



Courage & EnCourage
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ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

When: Sunday February 15, 2015 from 2:30 to 4:00pm

**Where: Holy Spirit Catholic Church
9565 Musch Rd.
Brighton, Michigan 48116**

Directions: US-23 to Silver Lake Rd. Exit (exit #55) West on Silver Lake Rd. to Whitmore Lake Rd. (a short distance). South on Whitmore Lake Rd. to Winans Lake Rd. (a three way stop). West on Winans Lake Rd. approximately one mile to Musch Rd. Turn left or West on Musch Rd. to Holy Spirit Catholic Church. We meet in the new school that connects to the church in the Conference/Lending Library Room. Look for Encourage Meeting Signs.

This morning as we drove to daily Mass through the snow, we noted that the actual temperature was 6 degrees and concluded that it is, indeed, a long winter. It is also an opportunity to spend more time in prayer. Ash Wednesday is just a couple of weeks away and we have the environment and the opportunity to deepen our prayer time. The first of our three enclosures is one of Sister Ann Shields' regular *From The Heart* columns. Sister Ann is a resident of our Diocese and a frequent source of inspiration. In this writing, she speaks to the challenges that Christians face in a hostile society. She offers us hope by reminding us that *where sin increased, grace abounded*.

A second enclosure, somewhat similar to Sister's, is by Andrew Comiskey of *Desert Stream Ministries*. He addresses the issue of "gay marriage" and urges us to pray for the coming Supreme Court case. It reminds us that another ministry, JONAH, (Jews Offering New Alternatives to Healing) is involved in a law suit in New Jersey as to whether they can provide competent therapy to persons wanting to better understand their SSA struggles with the goal of reorientation. Please pray.

The final enclosure encourages us to not be confused by the culture, but to know that the church stands solidly with her teachings on marriage and family. It sometimes can be difficult to cope with the plethora of opinions expressed in secular media on the subject, but doctrine has not changed, nor will it. Remember that prayer is our best weapon and we must not neglect it.

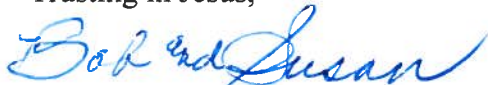
Please also remember that we unite to pray each Thursday to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in reparation for our sins and the sins against human sexuality such as same-sex behavior and abortion. Reparation is making amends for the wrongs committed through our sinful condition. Additionally, we pray as intercessors for all our loved ones who will, like the prodigal, someday return home. We generally follow the model given to us by St. Margaret Mary Alacoque in the booklet ***Holy Hour of Reparation*** published by CMJ Marian Publishers. If you would like a copy of the booklet, we have a small supply in our office or you can order one by calling the publisher at 1-888-636-6799. Another beautiful prayer is the ***Chaplet of the Precious Blood*** that is available upon request. This beautiful chaplet has been modified to address the specific concerns of Courage and EnCourage members. We have chosen to add this powerful prayer to our Holy Hour of Reparation. Please remember, “that the necessity of reparation is especially urgent today and must be evident to everyone who considers the present plight of the world, ‘seated in wickedness’. The Sacred Heart of Jesus promised to St. Margaret Mary that He would reward abundantly with His graces all those who should render this honor to His Heart.” (Pope Pius XI Encyclical *Miserentissimus*)

Please note: If you cannot attend the February 15th meeting, our next regular Diocesan EnCourage meeting is Sunday, March 15, 2015.

For more information regarding our meetings, or to talk about the issue of same-sex attraction in your lives or the lives of loved ones, call our Diocesan office at 517-342-2596 or email us at courage@dioceseoflansing.org. We might also mention that the Diocese of Lansing supports this ministry even though more than half of our letters go well beyond our borders. Any help you can give us is greatly appreciated.

We look forward to meeting with you. Let us remember, however, to always respect the right of each to complete confidentiality.

Trusting in Jesus,



Bob and Susan Cavera

“When we love deeply, we make ourselves vulnerable to deep pain. And this is the finest pain of all, a sacrifice of the highest order. God will equip us to love like this, and God will comfort us when it hurts.”

Kristin Armstrong
Living Faith Feb. 2, 2015

Heartless

- [January 26, 2015](#)
- Author [Andrew Comiskey](#)



‘All it takes for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing.’

If you remove the central feature from which something derives its nature, you distort its meaning. That ‘thing’ ceases to be what it is; it loses its heart. Look at the Gospels. Cut out Christ’s resurrection and you have a teacher/healer doomed for his radical goodness. Or the film ‘Unbroken,’ in which the screenwriters omitted the hero’s watershed conversion to Christianity. Unbroken indeed.

Now we face the prospect of marriage without male and female. Last week the Supreme Court agreed to decide by June whether all 50 states must allow gay couples to marry. Following the breathless pace at which individual states have assumed gay marriage rights (36 and counting), it seems unlikely that the very court which encouraged these changes two years ago will now backtrack.

A chief activist gushed prophetically: ‘Finally gay couples will be able to share in the joys, protections and responsibilities of marriage...’ Right?

Wrong. Marriage without male and female ceases to be marriage. Why? Because marriage is fundamentally about children. Same-gender couples cannot create them and should not parent them. (Would you want to be a child trying to secure its gender self from parents evidently unsure of their own?)

Since time began, marriage has been about creating and tending to kids. Although not all couples create them, it is still the orientation of male and female to do so. And family remains the fundamental fruit of marriage, complete with the ‘joys and responsibilities’ that the modern state

seeks to protect. Why? So that couples can have tax benefits and hospital visitation rights? No, so that their commitment might stabilize sexual love and give rise to children, who in turn might secure a foundation of stable love from the man and woman who made them. Period.

Remove male and female from marriage and it ceases to be marriage. It mutates; it becomes an extension of something else. In this case, marriage becomes the selfish arm of an extremely individualized, short-sighted people who refuse to recognize that marriage must answer to a call greater than the bond of two persons. Sex like marriage must answer to children.

If the Supreme Court defines marriage as free from gender restraints, then it will take the heart out of marriage. We will pass down a cruel decree on persons who have no voice and who need protection from the state. Children deserve a higher standard that will protect their formation and dignity as male and female.

It is no irony to me that the Supreme Court agreed to decide 'gay marriage' just days after the anniversary of 'Roe vs. Wade' which legalized abortion. For over 30 years now, we have lived heartlessly, in the shadow of life without protection. Do we want life without gender clarity?

Pray for the Court's abrupt reversal of the slide into national 'gay marriage.'

Pray for and encourage the marriages around you.

Do everything in your power to ensure that your church becomes a safe and powerful place of transformation for persons with same-sex attraction. God desires mercy and not judgment. If we do not care for willing broken hearts before they are seduced by worldly solutions, we help create a problem. We become heartless, a boney arm of judgment.

From the Heart

By Sr. Ann Shields, SGL

Pollution of the Spirit

For almost a year, I have been thinking about a reflection that Pope Benedict gave on the Blessed Mother. I found it thought provoking and have returned to it several times. (See <http://www.zenit.org/article-27788>) His main point was this: "The press brings us a daily serving where evil is recounted, repeated, amplified, accustoming us to the most horrible things, making us more insensitive and in some way intoxicates us, because the negative (we hear and read about) is not fully disposed of and accumulates day after day. Hearts harden and thoughts darken..."

We are breathing toxic fumes just as dangerous or more than severe air pollution. It is, he says, "the pollution of the spirit which leads to sadness and depression; it is that which renders our faces less smiling, more gloomy, which leads us not to greet one another, to not look at one another in the face...Persons become bodies and these bodies lose the soul, become things, objects without a face, to be exchanged and consumed."

One local pastor, Fr. William Ashbaugh, in this past Sunday's bulletin made this insightful comment: "During various times in history, it was unpopular to be a Christian. Perhaps we are facing something similar today. One New York Times article commented on this in terms of what our society glorifies. Outlandish immoral behavior seems to be more and more the norm. Porn stars become celebrities with bestselling books. Greed and glamour is rewarded while those who humbly follow God are maligned. One man called Mother Teresa a fanatic, a fundamentalist and a fraud..."

This is the air we breathe, brothers and sisters, and its fumes cannot help but harm us.

But the Pope tells us there is a purifier for the air we breathe: "It is the Blessed Mother who in her humility and faith and beauty brings a purifying grace to our world. 'Where sin abounds, grace abounds still more.'"

"She is the Immaculate Mother who repeats also to the men of our time: 'Do not be afraid, Jesus has conquered evil; he has conquered it at the root, freeing us from its dominion.'" Under her maternal care and in the power of Christ's Spirit, we can effect change.

Benedict says that Mary teaches us to look at others and to treat others as Christ did, "To look at them with mercy, with love, with

infinite tenderness, especially those who are most alone, most looked down upon, most exploited. 'Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more.'"

No matter the form that challenges take, the Holy Father encourages us: "There are many, many good people who have understood in every age that it is no use to condemn, to lament, to recriminate, but it is better to respond to evil with good. This changes things, it changes persons and, in consequence, improves society."

It is time for each of us to look very seriously at what we allow into our hearts, minds, and spirits. We need to make some decisions about what we watch and listen to and WHO we listen to...we are often not aware of the toxicity of the air until we find ourselves coughing and choking and struggling for clean air. So it is with the spirit and it is often not as obvious that our spirits are poisoned—until our faith has grown weak and our hearts lose hope and the desire to love grows sour and bitter and cynical.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to give us the grace "to listen to Mary's voice" as she prays for us, that the tide of evil may be overcome by the lavish grace of the Living Water that is Christ. May this water wash away the pollution of our hearts and minds and make us, once again, clear channels of His love and mercy to a poisoned and poisonous world.

Pope Benedict concludes his reflections with this statement. "Let us hear her silent but pressing appeal. She says to each one of us: Where sin increased, grace can overflow, beginning precisely from your heart and your life! And the city will be more beautiful, more Christian, more human." +



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DAILY NEWS

Confraternities of Catholic Clergy Reaffirm Church's Teaching on Marriage and the Family

Cardinal Raymond Burke encouraged the gathering of representatives for nearly 1,000 priests at a conference in Rome not to give up amid the 'troubled waters of confusion and error which surround us.'

BY EDWARD PENTIN

| Posted 1/9/15 at 1:26 PM

VATICAN CITY — A large group of clergy from English-speaking countries have unanimously reaffirmed their support for Church teaching on marriage and the family, implicitly rejecting proposals at the 2014 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops on the Family that the Church alter pastoral practice and doctrine in this area.

In a **statement** issued at the end of a **five-day conference** in Rome Jan. 5-9, the Confraternities of Catholic Clergy in the United States, Australia, Britain and Ireland said they pledged their "unwavering fidelity to the traditional doctrines regarding marriage and the true meaning of human sexuality, as proclaimed in the word of God and set out clearly in the Church's ordinary and universal magisterium."

During last October's extraordinary synod on the family, controversy erupted when attempts were made to promote changes in pastoral practice concerning marriage and human sexuality.

Cardinal Walter Kasper of Germany was a lightning rod, suggesting in a keynote speech that launched the synodal process, that the Church should allow divorced and remarried Catholics to receive Communion. Opponents argued that such changes would not be consistent with the Church's doctrine.

Controversy also focused on elements of the synod document that addressed pastoral practices dealing with homosexuality and cohabitation.

Having discussed issues pertinent to the upcoming second synod on the family, to take place in October this year, and responding "to the Holy Father's call for reflection," the priests stressed their commitment to "presenting anew the Good News about marriage and family life in all its fullness and helping, with the Lord's compassion, those who struggle to follow the Gospel in a secular society."

The priests also affirmed the "importance of upholding the Church's traditional discipline regarding the reception of the sacraments and that doctrine and practice must remain firmly and inseparably in harmony."

The confraternities, who represent nearly 1,000 priests in Anglophone countries, told the Register they believe the statement is clear and charitable, but fair, and expresses the sense among "many Catholic priests" of the issues discussed at the synod. They also said that such a "united expression of orthodoxy" gives them "joy and hope."

The Confraternity of Catholic Clergy in the United States is based in San Diego. Its president is frequent EWTN contributor Father John Trigilio.



Cardinal Burke's Homily

During his homily at a Mass for the priests in St. Peter's Basilica on Jan. 9, Cardinal Raymond Burke encouraged them not to give up.

The patron of the Knights of Malta said the "frighteningly troubled times in which we live surely make us more conscious of the great and seemingly overwhelming struggle" that priests today are facing.

"Confusion and error about the most fundamental truths of the moral law lead our culture into a greater and evermore self-destructive corruption," the American cardinal said.

Cardinal Burke added, "The Church exists to call the culture to conversion and to transform it, but in the struggle to row the boat of the Church against the troubled waters of the confusion and error which surround us, there is the temptation to give up and let the boat move with the times, with the result that the same confusion and error enters into the very life of the Church."

But he said that, at the same time, "it is the occasion to set aside our useless self-pity and fear and recognize that Christ is alive in our midst, that he comes to us upon the deeply troubled waters through which we are called to navigate the boat of this mystical body."

Cardinal Burke invited the priests to "strive every day" to give their lives completely to Christ and to be confident that, "with Christ," the turbulent waters become "navigable."

And he stressed that the strength to meet today's challenges, teach the truth of the faith and minister the saving mysteries to the faithful "comes solely from the holy Eucharist, from our union with Christ in the Eucharistic sacrifice and our communion with him in his body, blood, soul and divinity."

He concluded, "If the reality of the priestly office, as it must be exercised in the present time of profound confusion and error, instills in us an understandable fear, we must at the same moment open our eyes to behold Christ, walking toward us on the turbulent waters, and open our ears to hear his voice coming from his Eucharistic heart: 'Courage! It is I. Do not be afraid.'"

Cardinal George Pell, prefect of the Vatican's Secretariat for the Economy, was among the conference speakers. He underlined that the mission of the Church needs a clear and unambiguous witness to Christ.

"The Confraternities of Catholic Clergy, in their service to the Church and the world, are committed to prophetic witness, which challenges contemporary culture," the priests said in a closing statement. "We share the Holy Father's care and concern for the family and pray that the upcoming synod enables the Church to more effectively proclaim Christ's vision of marriage and family."

Edward Pentin is the Register's Rome correspondent.

Links to the confraternities:

United States: catholicclergy.net

U.K.: confraternityccb.org.uk

Ireland: confraternity.ie

Australia: clergy.asn.au