



Love and Truth: The Catholic Church brings hope and embrace love through the Courage Apostolate for Men and Women who Experience Same Sex Attraction. By Fr. Richard M. Samour - Chaplain of Courage and EnCourage San Antonio Chapter for Today's Catholic.



In the preface of the book *“That Nothing may be Lost”* by Fr. Paul Scalia, Archbishop Charles Chaput, Archbishop of Philadelphia describes love in a marvelous way: *“Christian life requires a willingness to love. And I don’t mean “love,” the theory, or “love,” the warm feeling. I mean “love,” the act of will, the act of courage. Real love is always expensive. Real love is always based in the truth about ourselves and about others. And while the truth will make us free “nobody said it would make us comfortable. The human heart is created for the truth, and the truth is meant for the human heart.”*

Real love is based in the truth and sometimes this love makes us uncomfortable with others. Emphasizing Archbishop words, let us reflect about it: what is truth? In Pilot’s question to Jesus before his trial that is found in the Gospel of John the dialogue reads: *“the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me. “What is truth?” retorted Pilate. With this he went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.”* (John 18:37-38) In other words, Pilot said that Jesus through his teachings proclaimed the truth; however the people of Jesus’ time including some of his followers, also the scribes and Pharisees rejected Him and His teachings. The truth made them uncomfortable.

We live in a world and time that relativism is having a big impact not only in the secular society but in Christian society. People are confused regarding some moral teachings and sometimes misunderstand (misperceive) what is the truth. The main duty of the Church has been and is to teach the truth in love (Ep. 4:15) but also to accompany the faithful taking into consideration the new signs of the times as Pope John XXIII prophesized in the opening of the II Vatican Council: *“Today more than ever we are called to serve mankind as such, and not merely Catholics... Today’s world, the needs made plain in the last fifty years, and a deeper understanding of doctrine, have brought us to a new situation. It is not that the Gospel has changed: it is that we have begun to understand it better.”*

These prophetic words of the Pope continue to resound nowadays. the world has changed since Pope John XXIII spoke in the opening of the II Vatican Council, and the way of living also but not the moral teachings, in consequence the doctrine has to "accompany" the faithful, people need to hear and embrace this truth, the truth of the Gospel, that is what the Church's teach us.

Sexuality is always a controversial topic to discuss in the Church, and even more so when dealing with homosexuality. The theme of same sex attraction and homosexuality has had a big impact in the last decade.

People who claim to be gay or lesbian are confused regarding his/her identity; affirming or arguing that some people born gay or lesbian is like saying that God lied to the world. Let me explain why: we find in the Bible that God's plan for humanity was **unity, complementarity and procreation.** (Gn. 1:27-30) According to the Online Etymology Dictionary (Douglas Harper), the meaning of the word gay is "full of joy, merry; light-hearted, carefree;" also "wanton, lewd, lascivious. The word gay had an overall tinge of promiscuity – a gay house was a brothel." So how did this word meaning joyful come to refer to homosexuality?

According to David Wilton an independent researcher in historical linguistics, etymology, and slang origins, there are two, not necessarily mutually exclusive, commonly proffered explanations that are plausible, but I will point only one *“the modern use of gay comes from a clipping of gay cat, a slang term among hobos and itinerants meaning a boy or young man who accompanies an older, more experienced tramp, with the implication of sexual favors being exchanged for protection and instruction.”* In addition, the word lesbian literally means resident of the Isle of Lesbos, the Greek Island. The term came to describe women who love women after the island's most famous resident, the poet Sappho. Her writings are very erotic, something uncommon, especially for women of that era. And it's clear from her writings that she loved men and women.

Therefore, understanding the etymology of gay and lesbian, also knowing God through the Bible, it is clear that God didn't have in mind to create people oriented at male prostitution or women created only for sex. This is why the Church doesn't use the terms gay or lesbians. It is not fair or accurate to label a person merely as "gay" or "lesbian" because his/her sexual orientation. We believe that each person has their dignity and identity created **"not good but very good"** (Gn. 1:31) with a holy reason: ***“Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*** (Gn. 1:28) ***“Man is called to love and to self-giving in the unity of body and spirit. Femininity and masculinity are complementary gifts, through which human sexuality is an integrating part of the concrete capacity for love which God has inscribed in man and woman.”*** (The Pontifical Council for the Family. *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality.* #10) The Church teaches that ***“Chastity is the joyous affirmation of someone who knows how to live self-giving, free from any form of self-centered slaver.”*** (The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: *Guidelines for Education Within the Family, December 8, 1995, #17*) We want to live a virtuous life, and sometimes we have ***“to make every effort to enter through the narrow door.”*** (Lk. 13:24)

In a recent interview, Fr. Philip Bochanski, Executive of Courage International said, *“The prevailing attitudes in secular society make our ministry, and the message that we have to share, both more challenging and more urgent. Welcoming and accompanying every person who asks to share the life of the Church and to know more about Christ has always been the mission of the Church, and a demand of the Gospel - there’s nothing new about that. But secular society wants the Church to say that loving a person means never questioning or challenging that person’s decisions when they contradict the Gospel. That kind of silence is not charity.”* Jesus said that *“the truth will [make us] free.”* (Jn.8:32) In other words, being honest about the demands of the Gospel, even when they challenge a person’s desires and decisions, that truth makes them uncomfortable.

The Church through the Courage Apostolate offers hope, charity and a way of living to be safe of any sexual desires contrary to Chastity with unique feeling: same sex attraction, homosexuality, pornography, etc. You do not have to do this journey alone, the Church speaking the truth in love will help you to grow up in all things into **“Him who is the head—Christ”—who “causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love”** (Ephesians 4:14-16).

The heart of *Courage and EnCourage’s* spirituality is the belief that sanctity is possible in everyday life. They come to recognize their true identity as children of God, men and women in Christ, understanding and experiencing the unconditional love of God, thus conforming themselves to His will for their lives.

If you want to know and learn more about Courage and EnCourage (Ministry for parents of love ones with same-sex attraction) Apostolates, or maybe you or someone whom you love may be interested in joining the group, please do not hesitate to contact me. All communication with Courage and EnCourage is strictly confidential. Fr. Richard M. Samour (210) 996-1371, or email mscouragesa@gmail.com; www.couragesatx.net.

Spanish Radio program: First Wednesday of each month: Radio Virgen de Guadalupe, 11:00am, also follow us in facebook: FrRichard Samour - Courage.