

GAMBLING & ADDICTION

BEHAVIOR THAT HURTS MANY



The Catholic Church teaches that “games of chance are not in themselves contrary to justice” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2413). Yet the Catechism warns that “the passion for gambling risks becoming an enslavement.” A distinction can be made between low stakes fund-raising events sponsored by charitable organizations, and the on-going gambling culture that bombards our communities with a “get rich quick” mentality.

Increasingly our society has become dependent on gambling as a revenue source for public purposes. With the growing prevalence of gambling opportunities, the risk from and prevalence of gambling addiction increases.

Whether betting on sports, playing the lottery, or participating in games of chance at a casino or online, compulsive or “problem gambling” can strain relationships, interfere with work, and lead to financial catastrophe. Individuals may even do things they never thought they would do such as lying to family or friends and stealing money to gamble or pay off debts.

The first step is recognizing and acknowledging the problem. Some of the signs that behaviors are developing into an addiction include:

- Feeling the need to be secretive about your behavior.
- Having trouble controlling your behavior.
- Engaging in the behavior when you don’t have the money.
- Feelings of being in power or control while engaging in or after engaging in the behavior.
- Developing a preoccupation with the behavior.
- Avoidance of responsibilities and regular social activities to engage in the behavior.

“Games of chance... become morally unacceptable when they deprive someone of what is necessary to provide for his needs and those of others.”

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2413

- Family and friends expressing concern and worry about your behavior.
- Deterioration of significant social and family relationships as a result of your engaging in the behavior.
- Experiencing mental, physical, social, and spiritual ruin.

These same warning signs apply to other compulsive or addictive behaviors that also have negative impacts on individuals and families, such as eating, shopping, internet use, pornography, work, alcohol, and drugs. Gambling and other addictive behaviors are not solutions to problems, they only exacerbate them.

After a problem behavior has been identified, the next step is seeking professional assistance. An individual may feel helpless and unable to stop, but with the right help, they can overcome a gambling problem or other addiction and regain control of their life.

The Michigan Department of Community Health operates a 24-hour problem gambling help-line at (800) 270-7177. Counselors at this confidential service provide immediate help to address issues related to problem gambling, including screening services and referrals to treatment or support groups.

Counseling services and support are available through the following Catholic agencies:

Archdiocese of Detroit	Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan	(855) 882-2736
Diocese of Gaylord	Catholic Human Services, Inc.	(231) 947-8110
Diocese of Grand Rapids	Catholic Charities of West Michigan	(877) 359-6523
Diocese of Kalamazoo	Catholic Charities Diocese of Kalamazoo	(269) 381-9800
Diocese of Lansing	Catholic Charities	(517) 342-2465
Diocese of Marquette	Catholic Social Services of the Upper Peninsula	(906) 227-9119
Diocese of Saginaw	Catholic Family Service	(989) 753-8446

We must always be on guard that our actions do not lead to behavior that is damaging to ourselves, our loved ones, and our communities.

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