

## WHAT DO COURAGE AND ENCOURAGE BELIEVE?

Courage and EnCourage believe that, with human support and Divine Intervention:

- Persons who experience SSA can follow Jesus Christ according to Roman Catholic spiritual and moral teaching.
- It is possible to experience SSA and live a chaste and productive life.
- Persons who experience SSA can develop an assured, grace-filled understanding of themselves while growing into their true identities as mature men and women.
- Experiencing same-sex attractions or homo-sexual feelings is not itself a sin; however, homosexual acts are immoral and do not lead to a deeper life in Christ.
- A person's dignity does not depend upon his or her sexual attractions but upon his or her relationship to Jesus Christ.
- Homosexual desires are not usually a person's choice.
- Therapy may address underlying emotional issues related to SSA; however, therapy cannot guarantee that SSA will be eliminated.
- Men and women who experience SSA can lead chaste lives. Chastity, made possible by Christ's redemption, is a liberating virtue and a source of joy and freedom.

## ENCOURAGE FURTHER BELIEVES:

- Standing by the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, EnCourage members support one another and their loved ones through discussion, prayer, fellowship, and sacrifice.
- We are not our children's saviors; Jesus Christ is Lord, God, and Savior.
- We are not responsible for our grown children's decisions to pursue homosexual activity (should they make such a decision), but we can encourage them to lead chaste lives.
- EnCourage offers faithful witness to Catholic teaching on sexual morality while meeting the needs of its members with charity and compassion.

***“Courage is doing  
the work of God.”***

— Pope St John Paul II

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**CHASTITY  
PRAYER AND DEDICATION  
FELLOWSHIP  
SUPPORT  
GOOD EXAMPLE**

### **COURAGE INTERNATIONAL, INC.**

8 Leonard Street  
Norwalk CT 06850  
(203) 803-1564  
office@couragerc.org  
<http://couragerc.org>

### **CONTACT YOUR LOCAL COURAGE AND ENCOURAGE CHAPTERS:**

Local Chapters in Tulsa:  
**Courage@dioceseoftulsa.org**  
and  
**EnCourage@dioceseoftulsa.org**



# **COURAGE**

**Support for Catholic men  
and women who experience  
same-sex attractions and  
desire to live chaste lives  
following the teachings of the  
Roman Catholic Church**

## WHAT IS COURAGE? WHAT IS ENCOURAGE?

Courage and EnCourage are spiritual support groups.

Courage was founded in 1980 by Cardinal Terence Cooke, then Archbishop of New York, to help Catholics who experience same-sex attractions live chaste lives in accordance with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching. Father John Harvey, OSFS, served as the founding director of the apostolate.

EnCourage is a support group for family members, spouses, and friends of men and women who experience same-sex attractions.

## THE FIVE GOALS OF COURAGE

The founding members of Courage developed five goals as the foundation of the apostolate:

1. **Chastity:** To live chaste lives in accordance with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality.
2. **Prayer and Dedication:** 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 the Holy Eucharist.
3. **Fellowship:** To foster a spirit of fellowship in which we may share with one

another our thoughts and experiences and so ensure that none of us has to face the problems of homosexuality alone.

4. **Support:** To be mindful of the truth that chaste friendships are not only possible but necessary in chaste Christian life; and to encourage one another in forming and sustaining these friendships.
5. **Good Example:** To live lives that may serve as good examples and role models to others.

## THE FIVE GOALS OF ENCOURAGE

1. To grow spiritually through spiritual reading, prayer, meditation, individual spiritual direction, frequent attendance at Mass, and the frequent reception of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist.
2. To gain a deeper understanding of the needs, difficulties, and challenges experienced by men and women with SSA.
3. To establish and maintain a healthy and wholesome relationship with their loved ones who experience SSA.
4. To assist other family members and friends to reach out with compassion and truth to, and not to reject, their loved ones who experience SSA.
5. To witness to their loved ones by their own lives that fulfillment is to be found in Jesus Christ through His Body, the Church.

## CHURCH TEACHINGS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

"The human person, made in the image and likeness of God, can hardly be adequately described by a reductionist reference to his or her sexual orientation. Every one living on the face of the earth has personal problems and difficulties – but challenges to growth, strengths, talents, and gifts as well. Today, the Church provides a badly needed context for the care of the human person when she refuses to consider the person a 'heterosexual' or a 'homosexual' and insists that every person has a fundamental identity: a creature of God, and by grace, His child and heir to eternal life."

Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith,  
*Letter to Bishops on the Pastoral Care  
of Homosexual Persons*, 1986.

"Support groups, noted for their adherence to Church teaching, for persons who experience same-sex attraction continue to be an important part of Church ministries and are to be encouraged.

"[Same-sex attracted persons] should not be encouraged to define themselves primarily in terms of their sexual inclination, however, or to participate in 'gay subcultures,' which often tend to promote immoral lifestyles. Rather, they should be encouraged to form relationships with the wider community .... Examples of such ministries whose principles are in accord with Church teaching are Courage and EnCourage."

US Conference of Catholic Bishops,  
*Ministry to Persons with a Homosexual Inclination:  
Guidelines for Pastoral Care*, 2006.

"Human love hence embraces the body, and the body also expresses spiritual love. Therefore, sexuality is not something purely biological; rather, it concerns the intimate nucleus of the person."

Pontifical Council for the Family  
*The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*, 1995

## MENTAL HEALTH AND SAME-SEX ATTRACTIONS

The authentic meeting point of spirituality and psychology with regard to same-sex attractions is in what might be called "chastity-based therapy." This is very far from an attempt to "repair" or "fix" someone. Rather, those with a deep understanding of the way human beings think and relate to others have demonstrated many ways in which habits of coping with feelings or situations can make one more susceptible to temptations or more likely to seek gratification in ways that are not good for him or her.

Some people find that, in addition to spiritual direction and the sacraments, talking about their experiences and their present situation with well-trained, ethical psychologists and therapists gives them insights that help them in their striving to be chaste. Courage respects the decisions some of our members make to seek out qualified professionals. However, Courage meetings are not group therapy, and no Courage member is required to seek counseling or treatment of any kind.

**Courage provides confidential, welcoming, and informative support for men and women who experience same-sex attractions. Please join us.**