



THE SAME SEX ATTRACTION

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**A Beacon for the Storm Tossed
Traveler in the Modern World**

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Introduction

Welcome and peace to all who read this document!

The Same Sex Attraction Morality League is dedicated to:

- the promotion of Christian sexual morality among those who experience same sex attraction, and...
- their treatment with respect, compassion and sensitivity by others

The creator of this document hopes that each of you may find something herein useful, insightful or at least provocative, whether you be of a heterosexual, homosexual or mixed inclination, and whether you be an orthodox Catholic, a Christian believer or otherwise.

Although the visible membership of the aforementioned League is small in number, it can be hoped that there are at least some sympathetic spirits out there with whom one may share in the bonds of an invisible communion. This document sets forth to the cyber community at large some propositions on the subject of same sex attraction and Christianity. These principles reflect the ruminations of a lifetime of one who happens to experience same sex attraction and is informed by the teachings of the Catholic faith.

Our cultural milieu is filled with shrill polemics from all sides on the subject of homosexuality. On the one hand, there is still a great deal of hatred directed against those with same sex attraction as persons. On the other hand, the gay activists encourage an "in your face" confrontational attitude and promote what many view as sinful behavior as well as a victim mentality on the part of those with same sex attraction.

The long-term trends in society would appear to be mixed. On the positive side, the visceral hatred of persons with same sex attraction may diminish over time as people understand better the deep-seated nature this inclination can take. On the negative side, we appear to be witnessing the triumph of the gay activist ideology that any and all safe and consensual sexual activity is not only licit, but to be positively celebrated, and that any expression of traditional Christian moral values on sexuality must be anathematized.

Inducements to promiscuity abound in the present day, while the virtue of chastity is denigrated. Sexual gratification has become seen in many quarters as the highest good in life. Relationships of a sexual nature between those of the same sex are lauded as the equivalent of heterosexual marriage, despite their very different context, even while the value of chaste friendship seems debased. Is it any wonder that we seem to be witnessing a certain coarsening of daily life and the growing ubiquity of a cynical "what's in it for me" attitude?

Some of us with same sex attraction who take seriously the notion of a moral conscience as informed by the Christian revelation feel at sea and demoralized in the modern world. Clear and balanced statements that speak the truth in love from an authentic Christian perspective are rare. One feels compelled either to accept the ideology of "gay pride" and "coming out" and embrace without reservation the promiscuous "gay" lifestyle or else to live a life of self-hatred and loneliness.

Neither of these unappealing alternatives is necessary to the believing Christian with same sex attraction. We CAN lead fulfilling lives with spiritual and emotional health by doing what God calls us to do -- live a life of holy chastity in conformity with his will and seek out true and chaste friendships with others. The truth about homosexuality is still as valid as it ever was - simply put, we must balance love for all persons with respect for the teachings of the Church on sexual morality. This truth is nothing of which to be ashamed.

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It is imperative to keep in mind in this regard that truth and right are not always the same as what is most popular. Consider the issue of abortion: simply because support for abortion is widespread does not mean that it is morally justifiable to kill a human fetus. If a majority of people thought it appropriate to send Jews to concentration camps that would not make such a policy right. And once we know the truth, we should be willing to grapple with, internalize and live it, with God's help. The propositions set forth below constitute a feeble attempt to start filling the gap in modern discourse by succinctly spelling out the truth in love as I apprehend it. It is my sincere prayer that these principles may act as a beacon for souls in this troubled world and a balm to reconcile and heal!

Before launching into the following exposition, I would like to express my gratitude at the support in maintaining chastity provided by the Catholic ministry "Courage". This ministry is designed to help those with same sex attraction live chastely in accordance with Catholic teaching. I encourage all Catholics with same sex attraction and other interested parties to consider seeking out this ministry with a truly open mind.

One final introductory note -- while I do consider myself a member of Courage, the opinions and beliefs set forth below are entirely my own and do not necessarily reflect those of Courage or of the Catholic Church. I hasten to add that as a true son of the Church, I submit to her maternal correction if any jot or tittle herein is at variance with her teachings on faith and morals.

The Teaching on Homosexuality in a Nutshell

- Hold Fast to the Entire Deposit of Faith. If one is a Christian who is serious about responding to God's call to holiness, one must take seriously the Apostle's injunction to hold fast to the whole deposit of faith. The deposit of faith includes the teaching of the Church on sexual morality, which simply put asks chastity of all humans (yes, there is even a chastity appropriate for married couples) and commands us either to marry or abstain, as George Herbert so tersely put it. While chastity is a duty that we owe to our Creator, Redeemer and Lord, it is at the same time a source of immense grace and blessing and, especially for those who experience same sex attraction, nothing other than the path to holiness in this life and the unspeakable joys of the Beatific Vision in the next.
- Love all Humans. While detesting and avoiding sin, the Christian must seriously endeavor to love all persons regardless of their personal characteristics or failings. We can and must speak out against wrong ideas and actions, but we should not target persons as such and should leave judgment to God. Many who rightly decry homosexual activity and the ideology of practicing and promoting homosexuals need to be careful about their language and not vilify persons. Moreover, those with same sex attraction can feel dignity in the unique gifts of their entire human personality and need not descend to either a narrow "pride" based solely on one's sex drive or a debilitating self-hatred. Humans are not simply walking hormones!
- The Pure Doctrine on Homosexuality. The Catholic teaching on homosexuality specifically, as reflected in [Sections 2357, 2358 and 2359](#) of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, has four basic concepts:
 - Activity Sinful - Homosexual activity is intrinsically sinful and disordered.
 - Condition Disordered - The inclination to commit such sin, while not a sin itself, is an objective disorder.
 - Person Deserving of Compassion - The minority of people (not insignificant in number) who have a deep seated sexual attraction to persons of their own sex are children of God who deserve respect, compassion and sensitivity from others.
 - Call to Chastity - Those with this disorder are called to chastity, which may include and benefit from the development of disinterested friendships.

The Teaching Based in Scripture and Tradition

- Scripture and Tradition Condemn Homosexual Acts. The moral teaching of the Church that homosexual acts are sinful and disordered is based on:
 - The Bible
 - Sacred Tradition handed down from the apostles as reflected in the unanimous consent of the fathers of the Church and the unchanging magisterium of the Church in the two thousand years of its existence on earth.
 - Philosophical reflections on the natural law.

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- The Bible condemns homosexual activity explicitly and harshly in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. While modern theologians and Biblical scholars try to render these condemnations practically meaningless, the plain sense of the inspired text remains and cries out in words transcending cultural contexts the moral (and not just ceremonial or dietary) injunction that "thou shalt not lie with man as with woman".
- Condemnations Always Interpreted as Applying to All Such Acts. In addition to the plain sense of Scripture, the early Church fathers and the Church's magisterium continuously interpreted the Biblical condemnations as applying to all homosexual acts, not simply to such acts in the context of temple prostitution or among those who do not have a high degree of same sex attraction, as many modern theologians and Biblical scholars argue. The fact that the Church, who Catholics believe is guided by the Holy Spirit in her interpretation of faith and morals, consistently so interpreted the Biblical prohibitions suggests that the narrow interpretations put forth by revisionist theologians are erroneous or possibly even self serving justifications for sinful activity. Moreover, Catholics must give the assent of faith to all teachings of the deposit of faith - not just dogmas infallibly defined by a pope or an ecumenical council or found in the Nicene Creed. If something has been always and everywhere taught within the Church, i.e., is part of the ordinary and universal magisterium, then it is part of Sacred Tradition and must be given the assent of faith. There is no question that the sinfulness of all homosexual acts has always and everywhere been held to be sinful by the Church's authentic magisterium.
- Supposed "Modern" Knowledge Questionable. Furthermore, the notion often put forth nowadays that the apostles and the Church fathers did not know "what we know today" about homosexuality, i.e., that they did not realize that same sex attraction was deep seated in some people, just does not ring true. It is inconceivable that none of the apostles and fathers knew either from the experience of acquaintances or perhaps in some cases from their own experience that same sex attraction can be deep seated. Moreover, the Church has had two thousand years of practical experience of spiritual direction and surely would have obtained during that period the wisdom that homosexual attraction can be deep seated in the dubious case that such wisdom was not there before. And in any event, the prohibition in the Bible is a prohibition on activity: since behavior is something that can be chosen or not regardless of the degree of same sex attraction (although sometimes of course it can be difficult without the help of grace to resist temptation), then it is difficult to see why our supposed "modern knowledge", even if it really is new, should change God's decrees.
- Jesus Loved Purity of Heart - Chastity is a "Core" Teaching of Christianity. Most tellingly to my mind, the Bible shows that Our Lord put purity of heart and the avoidance of even lustful thoughts at the center of his teaching. I have a hard time reconciling this concern of our Savior for chastity with the promiscuity that I see common in the "gay" lifestyle today. Even sexual acts within a homosexual "union" seem impure to my mind, since the unitive act is not open to life and the element of lust would seem inevitably to be predominant. I am therefore skeptical of efforts to justify this lifestyle within a Christian context. The teachings on sexual morality of the Church, far from being optional extras that are not part of the "core" of Christian doctrine, as some modern Anglican divines would have it, belong to the very essence of Jesus' message of purity and selfless love for God and neighbor. Changing this teaching would be taking away a significant if not crucial part of Christian teaching, and might even be deemed the creation of a new religion. Christianity, including its call for sexual purity, is a radical contradiction to the values of the world. One can certainly choose to believe in the values of the world, but such are not authentic Christianity and it is misleading so to label them.

- The True Church Cannot Change Teaching. The Church is based on the faith revealed to the apostles and known to us from Scripture and Tradition as interpreted and expounded by the Church's magisterium down the ages. Since this body of teaching on faith and morals cannot change, it is disloyal to insist that the Church must change its teaching to suit one's personal preferences. Of course doctrine can develop over time, but authentic development, as Cardinal Newman explained, must occur in an organic way. The detailed implications and applications to specific circumstances of existing doctrinal principles can become clearer and more refined over the centuries, but doctrine cannot be reversed. Bending the moral rules on homosexual acts, even if only in some circumstances, would constitute a reversal of long and clearly expressed moral teaching.
- Legitimate Development of Doctrine Has Occurred. Indeed, legitimate development of doctrine relating to homosexuality does seem to have taken place. For instance, I would argue that the greater emphasis now placed on treating those with same sex attraction with love and compassion, as evidenced in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, reflects a more nuanced treatment than the mere condemnations of the activity that might have characterized previous pronouncements on the topic over the centuries. This development would seem to be a logical result of analysis about how the important teachings on charity and the dignity of the human person relate to the condemnation of homosexual acts as sinful and disordered. The greater sensitivity to the personhood of those with same sex attraction does not in any way reverse or contradict the settled teaching on the sinfulness of such acts or the disorder of the inclination.

Homosexual Activity:

Promiscuity and Same Sex Relationships

- Understanding the Wrongfulness of Homosexual Activity. While Catholics are obliged to give assent or religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings of the Church on faith and morals, it is still worthwhile for any believer to try to understand and make sense in his or her own mind and conscience why God might have imposed a particular prohibition, such as that with respect to homosexual acts. As humans, we are endowed with reason. Why should the faithful in the twenty-first century be content merely to accept on faith what the Church teaches without also trying to understand possible reasons for the teaching, thereby helping to internalize it? It helps me to think through the issue of why homogenital acts are wrong to consider such acts in two categories: (a) purely promiscuous acts and (b) acts in the context of a committed monogamous relationship.
- Promiscuity Clearly Wrong. From an objective moral point of view, the conclusion that promiscuity is wrong or at least unchristian seems fairly easy to accept. If one looks into one's deepest conscience, one surely must see that promiscuity is in essence about using other people for our own selfish desires, and that it reduces the promiscuous one from the level of a rational human being to that of a mere beast. It is undignified behavior and leads to a mindset that sees other people as mere sex objects and not as humans deserving of dignity and respect. Let us not forget that Our Lord called not only for freedom from illicit sexual activity, but that we should not even surrender to lustful thoughts. Under any objective analysis, the "gay" lifestyle today is riddled with promiscuity and the promotion of such. Moreover, any criticism of such lifestyle along those lines is simply not tolerated. Do those in this lifestyle feel themselves free from any moral obligations by virtue of their sexual inclinations? Why do no gay activist leaders talk about morality and self-control? Why are any safe and consensual sexual liaisons considered not only permissible but laudable? Will no gay activist proclaim publicly that promiscuity is simply wrong? Why do they refuse to draw any moral lines? I would encourage even those who think that committed homosexual relationships are licit to acknowledge that promiscuity is immoral. Oh ye self-proclaimed leaders of the "gay community", please show some moral responsibility and speak out against promiscuity, "cruising", orgies, casual sexual encounters, sado-masochism, pedophilia, public indecency and pornography!
- Committed Relationships Based on Sexual Activity Problematic. Homosexual acts in the context of committed monogamous relationships are somewhat more difficult to my mind. On a superficial level, it would appear that such acts are at least partly motivated by affection for another, would not really harm oneself or others and may be a positive good. For years I longed in silence for such a relationship but never seemed to come in contact with the right person. At this point in my life, however, I am rather skeptical as to whether such a relationship really is possible for me or even desirable. I'm not sure if I could find a relationship involving a degree of selflessness on my part that would meet Our Lord's purity of heart standard. Nor do I want to treat people selfishly and callously in the process of looking for such a relationship, knowing that actions affect character over time. And even if I did find myself in an intimate friendship, I would want it to remain chaste. Sometimes it is said to be "unfair" to "deny" intimate sexual relationships to those with same sex attraction. I feel that such a view just does not recognize the reality of the world we live in. While we are obligated to love others, we have no entitlement to love and affection from other humans on this earth. Think of those fated to go through life single, such as those with disabilities or who are for whatever reason unattractive to others. If one has one true, disinterested friend, it is an act of purest grace for which one should be extremely thankful. I believe that all of us should be prepared to live alone with only Jesus as our true friend, because we inevitably will find ourselves at some time or another in friendless circumstances.

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- Sexuality is Holy, but only if Acted Upon in the Proper Context. The Catholic Church does not see sexuality as inherently wicked. It is in fact a sacred and holy thing. However, like any thing, it should not be treated casually and should be used only in the proper time and place. The proper time and place for sexual activity is within a permanent monogamous marriage between a man and a woman in an act potentially open to life. Only thus does the sexual act constitute a "sacramental" participation in God's loving act of creation congruent with the natural and divine orders. Once divorced from this context, sexuality if acted upon becomes a dangerous thing that tends to encourage selfishness and a turning away from God and neighbor in order to feed an insatiable animal appetite. Sometimes it is argued that the Church's endorsement of Natural Family Planning means that the Church recognizes the value of the unitive dimension of sexuality even apart from the procreative aspect. Nothing could be further from the truth. While not every act within the marital context will lead to new life, and while the unitive dimension may predominate in certain particular sexual acts between married persons practicing Natural Family Planning, it is still theoretically possible that life could result if no unnatural means have been taken to prevent new life, and the act is in any event within the context of a relationship that over time is open to life. Natural Family Planning also encourages chastity in marriage by requiring abstention from sexual acts for a certain period of time every month if one is licitly spacing children. The context is utterly different from that of a homosexual union.
- Selfish Motivations Perhaps Unavoidable. I have come to consider as unworthy sexual activity that is solely driven by a combination of lust and unitive affection and not open to the possibility of procreation or at least not in the broader context of a marriage open to new life. I suspect that it is not really possible in a context outside of a traditional marriage to get away completely from an essentially selfish motivation for sex. There may of course be real affection and love present between two people in a sexually active same sex relationship, and not every heterosexual marriage is a bed of roses. Nevertheless, I personally believe that the fundamentally selfish and sterile nature of the sexual activity seems much more likely to triumph in the long run in homosexual unions than in heterosexual marriages. I understand that the infidelity and break up rate of such relationships in the "gay community" are statistically quite high, which if true would seem to bear out this conclusion. None of this is to say that sexuality then has no meaning or value for those with same sex attraction. It simply means that, like those God calls to consecrated celibacy, we must channel our sexual energy in such other licit, healthy, creative and charitable ways as God may severally indicate to each of us, including in the development of chaste friendships.
- No Physical or Psychological Complementarity. Men and women would appear to have a certain physical complementarity. That men and women seem biologically made to copulate with each other and not with those of the same sex seems plain for all to see. Also, it makes sense to me based on my subjective observations in life that, generally speaking, men and women do have different personality types and that a same sex union does not have the same psychological and affective complementarity that a married relationship between a man and a woman has. The differing behavior patterns of male and female homosexuals (i.e., the higher incidence of promiscuity among the former versus the greater tendency to develop committed nurturing relationships among the latter) demonstrate that same sex attraction does not remove entirely fundamental differences in character between the sexes. Moreover, it would seem optimal for children to grow up under the influence of both a father and a mother and the different "charisms" that each imparts.
- Immorality of Engaging in Promiscuity to Find a Soul Mate. As mentioned above, I am troubled at the questionable morality of specifically going out and making friends with the ulterior motive of trying to find a special someone with whom to have a sexual relationship, particularly if it means participating in promiscuous activities with several different people in order to find that person. Is this not using other

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people for our selfish ends? Might not such a course of action in the long run make us less respectful of the dignity of others and inclined to undervalue disinterested friendships? Even if one is unsure in one's own mind of the morality of sexual acts with a monogamous lover, wouldn't the moral thing be to wait in chastity and see if such a person comes along and then decide on whether to take a step to initiate or respond to the initiation of such a relationship? And even if we find such a close friend, do we not owe it to Our Lord to consider whether the sexual behavior is really necessary for the relationship? In the long run, will it help or impede true friendship?

- **Civil Recognition of Same Sex Unions.** In terms of public policy, I do not believe that the law needs to recognize same sex unions. People of the same sex can without legal restriction live together whether or not sexual activity occurs. Why should the state recognize a special status if sexual activity is present? It seems the main purpose is to obtain the government's seal of approval on this activity. Given the divergent views of the populace on the complex moral and religious question of homosexuality, I believe the government should be truly neutral on the issue of homosexual activity and should not promote it. It almost seems an unconstitutional (at least in the American context) establishment of a religion by the government for the government to promote this activity despite the religious objections of many. Moreover, the public policy reasons for state support of heterosexual marriage - i.e., the need to protect a non-working spouse and children from too easy a break up of the marriage vow - are not really present in the context of same sex unions. The only possible legitimate public policy reason that I can see is for the state to want to discourage promiscuity among homosexuals. However, it is not clear whether the effect of public promotion of homosexuality by state recognition of same sex unions would necessarily lead to a diminishment of promiscuity or an increase. Of course reduction of violent hate crimes against homosexuals are also used as a public policy justification for "gay marriage", but isn't teaching people to refrain from violent acts a more direct way of dealing with this issue than the indirect means of government promotion of homosexual activity?

Healthy, Disinterested Friendships are Good. While relationships based on homosexual activity should be avoided, the Church does not in the least discourage chaste friendships. In fact, chastity may help us to have and appreciate friends more, since it would serve to take the sexually charged tension out of human interactions. Wouldn't it be a better way of living if we were not always evaluating people in terms of their sexual desirability and instead were treating people as the unique miracles of creation that they are? Would it not be like viewing in three dimensions a reality that we have been habitually viewing through the two dimensional lenses of sexual desire? As long as one avoids sin and, to the extent one's conscience deems appropriate, the near occasions of sin, the person with same sex attraction may and perhaps even should seek out and have close friendships, even intimate friendships, so long as they are chaste. For some, this may even include living together chastely, although to others this may be too much of an occasion for sin and should be avoided. And those in committed relationships might explore whether chastity may in fact enhance those relationships.

Natural Law and the Homosexual Inclination

- The Natural Law; Biologic Design. In addition to the conclusion based on Scripture and Tradition that homosexual acts are sinful, the Church has also deemed such acts to be wrong because they are in breach of the natural law. This relates to the facts of our anatomy and the physical and affective complementarity of the sexes mentioned above. Homosexual acts are contrary to how we are objectively meant to act according to our physical and psychological design. Take human males for example. we know that there is a general category of creatures called human males that are defined by the certain physical and to some extent psychological characteristics that they have in common. These characteristics in most cases work together to lead to certain ends, e.g. a sexual union between a man and a woman. This tendency toward sexual union with a female, who usually provides on her part a tendency to commitment in relationships, production of offspring and an aptitude for the nurturing of a family, leads to marriage and a stable family life. All this clearly is beneficial to the persons involved, to humanity at large, and is part of God's larger plan for the human race. Some of us males have the physical and psychological characteristics, but for one reason or another they do not lead toward the same great and good end that they usually do in the case of most human males. The homosexual inclination is thus a breakdown in the sense that we with this inclination have some but not all of the elements that someone in the general category of human male normally would have to achieve the above-mentioned good end. Even if homosexuality were found to be genetically caused, it would still constitute such a breakdown. There are such things as genetic birth defects in which an object in nature may not possess all the elements that an object of that type normally would have. While there may be other things that someone with a birth defect may have that a normal person would not, perhaps even tremendous and unique gifts, it is nevertheless true that they do not have everything that a normal person has.
- Moral Dimension of the Natural Law. However, the natural law is more than just a factual statement that we have some but not all of the things that make up a great good that most others in our group normally have. It also has a moral element, since it tells us that in this situation, while we may not be capable of acting against our inclinations to obtain the ordinary end (e.g., force ourselves to sleep with the opposite sex), we should at least avoid following our inclinations and acting contrary to our physical and psychological makeup. This makes sense in that acting toward ends to which our physical and psychological makeup are not geared may be harmful to ourselves and to others. Even if the harm is not readily apparent to our subjective vision, we should be open to the possibility that we may not always see the objective harms wrought by our acting on our subjective desires. Moreover, we may not always appreciate the benefits accruing from resisting our subjective desires. The natural law is not about what actually occurs in nature or about what subjectively feels "natural", but about how persons ought to be and act in order to reflect the purpose of their design and in order to maximize the goodness and limit the harm in the case that not all elements of the ordinary design are in place. We know that what we like to do is not always the same as what we ought to do. One may not feel like treating a certain person justly, doing one's homework or performing a certain contract, and one may subjectively feel like raping a woman, child or animal, but one is morally bound to do the former and abstain from the latter just the same. Finally, remember that the natural law applies even if an action affects only ourselves and/or a consenting partner. Just as God does not want us to commit suicide, so God does not want us to act in contravention of our physical and psychological design, even if we feel so inclined and don't hurt anyone but ourselves and/or a consenting partner in the process. God values us more than that, and we should too.

- Both Activity and Inclination Disordered. The Church teaches that both homosexual activity and the inclination to such activity are disordered. The inclination to such acts is a disorder because it is an inclination to an action that is both a sin (a breach of God's law) and disordered (a breach of the natural law). However, the inclination is not itself a sin, since sin requires volition, and people do not choose what thoughts come into their heads (although they do have a choice about what to do with such thoughts once they are there). The term disorder tends to rile people up, and certainly to the extent that it leads people to call others unkind names like "freaks" or worse, such anger may have some justification. Use of the term disorder to justify abusive language and treatment of people is uncharitable and is unbecoming of Christians. As the Catechism says, those with this condition must be treated with respect, compassion and sensitivity. However, if we view the Church as merely making the objective and logical conclusion that an inclination to a sinful and disordered act is itself disordered, and saying it in a dispassionate and clinical manner, or hopefully even a sensitive and charitable manner, then I think use of the term "disorder" is justified.
- Disorder as Inclination to Sin - Similar to Concupiscence Generally. To the extent that we view the inclination as disordered because it is an inclination to sin, then there is truly no justification for those without same sex attraction to use the concept of disorder in an abusive way. The disorder is just like any other inclination to sin, be it an inclination to commit fornication, adultery, gluttony or what have you. The objective disorder is akin to a character flaw, such as irascibility, alcoholism, etc. In this broader sense, homosexuals are in no different a position from almost all other humans, since all subject to original sin have warped wills and a tendency to sin in one way or another. Keep in mind that baptism takes away the guilt of original sin, but does not take away the propensity to sin, or concupiscence, that is the effect of original sin. Consequently, those who wish to lord it over those with same sex attraction on the basis that the latter are disordered would do better to "cultiver son jardin", as Voltaire put it. All sons and daughters of Adam and Eve are in the same boat. Let he who is without sin (or a tendency to sin) cast the first stone.
- Disorder Not Defining. Another reason why the disorder of same sex attraction should not cause people to be treated with disrespect is that the disorder is not the summation of who we are as individuals. Our flaws do not define who we are. We are so much more than the impure thoughts that come into our head. Our character comes from how we react to those impure thoughts, as well as from all the other multitudinous and unrelated facets of our personality. We each have our own peculiar talents, virtues, capacity to love and to help others, etc. Each one of us is a treasure chest of riches and a child of God made in his image and likeness. In charity, we should not simply judge people based on their sinful inclinations and activities. In line with the ever-central maxim "love the sinner, hate the sin", we must not let homosexual activity or inclination blind us to the dignity and worth of those who do or have such, just as we must not deny human dignity and respect to a criminal and make his crime or his inclination to crime the sole identifying factor of his personality.
- Reason and Ethics Uniquely Human, Not Sex Drive. Humans are most uniquely human in their capacity for reason and ethical behavior. This is what distinguishes man from the rest of the animal kingdom. Having a sexual drive is nothing of which to be especially proud. An ideology that makes one's primary identity pride in the ability to have sex is an ideology for beasts, not humans. We are not simply animals rutting away in the fields! The gay ideology of pride in one's sex drive reduces the fullness of our human personality and can lead to utterly degrading behavior. How can marching down a city street naked or nearly so in order to show "pride" in one's animal passions do anything but diminish our dignity as humans? As mentioned above, active sexuality can only be holy and beautiful in the context of a committed lifelong marriage between a man and women in an act that is potentially open to life and that combines the unitive and procreative aspects of the sex act. "Street theater" involving sexual acts is

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nothing but lust and public indecency. Those who are vowed to celibacy or other persons who for whatever reason are in circumstances where chaste singlehood is required should honor sexuality with forbearance and redirection of sexual energy into pure love and good and healthy works and away from selfish sinful pursuits. This redirection of energy is not a bad thing, pace all the decriers of "repression" in our society. This energy, properly channeled in healthy directions, is in fact the foundation of civilization. The latter would fall apart if everybody were to devote all of their energy to the satisfaction of their carnal lusts.

- Diversity of People with Same Sex Attraction. A propos to the fact that same sex attraction cannot define one's fundamental identity, I would like to make a plea for recognition of true diversity among those with same sex attraction. Not everyone with this condition fits a stereotype of what a "gay" person is supposed to be like, nor is there such a thing as a homogeneous "gay" community. People with same sex attraction are individuals with personalities as varied as those of heterosexuals and deserve to be treated as such. Some certainly are very loud and confrontational and toe the politically correct party line and have built up an ideology to justify homosexual behavior, including even the most promiscuous type of behavior. Others are quieter, but with various points of view on the acceptability of homosexual acts. Some do in fact remain chaste from religious or moral principle, and some there are who are able to perform heterosexual acts and are married. Some have significant feelings of other sex attraction and some very little. Some are open to all and sundry about their inclination, others have exercised their inalienable right either to tell only a few close friends and relations or to remain silent in public about their sexual inclinations. (On the issue of telling others about same sex attraction, I just want to say that the involuntary "outing" of others or pressure on others to "out" themselves is a form of emotional terrorism that cannot be condoned. It is a Robespierrean, Leninist political tactic that sacrifices the happiness of others to achievement of a political agenda. And it is unfair because a person may in fact not wish to have his or her primary identity be based on his or her sex drive. One quite legitimately may desire to be treated as a unique person instead of as a label.) Not all those with same sex attraction are activists, nor are they all "liberal" in their political or social views. In the 2000 presidential election in the United States, around 25% of those self-identifying as "homosexual" voted for the Republican ticket. If those who are not public about their inclination were included, I daresay the percentage might even be higher. This statistic is not mentioned to endorse any political party, but rather to highlight the fact that the gay activists do not speak for all those with same sex attraction and that the homosexual "community" is far from monolithic.
- A Note on Terms. At this point I should probably add a note on the tortured issue of terms used to describe homosexuality and homosexuals. I purposely have not used in this text the term "gay" as a word to describe those that experience same sex attraction because I believe the term "gay" as used in our society implies an acceptance of the entire culture and political agenda that has developed around the homosexually active lifestyle. It is unfair to label persons in this way because, first, not all persons that have same sex attraction subscribe to the ideology or practices of modern "gay" culture. Second, some persons may not want to be identified simply by their sex drive, but wish to be treated with respect as an entire and unique person with multiple facets, attributes and talents. Third, the term as used by "gay" activists often is used in a way that suggests that the degree of same sex attraction cannot vary within persons, a conclusion that has not yet decisively been proven by science. Fourth, to the extent the term is used to identify a purported culture, the term promotes ghettoization of those with same sex attraction apart from the mainstream of society. The term "homosexual" is far superior to "gay" in the sense that it is a more neutral clinical term, although it certainly has a certain amount of negative cultural baggage. "Same sex attraction" is thus the ideal term in my view, and thus I have used it here.

- Disorder as a "Gift" and a Means of Holiness. If we utilize our sexual energy in licit and healthy pursuits, then that energy, even if it is disordered, can in some sense be viewed as a "gift". With this energy, we can accomplish more things that help ourselves, others, society, the world, the Church and God. It may be that having this inclination encourages a certain amount of creativity and "thinking outside the box" that may in many ways be valuable for society at large. Another way in which the disorder might be viewed as a "gift" is that it is a challenge and a thorn in our sides that can goad us to greater holiness and purity of life. With the sufferings from our disorder, so akin to the "happy fault and necessary sin of Adam" mentioned in the Easter vigil, we can grow spiritually closer to God. Moreover, we can combine the struggles we face with the passion of Our Lord on the cross and offer them up to the Father as part of Christ's sacrifice. In this way, we are allowed to participate as part of Christ's body in the redemption of the universe. If we truly apply ourselves to growth in holiness, always invoking the aid of God's grace of course, then our disorder can truly be both an iniquity and a gift without contradiction.
- One Among Many Challenges to our Free Will. A fact that we must face is that we do not live in a perfect world here below. We humans are confronted in our lives with all kinds of challenges and contingencies, both relating to our internal psychological makeup as well as our external circumstances. Some of these phenomena have biological causes (such as genetic defects), some result from experience, some may result from a mixture of both and some are seemingly random occurrences. In any event, they are the cards that we have been dealt, and we must deal with them as best we can. Catholics believe that God has caused us to live in a contingent world in which we have the moral freedom to choose God and goodness and cooperate with his grace or reject the same. Just as it makes sense that God created us with a certain amount of free will with which to choose either to respond to him or not, God, without performing any evil act, allowed us to exist in world where challenges would arise to confront us. Of course he could have created us all perfect and happy and in a marvelous environment all the time, but then we would not have the opportunity to grow. Why do we recognize the need for practice and experience in order to become better in other walks of life when we do not similarly see the need for practice and experience in order to grow closer to God in holiness?
- God's Gift of Freedom Reflects His Love. We should value the freedom we have been given by God, since it is an act of purest love. Love involves forbearance and giving the beloved "space" and allowing them to "be themselves". If God were to preprogram our environment, thoughts and behavior, how would our life be truly our own and how would it have any meaning? Also, God wants us to love him truly and of our own volition. A mechanical love offered by puppet creatures would mean nothing to him or us. He truly wants us to be free and to embrace goodness and himself in freedom. But God is not a sadistic monster by placing us in a world with challenges and evil. He freely offers us the help of his grace and mercy, but it is not imposed. That is one of the messages of the cross. And God chooses goodness to operate like leaven in the world, slowly, silently and steadily working away for the ultimate triumph over evil. God does not always choose to intervene in a heavy-handed way to confront the evils of the time, but certainly there are positive as well as negative forces at work in the world, and the roadmap to the kingdom is there for all to see if they would but look. In justice to God, we should keep in mind that there is a lot of good in the world as well for which we are not thankful enough, and that we can through our own actions increase the amount of goodness and love in the world. And we know that since he is good, God will not allow evil to triumph over us forever, regardless of how bad it might seem. Remember that the Christian revelation posits an afterlife -- a realm beyond our current physical environment -- so we really cannot see the full picture or understand the full meaning of all the bad things that happen in this life. At this point, we must have faith in God, though we see but through a glass darkly.

- Source of Inclination Irrelevant. Because the Lord allows challenges to exist in our lives, I personally do not see any potential discovery of a "gay gene" or other genetic origin for homosexuality as necessitating the change of one iota of the teaching of the Church on homosexuality. Since homosexual behavior has been condemned by God, the source of the inclination simply should not matter. Regardless of how it arises, it exists and is strongly felt in many people, as the Catechism acknowledges, and all such are called to chastity regardless of whether the origin is nature, nurture, childhood social experience, a mixture of any of these factors, some other factor or even different factors for different people. Of course the issue of the origin of homosexuality is related to the vexed issue of its mutability. But whether mutable or no, all those with this condition are to live in a state of angelic purity.
- Change of Orientation. Perhaps a few things ought to be said here about the controversial issue of change of sexual orientation. Courage is not a change of orientation ministry and has always stressed with the Church that the call to chastity is the primary duty of all those with same sex attraction, as it is indeed of all humans, even those within marriage. However, modern-day "findings" about the supposed biological origins of same sex attraction and the supposed inability of any person of same sex attraction to ever change are of questionable scientific basis, and certain contrary data are perhaps being ignored or suppressed for political reasons. Many of the "professional" groups and individuals that issue conclusions on this issue seem driven more by politics than by objective science. As the Catechism recognizes, the source of homosexuality has not yet been satisfactorily explained by science, and I for one am happy to leave it at that. Furthermore, even if it is scientifically proven that the bulk of people with strong same sex attraction and weak "other sex attraction" are not likely to be able to change through therapy, how can one be sure that change is not possible in any individual case? Nobody can speak with absolute scientific accuracy that any particular individual may not be able to change. Each person is unique and should be taken on a case by case basis. Finally, I would note that even if a scientific proposition is widely accepted by scientists, that does not mean that the proposition is necessarily true. Science has often had to change hypotheses and theories in light of new evidence and new paradigms. Even Galileo was not entirely correct in his model of the solar system and needed refinements from Kepler to render his theories a more accurate reflection of physical reality. Especially in the field of behavioral psychology, I am skeptical that science can do anything more than propose theories rather than state iron-clad facts that would be absolutely true in every single case. And it seems quite conceivable to me that different instances of homosexuality could have different causes. For instance, while many with same sex attraction may have been abused by their father in childhood, this is not universally the case (it was not true in my case).
- Reparative Therapy. Given that there is no definitive scientific conclusion on the origins or the mutability of the homosexual inclination, why should reparative therapy not be available on a voluntary basis to those who wish it? Of course chastity is what we need to practice in order to be perfect, and we will not be any less valuable in God's eyes with the disorder than without it. Nevertheless, people with same sex attraction, and particularly young people for whom psychological patterns may not be rigidly fixed, should be allowed to try reparative therapy if they wish to and have the money to spend. Of course I would hope that all those who undergo therapy, while being open to the grace of change if the Lord wills it, not be upset or angry with God if the therapy does not seem to be working. It may be that the Lord does not will that the challenge of chastity be taken away from a specific individual at a specific time. (I also would point out to those in therapy of any kind that a therapist ethically should not belittle the religious and moral beliefs of the patient or impose their own beliefs on the patient. Please be wary then if your therapist, knowing of your religious beliefs to the contrary, tells you that homosexual acts are permissible, or that chastity is only a second-best "halfway house". They may be committing an ethical breach by abusing a position of authority.)

- Prayer is Free and Miracles Always Possible. Beyond change therapy specifically, all certainly have the freedom to pray not only for chastity but also to be released from the disorder of same sex attraction, if it be God's will. We should not put limits on what God can do, regardless of the science involved. With God all things are possible, and he has on several occasions as described in the Bible intervened in the natural world to make the barren woman a happy mother of children. Of course, our prayer at all times should in essence be that we have the grace to know, accept and do God's will. So pray by all means, but don't be overly disappointed if God does not immediately take away this thorn from one's side.

The Call to Chastity

- The Glory of Chastity. Regardless of whether same sex attraction diminishes or not, the Church tells us that the basic solution to the problem of deep seated homosexuality is to hand, i.e., the virtue of chastity. Chastity is often seen as a sentence of punishment by our sex saturated society, but it in fact is a profound blessing to those who strive to practice it. Chastity, while certainly a struggle for most, is nevertheless a great good and well worth the struggle. First of all, chastity can lead to the joy of a clear conscience, a feeling of communion and closeness to God, and assurance of eternal salvation. Think of how Jesus treasured purity of heart. And we know what a treasure it is every time we exit the confession stall. In addition, chastity gives us a great freedom that those with family commitments may not necessarily have. We can use this freedom to accomplish all sorts of good works for ourselves and others. We have more time to put ourselves in the conscious presence of God through a regular prayer life. We can engage in regular charitable and social activities that help other people, including family members, friends, acquaintances and society at large. Chastity encourages a self-discipline that frees us from slavery to sin. We should be able to enjoy the people and things of this world more for what they are, not for what they bring us. We can truly admire the physical and spiritual beauty of God's creation, including that of other humans, if we appreciate them chastely. The glories of this evangelical counsel radiate throughout time and space and have always been treasured within the Church.
- Many Chaste Lives are Fulfilled Lives. We should recognize that a lot of people go and have in history gone without sexual intimacy and yet have led fulfilling lives. Think of the vast number of clergy and religious in the Church down the ages and all the good that they have done. The selfless lives of many holy and celibate priests and religious are such a wonderful sign of contradiction to the values of the world and such an encouragement for those of us who live in chaste singlehood that it would be a shame if the Western Church were to dispense with this superlative discipline. Besides priests and religious, think of those who may have some sort of health problem or disability that would prevent sexual intimacy, those who may be unattractive to others due to ugliness of body or soul, those in the past who had been castrated at birth, and the vast number of poor and disadvantaged, especially in less developed economies, who may not marry for various social and economic reasons. We who live in such comparative luxury and wealth in developed economies are no worse off and in many ways are much better off than many of those living in the third world. Let's stop whining about not "getting any" and start counting our blessings! Even better yet, let's go out and do something to help those worse off than ourselves.
- Necessity of Grace, but Grace Offered to All Baptized. God's commandment to live without sin despite our disordered will is difficult to carry out, to be sure. However, it would be wrong to conclude in our pride either that God's revelation is wrong or that we can achieve a state of sinlessness solely by our own efforts. While we must of our own free will make a responsive step to God, we cannot without God's grace follow the moral and natural law. What a wonderful tide of conversion there might be if all those with same sex attraction were to say in humility, "Lord, I can't handle this alone, so I ask your help to walk the straight and narrow path of chastity in love and holiness"! God promises in the Bible grace sufficient to resist temptation. Practicing homosexuals occasionally maintain that only some are given the grace to remain chaste. At first glance it might seem that there is some Scriptural support for such a proposition. St. Paul and even Jesus seem to suggest that it is not given to all to be celibate. However, I have come to think that they must have been addressing the skirt chasing males among us, not those with deep-seated predominant same sex attraction. For one thing, the remedy commended by St. Paul and suggested as the alternative by Our Lord is marriage. By marriage they clearly mean a heterosexual union (Jesus even quotes Genesis about the creation of Adam and Eve in his discussion about marriage

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right before the "eunuch" passage in Matthew 19). Obviously if one is incapable of consummating a marriage, then this is not a solution. However, as certainly would have been well known to Jesus and St. Paul, there are some sinful activities that certain people may have a strong inclination toward, e.g., pedophilia, cannibalism, bestiality, murder and mayhem, etc., which activities cannot be licit in any circumstances. For those with deep-seated homosexuality, therefore, as for those with inclinations for other such sins, it must be that the relevant Scriptural texts would be those about being offered sufficient grace. I think in the cited passages, St. Paul and Our Lord are just making the pragmatic point that for those who have strong heterosexual urges, there is an easy solution -- marriage. For the rest of us, let us call upon God's abundant grace and mercy for help in approaching evangelical perfection!

- Taking Responsibility for Our Actions and Presumption of Volition. Oftentimes we just don't want to cooperate with God and we make excuses for ourselves. Thus sometimes when we say we "cannot help ourselves", there is nevertheless an objectively volitional element. We may not have really made an effort to seek out God's help in earnest. Of course if someone objectively cannot help doing something, then by definition there would be no sin because there is no volition. However, as with masturbation, I think it altogether too easy to let oneself off the hook by claiming that one could not help oneself. I personally think it better to operate with a presumption that acts are volitional and that we therefore should take responsibility for them, except in perhaps the most extreme cases. Of course, we should also avoid the other extreme of overscrupulosity and irrational obsession over every minute failing. Nor should we be morbidly obsessed with how sinful we are. We should confess our sins with contrition when we fall, do penance and move on. God in his mercy and love will forgive us our sins if he knows we are making a good faith effort to avoid sin. In any event, remember that our sanctification, even post-baptism, is an ongoing process here below. We should use the graces offered by God, especially through the sacraments of the Church, to grow in virtue over time and reduce the effects of our wilfull sinfulness.
- Aids to Chastity. Some view the struggle for chastity as similar to the struggle of an alcoholic for sobriety. They admit their powerlessness and seek God's grace through a "twelve step" process similar to that of Alcoholics Anonymous. Courage and groups like Sexaholics Anonymous use this approach, and many seem to find it helpful. Seeking out and treasuring chaste friendships can also be a means of chastity. Getting involved in healthy and non-sexually oriented pursuits and activities is of course also a good thing. Most important, however, is to stay close to God through regular prayer and the sacraments, including regular confession and communion. Private devotions such as the rosary are also a good means to do this. Publications like the "Magnificat" have very simple and easy to follow morning and evening prayers for those who don't have the time or inclination to master the intricacies of the liturgy of the hours and who are not required by their clerical or religious status to read or sing the same. Remember that prayer simply means communicating with Our Lord and God. It is amazing the difference it can make to do this on a regular basis, morning and evening, even if for a short period and even if we do not always feel like doing it. Christianity has always had a tradition of sanctifying the time. This is to help in our own sanctification. Space and time can be sacraments in a broad sense -- i.e., guaranteed meeting places with God -- if we live and worship in the spirit and in truth. Our faith is incarnational, which means not that the material is primary over the spirit, but that we should act in the world in order to bring out the spiritual potential in all matter. As the seraphim sing, "Heaven AND EARTH are full of thy glory"!
- The Single Vocation. One healthy development in the Church stemming from Vatican II is the greater recognition of the single vocation. This is great news for those with same sex attraction. Contrary to the traditional view that the single state should be a temporary state that one passes through before either going on to marriage or a religious vocation, the Church recognizes more and more that many different categories of people, including many people with same sex attraction, may find themselves in permanent

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singlehood. While this vocation may not be a specific calling the way it sometimes is for marriage or for the religious life, clearly if neither marriage nor the religious life are feasible for us, then God certainly must will that we stay where we are, follow his commandment of chastity and rejoice in the life that he has given. For many of us, of course, the reaction when we think that we have to live this way is dread at what an empty life it must be. However, the single vocation need not be empty and dreadful -- it is a life close to God and filled with the radiant glory of chastity. And it will be valued in heaven even if not by others on earth.

- **Marriage and the Family Life.** Although marriage may not be feasible for some of us with same sex attraction, there may be some with a sufficient degree of other sex attraction for whom marriage is feasible. Alternatively, some may have made full disclosure of the issue to an intended spouse who still wishes to go through with the marriage and is willing to help the individual work through the problem. While marriage should not be viewed simplistically as a means of "curing" homosexuality, I would encourage that people, especially young people, who have same sex attraction and who have met a potential mate with whom there is a basis of affection and love to build on, explore the feasibility of marriage (although I am not condoning fornication here!). I would say, however, that if one does not experience a sufficient degree of other sex attraction, one might consider disclosure of the issue before marriage. I know this is a real problem for many. Nondisclosure seems unfair, and yet there is always the danger with disclosure that the other person would not understand. There certainly are no simple solutions in this area, so it must be an area of prayer and careful discernment. Certainly if one is to be married, one should in any case resolve to remain faithful and honor the sacrament.
- **Those Already Married.** Those already married are of course in a somewhat different situation. Since marriage is a sacrament that Our Lord cautioned against breaking asunder, married people should stay together and try to work out problems if at all possible. It always seems to me something of a selfish betrayal for someone to up and leave a longstanding marriage, particularly if there are children, to "explore" their sex drive. Love is not simply romantic feelings, but involves actively doing things for others. There is nothing more important than marriage and the family if that is already among our responsibilities. Of course, if a marriage is incapable of consummation, there may be grounds for an annulment (i.e., a determination that a sacramental marriage never occurred in the first place). Please see your pastor if you are in this situation and if the parties involved want to explore the possibility of an annulment.

The Law of Charity

- Say No to Self Hatred. How should people with same sex attraction view themselves? Courage and the Church's teaching are often accused of promoting self-hatred. I certainly have had my moments in life where I did feel immense self-loathing and when I wished the ground would just swallow me up. On the other hand, these alternated with periods of exaggerated and undeserved self-love, so I think on average it probably is a wash in my case. Of course, low self-esteem and in some cases suicidal tendencies are real problems among those with same sex attraction, and I certainly do not mean to trivialize that issue. And of course a lack of charity of others to those with same sex attraction contributes to this problem. Those with same sex attraction certainly should not give in to self-hatred. I do not believe, however, that the answer is to tell people to give in to their lustful desires as if morality no longer applied. Nor do I believe that the Church's teaching, if properly understood, promotes self-hatred. If we understand this inclination as a character defect similar to other character defects that humans have, and as an inclination to sin that we share with all those who experience the concupiscence that is the effect of original sin, and if we remember that one's human dignity and identity do not solely consist of our sex drive and that so much more is involved, then there is no reason for self-hatred. Moreover, while we choose and must be responsible for activity and what we do with thoughts that come into our minds, we cannot consider ourselves responsible for what kinds of thoughts come into our minds. Of course we should be contrite because of our sinful activity, but in that way we are no different from heterosexually inclined individuals, who also sin with obvious frequency and ubiquity. The inclination is not a sin and so we should not feel guilty about it. We clearly can take pride in ourselves as humans created in the image and likeness of God.
- Love the Sinner, Hate the Sin. How should people who do not experience same sex attraction view those who do? As mentioned above, Christianity enjoins upon all of us the maxim, "love the sinner, hate the sin". However, there is always the tendency in human nature to take the easy way out and try to ignore rather than synthesize these seemingly conflicting principles. Most either slide into hating both the sin and the sinner (and the potential sinner, i.e., those with same sex attraction) or else loving both the sin and the sinner, and even denying that sin is involved at all. The Church demands that we walk along the ridge of the roof with a foot on each side, firmly rejecting the sin and refusing to affirm such activity, while at the same time loving and having compassion for the individual that has this condition. The Church thus has the true centrist position between the extremes of hatred and license, and political categories of "right" versus "left" in the context of Church teaching are therefore almost always misleading. Sure charity and condemnation of sin are difficult principles to reconcile, and there will always be ambiguities in specific situations as to where to draw the line. Nevertheless, we have no choice but to use our consciences to reconcile the two principles and put them both into practice if we are to call ourselves Christian. Each prong of the maxim is fundamental to the faith.
- Patience with those Practicing the Lifestyle. Because homosexual inclination (unlike the activity) is something that is not chosen and can be deep-seated, those who do not experience same sex attraction should be patient and charitable with those who do. While people can and should be held accountable for their behavior and the ideas that they promote, it is unfair to hold people responsible for the inclination itself, which is not chosen. Holding signs that say "God hates fags" just is not helpful and appears to be unfairly vilifying people for an unchosen inclination. Even with regard to those who are practicing and promoting homosexuality, patience and charity is required. Since the inclination seems natural, and since society now tells people with same sex attraction that nothing is wrong with fulfillment of sexual desires, many are simply ignorant and misled into really believing that nothing really is wrong with the activity. Also, many wrongly equate lack of sexual intimacy with loneliness.

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While this certainly need not be the case if we are open to close chaste friendships, it is an understandable equation in our sex-worshipping society that has lost sight of the true meaning of friendship. Since the culture often obscures the beauty of chastity and virtue, it is wise to show sensitivity and patient understanding for those in the "lifestyle", while quietly and calmly witnessing to the truth with love.

- Those with Same Sex Attraction Also Should Practice Charity. Just as those with same sex attraction are certainly owed charity, those with same sex attraction also owe charity to others, even those who do not accept the morality of homosexual activities or who have a hard time even accepting the fact of the inclination itself. It is hard for those without same sex attraction to understand what it is like, so one should not be surprised if there is often a negative reaction. Just as those with same sex attraction would hope for a little understanding, perhaps those with this attraction could show a little more understanding of the sometimes negative reactions of others. Since there are other facets of one's personality besides sexuality, one might look for such points of commonality with other people in order to avoid sharp and hateful ruptures among persons, particularly with relatives and friends. With respect to parents and family members especially, I think those of us with same sex attraction should be understanding and tolerant of differences of views and perspectives. God tells us to honor our father and mother, and I cannot understand the attitude of those who simply want to confront parents and arrogantly insist that they give their blessing to what their parents may sincerely believe to be immoral behavior. Parents have a right to their own beliefs, even if one does not always agree with them. Frankly, if I had to choose between my parents or the "gay" lifestyle, I would without hesitation choose my parents. Obviously, a background of abuse may lead to a different attitude, but I think even in that situation we owe it to our parents to make an effort to be charitable and understanding of them. After all, parents are human too and have their own weaknesses and foibles, as well as good points.
- Freedom of Religion. Finally, because so many traditional Christian denominations are being attacked quite viciously these days by those who call themselves Christian but who do not accept Christian teachings on sexual morality (e.g., groups like Soulforce), I thought it appropriate to make a plea for true religious freedom in our society. Those who insist that the Church must change its teaching to suit themselves simply do not respect the ideal of freedom from coercion in matters of religion, a principle enshrined in the United States Constitution as well as the constitutions of many other countries, and set forth by the magisterium in the Vatican II Council document, *Dignitatis Humanae*. If a citizen of a society where there is freedom of religion disagrees with the teachings of a religion, then the intellectually honorable thing to do is to find a religion with which one does agree. It is unfair to insist that a religion must change its core beliefs and that everyone else must step into line just because one feels that it must change. For those who wish affirmation of homosexually active lifestyles, there is no Inquisition present in this day and age to prevent one from joining any number of denominations that will provide this affirmation. The Unitarians, the Anglicans/Episcopalians and various other denominations that have compromised with the values of the world will welcome such a one with open arms. However, those who believe in traditional Christianity in its fullness have every right to do so and should be left alone to worship God without fear, holy and righteous in his sight all the days of their lives. Of course it is sad when communion is broken, but a communion that increasingly has no content is no communion at all. The Church will welcome everyone, but it cannot change its teachings about sin and behavior. Christianity has always been a sign of contradiction to challenge the world's nostrums. Once Christianity cuts itself loose from the anchor of God's revelation in the deposit of faith as protected by the magisterium down through the ages, once it simply accepts and sanctifies the ever changing fashions of contemporary values, then Christianity ceases to be a timeless verity and will sooner or later be shipwrecked and sunk. Thank God that he has given us the assurance that the gates of hell shall not

prevail against his Church. Let's all resolve therefore to follow God's moral commands in charity and build up the Church of Christ, not tear her down! This is my earnest plea.

SOME PERSONAL BACKGROUND

I have struggled with same sex attraction for as far back as I can remember (I am now 35) and have been blessed with the tremendous grace that I have found in the Catholic Church since my conversion and baptism nine years ago. My experience and background may not be the same as that of others who have same sex attraction. However, since it may resonate with some, I will set it forth here anyway. While I have acted out sexually at times in the past, I have never considered myself culturally part of the "gay" lifestyle or community. However, I have more or less learned to live with the contradiction of having same sex attraction while at the same time believing that acting out of such sexual inclinations is wrong and not in line with God's will for me.

My wonderful parents were very kind, although they did pursue a rather laissez-faire policy in bringing up my two siblings and me. We were all "good kids", so they generally trusted us to do the right thing without their micromanagement of our lives. My father in particular had a fairly reserved personality, although he was able to demonstrate affection and love in his own way. As my parents were not particularly outgoing socially, we rarely had non-relatives over to the house. I was not particularly encouraged to mingle with others, although I was not discouraged from doing so either. I have always been somewhat shy, retiring and ill at ease in social situations. I did not make friends easily and tended to find my own entertainment, much of which was of a bookish sort. I have always felt that my main problem has been social awkwardness and shyness, and that same sex attraction was merely a subsidiary problem. Despite all these issues, I did have what I would view as a very happy childhood. I was very close to my siblings and also had a series of fairly close friends in childhood, perhaps making up in quality what I lacked in quantity. I have usually done well at academics and generally have a strong intellectual curiosity.

College was a period of crisis for me. I came to the realization that I did have same sex attraction and that it was not just a passing phase that meeting the right girl would likely clear up. However, my main sexual "activity" at the time was frequent masturbation. I also experienced a series of intense secret infatuations (i.e., known only to myself - not even the objects of the infatuation were aware to my knowledge) with individuals that I would see from afar on a regular basis but with whom I never spoke or had reason to speak. I felt miserable and lonely during those years. However, I was at the same time really turned off by what I saw of the "out" scene. The closest I came in contact with the latter in college was in a choir to which I belonged. The open homosexuals in the choir would make suggestive comments to me or speak in obvious double entendres, making me feel very uncomfortable. When it became clear that I was not going to play their game, they became actually quite abusive and contemptuous of me. How I would have longed for a few friendly words of encouragement at that time of life instead of just sexual come-ons! My impression of the "gay lifestyle" has always been that it basically revolves around the selfish pursuit of sexual gratification. While the ideologues have done a good job in whitewashing the lifestyle so that it seems as decent and wholesome as apple pie with everyone pairing off into committed life-time monogamous relationships, my experiential impression of that lifestyle was never like that. I admit, though, that my experience with the "gay" community has been limited. I have never been able to bring myself to go into a bar and have always generally avoided places and people associated with that lifestyle - simply to preserve my own sense of psychological peace and equilibrium if nothing else. Maybe others do not agree or appreciate the choices that I have made in my life, but I have right to make those choices and to follow my conscience and religion.

After graduation, graduate school and entering the world of work, I basically tried to focus my energies on getting my career off the ground, although I did continue the pattern of masturbation and silent infatuations with individuals. Eventually, however, I came to the realization that my fantasies were just that, entirely a tissue of lies to myself without substance, and that I would waste my life away building personal castles in the air unless I took a more practical and realist view that such fantasies would lead me nowhere. I had also started attending a Catholic church, passed through RCIA and was baptized. In the years since then, I basically came to accept the fact that I was likely called to the chaste single life. I did pass through a period of a few years recently where I dated a woman (she had sought me out rather than the other way around), but it became clear to me that although we were fairly good friends, I could not love her in the complete way that a husband should. Perhaps with full disclosure to her and her acceptance of my sexuality and the problems it posed for a marriage, I might have been more willing to give the relationship a go, but since I could not bring myself to be open and honest, I let the relationship lapse. In any event, here I am, trying to live each day as it comes by the grace of God and trying to figure out how best to practice my single vocation in chastity and love.

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THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ON CHASTITY AND HOMOSEXUALITY

CCC #2357

Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity, tradition has always declared that "homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered." They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can they be approved.

□

CCC #2358

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.

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CCC #2359

Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection.

KEY BIBLICAL CITATIONS

Genesis 1:27-28; Genesis 2:18-25

The creation of Adam and Eve and the blessing of their sexual relationship shows the the high status of marriage and ordered sexuality in God's providential scheme. Jesus certainly endorses this special status of the marital union between a man and a woman when he cites these passages in Matthew 19:4-6 when talking about divorce. There is no corresponding endorsement of homosexual unions in the Bible. Of course close friendship between males is positively portrayed in the Bible, but there is no suggestion or implication that such relationships involved homosexual acts.

Genesis 19

This is the well-known story of Sodom and Gomorrah. References to the incident in 2 Peter 2:7-10 and Jude 7 make it clear that licentiousness, "indulging in unnatural lust" and the "lust of defiling passions" were the primary sins of the cities of the plain, not inhospitality or homosexual rape.

Leviticus 18:22-30; Leviticus 20

The prohibition against men laying with men as with women in the Mosaic Law was a moral prohibition and not merely a ceremonial rule. The latter rules were held not binding on Christians (c.f., Mark 7:19 and Hebrews 10:8-10), whereas the Mosaic law of sexual morality was upheld if not strengthened under the new covenant by both Jesus and the apostles and was never abrogated (c.f., Mark 7:20-23 -- note that Jesus condemns both fornication and adultery, i.e., all sex outside of marriage; Matthew 5:27 and 28; Acts 15:20). Moreover, there was a difference even in the old law between ceremonial and dietary prohibitions on the one hand and moral prohibitions on the other -- the former merely rendered one unclean but the latter merited death (c.f., Leviticus 11:24 versus Leviticus 20).

Romans 1:26-27

St. Paul sees homosexual acts as unnatural. This cannot simply mean a condemnation of homosexual activity by heterosexuals. Paul says that "God gave them up to dishonorable passions", which is to say that the passions were involuntary and therefore must have been deeply held -- the same situation as experienced by many with same sex attraction today. Note also the condemnation of lesbian sexual activity.

1 Corinthians 6:9

Since the list of those condemned uses words descriptive of people who have committed the acts described in the name, St. Paul clearly is condemning homosexual acts rather than those with the mere inclination. Thus such acts are mortal sins, and those committing such without repentance and absolution will not inherit the kingdom of God.

1 Timothy 1:10

St. Paul says that the law is for the correction of sinners, including sodomites. Clearly Paul did not see the moral law as having been overturned in the new dispensation.

Matthew 5:8

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Matthew 5:17-19

Jesus says he did not come to overturn the law, but to fulfill it.

Matthew 19:12

Jesus seems to be using the term "eunuch" as indicating a state of celibacy. The broader context of the discussion implies that Jesus views only marriage or chastity as the legitimate options in life as regards sexuality.