



Courage & EnCourage
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ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

When: Sunday March 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 Musch Rd. Turn left and quickly left again at the entrance to the parking area. Proceed to the church. We meet in the "Shroud Room" adjacent to the sanctuary. Look for Encourage Meeting signs.

Please note that we are meeting in a different room this month and probably, if the space works out, will continue to meet there. Fr. John wants us to continue to meet at his Parish but in a different specific location. Lately, the attendance at our monthly meetings has increased; consequently, we are moving to a room that will accommodate our larger size. We are re-locating from a portable classroom to what is called the "Shroud Room", where a beautiful display of the Shroud of Turin is housed, near the sanctuary in the main church building.

We have enclosed with this letter two brief articles that we felt would help in understanding issues threatening the Church's ability to minister to its flock. The first, *The Blessings of Chastity*, is a testimony on the importance of chastity in the lives of Courage members, and the solid commitment from a Diocese in Arizona. The second article by Fr. Robert Barron addresses the issue of secularism and its aggressive attempts to suppress the ministry of the church. As Fr. Barron says, "The secularist state recognizes that its principle enemy is the Catholic Church."

Two of our members who frequently travel from Sault Ste Marie sent us the following prayer that we thought particularly relevant.

*"If suffering did not occur, how would endurance be achieved?
Suffering plants the vine of endurance, endurance brings forth
the grape of proof that we have stood the test, and this proof
produces the wine of hope, and hope makes the heart rejoice because
it beholds the happiness that is to come as if it were at hand."*

St. Theoleptos of Philadelphia

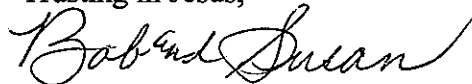
Remember please that we unite to pray each Thursday to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in reparation for our sins and the sins against human sexuality such as same-sex behavior and abortion. Reparation is making amends for the wrongs committed through our sinful condition. Additionally, we pray as intercessors 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 was enclosed in a previous letter. We would be happy to provide you with a copy. "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*)

If you cannot attend the March 18th meeting, our next regular meeting is April 15, 2012. We would love to see you.

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 Your donation to help defray the cost of sending this letter and enclosure is always welcome and can be sent to the Diocese of Lansing.

The 2012 National Annual Courage/Encourage Conference is July 19-22 at Mount St. Mary's College and Seminary, Emmitsburg, Maryland. Make plans now to attend.

Trusting in Jesus,



Bob and Susan Cavera

"May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (cf. Rom 15:13)

The Blessings of Chastity

Courage's outreach to men and women with same-sex attraction continues to grow, as bishops like Thomas Olmsted of Phoenix promote its vital work.

By Chuck Weber

The 30-minute talk from the middle-aged man describing his journey from confused boyhood to sexually abusive adolescence, and ultimately into what is referred to as an active "gay lifestyle" left the packed room of priests and parish ministers in a state of awkward, stunned silence.

The man's deepest secrets included countless sexual liaisons, indulged in while under emotional, psychological, and even workplace pressures. Much like an alcoholic who hits rock bottom, he also spoke about his moment of conversion, the breakthrough toward a path of normalcy, and the rediscovery of the sacraments and the practice of his Catholic faith.

Standing self-consciously before his audience, he sipped a glass of water and awaited their reaction, the distant groan of an air conditioner the only perceptible sound in the room. Finally, a priest from a major metropolitan diocese broke the awkward pause, rose slowly, and spoke softly.

"Thank you for what you just shared," he said, his voice barely above a whisper. "I cannot imagine what it was like for you to stand in front of strangers and share the deepest pains and the darkest hours you have ever experienced. My heart goes out to you and I am filled with gratitude for your willingness to reveal what you've been through."

"One of the great tragedies of the Church," he continued, his voice rising and trembling as he turned to his

brother priests, "is that we all hear stories like this repeated in the confessional more often than we care to admit. These penitents tell us that they are being told by *other priests* that the lifestyle they live isn't really sinful, isn't really wrong. And so they leave more confused and in more pain than before they came in."

The issue of such "misplaced compassion" among clergy and psychiatric professionals—as well as a range of other challenges confronting men and women with same-sex attraction (SSA)—took center stage in Chicago last August during the 23rd annual conference of Courage, a Roman Catholic apostolate for those living with SSA.

Courage and EnCourage (the companion support group for parents and loved ones) offers members an opportunity to express themselves in a distinctive atmosphere of peace and mutual spiritual support. When deeply personal, emotion-filled testimonials like the one described above are offered, this is done with the explicit understanding of confidentiality. Executive Director Father Paul Check says that understanding is crucial in making Courage a "place where men and women of like mind and heart can meet under the care of a priest and strive to live a life of fidelity to Christ and his Church."

Courage is widely considered to be the Church's most ambitious spiritual and pastoral effort on behalf of men and women with SSA, many of whom have been drawn into homosexual lifestyles that are increasingly celebrated and promoted by the entertainment

industry, news media, and modern culture. The mission of the apostolate and its emphasis on fostering personal purity, prayer, and chaste friendships is distinctly different from the tactics of those involved in political issues like the redefinition of marriage to include same-sex unions and other so-called "gay rights."

"We recognize and understand that homosexuality poses very real cultural problems," acknowledges Father Check, "but we go to great lengths in approaching the question of homosexuality not as a cultural problem or debate. Courage approaches the question of homosexuality as a lived reality in the daily life of individual people. Our purpose is help men and women who have a same-sex attraction discover and know they are not defined by these inclinations, that far more importantly they are children of God, redeemed in Christ and invited to grace in this life and glory in the life to come."

The roots of Courage can be traced back to the 1970s and late Cardinal Terence Cooke of New York, who became aware of and deeply concerned about the Church's lack of formal outreach to Catholics with SSA. This pastoral vacuum, he observed, imposed an unwelcome moment of decision for men and women: forge one's own path—which often led to a sense of exclusion and isolation—or accept the secular standard of homosexuality, which typically led to the acting out of same-sex desires.

Knowing of Father John Harvey's extensive on-the-streets ministry experience and background in moral theol-

ogy, Cardinal Cooke invited the Oblate of St. Francis de Sales to visit New York and explore pastoral ministry possibilities. Enlisting the help of others, including Father Benedict Groeschel, CFR, Father Harvey formed Courage International in 1980, gaining the endorsement of the Holy See not long thereafter.

Vatican approval and a relentless negative campaign from liberal theologians and laypeople have earned Courage much abuse from countless critics who view its mission and direction as repressive, "homophobic"—or worse. Ironically, says Father Groeschel, the initial pushback from within the Church against Courage was due to the misunderstanding that the group promoted tolerance or even acceptance of homosexual relations.

With this notion quickly dispelled, Father Harvey embarked upon a three-decade long career as leader of Courage, writing two compelling books during his tenure: *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care* (1987) and *The Truth About Homosexuality: The Cry of the Faithful* (1996).

Today, Courage maintains more than 100 local chapters in the United States and nearly a dozen more internationally, each under the care of a Catholic priest. The annual conference is a central event for Courage and EnCourage members who come to hear presentations from fellow members, Church leaders, and professionals from the psychological and medical communities on the personal, spiritual, and psychological dimensions of life with SSA. Mass is celebrated daily, the sacrament of reconciliation is available, and the Eucharistic Adoration chapel draws large numbers of members throughout the conference.

One day is typically dedicated to a special pastoral seminar that includes personal testimony from a Courage member and insights from psychological professionals and clergymen.

The 2011 Courage conference was a bittersweet gathering, as it was the first gathering without the organization's beloved founder, Father Harvey, who died on December 27, 2010. His life's work and dedication to the Courage mission were recalled in numerous tributes and reflections offered by Father Check, Courage and EnCourage members, and several Church leaders including Cardinal Raymond Burke, prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura at the Vatican, as well as Father Groeschel.

Among the other Church leaders presenting at the conference this year was Bishop Thomas Olmsted of Phoenix, a man Father Check describes as a model for pastoral compassion for those with SSA on the diocesan and parish level. Like other bishops who have waded into the controversy surrounding "gay rights," Bishop Olmsted has endured harsh, sometimes personal attacks from within the Church and outside of it for his support of Courage and his pastoral concern for people with SSA.

Shortly after his arrival in Phoenix 2003, Bishop Olmsted became aware that as many as nine of his priests had signed a statement drafted by area clergy (primarily from mainline Protestant congregations) known as the "No Longer Silent Phoenix Declaration," described in media accounts as "pro-gay rights." In response, Bishop Olmsted privately contacted the priests, requesting that they withdraw their support from the statement.

The confidential letter was promptly leaked to the press. Some of the priests publicly defied Bishop Olmsted's request to withdraw their support for the declaration, accusing him of "turning his back" on "LGBT brothers and sisters."

Undaunted, Bishop Olmsted wrote and published in the diocesan newspaper a three-part series of articles titled, "The Blessing of the Chaste Life." The sub-titles for each segment were "The Call to Holiness of Homosexual Persons," "The Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons," and "Difficulties Faced by Homosexual Persons."

Drawing upon Scripture and the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Bishop Olmsted laid out a theological, spiritual, and practical framework for understanding and ministering to those with SSA that Father Check hopes other dioceses will consider adopting. This pastoral approach begins, as the series' title notes, with embracing the chaste life as a blessing.

The challenge to the Church as a whole is putting this philosophy into practice on the parish level, in confidential settings like the confessional or through spiritual direction. In these settings, drawing a distinction between the homosexual inclination and the action is crucial.

"The person is always good—an authentic child of God," says Father Check. "But if a person acts upon the homosexual inclination, when he

makes a deliberate choice to engage in homosexual activity, that action is gravely immoral, and it is a responsibility of Mother Church to protect her children from harm."

Of the nine priests who signed the "No Longer Silent Phoenix Declaration," two are still serving in the Diocese of Phoenix. Some former priests of the diocese claim in the secular press to have been "forced out" because of their views on homosexuality. During his presentation at the 2011 Courage conference, Bishop Olmsted reflected upon the clerical reaction to *Humanae Vitae*, drawing the comparison to contemporary attitudes toward homosexuality. Citing one of the encyclical's great defenders, Bishop Austin Vaughan, who served as president of the Catholic Theological Society when the encyclical was released, Bishop Olmsted explained, "Bishop Vaughan later said that most priests didn't preach against *Humanae Vitae*—they just lost confidence it was good news."

In Bishop Olmsted's diocese and in Courage chapters across the United States and internationally, the "good news" of chastity is alive and well. "I am deeply grateful for the positive way that our priests have responded to my initiatives," Bishop Olmsted said. "Four of our priests have been directly involved with support for Courage; and many others offer support to members of Courage in their individual parishes."

The men and women of Courage face a hostile world that tells them homosexuality is all they have. In Courage they find community, support, and grace many thought they would never know. Some share their stories reluctantly, fearful of summoning demons that await a chance to haunt them again.

"When I think back on the lifestyle, it was a way of life that ate you up and spit you out," shares one Courage member. "And one day I just stopped and asked myself, 'How did I get here?' And that is why Courage is so vital. It is a community of people where there is one grace-filled moment after another, especially after a fall. It's not easy, but Courage has given me back my life, a life rooted in chastity and reality. And there's nothing like it." ■

CHUCK WEBER is a freelance writer and film producer based in Wichita, Kansas.

DAILY NEWS

Secularism's Toll on Catholic Americans

Father Robert Barron on HHS mandate: 'I would hope that American Catholics would argue against the Obama administration move, not only because they are Catholics, but also because they are Americans.'

BY FATHER ROBERT BARRON

| Posted 2/10/12 at 5:06 PM

Some years ago, Holy Cross Father James Burtchaell published a seminal book entitled *The Dying of the Light*. The central thesis of this study was that hundreds of universities that began under religious auspices and for religious purposes — the University of Chicago, Princeton, Harvard, Yale, to name just some of the most prominent — have undergone so thorough an erosion of their original identities that now they are utterly secular in orientation.

A particularly interesting feature of Burtchaell's book was his analysis of the slow, subtle process by which the change from fervently religious to blandly secular took place: slight changes, little adjustments, tiny concessions barely noticed at the time, but all of them conducting finally toward the inevitable secularization. *The Dying of the Light* was meant to be a sobering lesson and a wake-up call to many Catholic universities today, which find themselves on a similar path to compromise.

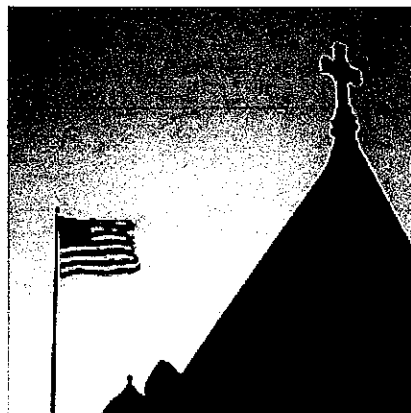
I won't follow that part of Burtchaell's argument now (perhaps another time), but I bring up his book because it sheds a good deal of light on an analogous situation today. Decades ago, priests, religious brothers and religious sisters were colorfully visible features of Catholic hospitals, serving as nurses, chaplains, business officers and chief administrators. With the decline in vocations, this obviously religious leadership largely disappeared, but Catholic values, for the most part, still animated these institutions.

What has begun to concern a number of observers is that, as today's medical personnel, staffers and administrators at Catholic hospitals have accommodated themselves more and more to secularist assumptions, even those values are in danger of disappearing. And what exacerbates the situation is that the leaders of many Catholic health-care facilities feel obligated not to overstress their religious distinctiveness, precisely because they are so reliant upon government funding.

In short, the slow but steady creep toward secularization of Catholic health-care has already been, for some time, a reality. But now the process has been given a massive push by the Obama administration's recent mandate that all health-care agencies and institutions must pay for insurance that covers contraception, sterilization and certain kinds of abortifacient drugs — all of which are repugnant to Catholic teaching.

Here is what is particularly worrisome: The state seems no longer satisfied with a slow but steady evolution toward secularity; it is aggressively forcing Catholic hospitals off the stage, for it is creating for them an impossible situation. If they cave in and provide insurance for these verboten procedures, they have effectively de-Catholicized themselves; and if they refuse to provide such insurance, they will be met with fines of millions of dollars, which they cannot possibly pay. In either case, they are forced out of business as Catholic.

And this seems, sadly, to be precisely what the Obama administration wants. At the University of Notre Dame, on the occasion of his receiving (controversially enough) an honorary degree of laws, President Obama publicly and vociferously pledged that he would provide for a "conscience clause" for those who wanted, for religious reasons, to opt out of a policy they find objectionable. But with this recent mandate, he has utterly gone back on his word.



The secularist state recognizes that its principle enemy is the Church Catholic. Accordingly, it wants Catholicism off the public stage and relegated to a private realm where it cannot interfere with secularism's totalitarian agenda. I realize that in using that particular term, I'm dropping a rhetorical bomb, but I am not doing so casually.

There is a modality of secular liberalism that is not aggressive toward religion, but rather recognizes that religion makes an indispensable contribution to civil society. This more tolerant liberalism allows, not only for freedom of worship, but also for real freedom of religion, which is to say, the expression of religious values in the public square and the free play of religious ideas in the public conversation.

Most of our Founding Fathers advocated just this type of liberalism. But there is another modality of secularism — sadly on display in the current administration — that is actively aggressive toward religion, precisely because it sees religion as its primary rival in the public arena. Appreciating certain moral convictions as disvalues — think here especially of Catholic teachings concerning sexuality — it seeks to eliminate religion or at the very least to privatize and hence marginalize it. In doing so, it indeed reveals itself as totalitarian, for it allows no room in the public space for anything but itself.

The reason that the Bill of Rights — the first 10 amendments to the Constitution — is so important is that it holds off the tendency, inherent in any government, toward totalitarianism, even if that means the totalitarianism of the majority.

The very first amendment, of course, guarantees the free exercise of religion in our country. Our founders obviously feared that even a democratic system, predicated upon a repudiation of tyranny, could become so tyrannical itself that it would seek to intrude upon the sacred realm of the religious conscience. As Jefferson, Toqueville, Lincoln and many others have seen, our democracy is especially healthy when it disallows a concentration of power — political, economic or cultural — in any one place.

I would hope that American Catholics would argue against the Obama administration move, not only because they are Catholics, but also because they are Americans.

This is a Catholic News Agency column.

Father Robert Barron is the founder of the global ministry Word on Fire, and the Francis Cardinal George Professor of Faith and Culture at University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein.

He is the creator and host of a new 10-episode documentary series called Catholicism and also hosts programs on Relevant Radio, EWTN and at WordOnFire.org.