performance and he lost his position at the university. His extended family conducted an intervention and persuaded Bob to check into a treatment center, which required successful completion of the first 5 Steps of the AA program before discharge. He rejected the Step 2, 3, and 5 notion of God, even a god of his own specifications, and checked out of treatment against doctors' orders. Bob died soon thereafter from the toxic impact of alcohol consumption.

Bob's alcoholism ate away at his emotional, physical, and social stability, and the misdirection of his intellect shut the door that could have led him to God. Clearly, his superior intellect could not rescue him from his addiction.

Similarly, we in PULLS cannot be delivered from our sexual powerlessness and unmanageability just on the merits of our intellect. Recovery requires us to be **responsible for our will**, to make **adult decisions**, to recognize and walk away from temptations, and entertain only **rightly ordered passions**. We need to come in from the darkness, and keep our eyes on the prize: fidelity, purity, chastity and God's plan for our life.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

The Darkened Intellect and the Lesser Good:

All manner of **evil** that surrounds us, **darkens our intellect**. A “**darkened**” intellect comes to **know Truth with great difficulty**. A **darkened intellect** is not aware that it is confused and in a poor position to make important decisions. If one solution seems fully **aligned with our faith**, common sense says we would choose it. Not so with a darkened intellect.

But what if a **second choice is pretty good, too**? It may be tempting to select the “**lesser good**”, a somewhat less Godly solution that still seems positive. Maybe it involves less stress, less need to explain or defend, less potential conflict with worldly pressures, and it might even seem to make everyone happy. Satan’s intent is to lure us away from **believing, speaking, and acting upon** God’s Truth. If he can steer us, even a little bit to one side of the Truth or the other, he has succeeded. Satan knows it is easy for us to resist downright evil. But he also knows that it is simple for us to choose the “**lesser good**”.

It is important then to **build an environment within** us that resists interference with our intellectual abilities or our receptiveness to God, who is Truth. God is our Light, our Clarity and our Truth. Our love for God leads us to embrace the Light of Christ and to ensure that Satan does not have his hands on the dimmer switch.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Will, the 4th of the 4 faculties of the soul:

Some words that describe “**will**” include: determination, firmness of purpose, strength of character, purposefulness, commitment, dedication, self-control and self-discipline. Notice how those synonyms imply a **healthy level of maturity**. Our former sexual obsessions and compulsions **stunted our development and maturity**.

Satan cannot directly access our will but he **can influence** us **externally...** and **easily** with those of us who unwittingly, voluntarily, **compromise our strength of character** due to our lack of **self-discipline**. Weakening of the will can be progressive as we seek **immature “ambitions” and fantasies**.

Most of us are not lacking in willfulness; so, the issue, then, is, “**What do we do with our will?**” In the **3rd Step**, we resolve to “*give our **will** and our lives over to the care of God*” and again, in the **11th Step**, we see the words, “*to know and fulfill His **will** for us*”. We do have “**free will**”, which allows us to have a choice in whether or not we will follow God. He does not want to fill His Kingdom with human marionettes, who blindly follow God because they have no choice. The trick for us is to **use our free will to willfully give our will to God!**

Can we recognize the source of our temptations and sinfulness?

Probably not. We might have chosen to stray from God on our own volition. Some of us march off toward sin without provocation and need little or no help from Satan to ruin our own lives. On the other hand, it is possible that evil spiritual forces are at work to **tempt us** and **weaken our resolve**.

The following bullets describe steps that many of us took, on our way to developing sexual powerlessness and unmanageability. For each bullet, we can ask ourselves, “Did Satan or his demons tempt us to do this or did I act alone?”:

- We connected the dots between all kinds of sexually and sensually charged input, and a pleasurable MEPSS response.
- We returned to sexually “rewarding” thoughts and behaviors in response to unpleasant feelings, e.g., loneliness, anger, resentment, fear, frustration, etc, as if **sex was a medicinal cure for discomfort.**
- We became convinced that sex was our **reason for existence.**
- Our logic became twisted, leading us to imagine that *Godly, healthy choices* would **lead to unpleasant consequences.** (*Satan is the prince of boggling, disrupting, confusing, and twisting...but we aren’t bad at that either.*)
- We came to believe that **chastity/purity is impossible**, impractical and absurd in our society.
- When we began experiencing painful **consequences**, we began to:
 - **deny** our problems,
 - **blame** others,
 - **avoid** those who care,
 - **protect** our sexual sin at all cost (*and oh what a cost it is*),
 - **justify** what we were doing, and/or
 - **hide** our obsessions and compulsions.
- Finally, we became convinced that we no longer **deserve** anything better than the pain of our secretiveness, our shame and our dual lives, **falsely proving** that **we don’t deserve God’s love.**

It is possible that some of us progressed through at least part of this hellish sequence of events without help from the evil ones...but **if** Satan et. al. **orchestrated this progression**, then this one **flagrant lie: that God cannot possibly love us**, would quite possibly be Satan’s crowning “achievement”. By accessing our memories and imagination, he might have deceived us into believing that **we don’t deserve God’s love**; that we are NOT His beloved children. This was the **cruelest** and **most despicable lie** of all. The men of PULLS learn to reject Satan’s lies, or our own disordered thinking, and return to God with gratitude, fellowship, humility and joy.

Steering Clear of Satan

We know that **God loves us** and has a plan for each of our lives. Well, **Satan despises us**, and *he* has a plan for each of us, too. If we **doubt his existence** or **deny the power of evil**, we are not prepared to resist his **temptations**. As Catholics, the assertion of our **vigilance, prayer and devotion to the Lord** provides **protection for us**. If we are **well informed** about the enemy and keep him in proper **perspective**, we will constantly and confidently **repel and resist him**.

Obsessing about Satan, giving him too much credit, fearing him or blaming him excessively, gives him **power that he doesn't deserve**. On the other hand, if we choose to deny his existence, ignore his works, or dialog, argue or reason with him, **we will lose**. We will not outsmart, manipulate or out-manuever Satan; **so, don’t try**.

Underestimating him will also **empower him**. Unlike us, he is not limited by the laws of physics, sequential (*horizontal*) time, a physical body, or 5 senses. Satan plays by different rules.

Satan hates our pilgrimage toward **chastity**. He flings **temptation** our way with annoying persistence. In spiritual warfare, as in military campaigns, it is essential to **know our enemy and his methods**. To prevail, we also need to be familiar with the **weapons** available for us to put into service.

Words of Wisdom:

God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your strength,
but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape,
that you may be able to endure it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

To resist Satan and temptation, **enlist his spirit enemies**: God, the angels and the heavenly hosts. And remember, **Satan recoils from the virtues of the Holy Spirit: chastity, temperance, charity, diligence, patience, kindness and humility**. Learning to internalize, cherish, and practice these **virtues** is a **powerful defense** against evil. Reject evil prayerfully and deliberately. We begin each PULLS meeting praying for those who still suffer. We have not forgotten our past and are grateful to those who prayed for us. We felt **hopeless and helpless**...but we stopped this descent and began the ascent with the grace of God.

How do we take on Satan?

Be a powerhouse for Christ! Scattered throughout Fr. Fortea's book, *Interview with an Exorcist*, are the following recommendations that will strengthen us in Christ and distance us from Satan, demons, and their evil works. It is good for us to see which of the following weapons we are already wielding against Satan and the demons.

Do not fear; be repentant of all sins; be humble; exercise humility, obedience and a life of virtue; resist temptation; use holy water; ask God for protection; practice adoration; pray; seek holiness; sacrifice; cultivate a life of virtue; ignore temptation; do the exact opposite of the proposed temptation; seek goodness through order and unity; do good works; pray to the Blessed Virgin Mary; notice God's graces; praise Him; live in virtue; don't dialog with a particular temptation; use God's grace to choose good instead of evil; follow our guardian angel's inspirations to goodness and virtue; resist pride; fast; give alms; do good works; live a spiritual life; invoke St. Michael the Archangel; call upon a saint; receive the Body of Christ; confess; proclaim the truth; trust the authority of Christ; go to Mass; read the Bible; speak with God every day; and place a crucifix and image of the Blessed Virgin Mary in our house.

We end each meeting with the St. Michael Prayer. Reciting this prayer taps into the power of St. Michael the Archangel every time we are tempted to sin.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

The PULLS Response

So what is PULLS?

The men of PULLS meet in fellowship at **weekly meetings**, lasting from 1 to 1 ½ hours, to provide and share support, insights, faith, hope, accountability, friendship, acceptance, and progressive victory over sexual unmanageability and powerlessness.

- The members of **PULLS** are united, foremost, by our **identity in Christ** through our Catholic faith.
- Our second essential bond is that **we share a mutual problem**: specifically, harmful, habitual, or addictive sexual behavior, and we are choosing to turn our lives over to the care of God in order to live faithful, healthy lives.
- Certainly all of our **PULLS** members **desire freedom** or “chastity”, but it is not required for attendance at meetings.

Who would benefit from participating in PULLS?

- Any Catholics, who feel **shame**, because our sexual thoughts and behaviors are clearly out of sync with our calling as Christians.
- Those who stepped away from God, **following empty sexual promises**, only to discover that we couldn’t find our way back to Him.
- Those who are living a **dual life**:
 - *the first*., a **facade of social respectability**, fidelity and responsibility.
- Those who question how God (*or anyone else*) could possibly love us, especially knowing that He knows the **truth**.
- Those who gravely doubt, in light of our sexual sins, that we will ever be able to align with the **fidelity and beautiful, joyful, unitive, and procreative purpose** that our gift of sexuality holds in our Catholic faith.

The new member’s remarkable experience...

At **weekly PULLS** meetings, new members immediately feel the **acceptance and understanding** of good, solid men of God, who share, **honestly, openly and willingly**, their **experience, strength and hope**. We have all experienced the same desperation, we know the same pain, and we have found and shared solutions that work for us.

The assurance of anonymity and confidentiality makes PULLS a safe place.

Those of us who experience obsessive sexual thoughts and/or compulsive sexual behaviors, could write our own books on some combination of the **secrecy, duality, shame, fear, hopelessness, and defensiveness** that have cast a dark shadow on our lives and relationships. The **hope** and indescribable **relief** found in being able to speak of our struggles and **not be judged** or condemned, defies further description!

Jesus transforms the hearts, minds, and spiritual lives of our **PULLS** brothers and sisters. We grow in **hope, sacrifice, joy, freedom, honesty, confidence, peace, and the ability to love**. We are getting on board with God’s plan for our lives.

What if I am not a Catholic Christian?

PULLS is a Catholic program. The **common thread** and **primary identity** that **unifies** the **PULLS** men is our **Catholic faith**, especially when it comes to Church **doctrine, tradition and teaching**. We desire to help one another, and a key to our effectiveness is our dedication to our **shared spiritual journey**.

At **PULLS** meetings, we **delve deeply into our faith** and **do not entertain theological debate**, or **espouse divergent teachings** or **political ideologies**. At the same time, we **encourage questions** and clarification of the Catholic theological positions on issues that relate to chastity and our common struggles.

There are **non-Catholics** who witness our joy and want what our faith clearly provides. If someone is **not Catholic**, but is **willing and open** to allow our Catholic hope to be integrated into their soul as evidenced by their participation in **OCIA** or expressing a **clear intention** to become a Catholic, they are appropriate for **PULLS**. Although **PULLS does not provide therapy**, we all benefit from the **therapeutic value** built into the **PULLS** initiative. Internally **desperate for freedom**, we find a **welcoming home in PULLS and in the Catholic Church**.

If **Christians**, who are **not Catholic**, attend **PULLS** meetings, they might innocently introduce theological ideas that contradict Catholic Church teachings. This highlights one advantage of having a current **PULLS** contact person connect with each prospective **PULLS** member: we can work with them to determine their next step. Options can be discussed. Quality **Sex Addicts Anonymous (also referred to as SAA)** or **Sexaholics Anonymous (SA) meetings** can be found in most larger communities, and by tradition, they are a welcoming and comfortable fit for those who would not be a good match for **PULLS**.

In a constantly changing world, does PULLS adjust, adapt or reconfigure?

The **healing Power, focus and core message of PULLS** has been, is, and will be forever **relevant** and timely. This is possible because, **regardless of**

- the sexual sins being addressed;
- the nature of technology available;
- or the trending cultural norms,

the central **features** of **PULLS** remain **unchanged** and will always be **pertinent** because **God is never changing and He is the source of our freedom from sexual sin**.

The men of **PULLS** won't be blind-sighted or enticed by technological advancement or social trends in the presentation and delivery of sexual sin. We are constantly in training and prepared for real life challenges and spiritual warfare.

The foundation of **PULLS** is our Catholic Church, our God, and our faith; these are unshakeable. Like Joan of Arc during her martyrdom, as flames consumed her body, her eyes remained fixed on the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We can and do face any worldly changes with unfailing integrity, solidarity, and faith.

What's the difference between PULLS and SAA?

The following is a quote from **SAA (Sex Addicts Anonymous)** literature:

“**SAA offers a spiritual solution to our addiction, without requiring adherence to any specific set of beliefs or practices.** Over time, we establish a relationship with a

Power greater than ourselves, each of us coming to an understanding of a **Higher Power that is personal for us**. Although the steps use the word “God” to indicate this Power, SAA is **not affiliated with any religion, creed, or dogma**. SAA members hold a wide variety of religious beliefs. Members can have **any religious belief or no belief at all**. All sex addicts seeking recovery are welcome. The path is wide enough for everyone who wishes to walk it.”

<https://saa-recovery.org/diversity/> (*Bolding added for emphasis*)

In contrast, **PULLS focuses not specifically on addiction but about living out our Catholic faith**. *All our members share the same, specific knowledge of God, as **revealed** in the Holy Bible, **inspired** by the Holy Spirit, **specified** in our Catechism of the Catholic Church (referred as the CCC elsewhere in this book), closely **examined** by many of the most brilliant minds in history, **handed down** in learned Catholic tradition, and **worshiped** in the manner prescribed by Jesus, for close to 2000 years.*

Our needs differ from non-Catholics. In recovery, we delve deeper into our *shared* knowledge of God, rather than formulate, in our hearts and minds, **a concept of God that works for us**. We already made the **seriously faulted decision to allow our sexually harmful thoughts and behaviors to become our idyllic "gods"** in our hearts and in our minds! *Our past history is dominated by poor choices when it comes to picking or formulating a god for ourselves. **The God of our one, holy, catholic and apostolic church** is not merely a better choice of gods, as if there is a god store at which we can try on gods in the fitting room, until we find a comfortable fit; **He is God**.*

Keep in mind that while **PULLS groups are exclusive to Catholics or potential Catholics**, this **does not mean that we are abandoning non-Catholics**, to face the duality, shame and secrecy of their sexual behaviors alone. SAA and SA are ideal for non-Catholics and their meetings are listed on-line.

The **threefold foundation of PULLS** constitutes another significant difference between PULLS and any other program addressing sexual expression, including SAA. SAA is a very successful 12 Step program.

PULLS has the

- 12 Steps, but they are revised to reflect our very Catholic approach to sexual sin,
- the 5 Key Features of the *Theology of the Body* to ensure that God’s intention for our sexuality is our common objective, and the
- 7 Points of the Kerygma, to make sure that we all have the same understanding of our Catholic faith.

Words of wisdom:

Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong.
(*Be men of courage*)

1 Corinthians 16:13

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

Why doesn’t everybody seek the freedom of sexual purity?

Not everyone **chooses** to exercise his God-given **free will** the same way. Some don’t know they have a choice; others don’t choose to do whatever needs to be done to eventually

abide in chastity. **Your heart** has thirsted for sexual sin to end, and purity to take its place. God responded, knowing the needs of your heart (even better than you). Using **your free will**, **you took the initiative** to defy the allure of sexual sin. That is an uncomfortable, unpopular, and in many ways, frightening choice...but a holy choice. God didn't force your free will; He provided graces and you chose to respond to them. Mary, the mother of Jesus, has modeled for all of us the heroic **yes** to God. By answering God's call, so have you.

You are exceptional!

- If **68%** of church-going men (a significant **majority**) view pornography on a regular basis, but *you chose not* to be part of that statistic, you took action that most other men did not (yet). You are striving for holiness.
- Our Western culture embraces pornography, prostitution, masturbation, all matter of consensual sex, etc., but **you are betraying that standard**. You are striving for holiness.
- While you sincerely confess your sins and experience God's mercy, **our culture doesn't even believe in sin**. You are striving for holiness.
- God called you by name. Your heart heard that personal appeal. You stand tall.
- You hear God's call to appreciate, realize, and practice the Theology of the Body in its deepest sense (at this point, because you **trust God**). You are striving for holiness.

God loves you, and He has a plan for your life. **God called you, individually, by name** to find wholeness and freedom. God is your biggest fan. He wants you to **delight in life**, and He knows your sexual history has been in the way. So, **He has opened doors** (some visible, some not) for you, and gave you blessings and graces for strength. Jesus loves you so much! He sacrificed everything including His life for you.

Human sexuality, clamors for the original innocence that preceded original sin, calls out for honest expression, seeks a God-centered comprehension, and unifies at a level holy and sacred. As sinners, we can't conceptualize the immensity of the theology that we are chosen, *and invited*, to embrace, but God called us to enter a vocation of sexual fidelity and faithfulness, immersed in holiness. Our "Yes!" response, our fiat (*let it be done*), allows us to achieve holy unity with God, and for those of us who are married, also with our spouse.

For reasons known to God, *your heart refused to accept this sexual sin in your life.*

If this sounds like the renewal you need and want, Welcome to PULLS!

How do I get started as a member of PULLS?

Visit our **PULLS website** at www.pullscatholic.org Most questions can be answered by selecting the various website tabs; so, be sure to **read all the information**. Fill in the "**Contact us**" page, and one of our men will contact you with information on when and where our in-person and on-line meetings are scheduled, and the web address to attend meetings on-line.

How about **starting a PULLS group** in your parish community or diocese? **Read the following chapter** to see how easily that can be done, and **speak to your priest** or bishop to get started! It would be smart to **attend a few of the established PULLS meetings** online or in-person to get a feel for the program.

Section 2: PULLS Groups

All About PULLS Group Meetings

Face-to-face (in-person) meetings:

Many PULLS meetings are “face -to-face”, connecting in person at regularly scheduled, weekly times and places.

Advantages: When meeting **in person**, our fellowship enjoys

- the **accountability** found particularly in the physical presence of others;
- the ability to “**read**” the **nonverbals** that accentuate the words shared;
- the **camaraderie** of personal contact, **and conversation** before and after meeting times.

On the down side, **face-to-face** meetings encounter issues including

- **finding and scheduling secure, accessible, confidential meeting places,**
- **transportation** to and from meetings;
- **parking,**
- handling money, when **room rental** is an issue,
- **weather concerns,**
- **confidentiality concerns** when going to or coming from the meeting site;
- holiday/seasonal **availability of the meeting place, etc.**

Online Meetings:

PULLS members can attend meetings via an online meeting app.

Advantages of online Meetings:

- We can offer **as many meetings each week as needed**; some of them **impromptu.**
- The **choice to show our faces** or not, online, allows for ultimate **confidentiality.**
- Online meetings are **time and energy efficient** and make it easier for each of us to **attend more meetings** a week, as needed.
- **Any PULLS member from ‘most anywhere in the world can attend the same meeting** at the same time, making proximity to a meeting place irrelevant.

Disadvantages of online meetings:

- As with most any human endeavor, man-made **technology** sometimes has its disadvantages as well. At this point in technological history, poor internet connection issues and somewhat awkward transmission delays can interfere with the flow of meetings. As technology advances, those problems will be minor inconveniences of the past and more advanced technology will present new opportunities...no doubt, with their own “bugs” to work out. God offers us flexibility and patience in the face of adversity, and meetings continue on with their healing and growth.

So, why can't we just attend meetings?

Just attending meetings and discussing chastity issues can be encouraging and uplifting for a while, but eventually, recovery will stall, stagnate and flounder.

The recipe for success in becoming a sexually pure (chaste) PULLS man of God:

- Attend at least 1 PULLS meeting a week.
- Read and reread this book.
- Complete the 7 Points, 5 TOB Key Features , and 12 Steps with a sponsor.
- Pray, pray, pray. Go to Mass. Go to confession.

Because we are respected as adults, our adherence to these recommendations and our progress in the program is primarily in our own hands.

PULLS Contact Person...suggested responsibilities:

On the PULLS website (www.pullscatholic.org), prospective PULLS members are encouraged to fill out and submit their contact information.

A PULLS Contact Person

- **connects with each new prospect** prior to his first meeting to double check his appropriateness for PULLS;
- specifies how to join our group message app,
- tells how to access the digital copy of ***The PULLS Pilgrimage*** free on our website
- and supplies the address to our on-line meeting site.

PULLS Group Coordinator...What does he or they do?

Some of our men are willing and eager to serve as a **Coordinator** for PULLS groups, the one person designated to be responsible for the success of that weekly meeting. While the **Coordinator** has responsibilities and accountability to the PULLS group, he is **not** regarded as **the leader or "boss"**. *He is a humble servant.*

Different PULLS members with **distinct coordinator skill sets** can take on **the varied responsibilities** that make the group run smoothly. In fact, well established groups may choose not to have one coordinator, but to have **various members share responsibility** to see that the meeting runs smoothly. Each group needs to decide what works for them.

The Coordinator's(s') Suggested Responsibilities:

- **READ THIS BOOK!**
- **Communicate** to all PULLS members all pertinent PULLS information:
 - *when,*
 - *where* (if face-to-face),
 - *the online access information* (if online),
 - changes in meeting times or locations,
 - any special events,
 - any group announcements.
 - additional necessary details, etc.
- ensure that each in-person meeting has **all the resources needed to conduct a meeting** (from the Appendix of this book). In-person meetings may want to

have printed hard copies in plastic sleeves to avoid consuming meeting time looking for the right pages.

- makes sure that **access to the in-person meeting space** is secured (*keys, parking, rent, room availability*);
- **offers the role of Trusted Servant to any willing member**, and supports the Trusted Servant to keep the meeting on task;
- keeps in **contact with the priest** if that specific PULLS group meets at a church or is a church sponsored program (*usually a brief text about once a month is sufficient*).
- ensures that the group has a confidential **Contact List** for PULLS group communications and check-ins, and keeps the Contact List up to date.
- **connects** (*checks in*) with members, who we have not heard from in a reasonable amount of time, to let them know we care about them, support them, and hope to see them again at our meetings.

The Coordinator communicates, communicates, communicates. Each PULLS member shares equal ownership of the group's success.

PULLS Program Questions and Suggestions

Can I (please!) work the program alone?

Wouldn't we like to work on our own "chastity" program, independently, without another single soul knowing? Initially, **nearly every one of us hoped we could "do it alone"**. Working on the 1st Step, we will discover how and why none of us have been able to quit our sexual preoccupations or actions on our own.

At first, recovering alone sounds great! **No one but we and God**, (and one 5th Step confidant, **if** we were to choose to do the 5th Step) would ever need to know about our sexual struggles. Think of the embarrassment, anxiety, and fear that could be avoided. With no responsibility to others, we could rely on our own resources, our own leanings on topics, and take shortcuts on the questions that make us feel uncomfortable. How quickly, how seriously, how deeply we manage our program will be our day-to-day choices. The time consumed by attending one or more meetings a week, checking in on the phone or group media, and being accountable for written work, could be avoided.

But seriously, those supposed "advantages" are actually the unmanageability and powerlessness of sexual sin taking a valiant last ditch effort to sabotage our chances of sexual purity. Hopefully, **the following questions and answers will calm any apprehensions** we may feel.

Words of wisdom:

Courage is the virtue by which we overcome obstacles or endure pain, suffering, embarrassment, etc. for the good.

I had a coffee cup, with John Wayne on it, that said,
"Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway!"

Fr. Nicholas Nelson

What is the advantage of meeting in group settings rather than working alone?

“On April 15, 1912, the passenger ship RMS Titanic struck an iceberg on her maiden voyage from Southampton, England, to New York City, and sank. 1,517 people died in one of the worst maritime disasters in history. 66 years later, a celebration is held in Los Angeles to honor the survivors and those who lost their lives in the tragic sinking of the ‘unsinkable’ cruise liner.”
<https://www.nbclearn.com/portal/site/k-12/flatview?cuecard=53563>

Imagine attending that reunion. Survivors, presumably from many parts of the world, came together to mourn the losses, recount their experiences, and celebrate their stories of survival. Envision how they shared a common experience that other people could only try to imagine. That is what it is like for us; we have been rescued from the frigid waters of sexual unmanageability, and powerlessness over our drives.

In the group setting, we connect with other **Catholics** who have faced the same sexual challenges; **the fellowship, friendship and group support** that would be **lacking if we tried to “do it alone”**. There is a high level of **positive accountability** when we are a part of a fellowship. We feel close to the other men and are motivated to contribute our best for the benefit of us all.

We reap the rewards of tapping into the intellect and emotions of our Brothers in Christ during group discussions and sharing times, digging deeper into sexual purity/chastity issues than one person is capable of doing. Finally, we have the immediate prayer support available to us at any time.

Won't it be embarrassing...or even humiliating, to appear at our first meeting?

We will stroll in two directions to answer that question. The first requires us to take a **weird segway** by talking about a **Jubilee!**

Q: What is a Jubilee?

A: In the Catholic Church, a **Jubilee** — or a **Holy Year** — is a religious event that involves the forgiveness of sins, as well as reconciliation.

But the idea of a Jubilee dates back to Old Testament days. “And you shall sanctify the **fiftieth** year, and proclaim freedom throughout the land for all who live on it,” Leviticus 25:10. For the ancient Israelites, the **Jubilee** was a time for properties to be returned to their original owners or legal heirs, slaves were set free and creditors were barred from collecting debts.

Catholics celebrate an “**Ordinary**” **Jubilee Year** every **25** years. The Pope can proclaim an **Extraordinary Jubilee Year** in a year that does not coincide with an **Ordinary Jubilee Year**.

Every Jubilee begins with the ceremonial opening of the **Holy Doors** of **St. Peter's Basilica** in the Vatican City. Many Catholic cathedrals across the world each have a **great door** or set of doors that are used *only* during Jubilee years. The Pope or local Bishop, ceremoniously opens that door, usually, to a great deal of jubilation and celebration. But after the initial excitement, those who silently proceed through the **Holy Door**, do so with great reverence and prayer. Symbolically, **the sins, concerns and issues of the world are left outside** as we cross the threshold to enter **the holy, heavenly abode of Our Lord**.

Now, to answer the original question: **It is not easy** for any of us to attend our first PULLS meeting. Let it be **symbolic**, similar to walking through a Holy Door on a Jubilee Year. **We leave our fears at the door**, and prayerfully **step over the threshold into the safe, secure, accepting, understanding and welcoming arms of Jesus**, via our fellow group members. After being lost in sin, it is like having a revelation of our true home.

A **second answer** zeroes in on our common enemy: **pride**. In the **duality** of our lives, a **hidden segment** of us was characterized by our compulsive and obsessive sexual choices. **The public, visible segment** can be distinguished by **prideful behaviors** designed to portray a secure, stable, honorable person with no life problems that he couldn't handle by himself.

Entering the PULLS group session **requires inner courage**, true **dignity**, and **brushing aside one's pride**,

- **to speak** openly,
- **learn** from others,
- **celebrate** our fellowship and interdependence,
- **and grasp** the saving grace of **humility**.

Every PULLS man makes that initial contact with PULLS and that inaugural, symbolic step toward a fellowship of Godly men, dedicated to a higher calling and holy freedom.

Will we actually have to talk at our first meeting?

No one is pressured to speak beyond his comfort level. Even during the introduction portion of the meeting, a man can say his first name and "Pass", if he wishes.

How does confidentiality work?

The importance of anonymity is stressed as a part of every PULLS meeting: "We use **only our first names**. Anonymity and confidentiality are essential for this to be a **safe place for all of us**.

**Whoever you see here, whatever you hear here,
let it stay here when you leave here. (Here, here!)"**

Picture ourselves and a friend strolling in a public place and, by chance, we encounter another **PULLS** member. If we greet or acknowledge that person, know that we might be asked how we know him.

We operate within these suggested parameters:

- If we know the person **only** by attending **PULLS** groups, anonymity suggests that we **act as if we do not know him** in the public domain. It may feel a bit rude or awkward, but it is also reassuring that we respect confidentiality.
- An exception to the previous bullet: **if agreed upon**, acknowledge each other, and, if asked how we know the person, truthfully respond that **we are both Catholics**. Because of the universality of the Church, Catholics often know a wide variety of people, and this answer would usually raise no further questions.
- If we do have **other common ground besides PULLS**, ie., if we work together or are members of the same civic or community organization, **greet each other**. When others are near, **we ensure that our conversation does not broach PULLS** or related issues.

- Outside of meetings, **if** we want to be open about our own past sexual struggles and/or **our own involvement in PULLS**, that is our right. As **ambassadors of PULLS**, we do so with propriety, discretion and taste. We have **no** obligation to do so, however. Be safe and feel safe.
- All of us have been excited or inspired by concepts gleaned from the PULLS group. *By all means, we **share our insights, awareness, and “aha moments”***, but keep anonymity paramount. **We celebrate and share our inspirations!**

What if another PULLS member recognizes me at my first meeting?

All PULLS meetings are **closed meetings**. The only people who attend are those who want

1. **to stop our sexual behaviors** that contradict our Catholic faith,
2. **to reframe our sexuality** with the Theology of the Body as our model,
3. and **to help** others follow our path.

If a **new member** is recognized by one or more established members, there is an air of **celebration** (*contained within the group, of course*). We “raise the bar” and set a high standard, by seeking **chastity together**. We have all experienced desperation and have suffered because **we “have been there”**. Now **our hope is in God**. Our commitment is to help each other as we have been helped. **Confidentiality keeps us safe**. To be recognized at our first PULLS meeting just might be the healthiest and safest recognition we could ever hope for!

Are PULLS groups co-ed?

Our PULLS groups are for men only.

Although we may have been nervous at the beginning of our first men’s meeting, soon we experienced a surprising ability to **speak freely with other men**, who have fought, overcome, and slain the same or similar sexual “dragons”.

Should groups try to focus on people of roughly the same age group?

One indicator of the health of an established group is the **mix of members, old and young, experienced and new**. New PULLS people provide rich, new energy, healthy **idealism, enthusiasm, creative responses** to routine questions, and **freshness** to a group. The **experienced PULLS** members are evidence of the effectiveness of PULLS. They bestow **wisdom**, a secure foundation of program **knowledge**, thoughtful **insights** and share a treasury of **love for the Lord**. **The old and the new need each other.**

How many members are needed to start a PULLS group?

A PULLS meeting **could** have *as few as 2 members* per meeting to **share their pilgrimage**. The numbers can be expected to grow over time. *Three*, however, transform a two-way conversation into a **group**, with different **group dynamics**, which improve with increased attendance. The **point of diminishing returns** would differ from group to group; however, *consider* scheduling additional groups each week when ~10 or more are regularly attending. Having a choice of meetings with different time slots each week is beneficial. **Attending more than one meeting a week is encouraged..**

Having **multiple weekly meetings** can accommodate **different schedules** and different needs (*school, work, family time, etc.*) and **minimize** the amount of **time** that a man must go **without** the support of a meeting.

Who leads the PULLS groups?

All of us share equal status. The person who facilitates a meeting is referred to as a **Trusted Servant**, a title dating back to the beginnings of AA and particularly relevant for us. **Trust** is an important quality of a Christian, and **Service** is at the core of *living out* our faith. The Trusted Servant **changes** from meeting to meeting. The agenda is very easy to follow, to make the **Trusted Servant** role simple. **No one is ever forced or pressured** to be a Trusted Servant; it is a voluntary service opportunity.

Should we have designated leaders who run PULLS?

Matthew 5:15 states, “No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.” We have **talents and gifts** from our Father, and we need to use them to **benefit** our PULLS brothers. But do we use those gifts pridefully, arrogantly, or at the cost of others? We need to contribute to the group process, while **being genuinely humble**, and **validate** the contributions of newcomers, **gain insights and** grow by learning from *their* contributions. We **lead by example** rather than by title.

How do the PULLS members keep in touch?

PULLS members use a **group text** communication app to interact confidentially. If one feels that his chastity is under attack, he can text a **prayer request**. Brief moments later, **God is being inundated with fervent prayers** over this intention! Besides prayer requests, we send out meeting reminders, schedule interruptions, relevant articles, encouraging messages, questions and insights. **We acknowledge that we have read each message**, even if we just give a thumbs up, an emoji or brief reply. It is discouraging to communicate and receive no response.

Checking-in

Check-ins are another means of interaction for our men. When we **check-in**, we call any PULLS member (*it is suggested we call a **different** member each time*) and

- let him know **how our sexual purity is going**,
- **share** any victories, challenges or triggers,
- **prayer requests**,
- **insights**
- **or questions** that have colored our day,
- and see how our Brother in Christ is doing.

The **check-in** is personal, shows individual interest, and allows for the option of extended conversation, one-on-one. Some people check-in daily with their “brothers.”

How do we introduce ourselves at meetings?

Most of us have heard about AA 12 Step meetings where the recovering man introduces himself saying, “Hi, I am Fred and I am an alcoholic.” For 80+ years, members of 12 Step groups have introduced themselves as **addicts**, or alcoholics, or co-dependents, etc.. The

introduction at a GA meeting, for instance, might sound like this, “Hi, I’m Gary and I am a **gambling addict**.” The group would then say, “Hi, Gary!” to acknowledge him. ***The addiction is the commonality that unites them.***

For a newcomer to PULLS, the thought of introducing himself may be intimidating. Must we say, “Hi, I’m _____ and I am a *sex addict*”? **No!** When it is our turn **to introduce ourselves, we say as little or as much as we want**. We can just share our first name and “Pass”, if we prefer. **Nobody will judge us**. If we want to say more, we can go for it.

So, what is our identity at meetings?

- **Are we addicts**, who are struggling to become chaste by following a spiritual program?
- **or are we God’s Children**, whose sexual sin has lured us from following His loving and individualized plan for each of us (*God’s personal call to holiness*)?

As baptized Christians, the **behaviors** (*sinfulness, addiction, and/or powerlessness and unmanageability*) **do not define us**, but they do accurately name the common **reason we strayed** from God’s path for us. **Being Christian does define us**. Our shared **commonality**, then, is that we are **Catholics**.

Identifying ourselves and each other **by name is important**. **God speaks** to us, using our **given name**. **God** directed **Adam** to **name the animals**. **God**, Himself, authorized the **name changes** of Abram to Abraham, Jacob to Israel, Sarai to Sarah and Simon to Peter. Names matter. Introducing ourselves, by our given name, at our meetings is valid.

But **if** we continued the introduction with, “...and I am a sex addict”, that would lift the addiction to a level equal to one’s name and identity. Instead, to say, “...**I am a child of God**” or “I am a baptised Catholic” **is accurate**.

It could be argued that we allowed addictive behaviors to “become our identity” when our faith took a back seat to our compulsion. **But although we abandoned God, He never abandoned us**. By our baptism, the Holy Spirit resides in us. **Our sinful choices do not void our baptism**. We confidently **re-claim and proclaim our identity as followers of Christ**.

Putting these concepts into an introduction might sound something like this:

"Hi, I'm _____ and I am a Christian (or Child of God, or Catholic).

*My sexual sin (powerless and unmanageability/addictive behavior)
has led me away from God.*

*I come to PULLS because this fellowship helps me return to the path
that God has prepared for me (God’s plan for my life)."*

Finally, when we contribute thoughts throughout a meeting, **we always preface our comments by introducing ourselves, by name, every time we speak**. It helps people learn our names and it clarifies exactly who is speaking next. **Everyone will listen**. We **do not interrupt** because it isn’t polite, of course, but also because the **Holy Spirit frequently speaks through every one of our people**. What we have to say is very likely to be critically important, either for us to say, or for someone else to hear. **Remember, God is in our presence**. It is only through God’s participation at our meetings that we are set free. **Our words are important and may ultimately save lives**.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Sponsorship...What is it all about?

Sponsorship is a vital part of our program. A sponsor provides guidance, experience, and accountability, and answers your questions, as you work through the 12 Steps, 5 TOB Key Features, and 7 Points.

Sponsoring other PULLS members is a **service option** and is not required of anyone. A sponsor is a **PULLS mentor**. He must continue his own growth in the program or his effectiveness will diminish. Technically, one can become a sponsor once he:

- has **completed** his **first round** of work on the **12 Steps**,
- demonstrates serious regard to **maintaining sexual purity**,
- **and is committed to being accountable** to his own sponsor.

Age does not define chastity; so, a younger person who has completed the Step work may sponsor an older individual.

Our sponsors are essentially on call,

- **answering** our questions or clarifying elements of the PULLS initiative,
- giving us **encouragement** and positive reinforcement,
- **carefronting** (confronting with love) our attitudes or behaviors that interfere with our growth toward chastity,
- **listening** to our concerns,
- **providing options** for us to consider,
- **reviewing** and discussing our **Written Work** with us,
- and discussing and preparing us for the next Point, Feature, or Step that we will be working on,

We connect regularly with our sponsors. Checking in once a week is recommended, beyond meeting times. **Daily contact** by text or phone is not unusual during vulnerable times.

When we complete the Written Work for each Step and each Point,

- with our sponsor, we arrange a date, place (in-person or on-line) and time to review the Written Work.
- **We send** our Written Work to our sponsor a day or two before our meeting, so he can be well prepared by our meeting time.
- may recommend that we dig deeper on other questions, or approach a question from a different perspective to get the most out of it.
- If we seem stuck or if we are being over-scrupulous, our sponsor might usher us forward to the next Step.
- **A sponsor should *never* work harder on our program than we (the sponsees) do.**

Does everyone who completes the 12 Steps have to be a Sponsor?

When to say, “No!” At every meeting, the Trusted Servant asks, “*May we have a show of hands of those **available** to be a sponsor?*” When a PULLS member completes the sponsor requirements, that does **not** necessarily mean that he is, or intends to be, a sponsor. We respect the adult choices of our brothers in Christ and do not pressure them. Others, who are already

sponsors, may have reached their optimum number of sponsees. Every sponsor has the right and responsibility to have a cut off point.

Suggested Procedure for Sponsors when Reviewing Step Work with a Sponsee:

- ***Before the sponsor/sponsee meetings:***
 - It is suggested that the sponsor underline or **highlight** any exceptionally insightful responses, evidence of deep searching, self-observations and insights, that reveal ideas that are clearly new or have new *meaning* for the sponsee.
- ***During the sponsor/sponsee meeting:***
 - **Comment on observations of the Written Work.**
 - **Praise** the portions that reflect deep thought, soul searching, or MEPSS revelation.
 - **Provide suggestions and processing** when responses need more development.
 - The sponsor might **recommend** that we dig deeper on some questions, or approach a question from a different perspective to get the most out of it.
 - Finally, **prepare** the sponsee for the next step, describing the purpose and what he will encounter.
- ***After the sponsor/sponsee meeting***
 - **Celebrate** this milestone!
 - **Congratulate** the sponsee.
 - **Remind** him that he is closer to stronger chastity and freedom from sexual sin.
 - With his permission, **post** this person's accomplishment on the group site and during the New Business portion of the next PULLS meeting.
 - **Group recognition** can inspire or encourage other members to get started, or return to, their own step work.

It is suggested that sponsors join an already existing **sponsors' group or *organize a new sponsors' group* that will meet once a month, or more frequently if additional meetings are required to cover agenda items.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

What Every Group Needs to Successfully Run a Meeting

Everything but the CCC and Bible, needed to successfully run a PULLS meeting can be found in the Appendix of ***The PULLS Pilgrimage***.

- ☐ Meeting **Agenda** (p. 277-278)
- ☐ Suggested PULLS Meeting **Topic Rotation** (p. 279)
- ☐ The **7 Points** of the Kerygma (p. 283)
- ☐ **5 Key Features** of the ***Theology of the Body***
- ☐ The **12 Steps** (p. 281)
- ☐ The **5 Perspectives** (MEPSS) (p. 284)
- ☐ The **Promises** (p. 285)
- ☐ **St. Michael Prayer** (p. 287)
- ☐ **Serenity Prayer** (3 paragraph version) (p. 286)
- ☐ **Catholic Bible**
- ☐ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

What should every group have for organizational purposes?

- ☐ Sponsoring priest (See Suggested Role of the Priest on P. 293)
- ☐ Sample promo sheet for church bulletins (*Samples in Appendix*)
- ☐ Referral cards for priests: masters and copies (*See Appendix*)
- ☐ Updated calling lists of fellow PULLS members
- ☐ Meeting locations reserved and communicated and/or online meeting address shared

What does each PULLS member need?

- ☐ The PULLS Pilgrimage book downloaded from pullscatholic.org
- ☐ Calling list with cell #s and email addresses
- ☐ **Catholic Bible**
- ☐ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

What should we do & not do in PULLS Group Meetings?

- ***Graphic sexual talk or triggering language*** is unnecessary and inappropriate at any time and in any setting, and will be stopped immediately.
Swearing, using God's name in vain or using graphic, suggestive or explicit slang words to describe sexual conduct is disrespectful to others and demeaning to oneself. We deserve better than that because we are children of God.
- ***No monopolizing***. While our comments are every bit as important as any other member's, their comments are also as important as ours.
 - Be aware of long winded shares, or irrelevant wanderings from the topic.
- ***Begin meetings on time***, even if other members are on the way.
- The ***only authority at our meetings is God***, Whose authority is expressed through the ***teaching authority of the Catholic Church*** that He established. (*See Matthew 16:18-19.*)
Each of us share equal importance.
 - We all have much to learn in order to grow as God would lead us.
 - Humility is a highly desirable virtue to which we can all aspire.
- ***One's outside status is irrelevant***, once one walks through the meeting door or signs in to an online meeting. The rock star, politician, clergyman, famous actor or professional athlete becomes a fellow PULLS member with just a first name like all the rest of us.
- Our ***"Trusted Servant" is any volunteer*** who takes on the service position of group facilitator for this meeting.
 - The Trusted Servant position ***rotates*** each meeting to avoid prideful leadership at the expense of the other members.

Interrupting a person's share chips away at his importance to the group. *God uses every member to speak to the hearts of our fellows.*

- We wait until he says, "Pass", before we introduce ourselves and our thoughts.
- When a fellow PULLS member shares a concern for which there may be numerous valid ways of approaching the issue, we try to help by ***sharing*** our experience ***as an option*** to consider, but ***we do not fix other members or give advice***.
- If a PULLS member indicates that he intends to solve a problem using a ***"solution" that is mortally sinful***, that must be confronted and a proper Catholic solution must be provided, not as an option, but as a necessity for the sake of his eternal soul e.g. a man chooses to divorce his wife and move in with his girlfriend.
- If one has spoken and passed, and he realizes that he wishes to share an additional thought, he should be sure ***all*** the other PULLS men have had their ***chance to speak first***.
- Whenever a person shares his thoughts, ***always acknowledge his contribution by saying "Thank-you,"*** and their name.
- Speaking of ***acknowledging***, if we receive a PULLS text communication, we ***respond***, even if it is a simple emoji.

- When a person takes the trouble to contact us, we **affirm their effort**.
- Speaking of speaking, ***we stick to topics relevant to the PULLS mission:***
 - How to stop our sexual behaviors that contradict our Catholic faith,
 - to reframe our sexuality, with the *Theology of the Body* as our model,
 - to help others follow our path.
 - Avoid social or political issues, complaining or voicing opinions unrelated to the topic.
- Remember, always, that ***it is God, Who is our hope***. Involve and reference God, scripture and theology throughout the meeting. ***All glory, praise and honor is attributed to Our Lord***.
- When representing PULLS or attending a PULLS meeting, we are careful to keep our comments related to our chastity and our hope, strength and experience. Avoid outside issues that are not related to the PULLS mission, e.g. political opinions.
- Whenever a group member is speaking, be sure to look at the speaker, nod to show understanding; let your facial expressions, body language and posture say, “I’m listening and I am interested in what you have to say!”

Our function at PULLS meetings is NOT to:

- **fix others** or tell anyone what they must do;
- **talk, complain or gossip** about others, or **point fingers**;
- **provide therapy** or **give advice**;
- **enable others** in their sexual sin.

We do:

- tell of our **struggles, successes, failings, and triumphs**.
- share what works for us individually, but **offer our thoughts only as an option** to consider.
- **listen for growth and understanding**,
- **encourage others**, sharing **your attention, faith, strength, hope and experience**.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

How We Actually Run Meetings

The **PULLS** meeting **agenda** is written below, but with **annotations, each marked with an arrow, providing additional instructions** intended to maintain continuity at all **PULLS** meetings. The suggestions describe the process by which we follow the agenda.

PULLS Meeting agenda (with explanations **not included** in the Appendix)

PULLS

From Powerlessness and Unmanageability to Living and Loving Sacrificially
...through Jesus Christ

PULLS Meeting Agenda and Guide for the Trusted Servant

- BEFORE BEGINNING THE MEETING, ANY PULLS MEMBER CAN VOLUNTEER TO BE THE “TRUSTED SERVANT” TO RUN TODAY’S MEETING. THE TRUSTED SERVANT ROLE SHOULD CHANGE FROM WEEK TO WEEK SO THAT EVERYONE WHO WISHES TO LEAD A MEETING HAS THE OPPORTUNITY.

(Option: Before the meeting begins, the Trusted Servant may choose to **invite group members** to read the **7 Points** of the **Kerygma**, the **5 Key Features of the TOB**, the **12 Steps**, and **The Promises** at the appropriate time in today’s agenda.)

Thanks for coming. I invite you to remove any distractions and silence or turn off your phones, except for those attending this meeting by phone.

Please listen as I read the **prayer** for those who are struggling with sexual issues, and then, join me in reciting the **Lord’s Prayer**.

✠ “**In the name of the Father**, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

“**Loving and merciful God**,

help all those, whose sexual sins betray Your plan for their lives,
to embrace the freedom of chastity.

Grace them with the humility and desire to seek help,
and bring them to a greater understanding of the divine purpose of their
sexuality. Amen”

Amen”

“**Our Father, Who art in heaven**, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come;
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.”

- **MAKE THE SIGN OF THE CROSS IMMEDIATELY BEFORE OUR PRAYER FOR THOSE STILL SUFFERING. THE SECOND TIME TO DO THE SIGN OF THE CROSS IS AT THE END OF**

THE MEETING, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE PRAYER TO ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL. SINCE THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PRESENT THROUGHOUT EACH MEETING, IT MAKES SENSE THAT THE BOOKENDS TO OUR ENTIRE MEETING WOULD BE “IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”.

PULLS is a **Catholic** program with a **threefold purpose**:

1. to stop our sexual behaviors that contradict our Catholic faith,
2. to reframe our sexuality, with the **Theology of the Body** as our model,
3. and to help others follow our path.

Our group sessions are based on

- the **7 Points** of the **Kerygma**,
- The **Theology of the Body**,
- the **12 Steps**,
- and the **traditions and Biblical teachings of the Catholic Church**.

Desperation brought us together.

We find in each other, people who know the depth of our pain.

Our hope is in the care of the Holy Trinity.

Our commitment is to help others as we have been helped.

We try to limit crosstalk in order to allow each person to speak without interruption, until he completes his share and says, “**Pass.**”

→ **CROSSTALK CONSISTS OF COMMENTING, PROVIDING A COUNTERPOINT, OR OTHERWISE INTERRUPTING THE FLOW OF SOMEONE’S SHARE BEFORE THEIR THOUGHTS HAVE BEEN FULLY EXPRESSED. NODDING, AN OCCASIONAL “UM HUM” OR OTHER NON-INTERRUPTIVE AFFIRMATIONS OF WHAT IS BEING SAID, IS NOT CROSSTALK AND, INDEED, MAY BE ENCOURAGING, REASSURING AND SUPPORTIVE.**

We only use our first names. **Anonymity and confidentiality** are essential for this to be a safe place for all of us.

**Whoever you see here, whatever you hear here,
let it stay here when you leave here.**

(All:) Hear, hear!

→ **ALL THE MEN SAY, “HEAR, HEAR!” INITIALLY, IT MAY SEEM ODD, BUT THE REMINDER OF ANONYMITY IS SO VITAL TO OUR SAFETY THAT IT DESERVES THE “HEAR, HEAR!” CONFIRMATION.**

Sponsorship is a vital part of our program.

A sponsor provides guidance, experience, and accountability, and answers your questions, as you work through the 12 Steps, 5 Key Features of the TOB, and 7 Points of the Kerygma.

May we have a show of hands of those qualified and **available** to be a sponsor?

Thank you, sponsors, for your willingness to serve.

Does anyone have either a **sexual abstinence or a chastity milestone** to celebrate?

- **SEXUAL ABSTINENCE MILESTONES HAVE DIFFERENT SIGNIFICANCE FOR EACH MEMBER. ONE PERSON MAY PROUDLY PROCLAIM THAT HE HAS ACHIEVED 1 WEEK OF SEXUAL ABSTINENCE. INDEED, THAT MAY BE A REAL ACCOMPLISHMENT. TRUST HIM. ANOTHER PERSON MAY SHARE A YEAR OR MORE. MILESTONES ARE CAUSE FOR ALL TO CELEBRATE! SOME OF OUR MORE EXPERIENCED MEN OF GOD ARE ENJOYING THE BENEFITS OF CHASTITY, PRAISE GOD! THEY CAN BE A REAL INSPIRATION TO THE REST OF THE FELLOWSHIP BY SHARING THEIR CHASTITY DATES.**

Does anyone have any **business** to share?

- **BUSINESS MAY INCLUDE CHANGES IN A MEETING SCHEDULE OR LOCATION, ANNOUNCEMENTS OF RELEVANT, UPCOMING PULLS, PARISH OR DIOCESAN EVENTS, FINANCE REPORTS IF MEETING ROOM RENTAL IS AN ISSUE, INFORMATION ABOUT UPCOMING CONFERENCES, SPEAKERS OR WORKSHOPS RELATED TO OUR FAITH, TOB, CATHOLIC SEXUALITY ISSUES, ETC.**

The **7 Points of the Kerygma** assure us that we all understand the foundation of our faith from the same perspective as the original Disciples of Jesus.

Will _____ (*selected group member*) please read the **7 Points of the Kerygma**

The **Theology of the Body** articulates the singular vision of God's intention for our sexuality.

Will _____ (*selected group member*) please read the **5 TOB Key Features**.

The **12 Steps** walk us through the process of recovery from sexually addictive thoughts and behaviors, to our common goal of chastity.

Will _____ (*selected group member*) please read the **12 Steps**.

It's time for brief **introductions**.

Share as much or as little as you are comfortable sharing,
and say 'Pass' when you are finished. **I'm** _____....

- **INTRODUCE YOURSELF KEEPING IN MIND THE COMMENTS CONCERNING "HOW DO YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELVES AT MEETINGS?". THE BASIC PARTS OF THE INTRO ARE YOUR FIRST NAME, A STATEMENT OF YOUR FAITH, AND ANY STRUGGLE THAT JEOPARDIZES YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. SHARING YOUR CHASTITY DATE IS OPTIONAL. THEN, EACH INTRODUCTION GOES WHERE THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS THE SPEAKER. ONE MAY BE LED TO SHARE HIS TEMPTATIONS FROM THE PAST WEEK, WHAT BRINGS HIM TO BE AT TODAY'S MEETING, OR AN IMPORTANT NEW INSIGHT. TRY TO KEEP INTRODUCTIONS REASONABLY CONCISE.**

Before we begin today's topic, does anyone wish to follow up on anything you heard during today's introductions?

- **WE WAIT TO ASK THIS, UNTIL THE COMPLETION OF INTRODUCTIONS. DURING INTRODUCTIONS, A LOT OF IMPORTANT INFORMATION IS SHARED. IT WOULD BE**

HEARTLESS TO JUST CONTINUE WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND GO ON WITH THE MEETING AND NOT DISCUSS WHAT HAS BEEN SHARED.
ON THE OTHER HAND, TO DISCUSS THE ISSUES *IMMEDIATELY* MIGHT PREVENT THE REMAINING MEMBERS FROM HAVING TIME TO INTRODUCE THEMSELVES.

Does anyone have a **purity/chastity issue**, insight or topic to discuss *besides* what was brought up in introductions?

→ SIMILARLY, WE ASK, “DOES ANYONE HAVE A PURITY/CHASTITY ISSUE, INSIGHT OR TOPIC TO DISCUSS?” BECAUSE A MEMBER MAY BRING AN ISSUE FOR US TO TALK ABOUT AT THE MEETING, WITHOUT BRINGING IT UP DURING HIS INTRODUCTION. THIS ALWAYS TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER THE SUGGESTED MEETING TOPICS. THE ISSUE MAY BE A QUESTION, CONCERN, INSIGHT, REVELATION, DILEMMA OR A CHASTITY CRISIS THAT NEEDS IMMEDIATE ATTENTION. FLEXIBILITY IN SCHEDULE IS A SMALL PRICE TO PAY IF WE CAN AVERT RELAPSE OR PROVIDE SPIRITUAL SUPPORT.

The “**Suggested PULLS Meeting Topic Rotation**” recommends the following: _____

Agenda for Closing the Meeting
(5 minutes before the meeting end time)

Will _____ (selected group member) please read **the Promises**.

(Trusted Servant reads the following.)

Satan has relentlessly torn at us, body and soul,
 with countless, seductive, worldly influences, the most alluring
 and confounding of which are his assaults on our sexuality.
 We, now, are the resistance.
 We embrace a renewed freedom.
 We abandon shame to accept God's grace.
 God gently **pulls** us to peace and honor through His love and mercy.
 We are moving forward from **Powerlessness** and **Unmanageability** to
Living and Loving Sacrificially, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Let us close our meeting with the **Serenity Prayer** on p. _____,
 followed by the **Prayer to St. Michael** on p. _____.

**(All:) God, grant us the serenity to accept the things we cannot change
 Courage to change the things we can
 And wisdom to know the difference.**

→ THIS PORTION OF THE SERENITY PRAYER IS RECITED AT EVERY 12 STEP MEETING ACROSS THE WORLD. BECAUSE TYPICAL 12 STEP PROGRAMS, BY DESIGN, APPEAL TO PEOPLE OF ALL FAITHS AS WELL AS AGNOSTICS AND ATHEISTS, THE REMAINING SECTIONS OF THE SERENITY PRAYER THAT FOLLOW, ARE NOT MENTIONED AT THEIR MEETINGS. BECAUSE PULLS IS SPECIFICALLY CATHOLIC, WE DO INCLUDE THEM. THE TRUSTED SERVANT READS THE CONTINUING PORTIONS ALONE.

(Trusted servant alone)

Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time;

→ WE DEAL WITH THAT WHICH IS BEFORE US. SCARS AND OPEN WOUNDS FROM ISSUES PAST ARE EXAMINED IN THE 1ST AND 4TH STEPS, AND DISPOSED OF IN STEPS 3, 5, 7, 9. WORRIES AND ANXIETY ABOUT THE FUTURE ARE PLACED ON THE ALTAR, TRUSTING OUR ALL-LOVING AND ALL-POWERFUL GOD, WITH OUR GUARDIAN ANGELS, TO PROTECT US, EMBOLDEN US, AND PREPARE US FOR ALL THAT LIFE PRESENTS. BUT NOW, RIGHT NOW, WE BASK IN THE LORD.

accepting hardships as a pathway to peace;

→ IN OUR FINITE, NATURAL WORLD, "STUFF HAPPENS". WE TRUST GOD TO PREVAIL OVER EVERY DISCORDANT ASPECT OF OUR LIVES. WE ABANDON OURSELVES TO HIM. WE REST IN GOD AND SURRENDER OUR CHALLENGES, HOWEVER HARSH AND SEVERE, TO HIM. IN THIS WAY, WE ALLOW PEACE TO ENTER OUR ENTIRE BEINGS.

taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as we would have it;

- **IMAGINE NOT WATCHING THE NEWS, READING THE PAPER, OR JOINING IN THE CHATTER AND DEBATES ONLINE, ABOUT THE ISSUES OF THE WORLD. WE ARE NOT CALLED TO BE GRANDIOSE, THINKING THAT OUR OPINIONS MATTER IN THE BIG PICTURE, OR THAT THINKING THAT RANTING ABOUT SIN IN THE WORLD WILL SOMEHOW MAKE A DENT IN IT. WHILE THERE WERE BLIND AND CRIPPLED PEOPLE, AND THOSE POSSESSED BY DEMONS ALL OVER THE WORLD, JESUS HEALED ONLY THOSE WHO HE PERSONALLY ENCOUNTERED. WE, TOO, ARE CALLED TO DEAL WITH WHAT IS BEFORE US.**

Trusting that You will make all things right if we surrender to Your Will;
that we may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You forever in the next.

(All:) AMEN.

St. Michael the Archangel

Defend us in battle.

Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,

And do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God,

Cast into hell, Satan and all the evil spirits,

Who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

- **THE ST. MICHAEL PRAYER IS TO BE PRAYED AT THE END OF EVERY PULLS MEETING AND ALSO AT THE ONSET OF TEMPTATION.**

The PULLS Diagonal Illustration

First, the honeymoon.

Very early in our program, we experience a kind of **recovery honeymoon**. What a relief; we can finally talk about our sexual challenges, openly and honestly! **We belong and fit in** with our PULLS brothers, who have “been there” and know our challenges first hand. We are among Godly men, who are living proof that **PULLS** works. Rather than judge or shame us, they encourage and understand. It could be described as a high feeling, but *this* is a “high” that we can finally *embrace* rather than hide. This is a novel and wonderful reality.

Then, we begin our walk on the diagonal line.

After the “honeymoon”, an **additional reality** is revealed: to succeed, we need to take on the introspection, the realities, and the challenges posed by our PULLS pilgrimage . It is time to be the **strong men of God** that He has called us to be; change is not easy and no one else can do it for us. The **challenging and exciting work begins**, and here we embark on our walk on the diagonal line.

The two sides of the diagonal line:

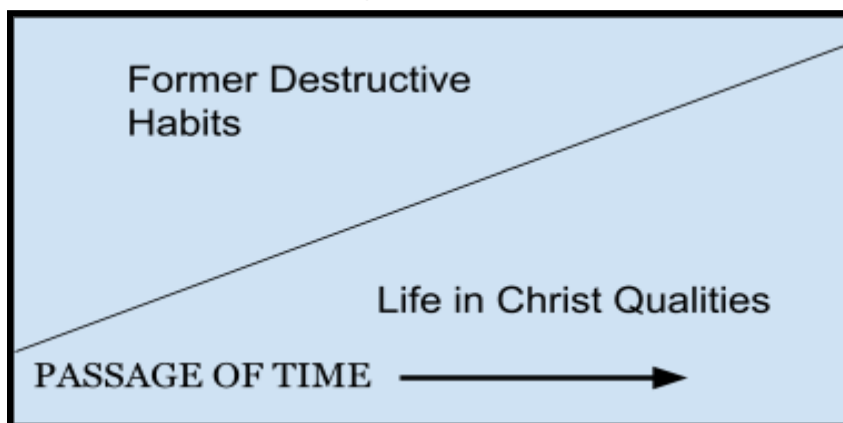
The first side: We carry into our first several PULLS meetings a heavy load of **unhealthy habits and attitudes, woundedness, and a ton of toxic behaviors and poisonous relationships**. We are hampered by **our inexperience, and our inability** to conquer all our “demons” of the past. It is easy to return to former habitual behaviors, and it is so very difficult to change our thinking patterns and attitudes. And then there's **Satan**, who works diligently against us because he does not want to lose his grip on us.

The flip side: At the same time, the **promise** of the PULLS program is this: **Godly, replacement behaviors will** grow in us, and they **will prevail**. Consider all the **positive resources** at our disposal; **they will triumph** over our destructive habits. Our ability to prioritize and **to properly use the available resources, takes time**.

Here's where the PULLS Diagonal Illustrations come in.

Looking at the box below, the diagonal line roughly forms two right triangles.

PULLS Diagonal Illustration



The upper triangle: In the upper triangle, we itemize our “character defects” and weaknesses that we need to get rid of, such as an:

- undesirable habit, behavior, relationship, or attitude,
- unpleasant feeling, or
- destructive belief, etc.

These have all become pretty deeply ingrained into us over the months, years, or maybe even decades that we were acting-out. The **area** that denotes undesirable, former behaviors, **starts off massive** on the *left side* of the rectangle and **diminishes as we move from left to right** across the box. These counter-productive factors go through a process called “**extinction**” in which, ideally, they **lose their hold** on us, until they either disappear, or decrease as much as possible, **over time**.

Words of wisdom:

No one was ever lost because his sin was too great,
but because his trust was too small.

St. Francis Xavier Seelos

There are **special cases** in which a trait that is very **beneficial and appropriate**, **early** in our recovery, is gradually **replaced** by a different characteristic that is **more desirable and relevant**, **later** in recovery; for instance, it is essential to **strive** for progress toward purity, early in recovery, but as we grow and mature into chastity, we **strive less and abide more** in Christ.

The left to right movement across the diagram represents the **passage of time**. Because the time required to conquer the “bad habits” differs from man to man and from problem area to problem area, the **amount of time to move across the chart is not specified**. Also, the movement of growth is sometimes not smooth and steady, but rather is manifested with fits and starts, sporadic surges and slow-downs.

The lower triangle: The **lower right triangle** represents **Life in Christ enhancing qualities** that are encouraged in the **PULLS** program. For every conceivable problem that could be placed in the upper triangle, there is a **corresponding, positive, replacement solution** that will bring us back to our walk beside our God. At first, the odds against us seem overwhelming, but with the **grace of God, we make steady gains**.

Words of wisdom:

Let us also remember Peter: three times he denied Jesus,
precisely when he should have been closest to him;
and when he hits bottom he meets the gaze of Jesus
who patiently, wordlessly, says to him:

"Peter, don't be afraid of your weakness, trust in me".

Peter understands, he feels the loving gaze of Jesus, and he weeps.
How beautiful is this gaze of Jesus – how much tenderness is there!

Brothers and sisters,
let us never lose trust in the patience and mercy of God!

Pope Francis

Remember, through the process of extinction, many of our weaknesses, but not all of them, **will eventually disappear**. The time line neither starts all the way down in the lower left hand corner, nor ends in the upper right hand corner. Not every problem gets 100% fixed. Sometimes, for reasons known only to our loving God, it is **vital** that we **persist in valiantly carrying certain crosses** through life. Do not be discouraged with this. Our mission as Christians is *not* to have a blissful life, free of challenges and misfortune. It is to **trust God**; that He knows the triumphs and trials we need, to become the person that God created us to be. **We offer our pain, weaknesses and discomfort to Jesus**, Who can transform them into **spiritual strength**. What remains, we are encouraged to bravely bear, without complaint. Perhaps, the retaining of a portion of these hardships will teach us fortitude, trust, and/or humility. But that is God's business. **Our job** is to **carry that cross, or those crosses, that bond us tighter to God**.

The weaknesses of our old selves will diminish. Gradually. The **replacement behaviors** steadily **occupy the space in our lives** that used to be occupied with the destructive stuff.

When we are **halfway across the chart**, we are still struggling to some degree with the habits, compulsions and obsessions of the past. But notice that we are equally strengthened with the PULLS program components, to handle those struggles.

We need to be **patient** and continue this significant, positive change. **Persevere**. A half-empty cup is also half-full. Similarly, our life, still burdened with lingering challenges and habits from our earlier days, is also "half-full" with new tools and Green circle choices. **We are already the winner** who has traversed the roughest terrain. And our friends in PULLS still "have our back" for the rest of our climb.

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

What if we stop our progress?

Finally, if we decide to **slack off** on our chastity commitment, **or quit** our recovery altogether, we are effectively stopping at the spot on the diagonal line where we made that unfortunate decision. Then, we could find ourselves **stuck** right there, or **regressing** (*moving backwards on the diagonal line*) by **MEPSS backsliding**.

Others are likely to notice we have stopped working on our chastity, as soon (or sooner) than we do. On the PULLS Diagonal, we would hopefully realize our mistake, and get back with the program, reverse directions again, and start moving from left to right from that spot.

Consider how the following words/phrases (*all borrowed from the Examination of Conscience found in the Appendix of this book*), when placed on the upper and lower triangles of PULLS Diagonals, could illustrate our progress toward chastity:

Place in the **bottom triangle** of the PULLS Diagonal, the word "**Mercy**" or "**Humility**"...

And write the word "**Pride**" or "**Vanity**" in the **top triangle...or** one of the following prideful or vain words that may apply to us:

- Disobedience (*failure/refusal to obey authority*);
- Boastfulness (*showing excessive pride*);
- Hypocrisy (*not conforming to God's standards*);

- Contention (*deliberate disagreement*);
- Obstinacy (*stubbornness*);
- Discord (*lack of harmony*);
- Love of Novelties to Excess (*overly concerned with fashion, technology, stuff*).

See how **we gain in mercy and humility** as the pride and vanity decreases!

Place on the **bottom triangle** of the PULLS Diagonal, **“Forgiveness”**.

Write the word **“Anger”** in the **top triangle**, **or** one of the words/phrases related to anger that may apply to us, such as:

- Indignation (*annoyance provoked by what is perceived to be unfair*);
- Building of strong feelings of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility;
- Name calling (*abusive language/insults*);
- Quarrels, arguments/violence.

See how **we gain in forgiveness** as the anger decreases.

Place on the **bottom triangle** of the PULLS Diagonal, **“Prudence”**, **“Chastity”**, and/or **“Purity”** (*freedom from immorality, especially of a sexual nature*)...

And write the word **“Lust”** in the **top triangle**, **or** one of the words/phrases related to lust that may apply to us, such as:

- Turning a blind-eye;
- Acting on temptations;
- Thoughtlessness (*lack of consideration for others*);
- Inconstancy (*not faithful or dependable*);
- Impulsiveness (*acting without thinking/forethought*);
- Self-love (*tending to be smug and superior*);
- Rejecting God (*embracing the world*).

See how **we gain in prudence, chastity or purity** as lust decreases.

Place on the **bottom triangle** of the PULLS Diagonal, **“Love (willing the good of the other)”**, or **“Gratitude (appreciation)”**, or “admiration”...

And write the word **“Envy”** or **“Jealousy”** in the **top triangle**, **or** one of the words/phrases related to envy or jealousy that may apply to us, such as:

- Dislike (*ill-will toward others*);
- Gossip (*defying trust*);
- Taking away the worth or value of a person or thing;
- Joy at another's misfortune;
- Resenting another's prosperity.

See how **we gain in love and gratitude** as the envy and jealousy decreases.

Place on the **bottom triangle** of the PULLS Diagonal, **“Temperance”**, **“Asceticism”**, or **“Self-discipline (avoidance of all forms of indulgence)”**...

And write the word **“Lust”** in the **top triangle**, **or** one of the words related to lust, such as **“Greed”** or **“Gluttony (Intense and selfish desire for something)”**.

See how **we gain in temperance, asceticism and self-discipline** as lust, greed and/or gluttony decreases.

Place on the **bottom triangle** of the PULLS Diagonal, “**Contentment** (*peace beyond circumstances*)” or “**Generosity**”...

And write the word “**Avarice** (*obsession with money*)” or “**Covetousness** (*wanting what other people have*)” in the **top triangle**, **or** one of the related words/phrases that may apply to us, such as:

- Deceptive (*giving an appearance different from the true one*);
- Fraud (*wrongful or criminal deception*);
- Falsehood (*lie, untruth*);
- Perjury (*willingly telling a lie after taking an oath*);
- Insensibility for mercy (*lack of concern or compassion for the plight of others*).

See how **we gain in contentment and generosity** as the avarice and covetousness decreases.

Place on the **bottom triangle** of the PULLS Diagonal “**Hope** (*walking faithfully with God through all seasons*)”, “**Diligence**” or “**Zeal** (*energy and/or enthusiasm*)”...

And write the word “**Sloth**” or “**Apathy**” in the **top triangle**, **or** one of the words related to sloth or apathy that may apply to us, such as:

- Malice (*intention or desire to hurt another*);
- Spite (*desire to hurt, annoy or offend*);
- Lacking courage;
- Sluggishness;
- Vulgarity (*uncleanness, impurity*).

See how **we gain in hope, diligence and zeal** as the sloth and/or apathy decreases.

Or picture the potential discussion borne from some other pairings that could be plotted on the PULLS Diagonal Illustration. Some that relate to our recovery include:

- **Provocative vs. modest**
- **Fantasy vs. reality**
- **Intensity vs. intimacy**
- **Greener grass vs. gratitude**
- **Use vs. love**
- **Pride vs. love**
- **Object vs. God’s child**
- **Me first vs. you first**
- **Worldly vs. Godly**
- **Dissatisfaction vs. fulfillment**
- **Impatience vs. serenity**
- **Me vs. God**

We add more of our own illustrations as they pop into our mind and keep reminding ourselves that **our assets, strengths, and Godly qualities are indeed progressing** and that our liabilities, weakness and sinful habits are diminishing.

What do we need to do ourselves, and what do we entrust to God? (When does He take over?)

Where does our hard work end and God's work begin?

Perhaps we are making the wrong assumption. **Recovery** needs to be an ongoing, **joint venture between us and God**. We work *together* from the moment God reveals to us that we need help. God *did* plant that realization in our heads. and we run side by side, start to finish, every step of the way to chastity.

Five keys to successful recovery

Our first key to a successful recovery experience is *Communicate*:

The most important element of *any* relationship is **communication**. If, inside of us, we store up all of our ideas, thoughts, or feelings, we aren't communicating. If we want other people to know what's going on in our heart or in our mind, we need to find some way to express ourselves, maybe by talking, gesturing (or using facial expressions), or by messaging.

But communication is a two way street; how do we know that they got the **right message** or really heard us at all? If they **tell us what they heard us say, or get back to us with a relevant comment or question**, then we *know* that we have been heard and understood. Without any response, we are left wondering, "Did anyone hear me? Is anybody out there?"

What makes PULLS so helpful is the opportunities we have to **speak up at meetings, check in** with one another, and show others that we are listening and that we get it. Often the Holy Spirit reaches out to us through what we share with the other PULLS men.

We need to **communicate with God**, most of all. We can:

- **pray**,
- **read** God's Word,
- **seek** God in all we encounter,
- **ask** Him to join us in everyday events,
- **watch** for His contributions during **PULLS** meetings,
- **worship** Him regularly,
- **discuss** our victories and struggles with Him,
- **spend** quiet time with Him and
- **enlist** others in our PULLS group to pray for us.

But remember, communication with God is only complete if we **listen** and **watch for His response**.

Develop what Catholic author, Jeff Cavins refers to as a "**posse of saints**" with whom **we can talk, share and pray**. Our posse consists of saints to whom we can relate in meaningful ways...maybe some struggled (*or were under attack*) with sexual temptation, such as St. Augustine, St. Gemma Galgani and St. Angela; others may be an inspiration of purity such as St. Mary and St. Joseph; many demonstrate the courage and willingness to die for their faith and/or their principles, e.g., St. Maria Goretti, Maximillian Kolbe and, sadly, an ever growing number of Christian martyrs. St. Imelda Lambertini's devotion to the Eucharist is astounding. Ask God to introduce us to a posse of saints who would "tick all the boxes" to influence our

pilgrimage toward chastity and be catalysts of learning, strength and holiness for us. We make sure to **ask them all to pray for us**. Never underestimate the power of prayer and then watch for God's responses. .

Our second key to a successful recovery experience is *Reading*:

The **images and words** we look at **have major consequences, good and bad**. Imagine the difference between devoting hours of our time reading graphic sexual content, compared to an hour spent reading the words of an inspiring Catholic writer.

We broaden our thinking by **reading the Bible and Christian works** by modern Catholic authors such as Christopher West, Scott Hahn, Dr. Edward Sri, Jeff Cavins, Pope Francis, Matt Fradd, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, Peter Kreeft, and many of the Saints and Doctors of the Church such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Paul II, Catherine of Sienna, Teresa of Avila, and Therese of Lisieux. Read the *lives* of the saints. Check out the resources section at the end of this book. Articles by **Covenant Eyes** and **Integrity Restored** are easily readable and informative sources about sexual issues.

Our third key to a successful recovery experience is *Talking/ Sharing*:

Throughout our growth, we gain **insights**, flashes of **wisdom**, and new knowledge and understanding. To speak, we pull together the random information in our brains, put it together, and it comes out from us in a sensible orderly way. As we share our words with others and to God, **truth, love and chastity take on a higher, new level of meaning**. **Sexual purity deepens** its roots. And, when we let the **Holy Spirit** speak through us, we open our mouths and out comes healing and wisdom, not only *for the speaker*, but *for all who listen*. Pray for words that will enlighten, uplift and bless.

Our fourth key to a successful recovery experience is *Writing*:

Writing presents a singular way **to focus, organize, order and present our thoughts. Write it down**. From our brains to our fingers, through the pen or keyboard, flow our written words: the realities, belief systems, and perceptions that reside in our hearts, minds, and souls, sometimes just below our awareness. The Written Work portions of our Steps, Key Features and Points (*in Sections 3, 4, and 5 of The PULLS Pilgrimage*) are designed to engage the unique benefits of writing.

A designated notebook or document folder can help to record/journalize our answers to the Written Work and additional thoughts and feelings about our recovery process. Taking notes during meetings helps us remember the priceless wisdom we hear from our brothers in Christ.

Our fifth key to a successful recovery experience is *Listening*:

At PULLS meetings, the Holy Spirit may communicate to us through whomever is speaking. So, we all listen and hear, in the depths of our hearts and souls, the **inspired hope, strength and experience** that God provides through our brothers.

We must learn to **hear** the very personal way that **God speaks** to each one of us:

- through our studies of the **Scriptures**,
- in the silence of **adoration**,
- throughout the **Mass**,
- as we appreciate **nature** and all of **God's Creation**,

- when we **listen** to other Catholics share their faith journey,
- though Christian **music**,
- by being aware of **God's still, small voice**,
- through the **Holy Spirit**, Who resides within us,
- when we **hear God's audible voice**,
- through God's personal **revelation**,
- through our **conscience**.

When the pieces come together, we **experience insights** that help us to grow. **Pray** to God, Who we can always trust, and **listen** to what He says. **Read** purposefully. **Speak** frequently, openly and honestly, and **write** as much and often as possible.

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

What We Can Do on Those “Low” Days

Two suggestions will help us stay focused, confident, and energized on those down days:

First... Pray about every temptation, set back, discouragement, frustration or obstacle we encounter. Tell God all about it, **placing it in His hands**. While He knows our thoughts and our heart's deepest yearnings, He wants us to **use our free will to make the choice** to communicate with Him. There may be some **crosses** that are necessary for us **to carry** to the grave for a **much greater purpose**. At Mass, when it is time for the offering, we visualize ourselves **placing our concern on the altar** beside the hosts and wine. **God will receive it, elevate it, consecrate it, and transform either the problem, or our heart.**

Then...Second, trust God to handle it. If we have prayed, **God has heard us**. He will **never betray us**. *Everything* shared with God in prayer, every single thing, will be heard. Remember God is not confined, as we are, by the laws of physics, time or space, and His comprehension has no limits. **He knows precisely what we need in order to spend eternity with him:** struggles in some areas to promote growth, and easy riding in other areas. Because He sees the big picture, and we see only the tiniest sliver of any issue, in light of the infinite, we need to **place our trust in Him and let go**, repeating **over and over, “Jesus, I trust in you.”**

How do I keep going when I don't feel like it?

Even the well known **saints** throughout Catholic history had **tough stages in their lives or episodic days when...**

- it was **hard to be positive**;
- they were **tempted to give up** or back track;
- in the **spiritual battles** of life, the enemy seemed to be gaining;
- they wondered if the **oppression or opposition** would ever subside;
- they were haunted by the weaknesses of the **past**, or became immobilized in the **present** by the potentially painful possibilities of the **future**.

We all have times when:

- we lose our motivation;
- feel too tired to care;
- have a terrible day;
- life just doesn't seem fair;
- we are just feeling weak;
- we are in the middle of stress or crises...or in the eye of an emotional tornado.

These conditions make it **difficult to avoid triggers or resist temptation.**

Every mountain climber, describing how he feels, standing on the peak of the mountain he just conquered, will first chronicle the exhilaration of the conquest. He will mention the **setbacks and difficulties** of the climb, only to **amplify the satisfaction** of the accomplishment. **The victory makes all the struggles well worth it.** In fact, the struggles and challenges are what makes the ascent **meaningful.**

Finally, **checking in** with another man in the fellowship, **reading** recommended blogs, attending a **meeting**, asking for prayer on the **group chat**, or reading your **green circle options** from your Step 1 written work can do wonders for lifting your spirits, too.

Struggles that our Wives or Girlfriends May Experience

In this section, we realize that many people other than our wives or girlfriends are hurt by the discovery of our sexual behaviors. For the ease of communication, we will not list all the other family members, friends, clients, colleagues or others who are impacted by our choices. They matter, too! Hopefully, the following information can be helpful despite the references only to wives and girlfriends.

Almost without exception, our “significant others” feel **humiliated, hurt, betrayed and downright angry** when they learn of our “secret” sexual behaviors. **Trust levels** hit bottom. **Betrayal of our wedding vows** (*or dating expectations*) eclipses any wrongs that we could ever imagine committing. Their **sense of safety** with us is gone. Life is turned completely upside-down.

Feeling deservingly **culpable and ashamed**, we make life’s most difficult decision and **get help for ourselves**. The **fellowship and encouragement** at meetings, feeling **God’s mercy**, and our own **hard work** launches us into a new world of **hope, honesty and singular purpose**. We are actually feeling good about our new direction...until we get home and need to face the **reminder and reality of the pain** we have caused. Our feelings lurch in every direction. We are confused. We are **finally beginning to think and behave like men** are supposed to!

What **we need to understand** is this: to those we have harmed, **behaving like Christian men, faithful and true, should be a given**, and not seen as acting “above and beyond”. Moreover, the hurt and betrayal feelings of loved ones are still comparatively new, raw and exposed.

Some of the women we love will work hard to understand what happened to us. Their response may be one of **forgiveness or mercy**. This does **not** mean their hurt is gone or their trust is restored. Their **Betrayal Trauma Syndrome** is a form of PTSD (*post-traumatic stress disorder*) and can take a lifetime to heal. But these women work tirelessly to get well, support us in our efforts to get well, and work with us to repair our relationship. They **read** everything they can find, do **research, get help** from others, and are determined to **grow** to new heights as a result of, or despite this calamity.

However, **some** people hurt by our dysfunctional behavior **may** see it as **our problem to repair**. Essentially, they would like us to go away and return when we are **fixed**. Sadly, **their healing is mired** by their intense feelings of **resentment, betrayal and possibly disgust**. They believe that they did not betray *our* trust; **we betrayed them...** and they are right. They may feel the dread of another “bomb” being dropped on them or on the relationship at any time.

It is **never** the fault of our loved ones that **we chose to sin**. **Change** is an adventure for some people, but for our traumatized women, the **change is dumped on them...** an **unwelcome and inevitably painful imposition**. They did not ask for “this present darkness” (*Ephesians 6:12*), and **grieve the loss** of the relationship’s perceived **innocence**. **Trust and fidelity** were thought to have been *shared values*.

Over time, they need to understand the dynamics of forgiveness and be prepared to forgive, **if** the relationship is to continue. The responsibility for **doing their part** in healing the relationship, is theirs and only theirs. If it happens at all, it will be on their timeline and their terms.

For more helpful information about our loved one's experience, see "Collateral Damage" in the previous section, "***Expressions and Ideas Central to PULLS***".

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Why doesn't my wife seem as sexually motivated as I am?

Though we are more similar than dissimilar, the brains of men and women are "wired" a bit differently. A man's brain tends to **isolate thoughts from feelings**, is **goal directed** and we tend to **initiate** action, including **sexual interactions**. We simply can not comprehend the enormous activity that goes on in a **woman's highly integrated brain; the female body chemistry** and equipment **predispose most women to be process oriented, relational, and receptive**, within reason.

A common wish expressed by our married men is that their **wives** would **initiate sexual activity** much like we do. Unfulfilled wishes lead to frustration, and frustration, accompanied by feelings of rejection and self-pity, are widespread among men who fail to see **the bigger picture**. So what "bigger picture" is there?

First of all, our **frustration**, by definition, means that our own personal sexual satisfaction is our **goal**. If she is not receptive right now (a **barrier**), then we feel frustrated, and **that** reveals **selfishness** on our part...**in contrast to** most women who desire sharing, emotional intimacy, and God's expectations of **unity** and openness to procreation. We need to **love, or "will the good of" our spouse**, selflessly.

Our male gender hormone, testosterone, heavily influences many of our physical characteristics, but, as Catholic men of God, we do not let hormones dictate our conduct.

The **female's sexual readiness** is dependent on a lot of factors, some of which can lessen, override or extinguish her sexual desire. Usually, it is neither a personal affront nor a rejection of her husband. The woman is impacted by the primarily **female gender hormone, estrogen**. Her brain can make it perfectly natural to integrate thoughts, feelings, speech, analytical and methodological functions, language, logic, processing of visual information, and comprehension of all kinds of "stuff"...all at once.

The "bigger picture" also includes a host of feminine issues that men have trouble relating to, or understanding...at least as a reason to not have sexual intercourse, e.g. vaginal infections, not feeling well, breast discomfort, a bad day, illness, pain, stress, distress, being "touched out" by the children, unresolved relationship issues, exhaustion, and numerous other significant issues.

Listen to her and believe her *reasons* for needing to take a pass on the marriage embrace. Attempting to persuade her, disrespects her personal needs and demonstrates a desire for "**selfish sex**". The points that she raises are an expression of her present **real and valid concerns**. She is **not** talking to provide time for us to organize a counter- offensive. Her reasons mustn't be confused with excuses or fodder for distrust.

She may also have unresolved, painful, MEPSS, sexual experiences from her past that she may be unable to get past. She needs you *at* her side and *on* her side. Finally, our wives' willingness to be sexually responsive, might be deeply inhibited by the degree to which she has experienced the Betrayal Trauma Syndrome, as a result of *our* sexual infidelity. She needs to heal, her way, in her time.

How can we respond to those we hurt, such as wives or girlfriends, by our sexually disordered behaviors?

- **Listen.**
- **Don't** try to talk her out of her feelings.
- Believe her and **let her know we believe her.**
 - The facts may or may not be accurate but **listen to the underlying feelings.**
- Try not to react, but to **respond.**
 - Swallow our pride and respond out of **unconditional love** and renewed commitment to our relationship.
 - Try not to follow or go down the “rabbit hole” of **hurt or blame** when interacting.
 - Accept it when she may have **seemingly irrational emotional outbursts.** Betrayal Trauma Syndrome creates deep scars.
- Let her know that **we are working hard** to repair the damage done.
- **Do not pressure her to change herself.**
 - Watch for **any** signs of her healing or progress and **have a disposition of support and caring.**
 - Accept that progress may come in very small steps.
 - Let her know that there are **resources** that can be of use to her **if she so chooses.**
- Realize that there may not be a mutual understanding or acceptance of what a healthy relationship may mean.
- **Be patient.** It may take **years to earn her trust.**
 - The best way to gain her trust is to **be honest and honorable.**
 - **Our job** is not to be trusted but to **be trustworthy.**
- Focus on ourselves and examine the **roots of any expectations** we may have of others.
- Finally, if our married men are discovering that our wives **can not** share the marriage embrace, we offer the period of abstinence to God **as a sacrifice.**
 - Use the celibate time to regroup and **grow.**
 - Read the **Theology of the Body** and related materials. We examine our intentions to discern, with the help of the Holy Spirit: are we wanting selfish sex or are we desiring our bride, as God intends?
 - **Ask Jesus to fill our heart with love for her,** that we can love her the way God wants us to love.
- **Pray for her.**
 - She needs our love and compassion more than ever.
 - **Give her to Jesus** and trust Him to bring blessings on our relationship.
- Let's step up to our vows and love her through this dark period of her life. Then we are **walking as true men of God.**

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

What is the role of the supporting priest in PULLS?

Suggested Roles for the Parish, Cluster or Diocesan Priest

A group member, usually the one who founded the group, regularly (usually monthly) communicates all new developments (*meeting times and locations, number of members, concerns*) to the priest. Just as individuals often have accountability partners, the group has the priest as their accountability partner. **The priest has no need to know the identities of the group members** (*other than the group coordinator*), although members are often eager to tell the priest that they are getting help for the sexual issues, previously shared in the confessional.

- **In the confessional**, when sexual sins are shared, we encourage the **priest** to inform the penitent of the **PULLS** group **as a resource** and provide the website address (www.pulls.catholic.org), preferably on a **business card**. Note: additional cards can be ordered using the Contact Us portion of the PULLS website, or the priest may choose to have his own supply of cards printed.
- The priest may wish to ask the **parish secretary** to insert **PULLS promotional sheets** in the Sunday bulletins, and/or enter a **PULLS** ad amongst the bulletin ads or to accommodate otherwise unused bulletin space throughout the year. (See examples p. 260-261.)
- He may want to be an **accountability partner** for people battling sexual sin.
- He may provide his time and talent to be a **5th Step confidant**.
- He **may not attend** PULLS group meetings if he has no sexual powerlessness or unmanageability issues of his own.
- He **may attend** PULLS meetings, only if he intends to **address his own sexual issues** as an equal to the other members of the group.
- He may wish to form a **PULLS group expressly for fellow priests or deacons** willing to deal openly and honestly with sexual struggles.

How a priest might refer people to PULLS:

Most priests are not licensed therapists, counselors or diagnosticians, so how does a priest determine who to refer to PULLS? First of all, PULLS is **not** exclusively for people who believe they are **addicted** to sexual acting-out. They may express **trouble quitting** a given sexual behavior; their **relationships may be hurting**; they may be **developing shame, duality, secrecy and/or dishonesty** related to sexual thoughts, habits or behaviors. Those would all be clear warning signs that they need the **love, direction and support** of other brothers in Christ *in PULLS*, who have walked a similar path and “get it”. They can be given the **PULLS website address**, along with inspired guidance. Let them know that PULLS is among a number of ways that people have received help and support to defeat sexual sin. **No pressure. No accusations. No judgments.**

Section 3: Expressions and Ideas Central to PULLS

GROUP 1

Accountability
Acting-out
Act of Spiritual Amends
Addiction
Anger
Autopilot

GROUP 2

Bargaining
BLAST
Bottoming out
Circle of Grace
Collateral damage
Compulsions

GROUP 3

Custody of the eyes
Deadly Sins, Virtues of the Holy Spirit
& Opposite Extremes of the Deadly Sins
Defenses
Delusion
Desire vs lust
Dishonesty and secrecy

GROUP 4

Don't dialog with the devil
Duality
Edging
Enabling
Fidelity
Forgiveness

GROUP 5

Guilt
Habit
HOW
Justice
KISS...or is it KIS?
Love

GROUP 6

Mercy
Mind your own business!
Night Arousal
Objectification
One day at a time
Presumption
Pride

GROUP 7

Progress and perfection
Projection
Ramping
Relapse
Resentment
RIDD

GROUP 8

Sabotaging our own success
Scrupulosity
Secondary virginity
Shame
Sin
Slip

GROUP 9

Stepping through the looking glass
Success
Superstition
Surrender
Three Stepping
Treasure Hunting
Triggers
White knuckling

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

GROUP 1

Accountability
Acting-out
Act of Spiritual Amends
Addiction
Anger
Autopilot

Accountability:

During a PULLS group discussion on **accountability**, “Robert” (*with his permission*) shared, “If you hold a person accountable, you are **reminding him who he is, and who he is becoming**. You walk beside him just as Jesus did with His disciples: with love, encouragement and nurturing.” The door of accountability swings both ways; we need to risk **revealing** the truth to others with the expectation of **receiving** a truthful, helpful response.

Because our authority is **God**, and He is **neither harsh nor threatening**, there is no place in PULLS for punishment or shame. Accountability is safe and designed to reinforce our movement toward sainthood.

Words of wisdom:

As to the past, let us entrust it to God's mercy,
 the future to divine providence.
 Our task is to live Holy the present moment.

St Gianna Molla

Throughout our recovery, every one of our PULLS men come up with inspirational ideas to try a new way of building our chastity. Naturally, sometimes we **fail**. **When we do fail**,

- having overcome our secrecy and shame, we confidently share our experience to our PULLS friends because we *want* to learn and grow;
- we hear the Holy Spirit speak through our fellow PULLS members and together, we benefit as we realize the truth of the Promises (see Appendix);
- we move forward, energized, wiser, enthused and eager to continue the walk on God's path.

Internet filters:

Another layer of accountability is the use of **internet filters** to reduce contact with objectionable, exploitive, sexual content on our devices. A popular recovery slogan is, “If you don’t want to slip, stay out of slippery places.” The internet is certainly a “slippery place”; internet use fits into the orange segment of the Three Circle Diagram where we write down the proximate (or near) occasions of sin. Filters have the impact of salt on an icy path; one can still slip, but it is less likely. Filtering apps, such provide screening services, report on-line searches for sexual content, and automatically contact predetermined **accountability partners**.

Tech savvy people may **navigate around filters**. Doing so signals **integrity and deception problems** that need to be openly dealt with as indicators of powerlessness and

unmanageability in their 1st Step work, and as **moral weaknesses and/or a defect of character** in their 4th Step work.

Accountability helps us remain oriented or get reoriented in our proper direction.

Acting-out:

Acting-out means **acting sexually, outside of God's safe boundaries**. It is a general term referring to any Red Circle behavior that the **recovering person is challenged to resist**. If a person reports, at a PULLS meeting, that he "acted-out" recently, he does not need to describe the specific behavior in detail and possibly trigger others in the room. It is sufficient to know that he is experiencing a degree of relapse. **Specifics are irrelevant**.

Act of Spiritual Amends:

When we are **unable to make amends** with someone (or if we are certain that making amends would harm them or others) we offer the situation up **to God in prayer in an Act of Spiritual Amends**.

Perhaps:

- we cannot remember their names;
- or never knew their names;
- or we exhausted all available information or resources to find their whereabouts;
- or they have died;
- or any of dozens of other solid reasons.

In preparation of Making Spiritual Amends:

- If this sin has not already been confessed, we start there.
- We place the entire matter in **God's hands** and **trust Him**.
- We trust that, if God chooses to clear the **way for us to connect** with the person, He can and will do so;
- If not, we make an **Act of Spiritual Amends**, knowing God will address every unresolved issue related to the event or events, **His way** and **in His time**, often without our involvement or knowledge;
- Satan can and does access and manipulate our memories, but God can certainly provide **healing of memories** in us and in the person for whom we pray.
- We **move forward** with our chastity program.

The following prayer can be used for each person who we are unable to contact:

The Act of Spiritual Amends Prayer

In the name of Jesus, I ask forgiveness for ...

_____ (specific behavior or behaviors).

_____ (name of the person, if known).

I am sorry and I ask you, Jesus, to bring into the soul of this person
the peace of reconciliation and healing through this Act of Spiritual Amends.
Heal in me the memories and feelings associated with my behaviors toward

_____ (person)

AMEN.

Addiction:

Addiction is a **pathological** (*unhealthy or disordered*) **relationship with a mood altering substance or experience**. For Catholics, if our pattern of actions and thoughts violates **God's Divine rule** (even when it may be socially acceptable or desirable to the secular, temporal world), it is spiritually poisonous for us. When we form a growing dependency on sexually disordered actions, our relationships with God or His creation get proportionally compromised. **Our objective** in chastity, then, is to move **from** our former *MEPSS*, **pathological relationship** with life, **to** a **healthy**, orderly, Godly **relationship**, befitting our current vocation.

Words of Wisdom:

Freedom is entrusted to us
out of our demonstrated willingness
for a lesser certainty.

Fr. Mike Schmitz

Externally introduced mood altering chemicals:

Usually, people associate addiction with “mood altering **substances**” that are **introduced into the body**: chemicals such as:

- caffeine,
- nicotine,
- alcohol,
- barbiturates,
- amphetamines,
- methamphetamine,
- opiates, etc.

Internally introduced mood altering chemicals:

A mood altering experience also involves chemicals, **created and hidden in the interior of the body**, such as the chemicals that cause:

- **lust** (*testosterone, and estrogen*),
- **attraction** (*dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin*), or
- **attachment** (*oxytocin and vasopressin*).

We may choose to **take chemicals** (*inhaling, injecting, swallowing, etc.*), or may learn how to **produce chemicals internally** (*objectifying women, masturbating, using pornography, ramping up relationships, treasure hunting, etc.*), and **intentionally, to create a change in mood**. Doing so, we run a number of risks, particularly if the mood change serves emotional needs or deficiencies (*regardless of whether the user recognizes those needs or deficiencies*).

Addiction Withdrawal:

Repeated misuse or abuse of substances, can necessitate emergency **adaptations by the body**, and confusion to the affected systems. Eventually the **chemical deception** causes the confused body to **become dependent** on the “drug” in order **to feel “normal”**. **To do without, causes stress and discomfort**. **Withdrawal**. As the body becomes accustomed

to the chemical, the desired effects may decrease. Then, an **increased amount of the substance is required** to receive the anticipated effect.

Addiction Tolerance:

Sexual **unmanageability** is the inability to **manage** or be in charge of one's sexual thoughts and behaviors. Our sexual acting-out initially created relief, euphoria, or perhaps a feeling of relaxation. Over time, the **rewards decreased** and we looked for stimuli that would **provoke stronger sensations**, and we sought more "creative" or intense means of acting-out; we developed **tolerance**, a symptom of addiction. A treasure hunter might breeze past 100 images of pornography, that previously would have "sufficed", before stopping on one that *now* provides adequate stimulation. Over time, some men find it impossible to have sexual intercourse, or even become aroused, by a live human being. The **powerlessness** and **unmanageability** (the focus of Step 1) are 2 key characteristics of addiction.

Words of wisdom:

I know that your spirit is always wrapped in the darkness of trials,
but it is enough for you to know that Jesus is with you and in you.

St. Padre Pio

As revealed in the Theology of the Body, a man's **marital embrace** with his wife is specifically inspired and intended by God to be, among other wonderful things, a **mood-altering experience**, the **polar opposite** of **pathological**. A husband and wife's **relationship**, when **making love**, is **creation's perfect interaction... glorious, sensual, thrilling, exciting, fulfilling and satisfying beyond description!**

Now, **contrast** that glorious vision of sexuality with **acting-out** behaviors: lusting, viewing pornography, masturbating, having affairs, fantasizing, etc. We are talking about **opposite ends of the spectrum**. An additional caution to our married men: God's marvelous unitive and procreative intention for sexuality, is not to be **reduced to lust**. **Concupiscence** (lust) is a **pathological relationship with a mood altering experience**.

Anger:

Anger is often a "**blanket emotion**" that covers up or **conceals other feelings** (*emotions*) that one would prefer **not** to deal with, such as hurt, pain, guilt, shame, embarrassment, fear, worry, etc. There are times and places for genuine and **appropriate expressions of anger**; however, to resort to anger (a supposedly masculine emotion) rather than admit our more sensitive feelings (too often regarded as unmanly) signals a disordered understanding of masculinity.

Autopilot:

There is a gadget called an autopilot that manages almost all of an aircraft's functions without relying on the pilot. People can go on autopilot, too. In fact, much of our day is spent functioning on autopilot mode, when little or any conscious effort is used to do everyday tasks such as brushing our teeth, walking from place to place, driving the car, humming a song, or reacting to more daily events than we could possibly count.

Some of our ***inappropriate sexual actions*** happen on **autopilot, too**; they have become so **habitual** that we find ourselves **baffled**, realizing we are **acting out without any prior planning or intent**. We can't use that as an excuse, though. The pattern can be broken.

To disable autopilot successfully, we do the following.

- **Figure out** what is typically happening ***just before acting out on autopilot***. Is acting out a knee jerk reaction to feeling stressed, being alone, showering, lying awake in bed, scrolling on the internet, visiting childhood home, a change in routine (holiday, traveling), attending bachelor parties, reunions, etc.?
- **Plan**, before acting out again, to use a specific **Green Circle behavior** (see Three Circles Exercise in 1st Step Written Work) every single time we are faced with one of those triggering situations.
- **Turn off the autopilot!** We **consciously** use the Green Circle response the **next time** the autopilot is about to get triggered. We experience success and build upon it.
- **Practice the Green Circle response consistently and consciously** until it becomes a **Green Circle habit** that replaces the former acting out behavior habit.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

GROUP 2

Bargaining
BLAST
Bottoming out
Circle of Grace
Collateral damage
Compulsions

Bargaining:

With few exceptions, those of us with addictive behaviors try to “bargain” our way out of our powerlessness and unmanageability, and the **consequences** of those behaviors.

Bargaining is a close cousin to superstition; it urges us Christians to **make a deal with God to dodge the consequences of something bad** that we have done.

Words of wisdom:

Our greatest cross is our fear of crosses.

St John Vianney

When we, in PULLS, recognize our flaws and character weaknesses, we **face them, own them, confess them, and present them to God** for His healing (*Steps 4 through 7, and 11*). Taking ownership and responsibility of our actions replaces **deflecting them by bargaining** (*Steps 1, 4, 8 and 9*). **God’s graces are free** and we need to humbly accept these **unearned gifts** of purity and chastity and a new beginning to our lives.

Pope Francis (6/27/19) addressed “bargaining” this way: “In our spiritual life we always run the danger of feeling as if we **need to make payment**...even when speaking to the Lord. **As if we needed to bribe the Lord**. No, that’s not the right path. **”Lord, if you do this to me, I will give you this.”** No, I make a promise to expand my heart, to receive what is already there, free for us. This relationship...with God will help us have the same rapport with others, whether it be through **Christian witness, Christian service or the pastoral life** of those who guide the people of God. Christian life means **walking, preaching and serving, but not using others**. Serve and give freely that which you have received freely.”

BLAST:

BLAST is an acronym for **Bored, Lonely, Angry, Stressed** or **Tired**. While there are certainly other conditions that would increase the risk of relapse for us, these 5 are frequently cited at **PULLS** meetings as **risk factors**. If we are feeling **bored, lonely, angry, stressed** or **tired**, that is a red flag that should prompt us to get to a meeting, read chastity literature, work on a Point, Feature, or Step, and/or check in with another PULLS member.

Bottoming Out:

Anyone immersed in sexual sin is **suffering**. At some point, we just cannot carry all that pain, shame, secrecy, duality, etc., any longer. The weight on our conscience robs us of

sleep and peace of mind. When the **consequences and Truth can no longer be denied**, the MEPSS pain crushes all our defenses and we have “bottomed out”. Then, the choice is either to remain MEPSS miserable, or to do something proactive about our sexual challenges.

Must we all “bottom out” before we can begin recovering? No. Some of us choose to “raise the bottom” by honestly, openly and **willingly surrendering to the Truth**. We come to realize that the cost of our disobedience distances us from God; that is just **not alright**. We chose to push the stop button on the moral elevator descending toward hell.

Words of wisdom:

While we are living improperly, we fear all kinds of things.
When we recognize God, there occurs a fear of His judgment.
But when we start to love God, all fears vanish.

St. Isaac the Syrian

Circle of Grace:

Catholic parishes across the world are providing preventative education, to children attending Catholic Religious Education Classes, on how to deal with the possible occasion of **predatory sexual encounters**. The “Circle of Grace” concept is taught at some of these parishes and it describes an **imaginary bubble**, of sorts, that **surrounds every human child of God**. That bubble extends about an arm’s length in all directions, and defines an area in which the **Holy Spirit resides** and in which one **should feel safe** from **violation** from others. Those of us who have objectified women, find the “Circle of Grace” concept helpful in defining a woman’s sacredness and dignity. We respect her as God intends.

Collateral Damage, Codependence, and BTS:

Collateral Damage:

Sadly, our sexual weaknesses and lack of control harms other people. As in war, **innocent, unintended victims sustain injury or suffer**, for no reason other than **being in the vicinity** of our volatile unmanageability and powerlessness; thus, they are “**collateral damage**”.

Some loved ones who suffer collateral damage **may become codependent**, but **all** with collateral damage **will experience** some level of **Betrayal Trauma Syndrome (BTS)**.

Codependence:

Codependent people:

- **lose sight** of healthy relational interaction and responsibility,
- **become preoccupied** with the acting-out person,
- **begin accepting responsibility** for the addictive behavior,
- **deny** the problem, and **cover for** or **defend** the addicted person.

BTS (Betrayal Trauma Syndrome)*:

Tragic collateral damage is sustained by the spouses, loved ones or significant others of those who have acted out, had affairs, or have committed other painful **violations of sacred trust**. They will frequently experience the devastation of **Betrayal Trauma Syndrome (BTS)**, a form of **PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)**. Those in that position should

research BTS and **seek help from a qualified advocate.**

The Three Cs:

It is important for both those with **codependency and Betrayal Trauma Syndrome** to learn and accept **the three Cs**:

- they did not **Cause** the problem;
- they cannot **Control** the problem;
- they cannot **Cure** the problem.

Bloom for Catholic Women is a good *website and program* for our spouses or girlfriends.

Words of wisdom:

Sometimes we are just the *collateral damage*
in someone else's inner war against themselves.
People at war with themselves will always cause *collateral damage*
in the lives of those around them.

John Mark Green

****Excellent articles regarding Betrayal Trauma Syndrome:***

10 Ways to Help Your Spouse Heal after Sexual Betrayal

<https://www.covenanteyes.com/2019/06/10/10-ways-to-help-your-spouse-heal-after-sexual-betrayal/>

Betrayal Trauma: The Side of Porn Use No One Talks About

<https://www.covenanteyes.com/2016/05/10/betrayal-trauma-the-side-of-pornography-use-no-one-is-talking-about/>

3 Essential Responses to Your Spouse's Betrayal Trauma Triggers

<https://www.covenanteyes.com/2019/02/25/3-essential-responses-to-your-spouses-betrayal-trauma-triggers>

5 Characteristics of Men Who Help Their Wives Heal from Betrayal

<https://www.covenanteyes.com/2018/02/12/5-characteristics-of-men-who-help-their-wives-heal-after-betrayal/>

How Betrayal Trauma Manifests Itself

<https://www.addorecovery.com/how-betrayal-trauma-manifests-itself>

Compulsions:

Compulsions got us in trouble. A **compulsive** person has thoughts and behaviors that originate from **urges**...ones that we may sense are **not good for us**, but that seem absolutely **irresistible**. We feel we **must** act on it. So, if sexual urges lead us **to be driven to act out, uncontrollably, urgently, overwhelmingly or addictively**, we are reacting **compulsively**.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

GROUP 3

Custody of the eyes

Deadly Sins, Virtues of the Holy Spirit & Opposite Extremes of the Deadly Sins

Defenses

Delusion

Desire vs lust

Dishonesty and secrecy

Custody of the Eyes:

Custody means *guardianship* or *providing protection*. **We cannot trust social norms to protect our souls**, so it is up to us to be good stewards of our souls by being good **guardians of that which we see**. Custody of the eyes has been practiced by Catholics for centuries as a way **to avoid the temptation to lust**. Why? Because many **visual images are indelibly etched into our memory banks** and, as hard as we may try, **we cannot unsee what we see**, any time soon. ***The good news is that, eventually, most*** images fade into oblivion, although the ones that produced the strongest reactions in us or were reviewed a lot, can last a lifetime. It is best, then, to be vigilant about what we let ourselves view.

Words of wisdom:

We all want progress, but if you're on the wrong road,
progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road;
in that case, the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive.

C.S. Lewis

How can we be flooded with immodest images and retain our purity? Once again, we men of God need to stand strong against the norms of our society that would label us as unrealistic, naive or prudish. Let's face it, **worldly opinion does not consider the state of one's soul**. But to the men of PULLS, nothing could be more important. We are determined to **raise the bar** far above worldly opinion.

So, we make real and hard choices: We strike TV shows, movies, advertisements, magazines, and establishments that are clearly near occasions of sin, by design. We decrease the possibilities of being tempted or triggered, by avoiding situations and places that are very likely to be frequented by women in immodest attire, such as beaches, parties and public venues known for indiscrete fashion.

But what if we are in "neutral territory", and inadvertently stumble upon a woman who "triggers" us? If we are able to look at a woman without edging, some of us deliberately look at her eyes while others pray for her. Still others choose to train themselves to look away, look up, look down at the pavement, or look at a non-triggering object such as a tree, sign, mail box, picture on the wall or piece of furniture. For those of us who are married or have girlfriends, we divert our gaze directly at our sweetheart until the triggering person is no longer in the vicinity. It is difficult at first, but becomes more and more automatic and habitual with plenty of prayer and practice. We need to be patient with ourselves and allow time for healthy habits to form.

Every time we take custody of our eyes, we have achieved a positive act of will that builds confidence, discipline, and self-respect. Lowering our eyes is an option; raising our hearts to God is essential.

A couple minutes **after we intentionally look away from someone** over whom we would have previously lusted, **ask ourselves:**

If I had looked at her,

- wouldn't the **'high' feeling** have passed by now?
- Would I **feel better** about myself, had I looked?
- Would I be a **better person**, had I looked?
- By passing up the 'opportunity', do I **possess self-control** that I did not have before I joined PULLS?
- Do I **respect her** as a **child of God** by not looking at her lustfully?
- Do I pray for her soul?
- Why don't I take a moment to ask for God to lead my heart to a **Saint**, who can be an **inspiration of sexual purity** for me...there are many, but some that we might consider include: ***Sts. Augustine, Agnes, Mary of Egypt, Moses the Ethiopian, Justina, John the Long Suffering, Gemma Galgani, Agatha, Lucy, Maria Goretti, Aloysius Gonzaga, Catherine of Siena, and of course Our Holy Mother Mary and St. Joseph.***

Keep in mind that **we are chaste by the grace of God.**

Yes, we must **do our part:** practice discipline, resolve to work our program, and know that it is **God**, Who is **delivering us** from sexual sin.

7 Deadly Sins, Virtues of the Holy Spirit & Opposite Extremes of the Deadly Sins:

In our **zeal** to separate ourselves from any of the seven Capital (or *Deadly*) Sins, it is possible to **go overboard**, sail right **past the desired virtue**, and settle into the **polar opposite behavior of the particular sin!** Case in point: A man's heart is convicted and he dedicates himself to abandoning all sins that are lustful and thus, disordered in the eyes of God. In his enthusiasm, he goes to the opposite extreme, passes right past chastity, and becomes a moral zealot, as consumed with sexual righteousness as he had been with sexual sin.

Words of wisdom:

Offer your temptations for the conversion of sinners.

St. Jean Vianney

*The Virtues of the Holy Spirit that we seek are **chastity, temperance, charity, diligence, patience, kindness, and humility.***

Below are **three columns.**

- The **first column** contains the **Seven Deadly Sins.**
- The **second column** consists of the seven *desirable* **Virtues of the Holy Spirit.**
- The **third column** shows us the polar **opposite behaviors of the Deadly Sins**, which are **not** the desired responses.

7 Deadly Sins	Virtues	Opposite Extreme
Lust	<i>Chastity</i>	Prudishness
Pride (<i>vanity</i>)	<i>Humility</i>	Self-Loathing
Greed (<i>avarice</i>)	<i>Generosity</i>	Wastefulness
Anger (<i>wrath</i>)	<i>Meekness or Patience</i>	Servility
Envy	<i>Kindness or Brotherly Love</i>	Timidity (<i>cowardice</i>)
Gluttony	<i>Temperance</i>	Deficiency
Sloth (<i>acedia</i>)	<i>Diligence</i>	Workaholism

Defenses:

Defenses are **methods** we use to keep people an arm's length away from our feelings. If we reveal our feelings, we would have to admit that addictive behaviors are at the root of many of our raw emotions. We have sacrificed practically everything to preserve our obsessions and compulsions: our mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual (*MEPSS*) health, our relationships, our dignity.

It seems that our addictive behaviors are all that we have left; so, we feel we must defend them at all cost. To do so, we use defenses including *blaming, intellectualizing, justifying, rationalizing, projecting, denying, avoiding, humor, intimidation, comparing* and many more. Defenses are designed to misdirect others, misrepresent ourselves, or make others back off.

Words of wisdom:

Pay attention carefully.
After the **sin** comes the **shame**;
courage follows **repentance**.
Did you pay attention to what I said?
Satan upsets the order;
he gives **courage** to the **sin** and **shame** to **repentance**.

St. John Chrysostom

Delusion:

Delusion occurs when one convinces himself that his dishonesty is the truth. We lie to ourselves and are invested in those lies to preserve our addictive relationships.

Desire vs Lust:

A difficult and challenging distinction we must make is how to **differentiate between desire and lust**. Our acting out was driven by **lust**, our **selfish craving** for the **intoxicating experience of sexual pleasure** to wash over our mind, feelings, and body. That (*obviously*) is **lust**; never satisfying, forever creating greater emptiness, and continually distancing us from God and from the very bedrock of Christian masculinity.

Benefits for single men to reject lust:

So what is the **benefit** for our **single men to reject lust** and become or remain chaste? First, remember that **sexual temptation signals spiritual warfare** over ownership of our **body, heart** and **soul**. We pray, incorporate the 7 virtues, remain ever vigilant, study the bible and integrate what we read (*especially Ephesians 6:10-18*). While defending our chastity, we are building powerful **Christian character**. Rebuffing Satan's sexual seductions

will be rewarded with tried and tested....

- **integrity,**
- **intentionality,**
- **trust,**
- **authenticity,**
- **honesty,**
- **sacrifice, and**
- **confidence** in our present or future vocation, be it celibate life, the priesthood, or marriage.

Desiring vs. Lusting Over Our Wives:

For those of us who are **married** or are called to the vocation of marriage, it is **not** God's intention for us to **lust** for our wives. In fact, **lust betrays** the promise of **fidelity** in Holy Matrimony. **Pure and chaste desire** needs to be the motivation behind our wish to share in the sensual joys of marriage.

But that begs the question: if the **pleasure of the past** has been self-centered, how do married men engage in the marriage embrace and not experience pleasure? The simple answer is this: **we do experience pleasure...profound pleasure**, beyond anything we have ever experienced, but this is not singular; it is **plural**. The **two of us** engage in God's *ultimate marriage gift* to each other. We are **giving ourselves** to our wives and they to us, in a *holy exchange* of the perfect measures of **3 forms of love** that the Greeks refer to as **philia, eros and agape love**...love designed to be **sensually spectacular (eros)** and, at the same time, a selfless and mutual gift that **will the good of the other (agape)**, while retaining a **close, affectionate, friendship (philia)**, *all* for the benefit of **God's greater unitive and procreative vision!** This becomes **the deepest desire of our hearts.**

Love vs. lust:

- *Eros love, separated from agape love, is **lust**.*
- *Eros love, purified by agape love, is the **chaste desire** in which we are to abide.*

How do we get out of the **lust habit** and grow into the experience of **desire as God intends it?** *Sometimes*, it requires a period of mutual **fasting** from all sexual (*MEPSS*) activity for a mutually predetermined period of time to allow ourselves to **“reset”** attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. **Pray for discernment.** We let God know that our deepest **desire** is to enter into His world of perfect love. **Pray together.**

Our marriage is a **Sacrament**, and the Holy Spirit is the unifying bridge between the two of us. He knows our heart and He will convert the movement of our intentions from selfishness to selflessness. **We give our sexual integrity to Him** and let Him work His miracles at His pace, knowing our heartfelt desires.

Words of wisdom:

The devil wants you to believe that you are unlovable,
unforgivable and that you'll never be enough.
He'll stick a thorn in the wound of your insecurities and twist it.
He wants you to believe you are worthless.
Grace is stronger. God is bigger.
The cross of Christ proves our great worth.

Mark Hart

Dishonesty and Secrecy:

Inevitably, if we are honest about our **addictive behaviors**, we know how they can **drive us into secrecy**. For many of us,

- first came the little lie — about missing an appointment or coming home late...
- then the lie to cover the lie,
- and then the lies to try to escape from the web of lies that entangled us within our deceit. We tell no one the truth.

We couldn't look our loved one in the eye; we wouldn't risk the truth, and so we lied again and again. Eventually, the sad day came when we found that our isolated world of fantasy and deception had become "normal".

For many of us, we were **afraid of honest spontaneity or unguarded discussion** for fear of bringing the whole house of deception tumbling down. **We watched our words, covered our tracks, and worried**, worried, worried. And usually we were not the only ones to get hurt; our spouses, children, friends, and colleagues suffered too. Increment by increment, we **slid** from a life of honesty and integrity to **powerlessness over our thoughts and behaviors, and unmanageability over our drives and lives**. The web of **deceit became so complicated** we could no longer imagine how we got to this awful place; if we broke our silence, we certainly couldn't begin to explain it. Our **secrecy compounded the shame**.

Lying and dishonesty are among dozens of character weaknesses that most of us develop along with our addictive behavior. In recovery, **we progress toward a life dedicated to honesty**. We have begun to change, and changing takes time; sometimes a lifetime. And what an exciting pilgrimage it is! So, we become eager to continue taking inventory and we **progress, fearlessly and honestly**. Each time we are honest, **the lies lose their hold on us** and we can witness the power of Truth. ***What a reinforcer!***

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

GROUP 4

Don't dialog with the devil

Duality

Edging

Enabling

Fidelity

Forgiveness

Don't Dialogue With the Devil:

The devil was rejected from heaven for pridefully and falsely seeking equal status to God. **God is the Creator. Satan is the corruptor.** The devil causes confusion, manipulates, and thrives on death, hatred, violence, ignorance, pride and addictions. Our sexual unmanageability and powerlessness are markers of **Satan's corruption of innocence.** Although **Satan is clearly inferior to God**, make no mistake that **we are all vulnerable to Satan's wickedness and snares.** No amount of **bravado** should tempt us **to challenge, entice, deal or dialogue with Satan.**

Some factors that increase the risk of falling into Satan's traps:

- engaging or entertaining compromising thoughts, habits or actions (**edging**),
- hanging out with people who exhibit sexually sinful attitudes,
- failing to stand firm on our values when among triggers,
- being dishonest with ourselves about relaxing our purity program.

These constitute "**feeding the dragon**", or **empowering the very evil that we should be trying to extinguish.** Recalling the words on the St. Benedict Medal, "Crux sacra sit mihi lux! Nunquam draco sit mihi dux!" (**May the holy cross be my light! May the dragon never be my guide!**).

At PULLS meetings, we acknowledge dangers to purity/chastity that can be attributable to Satan, and we pray the **Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel** (see Appendix) any time we face temptation, and to close every meeting. But we do not give Satan more time, power or credit than he deserves.

Words of wisdom:

Quit talking to the dang snake.

Fr. Justin Brady

"Don't dialogue with the devil" reminds us that **we are treading in spiritually dangerous territory.** *Luke 4:1-13* recounts how Jesus dealt with the temptations of the devil in the Judean desert. Notice **Jesus did not dialogue with the devil.** He **quoted holy scripture.** Our primary focus, on the road to our recovery needs to gravitate to sacred scripture, and God's mercy, and healing, and love.

Words of Wisdom:

The devil is an intelligent being and temptation is a dialog.

Fr. Jose Antonio Fortea

Duality:

Most sexually **obsessed** people don't want others to know about our **continual preoccupation** with sex. By definition, sexual obsession is intrusive; we are so **engrossed** with sexual thoughts and fantasies that they **interfere with our responsibilities and daily functioning**. Sex **controls, enthralls and consumes** us. Imagine the consequences if word got out that **sex dominated** our personal lives. We would be shunned!

So, most with compulsive sexual behaviors and obsessive sexual thoughts develop **dual lives**: one that we allow the world to see, and one that we conceal.

Words of wisdom:

When God sees our sin, He sees our pain.

Julian of Norwich

The side we show:

We become deeply invested in demonstrating all the apparently excellent characteristics that might be helpful to display to others, e.g. charm, morality, leadership, scholarship, charisma, achievement, social graces, ambition, etc.; all in an effort to project to the world the image of a Godly, or at least socially acceptable, man.

The side we don't show:

The other, hidden side of us conceals:

- **intense shame;**
- harsh self-contempt;
- profound *MEPS* pain;
- consuming insecurity;
- painful dishonesty;
- intense fear;
- irrational resentments;
- bottomless depression;
- acute anxiety and
- utter confusion...

all **very efficient and useful tools of Satan**. We rarely recognize Satan's involvement in the twisting of our lives until we become deeply entangled in his web of deceit.

Words of wisdom:

Even if we forget or reject our identity, God does not.
He never forgets you. He never forgets that you are His son,
and he will not reject you when you return home to Him.

Leah Darrow

Duality is exhausting... and disastrous, especially to a Christian. We learn to deceive others with our display of goodness, and we often **delude** ourselves into **believing our own**

lies, just to be able to live with ourselves. Eventually, our **highest highs** have **become lower than the lowest lows** before our addictive behavior took control. The **highs just don't satisfy** anymore, but the flickering buzz of sexually desperate measures seems better than the absolute misery of doing without. So we just continue doing what we have always done. Empty. *Joyless*. Shallow...just **existing in a deep, deep rut, while concealing it** with smiles, cleverness, and empty laughter. In our uniqueness, we experience these feelings at varying degrees.

Our **recovery brings about internal and external unity**. We progress in our recovery program, toward becoming **one person in Christ**: the person God has created us to be. **The duality leaves us**. The person people see at work, at school, at home, at the game, at recreation, at Church, or at the airport is now **consistent, unified, and integrated**; one **individual, created in God's image**, and lovable, *joyful* and secure in God's grace.

Edging:

Most of us have experienced that sinking of the stomach feeling, standing on, or near, the edge of a steep precipice? The feelings may range

- from fear to vertigo,
- from heart thumping excitement to paralysis,
- from terror to the thrill of a close call.

These sensations produce endorphins and other chemicals that **excite the pleasure centers** of our brains. Edging can be seen as **thrill seeking or tottering on the brink of danger**, and that can be **addictive**. Some of us with sexual concerns, often are stimulated by dangerous sexual situations and take **unnecessary or unsafe risks to ourselves or others**.

This could include running the risk of:

- causing **pregnancy**,
- catching or spreading **sexually transmitted diseases**,
- being caught in sexually **compromising situations**,
- risking **imprisonment**, and
- **ruining our committed relationship** with the ones we love: family, friends and God.

Near occasions of sexual sin can be considered edging. So can a self-manipulative means of **playing with technicalities to avoid responsibility** for acting-out, or for nurturing attitudes and behaviors that are definitely dangerous to our *individual programs*. An example might be a person who chooses to masturbate right up to the moment of ejaculation, and then stops. He rationalizes that he did not actually masturbate, since he did not complete the act.

Another man may arrange a date with a woman who is known to have very "relaxed" sexual standards. It seems that edging generally requires some form of rationalizing because, in this case, our friend's defense is that **the outcome** from this date **will somehow be different** than that of her dates with many previous men. He then feigns surprise when he ends up having sexual relations. Oops!

Especially when dealing with addictive behaviors, **edging** may be little more than a **means of setting up a slip**. There is a saying, "*If you don't want to slip, stay out of slippery*

places.” People, powerless over gambling, should stay away from casinos (slippery places for gambling addicts). Choosing to eat out at the casino buffet in clear view of the slot machines and within earshot of the broadcasted gaming promotions, would most definitely be edging. Another example: An alcoholic chooses to return to the bar he formerly frequented (clearly a slippery place for an alcoholic), rationalizing that he intends to order a non-alcoholic drink while his former drinking buddies have a “few beers” (edging). Experience suggests that if he successfully returns home this first time, having consumed only soft drinks (*and he probably will, if not just to prove he can do it*), he will return to the bar again and again until, sooner than later, **he will relapse**.

Words of wisdom:

My beloved, may every fall, even if it is serious and habitual sin,
always become for us a small step toward a higher degree of perfection.

St. Maximillian Kolbe

Enabling:

Most **people, whose lives are intertwined with a person with addictive behaviors**, are genuinely concerned and **want to be helpful**. The problem arises when, out of **good intentions**, or because they have no idea what else to do, they **mistakenly feed into the addictive behavior**. This is enabling. Enabling makes it easier for the person with addictive behaviors **to continue** on with their destructive actions. Enabling attempts to **fix the person, solve the problem, or reduce or remove consequences**.

When enabling happens **in 12 Step meetings**, the environment can become **toxic**. To avoid this danger, here are some **healthy practices to incorporate in our PULLS groups**:

- We are allowed to **assert our concerns** for the benefit of the group.
- **Acknowledge** and never minimize the **seriousness** of addictive behaviors.
- Our freedom to **express our feelings** is valued and encouraged.
- We recognize the **progressive nature** of compulsive and obsessive behaviors.
- Our interaction is **positive, understanding and empathetic**.
- Helping each other to **take responsibility** for our choices is critical to recovery.
- We **face the consequences** of our choices with honesty and courage. It is God, Who rescues us from the clutches of Satan.
- We allow our spiritual brothers to **experience, feel and express** their **pain**.
- We treat each other as **adults**, seeing each other through the eyes of God.
- PULLS men encourage our fellow group members to **gain personal independence, maturity and freedom** in all areas of our lives.
- We clearly separate and **delineate the addictive allure** of our past illicit sexual behavior, **from the** rich blend of **philia, agape and eros love** intended for married couples by God.
- We recognize problem activity or acting-out as behavior that is harmful to the dependent person and **address** that **inherent destructive nature** for exactly what it is.

Fidelity:

In all of our interpersonal relationships, and particularly for those of us who are married, engaged, or dating one special person, there is a **promise of fidelity**. Fidelity is demonstrated by our **constant loyalty of mind, body and soul**, to the one with whom we are devoted. **Our commitment to sexual purity** reveals our fidelity to those we love, to ourselves and to God.

Words of wisdom:

God reveals, out of His kindness, our woundedness
because God wants to bring us into communion.

Sr. Miriam James Heidland, SOLT

Forgiveness:

“Forgive us our trespasses as we *forgive* those who trespass against us.” Jesus taught us those words. The CCC addresses this passage in paragraphs 2838-2845. We say the **Our Father** shortly following **the Consecration** at every Mass, and when we begin our PULLS meetings. Pray that our ability to forgive becomes more and more like that of God. In contrast, Satan wants us to carry grudges. As Catholics, we *must* forgive others. Pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen us to forgive from the heart. Doing so will be **rewarded with graces** and will vitalize, energize and strengthen our bond to Jesus.

We justify our unforgiveness as if our circumstances are the **exceptions to the rule**. They aren't. **We need to forgive every incident** of incoming torment, insensitivity, intimidation, humiliation and embarrassment...big or little. How is this possible?

After the Vietnam War, a former American POW (Prisoner of War) returned to Vietnam to meet with the guard(s) who repeatedly tortured him during his imprisonment. He had one purpose: to complete the **process of forgiving**. No, he did not let the captor “off the hook”. He did not relieve his former jailer of responsibility. He knew he did not ask for or deserve the MEPSS abuse at the hands of the VietCong. **He didn't forget** what happened or **minimize** the horror of his experience. He absolutely did not **sweep away the harm** that was done. He knew he suffered PTSD (*Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*), that his nightmares might never stop, and that his symptoms might forever have a crippling impact on his life.

Words of wisdom:

As to the past, let us entrust it to God's mercy,
the future to divine providence.
Our task is to live Holy the present moment.

St Gianna Molla

So, how was **forgiveness** possible? The POW accurately regarded **forgiveness as a willful act of justice**. After **assessing the totality of the harm he had received**, he made the **willful choice** to forgive. He tallied exactly how much the guard's cruelty **had cost him**...and **released** the guard **from the guard's enormous debt**. To do so, the POW had to **absorb the cost himself**. That is forgiveness.

To a non-Christian, the story of the American prisoner's forgiveness most likely makes little or no sense. But to us Christians, we need only to **look at the Sacred Heart of Jesus**. When He was publicly perjured, betrayed, brutalized, spit upon, mocked, defiled, tortured, whipped, stripped, disrespected, despised, and nailed to a Roman cross, he **suffered every indignity** we could ever imagine. And yet, He uttered the words, "*Father, **forgive them, for they know not what they do.***" We are called to do more than just *emulate* Our Lord. We are to **be the reflection of Jesus; to open our hearts** to His love and allow Him to pour forth from us. We do this **by God's strength and His grace**. Pray for that. Sometimes, forgiveness is an ongoing process. Begin that process.

At our Mass, the Lord's Prayer is followed by the "Kiss of Peace", not simply in order to have a friendly, social time in the middle of Mass. It is designed *to make certain that we are not about to take the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ into our body when we are in a state of sin*. We are given an opportunity **to make peace** with anyone with whom we harbor hostile, angry or harmful feelings, **before participating** in the Eucharist Celebration. That is how important our Catholic Church regards the condition of our souls and the inestimable preciousness of the Sacrament.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

GROUP 5

Guilt
Habit
HOW
Justice
KISS...or is it KIS?
Love

Guilt:

Guilt is the feeling we experience when we realize that we have made a **bad choice** or **behaved in an unacceptable way**. Our **guilt is about our behavior**. God nudges us or alerts us, through our **conscience**, when we step outside the boundaries of His Commandments. That gives us an opportunity to **reconsider our behaviors** and align ourselves with conduct pleasing to God. We each have an internal desire to walk with Him, and He is always inviting us to reverse our direction, away from harmful behaviors.

Words of wisdom:

Sorrow for sin is indeed necessary,
but it should not be an endless preoccupation.
We should dwell also on the glad remembrance of God's loving kindness; otherwise,
sadness will harden the heart
and lead it more deeply into despair.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Habit:

While **habits usually accompany addictive behaviors**, habit is *not* the same as addiction. Habits are **acquired with repetition**; a behavior one tends to do with **regularity**, or with **practice**. Any action or sequence of actions will cause a specific *path or chain of electrical or synaptic activity* of cells (neurons) in the brain. The next time the behavior occurs, the chain of neurons fires more efficiently and directly. **Learning** happens when the path is traveled over and over again, and becomes **imprinted** in the brain. Once a habit, whether productive or destructive, is formed or learned, it tends to **persist**. That is why children are urged to learn **good habits** at an early age.

Words of wisdom:

My beloved, may every fall, even if it is serious and habitual sin,
always become for us a small step toward a higher degree of perfection.

St. Maximillian Kolbe

To break a “bad habit”, break the routine. We resolve that we need to **respond in a new and positive way** when we encounter triggers. Practicing a Green Circle behavior,

in response to a specific trigger, will cause the **new response to grow in strength**, and the old destructive behavior to extinguish (extinction).

Words of wisdom:

Lust indulged became habit, and habit unresisted became necessity.

St. Augustine

HOW:

HOW is an acronym to remind us, "If we want to maximize the chances of a healthy chastity, here's **HOW**: be **Honest**, **Open**, and **Willing**."

Justice:

"Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the 'virtue of religion.' Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor. 'You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.' 'Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.'" Catechism of the Catholic Church, Second Edition, paragraph 1807 (Bolding added.)

Outside many courthouses is a statue or architectural detail of a **woman holding a scale**. She represents **justice**. A **blindfold** covers her eyes because justice is meant to be blind; **justice should apply to everyone**, and **reparations** should be **in equal measure to the harm done**. Justice is a **virtue** that motivates us to **pay our just dues**; to **return that which we owe**.

But in our daily lives, it feels as though the scales of justice are never quite balanced, and are often utterly lopsided. We have all suffered unresolved issues with **someone who harmed us**. **Inequality of justice** can make us feel anger and resentment if we are **on the receiving end of injustice**. We feel that the "other guy" **owes us some measure of debt**. **Because we are Christians**, we must **choose to forgive** if we are **to be free of the dangerous emotional burden of resentment**. Feeling **resentful** of those who seem (in our minds) **to owe us**, is dangerous. We tend to use the weight of resentments to justify acting out.

Perhaps we have unresolved issues with **someone who we hurt**. **We owe them**. Step 9 speaks to the **making of amends** to those we have harmed. By doing so, we relieve a heavy and dangerous burden. Inequalities of justice can make us feel **guilt or shame when we have been the cause of injustice**. Carrying **unresolved feelings** can **impede our recovery**. They can stew and boil inside of us and drive us to **seek relief or comfort**. We relapse.

Words of wisdom:

I wait quietly before God, for my victory comes from Him.

Psalm 62:1

KISS...or is it KIS?

Some of us tend to **complicate** our thoughts, our problem areas, and our PULLS program solutions. Mental noise and clutter can obscure God's voice. Complexity is usually stressful, mind boggling, paralyzing and counter-productive. If we can't "see the forest for the trees", we need to KISS: **Keep It Simple!** OK, there are admittedly two Ss in KISS, but we don't demean a person by calling him Stupid, or confuse him by calling him Sweetheart! KIS will have to do!

Words of wisdom:

A saint is not someone who never sins,
but one who sins less and less frequently
and gets up more and more quickly.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Love:

St. Thomas Aquinas, a Doctor of the Church, best defines love: **"To love is to will the good of the other."** (CCC #1766. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*.)

The apostle, St. Paul expounded on love saying, *"If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing."*

Love is patient, love is kind. *It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, It is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."* (1 Cor. 13:1-8)

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

GROUP 6

Mercy
Mind your own business!
Night Arousal
Objectification
One day at a time
Presumption
Pride

Mercy:

When we are **merciful**, we love the person before us with the **unconditional, agape love that Christ modeled for us**. **Every person** we meet **suffers poverty** of some sort. We are merciful when we receive and love them in the midst of their need/poverty, and **do everything we can to remedy or assist them**, to the best of our ability. Mercy transcends or goes beyond justice.

Words of wisdom:

What is more pleasing to God?
 Is it when, after experiencing a failure,
 we are discouraged and tormented, or when we react by saying:
 "Lord, I ask Your pardon, I have sinned again.
 This, alas, is what I am capable of doing on my own!
 But I abandon myself with confidence to Your mercy and Your pardon,
 I thank You for not allowing me to sin even more grievously.
 I abandon myself to You with confidence because I know that one day
 You will heal me completely and, in the meantime,
 I ask You that the experience of my misery would cause me
 to be more humble, more considerate of others,
 more conscious that I can do nothing by myself,
 but that I must rely solely on Your love and Your mercy."

Fr. Jacque Philippe

Mind Your Own Business!

Often without knowing it, we have acquired **invasive habits**, extending **well beyond our "business"**. Why? We, who have struggled with appropriate sexuality, have **received sexual "rewards" (reinforcements)** for:

- getting information to which we are not entitled;
- allowing our eyes to wander where we shouldn't look;
- listening in on that which we shouldn't hear;

- goggling and ogling what we shouldn't view;
- invading privacy that should be respected;
- feeling what we shouldn't touch;
- wondering about that which we shouldn't be curious;
- seeking what we shouldn't find.

We developed hypervigilance, noticing everything inside and outside of our bounds in hope of a sexual “reward”. For us, this is **toxic**. Reeling-in our focus to **what is actually “our business”** feels very confining at first. But like our Lord, we are called to **deal with what is before us which requires our attention**.

We learn what is not our business by :

- accepting that our understanding of “what is **our business**” has gradually become **stretched** beyond acceptable limits, **corrupted and distorted**;
- **identifying and evaluating** the specific sexual and worldly **payoffs**.
- **listening to ourselves** when we provide **excuses** for overextending the limits of our moral and essential boundaries;
- **admitting** that our chastity calls for us to **retreat** or step back from our old notions, **redefine** what is actually our business, and show **respect** by **remaining** within our boundaries;
- making a **conscious, willful decision to discipline our curiosity**.
- **telling ourselves, “Mind your own business” or “This is not your business”**, when we catch ourselves overstepping our boundaries.

As our PULLS men aspire to chaste lives, we joyously refocus on the business of God.

Night Arousal:

Most of us have awakened in the middle of the night, aroused, often following a sexually triggering dream. Groggy and disoriented, our autopilot response to act out meets with little resistance. Consider trying the following.

- Night arousal *can* be related to something sexually provocative that we were thinking about or watching just prior to falling asleep; so, pray a night prayer, listen to relaxing Catholic music or read Catholic literature right before bed.
- It may be necessary to remove our phone, tv, or computer from our bedroom
- If we wake before our normal wake-up time and are unable to fall back to sleep, get out of bed and pray, read, or distract ourselves until the temptation passes.

Words of wisdom:

Whenever my enemy provokes me to combat, I try to behave like a soldier.

St. Therese of Lisieux

Objectification:

Objectification reduces human beings to physical objects or things. God opens our hearts to value the **mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual** qualities of others in relatively equal measure. For Christians, our body is a blessing, pure and chaste.

Through the vehicle of objectification, **the enemy, Satan:**

- **twists and defiles the purity of the body,**

- **reduces physical individuality into gradations of sexual desirability,**
- **allows our desires to view others merely as sexual objects.**

Words of wisdom:

When Jesus asked the woman at Jacob's well, for a cup of water,
 Jesus used her physical thirst to point out to her,
 her much deeper spiritual thirst.
 Jesus redirected her desire, according to God's design,
 so she could enter her eternal destiny
 with eternal union with Christ the bridegroom.
 Those of us, who are sexually broken,
 worship whatever we think will satisfy that thirst.
 We need to affirm people's thirst;
 that every human being is looking for more perfect love.

Christopher West

We have developed expertise at identifying, with one glance, the women who we judge worthy of triggering sexual experiences. We feel they "deserve" or "are worth" closer examination, our time and our energy. God did not create women to be used as a tool for masturbation.

But how about the women who we instantly dismiss and overlook; those that we judge as unattractive or undesirable and thus worthless, based solely on their **usefulness** in feeding our sexual desires? They are treated as discardable, worthless **objects** that warrant rejection. That is objectification, too. There is absolutely no room in the Catholic heart for objectification.

As we learn to look at others **as God sees them...** the way their loved ones see them,...our notion of the human body becomes sacred. We look at others as brothers and sisters among the children of God.

One Day at a Time:

A favorite bumper sticker for 12 Step enthusiasts across the world, reads, "One day at a time". It reminds us **not to dwell on the past or be anxious about the future.** We **deal with what is before us today.** Today, our concern is about **today's** purity, **today's** responsibilities, **today's** interactions, and **today's** reliance on our gracious and loving God.

The past: Our **Catholic Church provides a Sacrament and solution** to the remorse, resentments, fear or shame over **events from the past: Confession.** When we **confess our sins**, we **give them away** to God. At the **moment of absolution, our sin from our past has vanished in God's eyes.** God has done His part, more than we can understand; now we need to do ours. The priest helps us **let go** of the sins of the past by providing **penance** in Jesus's name. **One day at a time**, we accept permission to **let past sins dissipate as lessons learned**, and **accept** any **consequences** for our behavior choices. *We do not live in the past, but use past experiences as a means of a stronger, healthier today.*

Words of wisdom:

Confession is an act of honesty and courage - an act of entrusting ourselves, beyond sin, to the mercy of a loving and forgiving God.

St. John Paul II

Confession **gets us started in repairing the injustice** caused by our sin. We make **amends** in Step 9 as an act of **atonement for our sins against others**. We are invited to do even more in the name of **justice or mercy**. A Christian's **lifetime, marked with penance** (as opposed to punishment or chastisement), contributes to healing, not only for **our sins, but also** for those of the **whole world**.

This is often misunderstood as meaning that Catholics do our daily walk with an enormous load of guilt weighing on us. **Not so!** The **sincere repentance** in our hearts, the **sacrifice of Jesus**, and the **infinite mercy** of God **eliminated the sin** we confessed and gave us a **new beginning**. **Joy is the fruit of sincere repentance!** **One day at a time**, we are promised that "we will not regret the past or wish to shut the door on it." (*Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book p. 83 and 84*) **Jesus, we trust in You.**

The future: When we follow God's plan for us, we are assured that **there is nothing to fear about the future**. It is claimed that the words, "Do not fear", or versions of that sentiment, are found **365** times in the Bible; once for each day of the year. We do not wish to pass on inaccurate information, but we are even less inclined to begin counting. Suffice it to say, **fear is never productive**, according to our Bible.

Words of wisdom:

Don't despair over your shortcomings. Start over each day.
You make spiritual progress by beginning again and again.

St. Francis de Sales

Living **one day at a time**, rather than worrying about the future, we **step outside of our self-interest, into a life of radical love of God and neighbor**. If we **abide in God**, He enters our hearts to give us the courage and serenity that we require in adversity, and cherish in good times. With God, we will handle every obstacle...every life event. **We follow Him with absolute trust, hope and faith**, in that knowledge. Offer today's concerns and any worries about the future, up to God and trust Him to handle it His way, **one day at a time**.

Words of wisdom:

Do not be afraid of holiness, do not be afraid to aim high,
to be loved and purified by God,
do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Pope Francis

Presumption:

The sin of Presumption can present itself in a couple of ways and is a particularly thorny topic for people suffering with *any* addictions. A few thoughts:

- A temptation shared by a number of our PULLS men is to commit the **sin of presumption**. Let's say a man breaks a string of sexually abstinent days by sexually acting out. He chooses, rightly, to go to the Sacrament of Confession the very next day.

Here comes the **presumption**: he **presumes** that since he has already sinned and he intends to confess and be cleansed anyway, he might as well binge as much as he pleases before confessing that he has acted out.

- **Confession** is obviously **not** intended to be used as **an excuse to sin some more!** In truth, he not only needs to confess the sin of acting out, but now he must confess the additional, and perhaps even more grievous **sin of presumption**.
- **Confession requires the admission of sin and it needs to be accompanied by genuine remorse/repentance for offending God, with the resolve to do whatever it takes to not repeat this sin in the future.** When we confess sexual sin, the sin of Presumption asks the question, "Can the Sacrament of Confession be used as a *get out of jail free* card?" If we **compound a sin**, we deny its seriousness. A genuine slip *might* be a **venial sin**; however, if it is followed by the additional repeating or intentional bundling of the same sin, it can become a **mortal sin**. We are being **presumptive....with God!** It's as absurd as setting an elephant loose in heaven and thinking God won't notice; our poorly hidden intention is supposed to slip by God? Really? God is aware of every seriously **flawed and twisted technicality, every time**. God is never fooled. He knows our hearts and intentions better than we do.

Words of wisdom:

Legalistic remorse says, "I broke God's rules,"
while real repentance says, "I broke God's heart."

Tim Keller

- **Contrition** involves experiencing **sorrow** for committing that sin and, in response, we must do everything and anything it takes to **not continue** in the same sin pattern. How repentant can a person be, who has devised a plan to use a Sacrament as a means to justify additional sin? We mustn't **presume** that we are forgiven without contrition. God always does His part; we need to do our part by being absolutely honest, open and willing **in preparation for and in our participation in** the sacrament of Confession/Reconciliation. We are a team, a partnership, a relationship. Confession is not a toy to be played with; it is a holy Sacrament.
- Sorrow for our sins and genuine remorse, coupled with the determination to change, has brought virtually every one of our members to PULLS from the day of its inception. We can avoid the **sin of presumption** by doing the following:
 - We prayerfully seek chastity by attending and **sharing openly** at meetings. **Accountability** makes presumption difficult.
 - Whenever we are tempted to **presume**, we need to **switch** our thinking from feeding into our addiction, to concentrating on the slip and how to address that.
 - We **catch ourselves** when we rationalize, intellectualize, justify or use other **defenses** to **enable** presumption. **Consistently confronting** our misuse of our intellect keeps our thoughts pure, positive and Christ centered.
 - After entertaining presumptive thoughts, we examine or **take inventory** of our character **flaws or weaknesses** that feed into presumption and work hard to confront all aspects of our weaknesses (e.g. dishonesty, disrespect, manipulation, audacity, impudence, cockiness, egocentricity, arrogance, etc.) and **revisit Steps 4 through 7**.

- If a slip happens, we **do not follow a slip** or fall with additional acting-out behaviors, rationalizing that we can always have the sins removed through Confession. This is a serious **violation** of God's love and advocacy for us.
- We ask "Do I really think I can or should try to outsmart, con or **take advantage of You, God?**"
- With conviction, we **do what we promise** in our **Act of Contrition**. With a contrite heart for having offended God, we ensure that we never again behave **presumptively**.
- We **offer up** our temptation toward **presumption, on the altar**, during the offering at Mass **and in prayer** to our Lord.
- We read this book and other chastity literature, listen to podcasts addressing purity, do our stepwork, attend meetings, attend Catholic training on the Theology of the Body and related issues, etc. **Strengthening chastity** is sincere. It eliminates any need for **presumption**.
- **Philippians 4:8** "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Then **presumption** will not even be an option.
- A fall is not permission for "Party Time".
- If a slip happens while we are doing all that we possibly can to become chaste, we are not guilty of presumption; however, we need to return to Confession to continue the pilgrimage **honestly and devotedly**.
- Face the **seriousness of presumption** by facing the fact that knowingly and purposely misusing the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession checks the 3 boxes of **mortal sin: (1) "grave matter," (2) "full knowledge," and (3) "deliberate consent."**
- Know that anytime we search for **technicalities to blur or twist the truth**, we are being **dishonest** rather than honest, being **closed** to God's love rather than open, and we are being **unwilling** to practice the essentials required for chastity rather than being willing. That is just **not HOW** to practice our Catholic faith and love of God.
- Finally, we **prepare prayerfully, sincerely and repentantly** for the Sacrament of Confession....leaving no time, no intention and no room in our hearts for **presumption**.

Words of Wisdom:

In all acts of **self-discipline**, we experience and endorse **manhood over boyhood**; we cast out our reactive, juvenile ways of behavior to make room for an active **mastery of the will**. This facility to **do things by decision rather than default**, to be responsible for **making our own choices** rather than to be influenced by the **will** of others, leads to the mastery of all our other faculties, mental, emotional and physical.

Samuel Baket **Part 3** of the **Masculinity Series**

Pride:

The opposite of love is not hate. The opposite of love is pride*. Pride may well be the most toxic of all emotions or dispositions for a Christian. The antidote for pride is humility.

Imagine a line representing the **spectrum of feelings** with the passion of **pride** at the very **end point** of the line. The **beginning** point of that continuum (opposite of pride) is surprisingly **not** the **virtue of humility**. Rather, another sinful state of mind resides at **the farthest** end of the line **from pride... self-loathing**. Equally devastating are those **polar opposites: pride and self-loathing**. In our former powerless and unmanageable state, we seemed to **commit ourselves, simultaneously, to both**. This showcases our problem with **duality**, where **pride defended** our outward appearances and behaviors to the outside world, and **self-loathing dominated** our private, inner, hidden world. Recovery, plotted on that continuum, requires **movement from both ends toward the middle** of the line. There we experience **humility**.

Pride _____ **Humility** _____ **Self-loathing**

So Pride and **self-loathing** are the culprits that **jeopardize our recovery**, as much, if not more, than any other factors.

Looking at pride from a spiritual angle, recall that Satan, filled with pride, *did, does, and will* challenge the power of God; thus, Satan's fall. **Any claim Satan has on our lives will fall, too**, as we conquer our own propensity for pride and we abide in humility.

*(Depending on context, "use" can be another opposite of love.)

Words of wisdom:

Beware of despairing about yourself;
You are commanded to place your trust in God, and not yourself.

St. Augustine

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

GROUP 7

Progress and perfection

Projection

Ramping

Relapse

Resentment

RIDD

Progress and Perfection:

Progress is done in orderly, successive steps, as part of the process of recovery. What we incrementally deconstructed with acting-out behavior, we reconstruct with God's help. Humbly, we move confidently, steadily, and with our attention fixed on learning, growing, healing, sharing, and opening our hearts to Jesus. We **regard mistakes and exposed imperfections as opportunities for growth**. We **celebrate progress**.

Make no mistake, **we *do* seek sainthood and perfection in Christ**, *but* the “**relative perfection**” we can experience on earth, is **built on hope and faith** and is evidenced **in charity**. **Relative perfection** is not inconsistent with the presence of human miseries, rebellious passions, and venial sins. **Perfection is complete** and absolute **only in heaven**, where hope and faith do not exist (because they are fulfilled).

Words of wisdom:

Go often to rest your heart near the tabernacle;
you will find there, the necessary strength and graces
to go more surely along the path of *fidelity*.

St. Leonie Aviat

Expecting perfection, right now, without preparing our soul for the Lord's work **is prideful and wrong**. **Perfection** has no patience for progressive, incremental steps. In real life, the problems of the past aren't magically fixed. If perfect, we would have no inclination to humbly examine our character defects (Step 4). Proudly, we would think we have recovery mastered and have no need for Points, the TOB, or Steps. Who would need God? Mistakes are failures that would not be tolerated, and certainly not admitted, by a perfect, proud person. Perfection is allied with:

- entitlement,
- privilege,
- authoritarian, dogmatic, inflexible thinking and
- pride.

Bottom line? **Relapse**. So, in PULLS, **we make *progress toward* (relative) perfection and sainthood**.

Words of wisdom:

Beware of despairing about yourself;
You are commanded to place your trust in God, and not yourself.

St. Augustine

Projection:

Projection is a **defense** in which one points out, transfers or “projects” his personal negative characteristics (defects of character) onto another person. His intention is to draw attention away from himself and his shortcomings.

Ramping:

Ramping describes a type of sexual high that is derived from “ramping up”, or **incrementally increasing familiarity** with another person. Naturally, all people build relationships, and forming friendships requires getting to know each other better; so, how does ramping differ from just making friends? Ramping is indeed different. Like treasure hunting, **ramping extracts a sexual high** from “upping the ante” in the relationship. Often flirtation and suggestive wording enter into the interaction to test the other person's receptivity, with the hope that they will willingly partake. The further the ramping progresses, the more sexual excitement is generated with the hope that the feelings are mutual.

Anticipation of a sexual interaction, **real or fancied**, underlies the behavior of ramping. As with most sexually addictive behaviors, **reality loses its relevance** as the harmful behavior continues. We combine imagination with anticipation, we have fantasies. Ramping interactions, **powered by growing fantasies of a sexual outcome**, seek self-centered “rewards”.

Taking a relationship to a more **intense** level seeks sexual:

- tension,
- energy, and/or
- undercurrent,

all of which fan the flames of powerlessness and unmanageability, and damage the possibility of initiating a meaningful relationship. Ramping violates fidelity, purity and chastity.

Ramping is about selfish desire. We are **using** another person; one who is God's child. “Use” is an active **antithesis of love**. The **lies of the devil are insidious**, but by **being aware of his methods**, we can stop exploitative conduct and be secure in our purity.

Words of Wisdom

The devil is the Father of Lies, and he seeks to
make evil appear good and good appear evil.

At the heart of much evil is the rejection of human dignity;
the demons want us to forget
that we have been created in the image and likeness of God.

Fr. Jose Antonio Fortea

Interview with an Exorcist, An Insider's Look at the Devil,
Demonic Possession, and the Path to Deliverance

Relapse:

Relapse is defined as, “a deterioration in someone's state of health after a temporary improvement”. The dictionary synonyms, “deterioration, turn for the worse, setback, and recurrence” all fit. **Relapse is more serious than a slip.** Often, relapse visits the person who believes he is “**fixed**”, that the problem has gone away, that he is now “normal”. He believes he can indulge in our society's sexual “norms” (*what the Big Book refers to as “the dubious luxury of normal men”*) that inevitably result in a world of hurt. He may have *appeared* to be doing quite well for a period of time, only to suddenly crash, sexually acting-out at the point at which he left off when he first abstained. Or, because of the **progressive nature** of addictive behaviors, he may actually descend to even more harmful behavior levels accompanied with **greater consequences** than ever before. It is essential that he not be protected from experiencing the serious repercussions of his behaviors by well meaning friends or relatives.

He needs to get help immediately.

Some people **set themselves up** for relapse by:

- attending fewer meetings,
- sharing generalizations about recovery rather than personal information,
- putting off Point, Feature or Step work,
- isolating from other group members,
- not checking in,
- avoiding accountability,
- backing off from service (*setting up for meetings, volunteering to read, being Trusted Servant, sponsoring, etc.*), or
- failing to pray or grow in faith.

Watch for overconfidence, all-knowing attitudes and authoritarian postures that can cover an impending fall into relapse.

Words of wisdom:

Our Lord is called the Prince of Peace in Scripture and, consequently, everywhere where He is the absolute master, He maintains all things in peace.

It is nevertheless true that before bringing peace to a given place, He makes war with it, separating the heart and the soul of the most loved, familiar and ordinary affections, that is to say, the exaggerated love of self, confidence in and complacency with oneself, and similar affections.

Now, when our Lord separates us from these passions, so sweet and so dear, it seems that He flays the heart alive and we experience very angry feelings; it's almost all we can do to struggle with all our soul, because this separation is strongly felt. But all this spiritual agitation is, however, not without peace, as, finally, overwhelmed by this distress, we neither fail for this reason to conform our will to our Lord's will and to maintain it there,

riveted to this divine pleasure, nor do we abandon by any means our duties and their accomplishment; rather, we carry them out courageously.

St. Francis de Sales

Resentment:

Resentment is **ill will or anger in light of real or perceived wrong**. Generally, extending mercy or forgiveness is the *last thing on our mind* when **we feel we have been wronged**. We might:

- imagine the “perpetrator” begging for our forgiveness;
- or we fancy hurting them in greater measure than they hurt us;
- or we want some great karmic event to make them regret they ever crossed our path.

There is an old saying, “**Revenge** is sweet.” **It is not**. While **hard feelings may be natural, commonplace and understandable**, our recovery from our sexual challenges does not afford us the luxury of reacting this way.

Some of our members have admitted carrying **childhood resentments** well **into adulthood**. Feeling **resentful** of those who seem (in our minds) **to owe us**, is dangerous. **Because we are Christians**, we must **choose to forgive** if we are **to be free of** the dangerous emotional burdens. For us, **bitterness, animosity, and hostility** (and countless other unpleasant feelings associated with **resentment**) **are toxic**. We can *blame* the person who we think harmed us and fill ourselves with such bitterness that our pursuit of **chastity diminishes** as a priority. Because we can use the weight of resentments to justify acting out, it is time to let them go.

We need to make a decision to:

- swallow our **pride**;
- humbly come before **God**;
- be **willing to let go** of any sullen, hostile, resentment-filled attitudes that we have passionately held onto for days, months, years or even decades;
- give the entire matter to Jesus for Him to take care of it;
- trust that God will handle the situation in His way and His timeframe.
- **commit to forgive**.

RIDD:

RIDD is an acronym for **Restless, Irritable, Disconnected, and Discontented**. Similar to B.L.A.S.T, if we are feeling restless, irritable, disconnected or discontented, these are specifically **emotional red flags** that signal a need to pray, get to a meeting, read chastity literature, work on a Step, and/or call another PULLS member.

GROUP 8

Sabotaging our own success

Scrupulosity

Secondary virginity

Shame

Sin

Slip

Sabotaging Our Own Success:

People who have never dealt with addictive behaviors cannot understand why we would sabotage our own, successful, sexual recovery. It helps to define “**success**”. In the **material world**, success implies the acquisition of money and assets, privilege, influence, security, fame, and status. We are indoctrinated in our society to believe that these are positive aspirations.

Words of wisdom:

Say to yourself over and over again
regardless of what happens:
“God loves me!”and then add:
“And I will try to love Him!”

Ven. Fulton Sheen

In the world of a **Christian**, however, **success is lived in light of the virtues of the Holy Spirit and the example of Jesus**. In recovery, we find ourselves moving **from worldly sexual Powerlessness and Unmanageability to Living and Loving Sacrificially through Jesus Christ**. This seems contrary to worldly sensibilities...yet something inside us is intrinsically attracted to this **holy** kind of **success**.

There are many reasons a recovering person might sabotage his own success at chastity:

- The man who has experienced abandonment, betrayal or great loss, may fear, or be **reluctant to trust** the “success” of chastity because it may, too, disintegrate before his very eyes.
- He may **fear the responsibilities** of a successful, chaste lifestyle.
- He may be unsure if he actually wants to live a chaste, Godly life because it may be such **unfamiliar territory** or he may **feel unworthy**.
- He may believe that his accumulated sexual transgressions add up to a **wounded person who doesn't deserve the happiness** that a successfully chaste person merits.
- He may be **unable to monitor or recognize his gains** because he is **preoccupied with his weaknesses and imperfections**.
- He may be obsessed and **anxiety ridden** by the possibility of doing something

that would threaten his success in chastity; so, he does that which **undermines his success, to end that internal stress. The pain of living in fear of failure can exceed the pain of failure itself.**

- The **worldly attractiveness** of success seems to outweigh God's calling.
- He may have grown to **identify** so strongly **with his compulsive behaviors** that he simply **does not want to stop**, regardless of the cost.

Words of wisdom:

Lay all your cares about the future trusting in God's hands
and let yourself be guided by the Lord just like a little child.

St. Benedicta of the Cross

Scrupulosity:

We can think of scrupulosity as a combination of **extreme perfectionism and superstition**. If we are scrupulous, we fear that **something bad will happen if we fail** to perform **every detail** of our program **perfectly**, and/or demonstrate our faith to the extreme. That indefinable *something* will destroy any progress we have made, and will undermine any future efforts at maintaining or achieving purity.

The over-scrupulous person can *become* "**paralyzed**" by the **sheer weight of possibilities**, all of which he feels *he must address before he can be worthy of chastity or be pleasing in God's eyes*.

This can be **anxiety provoking** to say the least. How can we move forward if we **fear** we may have missed **some elusive detail** that *might* exist in the recovery work we just completed? Whatever it is, it *must be* found and then addressed to appease the fear.

Words of wisdom:

Holiness does not consist of not making mistakes or never sinning.

Holiness grows with capacity for conversion, repentance,
willingness to begin again,

and above all with the capacity of reconciliation and forgiveness.

Pope Benedict XVI

The Pharisees of Jesus' time **scrupulously** attempted to adhere to the *letter of the law*. But Jesus was more concerned that His people would receive the light and **Spirit of Christ's kerygma, proclaiming the Kingdom of God**.

Each of us is dealing with a critical moral issue: we have reduced God's beautiful gift of sexuality and have harmed other people, ourselves and our relationship with God along the way. We now realize that we walked away from God's loving plan for us. That deeply convicted us; so, we are **intentionally** turning, or returning, our will and our life over to the rightful care of God.

Our choice to dedicate and commit ourselves to God is, in fact, very different from scrupulosity. While the spirit of scrupulosity would require us to be vigilant, striving, driven and impeccable, Jesus calls us to joyously breathe in freedom from sin, moved by the radiant peace we experience when we allow the Holy Spirit to reveal our inner desire to love God

and love others as God loves. Chastity flows from this gentle and beautiful grace. **A check list of scrupulous rules and regulations just can't compare.**

Words of wisdom:

What is good has been explained to you, O man,
this is what the Lord asks of you, only this:
to act justly, to love tenderly,
and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

Secondary Virginity:

Imagine that you bought into the “hook-up” culture, sexually acted-out, and cooperated with trends in sexual expediency and recreation, and then formed a **meaningful relationship with our Lord**. The conviction of past behaviors can be crushing. You know that the **Lord forgives in His infinite mercy** and you are so very grateful. You **freely and gladly choose to transform** your sexual thoughts and behaviors to **conform to God's will, with joy!**

But there remains a nagging heaviness: your past. If your virginity was freely given away before you comprehended God's plan for your sexuality, **you cannot get that original virginity back**; however, a **conversion to living and loving sacrificially** (the LLS of PULLS), with a clear commitment to leave self-centered sexual behaviors and attitudes behind, constitutes a renewed, awakened commitment. This we call “**secondary virginity**”.

Words of wisdom:

You can't go back and change the beginning
but you can start where you are and change the ending.

C.S. Lewis

Shame:

Shame is the emotion we experience when we are convinced that **we are awful people because of our poor choices** or inappropriate behaviors. **Shame judges the quality of the human being**. God has an unimaginable level of love for each of us, personally and individually. God's love has **no limits or conditions**, as opposed to our limited human comprehension. He sees and forgives our behaviors, and sees us only through the eyes of love. Only **Satan** wants us to experience **shame**.

Words of wisdom:

People are made for happiness.
Rightly, then, you thirst for happiness.
Christ has the answer to this desire of yours.
But He asks you to trust Him.

Sin:

There are 7 categories of sins, called the **Capital or Deadly Sins**, *pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth or acedia*, from which all other sins originate. Our sins can be categorized by the **virtues they oppose**. (See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* #1866.)

So, deriving from each Capital or Deadly Sin is a collection of related sins. The **virtue** that the sin of **lust opposes** is **chastity**. Since our **PULLS** men are choosing to **defeat** the hold that **lust** has had in our lives (that *could* be expressed in the form of adultery, sexual fantasizing, seduction, rape, masturbation, unnatural vice, pornography, fornication, etc.), we seek **chastity** (lust's opposing virtue) as our common objective.

Words of wisdom:

When we must do something we dislike,
let us say to God,
"My God, I offer you this
in honor of the moment when you died for me."

St. John Vianney

Slip:

A **Slip** is usually an **isolated return to 1 or more thoughts or behaviors listed in the Red Circle**. The dictionary definition of "slip": "pass or change to a lower, worse, or different condition, typically in a gradual or imperceptible way" is quite accurate. If and when we "slip", we have neglected elements of our purity program. Temptations and triggers gradually, almost imperceptibly, began to intensify their grip on our drives. **A slip is a wake up call** to a person who cares about his recovery. He should pray, contact his PULLS brothers, call his sponsor, take a serious look at his Points, Key Features and Steps, and reflect on the *Theology of the Body*. **Caution:** only in this sense, is one's program *strengthened* by a slip. Too often, if not addressed, a slip ushers in full blown **relapse**.

Words of wisdom:

Jesus offers you the cross, a very heavy cross,
and you are afraid of not being able to carry on without giving way.
Why? Our beloved himself fell three times on the way to Calvary,
and why should we not imitate him?

St. Therese of Lisieux

GROUP 9

Stepping through the looking glass

Success

Superstition

Surrender

Three Stepping

Treasure Hunting

Triggers

White knuckling

Stepping Through the Looking Glass:

Some of our PULLS members have a particular vulnerability to situations in which we could "step through the looking glass." A reference to Lewis Carol's *Alice in Wonderland*, once Alice steps through the mirror (*looking glass*), she enters a whole strange, magical, mysterious, **unreal world** in which she encounters bizarre experiences before returning back through the looking glass, into her former real world.

Indeed, once our men with sexual addictive tendencies **step outside of the familiar world** of routines that are somewhat:

- predictable,
- comfortable,
- ordinary,
- secure,
- regular, and
- safe,

we may become **vulnerable to relapse**. Here's why: normal, routine life gives us security and stability to which we can attach self-imposed rules and rehearse safe responses to common, everyday scenarios that could threaten our chastity. But what happens when we go alone to, let's say, a conference or an outing with a group of people who do not share our PULLS sexual standards? Are we prepared to face the unexpected? Are we sure that we even *want* to be prepared? Might we be edging; setting ourselves up for a slip or subconsciously, eagerly anticipating the excitement of a treasure hunt?

Words of wisdom:

One deceit needs many others, and so the whole house is built in the air and must soon come crashing down.

Baltasar Gracián

A student announced to her high school support group that she had just returned from spring break, where she had sex with 6 different men in her 7 day and 6 night party stay in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. When asked when she would be going to the doctor, she looked genuinely puzzled and asked why. The response shocked her into reality: "Because, if you had sex with 6 men, you could well be pregnant or you may have contracted one or more STDs (*sexually transmitted diseases*)."

She had deluded herself into believing that she left the real world behind her, the minute she stepped on the plane. **Issues of morality, safety, reality, and laws-of-nature disappeared in her mind**, as if she had entered a dream, a parallel world, or a temporary hallucination. Just as "What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas" implies that *irresponsible behavior will not follow us once we leave Las Vegas*, so it is in many dangerous, temporary situations.

The **consequences** of our decisions **do follow us**. No matter how much we may wish that we could escape from daily life, **our chastity depends on truth and reality**, revealed, trusted, strengthened and valued because of our growth in God.

Success:

As we grew up, most of us were told that **success** means doing exceedingly well in school; earning academic, social and extracurricular status; getting into a reputable university; achieving an admirable career; gaining prestige in the community as a citizen and family man; living in a magnificent home and having plenty of money. None of these are evil, in and of themselves; the problem is that each can lead one to believe in their own **self-sufficiency and pride**. Most of us bought into this success description without question. It *seemed* to be a universal truth. But where did it get us? **Who needs God, if we think we are self-sufficient?**

Redefining **success** turns our whole material world upside down. As our ideas about success change, so does what is relevant in our lives. **As Catholics, success must always involve God.** *We are successful* if we

- **walk** with God,
- **talk** with God,
- **involve** God in every decision, in every relationship, in every thought,
- **reach out** to God,
- **feel** His presence,
- **listen** to Him,
- **seek** Him at all times, in all places,
- **embrace** humility and "poverty",
- **marvel** in His creation...

and above all, **love**.

Words of wisdom:

The greatest deception, and the deepest source of unhappiness,
is the illusion of finding life by excluding God,
of finding freedom by excluding moral truths and personal responsibility.

St. John Paul II

Superstition:

We usually think of superstition as having something to do with black cats and broken mirrors. In the world of addictive behaviors, we put a different twist on it. One form of "superstition" tells us that **if we do a positive action, then something**, beyond our control,

will happen to ruin it. That provides a “**self-fulfilling prophecy**” that increases the likelihood of relapse. It also tells us that **we listened, when the evil one whispered** words of defeat and resignation in our ears. Superstitious belief is rooted in a number of toxic soils including:

- past history of failure,
- fear of success,
- feelings of unworthiness, or
- inability to face the unknown.

Such thinking patterns or habits need to be *transplanted in the fertile soil of faith, trusting Jesus* to respond to our prayers in **His way** and in **His time**.

When we have self-defeating thoughts or attitudes, we need to **pray that God will expose the source** of our superstitions, **heal us, and direct us** toward His promise. **Taking a step in faith takes courage and practice until confidence is real.**

Surrender:

For many of us, our **sexual, acting-out** behavior **is found out**: we have been busted, outed; we suddenly face a break-up, separation or divorce; legal issues; jail time; public humiliation; **the secret is no more**. Especially in the **secular world** (*as in warfare*), **inevitable or actual defeat** causes the **overpowered** one **to surrender**. **External circumstances force the surrender**. **Surrender** is something that is **taken** from us. We can **choose** to **accept** that and either take **restorative action**, or **continue fighting** a **losing battle**.

God has given us an alternative to having surrender forced upon us. **We can voluntarily surrender** our sinfulness over to God, accept consequences, and **choose** not to hit bottom. Rationalizing that God can wait while we play with the devil for a bit longer, inevitably backfires on us, and lowers the bottom toward which we are marching.

Words of wisdom:

God does not require of us the martyrdom of the body;
He requires only martyrdom of the heart, and the will.

St. John Vianney

Three Stepping:

Christians, in particular, tend to “**3 Step**”. **Three Stepping**” means that we:

- (Step 1), **admit** we have a **problem**
- (Step 2), **acknowledge that God could do better**
- (Step 3), decide to give it to God, but **do not continue working on the remaining 9 Steps**. Then:
 - We **do not** grow any further,
 - usually **relapse**,
 - **wonder what happened**,
 - and **do the first 3 Steps** over again!

There are 12 Steps for a reason! All 12 are **necessary for solid chastity**.

By continuing through the Steps, the program stays fresh, challenging, and exciting!

Words of wisdom:

I gave in, and admitted that God was God.

C.S. Lewis

Treasure Hunting:

A person with habitual sexual issues, on occasion, will chance upon an **unexpected, sexually stimulating circumstance**; an **accidental situation** or **visual “treat”**, which **creates a powerful, intoxicating, sexual high**. He will find himself **watching for similar situations** in the future, getting a small but sufficient **anticipatory high**, initially, and a terrific high on those **rare** occasions that his hope is fulfilled. The “rewards” and “treats” of treasure hunting are spiritually toxic.

Consistent with the principles of intermittent reinforcement, an **unanticipated pleasurable, sexual experience** can actually **condition us, more than a “sure thing”**. **The reward, for the treasure hunter**, is about **gaining the unexpected prize**, somewhat like a gambler hitting the very occasional jackpot, or someone finding a real diamond in a box of junk jewelry. **Scrolling online** is clearly the most common treasure hunting behavior for people wrestling with sexual sin. Those occasional “rewards” keep the dream alive. Afterwards, every similar situation will **trigger anticipation of a possible reward**. The **predictable produces less stimulation/reward** than a surprise. The **“thrill of the hunt”** provides its own excitement or pay-off.

Words of wisdom:

Even if we forget or reject our identity, God does not.
He never forgets you. He never forgets that you are His son,
and he will not reject you when you return home to Him.

Leah Darrow

Triggers:

Sexual triggers are

- thoughts,
- sensory experiences (*sights, smells, touch, hearing or tastes*),
- situations,
- interactions or
- people

that **provoke or ignite sexual**

- thoughts,
- passions,
- reactions,
- habits or
- behaviors.

We might dismiss someone else's **trigger** because it might not *seem* sexually stimulating or emotionally evocative in any way, at least from our viewpoint. But consider this: if the trigger is **associated with a sexual experience**, especially one topped **with intense emotion**, it will indeed ignite a sexual response or an **emotional reaction**, whether pleasant or unpleasant. A rape victim, for instance, who sees a person with any given characteristic (trigger) resembling the perpetrator, is likely to feel instant panic, confusion, anxiety, fear, rage or violation.

Words of wisdom:

Virtue demands courage, constant effort,
and above all, help from on high.

St. John Vianney

Attending high school class **reunions** can be risky for sexually recovering people; we are vulnerable to triggers by reconnecting with classmates with whom we had sexual experiences during adolescence. Those experiences (because they were **novel or evoked strong emotion**) record these life events into our memory banks. While Satan can misuse, abuse, and **alter our memories** to his advantage, God **will** work our recollections to *His* advantage.

White Knuckling:

The expression “white knuckling” originated with alcoholics who quit drinking without quitting the disordered behaviors that accompany their addiction. Like alcoholism, sexual unmanageability and powerlessness creates a decline in the quality of all of our mental, emotional, physical, social and spiritual (*MEPSS*) aspects of life. **Recovery** certainly **requires a minimum of retrieving one's losses**. White knuckling is **abstaining from Red circle behaviors without beginning the recovery process**. Life is painful and, frankly, quite hellish, when simply abstaining because we can no longer use the temporary escapes of seeking or attaining sexual highs to offset the misery that accompanies the MEPSS decline. Our alcoholic brothers and sisters call this a “dry drunk”; they may technically be “dry” (not actually consuming alcohol), but their “unmedicated” behaviors are as dysfunctional as their drinking behavior. People who “white-knuckle it” inevitably remain in problematic behavior. **Progress** in recovery is essential.

Words of wisdom:

The gift of grace increases as the struggle increases.

St. Rose of Lima

Section 4: The 7 Points of the Kerygma

What if I don't learn, process information, or present my thoughts the same way as most other people?

The suggested procedure for completing the Steps, Points and Key Features **is not set in stone. We are flexible.** If we have difficulty reading the written word, processing complex questions, expressing our thoughts or feelings in writing, or have, for any reason, any cognitive or learning **disability or challenge** that **causes us to avoid moving forward** with our PULLS chastity program, please know that the sponsors will do whatever is needed to **ensure that accommodations are made** for us. The important thing is to **move forward** and **make progress** with every resource at our disposal.

The Suggested Procedure to Complete Your Points, Key Features & Steps

- **READ...the Point, Key Feature or Step Narrative**
- **COMPLETE the Written Work** following each Narrative, continually asking yourself "Why?" regarding each of your answers....and then why again...and then again.
- **SET A TIME to meet with your sponsor to review your Written Work.**
- **SEND your Written Work** to your sponsor **at least 24 hours before you meet** to discuss your Point, Key Feature or Step Work.
- **MEET with your sponsor** to review what you wrote and talk about your insights.
- **Use your sponsor** to clarify, advise, encourage and direct you on your journey; *not* just when you complete Written Work. It is easy to postpone moving forward with your program, or skim over, or get stuck on parts that you don't understand, *without a sponsor* as an additional layer of accountability.
- **REPEAT** this process for each Point, Key Feature or Step, in order, until the 7 Points of the Kerygma, the 5 Key Features of the Theology of the Body or the 12 Steps are completed.
 - **Note:** Once you complete all **12 Steps**, you will be ready to **be a sponsor** (*should you choose to do so*).

Kerygma is a Greek word which means "preaching" but refers more specifically to the first preaching of the Apostles as they went out after Pentecost. Kerygma is also translated as "message," and the early Church understood this to mean the basic foundational proclamation of Christ, his mission and our response.

Hidden in the seven Points of the classic Kerygma is the secret of

restoration, healing, and wholeness."

Jeff Cavins, The Activated Disciple (p.114)

This is the “restoration, healing and wholeness” we have longed for!

Consider for a minute, exactly what is needed for us to find freedom from sinful sexual behavior patterns in our lives.

- **Restoration:** Because we have wandered from God’s path, wouldn’t we need to **restore** the relationship with God and resume our walk on His path?
- **Healing:** Broken, wounded, ashamed and fallen, it is clear that we need **healing**.
- **Wholeness:** Feeling morally conflicted, divided by duality, mentally and emotionally broken, and painfully out of harmony with God’s plan for us, one can easily see how **wholeness** is "heaven on earth".

The **7 Points** follow. **We read each one slowly**, absorbing all the implications and insights that the Holy Spirit may want to reveal about that kerygmatic statement. After each Point, **pause** for about 15 to 20 seconds. During that time, see if and how **restoration, healing and wholeness** relates to that Point:

7 Points of the Kerygma:

1. ***God loves you and has a plan for your life.***
2. ***Sin disrupts that plan and separates you from God.***
3. ***Christ Jesus died to save you.***
4. ***Repent and believe the gospel.***
5. ***Be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit.***
6. ***Abide in Christ and His body, the Church***
7. ***Go make disciples.***

Just as the Apostles needed to proclaim the Kerygma to the early Christians, we too need to **proclaim the Kerygma** to our **PULLS** brothers and others.

Are the 7 points sufficient?

The 3 Legged Stool Example:

Let's use an example that is easy to visualize. Imagine a **stool with one leg** directly in the center. Sitting on it, we notice that it will work adequately as a stool, but we must be ever vigilant because it could tip in any direction. Similarly, if one chooses to fight sexual sin on one front, that one front should be the **7 Points of the Kerygma**. And for *some* of us, defining our faith would be enough to steer clear from sexual sin.



But, how about the *rest* of us? Let's return to the stool comparison. Picture the same stool, but now with 2 legs. Sitting on the 2 legged stool, we have much more stability and we are less likely to tip...or slip. So, along with the Kerygma, PULLS has the added strength of the Theology of the Body. Now we can choose to model ourselves after God's infinitely wise and loving vision, plan, purpose and meaning of human sexuality.

Finally, envision a **three legged stool**. We can sit on it solidly without fear of tipping. Similarly, PULLS uses a third, extremely stable, and comprehensive approach to healing with a proven, effective, **therapeutically mapped out route to navigate the course of our lives** from sexual sin to sexual purity: **the 12 Steps**.

Words of wisdom:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?

For you were bought with a price;
therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

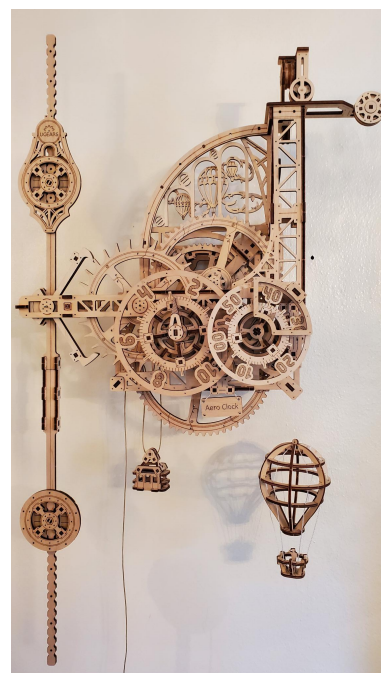
Thoughts About the Kerygma: A Brief Summary of Each of the 7 Points

Point 1: God loves you and has a plan for your life.

As Christians, we have one purpose on this earth. It is not to become rich, or powerful, or even famous. It is to love God and devote every part of our lives to become closer to Him. We were created to **live in perfect harmony, deep peace and unwavering love**, with God and with His Creation. In the beginning, all of Creation was **very good**.

With over eight billion people in our world, God has a **unique plan for every single one of us**. Like an elaborate clock with countless gears, springs, screws, a pendulum, toothed wheels, hands, a case, dials, barrel screws, and a face, all the various parts **work together for one purpose**: to display the accurate time.

Now, we picture in our minds, the entire human race, with each of us **living and loving our individual plan**, being exactly **the persons God created us to be**, in order to **fit perfectly as united parts** of the great mixture of souls, **for one purpose: to praise and worship God**.



Words of wisdom:

Let us understand that God is a physician,
and that suffering is a medicine for salvation,
not a punishment for damnation.

St. Augustine

Let's say we have a musical quartet playing a musical arrangement in 4 parts. While none of the musicians are performing the same musical part as the others, none of them feel left out, because **they all sense the importance of their contribution to the whole**. It is designed to be the same way in our world, when each of the seven-billion-plus people **follow the plan God has orchestrated** for humanity. The "arrangement" is awesome!

Point 2: Sin disrupts that plan and separates you from God.

Rebellion against God was not in the plans. But Satan tempted our original parents into sin and, as a **consequence**, the world of harmony, peace, and love, became **contaminated**. **Original sin** has been passed down from father to child, to this present day.

Now, **sin is pervasive**. We humans, collectively and individually, are separated from God and from His original plan for us, as a consequence of sin.

Point 3: Christ Jesus died to save you.

But we have to remember that **God's love for us**, collectively and individually, **has never weakened**. **He wants us back**; so, he is giving us the perfect hope to be **redeemed and saved**, by **the person** and by **the divinity of Jesus Christ**.

Jesus, by dying on the cross, is the sole means by which we can return to unity with God. The craving for divine grace is right there, in the souls of every one of us, whether we know it or not. And God wants nothing more than to be united with His people.

Words of wisdom:

For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son,
that whoever believes in him
should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

God wants us to spend eternity with Him in heaven. The heavenly harmony that was **a given** at the time humans were created, sadly, is now an **invitation for us to choose** to accept or reject. Our job is to accept that **invitation to salvation**, believe it, internalize it, embrace it, live it and **pass it forward**.

Point 4: Repent and believe the gospel.

To accept this **new covenant from God**, requires **deep and honest repentance for our sins**. **Repentance** begins in the heart. It is that **genuine sorrow** that we feel deep inside, **for offending our Father**. Along with our heart, our **intellect** is operative in repentance; **the heart is informed by the intellect**. Intelligence moves us **to know where we are wrong**. The **objective knowledge** of the **Ten Commandments** moves our heart to a place of **repentance**.

Repentance is not easy, especially in our **unrepentant society**:

- which values secularism, comfort, relativity and individual rights...often at the expense of others;
- in which people can simply opt out of dealing with anything that is uncomfortable;
- that surrounds us with worldly, sinful influences and expectations;

- where sinful behavior is the norm but the word “sin” is shunned;
- in which having sexual boundaries is met with resistance, mockery and hostility;
- where feeling remorseful, contrite, guilty or responsible is discouraged;
- which denies that there is such a thing as sin;
- that *minimizes or denies* the value of one’s conscience.

For example, students in many middle school life skills classes and high school health classes are taught that **masturbation** is healthy and good. A Minnesota high school football coach's slogan to his players is “Don’t date. Masturbate.”

True story: a local therapist actually informed his male client that watching **pornography** and **masturbating** is healthy entertainment; everyone does it. And because the client’s wife takes serious issue regarding his pornography use, *she* is prudish, irrational and intolerant. As if she, not he, is the one with the problem!

It is a popular belief that *not wanting* to have a baby is a good enough reason to have an **abortion**. A local professional was threatened with the loss of his social work licensure for (*successfully*) encouraging a high school senior to complete her pregnancy and keep her baby, rather than offer her the option of committing an abortion.

Sad to say, **we are the resistance behind enemy lines**.

Words of wisdom:

Be patient with everyone but above all thyself.
Do not be disheartened by your imperfections
but rise up with fresh courage.

St. Francis de Sales

Repent...God stirs in us the **willingness, desire and eagerness to repent**, when others don’t see the need. **To us, repentance** is a necessity. God calls us to repentance through our **conscience; we just need to listen**. Our repentance clears the path to chastity.

...and believe the gospel. We are particularly “fertile ground” for the **seeds of the gospel to flourish**. We **take the initiative** to seek God through prayer and by meditating on all aspects of our faith. He knows our heart’s desire and **graces us** with lessons learned, insights, knowledge, wisdom and understanding, as **the gospel reveals God to us**.

Point 5: Be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit.

The **Holy Spirit dwells in baptized people**. Also, **original sin was washed away when we were baptized**. Unfortunately, Baptism does not inoculate us with immunity to the sin that surrounds us and influences us after Baptism; so, we often find ourselves “wearing”, or dressing ourselves, in that sin. What we need to do, as faithful Catholics, is to remember that, in the eyes of Satan, **we are armed and dangerous because the Holy Spirit is present in us**. It is our responsibility to **use the tools with which we are armed**. An Army soldier, “armed to the teeth”, is essentially harmless to the enemy **if he does not use the weapons**, or if he does not know that he has the weapons at his disposal. So it is with the Holy Spirit. Thanks

to our **Baptism**, we have the Holy Spirit; we are given license to **use Him**, and we have a responsibility to do so.

Point 6: Abide in Christ and His body, the Church.

So, the Holy Spirit **abides** in us through **Baptism**. Through **Confirmation**, our faith is strengthened. Each time we receive the **Holy Eucharist**, we are celebrating "the source and summit" of the Christian life; **we become living Tabernacles** because the Living Christ is contained within us. How stunning is that? Technically, it would not be wrong to genuflect in front of a person who has just received the **Holy Eucharist**. Christ "abides" in us, and as we choose to be a part of the Catholic Church, we "**abide**" in the **body of Christ**. Through His love, and through our love for Him, we **reside and rest** in His heart.

Point 7: Go make disciples

Through His Church, every one of us has a special spot in the body of Jesus Christ. If we fall into the prideful trap of being **judgemental or harsh** toward people who follow society's permissive sexual norms, we need to **remember two things**:

1. we walked in those same shoes and, **only by the grace of God, are we being delivered**, and
2. **our calling is to reach out to those who are still suffering**, although they may not even be conscious of that need.

God loves every sinner, including those who attempt to deny and reject Him.

Take a moment to think about the following quote*: "***In the doorway of every brothel stands a man looking for God.***" Remember how we were "looking for love in all the wrong places", only to later discover that **the Love we were looking for...is God**.

When we come in contact with someone deeply immersed in sexual sin, we don't simply shrug it off and walk away. What better way to bring glory and honor to God than to allow Jesus to work through us and help the one who is lost. **Be a disciple**. The best way to do so, is to begin by **letting them know**, "**God loves you and has a plan for your life.**" It may feel awkward doing so, but remember:

If the Spirit moves us to touch another person's life, even that of a complete stranger, the Holy Spirit is also stirring that person's heart with the need to hear God's words from us. Trust God.

We are walking the walk that God has prepared for us. The Kerygma has reformed our lives, and redirected us from seemingly hopeless sexual sin to a theological foundation that supports Godly, joyous sexuality. That is God's plan, and in gratitude for our new lease on life, we eagerly **share our testimony**. **We can't contain it!** Keeping it locked inside ourselves isn't even an option. **We have to proclaim the good news that Jesus**

Christ is King! Our greatest desire is to **pass it along.** ***Go make disciples!***

*Paraphrased from the 1945 novel, *The World, the Flesh and Father Smith*
by Scottish writer, Bruce Marshall)

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

The Historical Kerygma

So **kerygmas are proclamations.** The ancient Romans employed heralds to spread kerygmas, proclaiming their military victories. The losers of the often violent takeovers were assured that they were now part of Augustus Caesar's great Roman Empire, and they would enjoy safety, peace and prosperity under his rule. **Caesar was heralded as the “Prince of Peace”.** Expecting to be regarded as a deity, the bigger-than-life **emperor was called, “Son of God”.** The Roman Empire's kerygma pointedly specified that Caesar's world domination was the **“Good News”.**

Sound familiar? From the farthest reaches of the Roman Empire, right into the very city of Rome came the Disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, with a different kerygma, or proclamation, of our own. His followers referred to **Jesus as, “Prince of Peace”, “Son of God”, and this, indeed, is the “Good News”.** ***So who is the real “Prince of Peace”, “Son of God” and about whom is the “Good News”; Augustus Caesar or Jesus?***

Many generations before Jesus or Augustus Caesar were born, **Old Testament** accounts from the prophets, among God's chosen people, provided the answer.

- In Isaiah 9:6, the prophet spoke of the much anticipated Messiah as the **“Prince of Peace”.**
- The **“Son of God”** is referenced in 2 Samuel 7:14, Psalm 2:7, Psalm 2:11-12, Proverbs 30:4, Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7, Daniel 3:25, Hosea 11:1 and Micah 5:1-3, **foretelling Jesus.**
- Isaiah 61:1 eagerly predicts the **“Good News”**, that the coming of the Messiah will free the people. The word **“gospel”** actually means **“good news”.**

Predictably, news of Jesus, and the kerygmatic message that the apostles spread, did not float well with Caesar's loyalists, or the man, Caesar. And not surprisingly, **massive persecution of Christians followed.** The Christians were forced to worship in **secrecy for three centuries**, until the Roman Empire came under the rule of **Emperor Constantine**, who was **permissive of Christianity, largely because his mother, St. Helena, was a Christian.**

Thus through catechesis the Gospel Kerygma (*the initial ardent proclamation by which a person is one day overwhelmed and brought to the decision to entrust himself to Jesus Christ by faith*) is gradually deepened, developed in its implicit consequences, explained in language that includes an appeal to reason, and channeled towards Christian practice in the Church and the world (CT 25).

St. John Paul II Catechesi Tradendae

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

Point 1 of the Kerygma- ***“God loves you and has a plan for your life”*** Narrative

Thoughts...God loves you.

The first Point gets us centered on two critical issues. The first is that *God loves us*. The second is *understanding and believing that He has a plan for us*.

Let's first look at **God's love for us**. There is an old cliché, “To know me is to love me!” That should seem obvious. But most of us, trapped in the deadly cycle of obsession and compulsion, believe exactly the opposite: “*To know me is to know **why** you cannot love me.*”

Words of wisdom:

Yet here I am once more, to renew my covenant with You.
 Save me once again, Lord,
 take me once more into Your redeeming embrace.

Pope Francis

So, nearly **every devoted Christian with sexual struggles** is internally devastated, believing that even God Himself *does not, and could not*, love him or her. **God actually does know every one of our sinful deeds, omissions, feelings and thoughts**, yet His love continues unaltered.

Certainly, sin has **consequences**, but making God switch off *His infinite, unimaginable love for us*, is **not one of them**. He loves us, right now, as we are. Our conviction that **we are the one exception** to the rule is 100% false. Sexual sin, possibly above all other sins, convicts the heart with self-condemnation, making us feel hopeless, helpless, unworthy, ashamed and unlovable. The head (knowing God loves us) and the heart are out of sync.

A Catholic speaker articulated “**the great lie**: We are loved (*by God*) to the depth and degree that we deserve it. **Don't buy it.**” He continued, “**God loves those most, who deserve it the least, but need it the most.**” That should be startling, compelling, and comforting news to those of us who still feel unlovable:

- **startling** because it is such a shock to our standard way of thinking;
- **compelling** because we feel drawn to learn more about such a counter-intuitive concept; and
- **comforting** because the Holy Spirit gently assures the suffering that this is true.

Our feeling that we are undeserving or unworthy is exactly what places us right in the middle of God's profound love. **There is indeed hope!**

“God loves those *most*, who deserve it the least, but *need* it the most.” And here we thought that God loves everyone equally. **In truth, He does not love us equally; He loves us individually.** There is no issue of fairness! The word “most” is **not** a reference to the

quantity of God's unfathomable, immeasurable love, as if He rations love as a commodity to people, in various sized portions. Rather, the process of bestowing unquantifiable, specifically purposeful love is **directed on the basis of need**, as God defines need. We all have more than abundant love from Our Father at every moment of every day, whether or not we believe it is *deserved*. "Deserve" is an expression of **human social judgment**. Fortunately, God's love transcends human concepts of justice or judgment.

Words of wisdom:

We are not the sum of our weaknesses and failures:
We are the sum of our Father's love for us.

St. John Paul II

We grow to love as God loves. We find ourselves **wanting** God to **focus His love on those with poverty of mind, body, and soul**. This is **mercy**. We rejoice as they are saved through His love. **We are among the 99, delighted that God is bringing the lost one home.**

God does have a plan for your life.

God has a plan for our life. In Point 2, we will see that sin disrupted that original plan. But through Jesus Christ, God has not abandoned His plan for our life. He continues to invite us, right now, to return to Him and start again on His path that he created especially for us. Our **addictive behaviors**, however, tend to cause our vision of life's opportunities, or possibilities, to shrink into a limited, little world that orbits tightly, around our specific struggle... in our case, misdirected sexuality. We not only deal poorly with what we think is before us, but we become reactive, watchful and defensive.

Words of wisdom:

No one can be saved without divine light.
Divine light causes us to begin and to make progress,
and it leads us to the summit of perfection.
Therefore if you want to begin and to receive this divine light, pray.
If you have begun to make progress, pray.
And if you have reached the summit of perfection,
and want to be super-illumined so as to remain in that state, pray.
If you want faith, pray. If you want hope, pray.
If you want charity, pray.
If you want poverty, pray.
If you want obedience, pray.
If you want chastity, pray.
If you want humility, pray.
If you want meekness, pray.
If you want fortitude, pray.
If you want any virtue, pray.

*St. Angela of Foligno,
Patron Saint of those afflicted by sexual temptations*

The men of **PULLS**, filled with the Holy Spirit, develop a **clear vision** of those **issues in front of us that God wants us to face**. Sexual preoccupation is high on that list. We fight it, courageously, determined to change, confident that **God will be the source** of that change. Then, **healing** (*recovery, chastity*) becomes the **priority**.

It is as if we have been wandering in tall prairie grass without a compass, lost and hungry. We recognize a need for direction, so we lift it up in prayer. Soon, we come upon what looks to be a line of packed down grass. So, we follow it, and it becomes more and more clearly a path. That is what **God provides for us: a path** (*or a plan*) that we **can choose** to follow. We may not know exactly where it leads, but we trust that it will be much, much better than being lost. **Indeed, it is.**

Words of wisdom:

Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new,
late have I loved you!
You were within me, but I was outside,
and it was there that I searched for you.
In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created.
You were with me,
but I was not with you.
Created things kept me from you;
yet if they had not been in you
they would have not been at all.
You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness.
You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness.
You breathed your fragrance on me;
I drew in breath and now I pant for you.
I have tasted you, now I hunger and thirst for more.
You touched me, and I burned for your peace.

St. Augustine

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Point 1 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Point 2 of the Kerygma: “Sin disrupts that plan and separates you from God.”

Narrative

Thoughts...

Although **original sin** was **washed away** at **Baptism**, we remained **vulnerable** to the seductions of the sin that surrounded us. **We were wounded** by the **effect of original sin**. **Ignoring God’s input**, we **reshaped our lifestyles** around addictive, sexual behaviors. **God’s plan** for our lives **was disrupted** as we formed a new **reliance on disordered thinking and behavior**. More and more **lost, wounded, and broken**, we **separated** from Him. Sin became poison in our veins that needed the **healing antidote of God’s grace**.

Words of wisdom:

Satan has a plan for your life, and the plan has always been
to hide your identity, to hide your calling, to hide your purpose.

Matt Lozano

Most of us were just children when a *rudely-sudden-something* happened. Something terribly, terribly wrong. Somehow, violating, crass, **sexual sin startled** and awakened our slumbering sexuality. Ready or not, we were thrust into chambers of sexuality that we were **unprepared to enter**. Confused, bewildered, disoriented and shocked, we just **couldn’t** come up with the means or maturity to respond as God would want.

Many aspects of our lives began to take a **downward slide**. Our addictive behaviors, and the sins that accompany them, were leading us, sometimes with our **eyes wide open**, **sometimes not**, sometimes actively, sometimes passively, **further away from the One** we needed most. Despite how we hurt inside, we continued to descend. Our ability to **care malfunctioned** and we injured *most*, the very people we should have been loving. Why couldn’t we just stop?

Words of wisdom:

When we want to be something
other than the thing God wants us to be,
we must be wanting what, in fact,
will not make us happy.

C.S. Lewis

- Maybe **we hoped** we would hit a sexual saturation point and quit;
- maybe **we thought** we could let it go once we experienced satisfaction *just once*;
- maybe **we wished** that we would achieve some major sexual milestone, where all the confusion, all the baffling experiences, all the personal investments would, somehow, be justified by some new, astounding sexual revelation;
- or maybe we didn't hope or think at all.

But **we quietly lost all fight, all hope of victory, all yearning for future joy. Walking with God**, we would have had hope, trust, faith, a giving spirit, ability to love, kindness, and peace, even in the harshest of circumstances. But we got lost along the way.

Words of wisdom:

Let's not waste our past by allowing it to define us.
Let's put it to good use by allowing it to prepare us.

Fr. Matt Guckin

God's Creation is not designed to be degraded or reduced, defiled, polluted or objectified; that is Satan's doing. We are each miraculous and magnificent creatures of God. **Body and soul**, we are lovable, worthwhile, wanted, special and unique. We are called to **see** through God's eyes, and are meant to **be seen** through God's eyes. The preoccupation, unmanageability and obsession with **sexualizing** members of God's human creation is a form of **deification or idol worship**.

Words of wisdom:

But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust
has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matthew 5:28

To **know one's heart**, we only need to **observe his use of time, energy and behavior**. Keeping in mind that **we are called to worship God the Creator**, our sexually addictive actions clearly miss the mark.

Reality check: Satan is **incapable of creating**, and he **despises God's creation**. His mode of operation is to **disrupt our value of creation**, and by doing so, **take our eyes off of the Creator**. Our **objectification** of others is the **worship of counterfeit love and counterfeit beauty**. It degrades God's creation by judging others according to their **usefulness** in gratifying our sexual urges.

Words of wisdom:

Angels and men, "as intelligent and free creatures, have to journey toward their ultimate destinies by their free choice and preferential love.

They can therefore go astray. Indeed, they have sinned.

Thus has moral evil, incommensurably more harmful than physical evil,
entered the world.

God is in no way, directly or indirectly, the cause of moral evil.

He permits it, however, because he respects the freedom of his creatures and, mysteriously, knows how to derive good from it."

Catechism of the Catholic Church #311

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Point 2 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

***Point 3 of the Kerygma:
“Christ Jesus died to save you.”***

Narrative

Thoughts...

At the Last Supper, Jesus said “This is my body, which will be given up for you. This is the cup of my blood. It will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven.” (Mt 26:28) The Catechism of the Catholic Church (#613) explains, “Christ’s death is both the Paschal sacrifice that accomplishes the definitive redemption of men, through the ‘Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,’ and the sacrifice of the New Covenant, which **restores man** to communion with God by **reconciling him** to God through the ‘blood of the covenant, which was **poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**”

Words of wisdom:

No one was ever lost because his sin was too great,
but because his trust was too small.

St. Francis Xavier Seelos

Sacrifices were the means by which the Jewish people, including Jesus' family and ancestors, **atoned to God for their sins**, by Jewish custom. They were obedient to Jewish law. The **sacrifice**, in this case **a lamb**, was **paraded into Jerusalem**, and lived with the family during the week preceding Passover. The family would develop an attachment to the lamb by caring for it, making the upcoming **sacrifice** truly sacrificial. The penitent Jews brought the **sacrificial lamb** to the temple to be offered to God, and then **sacrificed to God**, in reparation for their sins.

Numerous rabbinical priests (*rabbis*) were lined up behind a stone wall. The penitent would gently hand the lamb across the wall to the first rabbi to inspect. If it was acceptable, according to the laws, **unblemished** and fit, the rabbi would position the **lamb for sacrifice** with a gold or silver basin beneath the neck to capture the blood about to be spilled. The rabbinical priest would hand the knife to the **penitent** and it was the responsibility of the **penitent to slit the neck of the lamb**. The container of blood was then passed down the line of rabbis, to the last rabbi whose responsibility was to **pour the blood over the altar** of sacrifice. At that moment, **God forgave the sins** of the family.

Words of wisdom:

The Israelites didn't find healing staring at their snake bites.
You won't find the answer to your problems by an endless dwelling
on self or circumstance. You find it in Jesus.

2000 years ago, the teachings and miracles performed by Jesus were the talk of the entire Jewish nation. Because **Jesus stressed the Spirit and love contained in the Laws above the letter of the Laws of Moses**, it is safe to assume there was much division over Jesus' example, words and deeds. Once the flickers of division grew to a blaze, the religious and political leaders insisted the fires should be extinguished. Thus the subsequent **passion, death and resurrection of Our Lord**.

Modern day practice is to focus our eyes on two areas of the Triduum. The first is to regard the death of Jesus as His loving **sacrifice** for us. **Jesus' love** transcended even the horrible pain and death He suffered. His **agape love** placed the **needs of the other** (*in this case, every human being, past, present or future*) **before His own**.

We are all aware of **Jesus' physical agony** during the Passion; beaten and kicked, spit upon, slashed open and torn, covered with raw abrasions, bruised and swollen, pierced first by the spikes of the crown of thorns, then by the nails... Was His **mental, emotional, social and spiritual torment** any less agonizing than ours? And constantly, from the agony in the garden to the moment His mission on earth was finished on the cross, **He breathed**. Imagine if, with every single breath, Jesus said, "This is for Michael. This is for Sam. This is for Tom. This is for Justin. This is for Rush. This is for ____." Fill in the blank with **your name**. Jesus' sacrifice served an enormous purpose: **He died to save you... personally... individually**.

A second area of focus is the **Resurrection**: His being risen from the dead, followed by 40 days of instructing and interacting with at least 500 witnesses and creating the **Church of the New Covenant, the Catholic Church**. Jesus' resurrection **promises us life** after death. When we give our wills and our lives over to the care of the Holy Trinity, we have the promise of being **fully alive with** our loving, merciful, gracious **God in heaven for eternity**. Awesome!

About 2000 years after Jesus died to save us, **by God's grace, we took an honest look at our sexual behaviors** and came to our senses. We saw the bigger picture, and recognized damage we had created. We began to defiantly resist the **default desire for** sinful behavior. We enlisted with God, cut through denial, about-faced, and committed ourselves to the sometimes arduous climb back to Truth.

The stairway toward heaven is a manual ascent. There are **Steps** to climb, and vantage **Points** that reveal the reason for our progress. God walks with us, encouraging, picking us up when we fall, supporting us when we are wobbly. Why? Because **God knows our worth**. He loves us beyond all comprehension. He sent His Son to live among us, and for us. He redeemed us.

Point 3 of the Kerygma, "**Jesus died to save you**", is the most astounding news ever proclaimed to the people of the world.

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Point 3 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

Agenda for Closing the Meeting

Point 4 of the Kerygma: “Repent and believe the Gospel.”

Narrative

Thoughts...

Just as these 7 Points define the Kerygma that Jesus' apostles were directed to proclaim to the world, “Repent and believe the Gospel” was the proclamation (*kerygma*) of Jesus during His ministry. This familiar directive is among the words Jesus spoke (*Mark 1:15*) as He entered Galilee, shortly after His cousin, John the Baptist, was arrested. He came for one purpose: **to proclaim the gospel of God: “This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel.”**

Back in 1828, Webster defined ‘**repent**’ as: “5. In theology, to sorrow or be pained for sin, as a violation of God's holy law, a dishonor to his character..., and the foulest ingratitude to a Being of infinite benevolence.

Today’s Webster’s Dictionary has softened the definition by defining ‘**repent**’ this way: “1. To feel pain, sorrow or regret for something done or spoken.” It seems quite remarkable how **the very definition and gravity of repenting has changed** in less than a century.

For us, whose sexual indulgences were contrary to Jesus' teachings, **we cannot expect to receive healthy chastity, without sincere, heart-felt sorrow for our sins...repentance.** Being **sincere** matters. For some of our men, nothing prompts sincerity like getting caught in the act of sexual sin. The truth is out. We clearly feel embarrassment, humiliation, and frustration, but also a sense of relief. We can now stop the lying, secrecy, shame and duality. Hopefully, we have “hit bottom”. At last, we have had it. We reject our former life and choose to begin living a life of honesty and integrity. Finally, we will be worthy of trust. The price, however, is huge. We must listen to the pain, anger, frustration, fears, and other feelings expressed by our loved ones.

Then again, for some of us, the first thing on our mind, when caught, is damage control. We subtly twist the truth (outright lie), or in a bit of a panic, we do anything and everything we need to do to protect ourselves from revealing the whole truth. Truth is this: a problem exists that must be addressed.

In the words of Proverbs 28:13, “Those who conceal their sins do not prosper, but those who confess and forsake them obtain mercy.”

Words of wisdom:

The most beautiful and stirring adventure that can happen to you
is the personal meeting with Jesus,
who is the only one
who gives real meaning to our lives.

St. John Paul II

Again, Jesus' gospel (*kerygma* or *proclamation*) stated, **"This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."** Let's look at the middle sentence, "The kingdom of God is at hand." This kingdom is **divine** because it is **instituted by God** and is **everlasting** because it will exist forever under His rule. God's kingdom is **universal or catholic** with a small c, meaning all people from all nations can be a part of God's kingdom. And even though it has begun on earth, it is more than earthly; it is **spiritual** and **intrinsically heavenly**. Many of the people who heard Jesus speak, missed His point. They thought He would be ushering in an earthly kingdom where He would be the King and Israel would rule the world.

Our decision to repent of sexual immorality, seize upon chastity, and believe the gospel allows us a very real opportunity to spend eternity with Our Lord (*the King*) in His Kingdom (*the "world" that He shall rule*).

The second part of **Point 4** is "believe in the Gospel." The Nicene Creed states what we believe as Catholics. Our truth is rooted in the Gospel, the teachings and revelations of Our Lord, the words of Jesus in the Bible, and the ways God 'speaks' to us.

Bishop Robert Barron, in his article, **"What Precisely is the Gospel?"**, eventually provided this concise definition: "God became one of us that we might become participants in His life!"

Words of wisdom:

The most beautiful act of faith is the one made in darkness,
in sacrifice, and with extreme effort.

St. Padre Pio

Approaching the southern wall to the Temple Mount entering Jerusalem are 15 massive stone steps. This is believed to be near where the adulterous woman was brought before Jesus, Jesus drew in the dirt, the accusers became the convicted, and departed.

Traditionally, **15 Psalms were sung on those 15 steps**, by our Jewish brothers and sisters, as they **ascended the stairs** to enter the Temple area for Passover, Pentecost, and the Festival of Booths. **Psalms 120-134 are the Psalms of Ascent**. A psalm was recited one step at a time. The steps were of different heights so that the walk into Jerusalem was done purposefully and thoughtfully. This is a truly holy spot. And so it is, **we move forward, one holy Step at a time**, from our previous station in life, to repentance, and to belief through the Gospel.

On those same 15 steps that enter into Jerusalem, Fr. Matt Guckin led a group of modern day pilgrims to do the following:

"Invite Jesus to the exact spot of your shame.

Feel Christ's hand on your shoulder.

Let him lead you away from that place of shame and guilt."

When we **"repent"**, we cleanse ourselves of shame allowing ourselves to become participants in the life of Our Lord through the Gospel. We trust and follow His lead.

From the moment we were **conceived**, we were headed for a marvelous destination with God. Satan convinced us that taking a different route would be a great idea. We believed him. It wasn't. Jesus sacrificed His life in order for us to get back on track to **our original**

destination. We are not getting there by the same route that God originally intended, but rather, by a new, valid plan. Welcome back!

Now, we are committed to never take directions from Satan again;

- take all future directions from God;
- abide in Him and stand strong with all the other Christians who have returned to God's plan;
- and get the message of our stories out to the world.

Words of wisdom:

He reached down from on high and took hold of me;
He drew me out of deep waters.

2 Samuel 22:17

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Point 4 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Point 5 of the Kerygma: “Be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit.”

Narrative

Thoughts...

Original sin has been passed down from father to child, generation after generation, since Adam and Eve dined on the forbidden fruit. **At Baptism, we are freed from original sin, but remain vulnerable to the sin surrounding us.** The Catholic Church, instituted by Jesus Himself, welcomes adults (*usually those who have attended OCIA*) and infants, into the faith through the **Sacrament of Baptism**. Read CCC 1262-1284. It is all about the Catholic Church’s teachings on **Baptism**.

Words of wisdom:

Through the sacrament of baptism you have become
a temple of the Holy Spirit.
Do not drive away so great a Guest by evil conduct
and become a slave to the devil,
for your liberty was bought by the blood of Christ.

Pope St. Leo the Great

In Mark 1:4, the Apostle writes, “John [the] Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” Later, in Mark 1:8, he tells of **John the Baptist** saying, “I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” **John’s baptism washed the Jewish participants of their sins, thus preparing them for the Messiah**, who was soon to come. **Although Jesus was sinless, He asked John to baptize Him.**

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, #536

The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world". Already he is anticipating the "baptism" of his bloody death. Already he is coming to "fulfill all righteousness", that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins. The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son. The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to "rest on him". Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened" - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

When he emerged from the Jordan, Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness and then began His public life. The **apostles were sent out to all lands to baptize all who would embrace belief in Jesus.**

“In baptism, our previous life, stained by original sin, dies, and new life in Christ begins.” (CCC 1239) “Immersion in water symbolizes not only **death and purification**, but also

regeneration and renewal.” (CCC 1262)

- Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ, AKA Christians.
- Baptism ushers the newly baptized into the community of believers, the Church.
- The baptized person is freed from original sin.
- Baptism is necessary for salvation.
- In Baptism, we receive our **true identity as God’s child**, anointed as priest, prophet and king. Remember who we are. **We are Christ’s beloved children.**

Words of Wisdom

“Repent, and be baptized every one of you
in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins;
and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

(St. Peter’s promise to the crowd) CCC 1216

Jesus was baptized, and then went **into the desert**, and Satan tempted Him there, trying to **exploit His vulnerability**. Jesus had been fasting for those 40 days and was surely beyond hungry. Predictably, Satan seized upon that vulnerability, deciding to tempt Jesus by convincing Him that making a loaf of bread out of a rock would be a good idea. Hungry as He was, Jesus resisted, **armed by the Scriptures and also by His Baptism**. There was **power in His Baptism**. Remember, when He emerged from the Jordan, the heavens were torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descended upon him, and a voice came from the heavens, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” (*Mark 1:9-11*) If that didn’t empower Jesus, what could?

Likewise, in our chastity, we need to **tap into the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit** that have patiently been stored up inside of us, waiting to be used. **The gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord.**

If we unexpectedly encounter a situation that ‘triggers’ us, **we have the Holy Spirit** to call upon. **Satan tempts us when we are weak, just as he tried with Jesus.** We focus our attention on God with renewed strength, resist temptation and move on. Every time we rise above the temptation to sin, our chastity gets stronger.

Words of wisdom:

It is only when we become true lovers
who are committed to growing in our love for God
that we can become the fighters
who will fight sin and temptation
to the very end no matter the wounds and failures of the past.

Fr. Nnamdi Moneme, OMV

We each contain within us:

1. the **Holy Spirit**, if we have been Baptized,
2. **Jesus**, if we have received the Eucharist, and
3. our personal **Guardian Angel**.

Our Guardian Angel is our MEPSS defender whose responsibilities include protecting us, body and soul, and bringing us closer to the kingdom of God by strengthening our faith.

The Holy Spirit resides in each of us who have been baptized. At our Confirmation, we become even more empowered to tap the infinite capabilities of the Holy Spirit to become a remarkable force for God...if we so choose. The Godly men of **PULLS** do indeed so choose.

Being the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit residing in one man knows that particular man's thoughts, actions, capabilities, talents, deficiencies, and potential. Everything. Imagine if we call upon the Holy Spirit to nourish our soul, strengthen our faith, and help us to minister to others. He will not disappoint.

When *one baptized person* is in the company of *another*, or a group of other baptized people, they have a monumentally enormous **spiritual connection**! The Holy Spirit knows precisely what each man needs, to grow in the Lord, and can impact the whole group's dynamics to serve God. Everyone wins! Remember, we will freely choose to turn our will and our life over to the care of God (*see Step 3*). The Holy Spirit works within us.

Words of wisdom:

When tempted, invoke your angel.
He is more eager to help you than you are to be helped.

St. John Bosco

After **PULLS** meetings, someone often comments that he found himself speaking words, not of his own. At times, one finds himself learning something important from his own words. With God, all things are possible. This adds a fresh twist to Matthew 18:20: "*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.*"

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Point 5 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Point 6 of the Kerygma: “Abide in Christ and His body, the Church.”

Narrative

Thoughts...

We surrendered. At the beginning of our PULLS quest, God revealed to us the ***need to progress*** from the powerlessness and unmanageability associated with our sexuality, to living and loving sacrificially in Jesus Christ.

We strove. We worked. We dug in and worked tirelessly, ridding ourselves of all that fouled our souls, cleaning up any vestiges of debris from our past, and plotting the course toward chastity by setting and achieving clearly set objectives along the way.

We now abide. We rest in God’s arms. The deepest desire of our hearts became reality. We answered “Yes!” to God’s invitation to experience peace, satisfaction, serenity and joy in His loving arms.

Words of wisdom:

God is going to keep “interrupting” your life until
He doesn't feel like an interruption anymore...
and everything else does.

Mark Hart

Striving Versus Abiding

Striving and abiding are different. **Our world** certainly values the outcomes of striving: self-made men, overcomers, achievers, leaders, authorities, and men with status and power.

When we strive, we use our time, treasures and talents to:

- struggle against oppositional forces;
- overcome obstacles;
- achieve, obtain, accomplish or gain;
- improve quality or performance,
- earn recognition, honors, respect or accolades;
- fulfill or create our identity;
- take pride in what we do, what we possess, or the position we hold;
- be defined by what we do.

Can striving fit into our pilgrimage toward chastity?

Certainly! **As Catholics**, however, our **striving serves to elevate not ourselves, but God** in the eyes of others who we encounter. **Let’s look at how the bullet points above can be reframed to bring the love of God to the forefront.** As Catholic Christians, when we strive, we use our time, treasures and talents to:

- *struggle against oppositional forces,*
....when Satan has no intention of releasing his grip on us and **we strive to break free,**

walk away with conviction, and seek God;

- *overcome obstacles,*
....**when our sinful behaviors**, unproductive habits and addictions, and the bombardment of Godless temptations, influences and manipulations **interfere with our pilgrimage toward sainthood;**
- *achieve, obtain, accomplish or gain,*
....**when our hard work, dedication, and will move us to** learn about our faith, commit to our chastity program work, and set and **accomplish chastity milestones;**
- *improve quality or performance,*
....when bettering, energizing, and refining our faith commitment, prayer life, and religious studies, **to give us a stronger foundation to our sanctity;**
- *earn recognition, honors, respect or accolades,*
.... **when our interest** is in our **specific mission** and **our motivation** is to **do it well**. We do **not** do good works **to feed our egos**.
- *fulfill or create our identity,*
....when we intentionally and prayerfully **seek the person that God created us to be;**
- *take pride in what we do, what we possess, or the position we hold,*
....when our humble expression of **pride** is in the goodness of the Lord;
when **what we do** is done in service of God;
when our **possession** of the Truth and God's word is paramount;
when the **position** we hold is as a child of God
("Therefore, as it is written, 'Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.'" 1 Cor 1:31);
- *be defined by what we do,*
....when **all that we do is colored by**, covered by, and purified by **our love for God and His love for us**.

Words of wisdom:

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,
but you received a spirit of adoption,
through which we cry, "Abba, Father! "
The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Romans 8:14-16

So, striving can be virtuous, then?

Yes, but we need to ask for God's graces of **discernment and protection**. Otherwise, subtle compromises and little ego strokes can lead us to prideful sin, made worse by our doing so as Catholics.

We certainly strive, then, for qualities and lifestyle choices that strengthen our ability to love as Jesus loves. Pray that our striving is **virtuous**; that we strive with **humility, charity, chastity, gratitude, temperance, patience, and diligence, all centered on our loving, merciful and gracious God**.

Our striving is disciplined and hard work, performed out of our love of God to work alongside Him for **only His glory**.

Point 6 talks about abiding, not striving. How about abiding?

In PULLS, **striving** is a **conscious, intentional** effort to progress toward the gradual, **replacement state** of indwelling, confiding in, reliance on and resting in God: **abiding**. In the PULLS Diagonal Illustration, we would see our seeking decreasing over time while abiding grows within us.

“**Abide**” has many meanings, even in the Bible. In the book of John, abide is used over 40 times in its different forms. **To abide in Christ and His body**, the Church, we **share with Jesus a spiritual indwelling and sharing of our lives**. It’s a mutual commitment. As Christ abides in us, we become components of the body of Christ, the Church. Whether we are a finger, a bone, or a lung, **we are important**, and the body of Christ would be incomplete without us. We **mature** in PULLS, gaining a **disposition** of sexual purity (chastity), and **abiding** in God and resting in His care.

Finally, **abiding** can be interpreted as **flourishing and growing**. Abiding in Jesus Christ is rewarded by **a fruitful, exciting, growthful emergence** of full and rewarding life. No matter how we define it, abiding is important to PULLS.

When we are called to **abide** in Christ and His Body, the Church, **we**:

- become still;
- rest, linger, dwell and remain in Jesus;
- trust in God, Who He is and who we are in Him;
- place our confidence in God to complete or sustain us;
- allow the Lord to carry us when He wants movement in our lives;
- free ourselves of the habits, ambitions, dreams of glory, and prideful accomplishments that distance us from God;
- rely on God’s will for us;
- rest in His goodness as a cherished creation of God.

Purity and fullness in God are products of graces, **not just prizes or commodities** to which we are **entitled** by simply striving. They **are free gifts from God**. Because men tend to be goal-oriented (*while our sisters in Christ are usually process or relationally oriented*), it goes against our **worldly** grain to resist the **self-centered** rewards of striving. So we reorient our thinking; we **strive** to place ourselves in an **open posture** to be receptive to God’s graces. That’s actually **God’s point**: go against the grain. Be the fish who swims in opposition to the school. Be the flute serenading the sunrise while the rest of the band marches westward. Abide.

Back when we were driven by selfish striving, what mattered was the worldly nature of **what we did**. When we **abide** in God, what matters is **who we are**: Sons of God, Whose movement is in our souls. He reforms our identity as **His beloved, His treasured ones**. God-centered, we **rest in His heart** as a baby rests in the loving arms of his parents. Receiving **God’s gifts**, we freely “**pass them forward**” to others without need of repayment or expectation of recognition. One who strives, works to be productive. One who abides is fruitful. ***We thrive in Jesus. We flourish in Jesus. We are truly alive as we love Jesus!***

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Point 6 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

Point 7 of the Kerygma: “Go make disciples.”

Narrative

Thoughts...

Once we possess the Truth, it is our duty...our moral and theological imperative...to **spread the word to others**. What hangs in the balance of our choice is of enormous consequence.

Words of wisdom:

Truth is not a concept or abstract idea to discuss.
Truth is a person, Jesus Christ.

Jeff Cavins

We, as the Body of Christ, are called to bring Catholic enlightenment and core belief to all we meet. The **Word of God is entrusted to us**. Most of us recoil at the thought. We are too shy, too damaged, too insecure, not smart enough, not adequately religiously versed. We don't want to look stupid, or appear “holier than thou”. There are as many excuses as there are people.

Imagine being in the company of Andrew, Peter, James and John, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Simon, Matthew, James (*the Lesser*) and Judas the Zealot (*not Iscariot*) also known as Thaddaeus. They **all had weaknesses** and personal struggles of similar magnitude as ours. **Jesus called upon them, and He is calling upon us**. The job description is the same. "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations..." (*Matthew 28*) God knows us much better than we will ever know ourselves. Would He ask us to be a disciple, especially knowing our inventory? **Absolutely!** Pray about that.

Words of wisdom:

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,
but you received a spirit of adoption,
through which we cry, "Abba, Father! "
The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

Romans 8:14-16

So, if we are going to be disciples, who do we talk to? What do we say? How do we breach the subject? **We ask God to make us complete as a disciple**. We work with the Holy Spirit, Who resides in us and **brings to our attention specific people needing the faith, hope, mercy, and love that can only be found in God**.

The Apostle, Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12:9 quoted Jesus: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” I will all the more gladly boast of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

How will we know what to say? No worries! There are actually three answers.

- **First:** the **Holy Spirit speaks through us** to say exactly what the recipient needs to hear. If we have never experienced this before, we are in for a treat! There is no greater honor for a man, than to **be a means by which God can touch the life of another**. It is an immeasurably awesome experience; one that we will want to repeat, over and over again, with God as our director!
- **Second: remember the 7 Points of the Kerygma.** These are the agreed upon message that the original disciples used, to bring the Good News of Salvation to the world. **They are as true and effective now as they were 2000 years ago.**
- God may choose for us to say nothing, but **evangelize by example**; by living and celebrating our Christian joy. Our world is filled with people who suffer from emptiness of heart because they lack an intimate relationship with Jesus. Seeing the fullness of our faith in action, can reveal Christianity as the remedy for their spiritual thirst. They see us as people who have that fulfillment and satisfaction in life that they desperately want.

Words of wisdom:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you,
which you have from God, and that you are not your own?
For you were bought with a price;
therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

So, **discipleship is a calling, a responsibility and a privilege.** Let's embrace it. As Paul said in 1 Corinthians 31, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord!" Praise His name! Through Christ Jesus, we are freed from the slavery of sexual torment and given new life!

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Point 7 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

Section 5:

Theology of the Body

Theology of the Body and Recovery

Rejoice! There is great hope in **recovery**, that far exceeds our wildest imagination! Former Pope John Paul II, now *St. John-Paul the Great's* **Theology of the Body (TOB)** tells us that **God's glorious mystery is revealed in the human body. Our body is not evil; it bears the magnificent inscription of God!** God's intentionality and creative potential is engraved in our maleness and femaleness.

For those called to the vocation of marriage, our sexuality is designed to be expressed **fully**, in **joyful** sexual union. **Chastity (sexual purity)** is not suffocating or prudish. **Purity** is freeing, beautiful and extraordinarily sexually fulfilling. That's because **love, as God intended it**, right from the Creation, is **truthful, exciting, affectionate, sensual, intimate, fulfilling, satisfying**, and it is evidenced by our ability **(and our ultimate goal) to love as God loves**. Yes, it is love, purity, and holy unity that **fills the void** that we tried to fill with our counterfeit and addictive sexual thoughts and behaviors. *Lust* is in no way similar to the **loving desire** that our faith encourages. Prayerfully rejoice in the **profound meaning and theology that God Himself embedded into our bodies**.

Words of wisdom:

To limit your desires and your hopes
is to misunderstand God's infinite goodness!

St. Therese of Lisieux

The majority of the **Theology of the Body (TOB)**, was composed by Cardinal Karol Józef Wojtyła, **before** he became **Pope John-Paul II**, and the finishing touches were completed early in his papacy. The Pope actually presented the TOB in **129 separate reflections** to his Wednesday papal audiences in St. Peter's Square and the Paul VI Audience Hall between **September 5, 1979**, and **November 28, 1984**. The Holy Spirit's revelations and inspiration in the TOB are apparent.

The English translation of JPPI's **Theology of the Body** is lengthy, *challenging*, and worthwhile. For most of us, it can be a difficult read. Numerous books provide synopses or interpretations of the original TOB (e.g. Christopher West's **Theology of the Body for Beginners**) that are more reader friendly.

Essentially, the TOB presents **God's loving vision for human sexuality; the common chastity (purity) target** for PULLS participants, who have lost our way following sensual idols. We need, and have, a true, uncompromised, unblemished, **chastity objective** that can be **shared by all Catholics**.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Why the TOB is a significant part of the PULLS program, just like the 12 Steps and the 7 Points:

First, the 12 Steps:

We encourage our PULLS men to begin working on 12 Steps soon after joining PULLS. The 12 Steps are a ***therapeutic journey*** from powerlessness and **unmanageability** to living and loving **sacrificially**, in our Lord Jesus Christ. One of our PULLS men, Micky, said that the definition of insanity is to participate in a 12 Step program and not work the steps.

The Seven Points:

The 7 Points **of the Kerygma** ensure that **everyone in PULLS** is “on the same page” with our understanding and application of our Catholic faith. Then, we can apply that knowledge to our sexual concerns.

The Five Key Features of the Theology of the Body:

The TOB makes certain that we all have a **shared vision** of the second **objective of our recovery: chastity**, from God’s own point of view. Imagine trying to practice sexual purity without a deep understanding of **God’s reason for creating us as sexual beings!**

The Five Key Features of the Theology of the Body (TOB) are presented here, with a Narrative for each feature, written by **Dr. Edward Sri**. Our understanding of *our objective of chastity* can only make sense in the context of the **TOB**.

The Theology of the Body tells us that human sexuality transcends all life experience; it reaches to the very core of our being. It calls out for honest and pure expression, and truly unifies at a level holy and sacred. We are **blessed by God’s call** to answer **His personal invitation**:

- to emulate the unifying love of the Trinity;
- to harmonize with the marriage of Jesus and the Church;
- and to our married men, to participate with God in His very act of Creation, through the divine, holy marriage embrace (***procreation***).
- And for our single men, He invites us to seek holy **unity with God** in fulfillment of our current calling/vocation or as the essential preparation toward our future calling/vocation.

We are common, humble sinners.

God **calls us**, one by one, **by name**, to enter a vocation of
sexual fidelity and faithfulness, immersed in holiness.

The **Written Work** (and optional additional questions) for the 12 Steps, the Kerygma, and the Key Features can be found in separate booklets that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

About Dr. Edward Sri's

The Five Key Features of the Theology of the Body

Dr. Edward Sri is the author of *The Five Key Features of the Theology of the Body*, that helps us to grasp, internalize and apply the TOB to our PULLS chastity initiative. We have divided **Dr. Sri's** article into 6 separate narratives, each one followed by Written Work specifically geared toward our PULLS men of God.

The following article is based on Edward Sri's best-selling book, **Men, Women and the Mystery of Love: Practical Insights from John Paul II's Love & Responsibility** (Cincinnati: Franciscan Media, 2016). For more free resources from Dr. Sri on Theology of the Body, marriage, and dating relationships, visit his website edwardsri.com or listen to his podcast All Things Catholic with Edward Sri. You can follow him on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

We invite you to take a moment to read **Dr. Sri's** credits at the end of this chapter.

Five Key Features of the Theology of the Body

EDWARD P. SRI "This article is based on a chapter from Dr. Edward Sri's book [Men, Women, and the Mystery of Love](#): Practical Insights from John Paul II's Love and Responsibility"

Theology of the Body from Eden to Today

There is much excitement today, especially among the young, about John Paul II's "theology of the body" — the 129 catechetical addresses he gave between 1979 and 1984 that have revolutionized the way many theologians now teach about love, sexuality, and marriage.

However, while lay Catholics initially may respond with much enthusiasm to the ideas they've heard about the theology of the body, many of those who actually dare to read these addresses quickly find themselves overwhelmed by the depth of John Paul II's philosophical, theological, and indeed mystical thought on this topic.

In this short article, I will offer a brief overview of some key features of the Theology of the Body that will make this monumental work a bit more digestible and practical for lay readers. Though not intending to offer a comprehensive picture, I simply will highlight five aspects of the theology of the body that relate to themes we have already seen developed in John Paul II's earlier work, *Love and Responsibility* (see that series beginning [here](#) with subsequent articles listed at the bottom of the article)

Key Feature 1:

The Law of the Gift

In an age when many individuals approach their relationships as ways of seeking their own pleasure, interests, or gain, John Paul II constantly reminded us that such self-assertion is a dead end that will never lead to the love and happiness we long for. Human persons are made for self-giving love, not a self-getting love, and they will find fulfillment only when they give themselves in service to others.

This "law of the gift," as it is called by Catholic commentator George Weigel, is written in every human heart. And in the beginning of the theology of the body, John Paul II alludes to how it is based on man being made in the "image" of the Triune God (Gen. 1:26). Since God exists as a communion of three divine Persons giving themselves completely in love to each other, man and woman — created in the image of the Trinity — are made to live not as isolated individuals, each seeking his or her own pleasure and advantage from the other. Rather, man and woman are made to live in an intimate personal communion of self-giving love, mirroring the inner life of the Trinity. In the end, human persons will find the happiness they long for when they learn to live like the Trinity, giving themselves in love to others.

The Written Work to be completed for Key Feature 1 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Key Feature 2: **Original Solitude**

Here, John Paul II reflects on God's statement about Adam in Genesis 2:18: "It is not good for man to be alone."

At first glance, this statement seems odd. Adam is not alone. God has placed him in a garden with water, trees, and vegetation. And He has even put Adam alongside other flesh-and-blood creatures just like him — the animals. Yet, even though there are many other animal creatures with bodies in the garden of Eden, Adam is still in some sense described as being "alone."

He is not able to live out the law of the gift yet, for there is no one else like him to give himself to as an equal partner, no other human person, no body-soul creature, like him.

This tells us that there is something about Adam that is not found in other bodily creatures. By noticing how he is different from the animals, Adam comes to realize that he is more than a body — that he has a spiritual dimension. As a body-soul creature, Adam is unique. There is nothing else in creation like him.

And this poses a problem. If Adam is made to live the "law of the gift" — to give himself in a mutual relationship of love — then Adam, at this stage, is in a certain sense incomplete. He is not able to live out the law of the gift yet, for there is no one else like him to give himself to as an equal partner — no other human person, no body-soul creature, like him. This is why God says, "It is not good for man to be alone."

John Paul II explains that man only finds fulfillment when he lives in a relationship of mutual self-giving, living not for himself, but for another person. "When God-Yahweh said, 'It is not good that man should be alone' (Gen. 2:18) he affirmed that alone, man does not completely realize this essence. He realizes it only by existing with someone' — and even more deeply and completely — by existing for someone'" (p. 60).

The Written Work to be completed for Key Feature 2 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Key Feature #3: Original Unity

In response to Adam's solitude, the Lord creates another human person, Eve, to be his wife. "Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh'" (Gen. 2:23). John Paul II notes how this is the first time man manifests joy and exultation. Before this moment, he had no reason for rejoicing, "owing to the lack of a being like himself." But now he finally has someone to give himself to in this unique way. In ecstatic response, he sighs "At last!" for now he is able to live out the law of the gift and thus becomes who he was meant to be through his union with her.

Next, John Paul II reflects on how man and woman "become one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). He notes how this oneness in flesh does not refer merely to a bodily union, but points to a deeper spiritual union, a union of persons.

Recall how a human person is not just a body, but consists of body and soul. John Paul II expounds on how this union of body and soul in a person sheds light on human sexuality. The body has a language that is able to communicate something much more profound than information or ideas. What one does in his body reveals his very self, the "living soul" (p. 61). The body expresses the person and makes visible what is invisible, the spiritual dimension of man (pp. 56, 76).

He says our bodies have a nuptial character in the sense that they have "the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person becomes a gift and — by means of this gift — fulfills the meaning of his being and existence".

This has dramatic implications for understanding sexual intercourse. The marital act is not meant to be merely a physical union. It is meant to express an even deeper personal union. Since the body reveals the soul, when man and woman give their bodies to each other in marital intercourse, they give themselves to each other. Bodily union is meant to express a deeper spiritual union. The physical intimacy is meant to express an even more profound personal intimacy (cf. p. 57).

John Paul II calls this unique language of the body "the nuptial meaning of the body." He says our bodies have a nuptial character in the sense that they have "the capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person becomes a gift and — by means of this gift — fulfills the meaning of his being and existence" (p. 63).

In this light, we can see that the body will be an important arena in which the drama of relationships between men and women will be played out — for better or for worse. We can approach the bodily union of sexual intercourse as a means to deepening personal communion in marriage. Or we can engage in sexual intercourse primarily with our own pleasure in mind

and without any regard for the body's capacity to express self-giving love — in other words, without any regard for the nuptial meaning God has given to the body.

Put starkly: A man can view sex as a way of deepening his personal union with his wife, giving himself completely to her and expressing his total commitment to her as a person and to what is best for her. Or he can approach sex merely as a physical act with some woman who happens to give him pleasure — without any real commitment to that woman's well-being. Instead of being truly committed to the woman as a person and to her good, such a man is committed to the woman in that moment primarily for what she provides him: his own sexual satisfaction. Such a denigration of sex, which is pervasive in our culture today, certainly is a far cry from the beautiful nuptial meaning God has given to the body.

The Written Work to be completed for Key Feature 3 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Key Feature 4: Original Nakedness

What does it mean when Genesis 2:25 says Adam and Eve were "naked and not ashamed"? Shame involves fear of another person, when we're not sure we can trust that person. We fear being used or being hurt, so we are afraid of being vulnerable in letting others see us as we really are.

Originally, Adam and Eve were not ashamed. They each had complete confidence, trust and security in their relationship. Their bodily nakedness pointed to an even deeper personal "nakedness" in which they felt free to bare their souls completely to each other without any fear of being used, misunderstood, or let down. Adam and Eve understood "the nuptial meaning of the body" — not just the body at face value, but the body's capacity to express love and the communion of persons.

How were they able to have this ideal relationship?

Imagine living in a relationship in which there was absolutely no selfishness. You knew that your beloved was always seeking what was best for you, not just his own interests. He truly viewed you as a gift that was uniquely entrusted to him and he took this role seriously with a profound sense of responsibility.

This is the kind of relationship Adam and Eve had in the Garden. Before the Fall, sin had not yet entered the world, and human persons had self-mastery over their passions and appetites. Thus, with total purity of heart, they each were free from selfish desires and approached each other with reverence, seeking the good of the other and never viewing the other merely as an object to be used.

John Paul II explains that Adam and Eve saw each other with a supernatural perspective — with "the vision of the Creator" (p. 57). In other words, they saw each other the way God Himself saw them. Adam saw not just the beauty of Eve's body, but the whole truth of his beloved as a person. And just as God rejoiced in creating man and woman by saying, "It is good!," so Adam would have looked upon his wife with a profound sense of awe and wonder, seeing her as the daughter of God who had entrusted herself to him in marriage. Likewise, Eve would have accepted Adam interiorly as a gift and responded to him with similar love and responsibility. "Seeing each other, as if through the mystery of creation, man and woman see each other even more fully and distinctly than through the sense of sight itself... They see and know each other with all the peace of the interior gaze, which creates precisely the fullness of the intimacy of persons" (p. 57).

In this kind of environment of complete mutual love and responsibility, personal intimacy could flourish. In such a relationship of total security and total trust in the other person — when there is no fear of being used or hurt — one feels free to give himself as he really is, knowing that he will be welcomed and fully received as a gift. "The affirmation of the person is nothing but

acceptance of the gift, which ... creates the communion of persons" (p. 65). Thus, originally man and woman did not experience the walls of shame in their relationship. They had no fear that the other would use them, hurt them, or ever reject them. Free from sin, they were free to love. In a relationship of total reciprocal love, the walls of shame are not necessary. Indeed, as John Paul II explains, "immunity from shame" is "the result of love" (p. 67).

The Written Work to be completed for Key Feature 4 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Key Feature 5: ***Original Shame***

However, once sin entered the world, man lost the self-mastery necessary to keep selfish desires from growing in his heart and poisoning his relationship. Wounded by original sin, man finds that it is no longer easy for him to control his passions and appetites. No longer does man easily look upon his wife with "the vision of the Creator" ("It is good!"). No longer does he easily see her as a person who has been entrusted to him and as a gift which he longs to serve with selfless love and responsibility.

Now his heart's love for her is tainted by selfish desires to use her. He begins to view her primarily in terms of her sexual value — the value of her body or the value of her femininity — as an object to be exploited for his own sensual or emotional pleasure. He no longer easily sees her value as a person to be loved for her own sake.

In such a relationship of total security and total trust in the other person — when there is no fear of being used or hurt one feels free to give himself as he really is, knowing that he will be welcomed and fully received as a gift.

Imagine the shock Adam must have experienced at that first moment in which he felt the effects of original sin in his life. John Paul II says it is as if Adam "felt that he had just stopped . . . being above the world of the animals, which are driven by instinct and desires (p. 116). Almost like the animals, Adam now finds himself powerfully swayed by his desire to satisfy his sexual desires.

No longer mastering their passions, man and woman tend to approach each other with selfish and lustful hearts. That's why Adam and Eve instinctively conceal their sexuality from each other the moment sin and lust enters their lives (p. 117). They each no longer have total trust that the other is truly seeking what is best for them. They instinctively know that their beloved may use them. Thus, the biblical account of the Fall tells us that right after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden, they were naked and ashamed (Gen. 3:7).

The introduction of sin shatters the original unity of man and woman and hinders personal intimacy in their relationship, for now the defense mechanism of shame enters their relationship. "This shame took the place of the absolute trust connected with the previous state of original innocence in the mutual relationship between man and woman" (p. 120).

John Paul II explains that the original unity of Adam and Eve dissolved at the Fall because, without the total mutual selfless love and trust, they no longer felt free to truly give themselves to each other: "Having facilitated an extraordinary fullness in their mutual communication, the simplicity and purity of the original experience disappear... That simple and direct communion with each other, connected with the original experience of reciprocal nakedness, disappeared. Almost unexpectedly, an insuperable threshold appeared in their consciousness. It limited the

original giving of oneself to the other, in full confidence in what constituted their own identity" (p. 118).

The Written Work to be completed for Key Feature 5 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

Conclusion: Back to the Garden?

As sinful creatures constantly battling concupiscence, we may never be able to return to the ideal relationship of pre-fallen Adam and Eve. However, there is hope. Through Christ's redemptive work in our lives, we may begin to experience the healing of those disordered passions that keep us from the great trust, love, and personal communion that God wants us to experience in our relationships. The more the Holy Spirit transforms our selfish and lustful hearts with the total self-giving love of Jesus Christ, the more relationships between men and women will begin to recover something of the original unity of man and woman and the nuptial meaning of the body (cf. p. 213).

The Written Work to be completed for “Back to the Garden” can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

So there you have it: The 5 Key Features of the Theology of the Body! Our intention is that all the men of PULLS feel solidly grounded, with a common understanding of God's purpose for creating us as sexual beings; as *men* of God.

ABOUT DR. SRI

Dr. Edward Sri is a theologian, author and well-known Catholic speaker who presents to tens of thousands of people from around the world each year, including clergy, parish leaders, catechists and laity.

He has written several best-selling books, including *The Art of Living*; *No Greater Love: A Biblical Walk through Christ's Passion*; *Walking with Mary*, *Who Am I to Judge? – Responding to Relativism with Logic and Love*, and *Into His Likeness: Be Transformed as a Disciple*.

His latest books include, *When You Pray: Trust, Surrender and the Transformation of Your Soul* and a book on marriage that he co-authored with his wife Beth called *The Good, the Messy and the Beautiful: The Joys and Struggles of Real Married Life*.

Edward Sri is also the presenter of several Ascension Press faith formation film series, including: *A Biblical Walk through the Mass*; *Mary: A Biblical Walk with the Blessed Mother*; and *When You Pray: A Clear Path to a Deeper Relationship with God*. He also was the presenter for *Symbolon: The Catholic Faith Explained from the Augustine Institute*.

He is a founding leader with Curtis Martin of FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students), where he currently serves as Sr. Vice President of Apostolic Outreach.

Dr. Sri leads pilgrimages to Rome and the Holy Land each year and is the host of the acclaimed podcast “All Things Catholic.” He holds a doctorate from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome and is an adjunct professor at the Augustine Institute. He resides with his wife Elizabeth and their eight children in Littleton, Colorado.

Other Video Programs with Edward Sri

Edward Sri is the content director for several other Augustine Institute sacramental preparation programs, including *Beloved: Finding Happiness in Marriage*, *Reborn: You, Your Child and the Meaning of Baptism*, and *Forgiven: The Transforming Power of Confession*. He also served as the general editor of *Opening the Word: Journey through the Sunday Readings* (Augustine Institute).

Other Books by Edward Sri

- *Pope Francis and the Joy of the Gospel: Rediscovering the Heart of Disciple*
- *God with Us: Encountering Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*
- *Re-Thinking Mary in the New Testament*
- *Praying the Rosary Like Never Before: Encounter the Wonder of Heaven and Earth*
- *Men, Women and the Mystery of Love: Practical Insights on John Paul II's Love and Responsibility*
- *The Bible Compass: A Catholic's Guide to Navigating the Scriptures*

[View All Books](#)

Section 6: The 12 Steps Revised for PULLS

A Historical Look at A.A.'s 12 Steps

So why did who write the 12 Steps when?!

It happened in May of 1935, in Akron, Ohio. **Bill Wilson** (AKA **Bill W.**), formerly considered a hopeless alcoholic in his own right, spoke for 6 hours, clean and sober, to his friend, Robert Holbrook Smith (AKA **Dr. Bob**), a practicing alcoholic. What could possibly be so engaging, that an institutionalized, miserable alcoholic would listen for 6 hours? (*Possibly, Dr. Bob was simply so amazed that his friend was actually sober.*) **They talked about a seemingly impossible concept... and the driving philosophy behind sobriety.**

Before this, an alcoholic was pretty much destined to bounce from sanitarium to sanitarium until eventually he or she died. That was a given. End of story. Quitting was rare enough to be considered the exceptionally exceptional exception to the rule. Being addicted to anything was essentially the kiss of death.

Bill W. had learned, by attending meetings with the **Oxford Group** (*an evangelical Christian group of recovering alcoholic men*) that **recovery from Alcoholism was actually possible by applying principles "... of self-examination, acknowledgment of character defects, restitution for harm done, and working with others..."** (*Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, p. 39) So, he spread the word to Dr. Bob. Dr. Bob Smith stopped drinking on June 10, **1935**, the date now commonly agreed to be the birthdate of Alcoholics Anonymous.

It is said that **Bill W. composed the 12 Steps** in less than a half hour, back in **1939**. More accurately, perhaps, the **12 Steps were written by the Holy Spirit, using Bill W. as the human agent**, authorized to get the "program" out to the world. Remember, to suffer **the disease of addiction**, prior to the Oxford Group and AA, was considered **a tragic, humiliating and hopeless route to inevitable death**. Now, just **80+ years** later, God has used those same 12 Steps to deliver millions of desperately addicted people, attending the hundreds of thousands of 12 Step meetings offered daily throughout the world, from the bondage of Satan's captivity: all manner of obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviors to full blown addictions. Talk about amazing grace!

Words of wisdom:

Thus, in one sense, the road back to God, is a road of moral effort, of trying harder and harder. But, in another sense, it is not trying that is ever going to bring us home. All this trying leads up to the vital moment, at which you turn to God and say, "You must do this. I can't."

C.S. Lewis

The 12 Steps Grouped & Adapted By PULLS

PULLS has **adjusted** AA's 12 Steps to focus on the **compulsive or habitual sexual behavior** of our specific population of **Catholic** casualties. Solutions are mostly reserved for people who think they *just might* have a problem. Otherwise, **why fix what isn't broken?** Getting to the point of admitting...

"I have a problem and I need help..."

is the challenge. As Christians, we make that admission out of **love**. ***Here goes!***

The **12 Steps** are grouped together into smaller groups, or sets, of related Steps. Let's start with **Steps 1 through 3**.

- 1. We admitted we were powerless over our sexual thoughts and behaviors - that our lives had become unmanageable.**
- 2. Came to believe that God could restore us to His plan for our lives..**
- 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.**

.....
The key words in **Step 1** are **powerlessness and unmanageability**. We **realized**, and had to **admit that** running our lives **our way was disastrous**. Our counterproductive, self-sufficient thinking, attitudes and habits failed us.

Step 2 tells us that there is **Someone Who can restore us**, and we need to go through a process of shifting our whole belief system from "me, me, me" to "You, You, You." This "You, You, You" is the Trinity, the Source of stability, Who has a plan for our lives. The "me, me, me" attitude clearly shows the depth of the schism we have created between ourselves and God, marked by the powerlessness and unmanageability of the **1st Step**. Our relationship needs **restoration**.

Step 3: We **decide** that we will **surrender every part of ourselves to God, knowing He can and will heal our brokenness**. We are no longer lost. The entire course of our life's events will change for the better by our submission to God.

Essentially, Steps 1,2 and 3 say, **"I can't. You can, Lord. I'll let you."**

Steps 4 through 7 are also grouped together.

-
- 4. Made a searching and fearless moral self-inventory and linked our specific shortcomings to our sins.**
 - 5. Brought to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, all sins not yet confessed..**
 - 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all of our flaws and weaknesses.**
 - 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.**
-

Step 4 brings us to **identify and examine** our personal **characteristics**, some hidden, some discernible, and some glaringly conspicuous. We do this to determine their value, or their harmfulness, to our **relationships with ourselves, others, and with Jesus**. We search deeply, thoroughly, and fearlessly, and then, we study the **connection** between them and our sinful **behaviors**. Only then are we prepared for the **5th Step**.

In our **5th Step**, we tell all the sins that we have not yet confessed to God at the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession.

It is one thing to admit having flaws and quite another to have them removed by God. The key to **Step 6** is to become “**entirely ready**.”

Step 7, the last of this group of four Steps, **requires humility**. Heart to heart, we **offer** our character defects up to God.

.....
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

.....
Step 8, once again, focuses on **preparation**, much like Steps 2 and 6. Why? Because the Steps that follow, Steps 3, 7 and 9, are so important. Here, we carefully prepare a written list of people we have harmed. The real preparation comes in our mustering up the **willingness to make amends to them all**.

With **Step 9**, we actually **make amends** to people on our list.

.....
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11. Continued to pray for God’s graces and discernment, to know and fulfill His will for us..

.....
Steps 10 and 11 are the “**maintenance Steps**”.

Step 10 reminds us that we need to maintain our program by “tweaking”, updating, polishing and refining the inventory we created in Step 4.

The **11th Step** reminds us that **Jesus is the reason we are chaste**. **Out of our gratitude, we want** more than anything **to grow closer to Him, honor Him, live for Him** and **continue** to be the best possible reflection or extension of Him.

.....
12. Brought the PULLS message of God’s healing to those still suffering, and applied the 12 Steps to all areas of our lives.

.....
Step 12 is our call to service. **Reaching out to those who still suffer**, is the primary objective of every 12 Step group across the world. **Our focus is on those who suffer from sexual sin**. As Christians, we are called to be **active Disciples**.

Words of wisdom:

You want my heart – it’s here! I utterly cede my desires to You!

St. Therese of Lisieux

The Condensed 12 Steps

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <i>Step 1</i> | I CAN'T. |
| <i>Step 2</i> | GOD CAN. |
| <i>Step 3</i> | LET GOD. |
| <i>Step 4</i> | SEEK TRUTH. |
| <i>Step 5</i> | CONFESS. |
| <i>Step 6</i> | PREPARE TO LET GO. |
| <i>Step 7</i> | REQUEST GOD'S RESTORATION. |
| <i>Step 8</i> | LIST WHO WE HURT. |
| <i>Step 9</i> | MAKE AMENDS. |
| <i>Step 10</i> | TAKE DAILY INVENTORY. |
| <i>Step 11</i> | PRAY. |
| <i>Step 12</i> | SHARE IT. |

The PULLS Pilgrimage is not necessarily the last word for everyone's recovery. Catholic therapists, spiritual directors, our priest, our spouse, resources listed in the Appendix, and/or close Catholic friends may be the ideal inspirations for our journey toward chastity

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our sexual thoughts and behavior- that our lives had become unmanageable (I CAN'T)

Narrative

The 1st Step looks at our **powerlessness and unmanageability**, the trademarks of a major problem (and possible addiction) in our lives. We have to be thorough and honest, and take serious assessment of our **thoughts, behaviors, and our lifestyles that reflect powerlessness and unmanageability**. This admission is the **foundation for the rest of our recovery**. Here, **we take ownership** (or responsibility) for **our part** in **straying from God's path**. **We lost our way**, thinking we could be independent of God and control our own lives. Our initial contact with sexual sin may or may not have been intentional; but subsequent exposure clearly became purposeful. As sexual acting out continued, our lives took on **two unintended characteristics: powerlessness and unmanageability**.

Words of wisdom:

I understand very well why Peter fell.
Poor Peter, he was relying upon himself.
Before ruling the church that is filled with sinners,
he had to experience for himself what a person is capable of
without God's help.

St. Therese of Lisieux

“We admitted we were powerless over our sexual thoughts and behavior...”

Our **powerlessness** relates to our **behavior**. As Catholics, the **Power of God** is intended to **guide our behavior**. **We are called to be God's reflection**, in a world that desperately needs to **see** Him. But when we barter that **Power** over to sinful sexual behavior choices, even unconsciously, **we have abandoned God's path**. Our **protection against evil** is compromised or gone. Satan seizes on our **powerlessness** (*defenselessness and vulnerability*) and transforms it into a counterfeit, pathetic, and addictive sexual behavioral substitute, fed and **defended by our pride**.

A member of **PULLS**, described **powerlessness** this way: When ‘Alex’ was in his early teens, he masturbated frequently. One evening, he discovered a lump on one of his testicles. He feared his habitual masturbation caused the lump. Was it cancer or maybe some other disease that had serious consequences? Terrified, he vowed to stop masturbation completely, and hoped the condition would go away. Within 2 hours, he found himself masturbating again. **Regardless of the perceived consequences**, “Alex” was **powerless** over his drives and behaviors.

Our **inability to control, decrease, or stop** our sexual acting-out **behaviors**, makes it clear that we are **powerless**. If we are truly **powerless**, we lack personal control. That does not mean we just cave in and give ourselves up to sin, though. We can and will consciously

transfer **power** over our **behaviors** to God. That will happen in Steps 2 and 3.

Words of wisdom:

‘Piccoli Passi Possibile’,
literally ‘small possible steps’
Chiara Corbella Petrillo

“...that our lives had become unmanageable.”

Our **lives** are **unmanageable**, when our **self**-management has consistently led to a pattern of failure. But failure at what? Maybe we are doing just fine in the secular world, but how about our **faith life**? We are not called to be Catholics just when it strikes us as a good idea or is convenient, but to constantly challenge ourselves to be faithful as Catholics by **walking with God**, 24/7.

Our measures of Catholic **faithfulness** can include, but is not limited to:

- our genuine efforts toward **embracing** the virtues of the Holy Spirit;
- consciously **opening** our hearts to God’s graces;
- **trusting** that our salvation rests in Jesus Christ;
- as Pope Francis asserts) **measuring** success “not on what someone has, but on what someone gives”;
- prayerfully **striving** to love as Jesus loves;
- **living** in the service, love and worship of God;
- **abiding** in Him and His Church.
- **treasuring** the hope of spending eternity with God.
- **claiming, asserting, vowing and professing** our identity as Catholics

If **management** of our lives had historically pointed us in the direction of God and our Catholic faithfulness, our lives would be **manageable**. But in the midst of sexual preoccupation, our focus has been on ourselves, our comfort and our refusal to surrender the management of our lives to God.

Words of wisdom:

A humble soul does not trust itself,
but places all its confidence in God.

St. Faustina

So, our **unmanageability** relates to our **lives** rather than just our behaviors. As Christians, it is **God, Who** should be **managing our lives**. Ironically, **freedom** comes from **abandoning our control** or **management**, and **choosing** to freely and completely give (*management of*) our lives over to the will and the care of God. But we **squandered this** for selfish sex. **Admitting and believing this, is the purpose of Step 1; that pridefully managing our realm of influence has created a real mess.**

When we are **self-reliant**, we **discard God’s offer to manage** our lives and we seem surprised that **our lives become un-manage-able**. As if we could do it on our own

!

Words of wisdom:

The devil will try to upset you by accusing you of being unworthy
of the blessings that you have received.
Simply remain cheerful and do your best to ignore the devil's nagging.
If need be even laughing at the absurdity of the situation.
Satan, the epitome of sin itself, accuses you of unworthiness!
When the devil reminds you of your past, remind him of his future.

St. Teresa of Avila

The Three Circles

Qui tenetur ad finem, tenetur ad media

“He who is bound to reach a certain end is bound to employ the means to attain it.”

RED CIRCLE Sin:

Here, we plot those disturbing, sexual behaviors, situations and events that motivated us to get into PULLS in the first place. These are our “Acting-out” behaviors that:

- we have tried (*unsuccessfully*) to quit in the past;
- we know are wrong;
- clash with our Catholic values;
- have made us feel ashamed;
- we hid from others;
- are habit forming, addictive, unacceptable and harmful for us and for others;
- violate the moral teachings of our Catholic faith;
- keep us from following God’s plan for our lives.

Fortunately, God gave us free will. *Unfortunately*, we used our free will to choose sexual sin. Kind of ironic, isn’t it; we have used our **free** will to choose sexual **bondage**? In the Red Circle, we make a list of actions, attitudes, sins, and poor decisions that demonstrate that *God was secondary to our wants and our selfishness*. The completed list can be startling because of its **spiritual toxicity**. Choosing not to choose between our Lord and sin is a devastating and costly decision.

YELLOW CIRCLE Occasions of Sin:

This is **the area of choices**. When we find ourselves in the **Yellow Circle**, we must **consciously make a decision**:

- will we follow our **old habits** and drive ourselves into the **Red Circle** of sinful consequences, **or....**
- will we steer away from sin, to enter the safe, **Green Circle**, demonstrating our **Solidarity With God?**

In the **Yellow Circle**, we list the:

- behaviors,
- situations,
- triggers
- or activities,

that have the *history or likelihood* to lead us into sexual sin (*Red Circle*); **BUT**, by applying purity (*chastity*) program principles, **we may choose Green Circle options, instead.**

Words of wisdom:

I wait quietly before God, for my victory comes from Him.

Psalm 62:1

There are both Proximate and Remote Occasions of sin.

ORANGE AREA *Proximate Occasions of sin:*

If we find ourselves standing in a **Proximate (or Near) Occasion of Sin**, one foot is in the **Yellow Circle**, and the other foot is in the **Red Circle**. Here, we could predict that just about **anyone would be triggered** to sin, **or**, based on past experience, **we are likely to sin** due to our own personal vulnerabilities or history.

It is sinful to intentionally enter into easily avoidable **circumstances that we know will** most likely, or even most assuredly **lead us to succumb to temptation (edging)**. Human weakness is not an acceptable reason to sin. As a Christian, we have an obligation to **avoid every Proximate Occasion of Sin.**

The following story describes the **Proximate Occasion of Sin:**

A Brief Story as Told by Espera Oscar de Corti, also known as
"Iron Eyes Cody"

Many years ago Indian braves would go away in solitude to prepare for manhood. One hiked into a beautiful valley, green with trees and bright with flowers. There as he looked up at the surrounding mountains, he noticed a rugged peak capped with dazzling snow.

"I will test myself against that mountain," he thought. He put on his buffalo hide shirt, threw his blanket over his shoulders, and set off to climb the pinnacle. When he reached the top, he stood on the rim of the world. He could see forever, and his heart swelled with pride.

Then he heard a rustle at his feet. Looking down, he saw a snake. Before he could move, the snake spoke. "I am about to die," said the snake. "It is too cold up here and there is no food. Put me under your coat and take me down to the valley."

"No," said the youth. "I know your kind. You are a rattlesnake. If I pick you up, you will bite me, and your bite will kill me."

"Not so," said the snake. "I will treat you differently. If you do this for me, I will not harm you."

The youth resisted awhile, but this was a very persuasive snake. At last the youth tucked the snake under his coat and carried it down to the valley. There he laid it down gently. Suddenly the snake coiled, rattled, leaped, and bit him on the leg.

"But you promised," cried the youth!

"You knew what I was when you picked me up," said the snake as he slithered away.

YELLOWISH GREEN AREA *Remote Occasion of Sin:*

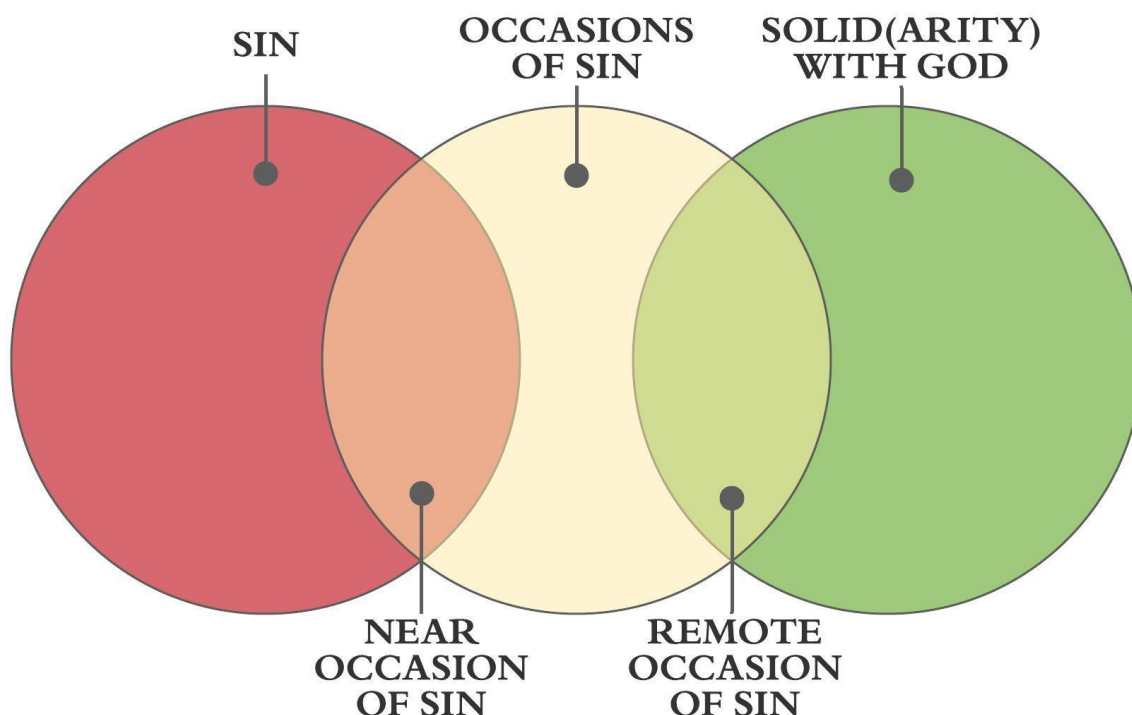
When we find ourselves standing in a **Remote Occasion of Sin**, one foot is in the **Yellow Circle** and the other foot is in the **Green Circle**. Although the **danger of sin is very slight**, it remains a **possibility**. It is easy for us to let down our guard, get too relaxed, or put down our vigilance when faced with **Remote Occasions of Sin**. Pride may be a stumbling block in the Yellow/Green area as we allow ourselves to rely on **self-sufficiency**.

GREEN CIRCLE *Solidarity With God:*

These are the **healthy behaviors** that **enhance** our **life, recovery, and relationships** with Jesus and others. As God's children, He wants us to **flourish, not just survive**. *Philippians (4:8)* provides the standards, by which we should examine every choice we make: *"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."*

A **Green Circle** activity or behavior choice can truly be that saving grace when we are tempted or in sexually compromising situations. Over time, as we grow in our faith, wisdom and understanding of chastity, we are encouraged to discover and apply new, more specific or refined **Green Circle** actions to our list. **Green Circle activities guide us to God's plan for our lives.**

One **caution:** some of us have successfully avoided sin by repeatedly selecting a specific green circle choice. That's cool; however, we should **be careful not to rely on one behavior choice** that has worked well in the past. **The same solution does not always fit every sexual challenge** we may face. An example: a good chef has a variety of specialized knives at the ready to prepare whatever dinner items might be ordered. But he must keep *all* his knives sharp, not just the one he uses most commonly. Similarly, we need to **consider all of our Green Circle options** and be prepared to select the most appropriate response to counteract each sexual temptation. Keep them **all** sharp and ready.



The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Step 1 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Step 2: Came to believe that God could restore us to His plan for our lives **(GOD CAN)**

Narrative

Step 2 tells us that **we need to make the mental and attitudinal shift**. We must hand over control of our lives to Someone Who is absolutely competent. As Christians, we know that this **Competent Someone is God**. Faith takes on a whole new level of *relevance* and new *urgency* when we reflect on the **real and only Source of our hope**. He will deliver us, but we need to *willingly “fall to our knees” in humility...* and to, figuratively speaking, *cling onto God’s ankles...to escape* from our powerlessness and unmanageability.

Words of wisdom:

Simply put, humility is the disposition to accept our impoverished dependence upon God.

St. John Vianney

First, we need to clear some barriers that are in our way of moving forward. By choosing sexual sin over purity, we recognize in our hearts (and maybe even consciously) that we are guilty of the following, to varying degrees:

- treating God as if He were dispensable;
- turning our back on God, betraying and belittling Him by our *actions*;
- ignoring God’s unwavering love for us and His dedication to us;
- snubbing God’s intelligence;
- deciding we knew better than God;
- taking God for granted;
- choosing to reject God, while seeking out sexual sin;
- buying into the worldly attractions;
- rejecting God’s graces and blessings.

Shouldn’t God hate me? How can God love me? Shouldn’t He have thrown away or burned His plans for my life by now?

Words of wisdom:

Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong.
(Be men of courage)

1 Corinthians 16:13

Straightening out our thinking:

How can we come “to believe that God could restore us to His plan for our lives” without navigating, first, around all of that debris from the past? God is not about vengeance, retribution, punishment or payback. We all know the most famous of all biblical quotes, John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in

him might not perish but might have eternal life.” Jesus offered His life in sacrifice for you. That’s you, personally.

In Matthew 22:37-39, Jesus said, “You shall **love the Lord**, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first **commandment**. The second is: You shall love your neighbor as **yourself**.”

So, loving God, your neighbor **and yourself** is **commanded** by God. It’s not just a suggestion or a good idea. To love God, we need to deal straight on with what drove us apart. To love ourselves, we need to forgive ourselves and take God at His word: He loves us. Keep in mind that His love is not clouded with human limitations.

Words of wisdom:

At first we say: "I'll walk with Jesus"
Next we say: "Ok, I'll crawl with Jesus"
Eventually we realize: "I need Him to carry me."

Jason Evert

Can we ever reconcile with God?

In **Step 2**, we **prepare ourselves** to let God **restore us to His plan** for our lives. Obviously, everyone is a sinner. We learned in preschool or kindergarten religious education classes that Jesus loves us and forgives us. Given this world’s history of sexual sin, our specifics are far from shocking. To move on with our lives, we need to accept His love and forgiveness and allow ourselves to be loved and forgiven.

Later, in Step 9, we will be called to **make amends** to *people* we have harmed. But here in **Step 2**, we Catholics begin by **making amends to God**.

How to make amends to God.

- Make a “good confession” in the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession.
- Sincerely acknowledge how your sexual choices impacted your relationship with God.
- Make atonement in the form of serious work toward chastity.
- Praise God and thank Him for hearing and responding to the pain of your heart.

Face God with deep love, honest **conviction**, genuine **remorse**, and **trust**, and then “**clean house**”. We are getting rid of our sexual baggage and the habits that tied them to us! Whew! We can see clearly, now, to move forward to form our **proper relationship** with God. We transfer the title of our souls to Him.

Words of wisdom:

We can’t be fully alive or fully ourselves until we give all of ourselves to Jesus,
who gives all of himself to us.

Fr. Josh Johnson

“Came to believe that God could restore us to His plan for our lives.”

Restoring us to His plan for our lives seems to assume or imply that we already walked with God sometime in the past. But how about those of us who have never really followed

Jesus? **What is there to restore?** How do we restore a relationship that never **mutually** existed?

Remember that **we were once baptized** and were freed from original sin and welcomed into the Catholic Church. Some of us sought a meaningful relationship with Jesus that grew and flourished until we backslid because of our sexual sin. These men can return to that walk with God. But others of us never nurtured a relationship with Jesus since Baptism. In this case, we can now **return to our Baptismal promises** and begin a new direction toward the love of Christ and the hope of eternity in heaven.

Finally, notice the wording of this step, “Came to believe that God could **restore us to His plan** for our lives.” Whether or not we return to a former, healthier spot on our personal timeline, it is God, Who produces the restoration, and that **restoration is to the plan** that He has had for our lives, since the beginning of time.

Words of wisdom:

The reason why God is such a great lover of humility
is that He is a great lover of truth.
Humility is in fact truth, while pride is nothing but lying.

St. Vincent de Paul

Step 2 challenges us to carefully and honestly reevaluate our preconceived ideas of the word ‘**success**’, and “where that got us,” to give us cause to revamp the foundation of our entire value system.

The root of our problem is that **we strayed from God**, only to find ourselves terribly lost. Finally admitting the cost, the reality, and the depth of our **brokenness**, we reached a turning point. **Sin** had indeed **corrupted us and ruined God’s plan** for our lives. **Truth** cleared the fog from our minds, and we recalled the promise of our faith, that **Christ Jesus died to save us**. The grace of clear thinking pointed us to our belief that we can embrace our holy gift of redemption; our own resurrection.

The “clanging cymbals” (see 1 Cor.13:1) and clamor of the world drowned out the gentle, **loving whisper of God**, but our souls heard His voice. As the seductions of pride gained momentum in our lives, God’s voice became more distant while, unbeknownst to us, our thirst for God intensified. The ‘benefits’ of the world rang hollow and we **ached for something more**; something that would actually **quench that dehydration of the soul**. Many of us responded to that ache by diving deeper and deeper into the undertow of our sexually addictive behaviors. **It just did not work.**

We eventually owned that we were **baffled and lost**. We sensed that we should pay heed to the needs of our soul. **God made our soul and our body both good and equal in importance**. We began to recognize that **both need nourishment, respect, growth, and fulfillment**, and that they need to **work in sync**. The men of **PULLS** have come to understand that **God is what we desired from the beginning**. We had been attempting to smash a sex shaped peg into a God shaped hole. That failed miserably. Praise the Lord, we have God’s hand to grasp.

Time to commit.

Words of wisdom:

If we have no taste for the things of God,
we can at least desire to have that taste,
and if we ask for it, it will be given us.

Thomas Merton

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Step 2 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Step 3: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God (LET GOD)

Narrative

Step 3 is the **Hope Step**. What could give us more **hope** than knowing that we have **made the decision** to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God? Healthy, positive commitments bolster our confidence and resolve. “**Made a decision to turn...**” is different from saying, “**Turned...**”. In **Step 3**, we set a clear **objective**: during our 12 Step pilgrimage, we **will follow God’s plan for our lives, not ours**. We actually step into action during Step 7, when we ask God **to remove** our shortcomings. **God will answer** that prayer; He answers all prayers in **His way** and in **His timing**. Our will and our lives *gradually* infuse with the loving design of our Lord, as our hearts remain in the open position to God.

Words of wisdom:

My battling in the kingdom looks less like me wielding a sword
made out of my own armor and more like
a posture of standing with my arms wide open.

This is how I fight my battles, completely surrendered to God,
letting Him fight the battle through me.

Heather Khym

Remember why Steps 1, 2 and 3 are intentionally grouped together.

- We realized in Step 1 that our former trail of self direction was paved with **failed promises and intentions**.
- Our 2nd Step work convinced us that God can and will restore His plan for our lives; we just need to commit our free will to allow that to happen.
- So now, in Step 3, we make the **decision** to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.

By allowing illicit sexual practices to *negatively influence* our **discipline**, we have compromised, or weakened our own **will**. Remember, Satan *cannot* directly access the **will**, but he *can externally influence* our **strength of character** by altering our **memories** and toying with our **imagination** and perception. It is time to make a mature commitment and resolve to **place our will** safely and securely **in God’s hands**. That **decision** will **free us** from Satan’s *slick entrapment* of bondage and despair, and **lift us** to **God’s promise** of **hope** and **freedom**.

Satan gradually and patiently **poisoned us** with sexual powerlessness and unmanageability. God **will** remove the vestiges of Satan’s “gifts”: hopelessness, helplessness, and pointlessness. **God** welcomes us, encouraged with 6 “H words”: **heartfelt harmony, happiness, healing, humility, and hope**. **Trust God**.

Here we **proclaim our trust in Christ**.

Where our drives were **unmanageable**, we now **make a decision** to give our lives entirely

over to **God's management**. Where we were **powerless over our addictive behavior**, we now **make the decision** to unite with Jesus in the mystery of the Eucharist, to have **our lives restored** with the **true power** and the glory of God.

Words of wisdom:

Help me to journey beyond the familiar and into the unknown.

Give me the faith to leave old ways
and break fresh ground with You.

Christ of the mysteries,

I trust You to be stronger than each storm within me.

I will trust in the darkness and know that my times,
even now, are in Your hand.

Tune my spirit to the music of heaven,
And somehow, make my obedience count

Prayer of St. Brendan

***We place our sinful, addicted lives on the altar
with the bread and wine offerings.
We are renewed in Christ!***

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Step 3 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Step 4: Made an honest, searching and fearless moral self-inventory (SEEK TRUTH)

Narrative

Some of us face Step 4 as if it is **a mystery** to be solved. After all, **4th Step** urges us to do **investigative work**, find previously hidden information **about ourselves**, **separate** knowledge from assumptions, **challenge** our intuitions, and **celebrate** the real value of our findings.

Another route we might take regarding **Step 4**, approaches it more as a **documentary** that requires a **hard look at our realities**, not only at **our present nature**, but it also uses the **lens of the past** to understand **today's actions, feelings and attitudes**. It would be a mistake to underestimate the value of such a **concrete, practical, pragmatic, rational, sensible view of life**. Real life does not always allow a simple *singular* approach and we find that we may tap into many genres as we walk through this step.

Step 4 gives **everyone** an opportunity to form a clearer image of who God created us to be. Although we strayed from God's plan for our lives, we **did retain** much of our created selves as well. So the question arises, which of my attitudes, beliefs, and values are of God, and which are not? Most everything we choose to do or not do, provides **a look into** who we are. God made us unique. This Step encourages us to learn all we can about that amazing, genuine person that each of us calls "me". **Satan steered us away** from knowing, recognizing, or accepting our God-created self; he wants us to be his **dis-integrated, unstable, needy and addicted puppets**. No wonder we refuse to dialog with the devil.

Words of wisdom:

In the measure you desire Him, you will find Him.

St. Teresa of Avila

Taking Inventory:

Bill W., the founder of AA, calls this self-examination a "**moral inventory**". Usually we think of stores taking inventories, not people. But the comparison is really quite good. The shopkeeper counts *how many*, or measures *how much* of **every product** in the store, to see which ones sell well and which ones sell poorly. Those that sell well are restocked in abundance. Those that sell slowly, or not at all, just take up shelf space that could be better used by displaying items that will be **profitable**. The slow or no sellers are put on sale, given to charity, or thrown in the dumpster or recycle bin.

So it is with our moral inventories. Every **liability** needs to be assessed and listed. Our **healthy qualities** that help us walk the path that **honors God**, are listed, too. **We build on these assets**, on our way toward sainthood.

Jesus came to us, fully divine and fully human, to testify to the **Truth**. An exasperated Pontius Pilate asked Him, "**What is truth?**" **The Truth** stood directly in front of him. **Truth** is not relative; it doesn't change from person to person. It is the very essence and nature of **God**; **unwavering, dependable, unfailing, never relative**. For our MEPSS health, it is

essential that we **reveal the whole Truth** about ourselves, **as God reveals it to us.**

It would be easy to take some of the most difficult feelings, attitudes and behavior patterns **that distance us from God**, and **put them on a “shelf”**. That shelf is located in the deep recesses of our hearts or minds, for “safe” storage until a good day to deal with them... which, we are somewhat hopeful, will never happen.

These harmful feelings, attitudes and behavior patterns **do not store well**. They have a **short shelf-life** because they are steeped with **shame, duality, remorse, resentments and secrets**. They can make us profoundly MEPSS **disabled**. We have **delayed out of fear**. Our *avoidance* and *pride* prevented us from taking them down from the shelves. **They need to be exposed and purged** from every storage place and every hiding spot within us. It will sometimes hurt, like removing a splinter from our hand, but bravery and the desire for Truth moves us forward toward true healing.

Words of wisdom:

I'd rather fail at trying to do what God's calling me to
than succeed at what He isn't.

Mark Hart

Why do we call our inventory a “moral” inventory?

Aren't morals just a subjective concept to justify value judgements? No! The USCCB (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops) summarized the Catholic position this way:

“Every moral act consists of three elements: the objective act (what we do), the subjective goal or intention (why we do the act), and the concrete situation or circumstances in which we perform the act (where, when, how, with whom, the consequences, etc.).

For an individual act to be morally good, the object, or what we are doing, must be objectively good. Some acts, apart from the intention or reason for doing them, are always wrong because they go against a fundamental or basic human good that ought never to be compromised. Direct killing of the innocent, torture, and rape are examples of acts that are always wrong. Such acts are referred to as intrinsically evil acts, meaning that they are wrong in themselves, apart from the reason they are done or the circumstances surrounding them.

The goal, end, or intention is the part of the moral act that lies within the person. For this reason, we say that the intention is the subjective element of the moral act. For an act to be morally good, one's intention must be good. If we are motivated to do something by a bad intention—even something that is objectively good—our action is morally evil. It must also be recognized that a good intention cannot make a bad action (something intrinsically evil) good. We can never do something wrong or evil in order to bring about a good. This is the meaning of the saying, “the end does not justify the means” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nos. 1749-1761).

<https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/what-we-believe/morality>

In the **Written Work** following this narrative, two of the lists are entitled, “**Positive Traits**” and “**Harmful Traits**”. But are the positives really positive? Are the harmful traits really harmful? Who says so? For example, the word, “Concerned” (from the Positive Traits List) would certainly **seem** positive, because we associate *being concerned* with situations we have encountered in which “concern” usually played a wholesome role. OK, but were those **situations morally “positive”**?

As we learned from our Catechism quote above, to find out, we intuitively assess:

- **what we do** when we are “concerned”,
- **why we do** the acts that we do when we are concerned, and
- the **circumstances** in which we perform the acts.

We ask ourselves:

- Do those actions “go against a fundamental or basic human good that ought never to be compromised”?
- Are they “intrinsically evil acts”?
- Is our goal or intention of our moral act “good”?

Let’s try another word, this time from the **Harmful Traits List**, which follows this narrative. Usually, “Cold Hearted” would be associated with situations or **actions** that are harmful in some way (MEPSS). Using the bullet points above, each of us must determine if it is appropriate to include “cold hearted” among the harmful traits.

Examining Our Strengths

An uplifting part of the **4th Step** is that **we first examine our strengths** and **lovable, beautiful, noble, honorable, God given qualities**. These must be

- preserved;
- uncovered;
- resurrected;
- or rediscovered.

In recovery, we acknowledge our healthy qualities and appreciate their value in order to **build upon these qualities. God loves that!**

However, **beware** that while identifying our positive qualities, we are likely to uncover **faux-positives**; ones that we created, whether consciously or not, to win approval and conceal our weakness, creating a **duality**, but these are not true realities of our genuine selves. Spotting and admitting these faux-positives can be freeing; we expose the tensions of our dishonesty and simplify life by abiding in truth.

Examining our weaknesses

While it can be exciting to seek the **truth** that is revealed from exploring our assets and liabilities, examining our weaknesses can be, at least initially, uncomfortable. That’s because we look **at our own, MEPSS, unhealthy traits**, many of which are properties that we don’t want *anyone* to see; least of all ourselves. Bill W. refers to our 4th Step quest as “**searching**” and “**fearless**”. We get past our hesitation and reluctance, and are “**fearless**” in order to **search out** that, which we may not like to admit. We may also struggle when we examine our healthy traits because we have gotten used to looking at ourselves through the lens colored by our addiction or habit. We are not called to look through any lens but that of God’s truth.

We also worked hard at **covering up our flaws**; people might **connect those flaws**

with our secret, sinful, sexual conduct....and there certainly is a correlation, as we shall learn in Step 5. Once our sin is exposed, we would be **held accountable** and would have to **quit the undesirable behavior**. We are reluctant because we have invested so much to preserve our sexual misconduct, and we tried to moderate and couldn't, and we tried to quit and couldn't. Who wants to admit powerlessness? So we "stuff" the behaviors and the pain, sometimes deep enough inside so that we can **mislead others (deception)** and even **deceive ourselves (delusion)**. The worse our problem areas get, the more **invested** we are in **denial**.

Words of wisdom:

Your wounds should never dictate your worth.

Fr. Mike Schmitz

Satan wants us to hang onto, and become weighed down by, our **shame and secrecy**. Once we got caught in the web of "the wickedness and snares of the devil", we began following a whole **new life script provided by Satan**. Eventually, **we bought into** Satan's addictive and self-serving sales pitch, and after a while, **we chose to continue** using the scripted behaviors **independently of Satan**. We got stuck into a pattern of using a myriad of **excuses, lies**, and other **defenses** that convinced us **not to reveal** our sin. These should be among the most important characteristics that we explore in the 4th Step.

Being Hard on Ourselves and Others:

Some addiction programs in the past involved tearing a person down by harshness, confrontation, yelling, putdowns, swearing, belittling, mocking, harassing and frightening the person. What people with addictive behaviors **do not need** is to be rebuilt from the **mangled pieces and rubble left over** after being torn to pieces. This does not...**cannot...** **lead us to purity**. Besides being punitive, it is abusive, shaming, destructive and unGodly. It **victimizes** us. We already "wrote the book" on feeling terrible about ourselves. We wouldn't treat others that way; let us not treat ourselves that way.

Rather, let us **resist the temptation** to be ruthless and severe to ourselves or others. We can be honest and yet **be kind, forgiving, gentle, nurturing and encouraging**. At the same time, for the sake of our dignity and strength of character, let's

- **expect much** from ourselves;
- **commit** to work hard;
- **be thorough**;
- set high enough **expectations**;
- keep our eyes on our **mission: to be victorious, chaste men of God**.

Words of wisdom:

We can't be fully alive or fully ourselves until we give all of ourselves to Jesus, who gives all of himself to us.

Fr. Josh Johnson

Some Obstacles to Our Healing are presented in more detail in this book in ***Section 3: Words and Ideas Central to PULLS***.

Resentments:

In **Section 3**, read the segment ***“Resentments”***. We need to dig into the depths of our heart and the recesses of our mind, to **unearth every resentment** that we hang onto, if we hope to gain the most of our 4th Step.

Injustice:

Information about justice and injustice can be found in **Section 3**, in the segment entitled, you guessed it, ***“Justice”***. Think about the feelings, attitudes and reactions that you experience when you encounter injustice. These speak volumes about you.

Inability to Forgive:

Our ability or inability to forgive are vitally important traits to assess while doing our 4th Step work. Now, read the segment, ***“Forgiveness”***, in Section 3.

Lack of mercy:

When we are **merciful**, we love the person before us with the **unconditional, agape love of Christ**. **Every person** we meet **suffers poverty** of some sort. We are merciful when we receive and **love them in the midst of their need/poverty**, and do everything we can to **remedy or assist them**, to the best of our ability. Mercy transcends or goes beyond justice. What are our roadblocks to forgiveness and mercy?

Step 4 is such a **motivator** to inspire us to annihilate those recurring weaknesses, harmful reactions, attitudes and behavior patterns! And that **will happen**, during **Steps 6 and 7** when we ask God to remove them.

Finally, we give our sins away to God by confessing them in the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession, and guess what; that happens next in Step 5.

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Step 4 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Step 5: We linked our shortcomings to our sins and brought to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, all sins not yet confessed (CONFESS)

Words of wisdom:

When we go to Confession,
we are not telling God something He doesn't already know
and we're not showing Him something He doesn't already see.
We are giving Him something He doesn't already have -
Your broken heart.

Fr. Mike Schmitz

Narrative

Why is our PULLS 5th Step different from “normal” 5th Steps used in 12 Step programs?

Normally, 12 Step Programs (the ones that end with “Anonymous”) have their 5th Step worded this way: “Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.” We don’t use these words. Why not? Because **we are Catholic and, thus, we have the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession**. In the confessional, we admit “to **God, to ourselves, and to another human being** the exact nature of our wrongs”, all in one fell swoop. Many of us have been allowing our souls to be cleansed in this way for some time. Note: during our entire life on earth, sin remains all around us, temptation will continue to be an irritating reality of life, and we will be susceptible to sin. That said, our charge is to continue the practice of confessing during the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession, **regularly and faithfully** for the remainder of our lives. We never need to walk in guilt, and certainly never in shame.

We linked specific shortcomings with our sins....

It is one thing to **list our faults**, and it is also one thing to **list our sins**, but that accomplishes little more than getting us two lists. So, here’s the deal: we need to use both of the lists to the benefit of our chastity, right? Here’s how.

In the **Step 5 Written Work**, we will make a list of our sins called, cleverly enough, our **Sins List**! We compile sins from a variety of sources:

- those that we have confessed within the past year or so;
- even older sins than that, if they were particularly significant to us;
- sins that we became aware of while doing our 4th Step **Harmful Traits** list;
- sins that arise from our Examination of Conscience,
- sins that we have neglected to confess for any number of reasons; and
- sins from our Red Circle in Step 1.

Then, we **dig into our sins**, one at a time, and ask the question, “**Why? What is it about us that led us to commit this sin?**”

Surprise....The answer is on another list; one that we already have from **Step 4**, the **Harmful Traits List**. There is, for sure, one and probably more than one, **character flaw** from our **Harmful Traits List** in **Step 4** that **makes us vulnerable**, or even certain to **commit**, each and every sin on our **Sins List** (in our 5th Step Work below). Find all the harmful traits that contribute to that sin and write them down. The **correlation between the lists** is startling!

Inversely, we can double check the accuracy of our work if we look at each **personal character weakness or flaw**, one at a time, from the top of our list to the bottom, and see which of the **sins from the Sins List are attached to each of our liabilities** like barnacles on a boat's bottom.

Words of wisdom:

Holiness is creative, life-giving, & radical.
 Your sin? No offense, but it's boring and uncreative.
 It's not super complicated. It's not a big dark secret monster.
 It doesn't make you a "bad" person.
 You're not shocking God (*he's seen it all*)
 and you won't scare your priest (*he's heard it all*).
 Stop making such a big deal out of it.
 Make some changes to avoid your favorite temptations,
 and get to confession.
 That's all I got for you today. :)

Chris Stefanick

....and brought to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, all sins not yet confessed.

We place our sins in God's loving hands when we confess them in the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession. **Our job**, in the second part of Step 5, is **to see to it** that we have **confessed every sin that requires confessing** up to this point in our lives, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession. Relieved of the weight of our sins, we are ready to continue the remainder of our steps with honesty, confidence and freedom.

When confessing, remember **the role of the priest** in this Sacrament.

*“In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means by saying that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts in persona Christi Capitis:²³
 It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents. Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (virtute ac persona ipsius Christi).²⁴ Christ is the*

source of all priesthood: the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ, and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states in paragraph 1548

It may be important to contact your priest in advance of your confession, to set up a special date and time to meet. The time required for a 5th Step confession is very likely to exceed that of a typical confession. Some of our men have shared that they would like to **confess their entire life of sin** in order to experience, perhaps symbolically, a **complete purging** of the entirety of their sinful lives before beginning anew in a life of chastity. This is certainly acceptable; approaching the 5th Step confession in **the best way that will help you**, is what matters.

Absolution from the Lord is amazingly freeing! Upon completing the **5th Step**, we feel as though we are walking on air. We have removed an enormous weight from our shoulders that we have been carrying for too long, consciously or unconsciously.

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Step 5 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all of our flaws and weaknesses (GET READY TO LET GO)

Narrative

Step 6 is a **Preparation Step**. In the previous Step, it was good to **reveal** our **unhealthy characteristics**, prayerfully, reflectively and verbally. But admitting our wrongs and **actually ridding** ourselves of them are two different matters. **So how do we go about actually getting rid of them?**

Back in **Step 3**, we **decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God**. Let's confidently prepare, now, to **take action in Step 7 to fearlessly surrender our will and lives to His power!** God will not let us down. Ever. We must ask, and then **trust the Holy Spirit** to lovingly fill the spaces previously occupied by our preoccupations. Our job is to cordially invite the Holy Spirit to do so, and keep those spaces open for Him.

These traits, harmful as they have been, have become part of us. They are attached to us like barnacles on a rusty boat bottom. Is it the barnacles that are actually holding the boat together? What will be left if we let go of our defects of character and give them up? **They have been part of our identity** and have often defined us. When we dispose of these "defects of character", we enter new, unexplored territory. We need to get **ready to reclaim our identity in Jesus Christ**.

So, **Step 6** is about **readiness**. We must be **ready** to make a change in mindset, to engage in hope-filled anticipation, moving from the strangely "comfortable" slavery of our unhealthy sexual practices, **to Living and Loving Sacrificially through Jesus**.

This is too big of a decision to just jump into it without preparation.

Words of wisdom:

But he said to me, my grace is sufficient for you,
for my power is made perfect in weakness.
Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses
so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 Corinthians 12:9

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Step 5 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

Step 7: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings (REQUEST GOD'S RESTORATION)

Narrative

Step 7 is the **Action Step**. Now we are **acting on the commitment** of Step 3, the **revelations** of Step 4, and the **preparation** of Step 6.

Musician and Franciscan Brother, **John Michael Talbot**, entitled one of his most reflective albums, ***Come to the Quiet***. “The Quiet” is a most fitting state for one who is about to ask **God to remove his shortcomings**, again and again. We embrace a peaceful tranquility, a calm, prayerful disposition in which we connect, without distraction, with God.

Humbly... The first word of the 7th Step is “**Humbly**”, the antithesis of pridefully. **Pride** would cause us to deny, justify, defend, hide behind, or avoid facing our faults and **shortcomings**, because of our **over-inflated self-regard**.

Praise God, dropping our pride and abiding in humility is understandably easier when **we are dealing directly with God, Himself**. There is no one to impress; no stage on which to show off; no pressure to save face. Only our opened heart before God.

Words of wisdom:

Do not be surprised at your weakness,
but acknowledge what you are,
and blush at your infidelity towards God,
then confide in Him and abandon yourself with tranquility
in the arms of the Heavenly Father, like a child in the arms of its mother.

St. Padre Pio

...asked God... Placing ourselves in the **presence of God**, we enter into the **right frame of mind** to complete the 7th Step. **God knows our hearts** and knows that, in our lifetime, these can be among the most important, most consequential, most **sincere requests** we will ever present to Him. Yes, He hears our words, but He also listens to the deepest longings of our heart. He loves us so much; God delights in our sincere efforts.

Where do we meet Him? As we continue to take personal inventory and promptly admit it in step 10, there is no doubt that more shortcomings will surface. Step 7 is not a “one shot deal”. Any time that we **encounter**, realize or become aware of **additional shortcomings**, know that **God wants, and is always available for us to ask Him to remove them**.

Finally, keep this in mind: just because we ask something of God does not mean that we have the ability to force God's hand....

...to remove our shortcomings... Our weaknesses and shortcomings are

drawn from our **4th Step work** *and* from any **insights** we have gained since doing our inventory. Removing means **expelling, abolishing, or eliminating our shortcomings**....not just setting them aside where they can be easily retrieved, should we want them back. We want them **gone** and are enlisting God as the catalyst in this process. We are unable to imagine the artistry, methods or rationale behind how God chooses to handle our failings and weaknesses. The virtuous change in our disposition is exciting evidence of God's will at work...because we get out of His way and sincerely ask him to intervene.

So, God responds to our request for him to remove our shortcomings. Ultimately, God may scrap *some* of **our plans** so He can provide a different set of opportunities or **circumstances** to incorporate His plan into our lives. He may also allow you to **continue** to have certain **challenges** or vulnerabilities **to help you be submissive, humble, and longing for his graces.**

Give it a thought. Give it prayer.

Words of wisdom:

Finally, brethren, whatever is *true*, whatever is *honorable*, whatever is *just*, whatever is *pure*, whatever is *lovely*, whatever is *gracious*, if there is any *excellence*, if there is anything *worthy of praise*, think about these things.

Paul's words to the Philippians (4:8)

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Step 7 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Step 8: Make a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all (LIST WHO WE HURT)

Narrative

Step 8, once again, **focuses on preparation**, much like **Steps 2 and 6**. **Why?** Because **Steps 3, 7 and 9** are so important. **Here, we carefully prepare a written list of every person we have harmed. Why?** Because we will not be able to sustain God's grace of purity/chastity if we are **carrying around the crushing weight of**

- **guilt,**
- **shame,**
- **moral liability or**
- **haunting uneasiness...**

that we feel, if we have not tried to **mend our bridges. All of our bridges.**

Staying Stuck:

Many of us waste our opportunities for growth and discovery because we remain embroiled in the **issues of our past. Unresolved**, they can keep us **stuck** in the mire of an earlier chapter of our personal stories, an era that becomes more **irrelevant** each passing day. God's plan for our lives is not stagnant; the rest of creation moves forward. Earthly time moves forward and so must we.

In the 20th Century, music was distributed on vinyl records. Sometimes, a nick or scratch on the vinyl would cause the music to "skip" and a little segment of the song (or instrumental) would play over and over and over... until someone would reset the tone arm to another groove in the recording. Some of us are like that scratched record. Unresolved, our issues persist. Sometimes, we replay them over and over in our minds. Other times, we put off dealing with them altogether or pretend they don't exist. But once we resolve our past issues, we can get moving on unencumbered, catch up and deal with what is before us, here and now.

Making Amends to Ourselves:

Making amends is a powerful way to get free of past wounds. First, we must be certain to **make amends to ourselves**. In fact, we **put ourselves at the top** of the list and work from there. Oftentimes, we find it harder to **forgive ourselves** than others. Until we do, our harsh self-condemnation will overshadow and stall our progress.

Making amends to all the others:

After having completed the **1st and 4th Steps**, we have plenty of material, addressing the damage we have done to ourselves and others. So, we add these people to our list. Then, we prayerfully, carefully, and systematically "excavate" or dig into our past to bring other names to the surface by reflecting and asking ourselves the following:

- With whom are there **unresolved** issues?
- What other people might be "walking wounded" because of my behavior?
- Are there wrongs that we have committed that **weigh on our conscience**, or that we

fear may come back to haunt us?

- Can we think of people we have harmed, who **never knew** that we were ultimately **the source** of their wounds?
- Did we enable others to sin, even if we didn't experience negative consequences?

This is the time to **resist all defenses, excuses and justifications. Rigorous, fearless honesty** is the hallmark of all we do in PULLS. While we need to be thorough, we avoid scrupulosity, and fretting over inessential issues.

Words of wisdom:

The most powerful weapon to conquer the devil is humility.

For as he does not know how to employ it,
neither does he know how to defend himself from it.

St. Vincent de Paul

We consider people with whom we have **lingering, unpleasant feelings**, and those who give us a bit of a knot in our gut, or a wave of discomfort at even the thought of them. These sensations are a threat to chastity because we can be **triggered to comfort our unpleasant feelings** with the temporary high of sexually acting-out. These people need to be on our list.

But I have been hurt too!

But what if we believe **the other person caused harm**, too? Our list must also contain those who we think **shared some responsibility or some part of the hurtful situation**. Even if we thought they got what they deserved, we, fortunately, were not elected judge, jury and executioner over others. The **bottom line** is this: **did they sustain harm from us...in reputation, physical injury, humiliation, fear, social standing or material loss?** It is human nature to blame the other person. We, who are recovering, do not have the luxury to point fingers. If the hurts we have received cloud our ability to make amends, reread in Section 3 the thoughts addressing resentments, forgiveness, justice, and mercy.

If we suspect that we *and* the person we wronged, each went our own ways, injured, we still need to **own our responsibility** for any part of the situation, regardless of how small. We do not quibble over, or even bring up, who was *more* injured, or who started it. Those technicalities are **irrelevant**. We **accept whatever responsibility was ours. We do not expect the other person to reciprocate**. Know that *we* are the ones working the Steps of recovery. **This is our program**. The **other person's response, positive or negative**, must not enter into our preparation to make amends.

Words of wisdom:

Forgiveness is the restoration of freedom to oneself;
it is the key held in our own hand to our prison cell.

St. John Paul II

“We Became Willing”:

Finally, remember that this step simply asks us to **become willing** to make amends. Let’s not get ahead of ourselves and worry about **9th step concerns** such as **how** we actually make those amends, or whether making amends to the people on our list might **injure them or others**. These are **not** 8th Step concerns.

To “**become willing**” to make amends, we need to **consider**:

- **the cost** that our guilt, fear, worry, resentments, shame, and painful thoughts, attitudes, and memories have had on our MEPSS wellness;
- that making “good amends” will greatly **reduce unpleasant emotions** and thoughts and, in turn, will **reduce the desire to medicate or escape** by sexually acting out;
- that we are **strengthened** as Catholics to **enlist the Holy Spirit**, to ensure that our list is well conceived and complete.

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Step 8 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others (MAKE AMENDS)

Narrative

With **Step 9**, we actually **make amends** to the people listed in Step 8. **Remember to begin every Step with prayer.** With the direction of the Holy Spirit, our amends will be **successful, as defined by God. We do our part and trust God to do His.** Love this person as God does, no matter how hard it might be. **Make amends out of love.**

Making amends involves much **more than simply apologizing.** In fact, the people to whom we need to make amends, may have heard our apologies over and over again. Our intentions were good and apologies sincere, but the actual change in behavior proved to be beyond our reach. We acted out again and shattered their trust. **“Sorry” might be the last thing they want to hear. So then what?**

Words of wisdom:

Remember: a sinner who is sorry for his sins
is closer to God than a man who boasts of his good works.

St. Padre Pio

Making amends is an **act of justice** toward those we have offended. We call it **restorative justice**. Not only do we *feel* like we need to make amends, but **it is our duty** to do so. **Justice is giving to another their due.**

How we make amends.

- Tell the person that we **understand** how our behavior was harmful or hurtful.
- **We are sincere.**
- **We acknowledge** that our wrong choice caused harm.
- **We take responsibility** for the damage we created.
- **We** express our preparedness to **make atonement**, and if there is any reasonable way we can make reparation, we willingly do so.
- If reparations are possible, we **make reparations** willingly, thoroughly, and sincerely, without avoiding.
- If **reparations** may **no longer** be **desired or possible**, our sincerity, honesty and willingness are what matter.
- We **thank them for their willingness** to hear our amends.

This is not a time to expect anything from the person we hurt. Their response might not be as we **hope or expect**, it **may differ from person to person, and is not the measure of our success in making amends.** Most individuals are appreciative and forgiving. Others may react harshly for reasons that are hidden in their hearts. **Humbly, be accepting and listen**, as Jesus would. **We silently own only what is ours.**

Allow the other person to have their **feelings**. **We depart peacefully, and we move on with recovery.**

Perhaps we have unresolved issues with **someone who we hurt**. **We owe them.** Step 9 speaks to the making of amends to those we have harmed. By doing so, we relieve a heavy and dangerous burden. Inequalities of justice can make us feel **guilt or shame when we cause injustice**. Carrying **unresolved feelings** can **impede our recovery**. They can stew and boil inside of us and drive us to **seek relief or comfort**. We relapse.

“...except when to do so...”

The **9th Step** ends with the **disclaimer** “**except when to do so would injure them or others.**” We talk to God, a spiritual director, priest or our sponsor (*or all four*) to discern (*not just decide*) who this disclaimer might refer to. Some of us have avoided making amends to certain people (*especially spouses*) out of fear of harm; **but to whom?** Might our fear of disappointment, anger or rejection indicate that we fear harm to ourselves more than to the other person? This marks one of those occasions for a specific examination of conscience and inventory taking. Would our attempts at making amends reopen old wounds, create new wounds or open the door to healing?

Nowhere in the description of how to make amends, does it say that we need to graphically resurrect the specific incident(s) about which we are making amends. Doing so *can* **re-victimize, compounding the pain**. Perfectly adequate amends *can* be made by sincerely **acknowledging our responsibility for causing pain** through our **character flaws** (see Step 4) e.g. being thoughtless, selfish, inconsiderate, insensitive, uncaring, disrespectful, rude, immature, tactless, heartless, etc.

What if we desire to make amends to someone but we are not able to do so?

There are people to whom we cannot make amends. Perhaps we cannot remember their names; or never knew their names; or we exhausted all available information or resources to find their whereabouts; or they have died; or any of dozens of other solid reasons. It is **hard to move on** when haunted with inaudible voices telling us **we should have said this or done that**. And there are all the “**if only**”: “if only I knew, then, what I know, now; if only I had said this; if only I had done that.” Then, it is time to **make Spiritual Amends**:

In preparation of Making Spiritual Amends:

- If this sin has not already been confessed, we start there.
- We place the entire matter in **God’s hands**.
- We **trust Him**.
- If God chooses to clear the **way for us to connect** with the person, He can and will do so;
- If not, we make an **Act of Spiritual Amends**, knowing God will fix every unresolved issue related to the event or events, **His way** and **in His time**, often without our involvement or knowledge;
- Satan can and does access and manipulate our memories, but God can certainly provide **healing of memories** in us and in the person for whom we pray.
- We **move forward** with our chastity program.

The following prayer can be used for each person who we are unable to contact:

The Act of Spiritual Amends Prayer

In the name of Jesus, I ask forgiveness for...

_____ (specific behavior or behaviors)

_____ (name of the person).

I am sorry and I ask you, Jesus, to bring into the soul of this person the peace of reconciliation and healing through this Act of Spiritual Amends.

Heal in me the memories and feelings associated with my behaviors toward

_____ (person)

AMEN.

Now let's look at this business of making amends to ourselves

- Often, we feel as though our **sinfulness is unforgivable**.
- Ours is somehow **worse** than the exact same misdeeds committed by others.
- Our sinfulness runs **deeper**, is somehow **more steeped in evil**.
- Our distance from God is **insurmountable**.

Like the Prodigal Son, **we want to return to God, but we feel that He couldn't possibly want us back.**

Superstitiously, we may feel that **if we let go of shame**, we do not have the **right to feel at peace**, as if a life of suffering is the only antidote for our level of sinfulness. But as Catholics, we realize that **self-condemnation is harsh and unfair**. **God's mercy** runs much deeper than our sinfulness. There is no need to second guess God.

If He forgives us (and He certainly does), then we need to forgive ourselves and move forward without fear of reprisal.

With our human limitations, we just cannot get our heads around the **incomprehensible degree of love God has for us**. Our worst sins are entirely forgiven without reservation, conditions, or small print. **God knows every sin** we have ever committed or ever considered committing, and **still chooses us**. Jesus knew our sins, even before He died on the cross, fulfilling His redemptive plan.

Jesus loves us, right now, so much, that He offered up His life for us 2000 years ago. **His love for us was greater than His pain on the cross.**

Words of wisdom:

I think that if God forgives us we must forgive ourselves.
Otherwise, it is almost like setting up ourselves
as a higher tribunal than Him.

C.S. Lewis

God wants us to know that:

- **He loves us**
- **and that He has a plan for our life.**

That's very, **extremely, hugely personal**. He is **calling us, by name, to be His**. He wants us to use our experience to give hope to others who are also **struggling in sin, who feel hopeless, helpless and have reached an apparent dead end**. In Fr. Mike Schmitz'

words, “He loves those most, who deserve it the least, but need it the most.” People might “drag up old dirt” on a bad day, and throw past sins in our face...but God does not.

Once forgiven, always forgiven. Do not fear.

We are invited on board. Ask Him to remove our doubts, self-damnation, fears and pride.

Then, trust Jesus.

***Processing our amends is necessary to put closure
on these loose ends of our past.***

It also reinforces the most positive aspects of our amends.

***Healthy recovery involves addressing what is before us;
preparing and planning adequately for the future, with confidence.***

**The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed
for Step 9 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded
from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.
beginning on the following page.**

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Step 10: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it (TAKE DAILY INVENTORY)

Narrative

Steps 10 and 11 are the “**maintenance Steps**”. By the time we reach **Step 10**, we realize that the **value of purity** is greater than any material valuables; so, we place a high value on ***maintaining our chastity***. Our recovery work is an ongoing pilgrimage. Since we completed our work on **Step 4**:

- we are more aware of the state of our inventory.
- we are sensitized, and vigilantly make adjustments as needed
- and linked specific shortcomings to our sinfulness.

The outcomes of inventory-taking are truth, healing and freedom. **Healing is an ongoing grace that rewards and motivates us.** Freedom is the outcome. The greater our commitment, the more beneficial the healing.

Words of wisdom:

We cannot have it both ways: if we are free, we are responsible:
If we are not responsible, we are not free.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen

When we encounter inevitable struggles, we **continue** to take personal inventory, and we work at **promptly** admitting our wrongs, failings, faults and weaknesses. Because we have grown, we count our blessings and moral positives, too. The word “**continue**” reminds us of our **ongoing pilgrimage**. We more specifically define our **triggers, weaknesses and vulnerabilities** and the corrective methods (including but not limited to the Sacrament of Reconciliation/Confession) that work for us.

Struggles will appear but we know from the past, how necessary it is to take immediate action because **the longer we procrastinate, the more likely we will justify or rationalize away the weakness**, or ‘forget’ to address it. It can be easy to develop a pattern of not scrutinizing those that make us uncomfortable or are most easily put off.

“**Admitted**” suggests **humility and willingness** to face our own sinfulness or pride. **Taking our own inventory and admitting our wrongs** are like taking a shower after a day of hard work.

Although not part of the **10th Step**, periodically, update the other Steps, too. Our **responses change** over time. We mature into the program and look at Step work with more understanding than when we were beginning our recovery. **Deeper comprehension** leads us to **refine** our program. We continue to **take personal inventory**, promptly **admit our wrongs, examine our conscience, and confess our sins**. Let each be an inspiration for the other.

We use the **10th Step** as a time to **assess our overall progress** (*from all 5 perspectives*) since the day we entered the **PULLS** initiative. Parts of recovery can transition so smoothly and so gradually, that **miraculous changes can unfold** without notice.

If we **do not pay attention to our progress**:

- we can become **discouraged**,
- experience **frustration**,
- or feel like we have **failed**, or
- we may **expect too much progress, too soon**.

To change habitual sexual behaviors, **requires the careful ‘rewiring’** of an intricate array of behaviors, thinking patterns, attitudes, beliefs, and reactions. As we become pure and ever more holy, we settle into God’s plan for our lives. That requires **time, hard work** and **patience**, if it is to be done well. **We are worth it!** Intentionally and generously, we **celebrate our progress**.

Words of wisdom:

There is no saint without a past, no sinner without a future.

St. Augustine

Some of us set a **specific time** for **10th Step** reflection each day. Usually, right before we retire for the night is an excellent time and our day is fresh in our minds and ready to review.

- How is our honesty, willingness and openness?
- What were our triumphs?
- What were our areas of struggle?
- In light of the Serenity Prayer, what can we... and can we not... change?
- Have we committed as much time to working on sexual purity as we would have spent on acting-out?
- Have we consistently placed our will and our lives in God’s hands throughout the day?
- Have we confessed our sins?

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Step 10 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Step 11: Continued to pray for God's graces and discernment, to know and fulfill His will for us (PRAY)

Narrative

The **11th Step** is the second of the two **maintenance Steps**. This one ensures our **continued focus on God**. The **Holy Spirit** inspires our words at meetings, our thoughts as we work the Steps, and our insights as we read our literature. **It is by the grace of God that we have chastity today.**

Words of wisdom:

Every day I need You, Lord, but today especially,
 I need some extra strength to face whatever is to come.
 This day, more than any other day, I need to feel You near me
 to strengthen my courage and to overcome any fear.
 By myself, I cannot meet the challenge of the hour.
 We are frail human creatures and we need a higher power
 to sustain us in all that life may bring.
 And so, dear Lord, hold my trembling hand.
 Be with me, Lord, this day and stretch out your powerful arm to help me.
 May Your love be upon me as I place all my hope in You. Amen
St. Pope John XXIII

Continued to pray...

The CCC **2720** tells us, *"The Church invites the faithful to regular prayer: daily prayers, the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Eucharist, the feasts of the liturgical year."*

We aim to **pray continually throughout the day, every day**, about a myriad of issues, concerns, desires, decisions, wisdom, graces, praises and the ability to love as He desires. Sometimes we just chat about our day.

The maintenance and strength of our relationship with God, happens through **prayer, meditation and contemplation**. As Catholics, these are the **three desirable forms of prayer**. The CCC **2721** states, *"The Christian tradition comprises three major expressions of the life of prayer: vocal prayer, meditation, and contemplative prayer. They have in common the recollection of the heart."*

We talk a lot about the power of vocal and silent prayer. CCC **7222** tells us, *"Vocal prayer, founded on the union of body and soul in human nature, associates the body with the interior prayer of the heart, following Christ's example of praying to his Father and teaching the Our Father to his disciples."*

Meditative Prayer:

Our Catholic practice of **meditation** is clearly defined and should not be confused with non-Catholic practices. **Non-Christians** commonly see meditation as an **emptying of the mind**, an act of **transcendence**, **focusing** on a single topic of thought, **mindfulness**, or **self-regulation** to gain control or power over one's own attention or consciousness. The perceived benefits of **non-Catholic** practices is believed to be an increased ability to achieve a

state of **tranquility, centering, clarity, or self-knowledge**. Some contain an **element of Truth** but we are cautioned not to settle for anything less than **God's fullness of Truth**.

A way of looking at **Catholic meditation** is to compare it to a painter in the act of creating a masterpiece. Meditation is like his use of his planning skills, his materials, his enthusiasm, his creativity, his talent and his deepest aspirations to produce the magnificent artistry he envisions.

According to the CCC 2723, "**Meditation is a prayerful quest engaging thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. Its goal is to make our own in faith the subject considered, by confronting it with the reality of our own life**".

Contemplative Prayer:

Continuing our earlier metaphor, **contemplation** would be similar to our stepping back and regarding (*contemplating*) the completed work of art. Contemplative prayer is comparable to our **taking in its entirety**, and simply **appreciating, absorbing, and being joyous** in the breathtaking, completed masterpiece.

Returning to our CCC (a work of art in itself), let's look at #2724: "*Contemplative prayer is the simple expression of the mystery of prayer. It is a **gaze of faith fixed on Jesus, an attentiveness to the Word of God, a silent love**. It achieves real union with the prayer of Christ to the extent that it makes us **share in his mystery***." Wow!

...for God's graces...

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) defines grace like this: "*Grace is favor, **the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God**, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and eternal life. Grace is a participation in the life of God.*" (CCC #1996-1997, bolding for emphasis added.) What more could we ask for...except discernment.

...and discernment...

CCC 2847 "*The Holy Spirit makes us **discern between trials**, which are necessary for the growth of the inner man, **and temptation**, which leads to sin and death. **We must also discern between being tempted and consenting to temptation**. Finally, **discernment unmasks the lie of temptation**, whose object appears to be good, a "delight to the eyes" and desirable, when in reality its fruit is death.*

*God does not want to impose the good, but wants free beings. . . . There is **a certain usefulness to temptation**. No one but God knows what our soul has received from him, not even we ourselves. But **temptation reveals** it in order to **teach us to know ourselves**, and in this way we **discover our evil inclinations and are obliged to** ." (bolding added for **emphasis**)*

...to know and fulfill His will for us...

We need **our will to conform to God's**. Remember the mess **our** willfulness used to create. We don't want that back again. God can open exactly the right doors for **His will** to be manifested through us. We humbly offer ourselves to Him to **fulfill His will**. We need to become very small so God can become very big in our lives

If we **assume** that *we know* His will because **it sounds right** to us, or **feels right** to

us, we're stomping on thin ice. Who needs God if we **intuitively** have all the answers? God doesn't conform to our will; **we conform** to His. We stop the prideful thinking and attitude, so that we can **humbly** and sincerely **ask God to teach us what He wills for us**, even when we think we have the answers.

Our individual ways of living out God's will can be as unique as we are. That said, we need to listen to the Holy Spirit's responses to our prayers.

The apostle Matthew tells us that Jesus, when asked what is the greatest commandment, responded: "*You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matthew 22:37-39)

Words of wisdom:

Once we allow the Spirit of Jesus to animate our lives,
we realize that there really is victory, grace, power, and freedom.

Fr. Dave Pivonka

To love God, we must *know* Him the best we possibly can; so, we ask God, in prayer, to love as He loves, knowing **He is the source** for all love. We do that, right from the bottom of our heart, daily, multiple times a day, constantly. Don't be surprised if our requests may lead us to

- seek specific readings,
- listen to or watch His inspired music or words,
- attend faith seminars, classes or conferences,
- read His bible,
- respond to opportunities to perform acts of discipleship, faith, hope, charity and love, as we will see in Step 12...And more.

The power to carry out **God's will** can only be tapped from the **power of God Himself**. That takes prayer, devotion, meditation and contemplative prayer to the **One who is welcoming us home**.

Words of wisdom:

Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just,
whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable,
if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise,
think about these things.

Philippians 4:8

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Step 11 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

Step 12: Served as a disciple of God's healing message to those still suffering, and applied the 12 Steps to all areas of our lives (SHARE IT)

Narrative

At every **PULLS** meeting, the Trusted Servant reads these words from our Preamble:

"PULLS is a Catholic program with a threefold purpose:

1. **to grow** in our love for God and the inspired wisdom of His Church.
2. **to stop** our sexual behaviors that violate **God's intention** for our sexuality.
3. **to help other men follow our path.**

Words of wisdom:

Ad maiora natus sum: I was born for greater things.

St. Stanislaus Kostka

Desperation brought us together. We find in each other, people who know the depth of our pain. Our hope is in the care of God. **Our commitment is to help others as we have been helped."**

Notice how much of our focus draws us out of ourselves, and directs us outward, toward others. So it is with Step 12.

Let's look at the wording of Step 12:

"Served as a disciple of God's healing message to those still suffering...."

Now, it is our turn to **help others follow our path**, thanks to the **hope, faith and experience modeled** by **those who ministered to us**. **By the grace of God**, and our brothers and predecessors in PULLS, we have been radically **transformed, enlightened and saved**. Our hearts and souls have experienced immeasurable healing from the "Gentle Healer". That need for God, ***inherent in every person***, is being realized! And now we are in a position to help others as we have been helped. We can't wait to **pass it forward!**

Our outreach is **spiritual caffeine**. **Awake, energized, and empowered** in Christ Jesus, **we inspire** bright-eyed hope, belief and belonging. **We welcome ministerial graces from God**, and **God uses us** in our new identity as **Disciples**, to bring all **Good News** to the ends of the world. **Those who still suffer**, find in us the truth and the hope of chastity.

"....and applied the 12 Steps to all areas of our lives."

Not to do so would constitute a return to duality. We men tend to *compartmentalize* segments of our being. If we put our sexuality in one "box" and clean it up, can we claim a victory for purity? What if other vices, sins, weaknesses and character defects reside in the

surrounding boxes? **Our chastity cannot withstand contradiction.** Practicing the program in **all areas of our lives**, provides **consistency, continuity and stability**; all qualities that reinforce purity.

Words of wisdom:

The world offers you comfort. But you were not made for comfort.
You were made for greatness.

Pope Benedict XVI

God's love for us is incomprehensible, unimaginable, unfathomable... and He loves those who are still sinning and suffering. Never forget from where we came. For reasons far beyond our understanding, *we are no longer among those who are deeply suffering* the agonizing addictive torment of sexual powerlessness and unmanageability. We need not feel undeserving, or experience survivor's guilt. God knows us and He is constantly answering the invitation to enter our heart and soul. As His beloved children, we are filled with **profound gratitude**. Naturally, we **tell others about our good fortune** and endeavor to **carry this message to others**.

Words of wisdom:

And Jesus came and said to them,
"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them
in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you;
and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age."

Matthew 28:19

Service in Jesus's name is **our response to God's love**, and this ministry satisfies a deep need to be the best possible **reflection of Our Lord**. In addition to **carrying our message to the suffering**, being a **sponsor** to other *PULLS* members is a needed and valued service. **Sponsorship** is a vital part of our program. A sponsor provides guidance, experience, and accountability, and answers questions, as the sponsee works through the 12 Steps. Once a member completes the **12 Steps**, he is qualified, but not required, to **serve as a sponsor**.

Words of wisdom:

Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong.
(*Be men of courage*)

1 Corinthians 16:13

The Catholic participant in **PULLS** sexual **recovery**;

- **refuses to follow** the social "mass (mob) mentality" that normalizes, justifies, encourages, and enables sexual sin;
- **is unwilling to enrich or empower** the influential, predatory, powerful, and malevolent sex trade;
- **seeks and appreciates God's intention** for creating humans as male and female;

- **accepts** the **challenge** to express his sexuality in the way that is appropriate for his station in life (married, single, ordained);
- **steps up** to the plate and becomes the **man** God created us to be;
- **willingly accepts**, as Jesus did, the *sometimes painful* social **consequences** of our choice to be pure in mind, body, heart and soul (e.g. rejection, pressure, misunderstanding, and anger);
- **appreciates** the *positive* **consequences** that accompany our chaste lifestyle (freedom, trust, clear conscience, singular purpose, and *so many* graces);
- **learns to love** as the **Author of Love** wants us to **love**;
- **comprehends, appreciates and practices** the essential 5 Key Features of Theology of the Body.

Keep moving Forward

The Written Work (and optional additional questions) to be completed for Step 12 can be found in a separate booklet that can be downloaded from the PULLS Website at www.pullscatholic.org.

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Section 7: Appendix

PULLS Meeting

Agenda and Guide for the Trusted Servant

*(Option: Before the meeting begins, the Trusted Servant may choose to **invite group members** to read the **7 Points** of the **Kerygma**, the **5 TOB Key Features**, the **12 Steps**, and **The Promises** at the appropriate time in today's agenda.)*

Thanks for coming and welcome to PULLS. I invite you to remove any distractions and silence or turn off your phones, except for those attending this meeting by phone.

Please listen as I read the **prayer** for those who are struggling with sexual issues, and then, join me in reciting the **Lord's Prayer**.

✠ **"In the name of the Father**, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

"Loving and merciful God,

help all those, whose sexual sins betray Your plan for their lives,
to embrace the freedom of chastity.

Grace them with the humility and desire to seek help,
and bring them to a greater understanding of the divine purpose of their
sexuality. Amen"

"Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be *Thy* name;

Thy kingdom come; *Thy* will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not **into** temptation, but **deliver us** from evil. Amen."

PULLS is a **Catholic** program with a **threefold purpose**:

1. **to grow** in our love for God and the inspired wisdom of His Church.
2. **to stop** our sexual behaviors that violate **God's intention** for our sexuality.
3. **to help** other men follow our path.

Our group sessions are based on:

- the **7 Points** of the **Kerygma**,
- The **Theology of the Body**,
- the **12 Steps**,
- and the **traditions** and **Biblical teachings** of the **Catholic Church**.

Desperation brought us together.

We find in each other, people who know the depth of our pain.

Our hope is in the care of the Holy Trinity.

Our commitment is to help others as we have been helped.

We try to **limit crosstalk** in order to allow each person to speak without interruption, until he completes his share and says, “**Pass.**”

We only use our first names. **Anonymity** and **confidentiality** are essential for this to be a safe place for all of us.

**Whoever you see here, whatever you hear here,
let it stay here when you leave here. (All:) Here, here!**

Sponsorship is a vital part of our program.

A sponsor provides guidance, experience, and accountability, and answers your questions, as you work through the 12 Steps, 5 TOB Key Features, and 7 Points. May we have a show of hands of those who are available to be a sponsor? Thank you, sponsors, for your willingness to serve.

Does anyone have either a sexual **abstinence or a chastity milestone** to celebrate? Does anyone have any **business** to share ?

The **7 Points of the Kerygma** assure us that we all understand **the foundation of our faith** from the same perspective as the original Disciples of Jesus.

Will _____ (*selected group member*) please read [The 7 Points of the Kerygma](#)

The **Theology of the Body** articulates the singular vision of **God’s intention for our sexuality**.

Will _____ (*selected group member*) please read [The Key Features of the Theology of the Body](#).

The **12 Steps** walk us through the process of recovery **from** sexually addictive thoughts and behaviors **to** our common objective of chastity.

Will _____ (*selected group member*) please read [The 12 Steps](#).

It’s time for brief **introductions**.

Share as much or as little as you are comfortable sharing,
and say ‘Pass’ when you are finished. **I’m** _____....

Before we begin today's topic, does anyone wish to **follow up** on anything you heard during today’s introductions, or share a **purity/chastity issue**, insight or topic?

Suggested PULLS Meeting Topic Rotation

<i>Suggested PULLS MEETING TOPIC ROTATION</i>					
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	*Week 5 Choices
JANUARY	Step 1 Narrative	God's Boundaries	The PULLS diagonal illustration	3. Intellect	Choose from Group 1 Words and Concepts
FEBRUARY	Step 2 Narrative	How did we get into this mess?	What we do and not do	4. Will	Choose from Group 2 Words and Concepts
MARCH	Step 3 Narrative	The elevator to Hell	The Historical Kerygma	Steering clear of Satan	Choose from Group 3 Words and Concepts
APRIL	Step 4 Narrative	5 perspectives of recovery	Temptation	How do we take on Satan?	Choose from Group 4 Words and Concepts
MAY	Step 5 Narrative	Recovery	Point 1 Narrative	TOB: The Law of the Gift	Choose from Group 5 Words and Concepts
JUNE	Step 6 Narrative	Chastity	Point 2 Narrative	TOB: Original Solitude	Choose from Group 6 Words and Concepts
JULY	Step 7 Narrative	The three traditional sources of temptation +1	Point 3 Narrative	TOB: Original Unity	Choose from Group 7 Words and Concepts
AUGUST	Step 8 Narrative	Our second source of temptation	Point 4 Narrative	TOB: Original Nakedness	Choose from Group 8 Words and Concepts
SEPTEMBER	Step 9 Narrative	Our third source of temptation	Point 5 Narrative	TOB: Original Shame	Choose from Group 9 Words and Concepts
OCTOBER	Step 10 Narrative	Speaking of the devil	Point 6 Narrative	TOB: Back to the Garden	The Promises (long) 1-6
NOVEMBER	Step 11 Narrative	Satan and the Human Soul + #1 Memories	Point 7 Narrative	Struggles of wives and girlfriends	The Promises (long) with quotations 7-12
DECEMBER	Step 12 Narrative	2. Imagination	5 Keys to Recovery	Responding to those we hurt	Litany of Humility

The group may choose to discuss a different topic than what is suggested above.. If meeting attendance grows too large, consider adding **additional Regular Meetings** at various, regularly scheduled times and days of the week.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Agenda for Closing the Meeting (5 minutes before the meeting end time)

Will _____ (selected group member) please read [The Promises](#)

(Trusted Servant reads the following.)

Satan has relentlessly torn at us, body and soul, with countless, seductive, worldly influences,
the most alluring and confounding of which are his assaults on our sexuality.

We, now, are the resistance.

We embrace a renewed freedom.

We abandon shame to accept God's grace.

God gently **pulls** us to peace and honor through His love and mercy.

We are moving forward from **Powerlessness** and **Unmanageability** to **Living** and **Loving Sacrificially**, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Let us close our meeting with the **Serenity Prayer**.

followed by the **Prayer to St. Michael**.

(All) God, grant us the **serenity** to accept the things we cannot change,
courage to change the things we can and **wisdom** to know the difference.

(Trusted Servant alone)

Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time;

accepting hardships as a pathway to peace,

Taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is,

not as we would have it;

Trusting that You will make all things right

if we surrender to Your will;

that we may be reasonably happy in this life

and supremely happy with You forever in the next.

(All) AMEN.

St. Michael the Archangel defend us in battle.

Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil.

May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,

And do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts,

by the power of God,

Cast into hell, Satan and all the evil spirits,

Who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls.

✠ **In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**
AMEN.

The **7 Points of the Kerygma** assure us that we all understand **the foundation of our faith** from the same perspective as the original Disciples of Jesus.

The 7 Points of the Kerygma

1. God loves you and
has a plan for your life.
2. Sin disrupts that plan and
separates you from God.
3. Christ Jesus died to save you.
4. Repent and
believe the gospel.
5. Be baptized and receive
the Holy Spirit.
6. Abide in Christ and His body,
the Church.
7. Go make disciples

[PULLS Meeting Agenda](#)

NOTE: Dr. Edward Sri's article on the *Theology of the Body* is simplified into five key features plus a hopeful conclusion. The following one sentence summaries were written by the PULLS Pilgrimage author.

The **Theology of the Body** articulates the singular vision of **God's intention for our sexuality**.

The Key Features of the Theology of the Body

1. The Law of the Gift:

God placed in every human heart the "law of the gift," calling us to self-giving love that mirrors the Trinity.

2. Original Solitude:

Among all creation, only Adam had a spiritual nature and felt incomplete without an equal partner to share the law of the gift.

3. Original Unity:

The Lord's creation of Eve filled Adam with joy, as their marriage enabled them to complete the self-giving love that united them deeply in both body and spirit.

4. Original Nakedness

Adam and Eve's lack of shame revealed a pure, selfless love and complete trust that allowed them to be fully open, vulnerable, and unafraid in their relationship.

5. Original Shame

With the Fall, sin disrupted human self-mastery and trust, causing shame and selfishness to replace the original openness and self-giving love between man and woman.

And Back to the Garden?

Though we cannot fully restore humanity's original unity, Christ's redemption allows the Holy Spirit to heal our hearts, enabling the love and intimacy in marriage to reflect God's design.

The **12 Steps** walk us through the process of recovery **from** sexually addictive thoughts and behaviors **to** our common objective of chastity.

The 12 Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over **our sexual thoughts and behavior** - that our lives had become unmanageable;
2. Came to believe that God could restore us to **His plan for our lives**;
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of **God**;
4. Made a searching, fearless and moral **self-inventory**;
5. **Made the connection between our shortcomings and our sins and brought to the Sacrament of Reconciliation, all sins not yet confessed**;
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all **of our character flaws and weaknesses**;
7. Humbly asked **Him** to remove our shortcomings;
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all;
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others;
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it;
11. **Continued to pray for God's graces and discernment, to know and fulfill His will for us**;
12. **Brought the PULLS message of God's healing to those still suffering, and applied the 12 Steps to all areas of our lives.**

(bolded words are exclusive to PULLS.)

[PULLS Meeting Agenda](#)

The Promises (short)

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

We will comprehend the word serenity.

We will know peace.

No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

The feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.

Self-seeking will slip away.

Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us.

We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Are these extravagant promises? ***We think not.***

They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly,
sometimes slowly.

They will always materialize if we work for them.

Big Book pg. 83 & 84 Alcoholics Anonymous, 3rd Ed

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

The Promises

(Long Version with Quotes from Saints)

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness.

It is Jesus that you seek when you dream of happiness;
He is waiting for you when nothing else you find satisfies you. *St. John Paul II*

We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.

As to the past, let us entrust it to God's mercy,
the future to divine providence.
Our task is to live holy the present moment. *St. Gianna Molla*

We will comprehend the word serenity.

Do not despair. Do not be depressed.
Do not let your weakness make you impatient.
Instead, let the serenity of your spirit shine through your face.
Let the joy of your mind burst forth.
Let words of faith burst forth from your lips. *St. Peter Damian*

We will know peace.

Let peace be your quest and aim. *St. Benedict*

No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

I have been all things unholy.
If God can work through me, He can work through anyone. *St. Francis of Assisi*

The feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

He is alive and at work, and immediately He came in,
He reawakened my drowsy soul;
He shook, softened, and wounded my heart,
because it was hard as rock and unsound.
He started uprooting and destroying, building and planting,
watering the arid areas, lighting up the dark recesses...
so that my soul started blessing the Lord. *St. Bernard*

We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.

Let us love, for that is all our hearts were made for. *St. Therese of Lisieux*

Self-seeking will slip away.

Be humble, be simple, and bring joy to others. *St. Madeleine Sophie Barat*

Our whole attitude and outlook upon life will change.

It is impossible for me to become great,
 so I must bear with myself and my many imperfections;
 but I will seek out a means of reaching heaven by a little way -
 very short, very straight and entirely new.

St. Therese of Lisieux

Fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us.

And so our good Lord answered to all the questions and doubts
 which I could raise, saying most comfortingly: I may make all things well,
 and I shall make all things well, and I will make all things well;
 and you will see yourself that every kind of thing will be well.

St. Julian of Norwich

We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us.

Jesus, who loves your soul, will continue to grant you
 the necessary help in exercising yourself in battle.

St. Padre Pio

We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

Beware of despairing about yourself;
 you are commanded to place your trust in God,
 and not yourself.

St. Augustine

Are these extravagant promises? *We think not.*

**They are being fulfilled among us—sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly.
 They will always materialize if we work for them.**

May we generously, randomly, intentionally
 place love where there is no love
 and so draw love in abundance - Jesus.

Bishop Paul Sirba

Bolded promises are from the Big Book pg. 83 & 84 Alcoholics Anonymous, 3rd Edition

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

Serenity Prayer

(All)

God grant us the **serenity**
to **accept** the things we cannot change;
courage to change the things we can;
and **wisdom** to know the difference.

(Trusted Servant)

Living one day at a time;
enjoying one moment at a time;
accepting hardships as a pathway to peace;
Taking, as Jesus did,
this sinful world as it is,
not as we would have it;
Trusting that You will make all things right
if we **surrender** to Your Will;
that we may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with You
forever in the next.

(All)

Amen.

Attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

St. Michael Prayer

(To be prayed in moments of temptation and at the end of every PULLS meeting)

St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle,
be our protection against the wickedness
and snares of the devil.
May God rebuke him we humbly pray;
and do thou,
O Prince of the Heavenly host,
by the power of God,
cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits
who prowl about the world
seeking the ruin of souls.
AMEN.

*Pope St. Leo XIII
1884*

[Agenda for Closing the Meeting](#)

When possible, answer questions from...

The 5 Perspectives:

Mentally...

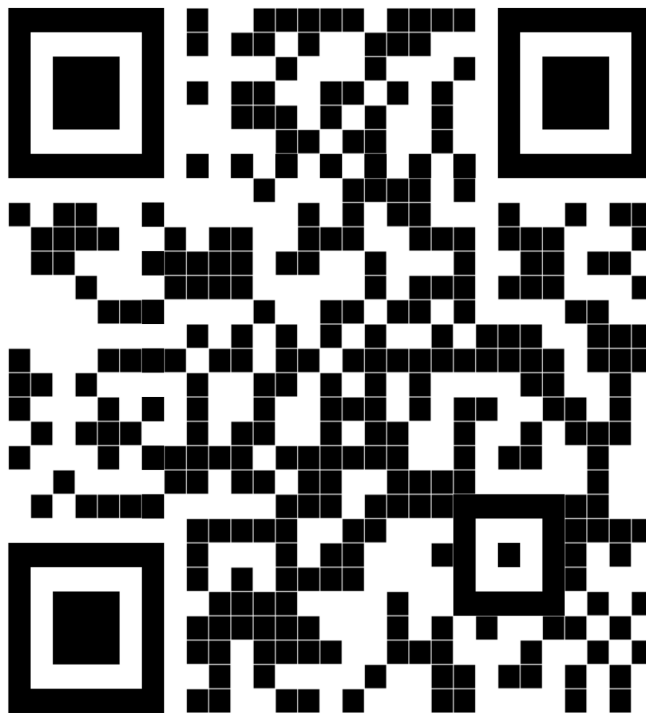
Emotionally...

Physically...

Socially...

Spiritually.

Visit our PULLS Website



www.pullscatholic.org

Bulletin Inserts

Tired of confessing sexual sin?

PULLS is here to help!

You are not alone. Yes, sexual temptations and opportunities are pervasive and entrenched in dating, media, fashion, music, and recreation.

- It is **baffling how *easily* we can fall prey** to sexual sin.
- It is even **more baffling how *impossible it seems* for us to escape, once trapped.**

Operating outside of God's boundaries has natural consequences, and we feel **shame**, fear, worry, confusion and conflict, and we operate under a dark shroud of **secrecy**.

But there is hope. Purity is possible.

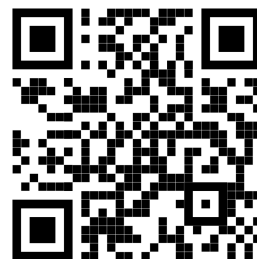
We are excited to invite you to weekly **online groups** and **in-person groups**, specifically for **Catholic men**, whose recurring sexual thoughts or behaviors contradict and conflict with our Catholic faith journey.

We are PULLS. With our **devotion to God**, and the **fellowship** of those attending, **we grow in our faith and heal** from a powerless and unmanageable relationship with sexual experiences, thoughts and behaviors. ***We become the resistance.*** We embrace a new or renewed **freedom from sexual sin**. We abandon shame by accepting **God's grace**.

Our steps, key features, and points gradually **pulls** us to God's loving arms through His love, grace, and mercy. We move forward...

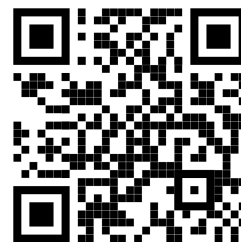
from **Powerlessness** and **Unmanageability** to **Living** and **Loving**
Sacrificially, through Jesus Christ. **PULLS**.

In this program **anonymity is critical**. If you are tired of the shame and struggles associated with a harmful relationship with sex, **pray about it**. If you think **it is time you gained freedom** from the seduction of sexual sin, join us! Visit **www.pullscatholic.org** for more information. And fill out the "Contact us" page; we'll get back to you soon.



When you discovered sex, were you too young to know what you were getting into? Now, older and wiser, you want to abandon sinful sexual behaviors and thoughts, but just can't seem to do so.

The men of PULLS can relate, understand, and are there to support you. Multiple groups meet weekly. Visit us at www.pullscatholic.org for more information. And be sure to fill out the "Contact us" page; we'll get back to you soon.



Do you dread The Sacrament of Confession because you repeatedly confess the same sexual sins? Are you frustrated and confused because you return to the same sexual thoughts and behaviors despite your genuine efforts to quit?

The men of PULLS can relate, understand and are there to support you. Multiple groups meet weekly. Visit us at www.pullscatholic.org for more information. And be sure to fill out the "Contact us" page. We'll get back to you soon.



Sample Card Handouts

We suggest messages similar to the following, to be printed front and back on business cards or paper, to be given by the priest to those who confess sexual sins in the Sacrament of Confession, or for PULLS members to give to other Catholics who express the need for PULLS.

The members of
PULLS
strive to move from
Powerlessness and
Unmanageability to
Living and
Loving
Sacrificially
in **J**esus

Visit our
PULLS
Website



www.pullscatholic.org

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

The 10 Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery relies upon PULLS unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - the loving God of Catholic scripture and tradition. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. PULLS membership is limited to Catholic men and women, who have a desire to stop our sexual powerlessness and unmanageable thoughts and behaviors.
4. Each group should be autonomous (self governing) except in matters affecting other groups or PULLS as a whole.
5. Each PULLS group has but one primary purpose - to carry our message of chastity, hope, and faith to the Catholic who still suffers with sexual powerlessness and unmanageability.
6. A PULLS group should never endorse, finance, or lend the PULLS name to any related facility or outside enterprise, because problems of money, property and prestige could divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every PULLS group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. PULLS should remain forever unprofessional.
9. PULLS has no opinion on outside issues; hence the PULLS name should never be drawn into public controversy.
10. Anonymity is the foundation of our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Adhering to these principles safeguards our fellowship, thus protecting the recovery of each individual member. We have found that they also help us to act with integrity in our personal relationships and as responsible members of the Church and of society.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

The Litany of Humility

O Jesus! Meek and humble of heart, From the desire of being esteemed, From the desire of being loved, From the desire of being extolled From the desire of being honored, From the desire of being praised, From the desire of being preferred, From the desire of being consulted, From the desire of being approved, From the fear of being humiliated, From the fear of being despised, From the fear of suffering rebukes, From the fear of being calumniated, From the fear of being forgotten, From the fear of being ridiculed, From the fear of being wronged, From the fear of being suspected,	Hear me. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus. Deliver me, Jesus.
---	---

That others may be loved more than I,
 Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be esteemed more than I,
 Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That, in the opinion of the world,
 others may increase and I may decrease,
 Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be chosen and I set aside,
 Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be praised and I unnoticed,
 Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be preferred to me in everything,
 Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may become holier than I,
 Provided that I may become as holy as I should,
 Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

AMEN

Rafael Cardinal Merry del Val

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

PULLS Examination of Conscience

For use with the 5th Step

VIRTUE...MERCY & HUMILITY

modest view of one's own importance

Area of STRUGGLE...PRIDE/VANITY

Disobedience ...failure/refusal to obey authority.

Boastfulness ...showing excessive pride.

Hypocrisy... not conforming to God's standards.

Contention... deliberate disagreement.

Obstinacy... stubbornness.

Discord...lack of harmony.

Love of Novelties to Excess...overly concerned with fashion,
technology, stuff.

QUESTIONS

God

1. Do I seek God above all else, or have I put other priorities ahead of him?
(e.g. friendships, ambition, comfort and ease)
2. Do I get so caught up in the things of this world that I forget God?
3. Do I risk losing my faith by those I keep company, my reading choices,
lack of bravery or pride?
4. Have I trusted God, especially in times of difficulty?
5. Have I neglected to use the talents that God has given me?
6. Have I failed to follow God's will because of a fear of what others might
think of me?
7. Have I received Holy Communion while in a state of serious sin?

Self

1. Do I find deep pleasure from my own achievements?
2. Do I refuse or resist admitting my weaknesses?
3. Have I been arrogant?
4. Have I reacted negatively when questioned or defensive when
confronted?
5. Do I experience frequent anxiety regarding how I am perceived? Do I
allow this to influence my actions?
6. Have I been overly concerned about what others think of me?
7. Have I lied or exaggerated to make myself look good?

8. Have I wasted undue time and money on clothes and appearance?
9. Do I cling to my own perception of myself instead of allowing others to help me understand how I really am?

Others

1. Have I dwelt on the failings of others?
2. Have I judged others, in my thoughts or words?
3. Do I rank myself better than others or demand certain treatment?
4. Have I harbored hatred or disdain for another?
5. Do I refuse to learn from others, assuming I am right, or reject their opinions, especially when they disagree with me?
6. Have I been irritable with others?
7. Have I been critical of others?
8. Have I been slow to listen to others and quick to speak over them

VIRTUE...FORGIVENESS

action or process of forgiving others

Area of STRUGGLE...ANGER

Indignation... annoyance provoked by what is perceived to be unfair.

Building of strong feelings of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility

Name Calling ...abusive language / insults.

Quarrels, arguments / Violence... behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something

QUESTIONS

God

1. Have I taken the Lord's name in vain?
2. Do I blame God when things go wrong in life?

Self

1. Do I or have I harbored resentment, grudges, and hatred in my thoughts?
2. Have I nurtured imaginary angry conversations?
3. Do I lose my temper?
4. Have I refused to seek forgiveness when I have hurt someone?
5. Have I sought revenge?

Others

1. Have I been slow to forgive?
2. Am I impatient or frustrated with people, family, events, sufferings, sicknesses?

3. Have I used vulgar language, especially about or directed toward another person?
4. Have I criticized anyone without first approaching their shortcomings with compassion?
5. Have I harmed any person (including myself) mentally, emotionally, physically, socially or spiritually (*MEPSS*)?
6. Have I hated another person or wished evil upon someone?
7. Have I withheld marital intimacy from my husband or wife as a form of manipulation or punishment?
8. Have I withheld forgiveness, even when it is actively sought from me?
9. Have I refused to show respect toward someone because of their race, gender, nationality, or religion

VIRTUE...PRUDENCE & CHASTITY

Purity; freedom from immorality, especially of a sexual nature.

Area of STRUGGLE...LUST

Turning a blind-eye and acting on temptations.

Thoughtless...no consideration for others.

Inconstancy...not faithful or dependable.

Impulsiveness ...acting without thinking/forethought

Self-love... tending to be smug and superior

Rejecting God...Embracing the World

QUESTIONS

God

1. Have I remained faithful to God?

Self

1. Have I respected my own sexual dignity?
2. Do I entertain impure thoughts?
3. Have I engaged in masturbation, alone, or with another?
4. Have I watched movies or TV shows, read books, or listened to music that degrades the sexual dignity of the human person or encourages sexual impurity?
5. Have I maintained custody of my eyes or have I allowed them to wander?
6. Have I engaged in romantic fiction leading to sexual fantasy?
7. Have I willingly viewed pornography or related sexual or sexualized material on internet? or TV? or Social Media?

8. Have I willingly put myself in a near occasion of sexual sin either by myself or with someone else?

Others

1. Do I view others as mere sexual objects rather than as persons to be loved and honored?
 2. Do I depersonalize others and express lack of concern for their slavery within pornography to enable my own pleasure?
 2. Have I committed adultery or engaged in sexual activity outside the context of Marriage (whether by entertaining thoughts or by action)?
 3. Have I engaged in homosexual acts?
 4. Have I failed to give my husband or wife my exclusive love and attention?
 5. Have I been flirtatious with someone who is not my husband or wife (if married)?
 6. Have I flirted with someone who is married to another (if single)?
-

VIRTUE...LOVE & GRATITUDE

Willing the good of the other.

Appreciation

Area of STRUGGLE...ENVY/JEALOUSY

Dislike / ill-will toward others.

Gossip/ defying trust.

Take away the worth or value of a person or thing.

Joy at others misfortune.

Resenting others' prosperity.

QUESTIONS

God

1. Have I been jealous or envious of another's blessings, ignoring the gifts I have been given?

Self

1. Do I envy or experience jealousy regarding the abilities, talents, ideas, good-looks, intelligence, clothes, possessions, money, friends, or family, or others?
2. Have I lied, exaggerated, or distorted the truth?
2. Have I been reckless or careless with my money or possessions?
3. Have I made purchases out of a desire to keep pace with others?

Others

1. Am I saddened or frustrated at the success of others?
2. Have I damaged the reputation of another person by my words, attitude, or looks/reactions/responses?
3. Have I spread false rumors or gossip about someone?
4. Have I repeated accusations that might not be true? Have I exaggerated?
4. Have I failed to defend the reputation of others?
5. Have I rejoiced in the difficult circumstances of another?
6. Have I been overly-critical or judgmental of others?
7. Do I fail to value my gifts and qualities because I compare myself to others?
8. Have I failed to keep discussions confidential?

VIRTUE...TEMPERANCE & ASCETICISM

Self-discipline; avoidance of all forms of indulgence

Area of STRUGGLE...GREED/GLUTTONY

Intense and selfish desire for something.

QUESTIONS

God

1. Have I always fasted an hour before receiving Holy Communion at Mass?
2. Have I busied myself on the Lord's Day, not observing that it is a day of rest in the Lord?
3. Have I failed to practice fasting and self-denial, especially on Fridays?
4. Have I placed people, achievements, or things (possessions) before God in my life?
5. Have I allowed someone or something to direct my decisions against God's guidance and will?
6. Have I engaged in occult activity (New Age practices or superstition such as consulting a psychic, tarot cards, ouija board, etc. or the worship of Satan)?
7. Have I failed to be grateful to God for what I have?
8. Have I presumed on the mercy of God (committing a sin with the expectation of God's mercy)?
9. Or conversely, have I despaired of God's mercy (thinking I am beyond the healing mercy of God)?

Self

1. Have I consumed more food or drink than I need to satisfy my appetite?
2. Do I spend excessive money on possessions or food?
3. Have I abused illegal or prescription drugs?
4. Have I consumed alcohol excessively?
5. Do I spend excessive energy and expense seeking comfort?
6. Have I supported, advised, participated in, or had an abortion?
Euthanasia?
7. Have I placed the value of material possessions, sports, online games, etc. over spiritual growth?

Others

1. Have I put the lives of others in danger by driving recklessly, distractedly, or under the influence of drugs or alcohol?
2. Have I purposefully withheld material goods from those in need, even when I have an excess?
3. Have I failed to give money to help the hungry?
4. Have I shown disrespect to others?
5. Have I cheated in any way (on a test, in sports, in business, etc.)?
6. Have I embellished stories or lied to make myself look good or others look bad?
7. Have I attempted to commit suicide?

VIRTUE...CONTENTMENT & GENEROSITY

peace beyond circumstances
quality of being kind and generous

Area of STRUGGLE...AVARICE/COVET

Deceptive, betrayal of trust.
Fraud...wrongful or criminal deception.
Falsehood...lie, untruth.
Perjury...willingly telling a lie after taking an oath.
Insensibility for Mercy...lack of concern or compassion for the plight of others.

QUESTIONS

God

1. Have I avoided sacrificial giving (time, talent, treasure) to God, the Church and others?
2. Do I only give what is easy to give?

Self

1. Have I been overly concerned about my own comfort and well-being?
2. Am I resentful of my lack of money or resources?
3. Do I waste money?
4. Do I cheat, steal, or fail to pay my bills on time?
5. Have I wasted money on things I don't need?

Others

1. Have I cheated, stolen, or failed to pay others on time?
2. Have I used people for my own ends and advantage?

VIRTUE...HOPE, DILIGENCE & ZEAL

walking faithfully with God through all seasons.
energy and/or enthusiasm.

Area of STRUGGLE...SLOTH/APATHY

Malice...intention or desire to hurt another.
Spite...desire to hurt, annoy or offend.
Lacking courage.
Sluggishness.
Vulgarity...Uncleanness. Impure.

QUESTIONS**God**

1. Have I willingly missed Mass on Sunday or on a Holy Day of Obligation?
2. Have I left Mass early without sufficient reason?
3. Do I neglect to say my daily prayers?
4. Do I take the Lord's name in vain or use other foul language?
5. Have I used words that demean God, the Church, or His saints?
6. Am I so caught up in the things of this world that I've forgotten God?

Self

1. Have I made good use of my time, or have I wasted time needlessly?
e.g. cell phone, TV, gaming, or internet?
2. Do I neglect to go to sleep on time and allow my curiosity, gaming or other "entertainment" to determine my schedule?
3. Do I fail to plan good use of relaxation and recreation, knowing that I need to rest well in order to pray and serve others?
4. Have I neglected to care for myself?
5. Have I wasted time or resources at work, school or home?

Others

1. Have I spent time with my family?
2. How have I manifested my concern for them?
3. Have I been forgiving and tolerant of my family?
4. Am I a good model or for my family?
5. Have I failed to show my parents proper respect?
6. Have I neglected my duties to my husband, wife, and my children?
7. Do I focus more on myself than on the needs of others?
8. Do I only serve others when it is convenient, pleasurable, or when I am forced to do so?
9. Have I been more focused on myself than on the needs of others?
10. Have my conversations been focused on my own interests, or on others?
11. Has my humor been insensitive to others?
12. Have I broken a promise or failed to live up to my responsibilities in a contract or commitment?
13. Have I neglected to help others?
14. Have I wasted other people's time or dishonored them by being late or have I failed to keep my commitments regarding being on time?

SINS OF OMISSION

In what I have done, and in what I have failed to do"

- sins of omission may be more serious than sins of commission

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA QUESTIONS BASED ON THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

(CatholicMom.com)

First Commandment: I am the Lord your God.

You shall not have strange gods before Me. (Ex 20:2,3)

1. When I wake up in the morning, is my first thought about giving thanks to God for another day or do I immediately think about checking for new updates on my social media accounts and email?
2. During moments of quiet in my day, do I turn to God in prayerful silence or do I grab my phone and scan for anything new and interesting in my news feeds, thinking I can always pray later?
3. Do I rely on prayer to hear God's guiding Voice in my life or do I turn to social media, desperately hoping He will somehow spell out His Will for me in the next blog post, tweet, or Facebook status update?

Second Commandment: You shall not take the Name of the Lord your God in vain. (Ex 20:7)

1. Do I ever use God's name casually and disrespectfully in online conversations?
2. Do I use foul language or in a derogatory way about God or others?
3. Do I praise and thank God for all the blessings in my life or do I use social media to complain and rant about everything God has not done for me?

Third Commandment: Remember that you keep holy the Sabbath Day. (Ex 20:8)

1. On Sunday, do I focus on preparing myself and my family for celebrating the Lord's Day or do I spend unnecessary time online instead?
2. While at Mass, am I listening, participating, and allowing God to pull me deeper into the Paschal Mystery or do I only think about my next blog post, Facebook status update, or how I'm going to increase my Twitter followers?
3. Have I used social media on my mobile device during the celebration of the Eucharist?

Fourth Commandment: Honor your father and your mother. (Ex 20:12)

1. Do I use my online interactions to slander, disrespect, or dishonor any of my family members, including my spouse and children?

2. Do I use social media to bring honor to Jesus and His teachings and the traditions passed onto us through the ministry of His Church?
3. When I am with my family, am I fully present or do I get distracted by using social media instead of giving them my full attention?

Fifth Commandment: You shall not kill. (Ex 20:13)

1. Do I encourage, incite, or extol violence through my online conversations?
2. Do I use social media to “kill” others’ reputations, honor, or dignity by spreading gossip or posting or sharing slanderous or mocking comments about others, including celebrities, politicians, or other public figures?
3. Do I use social media to build relationships or kill them by failing to consider the feelings and thoughts of others before I post, share, or make a public comment on a post?

Sixth and Ninth Commandments: You shall not commit adultery.”

(Ex 20:14) “You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife. (Ex 20:17)

1. Do I negatively compare or complain about my spouse publicly or privately in my online conversations?
2. Do I read about my friends’ spouses and wish my spouse was more like him or her?
3. Do I feel jealous or envious when looking at pictures friends have shared of themselves, their friends, their spouse, their children or family?

Seventh and Tenth Commandments: You shall not steal.” (Ex 20:15)

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s goods. (Ex 20:17)

1. Do I respect copyright laws for others’ published works and include sources when necessary and available or have I used someone else’s images, words, or ideas as my own?
2. Do I see others’ images or writing and want it for my own?
3. Do I feel jealous when friends share pictures and updates about recent purchases or possessions, their triumphs, joys, or accomplishments instead of expressing genuine happiness and thanksgiving for them?

Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.” (Ex 20:16)

1. Have I used social media to lie about my identity or present a false representation of who I really am?

2. Do I misrepresent, take out of context, inflate, or otherwise misconstrue others' words or information via social media for my own benefit and recognition.
3. Have I failed to respect others' privacy by sharing information that isn't mine to share or by sharing pictures of them online without their permission?
4. Do I use social media to destroy friendships, seek out revenge, or make myself look better than others?
5. If I have used social media in a hurtful way towards others, have I humbly acknowledged this, sought out their forgiveness after a sincere apology, and tried my best to amend my social media use?

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Catholic Bible
Bible in a Year podcast
Bloom for Catholic Women
Catechism in a Year podcast
Catechism of the Catholic Church
Catholic Psychotherapy Association
Christopher West
Crystalina Evert
Covenant Eyes
Dr. Edward Sri
Fight the New Drug
Fr. Michael Schmitz
Jason Evert
Integrity Restored
Matt Fradd
Natural Family Planning
Strive21
The Cor Project
The Chastity Project
The Culture Project
Theology of the Body
TOB Institute
Undone Redone (*Traylor & Melody Louvorn*)
U.S.C.C.B. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
www.pullscatholic.com pullsqna@gmail.com

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

About the Author:

David Taylor is Catholic to his very core, “crazy in love” with his wife, Desi, and the loving father of three and a grandfather. Now retired from competitive athletics, he founded and coached the Duluth Speed Skating Team, and competed in speed skating, inline racing, and distance running. Favorite pastimes include carpentry, playing the saxophone, and traveling the world. With Desi and close friends, he has enjoyed pilgrimages across the globe, attended 2 World Youth Day Pilgrimages (*Madrid and Cologne with Fr. Mike Schmitz*), and walked the streets and prayed at countless churches, cathedrals and basilicas in the Vatican and Rome, across Italy, Israel (*with Jeff Cavins*), Spain, Austria, China, Switzerland, France, Germany and Ireland. Travel has enriched his deep faith and love for the Lord.

Sober from alcohol and other drugs since 1977, Dave worked 35 years as a Chemical Dependency Counselor and School Social Worker, and lectured extensively on addictions, and on research findings on marijuana.

Licensed/Certified Chemical Dependency Counselor, Licensed Social Worker, Licensed Secondary Social Studies Teacher/School Social Worker, Certified Substance Abuse Prevention Specialist, Social Work Intern Supervisor, Service Learning Specialist, Sustainability Trainer for ISD 709, Minnesota Delegate to Drug Watch International, Chair: Drug Watch Minnesota.

Attended workshops at the Archbishop Flynn Catechetical Institute, 5 PRIDE *World Drug Conferences*, 5 Leadership Training and Program Sharing Conferences, Hazelden *AODA Training*, Johnson Institute *Alcoholic Family Roles Training*, National Student Assistance Conference, 5 Institute for Chemical Dependency Professionals of Minnesota Conferences, US Dept. of Health and Human Services Training, 5 *Kids Plus Conferences*, *National Catholic Conference*, 8 St. Louis County *Health and Human Services Conferences*, 6 Minnesota Association for Children’s Mental Health *Child and the Adolescent Conferences* and more.

Received specialized training in restorative learning, adolescent brain development and substance abuse, depression and anxiety disorders, synthetic drugs, empathy development and dysfunction, climate change and public health, attachment disorders, traumatic brain injury, ethics and boundaries, early onset mental illness, internet safety, at-risk learners, threat assessment, bullying, sexual assault and harrassment, unspoken shame and self/injurious behaviors, psychopharmacology, Asperger’s syndrome, grief support, hate crimes, professional ethics, toxic child, undoing racism, fetal alcohol syndrome, stress management, drug use trends, gambling addiction, sexual abstinence, current sexuality topics, relapse treatment, spiritual professionalism, incest, assertive discipline, and sex offender treatment.

Received Master’s Equivalency through University of Minnesota Duluth.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)