

Courage & EnCourage 228 North Walnut Street Lansing, Michigan 48933-1122 517-342-2596 Facsimile: 517-242-2468

Facsimile: 517.342.2468 caverart@comcast.net

## ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

When: Sunday January 18, 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. Look for Encourage Meeting Signs.

Susan and I want to wish you a Blessed and Holy New Year!

Last month we met for the first time in the new school that is connected to the church building. <u>Please Note:</u> We are <u>not</u> meeting in portable classroom #4. Follow the new directions given above and go to the church and new school. If you are in the habit of turning at the cemetery, don't. Proceed to Musch Rd and go to the church. Look for signs that will be appropriately placed.

We have enclosed with the letter the story of Ann, an EnCourage parent. Even though her story is available on line on the Courage web site, we thought it important enough for us to call your attention to this thoughtful account of a parent confronted with this issue.

We would also like to recommend a book entitled *The Healing of Families: How to Pray Effectively for Those Stubborn Personal and Familial Problems* by Fr. Yozefu – B. Ssemakula. Several of our members have read the book and found it helpful. On the back cover of the book is and endorsement by Fr. John Hampsch, CMF who has been intimately involved in family ministry for many years. We have enclosed his *Prayer For Healing Of The Family Tree* for your use.

**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 samesex 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)

<u>Please note:</u> If you cannot attend the January 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, our next regular Diocesan EnCourage meeting is <u>Sunday</u>, <u>February 15</u>, <u>2015</u>.

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 <a href="mailto:courage@dioceseoflansing.org">courage@dioceseoflansing.org</a> 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,

Paffud Jusan

Bob and Susan Cavera

"Fear not, I am with you; be not dismayed; I am your God. I will strengthen you, and help you, and uphold you with my right hand of justice." Isaiah 41: 10

## PRAYER FOR HEALING OF THE FAMILY TREE

REV. John H. Hampsch, C.M.F.

Heavenly Father, I come before you as your child in great need of your help. I have physical health needs, emotional needs, spiritual needs, and interpersonal needs. Many of my problems have been caused by my own failures, neglects, and sinfulness, for which I humbly beg your forgiveness Lord. But I also ask you to forgive the sins of my ancestors whose failures have left their effects on me in the form of unwanted tendencies, behavior patterns, and defects in body, mind, and spirit. Heal me, Lord, of all these disorders.

With Your help I sincerely forgive everyone, especially living or dead members of my family-tree, who have directly offended me or my loved ones in any way, or those whose sins have resulted in our present sufferings and disorders. In the name Your Divine Son Jesus, and in the power of his Holy Spirit, I ask you, Father, to deliver me and my entire family tree from the influence of the evil one. Free all living and dead members of my family tree, including those in adoptive relationships, and those in extended family relationships, from every contaminating form of bondage. By your loving concern for us, Heavenly Father, and by the shed blood of Your Precious Son Jesus, I beg you to extend your blessing on me and all of my deceased relatives. Heal every negative effect transmitted through all past generations, and prevent such negative effects in future generations of my family tree.

I symbolically place the cross of Jesus over the head of each person in my family tree, and between each generation, I ask you to let the cleansing blood of Jesus purify the blood lines in my family lineage. Send your protecting angels to encamp around us, and permit Archangel Raphael, the patron of healing, to administer your divine healing power to all of us, even in areas of genetic disability. Give special power to our family members' guardian angels to heal, protect, guide, and encourage each of us in all our needs. Let your healing power be released at this very moment, and let it continue along as your sovereignty permits.

In our family tree, Lord, replace all bondage with a holy bonding in family love. And let there be an ever deeper bonding with you, Lord, by the Holy Spirit, to your Son Jesus. Let the family of the Holy Trinity pervade our family with its tender, warm, loving presence, so that our family may recognize and manifest that love in all our relationships.

All of our unknown needs we include with this petition that we pray in Jesus' precious name Amen.

My story as an Encourage parent 10/15/14

Let me begin by expressing my deep gratitude to God for this journey with the Courage / Encourage Ministry of the Catholic Church - it's been a huge part of my coming to a deeper understanding and appreciation for my Catholic faith, and has led me to a more intimate relationship with the God Who loves me. It has also introduced me to so many wonderful people who love the Lord, who love the Church, and who are truly witnesses to the call to holiness. The depth of pain and suffering united with Christ's Passion, Death, and Resurrection that I've encountered in the people I've met is the most beautiful witness to the Power of God's grace and mercy that I can imagine. I see the triumph of the Cross lived out in their lives.

My desire to share the Truth of Jesus Christ was strengthened about 25 years ago when I was really struggling with the Church's teaching on same sex attraction, and someone who knew and understood that teaching and loved the Church challenged and warned me, and pointed the way to Truth for me ~ and I'm incredibly grateful for that! It's led me to a deeper faith and trust in Jesus, and the desire to help others to know the Truth. John 8:32 states, "you shall know the Truth and the Truth shall set you free," and that Truth is the Person of Jesus Christ. He's all we need to find the happiness God desires for us.

I come from a Protestant Baptist background, with a great-grandfather on both my father's and mother's side who were Baptist ministers. My parents taught me that God is Real, He loves me, and He's always with me. I specifically remember my own baptism at age 10, confessing Jesus as my Savior, and being immersed in the baptismal tub. I knew at that moment that something inside me had changed, and I felt a stronger sense of right and wrong, and the desire to be good. At age 17 I attended a Billy Graham movie that included an altar call; I was extremely shy and too fearful to make a public profession of faith, but in my heart I gave my life to Jesus that night in a deeper way, and experienced a new love for the Lord and desire to serve Him. That desire has remained with me throughout my life, altho I've taken many detours ~ I'm grateful to recognize that altho I have not always been faithful, God has remained faithful and has never given up on me, or on those I love ~

I married John at age 22, and we soon had our first child, a boy, followed 20 months later by our daughter Patti. Our first years of marriage were rocky, and something in our relationship changed negatively not long into our marriage. Years later John told me that early in our marriage he was disappointed with me sexually, and his attitude toward me reflected that disappointment. I no longer felt loved or respected, and found myself fantasizing about other men and also about women, although I never went beyond the fantasies. John was Catholic, and I had joined the Catholic Church when our son made his first communion. In a moment of grace, I confessed my fantasies to our pastor, and God's mercy took away those desires. I had actually forgotten about this period of my life until I heard the testimony given at the 2012 Courage Conference in Baltimore.

John was often angry and distant, and I was pretty subservient and timid - not a good model of femininity for our daughter. Both our son and Patti were excellent students, and our family life seemed relatively stable despite our marital challenges. In her sophomore year of college, we discovered that Patti and her good friend, whom we had welcomed into our home many times and loved, were in fact sexual partners. My first reaction was shock - I had no idea of the true nature of their relationship. I told her friend to leave, and never wanted to see her again, as I felt she had seduced my innocent child. The memory of my own homosexual desires of the past re-surfaced, and I shared this with Patti, hoping she would end her same sex relationship. We asked her to see the campus counselor, and were surprised when we found the counselor assured her this was normal, and affirmed her same-sex attraction.

This was 1991, and homosexuality was much less openly discussed at that time. I talked to no one about it for at least six months, except John. I felt it to be a dark secret which was destroying me, and I sought help from a friend who was a Methodist minister's wife. She looked in her resource book, and found P-Flag, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, an organization which accepts same sex attraction as inborn and unchangeable, and celebrates it as a gift given by God. I so desperately needed to connect with others in this situation that I blindly embraced their philosophy. God's grace enabled me to exchange the hatred I had been harboring for Patti's friend into genuine care and concern. I embraced Patti and her friend, and began to encourage her in this life style. I really didn't know my Catholic faith well, and was searching for answers; P-Flag offered them, altho in my heart there was an unsettled stirring that kept me from having peace about their position.

P-Flag invited John & I to serve on a panel to share our story with a school district there were also young men and women on the panel who had same sex attraction and were telling their own stories. My heart broke as I heard them speak of their pain, of being rejected, not only by peers but often by parents, and I determined I wanted to do something to help. I began reading everything I could find, mostly provided by the P-Flag people, and talking to others about this concern. I gave P-Flag books to our pastor and pastoral associate, who put them on their bookshelves, but offered no explanation of Church teaching, or questioning of my story.

The panel discussion had strengthened my compassion for those with this struggle, and my heart broke as Patti's did, when she attended the marriage of the young man she had felt a deep kinship with, and who John & I had agreed would be her perfect match. She had broken their relationship because she believed her identity was as a lesbian, and would never allow marriage to a man.

One of my friends, a good Catholic, knew what the Church taught, and she challenged my acceptance of the gay lifestyle. She encouraged me to pray that the Lord would lead me to the Truth. I desperately wanted to help, but didn't want to lead anyone astray - Matthew 18:6 haunted me: "whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung

around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." I didn't want to lead others into sin.

At a charismatic Day Of Reflection, I asked for prayer to know the Truth in how to best help Patti, and was given Proverbs 3:5 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding... "I had tried so hard to figure this out in my head, and it had only left me confused. With that prayer, it was as if a shade were lifted, and I received Light - I knew in my heart that what the Catholic Church taught was Truth. With this new recognition of Truth, I received a peace in my heart that I hadn't known for a very long time.

A series of God's providential circumstances led me to the Courage Ministry, where I began to learn clearly what the Catholic Church teaches about same sex attraction, interior chastity and holiness. Our first Courage Conference was in 1995, and it was filled with blessings and affirmation. My relationship with the Lord deepened, and my love for the Church and her teaching grew. I began to understand what it means to love the sinner, but hate the sin, and to experience with others the pain of discipleship that calls us to stand firm in the faith. I had to tell Patti about my change of thought - she was deeply disappointed, and our relationship became strained and distant. Courage was helping me to understand her identity as a child of God, not defined by her same sex attraction. Courage was also teaching me how to love her, without accepting her choices, and in time our relationship was restored, altho some tension still remains.

During one of the Encourage workshops at a Courage Conference, we were asked to share something positive we had experienced, to encourage each other. My heart started pounding in my chest as I felt compelled to relate God's Goodness in a challenging time. I recalled a time during Advent when I was wondering what gift I could offer the Lord that season - our family was all healthy, our finances looked good, John and I were doing better - life seemed perfect. And then I received an email from Patti, expressing her joy that she had exchanged engagement rings with her partner at the time. It was like a knife in my heart, and I cried - and then recognized that here was the gift I could offer to Jesus - the pain in my heart united with the pain He suffered as He hung on the cross, gazing at all those who would reject Him. I blurted this story out amid a few choked-back tears, and was met with silence. This was a positive experience? For me it was, as I felt so close to Jesus in this time of pain and suffering, and recognized how it was drawing me more deeply into His Sacred Heart.

Patti was in her second same sex relationship at that time, and she and her partner wanted to get married. Because our relationship had been restored and we were trying to show our love for her, she interpreted this as acceptance of their marriage. I had to tell her we could not attend a ceremony that we felt was deeply harmful for her spiritual well-being; she felt rejected, and could not separate our rejection of her choice from the idea that we rejected her as a person. This was about 10 years ago, and remains a stumbling block for us. However, our continued efforts to keep communications open and to show our love for her have allowed a restoration in our relationship again. We talk frequently on the phone, and Patti and her current partner have been joining us for

holiday celebrations and family connections. We don't talk about sexual orientation - we focus on our lives and adventures, and keeping up with the family.

We had two more children, and all three of her siblings accept Patti's same sex attraction as normal, rejecting the teachings of the Church. I'm sure my early ignorance, confusion and misguided compassion, as well as the culture that surrounds us, have had a role to play in their attitudes. John and I are divorced after 38 years of marriage; despite our fractures, our family is committed to keeping in touch and supporting one another.

Patti is currently in her fourth same-sex relationship, and was "married" a year ago. John and Patti's siblings attended the ceremony; Patti and I had a good conversation recognizing that it would be too uncomfortable for both of us for me to attend, and I stayed home. The whole family knows of our different views on same sex relationships, and respects that difference.

I've met so many talented and caring people through Patti, and have tried to listen and be present with them. Our Diocese has an Encourage chapter, and I hope to devote my energy to helping get the word out and educate others about the beauty and Truth of the Church's teachings. I'm so aware of how many detours I've taken, and hope to help others find a straighter road to Truth and Peace than the one I took.

In conclusion I can echo a testimony given by Dan at the 2010 conference - I thank God for the pain and challenge of dealing with same sex attraction, within myself and in our daughter, for it's brought me to a level of faith and love of God for which I am profoundly grateful. Dan also quoted Romans 2:4 in his testimony - "the kindness of God would lead you to repentance." God is faithful, and I trust Him to continue to call and draw our loved ones to Himself, even as He in His kindness and mercy has done for me.