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Sue Lubowitz

The Joy of Lent

A CBC news article by Alison Northcott, caught my eye recently. She reported on the issue of online sports gambling and how harms to health and well-being from gambling are “more substantial than previously understood”.

Ontario legalized online betting in 2022, opening the door to private online gambling companies to operate there. “Sports betting now is so intertwined with sports as a whole, you can't watch an entire game without seeing an ad.” (CBC News)



According to a recent report by the Lancet Public Health Commission on Gambling, gambling “poses a substantial threat to public health.” The commission noted the problems don't just affect the person gambling, but their families and communities too.

The catechism of the Roman Catholic Church teaches that “games of chance (card games, etc.) or wagers are not in themselves contrary to justice. They become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others.” (#2413)

Problem gambling becomes a problem when it:

- gets in the way of work, school or other activities
- harms the person's mental or physical health
- hurts the person financially
- damages the person's reputation and causes problems with family or friends



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As we **journey through Lent** the **Stations of the Cross** can remind us of our dignity. Station 10 tells us that "And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots." What could be more humiliating than to be stripped of your garments before your own mother and friends and then to be hung upon a cross to die. The stripping of our Lord's garments revealed that the sacredness of His life was not in what He obtained or had as a possession; rather, the sacredness and value of His life was solely about who He was.



In our own lives we must strive to see the value of who we are. Too often we fall into the trap of taking our identity and value in the things of this world. Many can mistakenly think, "The more possessions I have the greater my happiness will be." Just like Jesus, our dignity comes from our union with God.

Councils are invited to read the Pastoral Letter for the Jubilee **"Entering Into Hope"** by our Provincial Spiritual Advisor, Most Rev. Bishop Thomas Dowd. It can be found at <https://dioceseofsaultstemarie.org/letter1>



Councils wishing to learn more and plan action, can look to these resources:

1. Alison Northcott, CBC News "Online gambling is booming ahead of Super Bowl. So, experts say, is the risk to public health"
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/super-bowl-sports-betting-health-1.7451573>
2. The Lancet Public Health Commission on gambling
[https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpub/PIIS2468-2667\(24\)00167-1.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lanpub/PIIS2468-2667(24)00167-1.pdf)
3. Bill S-269, An Act respecting a national framework on Advertising for Sports Betting, <https://www.parl.ca/legisinfo/en/bill/44-1/s-269>
4. Resources for family support available from Centre for Addiction and Mental Health <https://www.camh.ca/en/your-care/for-families>