

# With Open Hearts

A resource to help people walk together on the topic of homosexuality, by initiating a journey towards a deeper understanding of both hearts and minds, along with what is upheld by the Catholic Church.

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**This resource has been approved for release by the author's bishop as well as the office of Courage International.**

## Dedication

This resource has been written out of gratitude  
to all men and women who have chosen to bear witness  
to the transformative love of Christ.

We salute you - your lived example is why we are here today.

## Endorsements

*With Open Hearts* is a marvelous document that offers a loving and truthful way to interact with those who experience same-sex attractions. With gentle clarity, the author, who draws upon his own experience which includes a gradual return to the Catholic Church, explains how to accompany those like him and how to understand and explain the Church's teaching, WHEN it is appropriate to do so. There is a world of wisdom in this document that manifests a sure grasp of the law of gradualness, the law of meeting people where they are at, and walking forward with them. - **Prof. Janet E. Smith, Father Michael J. McGivney Chair of Life Ethics at Sacred Heart Major Seminary, Detroit**

*With Open Hearts* approaches the important and sensitive topic of homosexuality with characteristic candor, orthodoxy and charity. I hope that this resource will bear great fruit as the beginning of a dialogue with the modern world about the Catholic Church and its approach to homosexuality. - **Father Philip Bochanski, Associate Director of Courage International**

*With Open Hearts* is one of the best resources I know of for generating a rational and helpful dialogue on such a vitally important and sensitive subject. Many people stand to be blessed by it! - **Father Joseph R. Jacobson, Retired Chancellor for the Catholic Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan (Alberta, Canada), and Former Lutheran Bishop**

Because new ideas can be challenging for us to grasp and integrate into our lives, sometimes we need help to open our hearts and minds to the very concepts that can free us to see ourselves as God does. The best resources for dealing with potentially divisive topics understand and reverence human dignity in all its glorious complexity. Wise and engaging, this beautiful guide is such a resource and will equip and inspire readers - regardless of their attractions or inclinations - to embrace the great worth of their own persons, made in the image and likeness of our gentle and holy God. - **Lisa Mladinich, Author of "True Radiance: Finding Grace in the Second Half of Life" and Founder of AmazingCatechists.com**

**Foreword**

Without a doubt, the topic of homosexuality is one of the most divisive topics of our day. However, it does not need to be that way. It is possible for us to work together, regardless of whether or not there is perfect agreement in what we believe. In saying that, we invite you to consider using this resource as a starting point for a shared journey towards deeper understanding.

The overall hope is that by growing in our perspective on this topic, we can ultimately come to know the hearts of our brothers and sisters in Christ in a more profound manner. With that, we invite all people - Catholics and non-Catholics alike - to enter this journey towards deeper understanding, so that the conversation may continue to deepen over time.

We thank you for approaching this with open hearts.

Sincerely in Christ,

Andrew & The Pursuit of Truth Ministries Team

**Introduction**

In our world today, it is commonplace to hear people refer to themselves and others as gay or straight,

or by any other similar type of identity label. With the spirit of self-honesty in mind, this seems to be a perfectly sensible way to describe ourselves.

The Catholic Church is not at odds with that in the sense that the Church actually invites us to be honest with ourselves about the attractions that we experience, regardless of what they might be. *Note: This is not the same thing as embracing a particular type of identity label.*

The reality that the Church wants us to be honest with ourselves about the attractions that we experience seems to take a lot of people by surprise. Unfortunately, when people are taken by surprise on a topic in which there are very strong opinions, there is often more division than there is openness to meaningful (and potentially unifying) dialogue. This is common amongst all types of people and all types of topics.

We can prevent that breakdown in communication if we simply become more aware of our shortcomings as human beings. This does not have to do with one's own fault, but rather it has to do with how our brains respond to new information - in *any* circumstance. For example, a person could not perceive to see a "fluffy rabbit" in a cloud formation, if they had not yet first come to know what a "fluffy rabbit" actually is. However, once a person comes to know what a "fluffy rabbit" is, only then could they subconsciously ascribe that concept of "fluffy rabbit" *onto* that cloud formation, in order to "see" the "fluffy rabbit" in the clouds. (This *confirmation bias* is a recognized psychological phenomenon.) The point is that we cannot *apply* concepts that our brains have not first come to *know*.

If we become more aware of how our brains try to fit new information into our pre-existing "box" of reality, then we will be better equipped to handle the new information that we encounter. If we don't become aware of this, then we are at risk of falling into the trap of subconsciously trying to *make* it fit, as opposed to using that new information to *expand* our understanding of reality.

For that reason, throughout this entire resource, we invite people not only to understand different perspectives, but to also understand how new information might be subconsciously modified to fit our current understanding of reality. We invite people into this awareness so that they may *consciously prevent* that from occurring. With this in mind, we can better prepare ourselves to receive new information in the way it was intended, and thus use it to grow in a more profound manner.

There are a number of items of new information that will be presented throughout this resource. While keeping in mind this information about how our brains function, we invite you to walk with us as we address some very important matters of the heart (and mind). These are matters that we too have had to address along our journey into the Catholic faith.

We hope and pray that you might be open to journeying with us *and* that you might prayerfully consider sharing our journey with others. Each one of us is here today because *someone like you* had chosen to do exactly this. In doing that, our hearts were reached. Please know that *you* can make the same decision and be a part of the *reaching of hearts* that is so very much needed in our world today. There are simply so many others like us who are still waiting to be reached, by courageous people like you.

### **If They Only Knew...**

*"I will never forget going into church. I was petrified... if they only knew my story, they would reject me."*

How often do these thoughts enter the minds of our brothers and sisters in Christ? How have we been successful (or not) at helping people who have this on their hearts? How are we helping them find peace, love, and belonging in the Catholic Church? How are we helping people come to know that the Catholic Church is a place that they can call home? *How are we helping them come to know the love and truth of Christ?*

Those are some heavy questions, but we would do well to consider them - even though they might make us a bit uncomfortable. We must never lose sight of the reality that each and every person, regardless of the attractions and or inclinations experienced, may become the world's next greatest saint. We also cannot ignore the reality that if a person perceives from us that they do not belong in the Catholic Church, they may leave, and never come back.

What might be even worse is if they come to believe that they are *hated* by the Catholic Church, for this might drive them to possibly devote their energy to fight *against* the Church. Many of us were once in that position... but by God's grace, our hearts softened. This softening of hearts brought us to gradually *open* our hearts to the Catholic faith. Today, we want to help others come to know *in their hearts* the beauty and joy that we have come to experience within the very church that the world had taught us to reject. Now, if people might only open their hearts to walk with us and to hear our story.

### **Shame**

*"I felt so shameful. I wanted to hide my true self... so I became someone I was not, while each day, dying a little more. How could they ever love me? How could I ever love myself? How could I escape myself?"*

One of the most important things to happen in our lives was the breaking down of shame. Many of us had been brought to believe that "the Church wants gay people to be shamed for being gay" and this shame had become a destructive and immobilizing force, as it became internalized by us to varying degrees. However, we came to discover that the Church actually offers us an invitation *to let go of* the shame that was weighing down our hearts. This is because the Church recognizes that *we do not specifically choose* the attractions that we experience. This invitation to let go of that shame, brought us to experience a freedom *in the Church* that the world told us was impossible.

Please note that in sharing of this freedom, we are *not* implying that the Church is saying that we should embrace pride. *Pride is counter to the virtue of humility*, and since the Church *always* invites us to grow in humility (for to grow in humility is to further emulate Christ), we are always invited to *distance* ourselves from pride. As well, we share about this freedom that we found within the Catholic Church, *not* with the intention of drawing people to come to self-identify and define themselves as "gays" or "straights" (or by any other similar type of identity label). Rather, we share this to help people become aware of, and to possibly come to know in their hearts, *the freedom* that we found in the Catholic Church when we answered that invitation to let go of that shame. We share this while hoping that others like us might come to experience the joy and freedom that we today know in our hearts - which has helped us become alive in the fullness of who we are!

And *that* begs us to ask the age-old question: *"Who are we?"*

### **Who Are We?**

Imagine you are holding a hamburger in your hands and it started talking to you. You might be a bit surprised, but just pretend that you would listen to what he had to say. Now imagine it telling you who "he" is... and he says "I'm ketchup" or "I'm pickle" or "I'm beef patty" or "I'm gluten" or "I'm calories" and so forth. How would you respond to these statements by the talking hamburger? (Aside from saying Oh my gosh! A talking hamburger!)

The point for us to consider is that even though all of those facets of the hamburger are true, none of them are able to reflect the *fullness* of who that hamburger really is. That example is given merely to illustrate how the identity labels we give ourselves (and others) reflect varying degrees of truth about who we are, even if the identity labels themselves *do* reflect something of the truth.

This example draws us to understand the concept of *degrees of truth*. To further illustrate, we can recognize that even though gluten *is* a true facet of the hamburger, the "glutenness" of the hamburger reflects *less than the fullness of truth* of the hamburger. Therefore, for this hamburger to say "I'm gluten," it *is* telling us truth (to some degree), however, it is still telling us *less than the fullness* of truth. Surely, many of us have tried to use *less than the fullness of truth* when trying to get ourselves out of trouble at some point in time or another!

Nonetheless, if this hamburger wanted to reflect the *greatest* possible degree of truth (and thus the greatest possible degree of self-honesty) about who he is, would it make sense for him to embrace an identity that is *not* capable of reflecting the fullness of who he is? That is, if this hamburger wanted to be more completely honest with himself about who he is, would it make sense for him to say "I'm pickle" or "I'm calories" when at the same time he could embrace an identity label that would reflect a greater degree of truth, such as "*I'm hamburger*"?

That is the question that the Catholic Church invites *all of us* to consider: Do the identities that we wholeheartedly embrace reflect the greatest possible degree of truth about who we are? Along our journeys, we also encountered this question. Out of our conviction to embrace a greater degree of self-honesty, we came to know in our hearts that we needed to *move beyond* and *disengage from* the gender-identity labels of this world, and instead see ourselves first and foremost *as persons*.

In retrospect, we also came to see how the ways in which we used to *describe* ourselves, actually influenced how we came to *define* ourselves. In coming to see that, it became very clear to us as to why our world was (and still is) so insistent that we *describe* ourselves in terms of the sexual attractions and or inclinations that we might (or might not) experience. It is because the more we do that, the more that we come to *define* ourselves in that way as well. Further, the more that those types of *identities* become normalized in our culture, the more that *shame* is placed on those who choose to *not* self-identify in this fashion. This is especially true for persons like us, who experience same-sex attractions *but* who choose to self-identify and define ourselves first and foremost according to our relationship with Christ... *while still being honest with ourselves about the attractions we experience*.

We merely hope that people might come to understand that the attractions or inclinations that we experience need not define us, *unless we choose that to be the case*. This of course matters greatly, because how we see ourselves *in our hearts* (how we truly define ourselves), largely influences what we perceive to be fulfilling. And *that* is what drives our behaviours. Further, how we see others *in our hearts* largely influences how we treat them *and how we affirm them*. And *that* influences *their* sense of identity. The point we are trying to make is that while many people are getting hung up on matters of *behaviour*, we should really be focusing on the role and significance of the identities we choose to wholeheartedly embrace as our own, for these *drive* behaviour.

Out of our love for Christ, we are motivated more than ever to offer our lives to Him. This amplifies our desire to grow in virtue. However, for this, some of us have been accused of being self-deceptive, self-suppressive, self-hating, and even pompous, as though people think we are trying to place ourselves above others. Others have gone as far as telling us we should be pitied. All of these statements are anchored on one thing, which is a closedness to understanding who we are, and how we got to where we are today. We know this because while we speak of how virtue has brought us peace and joy unlike anything of this world, the accusations typically pour in via comments that reveal a closedness to growing in one's understanding of virtue.

All we can do in response to these sorts of accusations and statements is invite people to open their hearts, while knowing *today*, that even some of those who we invite will still take it as an insult, and will try to stifle the idea that there is even anything further to learn about this topic. Perhaps we live in a time where true tolerance no longer exists. Perhaps we live in a time where it is socially acceptable for people to *choose to not expand* their understanding of reality to include people like us. Perhaps we live in a time where it is generally accepted that our stories shouldn't be shared at all. When we hear of people attempting to "disassemble" us (via character assassinations, and or public shaming), that is exactly how it feels. Perhaps our lives are a threat to their "box." However, speaking from the experience of our own lives, we know that our lives are also a sign of *hope*, for many others like us.

So *who are we?* We are first and foremost *persons...* who are *beautiful and beloved [adopted] sons and daughters of the Most High*, who are created with such depth and intricacy that gender-identity labels such as gay or straight, are simply incapable of expressing the fullness of the mystery of who we are. Further, the Church invites us to see beyond the gay and straight identities *so that we can move towards a Christ-centered identity*, which would anchor our journey towards fulfillment on *He who is infinite*, as opposed to *ourselves who are finite*. We have come to experience *first-hand* that indeed *His infinite Love* is far greater than all that is of this finite world!

### **Reaching Hearts**

When someone comes to you and shares that they are gay, or that they think they *might* be gay, that is not the time to try to educate them on matters of where the Church is at. It is not the time to explain to them how we are more than the gay or straight identity labels. Nor is it likely the time to teach someone that words like gay or straight are ambiguous on their own, and should be clarified as to their precise meaning. Rather, when someone comes to us with this on their heart, that is the time for us to *open our hearts and listen*, and to strive to be the living reasons (as best as we can) as to why they might *want* to grow in a deeper relationship with Christ. Our actions will speak louder than our words when in this position. To be able to better understand how this might unfold, we first and foremost need to pray, with a trust that God will permit us the wisdom to respond most appropriately for each given circumstance.

Also, there is a chance that this person may have faced one of the biggest fears of their lives in telling you of where they are in their journey. Our job as Catholics is to simply receive them *where they are* along their journey, regardless of where they are coming from. However, as with *any* encounter, out of our love for Christ we are to walk with them towards Christ *and Christian virtue*. That will be amplified if we are already "walking that walk" towards virtue.

The reason why journeying together is necessary is because *the love of our faith is shared from heart to heart*. The fact is that a *heart-to-heart* relationship (which can be forged in a shared journey), can help people not only grow in friendship, but also grow in inner peace - *within our Church*. That is, the journey together (towards virtue, while still being respectful of one's pace) *can foster belonging within our Church*. And it is belonging within our Church that can foster *healthy relationships with other brothers and sisters in Christ within the Church*, and *this* can foster a *deepening* desire for virtue. This is because when people are given the opportunity to experience the reality of *holy relationships*, they are provided with an opportunity to *taste* in their hearts the joy that abounds in the hearts of those who authentically strive for holiness (which is *exemplified* by the degree of virtue they uphold).

This taste of virtue *from someone like you* was responsible for the *shifting of desires* in our hearts. It shook our foundations and drew us away from pursuing fulfillment in the gay (and straight) identities, and instead drew us to begin to pursue fulfillment first and foremost within Christ - while drawing us to see ourselves first and foremost through *His* lens; as beloved children of God. For many of us, we initially pursued this on nothing more than a flicker of hope and faith. However, we have since come to know in

our hearts, on account of experiencing the joy, that *this* is the true fulfillment that we had been seeking our entire lives.

Note also that the chances of fostering a meaningful heart-to-heart relationship are greatly diminished when fear, indifference, or misinformation, guide us into silence or improper action - such as affirming a person in a journey that entrenches behaviours that are counter to virtue. In saying that, the degree to which we are called to engage in a shared journey of this type will be different for all people. However, we are all invited to walk together *in the way we can*. For many of us, that will mean journeying together *in prayer* - not so that people might "change their attractions" but rather so that hearts might be softened. If hearts are softened, it might open some people up to journeying together towards a deeper relationship with the Lord.

Also, the reason why *virtue* is so important is because it ultimately unifies us as one people. No matter who we are, and regardless of the attractions and or inclinations that we might experience, we are unified in our ability to choose whether or not we will open our hearts to growing in the fullness of virtue. Note that one's *openness to the fullness of virtue*, by far transcends the topic of both homosexuality *and* sexuality, because it is virtue in *all* areas of our lives that offers us the ability to experience the greatest possible degree of joy.

However, if virtue has not been modeled, or if people don't know what virtue is, then it would not be reasonable for us to expect many people to live it, let alone *desire* it or *strive* for it. For that reason, it would be beneficial for *us* to come to a clearer understanding of virtue as well. On this topic, the virtue of *chastity* is of particular significance, as well as the reality that it is a virtue for *all of us*. Note that chastity is often misrepresented to mean the same thing as abstinence and or celibacy. However, they are each very different, and we would do well to come to understand what those differences are.

### **Key Differences between Abstinence, Chastity, and Celibacy**

Have you ever talked about chastity only to have people respond to you like you're crazy? It happens all of the time. Why? Because we live in a world that thinks chastity means "No No No!" when within the Church it means "Yes Yes Yes!" That is, much of the world thinks it is bad (sexually repressive or backwards) while the Church looks at it through the lens of self-control for the glory of God.

Many of us have found freedom through the virtue of chastity, despite at first seeing it as a white-knuckled "no" (to activity). Over time and within a prayerful journey with our Catholic family we have come to see it as the joyful "Yes!" (to God) that it really is! We hope that the following clarifications will help people come to understand some of the key differences. *Note: They don't all mean "NO SEX!"*

**Abstinence** means *not doing something* (for example, not having sex). **It is about behavior.**

**Chastity** means *saying "Yes" to God in your heart and mind* to pursue choices, thoughts, and actions oriented toward a holy (virtuous) expression of sexuality. **It is about the state of the mind and heart.**

**Celibacy** is the *state in life* where an unmarried person willfully follows *the discipline* of saying yes to *holy* sexuality (fueled by their desire to live chastely), for the purposes of building the Kingdom of God. **It is about a deliberately chosen state in life.**

**Note:** Celibacy *without chastity* is not celibacy at all, but rather is merely abstinence.

Note that if *holy* sexuality is one's goal, then sexual activity outside of a potentially unifying and procreative Sacramental marriage is off the table - not with weeping and gnashing of teeth, but rather as a joyful sacrifice, out of one's love for Christ and His virtues.

Also, the reason we can say that chastity does not equate to "no sex" is because *holy sexuality does not equate to "no sex."* This is because if two people are open to growing in the fullness of virtue (chastity and humility being only two of many), then they are open to growing in the fullness of Christ. The fruits



of that will be holiness. For a couple to enter the marriage bed with hearts such as these, that too, can be holy. Thus, to be chaste does not mean "no sex" but rather it means a "Yes" to *holy* sex.

### **Language**

As you can see there are so many facets of our language that need to be clarified in order for the Catholic position to become more completely understood. So far we have addressed the matter of using words like gay and straight, and the differences between abstinence, chastity, and celibacy. The fact of the matter is that there are so many more instances where we would need to clarify language in order to better understand the Church's position on this topic (and many others).

This situation is reminiscent of the song "Purple Haze" by Jimmy Hendrix in the 1960s, where in one of the verses he says "Excuse me, while I kiss the sky." That line in and of itself doesn't sound too confusing, but many people hear it as "Excuse me, *while I kiss this guy*." This example draws to light the reality that if we actually thought he said "... kiss this guy" then we would not be able to understand the fullness of the meaning of the song, as originally written. That is, if we don't hear the words and phrases *as intended*, we are destined to not understand the fullness of what they were intended to mean.

We can think about this analogy when considering the language of the Church. The Church speaks in ways to express *objective realities*, but so often we interpret those words within our paradigm of reality, to be about *subjective feelings*. However, we know it would make no sense for someone to proclaim that they could properly interpret the song Purple Haze, if they were still singing "Excuse me, while I kiss this guy." So too, it would make no sense for someone to proclaim that they could properly interpret *the song of the Church* (how the Church describes what it upholds to be true), if they were applying *their own* interpretations to the words of the Church. That is why we need to be very careful about the conclusions we draw about the Catholic Church and what it upholds to be true.

If we are not careful in this way as to ensure that we are singing the proper lyrics *with the proper understanding of what those lyrics were intended to actually mean*, then we will be singing "Excuse me, *while I kiss this guy*" while also developing opinions of the song *based on that misinterpretation*. Obviously, doing that would lead us to incorrect conclusions about the meaning of that song, or *any* song - *including the song of the Church*. On that note, we also have to be aware that many Catholics are singing the wrong lyrics too, unfortunately. For this reason, we would do well to build our conclusions on the *lyrics of the Church, paired with the interpretation of the Church* - as opposed to building our conclusions on merely the song that any particular Catholic might be singing at any particular time. *That goes for us too* - you are invited to critically examine *everything* that we present!

### **Language Examples: "Intrinsically Disordered"**

*"The first time I read about this term, it was difficult to take. I felt as though the Church was calling me disordered. I could not have found a more hurtful phrase, and it made me want to pack up and leave, and never come back."*

To many people, this phrase is probably one of the most objectionable phrases of this day. However, as with other writings, the Church invites us to see how it is not speaking towards how we feel and or think about ourselves, but is simply describing what "is" in an objective manner. That is, the Church uses this language to express that there is both a unitive and procreative facet of our sexuality and that those purposes can be fulfilled only within a particular type of union - and that union happens to be one that requires (at the very least), the "ingredients" of male (XY) + female (XX). This is not invented by the Church, but rather an observation of what biologically "is," with the Church merely upholding it to be true.

**Note:** *It is this observation of objective truth that is being talked about when the Church uses the phrase "Natural Law." That is, when the Church uses that phrase, we need to understand that it is not referring*

to how something "feels" or "seems" natural to us. Rather, the Church uses this phrase to describe the order of how things are structurally created; an order which the Church merely observes, recognizes, and upholds to be true.

Regardless of how we feel or think about sexuality, we would still do well to open our hearts to understanding the language of the Church. In doing so, we would come to see that the Church uses the phrase "intrinsically disordered" as a means of describing not what is on our hearts, but rather how we are structurally created. That is, in the language of the Church, a sexual act is "intrinsically *disordered*" if it is not ordered towards the fulfillment of the purposes of our bodies, *as structurally created*. With regards to *purpose as structurally created*, this is no different than recognizing that it is *also* intrinsically disordered to try to patch a small hole in the wall with a few spoonfuls of mashed potatoes.

Beyond the *physiological* realities of how we were structurally created, are *the desires of our hearts*. For example, the *desire* to patch a hole in the wall with mashed potatoes, would be an intrinsically disordered desire, for the *purpose as structurally created* of the mashed potatoes (which would be to *nourish*), would not be fulfilled if they were to be used in that way. Likewise, the desire to engage in acts that are incapable of fulfilling the *purpose as structurally created* of male and female sexuality, would *also* be intrinsically disordered. This is so because they would be desires to engage oneself in a sexual manner that does not make it *possible* for the created purpose of our sexual faculties to become fulfilled. In this way, contraception is also considered intrinsically disordered, as are certain forms of "straight sex." This is important to note because it elevates the matter of intrinsic disorder to be far beyond the topic of homosexuality, for it can be applied to all facets of creation.

It is also important to note that because we do not specifically choose to have these desires placed onto our hearts to begin with, the mere *experience* of those desires in and of themselves **is not a committed sin** on our part. That is, experiencing an intrinsically disordered desire, in and of itself, is not a reason to become mired in shame. Rather, as with anything of our life experience, we are responsible for how we *respond* to the desires that are placed on our hearts. The Church invites *all of us* to respond to those desires - whatever they are - in a way that *puts us on the road towards amplifying virtue*.

As we began to understand the deeper meaning behind the phrase "Natural Law," we came to see that it was not at all telling us *we* are disordered. In being able to see that, we were able to step back from perceiving it to be a personal attack - or *any* attack at all. But we were not able to get to this space without first coming to know that the attractions we experience were not "who we are" as persons. That distinction between "attractions experienced" and "embraced identity" had to come first. In the name of equality we hope that *all* people might be open to understanding the *power* of that distinction - for it empowered us with the knowledge that despite experiencing same-sex attractions, we could find our home in the Catholic Church and walk together towards Christ with everyone else who has that shared mission. Coming to know of that distinction has helped *many* of us find freedom within the Catholic Church.

### **Same-Sex Marriage**

This is quite possibly one of the most difficult topics for people to understand. Many of us at one point struggled with understanding why the Church would ever try to prevent two people from loving each other. That is where our minds and hearts were at before we encountered Christ, who planted in our hearts an unceasing desire to grow in virtue and holiness.

We fully realize that this won't make much sense to people who have not yet encountered Christ in this way. However, the fact of the matter remains that after encountering Christ, and having our hearts convicted of the desire to grow in holiness, we knew that we had to make decisions with regards to the relationships we were in. That is, we knew that if we wanted to be honest with ourselves about what we

really wanted in life, we would have to disengage from activities that drew us from Christ, such as unchaste or prideful behavior (of *any* kind).

The fallout from that conviction in our hearts was to gradually move away from relationships which were not supportive of our journey towards greater virtue. That drew us to disengage from unchaste romantic and or sexualized relationships of *all* types - including those with same-sex partners. We share this to help people come to understand that we were motivated not out of "fear of misbehaving in the eyes of the Church" but rather because *we love Jesus Christ*.

With regards to same-sex marriage in particular, we again, came to realize that the Church was not inventing its own truth. Rather it was upholding objective truths about the order of creation. With that realization, we were able to more calmly enter a journey towards deeper understanding. The following is a condensed version of what we came to realize on this matter:

1. It is an objective truth that there is a particular type of union by which the intended purposes of our reproductive systems can be completely fulfilled. That is in a union between a male (XY) and a female (XX). **The Church doesn't invent this.**
2. There is a particular type of union that provides the greatest potential degree of stability for child rearing, and that is a set of parents who are not damaging each other's neurochemical bonding mechanisms by having multiple partners, but who rather are enhancing their bonding to one another through the practice of chaste living. **The Church doesn't invent this.**
3. Males and females have unique gifts to offer the world - AND their children - including conditioning on how to grow relationally with others, as the brains of males and females respond differently to the same relational stimuli. That is, a female cannot perfectly give what a male can give, and a male cannot perfectly give what a female can give.

Therefore to give a child the most complete and optimal parent-child relational experience, it is most optimal for the child to have had provided for them, a male and a female in the parental role. As well, the Church recognizes that while it takes at the very least a male and a female for there to be the structural openness to new life, it takes *one* male and *one* female, to bring about the likelihood of the most stable and well-bonded *parental* relationship. And because a stable and well-bonded parental relationship leads to the highest likelihood of a relationally stable environment into which a child may grow, it is this type of family structure that the Church recognizes to be most beneficial for a child. Again, the Church recognizes that *according to how we are structurally created*, a child has the most well-rounded developmental opportunities with regards to relationship building (which will influence him or her for their lifetime) when there are both male and female (and only one of each), in the parent-child relationship. **Again, the Church doesn't invent this.**

As we journeyed towards greater understanding, we began to realize how our earlier understandings of the Church's position came about because we *were speaking a different language* than the Church. In other words, we were trying to sing the *Song of the Church* without understanding the lyrics written into the symphony of creation, as those lyrics were intended to be understood. We have since, by God's grace, come to see the beauty of that Song via coming to understand the language of the Church. That has brought us to see that the Church's invitation given to all of us to uphold what is today referred to as the "traditional family" *is not an attack towards other types of relationships*, but rather is an invitation for us to willfully give our children *more*.

## Summary

Today, the truths upheld by the Church make sense to us. We know *now* that the Catholic Church is not the enemy but rather the best secret this world has ever kept. Out of our love for Christ, who moves us towards embracing a greater degree of truth and self-honesty, we hope to spend our lives helping people come to know the true beauty that is found within the Catholic Church. This beauty, *is most definitely even for people like us*, has touched our hearts, and brought us peace beyond all measure.

As well, be it known that there are so many other angles by which to approach this very important topic, but none of them should take precedence over prayer. In order to help reach the hearts of those who are *where we used to be*, there is nothing more powerful that you can do than *pray*. It is *that* which will help prepare your heart for the next time a potential future saint comes to you, seeking guidance along their journey.

If you are seen to be a safe person to talk to about *other* topics, then you will be more likely to be seen as a safe person to talk to about *this* topic. If you want to help reach the hearts of our future saints, please prayerfully make yourself available to receive them where they are at on their journey. Also, pray that you may be showered with God's grace such that you will know what to do *and what to say* when the time arrives.

Prepare your heart for this encounter by receiving the Sacraments of Reconciliation and then the Holy Eucharist *often*. This preparation will help those of us who are still questioning if they could ever belong in the Catholic Church, to come to know in their hearts that they can talk to you without fear of judgment or condemnation. That *authentically Catholic safe space* is tremendously important.

With that in mind, let us also take care to not violate that potential life-long bond of trust that will be forged in that first moment of journeying together. If it wasn't for people like you, who took care to do this for so many of us, we wouldn't be here today.

We hope you find the courage to walk with us, in the way you are called, along this journey of reaching other hearts like ours. By God's grace, your encounter may transform lives. *We are living proof*.

Blessings in Christ,

Andrew + The Pursuit of Truth Ministries Team