Dear friends,

There have been many occasions throughout the course of this year where so many of you have communicated your prayers and support for me as your pastor. I am constantly humbled by your expressions of love and gratitude. Thank you! It is now my turn to once again offer my support to you and your families.

As your pastor, I am available to guide you in the life of faith. I am available to celebrate the Sacraments, rejoice with you in happy times, and cry with you during the most difficult of times. I am also available to help you with anything that is keeping you or your families away from growing in the spiritual life and developing a deeper relationship with Christ and his Church. One issue that is becoming more and more difficult for individuals, marriages, children, and families as a whole is the struggle with pornography.

Regrettably, pornography can impact both children and adults spiritually, emotionally, physically and relationally. As you work hard to protect your families, I want to equip you with the appropriate tools to form, protect and guide your families on this specific issue. Thus, on September 11th, our parish, in conjunction with the entire diocese, will be celebrating the third annual Safe Haven Sunday with the theme “Equipping the Family: Safety Through Connection.”

As you may recall, Safe Haven Sunday finds its inspiration in the U.S. Bishops document *Create in Me a Clean Heart*, wherein they state, “The use of pornography by anyone in the home deprives the home of its role as a safe haven and has negative effects throughout a family’s life and across generations.” When a parent discovers his or her child or teenager has been looking at pornography, it can be alarming, hurtful, and even frightening. In the confusion of the moment, it is important for parents to understand that these are not uncharted waters.

The most powerful tool we have when it comes to teaching our children about the beauty of their sexuality is conversation- real, honest, “look them in the eyes” conversations about their deep questions. In the digital age, passive parenting is not an option—the internet never rests. As your pastor, I want to provide resources to assist you with confidently talking to your children about internet dangers, as well as their online and offline choices. I have included access to some of those resources here so that you can begin safeguarding your children right away.

Covenant Eyes most recent book, *Connected: How Strong Family Relationships Lead to Internet-Safe Kids* is being made available to you at no cost as a digital e-book, available by using this link:

[**https://learn.covenanteyes.com/connected/?utm\_source=Safe+Haven+Sunday&utm\_medium=Talk%2[…]r&utm\_campaign=Diocese+of+Kansas+City-St.+Joseph+SHS+2022**](https://learn.covenanteyes.com/connected/?utm_source=Safe+Haven+Sunday&utm_medium=Talk%252%5b…%5dr&utm_campaign=Diocese+of+Kansas+City-St.+Joseph+SHS+2022)**.**

Also provided is a free seven-day text-to-opt-in program that provides practical tips for caring adults to create safer digital environments for themselves and young people. Simply text **SECURE** to **66866** to begin receiving seven days of free emailed digital tips for parents.

Once again, this awareness weekend is meant to draw our attention as a parish community to the seriousness of the issues of pornography and to recommit ourselves to take steps to ensure our homes are safe havens for all. I encourage you to begin learning now by making use of these resources, and I look forward to celebrating our third annual Safe Haven Sunday with you next weekend!

Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth, intercessors of the home, and Saint Michael,

I am,

Father John Smith