



Courage & EnCourage  
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## ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

**When: Sunday June 23, 2013 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.

If you are a little confused as to why this letter seems so late in coming, please don't be. In June we move the meeting to the fourth Sunday to accommodate Father's Day.

Now, at the risk of adding to the confusion, we do not meet in the month of July. The Courage Annual Conference is July 25<sup>th</sup> through the 28<sup>th</sup> and this consumes our time and attention. We would encourage you, if you have not as yet made plans to attend, that you do so now. This year's conference is in Mundelein, IL at the University of St. Mary of the Lake. It is easy to get to from Chicago O'Hare or anywhere in the Midwest. This year's conference is loaded with imminent speakers, practical workshops, and holy fellowship. You will have the opportunity to pray with and meet Courage men and women, EnCourage members, and a plethora of clergy all dedicated to the church's teaching on same-sex attraction and chastity. This experience will change your life. Register through the Courage website or office or phone the University.

We have enclosed with this letter an article by Dan Mattson, a Courage member, offering advice to parents. Dan returned to the church at a Courage conference several years ago and has begun to minister to many with SSA and to their loved ones. You can meet Dan and many like him at the conference.

We also enclosed "Advice from Fr. Benedict Groschel on the Mystery of Suffering". It is often said the challenge of EnCourage members is to give meaning and purpose to suffering.

Additionally, we included "Words of Encouragement" by Barbara Johnson. For many years Barbara directed a ministry to parents and loved ones called Spatula Ministries, and she wrote several books, the first two entitled Stick A Geranium in Your Hat and Be Happy and Where Does A Mother Go to Resign.

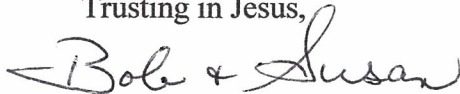
**Remember please** that we unite to pray each Thursday to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in reparation for our sins and the sins against human sexuality such as same-sex behavior and abortion. Reparation is making amends for the wrongs committed through our sinful condition. Additionally, we pray as intercessors 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 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 June 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting or next regular Diocesan meeting is Sunday, August 18, 2013. As we previously mentioned, we do not meet in July because of our preparation and attendance at the annual conference,

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](mailto: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 & Susan".

Bob and Susan Cavera

"The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer; my God is my saving strength."

Ps.18:3

# Dealing with same-sex attraction

June 1, 2013

Filed under [Columns](#), [Guest Editorial](#)

*Daniel Mattson writes to those who have children struggling with same-sex attraction . . .*



*by Daniel Mattson*

The most challenging questions I'm asked when speaking about the Church's teaching on homosexuality come from parents who desire to remain committed to the teachings of the Church, and yet have a child who has "come out" and identified as gay or lesbian. This is what I tell them.

**Express unconditional love.** When a child comes out, he needs to know that you won't reject him, and that your love for him will never change, regardless of his choices. Love can't be blind to the truth of the Church, naturally, but before you speak of the truth, a child needs to hear and feel unconditional love.

**Listen. Then listen some more.** Then be silent. Then listen some more. Unless a parent has lived with same-sex attraction (SSA), it's not possible to fully understand how much inner turmoil, isolation, fear of loneliness and rejection their child has painfully borne. He will know your love is genuine by your attempt to understand what his experience has been — without dialog, interruption, or condemnation.

**Preaching about the immorality of homosexual acts** has rarely, if ever, changed a person's mind. If you are a devout Catholic, he may fear that your first response will be to tell him that this will lead him to hell. Hearing such language will usually lead him away from you and the Church. It will lead him to embrace a community that will affirm him in his newly claimed identity and confirm in his mind what others say: that you and the Church are bigots to be ignored.

**Before urging a son or daughter to seek the path of truth,** educate yourself, listen to others who've trod this path before, and seek support. EnCourage, the family support arm of the Courage apostolate, is the best place to find help. Support is vital!

**Realize that God has allowed this in your life** and your child's life for your collective sanctification. Complete trust in God's Providence can often become difficult when a child comes out. Father John Harvey, founder of the Courage apostolate, stressed that the most difficult virtue to acquire is "willing acceptance of the permissive will of God." God allowed SSA in my life as the path that revealed my complete need for Him. So too, I am convinced, with anyone who lives with SSA. For parents, their child's SSA is a means by which God invites

them to total abandonment to Divine Providence. Remember that God works all things for good (Rom 8:28).

**God wants you to be more concerned with your growth in sanctity** than he wants you to be concerned with your child's growth in sanctity. The more we are faithful to Christ and the teachings of his Church, the more effective instruments we will be in his hands for the spiritual good of others. Ask the Holy Spirit for an increase in the gifts of wisdom, understanding and right judgment/good counsel. Offer the merits of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for your child's deliverance and well-being.

**The greatest means of bringing about your child's salvation** is through the gift of redemptive suffering. In the beautiful paradox that is always present in God's redemption, that which is the most painful in our lives becomes that which ultimately leads to the most joyous outcome. For example, through redemptive suffering, pain caused by a child's choices becomes the very means by which a parent can love him with a Christ-like love and ultimately help bring him back to his Father's house.

**"Do not despair, for we are an Easter people, and Hallelujah is our song."** Refuse to live in the twin regions of despair — the past and the future. Christ wisely tells us to live in the present, for today is the only place where peace is found and where grace is available to us. Take an honest inventory of your relationship with your child, and seek forgiveness for past shortcomings. But avoid regret or assuming blame for your child's SSA. Likewise, banish all imagined fears that reside in the unknown future.

**Always live with hope.** Saint Monica's answered prayers for St. Augustine should give parents hope. Oscar Wilde's deathbed conversion should inspire hope as well. I am certain that his salvation was brought about by his mother's insistence that he be baptized Catholic and by her continuous prayers for her son.

**Finally, and most importantly, wait on the Lord.** Allow God to act in his way and, in "the fullness of time," wait with "joyful hope" and excited anticipation for the moment when God reveals his salvific power in your child's life.

For further support, visit the Courage apostolate's website: [CourageRC.net](http://CourageRC.net)

**DANIEL MATTSO**N lives in the Midwest where he has a career in the arts. He has written for numerous publications, including *First Things*. He is occasionally invited to give his personal testimony to groups across the country.



## Words of Encouragement

Adapted from  
Barbara Johnson

At first, we will probably feel that we are a solitary case instead of one in a giant minority scattered everywhere in the world. If parents, spouses or family members could recall other cases when friends of theirs had heard similar disclosures made by children, spouses or friends, the jolt would be far less. Struggling with same sex attraction does not negate our love, any more than God negates His love for His children when they have fallen into sin. He still loves us! After our loved ones tell us of their same sex involvement, at least their own inner struggle has been externalized.

Our loved one is no tragedy. Knowing he is involved in same sex behavior does not erase all the joy and blessing he has been to us over the years. Just because we learn of the problem does not mean that we cannot be the same loving parent, friend or spouse that we were before we knew of his same sex attraction.

Has he (she) changed? Isn't this the same person for whom we would give anything even our lives? Where is the love and compassion that we once so easily displayed?

When a loved one reveals a piece of his (her) life, this is an expression of deep trust. Making this disclosure is probably one of the major decisions of his life. What was our reaction? It was, perhaps, a terrific opportunity for us to show our loyalty and our allegiance to him as he struggles with his dilemma. Did our knowledge of his or her struggle somehow cripple our ability to love him or relate to him?

Have we been able to genuinely communicate with him or her that we love him? Have we told him that we love him, but that we hate the sin because it hurts him? Regardless of his condition, we love him. If he is caught in deep sin, willing to change, unwilling to change, or even if he or she is too up tight to talk about it make him aware that our love does not depend upon his behavior. We love him because of his struggle, not in spite of it.

We must get our own spiritual house in order. Sometimes situations like this can drive people to God. Praise the Lord in the midst of this situation, knowing God will restore our loved one to full participation in His own time. We need to be ready to welcome our loved one to that fullness of fellowship.

Make our continual reflection be, "Praise the Lord anyhow!" This situation came to us through God's special filter to purify our lives and to make our families united in serving the Lord. Trials are to strengthen the bonds, making them strong as cables. Let this trial deepen our faith.

Above all, wrap our loved ones in love and present them to the Lord for Him to restore in His own time program. This commitment to the Lord will free us to pray for the healing power of the Holy Spirit to invade and liberate our loved one.

Keep Romans 8:28 forever in your heart. God's promise that, "all things work together for good..." even when things seem shattered, should take a high position on the priority list for verses on suffering. To glibly quote this without having been through this trial would be the height of hypocrisy and phony love. Aim to saturate ourselves with God's word, so that when we wake in the middle of the night with acute anxiety symptoms, we will hear the voice of the Lord whisper to us, "My child this will all work out for the good because you love Me and are called for My purposes." This saturation of helpful verses will be the kind of inner urging from the Lord that heals.

Think about this: "In love's service, only the *wounded* can serve, for they alone understand the cry of My bleeding heart." This shattered feeling that we are experiencing will one day be gone, and in its place will be a heart of love to minister to others whom God will bring into our lives, because we have passed the cup of suffering trial.

## Advice from Fr. Benedict Groschel on the Mystery of Suffering

**SUFFERING** – a painful and often mysterious aspect of human life, embraced by Jesus Christ. Before his own Passion, Jesus closely associated himself with those who suffer by befriending, defending and healing them. Link with the mystery of Christ – the man of sorrow.

Sorrow – grief over the experience (pain or stress) of another

Suffering is a bitter waste unless it is joined with sorrow, that is, with suffering for others and with hope. Hope is an act of faith, made solely with the assistance of grace, which causes us to believe that God will give us and those who are dear to us the means of salvation.

Suffering teaches us three things: (According to Cardinal Cooke of New York)

1. It teaches us not to cling to this life but to keep our eyes on eternity. A person who has suffered will not fear death.
2. It teaches us to be compassionate to others who suffer
3. It teaches us to unite all of our own pains to the suffering Christ, our Lord, who suffered for us.

“The suffering that seems to lack any purpose is the most destructive suffering. When transformed into sorrow through compassion for another and suffused with hope, suffering can give rise to great joy. There are innumerable misfortunes in life arising from accidents, the malice of others and natural disasters. From automobile fatalities to birth defects, from the killing of the innocent to epidemics, human life is vulnerable to all sorts of things that cause suffering. Sorrow and hope, compassion and a belief that God will bring good out of evil as He did in the life, death and resurrection of Christ are the keys to a joy that the world cannot give.”  
From *Stumbling Blocks Stepping Stones* – Benedict J. Groeschel

## REMEDY

- it is a time for faith, a time for belief, a time to cling to God – God you are there and I have nothing else to cling to. I believe that God’s goodness is going to bring about some greater good by this horror. It may not be a greater good for me in this world, but it will be a greater good someplace, somewhere, perhaps for those I love in the next world.
- get out of yourself and help someone else. “Save another’s soul, and it will save your own”
- St. John of the Cross – “Where there is no love, put love and you will draw love out.”
- Generosity, mercy, courtesy, concern for others, even patience are all ways of fulfilling the counsel of Jesus to love your neighbors as yourself and to be merciful as God is merciful. (this section from *Arise from Darkness – What to Do When Life Doesn’t Make Sense* – Benedict J. Groeschel).