

WHAT WE CAN DO

"Above all, welcome these young adults and, if they are honestly striving to live in accordance with the teaching of Christ, encourage their full and active role in parish life. Such participation provides a source of support that allows them to make progress in living a chaste life.

We ask that you promote support groups that foster chaste living, such as "Courage" for individuals with same-sex attraction and "EnCourage" for families interested in learning more about how to help their loved ones. Where support groups already exist, give them your backing. Where they do not yet exist, make every effort to establish them at both the parish and diocesan levels."

— Pastoral Ministry to Young People with Same-Sex Attraction,
Episcopal Commission for Doctrine of the Canadian
Conference of Catholic Bishops, June 23, 2011

"This resource accurately reflects Church teaching; it will profit those who seek to grow in their understanding of the love and mercy that God has for us all. It offers valuable insights from those persons who experience same-sex attractions and who have chosen to live lives consistent with the truth of the human person and the Catholic Faith."

— Fr. Paul N. Check, Executive Director, Courage International

For more information or to speak with the chaplain in confidence, contact:

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For more information about the Church's teaching on homosexuality, please visit the Courage website at www.couragerc.org.

Have Courage! Share this pamphlet with a friend or loved one.

HAVE COURAGE! YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Do you experience
same-sex attractions?

Do you know
someone who experiences
same-sex attractions?

Do you agree that all
people are beloved children
of God, *regardless of their
sexual attractions*?

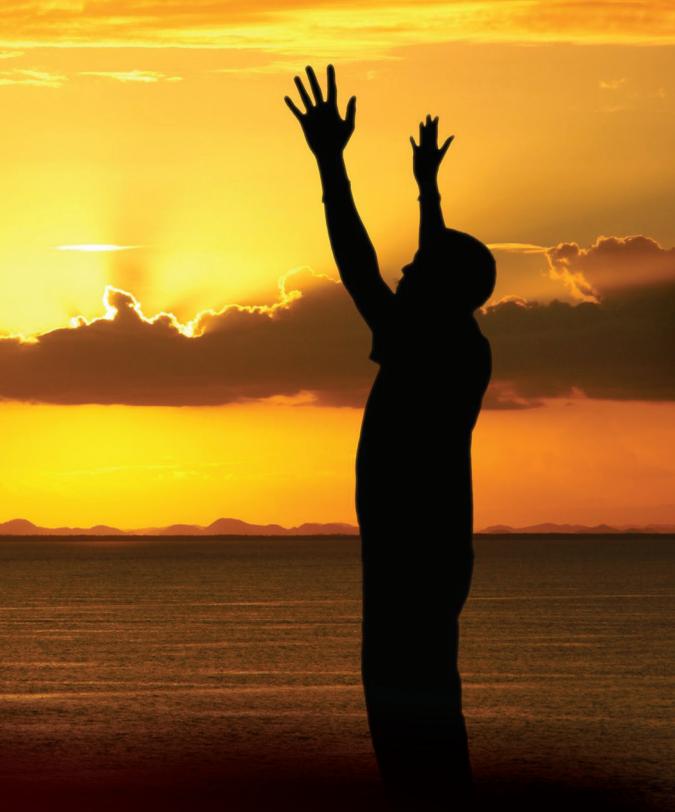
If you have answered "yes"
to even one of these questions ...

Have Courage! You are not alone!

A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Many of us who experience same-sex attractions have chosen to embrace the Catholic Church because we have found *love* in the Catholic Church - in the last place the world taught that we should look! The Catholic Church welcomed us as we were and gently invited us to pursue a greater degree of truth and self-honesty about who we are as persons. Today we understand why - as we come to embrace greater truth, we experience greater joy. Our journeys have brought us to grow in our understanding of our purpose and place in God's beautiful plan. The joy we experience today as a result of saying "Yes!" to that invitation is greater than what we ever before knew was possible. Our lives are living testimonies of that joy, and we thank the Catholic Church for inviting and encouraging us to pursue greater truth and self-honesty, while affirming us in the truth that we are indeed beloved children of God, first and foremost.

Our journeys have also been greatly aided by *Courage*; a world-wide Catholic spiritual network supported by Blessed Pope John Paul II, designed specifically for persons like us - persons who have been permitted the experience of same-sex attractions and who desire to live joyful lives as faithful Catholics. *Courage* empowered us with the awareness that despite our *non-specifically chosen* attractions, we still are free to *specifically choose* how to define ourselves as persons. That has empowered us with the realization that we



have the ability to be honest with ourselves about the existence of our attractions, while still being able to self-identify in a way that reflects Catholic teaching - which is to choose to self-identify first and foremost as beloved children of God, above all else. Today we realize how this identity, when wholeheartedly embraced, reflects a greater degree of truth of who we are as persons than any identity that is centered on any single facet of our beings (such as our sexuality). This is why we now joyfully choose to self-identify not as gays or lesbians, but rather first and foremost as beloved children of God - who are fully honest with ourselves about the existence of our attractions.

As well, within *Courage* is *EnCourage*, a ministry for our loved ones who might not experience same-sex attractions, but who are striving to grow together with us while we journey towards a stronger relationship with Christ.

LORD JESUS, IN YOU I DIE AND RISE TO NEW LIFE. MAY I KNOW YOUR LIFE SO FULLY THAT I WOULD REJOICE IN ALL THAT I FACE. AMEN.

A MATTER OF CHOICE

Our experience of same-sex attractions has given us an opportunity to choose to seek Christ in a profound way. Our choice to love Him and to strive to put Him first, in our action *and in our embraced identity*, is an ongoing testament of our love for Him. The power of our specific choice to put Him first must be recognized and celebrated, for when we do that, we disengage from seeking ultimate fulfillment through our sexuality (creation) and instead seek ultimate fulfillment through our relationship with God (Creator). *This* is the journey towards fulfillment that will satisfy our souls, for the love of God, our Creator, is perfect, limitless, and infinitely greater than any element of creation.

When we specifically choose to wholeheartedly embrace the identity of being *beloved children of God* first and foremost, while still being fully honest with ourselves about the existence of our attractions, we become role models for others of how one can choose to put Christ first, *above sexuality*. We invite all persons to make a choice in this regard, for both *infinite* Creator and *finite* creation cannot co-occupy the highest honor, and we will ultimately be held accountable for whether we choose to recognize this truth or not. Christ invites us to choose Him first because He loves us; once we choose to place Him first, the unending well-spring of His love will begin to flow through us, satisfying the longing for the fullness of love that exists within each of our beings.

WE ARE INVITED TO WHOLENESS AND HOLINESS

1. **Prayer:** We are invited to pray together for the graces to continue to place Christ at the center of our embraced identity, so that we may be drawn to find fulfillment in Him above all else. When we do this, the perfect love of Christ, who is with us at all times, can fill our hearts, easing loneliness and isolation thus allowing us to engage in healthier relationships with all persons.
2. **Fellowship:** We are invited to grow in chaste fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ so that we may be fully present to support each other as we continue to journey into the fullness of His love.
3. **Sharing:** We are invited to share with each other our thoughts and experiences, so that no one feels they are walking alone and so all will know that they have someone who will listen to them.
4. **Holiness:** We are invited to see ourselves worthy of living and pursuing holy and fulfilling lives as fellow beloved children of God, so that we may grow in our desire to embrace Christ's love, especially through the Sacraments of Reconciliation and The Holy Eucharist.
5. **Good Example:** We are invited to strive to exemplify Christ's love in all that we do, and to define our standard of success on our fidelity to Christ. In this way we honor the gift of free will that has been given to us, which permits us to always be able to return to His loving mercy, regardless of where we are today or what we have done in the past.

"Remember that you are a child of God, embraced by his tender love"

A SPIRITUAL GROWTH PLAN

1. **Relax** – Slow down and be at peace in the presence of a loving God.
2. **Self-Examine** – Examine your heart and conscience, while seeing yourself as Christ sees you: as His beloved. Remember, because our sexual attractions are not specifically chosen, feelings of shame or guilt internalized on account of the mere existence of those attractions can be released.
3. **Seek Spiritual Direction** – Speak in confidence to a wise and holy priest, who should be able to help you keep in touch with the forgiving and creative presence of Christ in your life.
4. **Read and Meditate** – A slow, prayerful reading of Scripture with the Lord is an excellent starting place. There are many other inspirational Catholic resources as well, especially those about the lives of the saints.
5. **Pray** – Strive to pray each day, not with the focus of "taking away same-sex attractions" but rather for the strength and graces to grow in relationship with Christ above all else.
6. **Attend Mass** – Strive to attend mass regularly and to become more involved in your church community. Do so while seeing yourself as God sees you; first and foremost, as His beloved child.
7. **Reconciliation** – This beautiful Sacrament is for everyone. In the times when we feel the most weak and perhaps even unlovable, we are reminded that Jesus Christ loves us enough to forgive us. Take advantage of that wonderful opportunity before receiving the Holy Eucharist (as all Catholics are called to do) in order to let go of anything that is weighing you down.

"We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary."
– Benedict XVI, in his first homily as Pope

