



Courage & EnCourage
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ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

When: Sunday November 18, 2012 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 entrance marked with a sign for Holy Spirit Cemetery and Holy Spirit Rectory and School. Turn left. We meet in portable classroom number four. Look for Encourage Meeting signs.

The holiday season is fast approaching and the issue of family visits, the presence of partners, sleeping accommodations, and interaction with relatives are often difficult issues for us. Plan to attend our next meeting to talk about these and many other issues.

Enclosed you will find the two newest editions of the pamphlets for the ministries of Courage and EnCourage. While the general Courage pamphlet is essentially a revision, the pamphlet addressed to young adults is new. You are welcome to reproduce both; note our Diocesan contact information is on both. You could sticker over our address or go to the Courage website at www.couragerc.org and download copies that will only have the national office contact information, and you can add your own. We recommend that you make enough copies for the pamphlet racks in the parishes in your Diocese with, of course, permission from your Bishop and/or your Pastor.

Fr. Paul Check, the Director of Courage and EnCourage, has asked that his letter asking for financial assistance be included in this month's letter. The ministry largely depends on donations to maintain the office staff and operations. Please, prayerfully consider making a gift, large or small, to the apostolate.

We also want to remind you that all the talks from the past Annual Conference are available on DVD and CD. They can be obtained on line at www.couragerc.org or by phone at 1-203-803-1564. If you would like a succinct explanation of the ministry of Courage and EnCourage we would suggest the DVD *Portraits in Courage*.

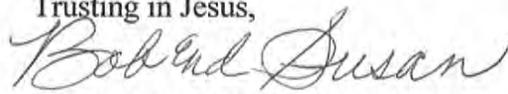
Dan, the Master of Ceremony at this year's conference and author of a previous enclosure titled *Why I Don't Call Myself a Gay Christian* was recently interviewed on Catholic Answer Radio. It was an outstanding interview and is also available on the Courage web site at www.couragerc.org.

Remember please 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 enclosed with this letter. "That the necessity of reparation is especially urgent today 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 November 18th meeting, our next regular meeting is December 16th.

For more information regarding our meetings, or to talk about the issue of same-sex attraction in your lives, call our Diocesan office at 517-342-2596 or email us at caverart@comcast.net

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

God has not promised skies without blue, joy without sorrow, peace without pain; but he has promised strength for the day, grace for the trials, and help from above. (author unknown)



November 2012

I will not leave you as orphans. (Jn 14:18)

Dear Friends in Christ,

Recently, I encountered a devout Catholic man whose heart was torn. He was struggling to reconcile two things: the love of his faith and the love of his child, who was living in a same-sex relationship. He said to me, "Father, I wonder what Jesus would say about this situation? What would He say to my daughter? What would He tell me to do?" Those were fair questions, springing from an earnest desire to find a way to unite two things that appeared to him to be in conflict. I wanted to provide an answer that would be a reassurance, but that would not claim more than I, as an individual priest and an imperfect representative of Jesus Christ, could say.

I replied: "Before Jesus went to His Passion, He made a promise. He said, 'I will not leave you as orphans.' To ensure His continued presence in this world, He established the Church as His body and bride, and the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God on earth, so that we, His children, would never want for His grace, mercy, and peace."

Beginning with the words and actions of Our Lord preserved for us in the Gospel, the Church teaches us that love has a specific and recognizable content in matters of sexual morality...a content based on the truth of our humanity. As Christ's presence in the world—in her teaching and in the Sacraments and Scripture—here is what the Church tells us about our identity:

The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation. Every one living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties, but challenges to growth, strengths, talents and gifts as well. Today, the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person as a "heterosexual" or a "homosexual" and insists that every person has a fundamental Identity: the creature of God, and by grace, his child and heir to eternal life. (CDF, 1986 "Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons," par 16)

Those words appear above the signature of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI. One of the titles of the Holy Father is "Vicar of Christ on earth", meaning that he stands in the place of Christ as the chief shepherd of the people of God, the Church. In more recent times, here is what the Pope has said about homosexuality: "The issue at stake here is the intrinsic truth of sexuality's significance in the constitution of man's being...[Homosexuality] remains contrary to the essence of what God originally willed."

Identity...humanity...being. We acknowledge that there is abundant confusion and controversy over these words today, problems that finally stem from Original Sin, when our first parents said, in effect, to God, "You are not our father." Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, came into the world to restore man's dignity, so that once again, we can say, in the midst of the Church, "Our Father", and so that we could be confident how to live and act in accordance with that dignity.

In the 1986 Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith document cited above, Cardinal Ratzinger expressed the conviction that informs the work of Courage and EnCourage: "Only what is true can ultimately be pastoral. The neglect of the Church's position prevents homosexual men and women from receiving the care they need and deserve." (par 15)

With these things in mind, I tried to help the man I mention above to see that he could and must love his Catholic Faith and love his daughter always, while—precisely because of those loves—not approve of any behavior contrary to her good, contrary to her real identity.

Since assuming the role of executive director in 2008, my priority has been the education of clergy to help ensure that pastoral care of men and women with same-sex attraction, and their families, rests on the theological anthropology of the Church, aided by sound assistance from the psychological sciences. I think that the vitality of Courage and EnCourage chapters depends especially upon parish priests who understand the teaching of the Church and who have confidence that our apostolate can be a practical help to the souls under their care.

To that end, I was grateful that so many priests participated in our annual national conference at Mount Saint Mary's in July, and where later in August, we conducted a study day for the third and fourth year seminarians. In September, I made a two-week trip to Australia and New Zealand, during which I visited six cities. This month, I will attend the annual Courage-Latino conference, this year in Mexico City. In December, I will spend 10 days in California, where we will have a clergy study day in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and a weekend retreat for Courage men.

Now I must appeal for your help. At the end of this calendar year, we face a shortfall of about **\$100,000** in our annual operations budget, of which I am counting on **\$50,000** coming from you, our Courage and EnCourage family and friends, who know best how important our work is and how urgent is the need. Would you please write a check today to Courage for **\$100**—more if you can—or at least pledge that amount and make the payments as your means will allow?

Your generosity directly supports the mission of the central office, as we endeavor to convey the truth in charity concerning the most contested cultural issue of the day...but from our standpoint, not so much an issue as *the reason why so many people suffer*, and are unhappy and even miserable. True, Courage is "a sign of contradiction" to some, as was the Lord Himself (cf. Lk 2:34). But we pray that it is also a sign of hope that the Savior has not left us orphans, because His presence continues among us in His Holy Church, of which Courage is a part. We desire to help people know their true identity in Jesus Christ.

As always, I offer my sincere gratitude to our chaplains, group leaders, and listserv moderators, in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and overseas, for all of their faithful service.

May God bless you and your families during the coming Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons.

In Christ,

(R.) P-N. Check

Rev. Paul N. Check

What do Courage and EnCourage believe?

Courage and EnCourage believe that, with human support and Divine Intervention:

- Persons with SSA can follow Jesus Christ according to Roman Catholic spiritual and moral teaching.
- It is possible to have SSA and live a chaste and productive life.
- Persons with SSA can develop an assured, grace-filled understanding of themselves while growing into their true identities as mature men and women.
- Homosexual attractions or feelings are not a sin; however, homosexual acts are immoral and do not lead to a deeper life in Christ.
- A person's dignity does not depend upon his or her sexual attractions but upon his or her relationship to Jesus Christ.
- Homosexual desires are not usually a person's choice.
- Therapy may address underlying emotional issues related to SSA; however, therapy cannot guarantee that SSA will be eliminated.
- Men and women with SSA can lead chaste lives. Chastity, made possible by Christ's redemption, is a liberating virtue and a source of joy and human freedom.

EnCourage further believes:

- Standing by the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, EnCourage members support one another and their loved ones through discussion, prayer, fellowship, and sacrifice.
- We are not our children's saviors; Jesus Christ is Lord, God, and Savior.
- We are not responsible for our grown children's decisions to pursue homosexual activity (should they make such a decision), but we can encourage them to lead chaste lives.
- EnCourage offers faithful witness to Catholic teaching on sexual morality while meeting the needs of its members with charity and compassion.

"Courage is doing the work of God."

Blessed Pope John Paul II

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To view a PDF version of this pamphlet and others, please visit the Courage web site.

How do Courage and EnCourage work?

The cornerstone of Courage is a program of five goals and twelve steps. "The Five Goals of Courage" are achieved through "The Twelve Steps of Courage," the 12-step format developed by Alcoholics Anonymous and used with their permission. Coupled with fellowship and sharing of personal experiences, these 12 steps can aid in spiritual growth. Referrals are sometimes made to loyal and faithful Catholic therapists.

- The Courage Handbook explains the Goals and Steps of Courage and EnCourage.
- Courage holds an International Conference each summer, where hundreds gather for prayer and support.
- Individual chapters of Courage often sponsor Days of Recollection to assist the members of our support groups.

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Spiritual support for Catholic men and women with same-sex attractions who desire to live chaste lives in accordance with the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church



"Be strong and of good courage; be not frightened, neither be dismayed; for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."
Joshua 1:9

What is Courage? What is EnCourage?

- Courage and EnCourage are spiritual support groups.
- Courage was founded in 1980 by Servant of God Terence Cardinal Cooke, Archbishop of New York, to help Catholics with same-sex attractions live chaste lives in accordance with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching.
- EnCourage is the affiliate support group for family members, spouses, and friends of men and women with same-sex attractions (SSA).
- The dignity and identity of Christian persons are not determined by their sexual attractions but by their relation to Jesus Christ through faith, hope, and love.
- *Experiencing* SSA is not a sin. The Church makes a distinction between *having* SSA and *pursuing* same-sex acts.

The Five Goals of Courage

The founding members of Courage have developed the following goals and purposes:

1. To live chaste lives in accordance with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality.
2. To dedicate our entire lives to Christ through service to others, spiritual reading, prayer, meditation, individual

spiritual direction, frequent attendance at Mass, and frequent reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist.

3. To foster a spirit of fellowship in which we may share with one another our thoughts and experiences and so ensure that none of us has to face the problems of homosexuality alone.
4. To be mindful of the truth that chaste friendships are not only possible but necessary in chaste Christian life; and to encourage one another in forming and sustaining these friendships.
5. To live lives that may serve as good examples/role models to others.

Facts about SSA

Medical doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and other mental health professionals agree that SSA can be caused by a variety of factors including emotional predisposition, environment and childhood experiences, and sexual abuse.

Courage members are free to pursue professional therapy to further understand and possibly diminish their same-sex attractions. They are under no moral obligation to do so, however. There is no guarantee that therapy will eliminate SSA, nor is such therapy always affordable or available. Courage itself does not provide professional therapy; we are solely a spiritual support group for those persons with SSA who want assistance in living chaste lives.

Courage provides confidential, welcoming, and informative support for men and women with SSA. Please join us.

What does the Church say?

"The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation. Every one living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties – but challenges to growth, strengths, talents, and gifts as well. Today, the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person a 'heterosexual' or a 'homosexual' and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: a creature of God, and by grace, His child and heir to eternal life."

Letter from the
**Congregation of the
Doctrine of the Faith**
October 1986
Signed by Joseph
Ratzinger



Now Pope Benedict XVI

What do Church officials say?

"Support groups, noted for their adherence to Church teaching, for persons who experience same-sex attraction continue to be an important part of Church ministries and are to be encouraged. [Same-sex attracted persons] should not be encouraged to define themselves primarily in terms of their sexual inclination, however, or to participate in 'gay subcultures,' which often tend to promote immoral lifestyles. Rather, they should be encouraged to form relationships with the wider community.... Examples of such ministries whose principles are in accord with Church teaching are Courage and EnCourage."

"Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care"

U. S. Conference of Catholics Bishops
November 2006

"Human love hence embraces the body, and the body also expresses spiritual love. Therefore, sexuality is not something purely biological; rather, it concerns the intimate nucleus of the person."

"The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality"

The Pontifical Council for the Family
1995

Courage offers spiritual support and fellowship for men and women 18 years and older with same-sex attractions who are striving to live chaste lives.

The Five Goals of Courage:

1. To live chaste lives in accordance with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality.
2. To dedicate our entire lives to Christ through service to others, spiritual reading, prayer, meditation, individual spiritual direction, frequent attendance at Mass, and the frequent reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist.
3. To foster a spirit of fellowship in which we may share with one another our thoughts and experiences and so ensure that none of us has to face the problems of homosexuality alone.
4. To be mindful of the truth that chaste friendships are not only possible but necessary in chaste Christian life, and to encourage one another in forming and sustaining these friendships.
5. To live lives that may serve as good examples/role models to others.

"I'm so grateful for the fellowship and moral support I've found through Courage. Where else could I find people who love the Lord and the teaching of the Church, and who also know what it's like to be tempted by same-sex attractions? Courage helps me to keep striving for chastity with patience and hope."

—Catherine, *Courage* member

"Courage is doing the work of God!"

Blessed Pope John Paul II

For more information contact the central Courage office:

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I've had these feelings for so long—keeping them hidden, afraid to speak out. . . .

What if it's true?

What if I am "gay"?



WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

A Guide for Young Adults Experiencing Same-Sex Attractions (SSA)



“Why do some people have these feelings?”

- ❖ Having same-sex attractions (SSA) is usually not a choice. God loves you regardless of your sexual attractions. You will always be His child.
- ❖ Sexuality develops and changes over many years. The fact that a person feels same-sex attractions now does not mean those feelings will continue.
- ❖ It’s important that we avoid labeling ourselves as “gay,” “lesbian,” or “bisexual.” We are much more than our sexual attractions! Sexuality is an important part of who we are, but first we are persons, men and women in Christ, children of God.
- ❖ Persons with SSA are often isolated and feel shame and confusion. LGBT groups may seem to offer a sense of acceptance and comfort, but they will not challenge you to understand your *true* identity in Jesus Christ.
- ❖ We are children of God, created with free will. Our sexual attractions are often not chosen and should not be the cause of shame or guilt. It’s important to remember that while who we are attracted to may not be our choice; what we **DO** with those attractions **IS!**

“Shouldn’t someone just accept that he or she is ‘gay’?”

The tidal wave of misinformation about sexuality that is crashing down on our world is hurting people. We must always distinguish the “person” from the “inclination” and the “actions” of that person.

Inaccurate information and misguided compassion perpetuate ignorance and can make people with SSA believe that they do not have free will to determine how they define themselves, and that they don’t have the ability to live chaste lives.

By resisting the “gay” or “lesbian” label, we assert our personhood and reject the notion that our sexual inclinations define us.

“What can we do with these feelings?”

Acknowledge them! Sexuality is an important part of who we are, but we are so much more than our sexual inclinations!

Chastity—striving to do God’s will in the area of our sexuality—can ultimately bring inner peace; it helps us love God, ourselves, and others aright. Chastity requires self-knowledge and self-mastery but it does lead to human freedom and joy.

You are not alone! It’s important to stay connected to others who welcome us as we are and who understand our struggle

as we strive to understand SSA and strengthen our relationship with God.

“What does the future hold?”

As young adults who experience same-sex attractions, we do have options, even if they may seem difficult and challenging at first.

- **God Loves Us:** We are beloved children of God, regardless of our desires or inclinations.
- **God Permits Us To Make Choices:** We are born with free will. Our emotions are good, but they must be guided by intellect and reason.
- **God Is With Us:** And with His Grace, He has promised that any hardship can be overcome, if we choose to seek Him first.

If you’ve been away from the Church, come back! Talk to the Lord; He is waiting for you!

The Church does **not** reject persons with SSA; all persons with SSA have a right to be welcomed into the Church community. We come to the Church **as we are**, with the intention and desire to do God’s will.

Visit the *Courage* website for more information about choosing a life of chastity.

“You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free” (John 8:32).