



Courage & EnCourage
228 North Walnut Street
Lansing, Michigan 48933-1122
517-342-2596
Facsimile: 517-342.2468
caverart@comcast.net

ENCOURAGE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

Roman Catholic Diocese of Lansing Chapter

When: **Sunday December 20, 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. The Courage group meets earlier at 2:00pm in the new school that connects to the church in the Conference/Lending Library Room. The The EnCourage group meets in the Parish Activity Center. Look for Encourage and Courage Meeting Signs.

This is a busy time and often a challenging time for many of our EnCourage members. Please take the time to slow down, reflect and pray. Susan and I wish you and your loved ones a Blessed and Merry Christmas!

In addition to our Christmas greeting, we included a special letter, that you may have already received, from Fr. Paul Check. In case you are not on the Courage mailing list, or perhaps the letter is buried in that pile of Christmas catalogues, we decided to include one for your perusal. If you decide to make a contribution to the apostolate, and we hope you do, please send your contribution to Courage at the address at the bottom of Fr. Paul's letter.

The third enclosure is an essay by Dan Mattson. As most of you know, Dan is one of the three Courage members featured in the award winning DVD *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*. His insights as to how the church lovingly labels us as to our sexuality is excellent.

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 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. 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*)

Please note: If you cannot attend the December 20th meeting, our next regular Diocesan EnCourage meeting is Sunday, January 17, 2016 If you would prefer to receive our letter and enclosures via email rather than regular mail please let us know, or if you no longer want to receive our letter please inform us.

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 courage@dioceseoflansing.org 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 financial 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,


Bob and Susan Cavera

Behold, the Lord comes to save his people; blessed are those prepared to meet him.



Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you. (Mk 10:49)

"I have never heard stories like those before," **Cardinal Robert Sarah** of Guinea said to me at our Rome conference on October 2, 2015. He was visibly moved by the testimonials from Andy Comiskey, Paul, Rilene and David, and he graciously thanked each speaker in turn. Those witness talks were the centerpiece of our *Living the Truth in Love* program, the executive summary of which is available on our website. I am always edified by our members when they recount their stories. But I was especially proud when, two days before the Synod began, Courage planted its flag in the heart of the Church in the form of four talks that prompted this heartfelt response by such a well-respected, humble and courageous churchman.

By the grace of the Holy Spirit, Courage and Encourage transform hearts and lives within a culture increasingly opposed to the truths taught by the Gospel. Your generosity helps to extend the scope of our educational and pastoral work, so that the apostolate can reach more people.

I had another occasion to be proud soon after our Rome conference, when *Desire of the Everlasting Hills* won the People's Festival Award at the **John Paul II Interfaith Film Festival** in Miami. The audience validated what we have known: *Desire* is a well-made documentary that conveys its compelling stories in a beautiful setting. On behalf of many, I commend and congratulate Dan, Paul and Rilene—along with the filmmakers—and I am grateful to the benefactors whose generosity made the movie possible.

The Gospel quote above comes from the encounter between Jesus and Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus will not allow either his personal weakness or the crowd, which initially insists on his silence, to impede his desire to be close to the Lord. When Jesus calls Bartimaeus to His side, those around encourage him to take heart and respond...and Jesus lauds him for his faith.

"Now is the acceptable time," as St. Paul would say, for Christians to give witness to their belief in Jesus and to their conviction that what His Church teaches is true and leads to fulfillment, challenge and controversy notwithstanding. Not every member of the Courage and EnCourage family can or should offer public testimony. Much prayer and reflection must precede this decision. Yet we can all support those who have made this choice with our prayers and words of encouragement, so that many can hear—and be moved—as Cardinal Sarah was.

Have you seen our newly released five part catechetical series, *Invited to Courageous Love*, which aired on EWTN and is now available for purchase? (A copy of the series would make an excellent Christmas present for your pastor or favorite priest!) Many of our members bravely and eloquently share their insights and experience throughout. I want to acknowledge the fine work of the series producer, Chuck Weber, and the donors who supported this project.

Led by our associate director, Father Philip Bochanski, members of Courage and EnCourage represented the apostolate with great success at the **World Meeting of Families**. We now have a whole new set of contacts in many dioceses in the US and overseas, thanks to these faithful ambassadors. During the year we visited 14 dioceses in four countries for clergy study or formation talks. We also shared the good news of Courage at seminaries, the USCCB, and national meetings of other groups, including *Legatus*.

In addition to a very successful annual conference at Mundelein (we hope to see you at the **Catholic University of America, July 21-24, 2016**), and our three regular regional retreats (CT, AL, CA), we also began a new project this year in Detroit: a conference for clergy, religious and lay faithful in various ministries called, "*Love One Another as I Have Loved You: Welcoming and Accompanying Our Brothers and Sisters with Same-Sex Attraction.*" Over 400 attended. Dr. Janet Smith from Sacred Heart Seminary, who for several years has been a faithful ally, was a driving force both behind this conference and the book from Ignatius Press that collects many of the talks: *Living the Truth in Love: Pastoral Approaches to Same Sex Attraction*.

We believe that the Master continues to call us to serve the Church in our critical and unique apostolate. We have many projects planned for 2016 that will further highlight the voice of our members: three books, new videos to be posted online, and additional catechetical material, all to be grouped under a new educational initiative called the *Truth and Love* project. In this project, we will develop partnerships with other apostolates and organizations, as we did in Detroit and Rome, to broaden the scope of Courage's reach.

We now have five full-time and several part-time staff members at the central office, and I am very proud of their work. But to keep pace with the need for our service, and as we look to new ways to reach people and accompany them to Jesus, we need more help. I would like to add two new full-time and a few more part-time staffers in months to come. We are already straining to keep pace with requests.

Your prayers and words of encouragement are indispensable. Yet so is your generous, even sacrificial, support. The day after our conference in Rome, another group held a conference aimed at changing Church teaching, even though that is impossible. That conference had at least four times the funding we did.

We hope you will prayerfully consider a gift of **\$200, \$500 or \$1,000**, perhaps even more if God's providence will allow. Be sure of my sincere gratitude for a gift of any amount.

Please help us to continue to respond courageously to Jesus' call to love and to serve. May God bless you and your loved ones - especially during this Advent and Christmas season.

(R.) P-N. Check

Father Paul N. Check
Executive Director

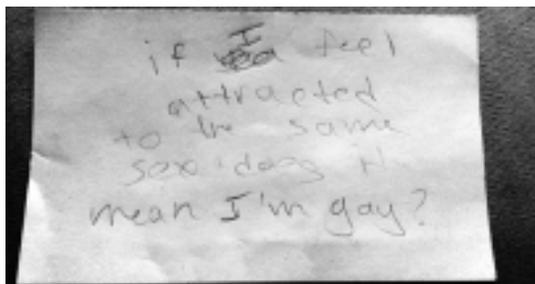
Blogs

Our Children Need To Know That Nobody's Gay

BY Daniel Mattson

| Posted 11/13/15 at 4:56 PM

All Saints Day found me in the Diocese of Pittsburgh in a little town, north of the city. I was there to do a presentation to a parish youth group about my conversion, and how I found peace and joy in the teachings of the Catholic Church on homosexuality.



In my ministry, I'm most passionate about reaching young people. I remember growing up in an evangelical church with attractions to boys instead of girls. I didn't know what to do about it, or if there was anyone I could talk with about it. I was horribly ashamed, since I knew instinctively that these desires weren't the sort of desires that reflected the way God had created me, or how he had created sex to be used.

Now that I've come back to my Father's house, after living the life of the Prodigal Son, I long to share the good news of the Church's teaching to as many young people as I can, especially boys and girls like me who might be wondering what to do about their attractions to the same sex. I want to give them hope and to let them know they are not alone.

After my talks I have the youth pastor hand out index cards for questions—everyone is required to write *something*, so no one is singled out for asking a question that might be assumed to be personal.

One question from that day has haunted me ever since. I took that index card home with me and I've often picked it up, looked at it, and then prayed for the person who asked it.

It is in my hands now.

It starts with "if," followed by "you": the beginning of a question. But the "you" is scratched out in a flourish of circles, replaced by "I".

This question isn't hypothetical. It's personal. It's about *him*—or her. I don't know if it's a boy or a girl.

The question goes, "If I feel attracted to the same sex, does that mean I'm gay?"

I thank God I was there.

"No," I said. "No! Despite what you may see on TV, or hear at school, feeling attracted to the same sex doesn't mean you're gay. In fact, it doesn't mean anything at all about who you *are*!"

I then shared the story of a woman I once met who is now in her seventies. She has been happily married for years and has many children and grandchildren.

"When she was a teenager," I told them, "she had a crush on one of the girls in her class. They became quite good friends, and even for a time 'messed around' together. As a good Catholic, she confessed and was forgiven. But she had the good fortune to

grow up in an age which didn't trap her into thinking those feelings *defined* her in anyway. She never once asked the question, 'does this mean I'm gay?', because she grew up never having heard of any sort of sexuality other than being a girl."

I told them, "Though today's culture tells us that our *feelings* are what define our sexuality most reliably, the Church wisely tells us that the truth of our sexuality is revealed to us by God, through our bodies."

[Quoting the Church's thinking on the subject](#) I asked them, "Did you know that the Church 'refuses to consider the person as a "heterosexual" or a "homosexual" and insists that every person has a fundamental Identity: the creature of God, and by grace, his child and heir to eternal life'? I have found great freedom in this truth of who I am as a sexual being. Even though I might feel attracted to the same sex, it doesn't mean I'm a different sort of man than every other man who has ever lived."

This question and the plight of the children who might ask it weigh heavily on me.

The wisdom of Proverbs shows us how we need to respond:

Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse;
he who guards himself will keep far from them.
Train up a child in the way he should go,
and when he is old he will not depart from it.

Children today are filled with the "thorns and snares" of the world's view of human sexuality, "the way of the perverse."

But we are far past thorns and snares. When a confused boy who thinks he's a girl can force a school to allow him to use a girl's locker room, or a man named Bruce thinks that he's become a woman named Caitlyn, our young people are bombarded by landmines of confusion.

To save them, they need the truth that only comes from Jesus.

While he was yet among us, incarnate on earth—as a *man*—he said, "Have you not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female?"

We must proclaim this truth from the mountaintops of the world. But we must first begin at home, in our pulpits and in our youth ministries and in our schools. There are thousands of kids who silently ask the same question as the question I hold in my hands: If I have feelings for the same sex, does it mean I'm gay?

The world whispers to them, "Yes, it does. Trust your feelings—they speak truth to you."

In the face of these lies, we cannot be silent, if we love them and desire to train them up in the way they should go.

Let's speak words of truth to them.

Copyright © 2013 EWTN News, Inc. All rights reserved.



*Lord Jesus, you came to bring us
the fullness of joy and to free us
from all the pale imitations of
happiness. This Advent, remove
any barriers we have put up to
keep you out of our lives. Teach us to
welcome your presence wherever
we find it, even in the difficulties
and challenges of daily life. As we
reach out in love to others, especially
Courage friends and EnCourage families,
may we come to know in our hearts
that we are welcoming you, our Lord and Savior.
Amen*