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ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

When: Sunday November, 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 located behind the cemetery. Look for Encourage Meeting signs.

Same-sex attraction has been in the news even more than usual lately and with each new press release we are called to respond in two ways. The first is to bring us to our knees in prayer and the second is to inspire us to be better informed. We have enclosed an article by Sister Ann Shields, SGL. In her article, Sister encourages parents, grandparents and godparents to pray for their young people who seem to have gone astray. Sister Ann's popular radio program *Food For The Journey* can be heard five days each week on Ave Maria Radio and on many EWTN affiliates. It can also be heard on Renewal Ministries' web site. She offers specific recommendations on how to pray and what to pray, and reminds us all of the power of prayer.

On the informational aspect, we have enclosed an article by Fr. Paul Check the executive director for Courage and EnCourage. Fr. Paul addresses some on the issues that have surfaced from the Synod on the Family in Rome. He speaks directly to something we focus on when we are communicating with our loved ones who have become involved in the life style, and that is to endeavor to speak the truth in love.

We are currently reading a book that we would like to recommend to you entitled *The Healing of Families: How to Pray Effectively for Those Stubborn Personal and Familial Problems* by Fr. Yozefu – B. Ssemalula. (Fr. Joseph). Fr. was ordained to the Catholic Priesthood in 1993 in Uganda and is currently serving in the Pensacola – Tallahassee, Florida. Fr. Joseph addresses the issues of prayer,

unanswered prayer and how to how to turn frustration and confusion to understanding and victory.

The Holidays are quickly approaching and we may be called to make difficult choices regarding family members. Arm yourselves with love, truth and prayer.

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* adapted for Courage and EnCourage 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 November 16th meeting, our next regular meeting is December 21st. On a personal note, we have been invited to participate in a presentation in early November to clergy and lay educators in a neighboring diocese. Please pray for us.

This letter and enclosures come to you through the generosity of our Diocese of Lansing. We are grateful for any donation, large or small, that you could give to help with our costs. If you are no longer interested in receiving our communications, please email or phone us.

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 courage@dioceseoflansing.org

We look forward to meeting with you. Let us remember, however, to always respect the right of each to complete confidentiality.

Trusting in Jesus,
Schand Susan

Bob and Susan Cavera

"Let us stand before Christ, our gateway to eternal life, and knock with confidence in prayer." (Magnificat Oct 29, 2014)

PRAYING FOR WAYWARD CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN



A number of years ago, I wrote a book entitled Pray and Never Lose Heart. It was prompted by the many people who were coming to me, sometimes almost hopeless, seeking ways to help their children and grandchildren who had left the Church. I want to share what you can do as parents and grandparents, godmothers and godfathers, aunts and uncles for those young people you love who seem to have gone astray.

As parents and grandparents, know that your marriage and the graces flowing from this sacrament are particularly powerful when it comes to praying for family members. Set aside time to pray together each day—morning or evening, asking God to give you wisdom as to how you should pray. It is natural to pray for human concerns: health, success in school, good employment, financial stability, etc. We should definitely bring these concerns to prayer, but they are not the most important.

Instead, pray that your children and grandchildren begin to know what it really means to be sons or daughters of God. Pray that their identity and security rest, first of all, on the love God has for them in creating them and giving them life. Pray for growth in wisdom that they might see the true values in life and not those that the world aggressively seeks to constantly put front and center in our lives. Pray for growth in faith and hope and love. Pray that they come to value service to the poor more than the accumulation of wealth and power. Pray they be given truly good friends and mentors. In short, pray that they become true disciples of Jesus Christ!

You can pray in many different ways. Have a good talk with God about the situation and ask Him to inspire and help you to pray for your loved ones according to His will. Pray a decade of the rosary or the Divine Mercy Chaplet together for such intentions. Pray a novena on occasion for some specific need. Pray that the graces of your

baptism and confirmation, as well as the graces of your marriage be "activated" on behalf of your loved ones. Such graces are always available for us. But we have to exercise our will and say "Lord, for me and for my loved ones, please let the living water of Christ's life flow through us; cleanse me of sin; give me a grateful heart for what Christ did for me on the Cross." The grace of all the sacraments is available. But we need to exercise our free will to choose to receive God's grace.

Ask God every day to make you a better example of real, living, active faith. Let your loved ones see what is important to you: love for God, love for others. I am not calling you to be perfect—you and I can't accomplish that on our own. But we can show our children, grandchildren and godchildren what a real disciple looks like. They don't need to see perfection. That would lead them to depend on themselves to be good. A true disciple knows that the source of all that is good is God; that the closer we walk with Him, the more He can share life with us and impart His life to our souls. Let them see you turning to God for help—a lot!

They need to see that when we make mistakes or sin, we are quick to repent and acknowledge that we did wrong in whatever way seems appropriate. I learned more the first time I heard my father acknowledge that he had been wrong in something he said to my mother, than I would have learned from a lecture on repentance.

Jesus has promised that "Wherever two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them," (Mt 18:20). What does it mean to be gathered in His Name? If you use someone's name, say for a job interview, you are letting the interviewer know that this person agrees with you and will lend his name to your request. To use God's name means that God is standing behind your request.

Does Compassion Require that We Overlook the Intrinsic Harmfulness of the Homosexual Lifestyle?

A compassionate approach that honors truth and genuine well-being

Fr. Paul N. Check

On the opening day of the Synod on the Family, Ron and Mavis Pirola – co-directors of the Australian Catholic Marriage and Family Council – sparked some confusion over the example they gave as a "model of evangelization." They stated in part:

... the Church constantly faces the tension of upholding the truth while expressing compassion and mercy. Families face this tension all the time.

Take homosexuality as an example. Friends of ours were planning their Christmas family gathering when their gay son said he wanted to bring his partner home too. They fully believed in the Church's teachings and they knew their grandchildren would see them welcome the son and his partner into the family. Their response could be summed up in three words, 'He's our son.'

What a model of evangelization for parishes as they respond to similar situations in their neghbourhood! ...

Aleteia invited Rev. Paul Check, Executive Director of Courage International, to describe a model of evangelization that combines compassion with truth and seeks the best interests of men and women struggling with same sex attraction:

You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. (Jn 8:32)

We can never be more pastoral than Jesus. Good God that He is, He knows well the weaknesses to which we are prone, especially in matters relating to love and affection. But He also sees the dignity in every human heart, because He placed it there. And He sees the potential for great nobility in each heart, too, because He knows the transforming power of His grace. The Communion of Saints bears witness to the goodness of God at work in the humble and trusting human heart.

"Only in truth does charity shine forth, only in truth can charity be authentically lived," writes the Pope Emeritus in his last encyclical. "Without truth, charity degenerates into sentimentality." God is both Agápe and Lógos, Pope Benedict reminds us.

To love people with same-sex attractions is to love them for their God-given and Christ-redeemed dignity. They are not less than any of the Father's children. Like everyone, they deserve more than sentimentality. They deserve compassion ... compassion founded on the truth of their humanity.

The story of our humanity begins in the book of Genesis. The two-fold expression of our nature is not heterosexual and homosexual, but male and female. God made Adam, but the first man was "blessedly incomplete," as aptly put by Dr J. Budziszewski. Eve completes Adam ... the two become one ... each giving to the other what he or she did not possess in themselves.

So that life could be shared, because it is such a surpassing gift, Adam and Eve together were given by the Lord the power to co-create with Him. Sexual intimacy, according to the story of our origin,

our identity, is integrally bound with fertility. That the contraceptive industry exists testifies, in a negative way, to this reality.

We can falter in embracing chastity – self-giving, self-forgetful love – as part of the "good news." We can deliberately try to set aside, to our own detriment, God's wisdom "from the beginning," which does not mean so much a point in time, as it indicates a guiding and generous hand that crafts the human identity, an identity that reflects, and can share more deeply in, the divine identity through grace.

God's pastoral, shepherd's heart for spousal love, according to the testimony of Sacred Scripture, reveals itself in the complementarity of the sexes and the procreative potential of the sexual faculty. Only a man and a woman together have a "reproductive system," in the words, again, of my friend Dr J. Budziszewski. Male and female genitalia only make sense in light of their complements. The sexual organs are best described as procreative organs. And procreation is how husband and wife share in the divine power to bring life into God's kingdom.

When we are unchaste in any way, we come into collision with ourselves, with "our story," as told by the sacred writer in Genesis, and confirmed by Jesus in the Gospel. When the Church asks two people of the same sex to avoid being unchaste, she does so with the compassionate heart of Christ, because she believes the words of Christ: only the truth will liberate us – from ignorance, confusion, fear, neglect, pain, malice – and fulfill us.

Our fallen nature can be especially vulnerable to many forms of unchastity: masturbation, fornication, contraception, adultery, pornography ... and homosexual activity. Each of these actions falls outside the limits of the humanity of which God is the author. If we fail to lead people away from any of these sins, we fail first in truth and then in compassion. We lose our trust in Jesus as Agápe and Lógos.

Pope Francis has wisely reminded us that the Church is a field hospital for sinners. His predecessor of saintly memory, John Paul II, spoke of the "law of gradualness" in leading souls to Christ. These good shepherds guide us away from sentimentality, because they are loyal sons of the Church who trust in the goodness of God and the efficacy of His grace.

To welcome people into the Church, into our homes, into conversation ... to "accept them" in an authentic Christ-like way would never call for a compromise of the truth, i.e., to say to someone in some form, "Well, that's the best you can do." At the same time, we can only share the truth if we first share a relationship with someone, and that takes time and trust to develop.

Our Lord's conversation with the Woman at the Well in John 4 offers a helpful pastoral model. A mutual human need –water – opens the door for a conversation about a topic of mutual interest: God. Jesus leads the conversation, in truth and in compassion, to the topics of grace, eternal life, and chastity. He does not begin with the moral question, but He does not avoid it. And for her part, the woman later describes the encounter with joy, because another heart took a deep interest in hers, and the truth that Heart conveyed, set her free.

For the last seven years, Fr. Paul Check, a priest of the Diocese of Bridgeport, CT, has gratefully served as the executive director of Courage International (http://couragerc.org (http://couragerc.org/)), the Catholic Church's apostolate to men and women who experience same sex attractions, and of EnCourage, a ministry for their loved ones. Courage has recently released a documentary, "The Desire of the Everlasting Hills," which is available online at http://everlastinghills.org (http://everlastinghills.org/)