



Courage & EnCourage
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ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

When: Sunday February 16, 2014 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.

Winter continues to be an influence on our meetings. We were forced to cancel December's meeting due to snow, but in January we had light snow, and as a result, a full house. We hope that "Winter" will cooperate in February and we shall again see so many of you. Should you have doubts regarding weather or our need to cancel please email us or phone us at 1-517-339-7509. It takes us an hour to travel to the meeting site so contact us before that. At our last meeting we did ask for email addresses, and will send a cancellation notice should the need arise. An early spring would be nice.

We have enclosed with our letter two articles that we think will be helpful to you. The first "*A Father's Gift to a Gay Prodigal Son*" speaks to the hearts of parents of loved ones. Our prayers will, indeed, be answered, but in God's time not ours. Our job is to remain faithful to prayer, to never give in to discouragement and to remain trusting in God's love.

The second article "*True Love*" helps us to remain focused on the truth as revealed in scripture and in the teachings of the church regarding the challenge to love in and through the truth. The author, Peter Herbeck, reminds us that to love without the truth is deceitful, and misleading, and the expression of love must always be grounded in truth—God's truth.

Please note the prayer offered by an EnCourage member below our signature.

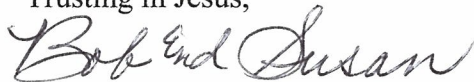
Remember please that we unite to pray each Thursday to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in reparation for our sins and the sins against human sexuality such as same-sex behavior and abortion. Reparation is making amends for the wrongs committed through our sinful condition. Additionally, we pray as intercessors 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 available upon request. "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 February 16th meeting, our next regular meeting is March 16, 2014.

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,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob and Susan".

Bob and Susan Cavera

"Lord I know you have heard my prayer.
I know you love me.
I know you love the person I am praying for.
Now I am leaving it in your hands.
I trust that you will do what you know to be the best for all of us."

A Father's Gift to a Gay Prodigal Son

In remembrance of my father, who would have turned 90 earlier this year, I am reposting (with slight alterations) this reflection I wrote in 2011 for a now-inactive blog. It was originally entitled, "A Prodigal Son Reflects on Father's Day."

My father first realized something was amiss when he perceived an odd smell that no one else noticed and that didn't correspond to anything around him. This turned out to be the first of several olfactory hallucinations caused by a malignant brain tumour. Over time, he had seizures, started substituting words, and almost completely lost his ability to speak.

I found my father's interpretation of his illness almost more painful than the illness itself and the possibility he might soon die. You see, he explained that he was prepared to suffer and even die for the sake of my brothers and me. (Being a minister of the United Church of Canada, he didn't ever use the term "offering it up," so far as I can recall, but he'd done his Bachelor of Divinity thesis on the theology of suffering, and we now figure he probably was influenced by a Catholic approach to redemptive suffering.) He had always been rather stoic with regard to illness, not wanting anyone to make a fuss over him, and in this he stayed true to form.

So, okay, I didn't want my dad to die on me, and he was resigned to whatever happened to him, even to the point of sometimes declining to take what we thought were reasonable steps to improve his circumstances. Passivity's not that unusual, I suppose, when one has been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Still, you'd think I'd be grateful for his generous offering of his suffering for my sake.

I was not grateful.

My father, I found out, my beloved father was offering his illness and possible death for the sake of my deliverance from homosexuality. Which he and my mother even said was demonically inspired.

How dare he. How dare he!

Twenty years after the event, I recounted my initial fury and bewilderment upon discovering this news.

Being gay wasn't just something I did, it was who I was. It was at the centre of my identity. And he was trying to take that away from me.

I might as well not exist. If somehow their prayers actually succeeded--I couldn't imagine how--it wouldn't be me anymore.

This was spiritual rape. Their prayers were an attack on my essence.

I've changed my mind, of course. Oh, how I've changed my mind! But it took many years.

About two years after my father's first symptoms appeared, the cancer took his life. By then I'd more or less made my peace with him, though the slipping away of his ability to speak meant we never did have the conversation I'd been longing for to clear the air about the big fight. I still wasn't happy about what he'd intended, but in the grand scheme of things, I would tell myself, it mattered more that I loved him and he loved me and I would miss him terribly.

I believed in heaven and, not knowing about purgatory, believed heaven was where he'd gone for sure. I don't remember fearing for my own eternal destiny. At the time I attended Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto, which used to bill itself as "a Christian church with a special ministry to the gay and lesbian community." There I'd gotten the impression pretty much everyone except possibly a few right-wing hypocrites would go to heaven. So some day I would see my dad again. I was comforted to believe he'd be able to walk as he used to, and talk, and he wouldn't be in pain any more.

At this point I have to pay tribute to the man who was then my lover. He was living in the States and took several days off work, maybe as much as a week, to visit me and comfort me, at considerable personal cost. To say this isn't at all to condone the sexual component of our relationship, which was gravely wrong; it's just to acknowledge that elements of genuine love and generosity on his part were present in spite of our highly irregular situation. Upholding the true nature of marriage and the proper ends of sexuality doesn't require dismissing everything that goes on within a gay relationship. I'll give my ex credit too for breaking up with me later, but that's another story.

My parents' prayers had little noticeable effect on me in the years that followed my father's death. After I broke with MCCT over a governance issue I stopped going to church, except occasionally at the invitation of a close friend who was and remains a liberal Anglican. Though traditional Christian music and architecture still stirred me, I stopped believing in the God who had inspired their creation. As my sex life spiralled out of control, I struggled to hold myself together emotionally, even with the help of a sympathetic therapist.

In the ninth year after my father died, I had a spiritual crisis, from which I emerged with an overwhelming sense of God's love and grace. I found myself able to face the reality of my shortcomings with much less squirming than I'd exhibited for a long time, because I was sure God would continue to love me even if I was truly responsible for doing something bad. (If you, dear reader, happen to worry that I was getting hung up on sexual matters that you don't believe are actually sinful, well, no: actually I'd been scrupulously guilt-ridden over virtually everything *except* my sex life.) The doctrine of Original Sin suddenly felt like *good* news, in that it meant we were all in the same boat.

And during a period of some six weeks of feeling positively bathed in a sense of harmony with the Creator of the universe, I found continually bubbling up in my mind the question of whether gay sex might be objectively bad.

I tried for a while to have my cake and eat it too, but that didn't work. And so, a little more than ten years after my father's offering of his suffering reached its natural conclusion, I resolved never again to have sex with a man. This resolution I have, by the grace of God, kept.

Now "deliverance from homosexuality" means different things to different people. Back in the 1980s and early '90s I thought of it as elimination of my homosexual desires, and this was hugely threatening to imagine. What on earth would be left of me! I would become some sort of sexless cipher, a shadow of my former self. Thanks but no thanks!

In fact, my homosexual desires haven't been eliminated altogether. They're a whole lot less intrusive than they used to be when I indulged them, but I'm still tempted from time to time, particularly when I'm under a lot of stress. C'est la vie: welcome to the world of concupiscence.

The point remains, though, I've come to affirm the truth that there's far more to my identity than my sexual desires, important as they are and whatever the direction they happen to point me in.

Even if I were still far more troubled by homosexual temptations--and do recall that Padre Pio and St Teresa of Avila, among other saints, were terribly plagued by unwanted thoughts of sexual impurity, albeit in a different direction--even so I would be everlastingly grateful for having been led out of a gay lifestyle. If that had been the limit of my once-feared "deliverance from homosexuality," I would still be thankful.

In fact, my sexual inclinations have changed very substantially, thanks to psychotherapy and the Rosary and Eucharistic Adoration. You can read about that transformation in a three-part blog post beginning here. My wife and I are quite happily married (now going on four years).

We take pains, though, to clarify that not everyone can expect such an outcome. The purpose of Courage isn't marriage, it's surrendering to God, who will tell each one of us what form our chastity should take. As a member of Courage I honour my fellow group members who don't have the consolations of marriage and yet still strive to follow Church teaching on sexuality. Same-sex-attracted people are included with everyone else in the universal call to holiness, and our celibate Courage friends have taught us much about the path to sanctity. One of the messages we most want to share with adolescents is that nothing is impossible with God, including chastity; in whatever state of life we best serve him, God will provide the necessary graces.

Wearing my EnCourage hat I'll especially address parents who are troubled that a son or daughter is living a gay or lesbian lifestyle. It's possible that same-sex temptations will keep coming up for the rest of his or her life. We don't know. And even if a change comes, you yourself may not live to see it. What is important is to surrender the outcome to God. Pray without ceasing, as St Paul says. I particularly recommend the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary. Offer some form of fasting in reparation.

And make sure your child knows you love him or her no matter what. My parents kept communication open as well as they could, even when I was at my prickliest, and they continued to tell me they loved me. Eventually their prayers showed visible results, but it's important that my mother didn't give up even after many years of seeing no improvement. In that, she was rather like St Monica, the mother of St Augustine.

On Father's Day, I honour my father for one of the hardest and most thankless tasks a parent can carry out, namely, saying no. Fathers generally try to provide for what their children need, as

Jesus remarks by way of illustration of the even greater love shown by our heavenly Father: "What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?" (Luke 11:11-12). But when the son is confused enough to ask for a scorpion, as I did in seeking my father's blessing upon the way I was misusing my body, who will be man enough to say, "No, son, out of love I cannot give you that"?

I honour too my father's willingness to accept uncomplainingly the cross that was set before him. I cannot repay his gift, which helped set me free. Eventually, though my mother herself remains Protestant, my parents' prayers led me into the Catholic Church.

Dear readers, please say a prayer today for the repose of my father's soul. And pray also for fathers everywhere, especially those faced with new challenges, to show kindness, perseverance, and strength in living out their vocations.

The Sheepcat on 16 June 2013 in [Conversion](#), [Courage](#), [EnCourage](#), [Prayer Requests](#), [Same-Sex Issues](#), [Suffering](#) | [Permalink](#)

True Love

"We press play, don't press pause, Progress, march on! With a veil over our eyes, we turn our back on the cause. 'Till the day that my uncles can be united by law... a certificate on paper isn't going to solve it all, but it's a damn good place to start... whatever God you believe in we come from the same one, strip away the fear, underneath, it's all the same love. About time that we raised up! Love is patient, love is kind. Love is patient, love is kind..."

These are some of the lyrics of an enormously popular song by hip-hop artist Macklemore called Same Love. The song, which has gone viral with nearly fifty million views of the music video version, is about homosexuality and same-sex marriage. Over the past few weeks a number of young people have brought up the song in conversation. Just yesterday my twenty-two year old nephew, asked me if I had ever heard the song. He raised the question in the context of a discussion we were having about same-sex marriage. He pointed out that it is not only a very catchy song and fun to listen to, but that it is confusing because the story it tells is that true love, God's love, embraces same-sex marriage.

In fact, Macklemore ends the song by repeating words from 1 Corinthians 13, "Love is patient, love is kind," which is arguably the most famous passage on love in the entire Bible. In essence, what he is saying is, to love like Jesus loves, the love that is patient and kind, the love that is the opposite of "hate," is a love that celebrates homosexual acts and fights for the legalization of same-sex marriage. That's the argument.

It's essentially the same argument, without explicit appeal to the New Testament, that Justice Anthony Kennedy presented in the decision of the majority of justices on the Supreme Court who struck down DOMA, the Defense of Marriage Act, which recognized marriage as being defined by one man and one woman. Justice Anton Scalia summarized the majority opinion this way: "In the majority's telling, this story is black-and-white: Hate your neighbor or come along with us. The truth is more complicated."

Indeed, the truth about love is more complicated. From a Catholic point of view, there is no love without the truth. Love and truth always go together. In his homily during the canonization of Edith Stein, Pope John Paul II said that St. Teresa Benedicta, the "martyr of love," taught us all that "love and truth have an intrinsic relationship," and that "love and truth need each other."

The truth love seeks is the good of the other. That is, to love someone means that I will their good. I want what is best for them. What is best for every person is what will lead to genuine human flourishing and this only happens when we "live the truth." That is, when we live the way we were made to live, when we recognize how God made us, and live in accord with his plan for our lives.

Pope John Paul continued: "St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross says to us all: Do not accept anything as the truth if it lacks love. And do not accept anything as love which lacks truth! One without the other becomes a destructive lie."

This is why St. Paul, in the very passage Macklemore quotes, says that love "does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right" (1 Corinthians 13:6). What Macklemore and so many others are demanding is that in the case of active homosexuality and same-sex marriage, in order to love, we must "rejoice in what is wrong."

What the Church Teaches

The teaching of the Catholic Church is presented clearly and with genuine compassion in the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2357-2359):

"Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that 'homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.' They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved."

Here the Church is teaching the truth in love. She is fulfilling the command of the Lord to "love your neighbor as yourself." She knows that she must communicate the objective truth about human sexuality and marriage as an expression of her love for persons with homosexual attractions. Homosexual acts are described as "intrinsically disordered." Note, it does not say persons with homosexual attractions are in themselves intrinsically disordered. They are, in the eyes of the Church, children of God, who bear the image of God, persons with inherent dignity who are called and destined to live with God forever.

It is the homosexual act that is intrinsically disordered because it violates the objective goods or the essential truth of the sexual act. The sexual act is, by nature, in its essence, the one flesh union of two persons, which is open to life. As Dr. Janet Smith puts it, "sex is for babies and bonding." It is ordered to reproduction and union which are both made possible by "sexual complementarity." Homosexual acts fail to recognize the essential, objective, unchanging truth about the purpose of the sexual act.

The Church recognizes that marriage is an institution that the Church did not create. Every society known to man has recognized marriage as an institution that unites children with their parents. It is the fundamental building block of human civilization. The Church has no power to change its teaching on homosexual activity or marriage. She didn't create or design the fundamental purpose for either one; she simply recognizes the intrinsic meaning of both.

What motivates the Church's teaching is love. There is no hate, bigotry or animus toward homosexual persons. Certainly, there are some in the Church who are bigots, but that isn't the source of the Church's teaching. It's the same love the Church expresses when she speaks against premarital sex, masturbation, prostitution, adultery, fornication, and pornography. Each one of these acts, in some way, suppresses the truth about the meaning, purpose and design of human sexuality.

So it is with tough love that the Church passes on to us the teaching of the Scriptures, as well as the truth revealed in the natural law. To fail to teach it, or to promote what is contrary to it, is to "rejoice in what is wrong," and to promote a "destructive lie."

My Truth

Finally, what makes the Church's teaching such a challenge in these days is the cultural dominance of what Pope Benedict XVI described as the "dictatorship of relativism." It is essentially the rejection of any standard of truth outside my own personal experience or subjective understanding. The only truth that is decisive, especially in the sexual realm, is "my truth." The ultimate standard or measure of truth is my own personal choice, what I determine to be true for myself.

This is a game the Church cannot play. It's a lie. It's not only the suppression of the truth about the meaning of human sexuality; it is a form of idolatry. To live in the truth is to be rightly related to reality. It means to live in the real world, not the world I create for myself. The reason we have become so confused about things that are so obvious is that we have decided to shape reality according to our own design. We don't want God's design for reality; we want reality on our terms. We want to be gods.

This is the root of our confusion and current struggle. The only way out is repentance. We must turn again, wholeheartedly toward God. We must welcome reality on his terms, to humbly and gratefully receive his design for human life, and to live in his truth with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. It's the only way to love. It is true love.

By Peter Herbeck
from Renewal Ministries, September 2013