

Executive Summary of Living the Truth in Love

An international conference and resource event
to address pastoral approaches toward
men and women with homosexual tendencies



“Love one another as I have loved you.”

October 2, 2015

Pontifical University of St. Thomas
Rome, Italy



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"[C]hastity is not a denial of our sexual selves but rather the means to live 'self-mastery' and to turn our minds to that 'inner freedom' which will help us to know ourselves, and others, and uncover for us that peace which the world cannot give."

"Perhaps the time has come to study again, to revisit the Church's teaching on human sexuality and morality. Not to change it, but rather to make it known and explain it positively. . . .

. . . Too little is known about the Church's teachings on homosexuality, for example. Far too often the media is only too interested in repeating the myth that the Church hates homosexuals. Nothing could be further from the truth!"

—Cardinal George Pell
Introduction at the Living the Truth in Love Conference, Rome
October 2, 2015



Introduction

“Who do you say that I am?” (Mt 16:15). Our Lord’s question to the Apostles is arguably the most important one ever asked in human history. It is a question of *identity*. The question leads to St. Peter’s confession of faith that Jesus is Lord. In turn, this leads to his discipleship and ours; and if like St. Peter, we persevere to the end, then to salvation (Mt 24:13), to the fulfillment of the human heart.

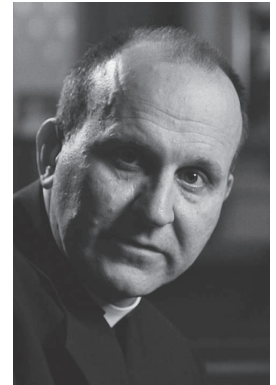
In thinking more generally, however, we would suggest that Jesus’ question, and the response of discipleship, evoke a broad principle of metaphysics: *agere sequitur esse*, action follows being—an indispensable principle for finding truth and fulfillment, in this life and in the life to come. In other words, we can only know *what something is for* if we first know *what it is*. Here is a simple example: I recognize that the object in my hand is a pen; now I know it is for writing.

Christian moral teaching follows this principle: what something is determines its proper—virtuous—use and fulfillment. Conversely, harm follows misuse. If I don’t use something in accord with its purpose or design, I might damage it and perhaps bring harm to myself. Jesus comes into the world to rescue us from our fallen nature, by reminding us of our dignity and by healing our rebellious wills. “Christ the New Adam fully reveals man to himself and his most high calling” (*Gaudium et Spes* 22).

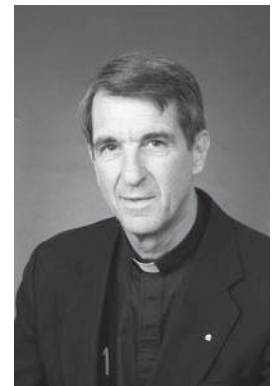
So the foundational questions for the “Truth and Life” conference are these: “What is man? What is human nature? What is sex for? In what—or in whom—will the human heart find joy?” The Church examines these questions not from the standpoint of a sterile or outdated ethical teaching, but from a maternal solicitude for the authentic happiness of the human heart. And like all mothers, her interest lies not simply in fulfillment in a general sense, but rather in fulfillment for individual hearts—this person and that one. Are these words of Christ not one possible summary of the Incarnation: “I have told you this so that my joy might be in you and your joy might be complete” (Jn 15:11)?

The Church approaches the topic of homosexuality from this twofold standpoint, itself another aspect of classical metaphysics: the universal (Christian anthropology) and the particular (this individual person). Knowing that the Gospel story is the universal story that applies to all God’s children, she nevertheless approaches each individual story with maternal compassion and charity—and she then applies deep insights about the human condition and she offers God’s grace to this son or this daughter of the Father.

In this executive summary of the conference, you will see that we both address the Church’s teaching and try to “put a face” on the subject, to see what we can learn from both. Our hope is that such an approach will lead to the genuine pastoral care for which the Church has called. **If we can help people claim their true identity in Christ, we can then accompany them on the path to joy.**



Father Paul Check



Father Joseph Fessio, S.J.



God or Nothing: Addressing the Confusion Surrounding Gender Ideology Today

Robert Cardinal Sarah

I have been asked to introduce these interventions. The experts on this delicate matter are, for all of us, a light that illuminates the pastoral care of those people of the same sex who are attracted to one another.

The Catholic universe is, today, broadly shaken by the evolution of the Western mentality with regard to the definition of gender, but this phenomenon certainly did not emerge only yesterday. Toward the middle of the eighties, Elisabeth Badinter, in her book *L'un est l'autre*, already noted that

the upheavals that we understand are perhaps of another nature than a simple evolution—or even revolution—of customs. The paradigm shift does not call into question only our behaviors and values, but touches the intimacy of our being, our identity, our masculine and feminine nature. This is why the concern assumes the tone of a true and proper existential anguish, which obliges us to propose anew the great metaphysical question of “who am I, what is my identity and my relationship with God, who has created me to His Image and likeness?”

God, who is Love, has placed in my heart his own Love, which is in me. That which man is, his works and his projects for realizing himself, is not understandable if not in God. If we exclude him from our being, we develop an identity that can shift, that fascinates a great number of our contemporaries. But the grave thing is that, in this fluctuation, there is no space for a commitment in fidelity, either that found in consecrated religious life or in marriage. In fact, why bind oneself to a kind of life when tomorrow, or in ten years, my “I” will no longer be the same?

Nevertheless, the Psalmist describes the intimate life of the One who has created us with these words: *Tu autem idem Ipse es*—“[My God,] you, however, are always the same” (Ps 102:28)—while the world continually changes its face. How does one help man to anchor himself in God in order to empower him to realize fully and to know how to love like him?

Loving the other that is physiologically complimentary to me because they are different than me—in this stands the mission of the Church that, in the name of the Creator, ought to prevent the West from spreading a vision

of love, of marriage, and of the family disconnected from Revelation.

One of the numerous issues that this notion *God or Nothing* considers is, properly, the ideology of gender in its radical expression of gender “indifference.” This radical expression implies that there are no differences between the sexes, in the sense that anatomy is not, in any way, a determiner in the game of freedom. Thus, each man can act “as a woman” and each woman can act “as a man.” Such extreme positions can be found in the Queer movement (from the English word meaning “strange”).

For many “gender theorists,” masculinity and femininity are always invented, in the most open way possible, without their allowing that anatomy is able to determine, in some way, the strictly personal destiny of the individual that chooses his or her own *modus vivendi*.

This dissociation between sex and social role is manifested, for example, in the claims made by lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons, according to which sexuality does not, per se, orient one sex toward the other, because it is entirely plausible that two men or two women might have a sexual relationship. In some countries, the normalized character of these orientations, which distance themselves from heterosexuality, is, moreover, the object of an explicit recognition in the institution of marriage, even in same-sex parenthood. The prospects for transsexual persons have also been brought to a notable juridical evolution, such that it is ever more admitted into Western societies that a man who feels in his psyche that he is a woman (or else the contrary, a woman that feels in her psyche that she is a man) can obtain, by means of a more or less significant surgical procedure, the recognition of his change of sex in the civil records of the state.

The Church, above all in the teaching Magisterium of St. John Paul II and onward, denounces with ever greater firmness the misdeeds of gender ideology. The Church excludes, then, the dubious interpretations founded on the different visions in the world, according to which sexual identity is able to be adapted to the infinity of new and different purposes. Numerous Catholic authors have taken up positions against this indeterminacy of sex, overshadowed by the ambiguity of the term “gender.”



Gender ideology ignores, as it happens, that if the spouses exchange, reciprocally, the word of the conjugal universe on their person, it is because they pronounce it in response to a prior Word, pronounced on their bodies, created male and female. Thus, before these achieve the capacity of the “word” through which they are united to each other, the man and woman would already have been expressed in the Word; they would have received, in their very sexual duality, the creative Word itself. This prior Word, in fact, said: “‘Let us make man in our image and likeness.’ . . . And God created man in his own image: in the image of God he created him: male and female he created

them. And God blessed them, saying: ‘Be fertile and multiply, and fill the earth.’” (Gen 1:26–28) Man and woman are ontologically bound to God. They are in the image and likeness of God. They complete each other according to the plan of God. Their existence and their being are founded in God. To separate oneself from God and from his plan for man annihilates man, makes him lose his ontological consistency and stability. It is for this reason that the absolute independence and autonomy of man with regard to the Creator is the great snare of our day. *God or Nothing* confronts this question in a decisive way.



Christian Anthropology and Homosexuality

Monsignor Livio Melina

In this brief summary, I can offer only some essential points of reference, which I want to arrange in two sections. In the first, I will illustrate the *anthropological framework* and basic dynamic for a Christian vision of sexuality, in the perspective of what St. John Paul II called “the vocation to love.” In the second, I will enter more specifically into the *ethical* evaluation of homosexuality according to the teaching of the Church, and of a possible path for the person having an inclination toward people of the same sex.

The Vocation to Love

The densest nucleus of the theology of the body is the *Eucharist*. This, obviously, does not immediately refer to the sexual dimension, but offers the ultimate meaning of human bodily existence, which precedes and is also the foundation for its more specific aspects. Christ in the Eucharist reveals and communicates the *ultimate significance of the human body*, even in its sexual dimension: the body is made for the gift of self. This gift of self in and through the body, expresses love, and is realized through the communion of persons.

To begin from the Eucharist means, then, to begin from the *vocation to love*, which defines the destiny of every person, both in his or her origin and in his or her free and dramatic dynamic. Thus, we find it marvelously expressed by St. John Paul II: “God created man in His own image and likeness: calling him to existence through love, He called him at the same time for love... Love is therefore the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being” (*Familiaris Consortio* 11).

The *theology of the body*, developed in the *Catecheses* of St. John Paul II, reveals how the hermeneutic of love as gift of self, which has its theological fulcrum in the Eucharist, may be the key to understanding the sexual difference, inscribed in the masculine and feminine body. “Male and female he created them” (Gen 1:27)—the sexual connotation is not a mere accidental element of persons, negligible or manipulated at will, but constitutes a decisive character of their dignity as being made in the image and likeness of God, and of their vocation to realize the communion of persons, the reflection of the community of the Trinity [1].

This anthropological vision establishes an intimate but also hierarchical intertwining between the dimensions of the human being, which I summarize here in four parts: the dignity of *personal being*, the reality of the *body*, the *sexual difference* inscribed intimately in the body, and the *genitalia* as a specific but not absolute expression and one not exhaustive of being sexed. Here one considers dimensions profoundly connected to each other, which establish the dignity of each one with regard to the person, but which are also ordered to each other hierarchically in a call to realize the truth of the gift of self in a fertile communion.

If the *person* indicates the unique and unrepeatable value of each human being insofar as he or she is thought and willed by God the Creator for his or her own sake, who ought to be considered as an end and never solely as a means, bodily existence expresses the visible and concrete sign of the personal subject. The *body* is, in fact, according to the luminous expression of St. John Paul II, “the visible sacrament of the person” [1]—the visible sign of the invisible reality of the person, the place of encounter and openness to the world, above all to the world of others. The body is also the place where one experiences the limits, and thus the contingency, of the creature and the fragility of man. In the body one experiences his solitude and his need of someone other than himself in order to complete himself through reciprocity.

Thus, the *sexual difference* of men and of women, which characterizes the human body even in its most intimate fibers, expresses at the same time a lack of completeness and an original solitude, but also a call to communion. The difference is not a simple diversity: it indicates the presence, before the personal subject, of another subject, at the same time identical and complimentary, who exists in an irreducible and promising reciprocity [2]. In front of the body-person of the opposite sex, the human being discovers the spousal meaning of the body, which is called the fruitful gift of self, open to the communication of a new life, in collaboration with God.

Genitality, while not expressing all the richness of human sexuality, manifests a specific form of intimate corporeal union, and a unique generative potency: procreation—collaboration with God in calling into life another person, made in God’s image and likeness, called to eternal life!



At the end of this dense and rapid exploration into the anthropological references of the vocation to love, we are able to affirm that sexual difference, inscribed in the masculine and feminine body, represents a fundamental element of the *grammar of love*. If the language of the body is a spousal language—namely, turned toward the gift of self—the sexual difference is not casual or accidental, but expresses the two fundamental characteristics of the truth of love: openness to the other, different and always a little unknown, in view of reciprocal communion and fecundity, understood as the capacity to generate life.

The Teaching of the Church on Homosexuality and a Possible Path

How, then, can we assess, in the light of the vocation to love just outlined according to the fundamental references of the theology of the body, the complex and articulated phenomenon of homosexuality? [3]

The *teaching of the Catholic Church* about homosexuality can be arranged in three points. (1) We must first accept homosexual persons with respect, compassion, and sensitivity, avoiding any unjust discrimination [4]. In fact, the dignity of the person and their calling to love are irreducible and more fundamental than any particular sexual inclination. (2) Sexual acts between persons of the same sex are intrinsically disordered, inasmuch as they are deprived of their essential and indispensable finality [5]. (3) Catholic doctrine affirms further that homosexual inclination, “while it may not be sinful in itself,” is in itself “objectively disordered” [6].

A positive way of accompaniment and realization of the vocation to love and to holiness is possible [7], as we shall try to show, but it is important to understand what is meant when the Church speaks of an *objectively disordered inclination*.

The affirmation of an objective disorder raises a first objection. How can that which is not born of a free choice be defined in morally negative terms? The distinction between the “homosexual condition” and “homosexual acts” implies the recognition that the homosexual orientation, inasmuch as it may not be the fruit of preceding deliberate choices, is not of itself a moral fault, for which people are held responsible.

Nonetheless, that which flows into our liberty and conditions, as a predisposition for our free choices, has a great significance for action and can thus be morally qualified in an analogous sense, in reference to the orientation that it promotes. The liberty of man is in fact a

“solely human” liberty—that is, not absolute. It is a real but finite liberty, situated and conditioned, which takes its foothold from, and is developed beginning from, motivations, contingencies, and corporeal determinations [8]. Concerning oneself with these conditions prior to our liberty, judging them in regard to the conduct toward which they incline, and trying to correct them makes up part of the unavoidable task of a healthy, objective, and realistic moral teaching.

The language itself that has existed and that we are constrained to use in speaking of homosexuality makes up a second difficulty, and a dangerous misconception. It seems to imply that “sexuality” is an abstract and neutral term, regarding which one would give only successively two apparently symmetrical versions: “hetero-” and “homo-” sexuality. Thus sexuality that reflects the man-woman difference comes to be defined linguistically as a successive determination and, by implication, on the same plane as the disordered attitude. In reality, the very term “sexuality” derives from the Latin *secare*, “to divide in two,” and always implies the difference. For this reason, the term “heterosexual” is superfluous, while “homosexual” is self-contradicting: the roots *homo* and *sexus* do not agree, and their combination expresses the inverse of what they enunciate, since two people of the same sex in the case of homoeroticism are in a relationship of fusion of the same with the same. The ideological and manipulative character of this linguistic system, which has been imposed, ought not to escape us.

To speak of sexuality as a “stance” or as a “disposition” means referring to a plurality of factors and elements of personality, which are destined to construct a tendential unity, on which the subject constructs his own sexual identity and recognizes his place in relation with others and in the surrounding world. The concept of “order”—and, respectively, of “disorder”—seems to refer itself exactly to a problem of this type.

We are thus able to understand, more precisely, the meaning of the expression “objectively disordered inclination.” This is a tendency in which the dispositions of factors of personality do not orient the person to the attainment of the end, which in the divine plan is assigned to sexuality.

From the point of view of the moral order, Catholic doctrine qualifies the homosexual inclination as intrinsically disordered, inasmuch as in this inclination the sexual dynamism of persons, which is triggered, *lacks* (1) the *unitive significance* of gift of self to the other person and of communion, which can only realize itself in the conjugal union between man and woman [9], and (2) openness to



the *procreative meaning* by means of which human sexuality is otherwise ordered to the good of procreation. The criteria of the ethical evaluation are thus rooted in a theological anthropology of human sexuality, solely in the light of which the disordered character of the homosexual inclination, through contrast, is also able to emerge.

The *rejection of sexual difference* also acquires a theological relevance, in reference to the relation of the creature with the Creator. It is the pretext of freeing oneself from the proper condition of the creature and from all natural limits, in the arrogance of being like God, without need of relationships with the other, different from me.

Regarding the prospects of a path, the affirmation of the document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith of 1986 is fundamental: “Only that which is true can ultimately also be pastoral” [6]. The truth of which we speak is that of love, which is always referred to the most concrete vocation of each person, and which unveils the falsehood of every presumed “pastoral solution” contrary to the dignity of the person and of his acts. In this sense, the first essential task of the Church is “to proclaim the truth”—that truth that permits living love authentically. The teaching about the existence of intrinsically evil acts, which contradict the path toward the truth of love, is a defense of the dignity of the person.

A truth is discussed here, which touches on that which is most intimate about the person and regards his identity itself; and its adequate intake cannot be exhausted in the mention of principles, but ought to take place in a gradual and convicted involvement of the whole experience, even affective, beginning from a new interpretation of affective experience. It is that which the great ethical tradition calls virtue; and in particular, the virtue of chastity comes into play here, which is not to be seen only as negative, as the repression of disordered instincts, but as the integration of the whole person in view of an excellence of love, which is the gift of self in communion. To grow in virtue, one needs a community: moral life needs a dwelling place, this is why friendship is a school of virtue. The Church should have the living face of a friendship that welcomes me as I am, that accompanies me so that I can become that which I ought to be, that knows how to speak truth to me, and lifts me up after each fall with a mercy that is patience.

The pastoral approach in terms of vocation requires, then, a very concrete attention to each person, in his history and in his original problems. One needs above all to listen, without reducing individuals to general categories or to stereotypical cases. One discusses causes for hope, not limiting oneself to mentioning prohibitions, but showing

as existing a better half and one that is able to be reached. One accompanies in the journey by taking up difficulties, disappointments, falls, the tiring moments, possibly also making recourse eventually to the resource of a competent psychological attention. Realism, which knows to look to the concrete character of the situation and to recognize the obstacles and tests, will thus assume the dimension of time, so essential in approaching people.

Conclusion

We began from the Eucharist, and we have seen how in this is unveiled the supreme truth of love, the gift of self in the body for the life of the world. But the Eucharist is not just a revelation; it is a gratuitous communication of an energy of new life. In communion with the Body and Blood of Christ, a new lifeblood flows back into our life—his Spirit permeates our affectivity and our will, and heals and strengthens them, elevating them to a new dimension. For those who approach the Eucharist with dignity and a penitent heart, this is the bread of strength, the bread of the journey, which permits us always to have the hope that, even for the least of poor sinners, the dream of happiness and love that God has for each one of us is possible, since he has called us to life in it.

Notes

[1] John Paul II, *Uomo e donna lo creò. Catechesi sull'amore umano* (Rome: Città Nuova Editrice-Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1985), cat. xix, 90–92.

[2] Concerning this, see also A. Scola, *Uomo-donna. Il “caso serio” dell'amore* (Genova-Milano: Marietti, 2002), 15–28.

[3] An articulate study, with the contribution of international experts in different disciplines, may be found in L. Melina—S. Belardinelli, ed., *Amare nella differenza. Le forme della sessualità e il pensiero cattolico: studio interdisciplinare* (Siena: Cantagalli-Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012).

[4] Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 2358.

[5] Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Persona humana*, December 29, 1975, no. 8.

[6] Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Homosexualitatis problema*, October 1, 1986, no. 3; reprinted in no. 2358 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

[7] See in particular the reflections, corroborated by long and wise pastoral experience, collected in the works of P. John Harvey, *The Homosexual Person: New Thinking in Pastoral Care* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987); *The Truth*



About Homosexuality: The Cry of the Faithful (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996).

[8] This is as much, in the analysis of the structure of voluntary human action, as can be defined as its “archaeology.” See P. Ricoeur, *La sémantique de l'action. Ière partie: Le discours de l'action* (Paris: Éd. CNRS, 1977).

[9] The following identifies the narcissistic trait of self-absorption of the homosexual tendency: T. Anarella, *Le règne de Narcisse. Les enjeux du déni de la différence sexuelle* (Paris: Presses de la Renaissance, 2005).



The Face of the Other: Ministering to Those with Same-Sex Attraction

Fr. Paul N. Check

Fr. Paul N. Check is the executive director of Courage International. This essay was based on a talk given on February 4, 2015, at the twenty-fifth National Catholic Bioethics Center Workshop for Bishops in Dallas, Texas.

I am grateful to have this opportunity to offer some perspective from a parish priest and moral theologian who was asked to work in a particular part of the vineyard over a decade ago. The story of how that work began may be of some interest, though I am not sure it really establishes my bona fides.

Twelve years ago, I was serving as a parochial vicar in a downtown parish in my diocese and teaching part-time at our college seminary and in the pre-theology program, when one day I received a letter in the mail: “Dear Father Check: Prayerful greetings in the Lord. We do not have a Courage chapter in our diocese. I would be very grateful if you started one. Sincerely yours in Christ, Your Bishop.” And that was it.

I like to tell that story for a couple of reasons. One is to encourage those with the fullness of the threefold *munera*, our bishops, to take heart: sometimes letters like that work!

So I am happily and gratefully in Archbishop William Lori’s debt for sending me that letter at the end of 2002. It has changed my priesthood, and not just in terms of serving the Church in an external assignment from my diocese for the last seven years. To be frank, I do not know that I would have volunteered for such work, either as a diocesan Courage chaplain or in my current position as executive director—and so those of our chaplains who have offered themselves in this way have my deepest esteem.

The Untouchable Subject

I have no intention to be self-serving in this observation, but objectively speaking, I believe that addressing homosexuality according to the mind and heart of the Church is one of the most demanding aspects of education, formation, and pastoral care today, and in my opinion, it will become

more difficult as time passes. In *Desire of the Everlasting Hills* [1], Dan says, “This is the untouchable subject,” and I am sorry that in many cases, from what I see, he is right. Few are eager to touch the question, and understandably so—except perhaps when it is absolutely unavoidable. In saying this, I am not passing any judgment as to why this is the case. In fact, the complexity of the subject matter alone, even before we consider the controversy that surrounds it, will deter people from becoming involved. For now, I would only say that I come to you, not so much as the executive director of the Courage and EnCourage apostolates (EnCourage is for family members), but as the advocate for an underserved population, one of those that I believe the Holy Father has located on the “periphery.” I don’t think we can wait for volunteers to undertake some aspect of this vital work.

An episcopal request will go a long way, at least it did in my case. I must also say, with regret, that some of the people who are eager to engage in pastoral care do not understand or do not share the Church’s anthropology. This only causes confusion and in some cases scandal. So that brings me to the point of my talk: authentic pastoral care flows from an authentic understanding of the human person and, in this case, the virtue of chastity.

Unfortunately, the word most often associated with the Catholic Church on the topic of homosexuality is “no.” While of course there is a no that must be charitably preached, that no covers but one part of a much larger yes, which comprises the fullness of the Church’s pastoral charity to a group who are in special need. I do know how grateful our members are for the spiritual fatherhood of the priests at Courage and EnCourage meetings. Among other things, that presence bespeaks a commitment on the part of the Church to people who often are unsure where they belong in general, and who can be quite uneasy about their place in the Catholic Church in particular. The 2006 document from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination*, which is superb both for its precise moral teaching and for its thoughtful practical wisdom, makes special mention of the primary role of the priest in ministries to people with same-sex attractions [2]. And it is really for that reason—the opportunity to attend to the often acute and persistent

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wounds of those who need healing within what Pope Francis calls the “field hospital” of the Church—that I am grateful for the invitation from my former bishop. His gracious request called for something more than simple obedience: it became for me, in time, an invitation to a deeper understanding of the human condition, in all the good and the bad that implies, and a deeper appreciation and reverence for the truth and dignity of the human person and the mystery and efficacy of grace.

Dan, who spoke of “the untouchable subject,” occasionally gives his testimonial to priests in the context of the study days for clergy that we conduct at the request of bishops and seminary rectors. In his testimonial, as in the film, he recalls a moment, before he found his way to *Courage*, when he typed the phrase “I am gay and . . .” into the Google search engine. The first Google “suggestion” at the time was “. . . and I want to find a boyfriend”; the second was “. . . and I want to die.” Though Dan’s struggles and pain are far from over, he now understands why the Catholic Church is his home: because he is a member of the Church of the striving (not of the saved), just like the rest of us. The community of the Mystical Body and the fellowship of *Courage* have guided him away from dangerous alternatives presented by Google and the culture.

You notice the title of the film: *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*. This is one of the invocations of the Litany of the Sacred Heart and a phrase first spoken by the patriarch Jacob when he prophesies the coming of Christ, the fulfillment of the desire of all of creation, in Genesis 49:26, “until the desire of the everlasting hills should come” (Douay-Rheims). I point this out because the film, like the work of *Courage*, is really not first about homosexuality. Both address what it means to be human and to be a child of God, and so the film and the apostolate consider the question of the fulfillment of the human heart according to God’s gracious plan and invitation.

And here we are very much at the crux of the problem. To that point, I would suggest that there are two narratives at work in society today. One says man is made for satisfaction (or pleasure or enjoyment). The other says man is made for fulfillment (or joy). In the first narrative, there is no design for sex. In the second, there is. In the first narrative, virtue is only another word for “restraint.” In the second, chastity means freedom and peace.

Needing to Be Wanted

“I needed to be wanted,” we heard Rilene say in the trailer. When I give an introduction to Christian anthropology, I

often say that Original Sin brings an amnesia to humanity, a loss of memory of our human identity, which the Incarnation is meant to cure: “Christ, the new Adam . . . fully reveals man to man himself” [3]. So I would offer this distinction to you: homosexuality is not first about sex or about relationships; *it is a misperception of identity*. In turn, that misperception can lead to a misdirected search to answer the desires of the heart. How we understand ourselves—our identity—influences, even determines, how we try to meet the needs and wants of the heart.

Let me see if I can explain it this way. When I was a pre-theologian and taking the required philosophy courses, I could see, I am sorry to admit, no real connection between metaphysics and pastoral work of any type. Seventeen years of the priesthood, and the seven in this work in particular, have cured me of that mistaken notion . . . and this change of thinking is something I share with seminarians to urge them to study philosophy well! *Agere sequitur esse*, action follows being or, if I may formulate it this way, action follows identity, whether identity is properly understood or misperceived. I will act and make choices according to how I understand myself.

So we return to what Rilene said: “I needed to be wanted.” Of course she did, and this is true for all of us, because we are, in the words of one moral theologian, “blessedly incomplete.” The difficulty lay not in her need to be wanted but in how she came to understand herself. And here, before thinking about pastoral care, we need another part of our anthropology: we are changed by our actions, by our choices, by anything involving the will, including the way we think about ourselves, the way we *self-identify*. Choices consistent with our nature build up our humanity; the opposite is also true. This is one of the reasons why I recommend against the use of words like “homosexual,” “gay,” and “lesbian” as nouns to describe an identity or a class or group of people. I accept that the phrase “same-sex attractions” can be a bit cumbersome, and I am not recommending arguing or debating with people about the way they describe themselves, even as we hope to guide them to a fuller identity in Christ. At the moment, I am only suggesting that the answers to the foundational questions—“Who am I? What am I? Why am I?”—are of interest to everyone, even if they do not think in exactly those terms. They are metaphysical questions that Christian anthropology ultimately answers. I am also suggesting that through the careful choice of words, we can try to avoid furthering the commonly held misconception that the two-fold expression of humanity is heterosexual and homosexual rather than male and female.



By extension, we can see the especial danger in so-called LGBT or gay-straight alliances or support groups in high schools and colleges, because they lack a proper understanding of human nature. Adolescence is a time of self-discovery, emotional and sexual development, and growth in virtue, with some predictable confusion and even missteps on the road to authentic self-knowledge. To assign a label to someone, or to encourage someone to adopt a label for himself or herself during the teenage years, may lead to harm that could have been avoided, since such labeling may prompt the young person to travel down a path that he or she otherwise might well have avoided, having passed safely through the challenging season of self-discovery and confusion. The 2006 USCCB document raises the question of and offers a caution about self-disclosures in a public way, the motive for which should always be considered carefully. Here is the relevant passage: “For some persons, revealing their homosexual tendencies to certain close friends, family members, a spiritual director, confessor, or members of a Church support group may provide some spiritual and emotional help and aid them in their growth in the Christian life. In the context of parish life, however, general public self-disclosures are not helpful and should not be encouraged” [4].

Elsewhere it says, “Persons with a homosexual inclination should not be encouraged to define themselves primarily in terms of their sexual inclination” [5]. In the realm of pastoral care generally, and with regard to language and vocabulary, I return to the idea that the use of certain words as nouns tends, even if inadvertently, to impose a template on someone. This might be another way to interpret the Holy Father’s well known, if not equally well understood, question “Who am I to judge?” [6] A label is a form of judgment, collapsing a rich and complex identity—of which the homosexual tendency is certainly a significant part—that risks injury to both justice and charity. The threefold distinction that the Church makes with regard to homosexuality helps us further address the question of identity: person—inclination—action. The inclination, no matter how deep-seated it might be, does not describe the totality of the person. Nor of course do actions, although as we were considering a moment ago, choices do change us.

So back to Rilene: “I needed to be wanted.” Yes, that need is good, and in fact prompts us to step outside ourselves in search of relationships, which will be fulfilling to the degree that they are genuinely self-giving [7]. But the embrace of a misperceived identity (“I am gay”) and the subsequent misdirected inclination brought Rilene into collision with her true self. And so now we can call

on another part of metaphysics that is at work here: the universal and particular. The natural moral law and Christian anthropology (the universals) help me (the particular) to understand myself and to distinguish authentically human desires from counterfeits. Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI defined moral relativism as “the skepticism about all things human” [8], and that skepticism, the belief that there is no universal human nature, leaves people a puzzle to themselves, especially in the sexual sphere, because unchaste behavior of any kind leads to division and loneliness, estrangement from self, from others, and from God, any subjectively good intention notwithstanding.

The reason I offer this point is this: Our approach to the virtue of chastity must be consistent and coherent. Owing in large part to the efficacy of chemical contraception (and widespread sterilization), we probably have more physical “intimacy” than at any time in history. But I believe we also have more *loneliness*. From my practical experience as a moralist who teaches sexual ethics and as a pastor of souls, I think the two are related: contraception (and the promiscuity it fosters) and loneliness. My brother priests often ask me what we can do, pastorally speaking, about homosexuality, and one of the things I suggest is more and deeper Pre-Cana, the kind that helps couples see, among many other things, that marital chastity excludes contraception because it harms love and marriage, and so impedes the fulfillment of the heart. Said another way: to the degree I *deliberately* impede self-gift (which in turn impedes giving life, in whatever sphere of the human condition), I *deliberately* impede my heart. And I think it can be easily demonstrated that it is not too far a stretch from the deliberate separation of fertility from sex in marriage to the problem we face culturally about the *nature* of marriage.

I raise this point because my sense is that while justice, mercy, grace, and redemption, for example, are all readily accepted as part of the “good news,” I am not certain that chastity is widely and confidently viewed that way in the “visible” Church, including among many clergy. If this is true, then a practical problem follows: the no to same-sex unions, which must be preached especially when civil legislation is at stake, may appear not as part of a larger fabric of virtue but as an arbitrarily drawn line that ultimately fails the test of fairness. And so some preaching may ring hollow to many. One parent who contacted me about his son said, “Father, the teachings of the Church are making this hard.” I gently tried to suggest to him that it was a *confusion* about identity in the mind and heart of his son and a *confusion* about the Church’s teaching on chastity that were actually the sources of the tension.



Not long ago, after our four-hour study-day presentation in one diocese, a priest asked me, “Father, do you think the anthropology of the Church will ever change?” I am not precisely sure what lay behind that question, but it is troubling that it would occur to a priest to ask. In his last encyclical, Benedict XVI makes the distinction between sentimentality, on the one hand, and charity or compassion on the other, the difference being the truth [9]. Here we find one of our greatest challenges within the Church when it comes to understanding homosexuality, including among some clergy, Mass-going Catholics, and especially Catholic teens: sentimentality. While I think a consistent approach to teaching sexual ethics will help foster understanding and compassion, more will be needed, particularly the witness of those who are willing to speak publicly about the effects of unchaste living, like Dan, Rilene, and Paul.

Giving and Receiving Hope

Years ago, I recall our founding executive director, Fr. John Harvey, OSFS, of happy memory, saying, “Our best ambassadors are our members.” I know he was right, and that is one of the reasons we made the movie: it puts a face on Church teaching. In the trailer, Paul was quite sincere: “I have been given hope, and I want to do that for other people . . . to give others the same hope.” Over time, more of our members have become willing to share their stories in public or quasi-public settings (like a youth group or high school) because they feel a sense of urgency to reach others whom they know are at risk in one way or another. Thankfully, the personal narrative still receives respect culturally, even when the content of the message is not necessarily welcome.

Unchaste and promiscuous behavior of all types—not just those related to homosexuality—is both a reason for and a consequence of the confusion about identity, and also, therefore, the widespread confusion about the fulfillment of the human heart, no matter one’s attractions. In the pastoral setting, we find it most helpful for those who have suffered the effects of promiscuity to share their stories in the hopes of preventing further suffering [10].

And so that brings me to another relevant part of metaphysics: cause and effect. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* refers to the “psychological genesis” (CCC 2357) of homosexuality, while leaving it to the natural and empirical sciences to study the origins of or factors leading to homosexuality. Within the Courage apostolate, I think we maintain a thoughtful reserve about the question of causality, because we do not want to impose templates on people

and because of the complex character of the development of masculine and feminine identity. But we are also mindful that we live in a world of cause and effect. Thus, the *Catechism’s* phrase “psychological genesis” is useful in our reflection on identity. It seems to me that it means, among other things, that homosexuality is not “ontological”; that is, it is not a natural or normal variant of human sexuality.

So “homosexual” cannot, therefore, be an authentic human identity. The phrase “psychological genesis” can also be understood to confirm what the data from psychological sciences certainly seem to indicate: that same-sex attraction is a symptom of, or a reaction to, something antecedent to the tendency or inclination. I think we can even take a step further. The *Catechism* describes homosexual attraction as “objectively disordered” (CCC 2358), words that I know fall hard on many ears, even after an explanation. My point here is to say that if an effect is bad (an objectively disordered tendency—a *poverty*, if you like), then by logic the cause is likely to be bad, because “the tree is known by its fruit” (Lk 6:44).

Please understand that I am not attempting a diagnosis for same-sex attraction, which is not among the goals of Courage. I am thinking in more philosophical terms, but with an eye on pastoral care. Let me offer one example. Under that rubric of pastoral care, I raise the question of causality for a couple of reasons. First, without entering a particular discussion of what is causative or simply correlative here, there are data to indicate that a man who has the homosexual inclination is seven times more likely to have been the victim of sexual abuse as a child or adolescent than a man who does not. So if a young person discloses that he thinks he or she is “gay,” then there may be something behind that disclosure that requires attention and thoughtful care.

Second, the 2006 USCCB document mentions twice the important role of counseling services as a part of pastoral care, especially for adolescents. I do not see this as any kind of endorsement for “reparative therapy”—something with which Courage is not involved—but rather as an acknowledgment that there may be attendant and antecedent difficulties, psychological and emotional, that accompany same-sex attractions.

In the Christian context, we have mercy, compassion and forgiveness, service and self-giving, and the strength of the Cross, all of which form big pieces of the work of our apostolate and have great power to heal spiritual and moral wounds (not to vanquish same-sex attractions), especially when there is honest, humble, and courageous self-knowledge. We know that we cannot make real



progress in the spiritual life unless we know ourselves in the light of grace. Some of that knowledge may be painful or very sensitive or even embarrassing, and so we may turn away from the light of truth in discomfort. But that light is also a source of hope, and it brings some degree of liberation (see Jn 8:32). Fr. Harvey used to say that the hardest thing to do is accept the permissive will of God. But a peaceful resignation to the will of God opens the door to grace, as St. Paul says in Romans 8:28, where he reminds us that for those who love him, God works for the good in all things.

Needing to Connect

Claiming that people are “born that way” (an unproved assertion) or that “homosexuality is a blessing” (which is ambiguous) can leave someone a puzzle to himself. I am not suggesting that everyone needs therapy or counseling by any means, and I am a long way from suggesting that someone can “change,” another term that can be ambiguous. What I am saying is that a thoughtful and peaceful setting where people can bring things into the light to better understand themselves will be of practical help, because those questions we considered earlier—“Who am I? What am I? Why am I?”—are always at work. Recall Dan’s words: “There is a need to connect. . . . You’ve got to get this out.”

He was looking for the right forum to better understand himself, where he could trust that he would be accepted and understood, and where two of the biggest enemies faced by men and women with same-sex attractions—shame and isolation—could be eased. “Acceptance” is a third word that can be ambiguous in meaning, which is why the frame of any ministry must clearly reflect the Gospel and teachings of the Church. In the 1986 document from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons* (a title that I think might be phrased differently today, for example, *On the Pastoral Care of Persons with Homosexual Attractions*), Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger warned of what he called a “studied ambiguity” with regard to the relationship between certain groups that would like to enjoy the mantle of the Catholic Church and the teaching of the magisterium [11]. He wrote, “No authentic pastoral program will include organizations in which homosexual persons associate with each other without clearly stating that homosexual activity is immoral. A truly pastoral approach will appreciate the need for homosexual persons to avoid the near occasions of sin” [12]. I like to think that the goals of Courage and EnCourage express the “intellectual charity” (another “Benedictine”

phrase) of the Church. Pope Paul VI wrote in *Humanae vitae*, “Now it is an outstanding manifestation of charity toward souls to omit nothing from the saving doctrine of Christ” [13].

Three additional brief comments are in order here: First, to make plain the teachings of the Church and the goals of the ministry is fully in harmony with what Pope St. John Paul II called “the law of gradualness” [14], because the expectation is not that everyone who joins the group is already living all the virtues, but rather that they acknowledge the truth and good in the teachings of the Church and indicate their sincere desire to strive for them. Second, Courage members have told me that other groups—Dignity comes to mind, but it would not be the only one—that do not make plain their relationship with the content of the Church’s teaching on sexual ethics can function as meeting points for relationships that are not chaste. Finally, wherever such other groups exist, my impression is that Courage suffers, because its fidelity to the magisterium looks too severe or simply unrealistic.

Needing the Other

The need for community is strong in each of us, all the more so in those who, for any number of reasons, may find forming relationships a challenge. Those on the other side of this question (and I am not demonizing them) offer a community that seems welcoming, understanding, and supportive. I think we are in real danger of losing people from the faith because we do not appear to have something vital and attractive to offer as an alternative. I have done numerous clergy study days, and I do have the sense that Courage is providing a useful service to the Church in this regard. I am much more concerned about how that translates to our work on the ground. Most of our Courage and EnCourage groups are small, and lack the benefit of sufficient advertisement and promotion to regularly bring in new members. We have so many good means at our disposal to make known the Church’s yes to men and women with same-sex attractions and their families, including websites and social media, periodic bulletin announcements, confessionals, sermons, RCIA programs, vestibule bulletin boards and pamphlet racks, and diocesan newspapers. But of course, we need to use them.

The film *Desire of the Everlasting Hills* is available free on the Internet, and it has subtitles in nine languages. Please do watch the movie or put it in the hands of someone you trust to review it for you. I am not very savvy about the world of social media, but I know that links from Facebook



pages and diocesan websites will help to reach many people who will benefit from seeing it.

In the film, along with the voices of Dan, Rilene, and Paul, you also see the words of Benedict XVI: “Look at the face of the other. Discover that he has a soul, and a life, that he is a person and that God loves this person” [15]. I think this expresses the strength of Courage: to meet people and accompany them on their walk to the Lord, to the fullness of truth and charity. We avoid addressing homosexuality as a cultural or political issue, but rather look at it as a daily, personal reality in the lives of many people and seek to give voice to those whose lived experience includes both the homosexual tendency and trust in the maternal wisdom and charity of the Catholic Church.

Notes

[1] *Desire of the Everlasting Hills* is a film made in 2014 by the Courage apostolate. It can be viewed online without charge or purchased as a DVD at <http://www.everlastinghills.org>; a study guide is also available for free download, for use at the parish level, in university chaplaincies and high schools, and in other places where a thoughtful conversation about a difficult topic might be possible.

[2] US Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination: Guidelines for Pastoral Care* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2006), 21, <http://www>

[.usccb.org/about/doctrine/publications/upload/ministry-to-persons-of-homosexual-inclination-2006.pdf](http://www.usccb.org/about/doctrine/publications/upload/ministry-to-persons-of-homosexual-inclination-2006.pdf).

[3] Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et spes*, December 7, 1965, no. 22.

[4] USCCB, *Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination*, 17.

[5] *Ibid.*, 22.

[6] Francis, Press conference during return flight from Rio de Janeiro, July 28, 2013.

[7] See *Gaudium et spes*, no. 24: Man “cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself.”

[8] Joseph Ratzinger, “Christian Faith as ‘the Way’: An Introduction to *Veritatis Splendor*,” *Communio* 21.2 (Summer 1994): 109–207.

[9] Benedict XVI, *Caritas in veritate*, June 29, 2009, no. 3.

[10] See, for example, Rom 8:28: “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

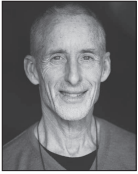
[11] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *On the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons*, October 1, 1986, no. 14.

[12] *Ibid.*, no. 15.

[13] Paul VI, *Humanae vitae*, July 25, 1968, no. 29.

[14] John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, November 22, 1981, no. 34.

[15] Benedict XVI, Remarks after the Angelus, January 10, 2010.



Beauty and Brokenness

Andrew Comiskey

Beautiful Jesus, His Body Broken for Me

I had ministered for years as an evangelical minister to the sexually broken. Grateful, I was yet still hungry for the whole meal: the centrality of the Crucified, the tabernacle, the door to His very body opened for me!

My core “ache” for Jesus satisfied when I became a Catholic, I still longed for what had been my familiar meal as an evangelical: the common grace of the “one another.” I needed to be known in my weakness by other saints who like me loved Jesus above all else and yet still ached for love in a disordered way. I needed Christ’s body broken for each other, the same body St. Paul referred to when he said: “God has arranged members of the body to extend honor to the parts that lack it” (1 Cor 12:26).

I began a prayer group for chastity in our parish that became a “watering hole” for several thirsty souls, and it has grown into a small community of wounded healers.

How beautiful is Jesus’ face to the unchaste in our parishes? Are there clear channels where the shameful can find the covering of holy honor?

Enslaving Liberties

I grew up overexposed in Southern California. I submitted my disintegrated masculine self to men in sexual pursuits. Seeking wholeness in that way only damaged me further. I began with porn and then evolved to real people. Seeking love, we hurt each other. Detached from the good of my own manhood, I attached understandably (and poorly) to aspects of masculinity in other men. Issues with my dad and my own temperament created a vulnerability to the false freedoms of a “gay-friendly” culture.

Is it clear how one might long for something in another when that is what he feels is lacking in himself?

Eyes of Love

My older brothers were “normal” demonized guys, full of misdirected might of which I often received the brunt end. I did not much like them. But when they both became Christians, I noticed a real change. They became tender and loving and began to talk with me as if they really cared

for me. I did not yet want their “Jesus,” but I could receive their kindness, perhaps the first fruit of their repentance. Similarly, my mother could see how I was in trouble, becoming someone she barely knew. When I came home from university and told her, “I am gay,” her eyes filled with tears and she simply said: “I have known people in that life, Andy. I wanted more for you.”

How do our eyes and words convey the kindness of Jesus to sinners? Do we believe that “the kindness of Jesus leads us to repentance” (Rom 2:4)?

Slow Road to Surrender

I came to believe that Jesus was my best hope, but I would not surrender to Him. The Holy Spirit had to expose my misery first. I ran out of a party after midnight one night and wound up at a revival meeting. Beautiful. Then one man, a Christian, kept calling me and even dropping by my apartment to remind me that a Christian loved me and was praying for me. One day while reading the words of John the Baptist: “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1: 29), I realized that God gave away everything to remove my sin and shame and to gain me. I pledged my allegiance to Him for life, come what may.

God gives us His heart for sinners as we pray and await chances to make God’s love known to them in specific, Spirit-led ways. Who are you praying for? How can you be an answer to your own prayers for another?

Confusion and the Cross

I attended a seminar at my university called “The Bible and Homosexuality” and was shocked to discover that ministers from many Christian denominations had gathered to say: “We have misunderstood Scripture—‘gay’ is good and the Church now wants to support homosexuals as a new form of justice.” What? I could not believe it. To my dismay, this gathering was not about Jesus but about “gay rights.” I knew very little, but I did know that becoming a Christian was about laying down rights and identifications, picking up the cross, and following Him. I left that seminar more committed than ever to carry my cross. I also determined



to lay down identifying as “gay.” I was a Christian, signed by the cross.

Jesus said that we must lose our lives to save them (see Mk 8:35). How have you surrendered aspects of your life—your desires, your “rights”—for the Gospel? How can you apply the merciful challenge of the cross to persons with same-sex attraction in our age of “gay rights”?

Deeper into His Body

I was weak. My temptations increased as a result of my faith commitment.

I needed a community of men around me to learn how to give and receive love the right way. I had never learned this with men. And it was central to my chastity—that is, my desire to reconcile the purpose of my bodily desires with my Christian spirituality. None of these men had homosexual problems, but they had a lot of other ones, like addiction to porn and masturbation, fear and contempt of women, and so on. Together, we began to confess our sins to each other and pray together for purity’s sake (see Jas 5:16). Through this two-year commitment, I grew in my integration as a man. For these welcoming men, I will be forever grateful.

Christopher West says: “We are all disintegrated persons in need of healing.” What is your wound? Your consolation? How can you comfort another in a different affliction (like homosexuality) with the comfort you received (see 2 Cor 1:3–5)?

Deeper Healing

When my feelings for one of my roommates became disordered, I realized I needed help outside of my immediate community. I found a faithful, skillful therapist who helped me to work through the deeper issues behind my desires. That took me right back to my “father wound,” where Jesus at work in my therapist helped me to let go of some of my defenses, forgive Dad from the heart, and proceed on with better boundaries and a resolution to love my roommate as a fellow man, shoulder to shoulder. My friend could not give me what my father had not, but we could direct each other onward in Jesus, the One we loved most.

It is humbling to seek help for shameful, messy emotions. But God is faithful and provides help for those who seek it. We in our churches can work cooperatively with skilled helpers who can assist strugglers to find focused, trustworthy care for the deeper issues at work in same-sex attraction.

The Whole Image

One of my housemates asked me why I was not dating anyone. I had no answer, and seriously doubted I had the gift of celibacy. That began a quest to discover who I was in relation to women. I discovered the great reformed theologian Karl Barth, who opened a horizon to me in his beautiful exposition of the *imago Dei*: what it means to manifest the Creator in humble reliance upon the other gender. I worked alongside a beautiful woman in a theological bookstore during this time, and slowly began to realize that I was falling in love with her. I faced many self-doubts and she some confusion as we grew as friends and then as exclusive partners considering marriage. But I desired her and wanted her best, even as I could tell she wanted mine. Our pastor connected us with a seasoned married couple with a similar history, who helped us a lot. The same pastor urged us to begin to minister to others who, like me, were seeking a bridge between repentance from their homosexuality and entering our faith community. My wife-to-be Annette and I discovered marriage and mission at the same time!

St. Paul writes that, in Christ, “woman is not independent of man nor man woman” (1 Cor 11:11). We must each discover our vocations in the faith community, and for some of us that will mean fruitful opposite-sex relationships. The Church must give wise counsel here and provide the support needed for one like me to carry his cross and discover the beauty of marriage.

Heart for the Body

God honored Annette and me with four wonderful children, now all grown and each in love with Jesus. We have also continued to act in merciful faith for persons dealing with a host of sexual problems; we committed ourselves to helping churches establish small groups where such issues can be addressed in a safe, inspired way. We served many different evangelical churches over the last thirty-five years, yet my hunger for the Catholic Church only deepened. I read St. John Paul II’s *Theology of the Body*: his tome rooted Barth’s insights on gender and sexuality into a beautiful Catholic context of redemption, including the salvific power of the Church herself. That converted me. Annette and I continue to labor for the Church to become whole, the bride who has made herself ready for Jesus, “radiant, without blemish or wrinkle, holy and blameless” (Eph 6:27).

“Father, help us to love Your Church, to see what You see in her. She is broken and beautiful, worthy of all our loving care as we prepare ourselves for You.”



Against All Odds

Paul Darrow

I'd like to tell you about an unborn baby whose mother thought about having him aborted and about a young child who was sexually molested by his mother's adult brother, by his own older brother, and by an older neighbor, all by the time he was only ten years old.

He's a boy who, from the time he was five years old until he went away to college, lived in almost constant fear of being beaten or shot to death by his violent father or his brother. You probably guessed that I am describing my early life.

Before I was a senior in college, I found myself loitering in the streets of Montreal, Miami, New York City, Paris, Florence, and Rome, always searching for men to love me. I did find all sorts of men to love me, but it wasn't the type of love that I needed.

Seeking validation from others, especially from handsome men, I chose to become an international fashion model. My life was about finding my knight in shining armor, my perfect "Prince Charming," who would love me forever. Although I never found that perfect Prince Charming, I was intimate with a famous real-life prince and with an embarrassingly huge number of other charmers. I became a sex addict before I had ever heard the term.

Like most homosexuals, I hated the Catholic Church because Catholicism stood between me and what I most worshipped. Sex was my god. "Gay" wasn't just *what* I was—it was *who* I was.

And that would have been the end of my story, if grace hadn't saved my life.

Over time, a number of "spiritual coincidences" in my life came into focus, and it became crystal clear to me that I was a child of God and that I belonged back in the Catholic Church.

So I returned after a forty-year absence, and it was wonderful. I confessed, promised to sin no more, and joyfully received Communion.

I then hit a gigantic brick wall. I began to see the truth about the real purpose of sexual intimacy and how such

intimacy belongs only within the sacred bond of marriage between one man and one woman.

My eyes were finally opened to the beauty of the sacredness of the human body.

But no matter how desperately I tried, I couldn't resist those lustful temptations that had so much power over me.

I'd go to confession and to Communion, commit sins of the flesh, and repeat the same pattern over and over again. I felt I was living a shameful secret, caught between my attraction and my faith.

Thinking that chastity was unattainable for me, I was distressed and truly lost.

Then I heard about Courage, the Catholic apostolate that ministers to men and women with same-sex attraction who desire to move beyond the confines of an incomplete homosexual identity to a more complete identity in Christ.

I became familiar with Father John Harvey, one of the founders of Courage, and listened to him gently explain the reasons why we need to be courageous in our battle against same-sex attraction.

Courage gave me the hope of being able to break free from the chains of my lustful desires. It gave me the confidence to distance myself from the lifestyle I'd been living and to be unafraid of any backlash from advocates of that lifestyle. I started praying the Rosary and visiting the adoration chapel.

I gradually began to feel some control over my lustful desires. Then, after months of defeat, a grace-filled moment enabled me not to give in to those inclinations. Experiencing something that I once thought impossible, I was instantly and effortlessly able to begin living a completely chaste life, and I have continued to do so ever since that blessed moment several years ago.

By exchanging my incomplete homosexual identity for a more complete one, I received a joy, a freedom, and a spiritual fulfillment that I had never known existed.

We all need courage in order to swim against those humongous cultural waves that are smashing against the sacredness of the body.

But with God's grace and with Courage, I have fallen in love with his light.

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Having been immersed in, and addicted to, the homosexual identity for about forty years, I am living proof that we do always have the chance not to give in to our inclinations and those destructive cultural forces.

Some of the most euphoric moments in my glamorous life were when I was with beautiful, famous, and wealthy people at magnificent penthouse parties, enjoying the

finest champagne and party favors while gazing out over the spectacular Manhattan skyline.

But those moments pale in comparison to the indescribable euphoria that comes over me when, with a pure, clean heart, I receive the body and blood of Our Lord during Mass.



On the Nature of Identity: Because You're an Accountant, and I'm Not

Rilene

We sat across the table, figuring out the finances for our first home purchase together, a townhouse in the suburbs of Washington, DC. My partner Margo was eleven years older than I, and had been in the workforce that much longer. So my question to her was, "How is it that *I* have the savings for the down payment, and you don't?" Margo had a quick wit, and a way of turning a phrase. Her response was, "Because you're an accountant, and I'm not." We laughed together, and that became one of our many catchphrases, that shorthand you have in relationships to remind you of a shared moment, or a truth, or an irony.

It highlighted for us our differences. I was conservative with my money, and she, more free spending. I was a little more logical, and she, intuitive. I was in the box, and she, well, she was not just out of the box; she wasn't even in the warehouse. "You are the string to my balloon"—another way of saying the same thing. "You keep me grounded." In some ways, this can be a limitation, but also, it keeps me from flying away, lost. And when I met her, I *was* an accountant. Or was I?

Right now, in my social circles, a discussion about identity is raging. I'm not sure who in the larger world might be discussing this, but in my Catholic world, among my Courage friends and my pro-life friends, we are thinking about identity. Specifically, is being "gay" an identity? And in the greater same-sex-attracted Christian community, people are taking sides, believe me.

I certainly spent a few decades claiming "gay" for myself. (Actually, to be accurate, "lesbian" is the term I claimed. In the gay culture, "gay" was a word reserved for the guys, mostly. You see, we didn't really mix that much with the men, and the borders were up between the male and female camps. That's why there's an *L* in LGBT. Although, "gay and lesbian" was so awkward a phrase, sometimes we let the "gay" label be an umbrella for us all.)

I put it out there in no uncertain terms: "I am a lesbian." I said it with pride. I said it to anyone I expected to remain in my life for more than just a transaction. I didn't tell the grocery clerk or the bank teller, but I did inform our realtor, our hair stylist (of course!—we were "family" and got the family discount), our neighbors, and our coworkers. I even told prospective employers: "I'm a lesbian. Will that be a problem for you?" Wow!

I saw it as essential information. As in "essence." As in "fundamental to the nature of someone." As in, my very being.

My understanding of identity then was so shallow.

I wonder at it, now. It seems so odd. Other segments of the population don't define themselves by whom they are attracted to or want to have sex with. You never meet someone at the company picnic who introduces himself as a likes-only-petite-redheads-with-unshaven-legs man. Nor does the guy at the Chamber of Commerce say, "Hi, I'm Fred. I'm a foot-fetishist." That is way too much information; people would run from you. Except in the LGBT world. And there, we—or I should now say "they"—wear their attractions on their sleeves (and on bumpers and windshields, and from the front porch as rainbow flags.)

As I ponder this identity question now, thirty or so years later, I have started to reject anything that starts with "I am a . . ." or "He or she is a . . ." Was I really even an accountant? Am I a software engineer now? Am I a white woman? Am I an Irish-English-German-American? Am I a cat owner, or pro-lifer, or a child of divorce, or a procrastinator, or a survivor of suicide, or an adult child of an alcoholic, or a public speaker, or a foodie, or a fatty, or an avid reader? Am I a Steelers or 49ers or Raiders fan?

Okay, none of the above on that last one. But as to the rest, they are not things that I am, but things that I do, and think, and feel. They are experiences that I have had, personality traits, conditions of my body, and values that I hold. They are circumstances that have helped to shape how I respond to people and situations. But none of them, taken in isolation, can do justice to who I am. They are at best descriptors of my life experience or character at points in time, now or in the past. But in my being, I cannot, and will not, be reduced to any one label.

The Catholic Church is clear on identity, and on sexual identity. It only takes two paragraphs in the *Catechism* to get to the heart of the matter:

God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life. . . . In his Son and through him, he invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus heirs of his blessed life. (CCC 1)



“God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.” Man occupies a unique place in creation: (I) he is “in the image of God”; (II) in his own nature he unites the spiritual and material worlds; (III) he is created “male and female”; (IV) God established him in his friendship. (CCC 355)

We are His creatures, made in His image and likeness—material and spiritual, either man or woman—and friends of Him. And through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, we are His children. There is no mention of race or nationality, job, career, or hobby. There is nothing about feelings or attractions. Pure and simple: we as human beings, man or woman, body and spirit, are *imago Dei*, children of God.

Identity is powerful. In war, when we want to enable our very human young troops to kill the enemy, we label them. I come from the Vietnam era, and “gooks” and “dinks” and “slopes” were all pejoratives our soldiers used to dehumanize the enemy. It made them easier to kill.

In the sixties, we fought not to be numbers, but to be names. In the nineties, the medical profession underwent sea change in patient care by recognizing that the person in room 455, bed A, was Mr. Jones, not the lymphoma or the

dementia, or the coronary bypass or the bipolar. We fight reductionism because it whittles away at our humanity and our dignity. It makes us flat and one-dimensional.

At this point in my thinking, I even disagree with Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous and all of the rest. “Hi, I’m John and I’m an alcoholic.” “Hi, John.” I acknowledge that it’s useful for someone to claim the disease and take responsibility for one’s condition at a certain point in recovery. It is useful because it breaks down the pride, the attitude. It demands humility and opens the wound to let the healing begin. But I really resist the idea that a person has to maintain that tag for the rest of his days in AA. With God’s grace, cannot a person with an alcohol habit leave it behind?

And so, now, I bristle when I hear someone identify as gay, or lesbian, or bisexual, and so on. I resist. It is too flat, too easy, too dismissive. I want to cry out at the injustice of it. We humans are all so much more than our feelings and attractions.

Margo was right. She was not an accountant. But neither was I.



I Am Not Gay ... I Am David

David Prosen

Are people born “gay” or do they choose to be gay?

The answer to both questions is no—although in many passionate debates generated by this topic, we are quick to dismiss objectivity. In reality, these questions provide a smoke screen to a much bigger problem that is pervasive in our society, in religious circles, politics, and clinical settings. The problem I speak of is the idea that homosexuality is an identity.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that every individual must “acknowledge and accept his sexual *identity*” (CCC 2333). This refers to the “physical, moral, and spiritual *difference and complementarity*” of both sexes which are “oriented toward the goods of marriage and the flourishing of family life” (ibid.). At the most basic level, our identity is rooted in the fact that we are created in the image and likeness of God—“Male and female He created them” (Gen 1:27).

I used to believe I was a “gay” person. I had been attracted to the same sex for as long as I could remember. Because this attraction was present from early on in my life, without my conscious choice, I concluded that I must have been born this way. After all, that’s a logical conclusion ... right?

The attraction I had to the same sex when I was a little boy was normal and similar to what many boys experience. Boys look for heroes, role models whom they respect and want to emulate. For me, the attraction to men started out with normal admiration but then began to take some dysfunctional turns. As a child, I was often made fun of and told by my peers that I wasn’t like them. This made me question what the difference between us was. At this point, shades of covetousness characterized my admiration. I secretly wondered, “If I looked like so-and-so, would I be accepted?”

In puberty, this attraction or admiration became eroticized. The derogative homosexual label was given to me by my peers, and I yielded to their accusations because I

truly did have a sexualized same-sex attraction. Eventually, I embraced this label and called myself “gay.”

Although I didn’t freely choose same-sex attractions, I did willfully choose to act upon them. My decision to sin brought me intense pain, loneliness, and—worst of all—separation from God. The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith explained this reality in a statement that observed, “As in every moral disorder, homosexual activity prevents one’s own fulfillment and happiness by acting contrary to the creative wisdom of God. The Church, in rejecting erroneous opinions regarding homosexuality, does not limit personal freedom and dignity realistically and authentically understood” [1].

Eventually, in my brokenness, I responded to the Lord’s loving call to forgiveness and healing. He has brought me through the valley of shame and out of the darkness of my past and shined His light of truth upon the many lies I believed about myself—especially the one that claimed that I was a “gay” person.

Defining Terms

By defining myself as a “gay” male, I had taken on a false identity. Any label such as “lesbian,” “bisexual,” or even “homosexual” insinuates a *type* of person equivalent to male or female. This is simply not true. One *is not* a same-sex attraction, but instead *experiences* this attraction.

In his book *Growth into Manhood*, Alan Medinger shows that homosexual tendencies and behaviors have been around for thousands of years, but the idea of a homosexual identity only began to evolve about 150 years ago with the emergence of the term “homosexual” [2].

In a later study, Medinger further demonstrates his findings, revealing a number of untruths that tend to surface when one accepts homosexuality as an identity:

- I must have been born this way.
- If I was born that way, God made me this way.
- If God made me this way, how can there be anything wrong with it?
- It’s in my nature and I must be true to my nature.
- If it’s my nature, I can’t change.
- If I try to change, I would be trying to go against my nature, and that would be harmful.

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- Accepting myself as gay feels so good—I feel like a thousand-pound load has been lifted off of my back—so it must be okay.
- If people can't accept my being gay, then something is wrong with them.
- If people can't accept my being gay, then they don't accept me because that's *who* I am [3].

When I read these, I was floored. I believed each and every statement deep down to my core. When I was engaged in this lifestyle, it made perfect sense to go along with what felt natural. However, it was logical only because it *appeared* to be truth. In reality, lies had to be built upon lies for them to add up to something with the semblance of truth.

I believed I was gay. But I was also certain that I didn't choose this for myself, and so I believed that God must have made me this way. However, Scripture verses like the following made no sense in light of my feelings: "If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall be put to death, their blood is upon them" (Lev 20:13).

How could a God of love create me this way and then condemn me to hell? I began to do what many other Christians struggling with same-sex attraction do and searched for "pro-gay" theologies for explanations. I desperately wanted to be in a loving relationship with the same sex, but at the same time, I had a gnawing feeling in my heart that this was wrong.

Time for Truth

Looking back, I believe that my search for truth and struggle against accepting this lifestyle was ultimately the way in which the Holy Spirit convicted me. Still, this gnawing feeling—that same-sex attraction was not God's plan for my life—was not easy for me to reconcile with, because I believed that my sexuality alone was my identity.

Ignorance of this distinction is dangerous. My false beliefs regarding my identity deterred me from accepting the conviction in my heart from the Holy Spirit. St. Paul acknowledged this very same process, explaining:

Because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator . . . God gave them up to dishonorable passions. Their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error (Rom 1:25–27).

Only after I accepted the truth that acting on homosexual attractions was a sin did I begin to ask for the strength and the grace to carry that cross—and the Lord abundantly poured these upon me. Several years later, He showed me that homosexuality was a false identity that I had embraced. And at this point, my integral healing began as I searched out who I really was. My reflections led me to the discovery that I never truly believed I was a man, and yet I didn't think I was a woman. In that searching process, I realized that I did not fully identify with either sex.

Through the sacraments—especially the Eucharist—as well as counseling, spiritual healing retreats, and much prayer, Christ revealed to me that I *am* a man. I have many masculine traits that I was never aware I possessed—such as courage and strength. I can never adequately express the tremendous joy I felt when I began to internally recognize and accept the fact that I am a man, I am masculine, and I do belong in the world of men. At the same time this recognition occurred to me, my attraction to men continued to decrease drastically and my attraction to women increased.

Identity and the Church

At the beginning of this article, I mentioned the discussion over whether persons are born homosexual or if they choose to be. Neither is true because same-sex attraction is an experience—not a type of person. Accepting homosexuality as an identity, which has largely been affirmed in our culture, brings so much confusion. In order for a Christian to justify homosexual behavior, he or she needs to alter and contort Sacred Scripture.

Many individuals from within are trying to force the Catholic Church to change her stance toward homosexuality because it *seems* like discrimination against those who are just "being themselves." But it is not discrimination when we identify and seek to correct falsely held beliefs.

The problem has not just affected those dissenting in our Church. There are very good Catholics and even good priests who wrongly assert that people cannot change their sexual orientation. These people may have the best of intentions, but for whatever reason they have bought into the lie that homosexuality is a type of person.

The Church's response to those suffering with same-sex attraction offers us this perspective:

The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in



their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition (*CCC 2358*).

There is hope for those who have same-sex attraction, and we must not abandon efforts to help others understand the truth. This is not to say that God will "change" His creation, the person, because He did not make them this way or intend for them to experience this attraction. Rather, God can change the person's way of thinking by revealing the lie that the individual has accepted and assimilated into their sense of self.

Once the lie is exposed, wounds that led to this lie, such as abuse, rejection, or lack of affirmation in one's sexual identity, can be addressed, healing can begin, and the person's true identity can emerge. When this healing process begins, the attraction to the opposite sex for many has increased.

Courage, the Catholic support group for those with same-sex attraction, as well as many Christians, refrain from using words such as "gay," "lesbian," "bisexual," "transgender," or even "homosexual." Words can have powerful effects. Because these words are labels which insinuate that homosexuality is an identity, they reinforce untruths and continue to escalate the problems in our society and our Church. As Catholic Christians, I encourage each of us to be careful with our speech and eliminate the use of labels and instead use the words "same-sex attraction," which more accurately describe the experience that these men and women go through.

Heart Knowledge

Earlier, I spoke of the importance of recognizing that I am a man and feeling it internally within my heart. Fr. Larry Richards' challenging book *Be a Man!* helped me obtain even deeper healing. Intellectually, I knew that God was my Heavenly Father, but I didn't really know and believe it with my whole being. And then I read the following passage in Fr. Larry's book:

When we were baptized, the sky opened up just like it did upon Jesus, and spiritually, God the Father, the Creator of the universe, looked at you and me and said, "You

are my beloved Son." You stopped being a creation and you became a son of the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit. [4]

Talk about the power of words! In Jesus, we *are* sons and daughters of the Creator of the universe. He truly loves us more than we could ever imagine. *This is our true identity; this is who each of us truly is.*

Isaiah 43:4 states, "You are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you. . . ." Fr. Larry brought this verse home to me in a very personal way by explaining:

We must enter into a relationship with God knowing that truth. We must know that our relationship begins where Jesus began, with the knowledge that we are loved by the Father. The God of the universe looks at you and says: "I love you!" [5]

This touched me deeply. Before this inner healing took place, I had known with certainty that God loved everyone. But when it came to Him loving me *personally*, I only knew this intellectually—not in my heart. Fr. Larry helped me to connect this truth from my head to my heart.

I am grateful to God for showing me my true identity in Him. Now, I embrace my masculinity and know that I am a man of God. In Jesus, I know I am a beloved son of God who is uniquely and wondrously created, and whose name is David.

Notes

[1] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Some Considerations Concerning the Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual Persons," July 22, 1992, no. 3.

[2] Alan Medinger, *Growth into Manhood* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2000).

[3] Medinger, "Calling Oneself 'Gay' or 'Lesbian' Clouds One's Self-Perception," in *Same-Sex Attraction: A Parent's Guide*, ed. John F. Harvey, OSFS, and Gerard V. Bradley (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2003), 173.

[4] Fr. Larry Richards, *Be a Man!* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 43.

[5] *Ibid.*, 37.



Sexuality and Identity: Scientific Findings

Key Findings

Sexual Attraction

- Today, terms like “homosexual persons” and “sexual orientation” are used as if they had a univocal meaning and described objective, even obvious realities existing in the world. But phrases like “homosexual persons” and “sexual orientation” can be misleading, and words like “homosexual” and “homosexuality” are ambiguous.
 - “Sexual orientation”: this term can refer to (1) complex patterns of desires and attractions, (2) sexual behaviors, or (3) a self-proclaimed identity. But for many individuals these three phenomena often do not align.
 - “Sexual orientation” doesn’t necessarily accurately reflect an innate and immutable biological or psychological trait.
 - The term “homosexual” doesn’t pick out stable, clearly measurable and verifiable biological or psychological traits.
- Sexual attractions are shaped by many factors (including environmental and experiential ones), and are sometimes fluid and subject to change across a person’s lifetime. Substantive changes—typically toward heterosexual desire—often occur even without deliberate effort as adolescents and young adults mature.
- “Neuroplasticity” shows that the brain—including regions involved in sexual arousal and behavior—can be reshaped over time by life experiences, including relationships, and by sexual behaviors and habits.
- While many today still believe that individuals identifying as gay or lesbian were “born that way,” there is little scientific evidence that homosexual attraction is simply fixed by genes or by prenatal hormonal influences. In fact, a robust body of evidence suggests that it is shaped far more by a person’s relationships, culture, and other experiences. Scientific research suggests that while genetic factors may modestly influence same-sex inclination and behavior, subsequent environmental factors play a larger role.
- The assumption that romantic or sexual desire, attraction, interest, or longing automatically implies a

particular “sexual identity” or “orientation” is problematic. While these terms may sound as though they are derived from biological or medical science, they are not. Research and pastoral practice would best be served by distinguishing among inclination, behavior, and identity, and by acknowledging that these may sometimes change over time.

- As human beings, all of us have desires and longings for deep intimacy with other human beings. These desires—sexual, romantic, or otherwise—are influenced by many factors, including the decisions that we make to cultivate, shape, and channel them over time.
- Insisting on language better suited to scientific and anthropological realities will help clarify the truth about our identity as human persons and the true basis of our dignity, for those within and beyond our religious communities.

Sexual Identity

- Biologically rooted sex differences between men and women have been shown to run through all levels of human biology—from organism-wide traits, to subtle features of organs and tissues, and even to differences on the cellular and molecular level. The differences are not just physiological and anatomical, but also psychological; aside from our reproductive organs, the most sexually differentiated human organ is the *brain*.
 - Men and women differ in terms of our experience of emotion, our memory, our vision, and our hearing; men and women differ in our perceptual processing of faces, as well as in pain perception, navigation, neurotransmitter levels in our brain, and stress hormone effects on our bodies. Men and women are prone to different diseases and respond differently to the same medical treatments. Many of these differences are innate and built into our created nature—they are present from before birth and persist throughout life.
 - Accurate knowledge of these differences will allow us to more effectively conduct research and educational approaches to the unique needs of men and women, precisely so that we help each to reach their full potential.



- These truths have become increasingly clouded today by a nonscientific gender ideology, which claims that “gender” can be divorced from our biological sex; it claims that gender is not limited to male and female but exists on a spectrum; it even claims that individuals can choose to radically remake their gender according to their subjective preferences.
- But scientific evidence runs contrary to this sharp division between biological sex and socially constructed gender. This fact of sexual differentiation goes beyond our reproductive organs, to encompass our thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and interactions.
- Rare “intersex” conditions, which are caused by genetic or hormonal abnormalities, do not undermine the basic biological norm of male and female. Modern medicine understands these conditions to be *anomalies* or *disorders* of sexual development; they are typically characterized by sexual or reproductive problems like infertility and other functional deficiencies.
 - There is no credible scientific evidence that people suffering from gender-identity disorder or gender dysphoria were somehow “born in the wrong body.”

Some researchers have tried to show that these individuals have brain features closer to their “desired gender” than to their biological sex. But these studies have shown inconclusive results at best, and the weight of the current scientific evidence contradicts this notion.

- The personal distress of individuals with gender dysphoria is analogous to the distress found in other psychiatric conditions like anorexia or body-dysmorphic disorder—which involve believing that one is obese when the opposite is true, or focusing obsessively on physical traits that one hasn’t accepted. All of these conditions involve discomfort with one’s own body, a distorted body image, a strong and persistent desire to have different physical traits, and difficulties with identity.
- Gender reassignment procedures (like sex-change operations and associated hormonal therapies) do not typically help such people, as shown by studies of mental- and physical-health outcomes after such procedures.

Explanatory Essay

Sexual Desire

Drawing upon extensive research in the biological, psychological, and social sciences regarding sexuality and identity (to be summarized in a forthcoming publication), we wish to offer thoughts that we hope will help the Conference participants. We offer them as a commentary on language and terms often borrowed from popular culture in our religious communities’ pastoral writings and discourse.

Today, terms like “homosexual persons” and “sexual orientation” are used as if they had a clear meaning and described objective, even obvious realities existing in the world. But we think that scientific findings tell a different story. In light of the biological and psychological sciences, we believe that phrases like “homosexual persons” and “sexual orientation” are misleading, and that words like “homosexual” and “homosexuality” are ambiguous (similar problems likely plague the words “heterosexual” and “heterosexuality”).

Consider “sexual orientation”: this term can refer to (1) complex patterns of desires and attractions, (2) sexual

behaviors, or (3) a self-proclaimed identity. But research shows that for many individuals these three phenomena often do not align. Ignoring these distinctions may thus hinder efforts to develop pastoral guidance—or design research—aimed at helping those who identify as homosexual in any of these senses. Besides being ambiguous, the concept of “sexual orientation” is misleading; it carries a false scientific veneer. “Sexual orientation” doesn’t actually capture an innate and immutable biological or psychological trait; indeed, the notion didn’t emerge from any research in biology or psychology. It is, instead, a social construct invented in the nineteenth century—one whose ambiguity makes it difficult for science to study.

Likewise, the common popular belief that “homosexual” and “heterosexual” describe different types of human beings is not based on science; such terms don’t pick out stable, clearly measurable and verifiable biological or psychological traits. Indeed, new “sexual orientations” could be multiplied indefinitely to match the vast range of human sexual behavior and expression. Some advocates have already pushed for civil law to recognize asexuality, polyamory, and even pedophilia as sexual orientations in the same sense. And psychiatric clinical literature and research



identify countless fetishes—more or less stable patterns of sexual desire and behavior—that one could, by this logic, call orientations.

Research on human sexuality demonstrates not only that sexual desires are complex and difficult to measure, but that they are shaped by many factors (including environmental and experiential ones), and often subject to change across a person's lifetime. Of course, no one wakes up and simply *chooses* to have these or those desires. But recent scientific findings demonstrate that sexual desire is often fluid and changeable—most fluid perhaps in women, but also remarkably so in young men. As several large and robust studies have shown, substantive changes—typically toward heterosexual desire—often occur even without deliberate effort as adolescents and young adults mature. The most comprehensive of these studies found that 80 percent of boys reporting predominant *same-sex* attraction as adolescents—and 80 percent reporting *both-sex* attractions—by their twenties came to report *exclusively opposite-sex* attractions. The same was true of more than half of both-sex attracted adolescent girls. (Heterosexual attractions, by contrast, were found in this study to be quite stable.) [1]

These findings cohere with recent research on “neuroplasticity,” which shows that the brain—including regions involved in sexual arousal and behavior—can be reshaped over time by life experiences, including relationships, sexual behaviors, and habits. As one prominent psychiatrist and researcher puts it: “The human libido is not a hardwired, invariable biological urge but can be curiously fickle, easily altered by our psychology and the history of our sexual encounters. . . . Sexual taste is obviously influenced by culture and experience and is often acquired and then wired into the brain” [2]. This is not to suggest that same-sex attractions are always able to change; for some individuals these attractions may remain more stable across the life span.

While many today still believe that individuals identifying as gay or lesbian were “born that way,” there is little scientific evidence that homosexual desire is simply fixed by genes. In fact, a robust body of evidence suggests that it is shaped far more by a person's relationships, culture, and other experiences. Several large studies have shown that genetically identical twins aren't much more likely than nonidentical siblings to report both experiencing homosexual desire or behavior wherever one sibling does (with concordance rates for identical twins ranging from 5 percent to 24 percent, depending on the study and its criteria for defining “homosexual”) [3].

Moreover, homosexuality isn't distributed evenly across different environments and experiences, as genetically set

traits are. According to the largest and most comprehensive study of sexual behavior in the United States, rates of male homosexual behavior depend to a remarkable extent on whether the person spent his adolescence in a rural or urban area; adult males who had spent adolescence in an urban area were four times more likely to have had a same-sex partner in the past year. The same survey found that adult men are two times more likely—and adult women are *nine* times more likely—to identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual if they attended college [4]. In short, scientific research suggests that while genetic factors may modestly influence same-sex desire and behavior, environmental factors play a larger role [5].

To summarize, the concept of orientation, and related categories like “homosexual” and “heterosexual,” often obscure the subtlety, complexity, and fluidity of sexual desire and related phenomena. The automatic inference from romantic or sexual desire, attraction, interest, or longing to “sexual identity” or “orientation” is therefore problematic. While these terms may sound as though they are derived from biological or medical science, they are not. Research and pastoral practice would best be served by distinguishing among desire, behavior, and identity, and by acknowledging that these may sometimes change over time.

These scientific findings confirm what many religious traditions, including Christianity, have long understood regarding the human person: while our biological and psychological constitution as *male* and *female* represents pervasive and innate features of our sexual and personal identity, sexual orientation categories do not. Too often the language now used in religious contexts suggests, unwittingly, that “homosexual persons” or “homosexuals” constitute a particular species of individual, differentiated from the rest of humanity by clearly identifiable biological or psychological features. We hope our brief analysis has demonstrated that this is not what science shows about human sexuality. Research suggests that a person's sexual desires do not constitute a stable or genetically fixed feature of his or her biological or psychological makeup; neither do such desires and attractions influence the person's constitution in such a way that science suggests we should understand their well-being in radically different terms. It is worth noting here that the same could be said of the terms “heterosexual” or “heterosexuality” [6].

Regarding sexuality and identity, the most basic category and the most important distinction is that we are *men* or *women*. As we describe in the next section, there are important and scientifically measurable perceptual, cognitive, affective, social, and relational differences derived



from this sexual differentiation between male and female—differences that run deeper than our reproductive organs, and that constitute essential features of our sexuality.

By contrast, our complex, often fluid sexual desires and attractions constitute a more peripheral and variable feature of our biological and psychological constitution. As human beings, all of us have desires and longings for deep intimacy with other human beings. These desires—sexual, romantic, or otherwise—are influenced by many factors, including the decisions that we make to cultivate, shape, and channel them over time.

We believe that the language used in religious and pastoral documents should strive to accurately reflect these realities. To avoid these “sexual orientation” categories—now widely, though misguidedly, accepted and employed—may prove challenging when writing or speaking on these issues. But distinguishing among homosexual desire, behavior, and identity—and avoiding misleading or confusing uses of “orientation” terms—will in the long run better serve pastoral practice, research, and other aims of our religious communities. We believe that insisting on language better suited to scientific and anthropological realities will help clarify the truth about our identity as human persons and the true basis of our dignity, for those within and beyond our religious communities.

We wish to respond to the possible objection that by rejecting the utility of this terminology, we are ignoring or implicitly denying the pastoral or moral challenges that people face in the sexual realm. To the contrary, we fully recognize these challenges. Indeed, we are motivated by the belief that they can be adequately addressed only *if* we begin from scientifically responsible starting points. If these issues are framed in categories that serve (even just unintentionally) to encase or entrap people in social constructs—which can artificially limit their development—we risk laying a burden on them too great for any man or woman to bear, rather than helping them toward the freedom to which they are all called.

Gender Identity

Men and women—mothers and fathers—are not interchangeable parts in a family. Science is increasingly discovering the remarkable and subtle ways that men and women are differentiated, with each one beautifully suited to complement the gifts of the other. As a result of this complementarity, the unique relationship of marriage has beneficial effects on the mental and physical health of both husbands and wives. To cite just one example, marriage

lowers men’s risks of aggressive or impulsive behaviors, because the stable marital relationship with a woman modulates a man’s levels of testosterone.

Biologically rooted sex differences between men and women have been shown by scientific studies to run through all levels of human biology—from organism-wide traits, to subtle features of organs and tissues, and even to differences on the cellular and molecular level. The differences are not just biological, but also psychological; it turns out that aside from our reproductive organs, the most sexually differentiated human organ is the *brain*.

We now know that men and women differ in terms of our experience of emotion, our memory, our vision, and our hearing; men and women differ in our perceptual processing of faces, as well as in pain perception, navigation, neurotransmitter levels in our brain, and stress hormone effects on our bodies. Men and women are prone to different diseases and respond differently to the same medical treatments. Research has demonstrated that many of these differences are innate and built into our created natures—they are present from before birth and persist throughout life [7].

A recent report of the prestigious National Academy of Sciences in the United States stated: “Sex matters. Sex, that is, being male or female, is an important basic human variable that should be considered when designing and analyzing studies in all areas and at all levels of biomedical and health related research” [8]. Rather than providing a basis for male-female inequality, biological sex differences suggest complementarity, which is perfectly compatible with equality. Accurate knowledge of these differences will allow us to more effectively tailor research and educational approaches to the unique needs of men and women, precisely so that we help each to reach their full potential.

However, these truths about the complementarity of men and women have become increasingly clouded today by a gender ideology that rejects our embodied sexual nature. To adopt this gnostic ideology requires that we ignore not only common sense but also extensive research findings in modern biology, neuroscience, and medicine. This ideology claims that “gender” can be divorced from our biological sex; it claims that gender is not limited to male and female but exists on a spectrum; it even claims that individuals can choose to radically remake their gender according to their subjective preferences. We can take as a representative of this view the phrase of Simone de Beauvoir, who in the last century heralded this gender ideology with her famous claim, “One is not born a woman; one becomes a woman” [9].



But scientific evidence in the biological, psychological, and social sciences runs contrary to this sharp division between biological sex and socially constructed gender. This fact of sexual differentiation goes beyond our reproductive organs, to encompass our thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and interactions. It influences the unique and irreplaceable way that men and women bond, not only in the creation of new human life, but in the institution of the family, which provides such life with the most suitable social context in which it can develop and flourish. Men and women are finely tuned at every level—biological, psychological, social, and spiritual—to complement one another in the process of cocreating, educating, and raising new members of the human family. The unique roles of man and woman in marriage are therefore irreplaceable. This truth has been taught for centuries by the world’s great religious traditions, and it is confirmed also by the fascinating and beautiful findings of modern scientific research.

It may be helpful to point out that rare “intersex” conditions, which are caused by genetic or hormonal abnormalities, do not undermine the basic biological fact of sexual dimorphism—the biological norm of male and female. Modern medicine understands these conditions to be *anomalies* or *disorders* of sexual development; such conditions are typically characterized by sexual or reproductive problems like infertility. They involve biological and functional deficiencies when measured against the natural norm of male and female.

A comprehensive treatment of the issue of gender-identity disorder, gender dysphoria, or what is popularly called transgenderism lies outside the scope of this short work. We will mention briefly, however, that there is no credible scientific evidence that people suffering from gender-identity disorder or gender dysphoria were somehow “born in the wrong body.” Some researchers have tried to show that these individuals have brain features closer to their “desired gender” than to their biological sex. But these studies have shown inconclusive results at best; and the weight of the current scientific evidence contradicts this notion.

Rather, the subjective distress of individuals with gender dysphoria is analogous to the distress found in other psychiatric conditions like anorexia or body-dysmorphic disorder—which involve believing that one is obese when the opposite is true, or focusing obsessively on physical traits that one hasn’t accepted. All of these conditions involve discomfort with one’s own body, a distorted body image, a strong and persistent desire to have different physical traits, and difficulties with identity.

Individuals suffering from these feelings indeed call for compassion, as well as sensitive psychological and pastoral assistance—but assistance that actually helps them. But so-called gender-reassignment procedures do not actually help such people, as shown by studies of mental- and physical-health outcomes after such procedures. One Swedish study of seven hundred people ten years after gender-reassignment surgery showed that these individuals tragically continued to suffer: they had suicide attempts at seven times the rate of the general population; they completed suicide at rates nineteen times that of the general population; their mortality rate was four times higher than the general population; and their rate of psychiatric hospitalization was also four times higher than the general population. In short, the procedure did not fix their distress or their mental-health problems.

Treatment approaches based upon notions of gender that do not comport with the truth about the human person, not surprisingly, appear to be ineffective. Better treatment and pastoral approaches are most certainly called for; otherwise, we risk abandoning individuals who are suffering, or offering them a solution that does not get to the root of the problem, and so does not resolve their distress.

In regard to gender and sexuality, we conclude with some remarks from Pope Benedict XVI:

The human being is not a self-sufficient individual nor an anonymous element in the group. Rather he is a unique and unrepeatable person, intrinsically ordered to relationships and sociability. Thus the Church reaffirms her great “yes” to the dignity and beauty of marriage as an expression of the faithful and generous bond between man and woman, and her no to “gender” philosophies, because the reciprocity between male and female is an expression of the beauty of nature willed by the Creator [10].

Notes

[1] The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (known by researchers as “Add Health”) was a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of over 90,000 US individuals, followed prospectively from adolescence to young adulthood. For the data cited here, see J. Udry and K. Chantala, “Risk Factors Differ according to Same-Sex and Opposite-Sex Interests,” *Journal of Biological Science* 37 (2005): 481–97; and R. Savin-Williams and G. Ream, “Prevalence and Stability of Sexual Orientation Components during Adolescence and Young Adulthood,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 36 (2007): 385–94.



[2] N. Doidge, “Acquiring Tastes and Loves,” in *The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2007).

[3] J.M. Bailey, M. Dunne, and N. Martin, “Genetic and Environmental Influences on Sexual Orientation and Its Correlates in an Australian Twin Sample,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78 (2000): 524–36; P. Bearman and H. Bruckner, “Opposite-Sex Twins and Adolescent Same-Sex Attraction,” *American Journal of Sociology* 107 (2002): 1179–205; S. Kendler, L. Thornton, S. Gilman, and R. Kessler, “Sexual Orientation in a U.S. National Sample of Twin and Nontwin Sibling Pairs,” *American Journal of Psychiatry* 157 (2000): 1843–46; N. Langstrom, Q. Rahman, E. Carlstrom, and P. Lichtenstein, “Genetic and Environmental Effects on Same-Sex Sexual Behavior: A Population Study of Twins in Sweden,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 39 (2010): 75–80.

[4] E. Laumann, J.H. Gagnon, R.T. Michael, and S. Michael, *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[5] N. Langstrom, Q. Rahman, E. Carlstrom, and P. Lichtenstein, “Genetic and Environmental Effects on Same-Sex Sexual Behavior: A Population Study of Twins in Sweden,” *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 39 (2010): 75–80.

[6] It is instructive to note in this context that, from the perspective of natural-law theory and Catholic moral theology, the essential distinction is between marital acts

(which are necessarily sexual acts of the procreative type) and nonmarital sexual acts (including all complete sexual acts that are not procreative in type), and *not* between homosexual and heterosexual acts.

[7] As one leading neuroscience researcher put it: “Sex influences on brain function are ubiquitous, found at every level of neuroscience from the behaving human to the [molecular] ion channel. . . . Those who know the [research] literature would find it difficult to think of a single domain of brain research that remains untouched by this hugely important development” (L. Cahill, “Oversimplifying Sexual Differences in the Brain, a review of *Man and Woman: An Inside Story*,” *Cerebrum* (May 2011). For a good overview summary of brain differences by sex as these relate to cognition, see Diane Halpern, *Sex Differences in Cognitive Abilities* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2011).

[8] National Academy of Sciences, “Exploring the Biological Contributions to Human Health: Does Sex Matter?” (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2001), <https://iom.nationalacademies.org/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2003/Exploring-the-Biological-Contributions-to-Human-Health-Does-Sex-Matter/DoesSexMatter8pager.pdf>.

[9] Simone de Beauvoir, *Das andere Geschlecht* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1968), 265.

[10] Pope Benedict, XVI, Address to participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*, January 19, 2013.



Summary of Research Results: Children and Same-Sex Parenting

Jennifer Roback Morse, PhD

This executive summary provides an analysis of the state of our knowledge about the likely impact of same-sex parenting on children. Information is necessarily incomplete.

- The number of children in same-sex households is small.
- Children can enter into a same-sex household in several ways: adoption, third-party reproduction, and from a previous heterosexual relationship. Making appropriate comparisons between children of same-sex couples and comparable opposite-sex couples requires an enormous amount of data.
- Same-sex parenting is relatively new, and the full impact over the life span of the child cannot now be fully known.
- At this point in time, we must draw inferences based on studies of varying quality and other social-science results on related topics that we know with more certainty.

Highlights

The children who live with their own mothers and fathers married to each other in a low-conflict union have better life chances and outcomes on a variety of measures compared with children in other family forms that have been carefully studied. These outcomes are a reflection of the basic injustice done to children who are deprived of a relationship with one of their parents without good reason.

The overall inference to draw from the body of evidence is that we cannot convincingly claim that there is “no difference” between the children of same-sex couples and opposite-sex couples. Over time, we will accumulate more data and observe longer term outcomes. We have no scientific basis for presuming that the social experiment of same-sex parenting will be harmless, much less beneficial to the outcomes children experience.

Basic Demographic Facts about Children of Same-Sex Couples in the United States

According to the Williams Institute (Gates, 2013):

- About 0.3% of American children aged eighteen and under are being raised in a same-sex couple household.

This amounts to 220,000 children out of 73 million children total in the United States.

- Of these 220,000 children, about 59 percent or 129,200 children are classified as “biological” children of one of the adults. These children were produced via some form of third-party reproduction. An unknown percentage of these children have never known their gamete “donor” parent.
- Of the total 220,000 children, 7 percent or 16,400 are classified as stepchildren. These children were conceived in a heterosexual relationship, and experienced the separation or divorce of their parents.
- Of the total 220,000 children, 12 percent were either adopted or foster children. Ten percent or 22,500 were adopted, and 2 percent or 3,400 were foster children, for a total of 25,900 children.
- Of the total 220,000 children, 22 percent or 48,500 were classified as “other,” including grandchildren, siblings, or others unrelated to the adults in the home.

Studies claiming to show “no differences” between children of same-sex couples and opposite-sex couples are flawed.

Careful reviews of the methodology of the same-sex parenting studies have concluded that the “no differences” claim is not supported by the available evidence (Lerner and Nagai, 2001; Marks, 2012; Nock, 2001). The most recent (Marks, 2012) is a careful examination of the fifty-nine studies cited in the American Psychological Association’s brief (Patterson, 2005) that claims, “Not a single study has found children of lesbian or gay parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents.”

The review concluded: “Not one of the 59 studies referenced in the 2005 APA Brief compares a large, random, representative sample of lesbian or gay parents and their children with a large, random, representative sample of married parents and their children. The available data, which are drawn primarily from small convenience samples, are insufficient to support a strong generalizable claim either way. Such a statement would not be grounded in science” (Marks, 2012).



One important exception to this statement is the 2010 study by Michael Rosenfeld using US Census data. This study examines a socially significant question—namely, do children of same-sex couples make timely progress through school compared with other children? This study has a large random sample, of over 700,000 observations, and concludes that there is “no difference” between the children of same-sex couples and other children. However, this data was reanalyzed with different methods and obtained a different result. This brings me to my next point.

Comparing studies of the same outcome, the newer studies showing some differences are methodologically superior to those showing no differences.

Allen, Pakaluk, and Price’s Challenge

Allen, Pakaluk, and Price (2012) challenge these results because Rosenfeld excluded all children who were completely unrelated to both adults in the household, and all households in which the family did not reside in the same location for the five previous years. They argue that excluding these children eliminates two of the important routes through which living with a same-sex couple may affect children and their progress through school. When all the children are included, and these variables are statistically accounted for, significant differences between children of same-sex couples and other family structures do emerge. (The sample size without the restrictions rises to 1.6 million children.)

The following was found when comparing groups with children raised by same-sex couples:

- Children raised by heterosexual married couples are 35 percent more likely to be making normal progress through school.
- Children raised by cohabiting heterosexual couples are 15 percent more likely to be making normal progress through school.
- Children raised by their never married mothers are 23 percent more likely to be making normal progress through school.

Allen’s Study of Canadian High School Graduation Rates

Douglas Allen’s study (2013) is a variation on the theme of children making appropriate progress through school, examining high school graduation rates for Canadian

children. The study is based on a random 20 percent sample from the 2006 Canadian Census with roughly two million observations.

Children were classified as having same-sex parents if they answered yes to the following question: “Are you a child of a male (female) same-sex married or common law couple?” Families with a gay or lesbian single parent were classified as single parents.

Children living in same-sex couple households were on average 65 percent less likely to graduate from high school on time, with girls struggling more than boys and girls living with two fathers struggling particularly: such girls are 15 percent as likely to graduate on time.

Sullins’s Studies of Children’s Emotional Difficulties

Sullins’s studies (2015) of children’s emotional difficulties, using the Strengths and Difficulties Test, and the accompanying study on ADHD is based on the US National Health Interview Survey, with approximately 1.6 million people, including 207,000 children from 1997 to 2013. Family variables include family structure and biological parentage. The key variable of interest is the child’s score on the Strengths and Difficulties Test, which is a standardized measure of emotional functioning.

Key findings are that children of same-sex parents are more likely to have the following:

- Higher scores on the Strengths and Difficulties test
- Serious emotional problems, as reported by parents
- ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)
- Learning disability

These differences can *not* be attributed to the following:

- Bullying (In this nationally representative sample, children of same-sex parents were bullied *less* frequently than other children.)
- Residential instability
- Parental psychological distress

Thus, children of same-sex parents have a higher risk of emotional problems than children of married biological parents, and have risk levels most comparable to children of single parents. Children of married stepparents and cohabiting biological parents have lower risk levels than children of same-sex couples.

The New Family Structures Study

The New Family Structures Study (Regnerus, 2012) is one of the highest quality studies. While this study has generated



enormous controversy, it meets the requirements of good sample design. It has a large, random sample with appropriate controls, asking significant questions of the adult children themselves. A professional survey company gathered data on 2,988 young adults, aged eighteen to thirty-nine at the time of the survey, and asked them a variety of questions on their experiences growing up, and their current lives.

This survey found that, compared with children of single mothers or stepparents, children whose mothers had a lesbian relationship reported that they were

- likely to have received welfare growing up;
- less likely to be employed full-time and more likely to be unemployed;
- less likely to identify as entirely heterosexual;
- more likely to have had an affair while married or cohabiting;
- more likely to have been forced to have sex against their will;
- less likely to say that the family of origin provided them with safety and security;
- more likely to be depressed;
- more likely to have difficulty trusting others or depending on others;
- more likely to have been arrested or plead guilty to a nonminor offense; and
- more likely as women to report a larger number of sex partners.

The Ruth Institute and the upcoming Synod are both concerned about the impact of divorce on children as well as the impact of same-sex parenting. The New Family Structures Survey reports information of interest. We can conclude that, compared with intact biological families, an adult child from the single parent/stepfamily category is more likely to have

- had an affair while married or cohabiting;
- had a sexually transmitted infection;
- been touched sexually by a parent or other adult;
- been forced to have sex against their will;
- identified as something other than entirely heterosexual;
- been in an unmarried cohabiting relationship;
- received welfare;
- lower income;
- therapy;
- received welfare as a family when growing up;
- difficulty depending on or trusting others;
- said that their current relationship is in trouble; and
- reported a lower overall level of happiness.

This study could be considered a contribution to the literature on the impact of alternative family forms on children. In that light, these results are part of the very large body of literature showing negative outcomes for children living in stepfamilies and children of never married mothers.

Self-Reports by Children of Same-Sex Couples

Before we leave the discussion of the data, we should take a moment to listen to the voices of the adult children of same-sex parents themselves. The following quotations have been compiled from Lopez et al. (2015).

- “I experienced the loss of my father as an amputation” (Jean-Dominique Bunel, sixty-six-year-old French humanitarian, raised by his mother and her female partner).
- “I felt it was better to be a gay male, or even a transgender male, than it was to be a little girl growing up. I always felt that I wasn’t lovable because I did not see the men in my life loving women” (Dawn S., Canadian woman raised by her gay father, and a series of his partners).
- “I just didn’t have a dad there. . . . I filled that gap sexually. From the age of thirteen on, I was extremely promiscuous and sleeping with a lot of older men” (Bobby L., Puerto Rican, Filipino-American man, raised by his mother and her female partner).
- “After my parents’ separation, my sister and I began spending every other weekend with my father in the city. He shared a condo with a man who had also left his wife and children. Those weekends were a nightmare for my sister and me. Children are forced to live in a lifestyle they did not choose” (Jeremy D., American man, raised by his gay father).
- “When growing up, I always had the feeling of being something unnatural. . . . I had the feeling I was a lab experiment” (Bronaugh C., an American woman created by artificial insemination by her mother and her female partner).

Studies looking at other situations in which children have been separated from a parent—for instance, through divorce—show convincingly that these children face elevated risks for a variety of serious negative outcomes.

Children of Divorce

A thorough discussion of the data on alternative family structures is well beyond the scope of this review.



Children of divorce have been extensively studied, with literally hundreds of scholarly books and articles on the subject. Likewise, children of cohabiting couples and single parents have been extensively studied. I reproduce here the list from the talk, with a few readily accessible general references (Desai, 2015; Hawkins and Frackell, 2009; Hansen, 2013). In addition, the Ruth Institute's online story collective, "Kids' Divorce Stories," allows children of divorce to speak for themselves about their experiences. Many of those who contribute to that site are writing about their parents' divorces from thirty years before.

Compared to children raised with their own married biological parents, children of divorce are at elevated risks for the following:

- getting sick
- falling behind in math
- smoking
- needing Ritalin
- losing contact with grandparents
- engaging in drug or alcohol abuse
- engaging in criminal activities
- getting divorced as an adult
- not finishing college
- doubting parents' religious beliefs
- persistent feelings of loneliness
- dying at a younger age
- fewer close friends
- suffering academically
- not finishing high school
- having a stroke
- engaging in early sexual activity
- having sleep problems
- having less parental supervision
- not attending church
- feeling a lack of compassion from their church
- thoughts of suicide or violence

Donor-Conceived Persons

Likewise, a full treatment of the impact of being donor conceived is beyond the scope of this report. The study of donor-conceived persons is hampered by many of the same problems hampering the study of children of same-sex couples: difficulty in finding large numbers of people who would be truly representative of the experience of donor conception, and the impossibility of drawing firm conclusions about its long-term impact.

However, a few preliminary findings have emerged. One study (Marquardt et al., 2010) found that donor-conceived persons

- experience profound struggles with their origins and identities;
- experience tension, loss, and confusion in their family relationships;
- have concerns about inadvertently forming intimate unions with unknown blood relatives; and
- support the right of donor-conceived persons to know the truth about their origins.

The Anonymous Us Story Collective (Newman, 2013) allows all persons who have been affected by third-party reproduction to tell their stories. These stories broadly support the results of the more systematic study. Further, the stories in the collective reflect a profound discomfort with the economic transactions that formed the basis of their conception. And some donor-conceived persons report experiences similar to those of stepchildren: feeling that they were treated differently by their biological parent and that parent's spouse.

Studies looking at the stability of unions show that same-sex unions are less stable than opposite-sex unions.

Based on available evidence, same-sex relationships appear to be less stable than married heterosexual relationships. For instance, in a US study (Gates, 2006) explaining the propensity of couples' relationships to endure more than five years, same-sex relationships were found to be less stable than opposite-sex married couples. Male couples were only 30 percent as likely, while female couples were less than 25 percent as likely, as heterosexual married couples to be residing in the same household for five years.

In another US study (Kurdek, 2008), purporting to show the higher quality of same-sex relationships, gay and lesbian couples were more likely to have dissolved at the end of ten years (27 percent and 26 percent respectively), compared with heterosexual couples without and with children (19 percent and 13 percent respectively). This result was found in spite of the fact that individuals in the same-sex couples had higher levels of income and education than the members of the married opposite-sex couples.

In a study of Dutch data (Kalmijn et al., 2007), same-sex couples had a 3.15 times greater dissolution rate than opposite-sex cohabiting couples, and a 3.15×3.66 (or 11.5)



times greater dissolution rate than opposite-sex married couples. Similar results were found for both Norway and Sweden: female partnerships have the highest dissolution rate (Andersson et al., 2006). And including possibly confounding factors increased the gap between female divorce rates and both male divorce rates and heterosexual couples' divorce rates.

Conclusion

All in all, we have good reason to be concerned about the ongoing social experiment of same-sex parenting.

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How to Increase Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity for Individuals with Same-Sex Attraction: Understanding the Latest Research from the Psychological Sciences

Timothy G. Lock, PhD

Overview

Same-sex attraction (SSA) appears to be a condition that results from various psychological wounds and issues that develop during childhood. The psychosocial development of an individual who manifests same-sex attractions is often fraught with pain and anguish. Same-sex attraction is thought to be a symptom of these wounds. Those who offer pastoral care to the individual with SSA must grow in their understanding of the psychological issues that are concurrent with the development of same-sex attraction. Also, pastoral care will require an understanding of the “gay lifestyle” and the suffering present in many same-sex relationships. Finally, those offering pastoral care must be willing to develop authentic relationships and tolerate the sometimes cold reception that they will experience by those with SSA. The psychological sciences can foster growth in respect, compassion, and sensitivity that will ultimately decrease shame and stigma, homophobia, and isolation in a population that is yearning to know Christ’s love in the Catholic Church. Following is select information that supports the Church’s magisterial teaching on homosexuality. Additional resource information is included at the end of this document.

Are individuals with same-sex attractions born that way?

The American Psychological Association says no. According to the APA’s most recent statement (2008), “There is

no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors.”

Where do same-sex attractions come from?

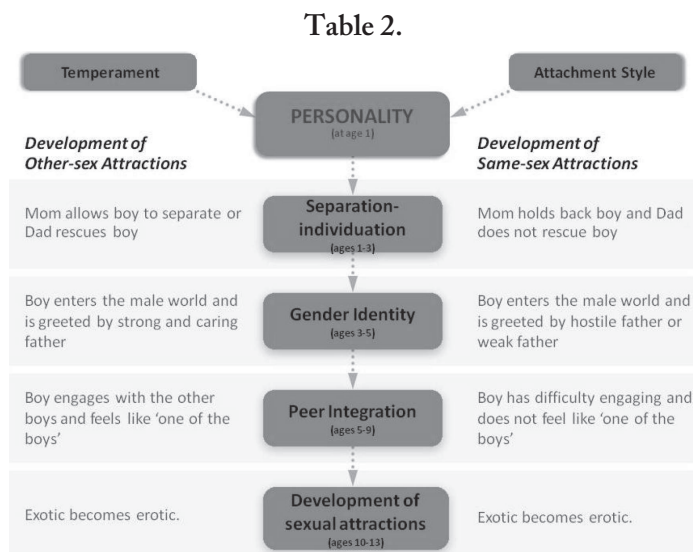
The American Psychological Association (2008) indicates, “Many [scientists] think that nature and nurture both play complex roles.” Clinical psychologists who work with people with same-sex attractions (SSA) tell us that there are some common situations or relationships that people with SSA experience during their upbringing. While these recollections are influenced by perception (and not necessarily reality), those providing pastoral care must be attuned to the struggle and pain that the individual with SSA reports when exploring his or her experiences. Those in pastoral care should be careful to avoid any type of “blame game” since the purpose of exploring the psychological genesis of SSA is to better understand the past and learn from the past. The presence of one situation does not cause the development of SSA; however, those with SSA often report many of these common experiences. Please note that those in pastoral care should not impose this view on others; it is simply offered as the experience of many clinicians (see Table 1).

Table 1.

BOTH MEN AND WOMEN: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Father conflicts • Mother conflicts • Peer rejection • Poor body image • Gender nonconformity • Abuse: physical, sexual, neglect 	MEN ONLY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Father failed to welcome son into the world of men and to fortify his masculine identification • Parents failed to encourage same-sex identification • Parental loss
	WOMEN ONLY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Father failed to act as buffer in relationship with mother and to fortify her feminine identification • Male betrayal • Extreme loneliness



Here is a developmental model for the development of male SSA that demonstrates how these behaviors may manifest over time:



What percentage of people with SSA have experienced abuse, and does that abuse cause SSA?

The rates of abuse are statistically higher in individuals with SSA. This suggests a connection but does not establish causality. Individuals in pastoral care must be attentive to the whole individual without imposing a template on anyone; however, in providing pastoral care, one should also be vigilant to the possibility that a person with SSA has a statistically higher chance to have experienced some type of abuse in their childhood.

Compared with the general population, men with SSA were seven times more likely and women with SSA were 3.5 times more likely to report childhood sexual abuse. Men with SSA were two times more likely and women with SSA were three times more likely to report childhood physical abuse. Men with SSA were five times more likely and women with SSA were 3.5 times more likely to report childhood neglect (Table 3) (Hughes et al., 2010).

Table 3.

	Male OSA	Male SSA	Female OSA	Female SSA
Neglect	2.5%	12.4%	3.4%	12.4%
Physical abuse	3.8%	5.3%	3.8%	11.3%
Sexual abuse	2.2%	15.4%	10.3%	34.7%

Do people choose to have same-sex attraction?

According to the American Psychological Association (2008), “Most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation.” The presence of SSA in and of itself has no moral culpability because the feeling is not chosen. The response to this feeling, however, including one’s behavior, is the individual’s moral responsibility.

Do people who have same-sex attraction ever develop opposite-sex attraction?

Yes. Sometimes this happens spontaneously and is referred to as “sexual fluidity.” A recent study reported on young men and women across four time periods: wave 1 included kids in grades 7–12 (mean age of 15.8 years old), and wave 4 had the very same people now 24–32 years old. Of the males who reported that they had any same-sex attraction at wave 1, “over 80%” had exclusively opposite sex attraction in Wave 4. Of the females who reported that they had any same-sex attraction at wave 1, “over 70%” had exclusively OSA in Wave 4 (Savin-Williams and Joyner, 2014, pp. 415–16).

Sometimes sexual attractions change through involvement in counseling. In a recent research study that followed people with SSA longitudinally through their treatment experience, a significant percentage experienced a change from same-sex attracted to opposite-sex attracted (Jones and Yarhouse, 2007, 2011).

Is modern treatment focused on changing sexual attractions (this treatment is sometimes called SOCE or “sexual orientation change efforts”) harmful?

The APA wrote, “There are no scientifically rigorous studies of recent SOCE that would enable us to make a definitive statement about whether recent SOCE is safe or harmful and for whom” (2009, p. 83).

Psychiatrist Dr. Robert Spitzer, from Columbia University, examined a group of individuals who went through SOCE and concluded, “For the participants in our study, there was no evidence of harm. To the contrary, they reported that it was helpful in a variety of ways beyond changing sexual orientation” (2003, p. 414).

Does Courage help people change to be attracted to members of the opposite sex?

No, the purpose of Courage is NOT to “change” people’s sexual attractions. The purpose of Courage is to help



Table 4.

	OSA Male	SSA Male	BSA Male	OSA Female	SSA Female	BSA Female
Any mood disorder	19.8%	42.3%	36.9%	30.5%	44.4%	58.7%
Any anxiety disorder	21.4%	45.8%	40.6%	36.3%	48.4%	66.2%
Any substance use disorders	50.0%	65.0%	55.8%	24.3%	60.8%	61.9%
Any Cluster A PD*	8.7%	13.5%	20.5%	8.9%	21.3%	21.9%
Any Cluster B PD*	15.4%	30.7%	25.7%	10.8%	19.8%	31.7%
Any Cluster C PD*	9.1%	12.3%	12.1%	9.6%	11.1%	17.1%
Psychotic illness	2.7%	9.3%	2.1%	3.4%	2.9%	9.2%
Suicide attempt	2.1%	9.8%	10.0%	4.2%	10.9%	24.4%

*Personality disorders (PD) are divided into three groups: cluster A, cluster B, and cluster C. *Source:* Bolton and Sareen, 2011, pp. 35–43.

individuals with same-sex attractions to live the virtue of chastity. Some people who attend Courage groups seek psychotherapy to help them ‘change’ their sexual attractions (i.e., some seek “Reparative Therapy”). The majority of people who attend Courage groups do *NOT* seek psychotherapy to help them ‘change’ their sexual attractions. Courage does not promote nor does it discourage “reparative therapy”.

Do individuals who experience SSA have a higher prevalence of emotional and psychological disorders?

Gilman et al. write: “Homosexual orientation ... is associated with a general elevation of risk for anxiety, mood, and substance use disorders and for suicidal thoughts and plans” (2001, p. 933).

Compared with the general population, individuals with SSA experience increases in emotional disorder. In men, there are two times the amount of mood disorders, two times the amount of anxiety disorders, 1.3 times the

amount of substance-use disorders; in women the statistics are as follows: 1.5 times the amount of mood disorders, 1.3 times the amount of anxiety disorders, 2.5 times the amount of substance-use disorders (Table 4) (Bolton and Sareem, 2011).

If the culture were more tolerant of homosexual behavior, would the prevalence of psychological disorders in people with SSA decrease?

The prevalence of psychological disorders does not change because an individual with SSA lives in a culture that is more tolerant of homosexual behavior. To summarize many studies that have examined this question, “gay-accepting cultures” show the same rates of psychopathology; the problem does not go away.

This finding has been replicated in many studies; for example, see the study noted below that looks at rates of mental-health symptoms in individuals with SSA in the Netherlands Table 5:

Table 5. Increased Frequency of Mental Health Symptoms Based on SSA Men and Women from the USA and the Netherlands

	SSA Men USA	SSA Men Netherlands	SSA Women USA	SSA Women Netherlands
Any mood disorder	2×	3×	1.5×	2×
Any anxiety disorder	2×	2.5×	1.3×	nd
Any substance-use disorders	1.3×	nd	2.5×	3.5×

Source: Bolton and Sareen, 2011; Sandfort et al., 2001.



Table 6.

	Male Heterosexual	Male SSA	Female Heterosexual	Female SSA
Emotional abuse	49%	83%	48%	82%
Physical abuse	14%	44%	24%	56%
Sexual abuse	2%	13%	9%	13%

Source: Breiding, Chen, and Black, 2014; Turell, 2000.

“This study was conducted in the Netherlands, which has a social climate toward sexual minorities that is less intolerant than that in the United States.”

“Gay and lesbian people reported more acute mental health symptoms than heterosexual people and their general mental health also was worse” (Sandfort et al., 2006, p. 1123).

Are the behaviors of same-sex couples the same as those of opposite-sex couples?

While 22.7 percent of opposite-sex couples have male infidelity (Wiederman, 1997), 82 percent to 100 percent of same-sex couples have male infidelity (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983; McWhirter and Mattison, 1984). Research also showed that 11.6 percent of opposite-sex couples have female infidelity (Wiederman, 1997), 28 percent of same-sex couples have female infidelity (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983).

Is there a difference in interpersonal violence in the same-sex couple?

Emotional abuse is reported by 49 percent of men in opposite-sex couples and by 83 percent of men in same-sex couples. Emotional abuse is reported by 48 percent of women in opposite-sex couples and by 82 percent of women in same-sex couples. Physical abuse is reported by 14 percent of men in opposite-sex couples and by 44 percent of men in same-sex couples. Physical abuse is reported by 24 percent of women in opposite-sex couples and by 56 percent of women in same-sex couples. Sexual abuse is reported by 2 percent of men in opposite-sex couples and by 13 percent of men in same-sex couples. Sexual abuse is reported by 9 percent of women in opposite-sex couples and by 13 percent of women in same-sex couples (Table 6).

Recommendations for Pastoral Response

1. Pope Benedict XVI said that a priest should, “... be an expert in the spiritual life...” (5/25/06)

2. Be a father to the fatherless
3. Practice the “art of accompaniment” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 169)—listen and understand feelings (without compromising moral truths)
4. Start a Courage group in your diocese
5. Support chaste fellowship through men’s groups or women’s group. For excellent resources see [www .desertstream.org](http://www.desertstream.org)
6. Encourage fathers to be good husbands and good fathers
7. Educate the faithful. See couragerc.org
8. Identify therapists who offer therapy in full accord with the teachings of the Church. Offer training to Catholic Charities clinics or mental health clinics funded by the diocese. See www.chastityfocusedtherapy.com
9. “Mom, Dad, I’m Gay...” free ebook at www.theraphaelremedy.com

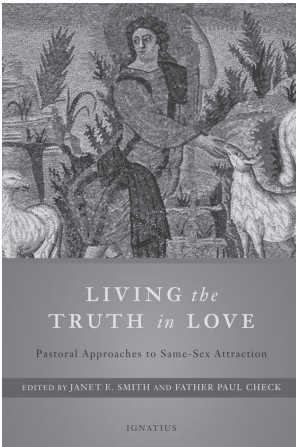
Recommended reading

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- Harvey, John F. *Homosexuality and the Catholic Church*. West Chester, PA: Ascension Press, 2007. (Topic: general information)
- Melina, Livio, and Sergio Belardinelli, eds. *Amare Nella Differenza: Le Forme Della Sessualita e il Pensiero Cattolico: studio interdisciplinare*. Citta del Vatican: Siena e Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2012. (Topic: previous conference in Rome on a variety of topics related to SSA; chapters or chapter summaries written in Italian, English, French, and Spanish)
- Nicolosi, Joseph J. *Shame and Attachment Loss: The Practical Work of Reparative Therapy*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009. (Topic: male SSA, therapy)
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Living the Truth in Love

Janet E. Smith and Father Paul Check

Living the Truth in Love grew out of the desire to provide answers to the questions posed for the Synod on Marriage called by Pope Francis:

- How can the Christian community give pastoral attention to families with persons with same-sex attraction?
- While avoiding any unjust discrimination, how can the Church give such persons pastoral care in light of the Gospel?
- How can God's will be proposed to them in their situation?

People who want to be instruments of Christ's love to those who experience same-sex attraction (SSA) seek guidance on how best to do so. They need to listen to the stories of those who experience SSA and the stories of those who have accompanied them on their journeys. They also need to ground their responses in a genuine Christian understanding of the human person and of human sexuality.

This volume includes essays that lay out the Christian view of the human person and of human sexuality, essays that challenge the bifurcation of sexualities into "heterosexual" and "homosexual." Topics include an explanation of the meaning of the word "disorder," a discussion of the therapeutic power of friendship, and an application of Saint John Paul II's personalism to the question of same-sex attraction. Psychologists and counselors explain various ways of affirming those who experience SSA and of leading them to experience the power of Christ's healing love. Several of those who experience SSA tell their touching and inspiring stories.



God or Nothing

Robert Cardinal Sarah

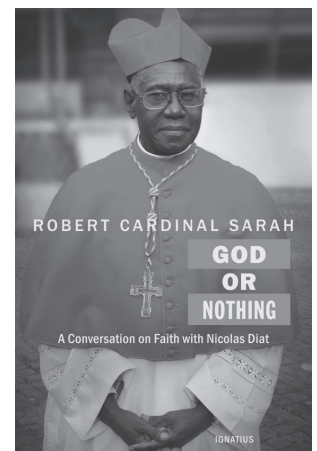
"The idea of putting Magisterial teaching in a beautiful display case while separating it from pastoral practice, which then could evolve along with circumstances, fashions, and passions, is a sort of heresy, a dangerous schizophrenic pathology. I therefore solemnly state that the Church in Africa is staunchly opposed to any rebellion against the teaching of Jesus and of the Magisterium. . . . The Church of Africa is committed in the name of the Lord Jesus to keeping unchanged the teaching of God and of the Church."

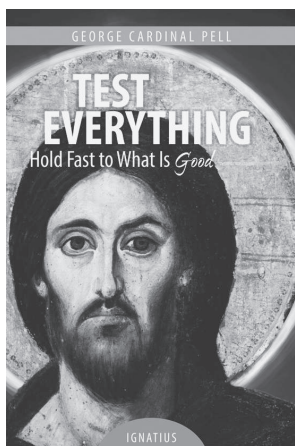
—Robert Cardinal Sarah

In this fascinating autobiographical interview, one of the most prominent and outspoken Catholic Cardinals gives witness to his Christian faith and comments on many current controversial issues. The mission of the Church, the joy of the Gospel, the "heresy of activism," and the definition of marriage are among the topics he discusses with wisdom and eloquence.

Robert Cardinal Sarah grew up in Guinea, West Africa. Inspired by the missionary priests who made great sacrifices to bring the Faith to their remote village, his parents became Catholics. Robert discerned a call to the priesthood and entered the seminary at a young age, but due to the oppression of the Church by the government of Guinea, he continued his education outside of his homeland. He studied in France and nearby Senegal. Later he obtained a licentiate in theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, followed by a licentiate in Sacred Scripture at the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of Jerusalem.

At the age of thirty-four he became the youngest bishop in the Catholic Church when Pope John Paul II appointed him the Archbishop of Conakry, Guinea, in 1979. His predecessor had been imprisoned by the Communist government for several years, and when Archbishop Sarah was targeted for assassination, Pope John Paul II called him to Rome to be Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. In 2010 Pope Benedict XVI named him Cardinal and appointed him Prefect of the Pontifical Council *Cor Unum*. Pope Francis made him Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 2014.





Test Everything

George Cardinal Pell

“Test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from evil.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:21

The renowned George Cardinal Pell, formerly Archbishop of Sydney and recently appointed by Pope Francis as Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy at the Vatican, challenges readers with the admonition of St. Paul to “test everything.” These powerful reflections consider some of the ultimate questions that confront us all: Why are we here? What is the purpose of life? What is the good we should do and the evil we should avoid?

Reaching out to youth, as well as to people of all ages, faiths, and experiences, Cardinal Pell uses an engaging style mixed with a keen Aussie wit. He writes as a seasoned storyteller, an expert historian, an insightful scholar, a patriot par excellence, and an outstanding Churchman.

His advice to all is credible, practical, and helpful: Search for genuine love. Do not follow the crowd. Remember to pray. He reminds Christians, “Every lover must be a fighter. . . . We know that evil will triumph if good people do nothing.” To those harboring doubts or tempted to disbelief he brings steadfast encouragement. “The Christian vision does not deceive,” he writes. “If it comes slowly, wait, for it will come without fail.”

Among the many interesting topics he discusses are the Trinity, the meaning of suffering, the relationship between faith and science, the role of Christians in public life, and the enduring wisdom of *Humanae Vitae*.

Cardinal Pell’s overall message points us to the Cross of Christ as the unique and final measure of what it means to be human, and thus holy. Cardinal Pell, modern man of faith, vision, and action, inspires readers to go deeper and to “test everything.”



Christ’s New Homeland – Africa

In June 2015, five cardinals and forty-five bishops representing fifty African countries met in Accra, Ghana, to prepare for the October 2015 Synod on the Family.

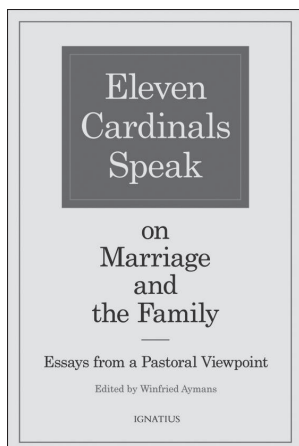
In his opening remarks—included in this volume—Robert Cardinal Sarah encouraged the bishops of Africa to “speak with one voice” during the synod: “I encourage you to speak with clarity and with one credible voice and with filial love of the Church. Be conscious of the mission of the Church; protect the sacredness of marriage which is now being attacked by all forms of ideologies that intend to destroy the family in Africa. Do not be afraid to stress the teaching of the Church on marriage.”

In a major six-page interview released during the same period in the French magazine *Famille Chrétienne*, Cardinal Sarah said: “At the synod next October we will address, I hope, the question of marriage in an entirely positive manner, seeking to promote the family and the values that it bears. The African bishops will act to support that which God asks of man concerning the family, and to receive that which the Church has always taught. . . . Why should we think that only the Western vision of man, of the world, of society is good, just, universal? The Church must fight to say no to this new colonization.”

These African pastors provide much food for thought and reflection about modern Western culture and our personal lives, as well as an introduction to the Synod. The title of the book comes from a phrase used by Blessed Pope Paul VI, which in our time beautifully expresses the universality of the Church and the increasing role played by African Church leaders. Among the contributing cardinals and bishops are Robert Cardinal Sarah, Francis Cardinal Arinze, Christian Cardinal Tumi, Théodore Cardinal Sarr, Archbishop Samuel Kleda, and more.



Available at www.ignatius.com



Eleven Cardinals Speak on Marriage and the Family

Marriage and the family are in crisis. In October 2015, a Synod of Bishops will meet in the Vatican to discuss this important subject. In preparation for the event, eleven Cardinals from around the world have written powerful essays on some of the problems to be discussed: the challenge of providing adequate marriage preparation in a secularized world, the need for evangelization and conversion, the relationship between charity and truth, the situation of divorced and civilly remarried Catholics, and the demands of authentic pastoral care.

The authors understand that doctrine and pastoral ministry are not opposed to one another. They carefully steer a wise and merciful course that engages as both a concise introduction to the forthcoming Synod and a helpful guide to applying Christ’s teaching to the pastoral care of families. Long after the Synod, these essays will remain valuable for anyone wanting to understand and to proclaim the Gospel of the Family.

The contributing Cardinals are Robert Sarah, Carlo Caffarra, Baselios Cleemis, Paul Josef Cordes, Dominik Duka, Joachim Meisner, Camillo Ruini, Antonio María Rouco Varela, Willem Jacobus Eijk, John Onaiyekan, and Jorge L. Urosa Savino.



Remaining in the Truth of Christ

Janet E. Smith and Father Paul Check

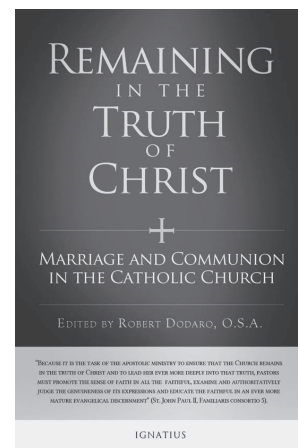
In this volume five cardinals of the Church, and four other scholars, respond to the call issued by Walter Cardinal Kasper for the Church to harmonize “fidelity and mercy in its pastoral practice with civilly remarried, divorced people.” The contributors are Walter Cardinal Brandmüller; Raymond Cardinal Burke; Carlo Cardinal Caffarra; Velasio Cardinal De Paolis, C.S.; Robert Dodaro, O.S.A.; Paul Mankowski, S.J.; Gerhard Cardinal Müller; John M. Rist; and Archbishop Cyril Vasil, S.J.

Cardinal Kasper appeals to early Church practice in order to support his view. The contributors bring their wealth of knowledge and expertise to bear upon this question, concluding that the Bible and the Church Fathers do not support the kind of “toleration” of civil marriages following divorce advocated by Cardinal Kasper. They also examine the Eastern Orthodox practice of *oikonomia* (understood as “mercy” implying “toleration”) in cases of remarriage after divorce and in the context of the vexed question of Eucharistic Communion. The book traces the long history of Catholic resistance to this practice, revealing the serious theological and pastoral difficulties it poses in past and current Orthodox Church practice.

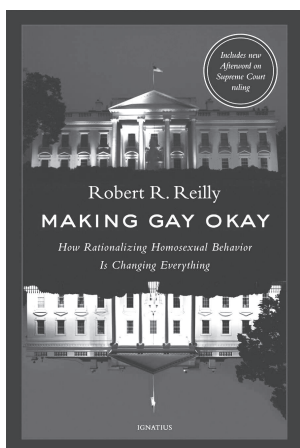
As the authors demonstrate, traditional Catholic doctrine, based on the teaching of Jesus himself, and current pastoral practice are not at odds with genuine mercy and compassion. The authentic “gospel of mercy” is available through a closer examination of the Church’s teachings.

“Because it is the task of the apostolic ministry to ensure that the Church remains in the truth of Christ and to lead her ever more deeply into that truth, pastors must promote the sense of faith in all the faithful, examine and authoritatively judge the genuineness of its expressions and educate the faithful in an ever more mature evangelical discernment.”

—St. John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*



Available at www.ignatius.com



Making Gay Okay
How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior Is Changing Everything

Robert Reilly

Why are Americans being forced to consider homosexual acts as morally acceptable? Why has the US Supreme Court discovered a constitutional right to same-sex “marriage”, which until a decade ago, was unheard of in the history of Western or any other civilization? Where has the “gay rights” movement come from, and how has it so easily conquered America?

The answers are in the dynamics of the rationalization of sexual misbehavior. The power of rationalization—the means by which one mentally transforms wrong into right—drives the gay rights movement, gives it its revolutionary character, and makes its advocates indefatigable. The homosexual cause moved naturally from a plea for tolerance to cultural conquest because the security of its rationalization requires universal acceptance. In other words, we all must say that the bad is good.

At stake in the rationalization of homosexual behavior is reality itself, which is why it will have consequences that reach far beyond the issue at hand. Already America’s major institutions have been transformed—its courts, its schools, its military, its civic institutions, and even its diplomacy. The further institutionalization of homosexuality will mean the triumph of force over reason, thus undermining the very foundations of the American Republic.

Available at www.ignatius.com

Courage International Resources



Courage, an apostolate of the Catholic Church, ministers to persons with same-sex attractions and their loved ones. We have been endorsed by the Pontifical Council for the Family, and our beloved St. John Paul II said of this ministry, "COURAGE is doing the work of God!" We also have an outreach called EnCourage, which ministers to relatives, spouses, and friends of persons with same-sex attractions.

The Five Goals of Courage

- To live chaste lives in accordance with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality. (Chastity)
- To dedicate our entire lives to Christ through service to others, spiritual reading, prayer, meditation, individual spiritual direction, frequent attendance at Mass, and the frequent reception of the sacraments of Reconciliation and Holy Eucharist. (Prayer and Dedication)
- To foster a spirit of fellowship in which we may share with one another our thoughts and experiences, and so ensure that no one will have to face the problems of homosexuality alone. (Fellowship)
- To be mindful of the truth that chaste friendships are not only possible but necessary in a chaste Christian life; and to encourage one another in forming and sustaining these friendships. (Support)
- To live lives that may serve as good examples to others. (Good Example/Role Model)

The Five Goals of EnCourage

- To help members themselves to grow spiritually through developing a vital relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ as authentically taught in our Roman Catholic Tradition.
- To enable members to gain a deeper understanding of the needs, problems, and issues experienced by men and women with same-sex attractions.
- To help members establish and maintain a healthy and wholesome relationship with the loved one who experiences same-sex attractions.
- To assist other parents and families not to reject but to reach out with compassion and truth to their loved one with same-sex feelings and behaviors.
- To witness to our loved one by our own lives that a happy, wholesome life is to be found in union with Jesus Christ and with His body, the Church.

Please visit the Courage website at www.couragerc.org if you'd like to learn more about the Courage/EnCourage Apostolate.



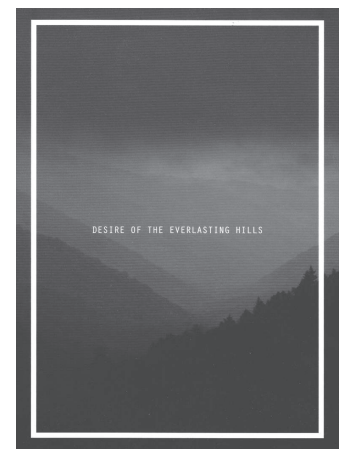
Desire of the Everlasting Hills

New, from Courage International, a Catholic apostolate that faithfully embraces the Church's teaching on homosexuality and her norms for pastoral care, ministering to those who strive to live chaste lives rooted in the love of Jesus Christ, comes a profoundly moving documentary: *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*. Here are the intimate and candid portraits of three Catholics who struggle to navigate the waters of self-understanding, faith, and homosexuality.

Visit www.everlastinghills.org to view the documentary *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*. Now available in nine languages with a companion study guide. © 2014 Courage International

DVDs available for \$10.00 includes shipping within the continental U.S.A.

To order go to couragerc.org/order-dvd/



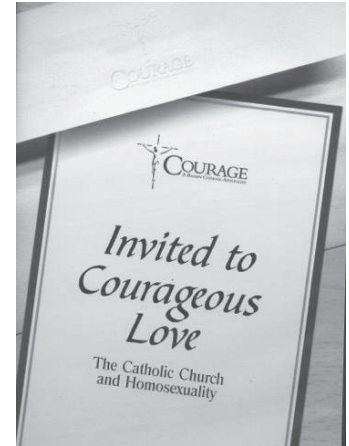


Invited to Courageous Love: The Catholic Church and Homosexuality

5-Part DVD Catechetical Series

Courage International is proud to announce the release of "Invited to Courageous Love", a five-part series on the Catholic Church and Homosexuality. These videos present a unique perspective on the lives of Catholics who experience same-sex attractions and the peace and joy they have found by embracing the Gospel call to charity and fellowship.

Each 30-minute episode includes testimony from Courage members and interviews with professionals in the fields of pastoral care, philosophy and theology, and the medical and social sciences. The 5-DVD set includes a Study Guide for individuals or groups, and will be an important and effective tool for dioceses, parishes, schools and anyone wishing to know more about the teachings of the Catholic Church on homosexuality, and the lives of people who are faithfully living them out.



DVD Set Includes:

- Disc 1: The Good News About Chaste Love
- Disc 2: Sex and Sexuality in the Divine Design
- Disc 3: Insights From the Medical and Social Sciences
- Disc 4: Same Sex Attraction and the Family
- Disc 5: Providing Authentic Pastoral Care

5-Part DVD Catechetical Series \$50.00 includes shipping within the continental U.S.A.

Order at couragerc.net/invited-to-courageous-love-dvd-series.

For more information about Courage International, Inc. contact:

8 Leonard Street • Norwalk, CT 06850 USA
+1 (203)803-1564 • office@couragerc.net

truthandlove.com

truthandlove.com will remain a resource at service of the Church by providing accurate and timely research, as well as pastoral approaches for those who experience same-sex attractions.

The body of information from the August 2015 conference in Detroit, as well as this October 2015 conference in Rome will be made available through this site. We expect to have the audio, video, and PowerPoint presentations from the Detroit conference available by the end of October. Likewise, we will be working diligently to bring you the audio, video, and PowerPoint presentations from this Rome conference as quickly as possible.

Our speakers and other experts have been invited to share their ongoing research into these topics as time goes on. We will post information about other upcoming conferences and speaking events. **We invite you to share in this project by bookmarking truthandlove.com and visiting often.** Also, please share our link with others.



Recommended Documents, Books, Articles, and Videos

Church Documents

Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part 3, Section 2, Chapter 2, Article 6, “The Sixth Commandment” (paragraphs 2331–2400).

<http://bit.ly/1tcYhDY>

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Books by Father Harvey

Father John Harvey, OSFS, founded the Courage Apostolate in 1980 at the request of Cardinal Terence Cooke, then Archbishop of New York. A moral theologian by training, Father Harvey authored and edited a number of books aimed at a deeper understanding of the nature of homosexuality and of the teaching of the Catholic Church. They include:

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Videos

Desire of the Everlasting Hills, a poignant film in which three Catholics relate their personal journey of faith and their experience of same-sex attractions. Watch online here:

<http://bit.ly/1KdICMW>

Invited to Courageous Love: The Catholic Church and Homosexuality. A five-part catechetical series that explores the stories of Courage and EnCourage members, the teaching of the Catholic Church, the contributions of the social and medical sciences, and authentic pastoral care. Published in September 2015. Watch the trailer online here:

<http://bit.ly/1J3qNhL>

Talks from annual Courage and EnCourage International Conferences, 2012–2015:

<http://bit.ly/1K1wVso>

Recorded talks from a recent Clergy Study Day in the Diocese of Birmingham:

<http://bit.ly/1UIiP9H>



The Word of God and Homosexuality

Mary Healy, STD

No discussion of homosexuality in a Christian context can be fruitful unless it begins with, and remains grounded in, an attentive listening to the Word of God. Yet, the biblical texts on homosexual behavior pose particular challenges [1]. Their harsh condemnations seem to be in tension with the unlimited mercy announced in the gospel. In what sense are these texts relevant today? What can they offer to those who experience same-sex attraction? How they be compatible with the freshness and fragrance of the good news of Christ? In what follows I hope to clarify what Scripture says about homosexuality in light of these questions [2].

Homosexuality in the Old Testament

Four passages in the Old Testament directly refer to homosexual behavior: two narratives (Gen 19 and Judg 19) and two legal texts (Lev 18:22 and Lev 20:13). To be interpreted properly these passages must be viewed within the broader context of biblical teaching on sexuality, the foundations of which are laid in the creation narratives of Genesis 1–3.

Even a cursory comparison of the Genesis narrative with the myths of the surrounding pagan cultures reveals the absolute distinctiveness of its portrayal of God. The God of biblical revelation is utterly transcendent. There is no hint of sexuality in God. Rather, sexuality and the covenant founded on it, marriage, are a gift of God, part of the created order willed by God and thus subject to his holy laws.

Each of the two biblical creation accounts depicts in its own way God's design for humanity. In Genesis 1 the creation of sexually differentiated human beings and the divine blessing of fertility appear as the very pinnacle of God's creative work (Gen 1:26–28). That which is created in God's image is irreducibly both a collective singular ("he created *him*") and a sexually differentiated plural ("male and female he created *them*"). The point, although it remains only implicit in the text, is that the interpersonal communion made possible by the differentiation of the sexes is intrinsic to human existence, and is somehow essential to man's being created in the image of God. God's desire for an image of himself in the world is realized in the creation,

not of isolated individuals, but of a man and woman who are to unite in marriage. Moreover, their union is to be fruitful, giving rise to the primordial human community, the family.

In Genesis 2 the remark that "It is *not good* that the man should be alone" (Gen 2:18) emphatically asserts what Genesis 1:27 already implied: man is not made for solitude; essential to human nature is interpersonal communion. At the culmination of the narrative, God acts to resolve the crisis by forming the woman. It is of pivotal significance that God does not simply fashion another *adam*, a replica of the first, but a complementary being from Adam's side—one who is different yet intimately related to him, with whom he yearns to be *reunited*. The man's encounter with the woman is depicted as a moment of existential self-discovery. Through her, he comes to recognize the deepest purpose of his existence: to share in a spousal communion in which the gift of self is freely given and received. In this perspective the meaning of the woman's designation as "helper" becomes clear: she helps the man recognize and fulfill his true vocation—namely, to love.

By accenting the male-female distinction, the text conveys that it is precisely through the *complementarity of their bodies*—their sexual differences that render union possible—that the man and woman realize their vocation to interpersonal communion. Through their bodies, they each recognize the other as an equal and yet irreducibly other. Their bodies are designed to be joined in a sexual union that expresses and embodies a union at the deepest level of the person. Genesis thus affirms the only sexual "orientation" with which human beings are created: the orientation to spousal communion with the opposite sex that is inscribed in the body, male or female. *Sexual union* properly speaking is in fact not possible with a person of the same sex, even if various forms of erotic activity are possible.

Genesis goes on to show the relevance of this defining moment of self-discovery for all future marital relations: "Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24). Through this narrative the biblical authors give symbolic expression to the truth that is inscribed in the human body and is therefore in principle accessible to every human



being: that the intrinsic meaning of sexual union is to signify and effect the marital covenant between a man and a woman; marriage is therefore the only appropriate context for sexual expression.

Jesus' Teaching on Sexuality

Jesus said nothing explicit about homosexual conduct. Does this imply that, as some argue, he had no objection to such conduct, or would perhaps even have approved of it? Such an argument from silence quickly collapses since, by the same reasoning, Jesus would also have approved of incest, bestiality, and other sexual behaviors condemned in the law of Moses but not mentioned by him. Jesus' silence must be interpreted within the context of first-century Judaism, which unequivocally held to the Mosaic law's prohibition of nonmarital sexual activity. Jesus did not hesitate to challenge certain elements of human tradition surrounding the law in his day. But far from relaxing the moral law, he makes its demands even more stringent. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus affirms the continuing validity of the law (Mt 5:17–19), and adds that not only the immoral act itself but also the desire for it must be rooted out (Mt 5:28). In Mark Jesus asserts that disordered sexual conduct originates in the heart: "What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality [*porneiai*], . . . adultery, . . . debauchery. . . ." (Mk 7:20–23). The term *porneiai* encompasses sexually immorality in general, including homosexual acts and all the other sexual behaviors forbidden in the Torah [3].

Two sets of related texts are crucial for interpreting Jesus' astoundingly high standards for sexual morality: his teaching on God's original intention for marriage and his personal interaction with sexual sinners.

God's Intention for Marriage

Jesus' most extensive teaching on marriage occurs in response to a question about divorce (Mk 10:2–12; cf. Mt 19:3–9). In response to the Pharisees' inquiry seeking to justify divorce, Jesus appeals to what God intended "from the beginning." He quotes from both creation accounts. The first quotation, "he made them male and female," affirms God's creation of men and women as gendered beings who are called to fruitful sexual union. The second describes God's purpose for this sexual complementarity: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one

flesh." Jesus thus reaffirms the teaching of Genesis that the differentiation of the sexes is for the purpose of the one-flesh union that is the bodily expression of the covenant bond between husband and wife. Moreover, by the very fact of appealing to humanity before the Fall, Jesus implies that, from now on, *God's original intention* is the true standard for sexual union and marriage. Although Moses had allowed divorce and remarriage as a concession to "hardness of heart" (Mk 10:5), that concession has been annulled since the era of the dominion of sin is over. Now that Christ has come, there is a new reality at hand—the kingdom of God—bringing a new power to live according to what God intended from the beginning. As Jesus has already suggested (Mk 8:31–9:1), this new reality will come about through his passion and resurrection.

Thus Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount calling for sexual purity in thought and deed are not merely the expression of a lofty ideal, a goal toward which we should aim. They are authoritative and efficacious words; they have power to accomplish what they demand, for those who accept his call.

Mercy for Sexual Sinners

The second set of key texts are those in which Jesus offers mercy to those branded as sexual sinners, particularly the "woman of the city" in Luke 7:36–50, the Samaritan woman in John 4, and the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1–11. These episodes are sometimes taken as an indication that Jesus was indifferent to sexual immorality. But such a reading is only possible by distorting the texts as well as ignoring Jesus' explicit moral teachings. These passages "no more suggest that Jesus was soft on sexual sin than do the stories about Jesus' fraternization with tax collectors insinuate an accommodation to economic exploitation" [4]. In response to the Pharisees' complaint, Jesus reveals his true motive for welcoming sinners. He is the Divine Physician whose mission is not merely to accept all in love, but to *heal* all—including, ironically, the Pharisees who deem themselves righteous—of their debilitating moral sickness by calling all to repentance (Lk 5:31–32).

Numerous other texts confirm that Jesus invites people not simply to enter the kingdom but to become "fit for the kingdom" (cf. Lk 9:62) through faith and repentance manifested in a changed life [5]. Nowhere is there the slightest indication that he simply tolerated a way of life contrary to the moral law. On several occasions, however, Jesus indicates that pride and the self-righteousness that precludes repentance are a more formidable barrier to the kingdom



than sexual sin (Mt 21:31–32; cf. Mt 12:24–32; Lk 7:29–30; Lk 11:42–52).

The gospel’s high standards of sexual morality may at first seem to threaten the possibility of human happiness for some. But all the limits Scripture places on human conduct are for the sake of something greater. The gospel reveals that there is a personal relationship available to all that is satisfying beyond our wildest expectations, a spousal relationship with Jesus himself, the divine Bridegroom (Mt 9:15; Jn 3:29). The Gospels depict in a variety of ways the joy of those who encounter Jesus and experience his unconditional love and forgiveness, imparting the grace to begin a new life (Mk 2:14–15; Lk 8:2; Lk 7:36–50; Jn 4:29).

Pauline Teaching on Sexuality

Three passages in the Pauline literature explicitly mention homosexual conduct: two lists of vices (1 Cor 6:9–11; 1 Tim 1:9–11), and a lengthy reflection on the moral consequences of idolatry (Rom 1:18–32). As with the Old Testament and Gospel texts, these need to be interpreted within the broader context of Paul’s teaching on marriage (especially Eph 5:21–33 and 1 Cor 7).

In 1 Corinthians Paul addresses scandalous conduct that the Corinthian community has tolerated in its midst. Many of the Corinthian Christians were Gentiles who had undergone a radical conversion from the sexually permissive lifestyles that were common in Greek culture. As in other letters, Paul takes pains to show them that their former conduct is utterly incompatible with their new life in Christ [6]. He admonishes:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor passive homosexual partners [*malakoi*], nor men who lie with males [*arsenokoitai*], nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor 6:9–11, author’s translation)

Paul’s sharp warning, “Do not be deceived,” indicates that it is in fact possible for Christians to deceive themselves regarding sin and its devastating consequences.

Two terms refer explicitly to homosexual conduct. *Malakos* is literally “soft, delicate” (cf. Mt 11:8), but in ancient Greek was used for men or boys who played the passive role in homosexual relations [7]. The NAB translation “boy prostitutes” inordinately narrows the meaning, since there

is no evidence that the term was limited either to adolescents or to those who sold their services. The second term, *arsenokoitai* (literally, “men who lie with males”), was probably coined by Paul himself, combining two terms used for the prohibition of homosexual acts in LXX Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13: *arsēn* (“male”) and *koitē* (“lying” or “bed”). Thus, *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai* together refer to the two partners in same-sex relations.

But the warning is not complete without the jubilant exclamation of verse 11: “such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.” No matter what their past misdeeds, those joined to Christ through faith and baptism have been liberated from bondage to sin and brought into life-transforming communion with God. They are no longer under the domination of sinful impulses. They belong to the company of redeemed sinners, who praise the mercy of God.

As numerous exhortations throughout Paul’s letters make clear, this new freedom in Christ does not mean that disordered sexual desires simply disappear [8]. Paul “was not guaranteeing former adulterers that they would never again experience sexual desire for people other than their spouse, or former thieves and swindlers that they would never again be tempted by material possessions” [9]. It *does* mean there is a new power within Christians, the Holy Spirit, to resist these impulses and live a holy life in accord with God’s will (cf. Rom 8:4, 14). As in Jesus’ teachings, the gospel demands the purification not only of deeds but of desires (Gal 5:24).

The admonition of 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 is followed by a more extended exhortation to sexual purity (1 Cor 6:12–20). Like Jesus, Paul cites God’s original intention for marriage as providing the norm for human sexuality: “the two shall become one flesh” (v. 16). The ultimate rationale for fidelity to that divine intention is the inconceivable dignity of the human body as revealed in Christ. The body is created to be the dwelling place of the triune God. A Christian’s body is united with the body of the risen Christ (v. 15) and is a temple of the Holy Spirit (v. 19), in which God is to be glorified (v. 20).

Conclusion

The biblical teaching on homosexual conduct, interpreted impartially, is deeply challenging to modern sensibilities. Since today there are people whose same-sex attraction seems to them innate and unalterable, the assumption is often made that to take the biblical teaching at face value



is to condemn such persons to a life of loneliness, frustration, and unfulfillment. But this assumption is incompatible with the witness of the New Testament. Same-sex attraction is simply one form of the disorder that is in every human heart due to the Fall. The gospel proclaims not only the forgiveness of sin but the healing of all these forms of disorder and the power to live a transformed life in communion with God and others. The key to this progressive transformation is coming to know one's identity as a beloved son or daughter of God (cf. Rom 8:13–16), which in turn takes place through intimate union with Christ.

The biblical teaching on homosexuality, then, includes three inseparable dimensions: the mercy of God the Father, the truth that is in Jesus Christ, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. To be faithful to the Word of God, Christians must give witness to this full truth of God's purposes for human sexuality. A Christianity that preaches high standards of sexual morality without imitating Jesus' warm welcome of sinners is hypocritical and unattractive. A Christianity that proclaims mercy toward sinners without calling them to repentance and holiness of life is anemic and self-deceiving. And a Christianity that proclaims mercy and upholds high moral standards but without making available the power for healing and transformation is impoverished and burdensome, "holding the form of religion but denying its power" (2 Tim 3:5). But a Christianity that proclaims and lives by the full truth of the Word of God is an invitation to joy and the fullness of life.

Notes

[1] The biblical texts do not, of course, use the modern term "homosexual," referring to a condition or a category of people. Rather, they refer to those who engage in same-sex erotic acts.

[2] For lack of space this summary will omit the discussion of the Old Testament texts that directly relate to

homosexual conduct as well as two important New Testament passages, Rom 1:18–32 and 1 Tim 1:9–11.

[3] See "πορνεία," in W. Arndt, F.W. Danker, and W. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

[4] Robert A.J. Gagnon, in Dan O. Via and Robert A.J. Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 70.

[5] Mt 7:21–27; 21:31–32; 22:11–13; Lk 18:10–14; 19:2–9; Jn 8:11.

[6] Cf. Rom 6:12–21; Gal 5:16–21; Eph 2:3; 4:17–24; Col 3:5–10; 1 Thes 4:3–8.

[7] See Raymond Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 529. Philo of Alexandria uses the cognate nouns *malakotēs* and *malakia* to describe the effeminacy of passive homosexual partners (*On Abraham* 136; *Special Laws* 3.37–42).

[8] Rom 6:12–14; 13:14; Gal 5:16; Eph 4:22; Col 3:5–8.

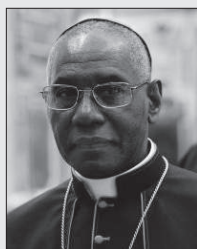
[9] Gagnon, *Homosexuality and the Bible*, 84.

Dr. Mary Healy teaches Scripture at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit, Michigan. She earned her doctorate in biblical theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. She is a general editor of the Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, a series of commentaries that interpret Scripture from the heart of the Church, and author of its volumes The Gospel of Mark (2008) and The Letter to the Hebrews (2016). She is co-editor of three books on biblical interpretation and author of numerous articles and several other books including Men and Women Are from Eden: A Study Guide to John Paul II's Theology of the Body and Healing: Bringing the Gift of God's Mercy to the World. Dr. Healy serves the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity as a member of the International Pentecostal-Catholic Dialogue. In 2014 Pope Francis appointed her to the Pontifical Biblical Commission.

Contributors

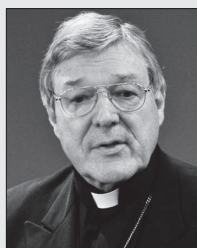


Drawing from a variety of experiences and perspectives, this event gathered leaders in the faith and human sciences who have shown prudence and charity in their work with souls. Attentive to the challenges of those who experience homosexual tendencies, the Church seeks to integrate their experiences and insights into authentic pastoral care.



Robert Cardinal Sarah was born in Guinea, West Africa, and after being ordained a priest, he became the youngest bishop in the Catholic Church. Pope John Paul II made him the Secretary of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. Under Pope Benedict XVI he became Prefect of the Pontifical Council

Cor Unum. In November 2014, Pope Francis appointed him Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.



George Cardinal Pell, formerly Archbishop of Sydney, Australia, was appointed Prefect of the Secretariat for the Economy at the Vatican by Pope Francis in 2014. He has a Licentiate of Sacred Theology from the Pontifical Urbaniana University and a PhD in philosophy from Oxford University. His books include *Issues of Faith and*

Morals (Ignatius Press); his biography, *George Pell: Defender of the Faith Down Under* (Ignatius Press), was written by Tess Livingston.



Monsignor Livio Melina is President and Professor of Moral Theology at the Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family at the Lateran University in Rome. In addition to numerous articles, he has written, coauthored, and edited several books. Among his English titles are *Building a Culture of the*

Family: The Language of Love (Alba House Society of St. Paul); *The Epiphany of Love: Toward a Theological Understanding of Christian Action* (Wm. B. Eerdmans); *Learning to Love* (Gracewing); and *Sharing in Christ's Virtues: For a Renewal of Moral Theology in Light of Veritatis Splendor* (Catholic University of America Press). He is a member of the Pontifical Academy of Theology and a consultor of the Pontifical Council for the Family and the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Assistance to Health Care Workers. He is editor of the journal *Anthropotes*.



Father Paul N. Check was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Bridgeport, Connecticut in 1997. At the direction of Bishop Lori in 2002, he established a Courage chapter in his diocese for which he continues to serve as chaplain. He holds an STB from the Gregorian University and an STL from the University of the Holy Cross,

both in Rome. He teaches fundamental moral theology and sexual and medical ethics to seminarians and permanent deacon candidates in the Bridgeport Diocese. Beginning in 1999, he has taught the two-week course in moral theology in the "Gift of Faith" syllabus for Blessed Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta. Father Check graduated from Rice University, Texas in 1981 with a BA in history. He served as an officer in the US Marine Corps for nine years prior to entering the seminary. In 2008, he was selected to succeed Father John Harvey as the Executive Director of Courage International, at the request of Father Harvey and with the approval of Bishop Lori and Cardinal Dolan. He spends much of his time traveling and making presentations to clergy about the Church's teaching about homosexuality and her pastoral response.



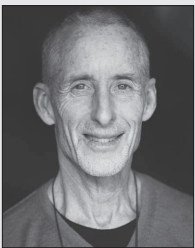
Dr. Jennifer Roback Morse, PhD, is the founder of the Ruth Institute, an interfaith organization that addresses the lies of the sexual revolution. She has authored or coauthored four books and spoken around the globe on marriage, family, and human sexuality. Her newest book is *The Sexual Revolution and Its Victims* (Ruth

Institute). She earned her PhD at the University of Rochester and taught economics at Yale and George Mason Universities. Dr. Morse was named one of the "Catholic Stars of 2013," on a list that included Pope Francis and Pope Benedict XVI. Dr. Morse and her husband are parents of an adopted child, a birth child, and a goddaughter and were foster parents for San Diego County to eight foster children.



Dr. Timothy G. Lock, PhD, is a licensed psychologist in full-time private practice, working within a Catholic anthropology, to offer psychological assessment, psychotherapy, and psychological consultation. While Dr. Lock has a general practice, he specializes in the treatment of clergy and male and female

religious, as well as those who have experienced trauma, those who suffer from anxiety disorders, and those who struggle with sexual issues. Dr. Lock serves on the Board of Courage International and of the Christian Counseling Center of Greater Danbury, where he also is the clinical supervisor. At the request of his bishop, Dr. Lock serves on the Diocese of Bridgeport Ministerial Misconduct Advisory Board. Dr. Lock has published professional articles and book chapters in the area of psychological trauma and traumatic memory. Formerly, he was the coordinator of the Adult Sexual Offender Treatment Program, providing psychotherapy to convicted sexual offenders through the Department of Probation in a large urban area outside of New York City. Dr. Lock has lectured nationally and internationally to seminarians, clergy, mental-health practitioners, and the general public on issues including Catholic psychology, Catholic psychotherapy, the psychology of same-sex attractions, and psychotherapeutic treatment of individuals with same-sex attractions. Dr. Lock conducts psychological evaluations for individuals in seminary and religious life, as well as for those wishing to enter seminary and religious life. A practicing Roman Catholic, Dr. Lock lives with his wife of twenty-two years and their eight children in northwestern Connecticut, USA.



Andrew Comiskey, M.Div., has worked extensively with the healing of the sexually and relationally broken. He is founder and director of Desert Stream/Living Waters Ministries, a multifaceted outreach to the broken. Andrew's ministry grows both out of his own commitment to overcome homosexuality and his experience

as a husband to Annette and father of four children. He is author of *Pursuing Sexual Wholeness* (Creation House), *Strength in Weakness* (InterVarsity Press), *Naked Surrender: Coming Home to Our True Sexuality* (InterVarsity Press), and the Living Waters healing program. Andrew seeks to equip the global church to be whole and holy, as a bride ready to receive Jesus. Andrew attends and serves at St. Thomas More in Kansas City, Missouri. After over three decades of ministry, Andrew still loves imparting healing to the entire body of Christ.



Rilene has spent most of her adult life living as an atheist in a same-sex relationship. She was one of three people profiled in the documentary film *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*, a story of redemption and conversion to Christ. After returning to the Catholic faith in 2009, Rilene has shared her story at conferences, on radio

interviews, and on an EWTN special that aired in September 2015. Through her compelling story, Rilene helps Catholics understand the complexity around this controversial topic, the truth in the Church's teaching, and the hope and freedom found in the love of Christ.



David graduated in 2006 with his MA in counseling from Franciscan University of Steubenville. He works at Franciscan University of Steubenville as a clinical counselor and at The Raphael Remedy of New York, where he offers Catholic phone and internet counseling and life coaching. As a Catholic therapist he helps others

with a variety of issues some of which include, depression, anxiety, gender wounds, and co-dependency. As a life coach, David specializes in helping Catholic parents with a loved one who claims "gay" or "lesbian" identity. He has given numerous presentations across the country on same-sex attraction from a Catholic perspective and has had a number of articles published in magazines and internet sources. David can also be seen in the recently released documentary, *The Third Way: Homosexuality and the Catholic Church*, by Blackstone Films.



From an early age, **Paul's** world travels, glamorous careers, and ties to high society have given him invaluable insight into alternative lifestyles. Several weeks after graduating college in his home state of Pennsylvania, Paul moved to Manhattan, where he became an international fashion model. At his very first public-speaking

engagement since returning to the Church, Paul was surprised to find himself sharing the lectern with esteemed university presidents, political figures, priests, and producers of award-winning films. Just two months later, he was being filmed as one of the subjects of the movie *Desire of the Everlasting Hills*, which has since been distributed to all of the bishops at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Whether giving presentations to young adults in church halls, to private organizations in university settings, or to clergy and seminarians in convent retreat houses, Paul shares his unusual testimony in order to be a living example that God's grace is always at work and is more powerful than the greatest human weaknesses.





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